

631 What is Human?

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God's Answers to Life's Questions

A friend of mine was caught committing a crime. When we asked him about it, he said, "I'm only human." Well, what does it mean to be human? Stick around and we'll find out. Today we're asking the question, "What is human?" In Genesis 1:26-31, God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." ... God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. Very good? ... what happened?

At best people are a riddle. Sometimes they can be so sweet and good and loving; and at other times they are selfish, mean, and cruel. Paul described the human condition without God in Titus 3:3, "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another." When we look at all the crimes, addictions, wars, fusses, and cruelties in America, we wonder how people can be so sinful. At the same time we see America as the most charitable country in the world. We see heroism among our firefighters, policeman, and military. We see people who give up much to bless the lives of others—teachers, doctors, nurses, educators, and businessmen. We see good and bad all mixed up together in everyone. Jesus described the nature of man in Matthew 26:41. The disciples, Peter, James and John, were praying with him in the garden of Gethsemane. While he was agonizing over his upcoming crucifixion, they were sleeping from sorrow. Jesus knew they would be tempted when the multitude would come and take him away to trial. Jesus said, "So, you *men* could not keep watch with Me for one hour? Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak—that's all of us!

God made man with two natures: (1) an inward man, who delights in the law of God and desires to follow it; and (2) an outward, fleshly man, that wants to please its lusts and desires. Paul said in Galatians 5:16-17, "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please." Paul knew this struggle well in his own life. God was pulling him one way, and his worldly flesh pulling him another. He found himself doing things he hated and failing to do what he desired to do. In Romans 7:14-25 Paul explains, "For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not want to *do*, I agree with the Law, *confessing* that the Law is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which

is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin."

Left to itself, by nature, the flesh will seek self-indulgence. Paul describes the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21, "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality [or fornication of all types], impurity [lasciviousness or sexual lust], sensuality, idolatry, sorcery [witchcraft], enmities [hatred], strife [fights], jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions [heresies], envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." The works of the flesh will cost people their souls. You can't go to heaven and live in sin. Many people deceive themselves in thinking they can live anyway they want to and still please God. Paul said in Galatians 6:7-8, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." Don't fool yourself into thinking you can live all your life pleasing yourself and not suffer for it. Sowing to the flesh reaps corruption from the flesh, but sowing to the Spirit (following God's word) reaps eternal life. We find ourselves drawn in both directions, but at some point we must decide which will be the focus of our lives. We are praying that you, my friend, will sow to the Spirit, that is, following the teaching of the Word of God. When you do that, the Word produces in your life a wonderful fruit. Paul said in Galatians 5:22-24, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." If you choose to walk by the Spirit, you will not carry out the desires of the flesh. If the Lord Jesus is living in your life, you won't want to live like the world.

Colossians chapter three describes how Christ can make a difference in your heart and life. "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—a *renewal* in which there is no *distinction between* Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called

in one body; and be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”

This chapter describes the change that takes place in our lives once we have fixed our minds upon Him and have been transformed by Him. We can learn to forgive, because He forgave us. We learn to be thankful, because He is so good to us. We learn to let His peace rule or make decisions in our lives, because He brought peace to us. We learn to bear with the weaknesses of others, because God bears with our weaknesses. Christianity is a transforming faith that helps people to become like Jesus. A person may hate himself and his behavior before he becomes a Christian, but the Lord sees what we can become and helps us to become it. Because of the blood of Jesus, God gives us hope and cleanses us from sin. He cleans us up inside and out. He makes our lives different, loving and meaningful. He gets us away from having to please the flesh by pointing to the cross. In Christ God sees us as “chosen” not as fleshly creatures. He sees us as holy (pure and set apart for godliness). He sees us as beloved children, not strangers. In Christ, God draws us close to Himself. He wants us for His children. We learn to love Him and His ways and to hate the things that are evil. We are happy to sing praises to His name and to thank Him everyday for all the good that He has done for us. Christianity transforms a hateful, selfish person into a loving, giving, thankful, and kind person. One can see the fruit of the Spirit in his life: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” God through Christ lifts a person up to become the person he or she really wants to be.

We are all in a state of becoming something. Some are growing better, more holy, more loving, and more obedient to the will of God; and others are growing worse, more ungodly, more callous, and more rebellious to the will of God. My friend, you are becoming something: what are you becoming? When you look into the mirror, do you like what you see? I am not speaking of the physical; I’m speaking of the person inside. Are you living for the Lord or are you walking like a person who doesn’t even know God exists. Paul describes the Gentiles of his day who did not know God exists in these words of Ephesians 4:17-19, “So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.” Frankly, the more I look at our society, the more I grasp what Paul is talking about. We are becoming callous to right and wrong, callous to good and evil, callous to God. I see people living empty lives, because they don’t know God. Paul continues in verse 20-24, “But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your

former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of* God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.” The most wonderful news I can tell you today is that you can change. You don’t have to remain in a life of ignorance and hardness of heart. You can live in the righteousness and the holiness of the truth. You can put on a new self, made in likeness of the Lord Jesus. You can live life with love and joy and hope. I don’t know where you are in life, but you don’t have to stay trapped by sin. God made you for something better. We have asked the question, “What is human?” The answer is really two-fold. There is what is human without God, and there is human with God. That’s why life is somewhat a riddle. We might live part of lives in rebellion to God and another part in obedience to God. Each of us are walking closer to Him or further away. Where are you going? If you look deep into your heart, you can answer that question. Only you and God can look on the inside at your soul and know whether or not your heart is right with God. If you look at your soul and don’t like what you see, don’t spend the rest of your life there. Make a change by drawing close to God and obeying His word from the heart. Paul said in Romans 6:16-18, “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone *as* slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.” I pray you’ll obey from your heart.

What are you becoming? Where are you going? Remember that one day God will bring us into judgment for our deeds, our thoughts, and our words. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:10, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” We must also understand that wherever it is we are going, we are taking others with us. You can’t lead someone to a place where you are not going. You can’t live your life in rebellion to God and lead your children to heaven. The worst thing I can imagine is waking up lost and finding my children are lost with me. Parents, if you are becoming fleshly and worldly, you are leading your children in the same direction. Why not turn your life around and come to God? Why not obey the gospel from your heart by believing that Jesus is the Christ, repenting of every sin, confessing the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by being baptized in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins? You won’t do anything today that is more important than getting right with the living God. Obeying the gospel is the first step in becoming like Jesus. Each day you live, you’ll want to love and serve Him more. It may be that you have obeyed the gospel but have gone back into the world and quit the church. Why not turn your life around today and come back to God. You will never regret doing what is right, but you will always regret living a life of rebellion toward God. That is why making the change today is so important. Put off the flesh and put on the Lord. Live for Him.

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