

Changes Caused by Rebellion



What Is Man? (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, sharing with you precious insights out of Scripture that have made the difference between success and failure in my life, and can do the same in yours.

The theme for my talks this week takes the form of a question: "What Is Man?" In our study yesterday we looked at the Bible's account of the creation of man as given in Genesis 2:7, where it says this:

> "And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being [or more literally, a living soul]." (NIV)

We saw that man's being has two separate and distinct sources: from above it's the eternal, inbreathed, Spirit-breath of Almighty God; from below it's the clay. And the union of Spirit from above and clay from beneath produces what the Bible calls a soul, a complete human personality.

We saw the two words for spirit and soul in Hebrew indicative of the nature of each. Ruach, the word for spirit, suggests steady, continuous, outgoing breath; the self-existent, eternal nature of God. The word nefesh for soul suggests first breathing in and then breathing out. In other words, nefesh is dependent. It must receive from God and be maintained by God. In life, it's life is dependent on spirit.

Today I'm going to explain the radical changes in man's total personality caused by his rebellion against God. All human problems ultimately go back to one root cause, rebellion against God. This is so clearly summed up in the words of the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 53:6:

> "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him [this is a prophetic of Jesus] the Lord has laid on him the iniquity [or rebellion] of us all." (NIV)

So there's one thing we all have in common, one basic problem of all humanity. We've all turned to our own way. We've all been self-willed and rebellious. Now the very word self-will indicates the area in which this problem originates. For the soul is the self; it's the ego; it's the thing that says "I want" or "I don't want," "I will" or "I won't." It's the decision making function of the human personality. So self-will or rebellion originates in the soul; not in the spirit, not in the body, but in the soul. And actually, if we are able to analyze our problem, we'll find that all of them ultimately center in that area of the being which is called in the Bible, the soul.

So man made a decision in his soul to disobey God. He deliberately turned against the commandment that God had given him. And now we are going to look briefly at the results of this rebellion in each area of man's personality. Starting with the spirit, the result was that the spirit died. This is really implicit in the words of Genesis 2:17, where the Lord gave man his directions and warned him:

> "...but from the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die." (NASB)

Notice "in the day that you eat you will die." Physically, Adam did not die for something like nine hundred years. But God said, "in the day that you eat you will die." Adam did die, not physically, but spiritually. His disobedience cut him off from the only source of inner life, the very being and person of God. He was alienated, cut off from God.

This is stated again very vividly in Isaiah 59:2, and Isaiah says to the people of his day:

> "Your iniquities [or your rebellions] have separated you from your God..." (NIV)

Rebellion always separates human personality from God. And separated from God, the spirit dies. So we understand the words of Paul in Ephesians 2:1-2, writing to Christians about their condition before they turned back to the Lord in repentance and faith.

> "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." (NASB)

Notice the root problem is disobedience. And as a result of disobedience and turning away from God, we are "dead in trespasses and sins," not physically dead, but spiritually dead, cut off from the life of God. And Paul says the same again in very vivid language in Ephesians 4:18, talking about the unbelieving Gentiles:

> "They (the Gentiles) are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts." (NIV)

There are four words used there, all of which are so vivid and descriptive: darkened, separated, ignorant and hardened. That's the condition of man in his rebellion: spiritually dead, dead in trespasses and sins, dead as the result of disobedience or rebellion.

Now let's look at the result of man's rebellion in the second element of his personality, the soul. I describe it this way, an inner force of rebellion became resident in man's soul. Or you could perhaps say it this way, man's soul became infected with rebellion. Now the result of this in every succeeding generation is that man no longer needs to be tempted from outside. There's an inner force of rebellion latent in his soul. You see, the first temptation came to man from outside, from another source. We've already seen that phrase that Paul uses in Ephesians 2:2, where he speaks of "sons of disobedience," those who are born out of a disobedient nature.

And then in verse 3 of that same chapter he continues this way:

> "Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." (NASB)

The word lust there indicates rebellious or perverted desires. So once man had turned against God in rebellion, there was the potential of lust of perverted evil desire in his soul; temptation could come from within. And that's exactly what James says in his first epistle, verse 14:

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust [his own inner lust]. (NASB)

The third element of man, the body, as a result of man's rebellion became subject to corruption or decay and ultimate death. 1 Corinthians 15:56:

The poison of death was injected into man's body by his sin. And as a result, his body became subject to decay, corruption and death.

In closing I'm going to paint a brief picture of the total result of rebellion in man's total personality. What was the end of a rebellion as it affected the whole personality of man? I could sum it up, I think, this way: man's two lower elements, his soul and his body, united in rebellion against God's appointed inner ruler, the spirit. You see, God appointed the spirit to rule the soul and the soul to rule the body. But the soul and the body in rebellion through the temptation of Satan, united against the rule of the spirit and, as it were, dethroned the spirit from it's God-appointed place of rulership in man's personality.

After that, this rebellious combination of the soul and the body is described in the Bible by various very important phrases. There are three main phrases used in the New Testament: the flesh, the body, the body of sin. But when we read these phrases we need to understand that they do not refer simply to man's physical body, but rather they refer to the nature that man has inherited through birth in his physical body. And the actual totality by what's described by the flesh or the body or the body of sin is not just the physical body, but it's that combination of soul and body in rebellion against God and against God's appointed inner ruler, the spirit.

The distinctive word which describes the flesh in this sense, is the word corrupt. Man has become corrupt. Inwardly he's morally corrupt. Outwardly he's physically corrupt. And the nature of corruption is such that it's progressive. So we see this in man's physical being; at first corruption may not be obvious. But as the process goes on, as the years pass, the evidence of corruption is more plain in every area of the physical body.

The same is true inwardly in the soul. Corruption is progressive. Unless the process is arrested, there's an ongoing deterioration of human personality.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be speaking about the miracle by which man's spirit can be brought back from death to life.

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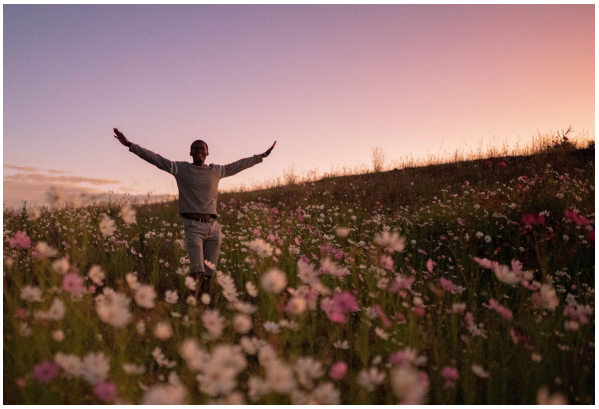

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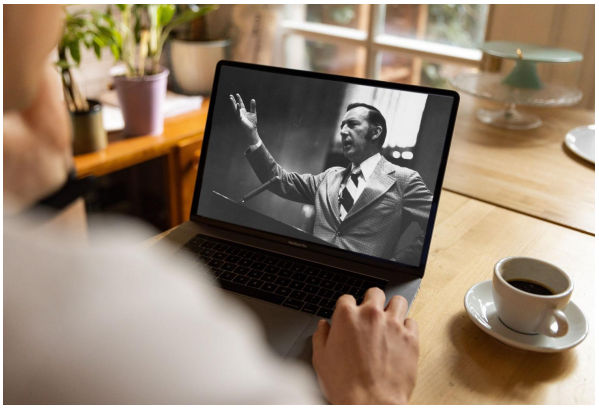

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