



October 7, 2018

“The Truth about the Human Condition”

Isaiah 64

Pastor Gary Hamrick

Is man basically good? Can we improve our condition by doing good things? Does God “grade on the curve”? Pastor Gary answers these questions in his teaching from Isaiah 64. There are myths that our culture believes, and there’s the truth that God expresses concerning the human condition. If we don’t have a proper, true understanding of the human heart then we will never understand our need for a Savior. God has provided a way for mankind to be made right with him through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We can’t improve our own condition ourselves, but we can get a new heart from our Father in heaven!

Three Myths About The Human Condition

1. Pastor Gary said: “The heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart. The Bible in general, and this chapter in particular, challenges conventional wisdom about the human condition. And, if we don’t properly understand the human condition then we will never see our desperate need for a Savior. ... I call them myths because even though they are popularly held beliefs, they conflict with God’s assessment of humanity.”
 - a. **1 Corinthians 3:18–19a** – *“Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a ‘fool’ so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight.”*
 - b. Man, on his best day, doesn’t come close to having the wisdom of God!

It’s A Myth That Man Is Basically Good

2. Pastor Gary shared a quote from Melody Beattie’s book, *Codependent No More*, which was written and published in 1986.

- a. “Most codependents suffer from that vague but penetrating affliction, low self-worth. ¹ ... Actually, it doesn’t matter when we began torturing ourselves. We must stop now. Right now, we can give ourselves a big emotional and mental hug. We are okay. It’s wonderful to be who we are. Our thoughts are okay. Our feelings are appropriate. We’re right where we’re supposed to be today, this moment. There is nothing wrong with us. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with us. If we’ve done wrong things, that’s okay; we were doing the best we could.” ²
 - b. Pastor Gary said: “[Beattie was] trying to coach people, and coach herself, out of a bad mindset concerning self. Her answer is, not bad self in need of a Savior, but a good self in need of a pep talk. This is the pervasive thinking of our society, [in that] what we need is a good dose of self-esteem.”
3. Pastor Gary shared several Scriptures as examples of how God views of the human condition.
- a. **Romans 3:10, 12** - *“As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one.’ ... there is no one who does good, not even one.’ ”*
 - b. **Psalm 51:5** - *“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”*
 - c. **Romans 7:18a** - *“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature.”*

It’s A Myth That Man Can Improve His Condition Through Good Deeds

4. Pastor Gary said: “It’s a very trendy thing in our culture right now, to try to improve one’s self and others, through social justice, and [this is evident] particularly among millennials. [Millennials] thrive on the idea of the more [they] do to better other people, the better [they are] as a person. I’m talking about social justice issues like clean water initiatives and sex trafficking and aids relief and eradicating world hunger. Now, let me be clear as I tread into this area, that social justice can be a very good thing. Where we see oppression and suffering and mistreatment of others, [we should be motivated] to do something to help [others]. ... What I’m talking about is how oftentimes the motivation for social causes, at least among non-Christians, [is] an attempt to feel better about one’s

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sinful condition by doing good for others. ... Without God in the equation, some people are subconsciously trying to assuage the guilt of their own sinful condition by engaging in social causes, which will, in the process, [help] others, which is a good thing. [Doing good things gives a] false sense of intrinsic good to those who are doing the helping. They will believe the idea that, 'I'm a morally good person because I'm doing morally good things.' There's actually a term for this! It's called Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.³ ... [A basic understanding of 'MTD' is that people do something good to compensate for their immoral condition]. ... [I] want to emphasize that all of those causes can be wonderful, and if those causes are done in the name of Jesus for the purpose of providing immediate relief and eternal hope through the gospel of Jesus Christ, then that's the 'perfect marriage.' ... We cannot improve our sinful condition no matter what [kind of] good we do, because our sinful condition is an underlying issue that cannot be improved upon by human effort."

- a. **Isaiah 1:17** - *"[Learn] to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, please the case of the widow."*
- b. **Matthew 23:28** - *"... on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness."*

It's A Myth That God Grades On The Curve

5. Pastor Gary said: "Some people think that it's about a ranking system with God, [meaning that] as long as I'm not as bad as the next guy, I'll get a good grade with God. There are some people who actually think that they will get to heaven based on how they do compared to others. ... The standard is not how you measure up to other people; the standard is how you measure up against Christ, and we all fall woefully short."
 - a. **Romans 3:23** - *"[For] all have fallen short of the glory of God."*

Four Truths About The Human Condition

6. **Isaiah 64:6** - *"All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away."*
7. Pastor Gary said: "[In] order to get the proper cure, the proper remedy, we have to properly evaluate the condition. ... Our culture and our world paint a very different picture, but it's not reality."

It's True That We Are Like One Unclean

8. In the Old Testament, certain animals, actions, and conditions/illnesses were considered to be unclean.
9. Pastor Gary said: "The idea here is that our sinful condition makes us unworthy and unpresentable to God. We are like outcasts!"

It's True That Our Righteous Acts Are Like Filthy Rags

10. "The expression, 'filthy rags,' in the Hebrew, is one which we could not with propriety explain the present assembly. As the confession must be made privately alone before God, so the full meaning of the comparison is not meant for human ear." – Charles Haddon Spurgeon ⁴
11. Pastor Gary said: "Our best efforts and our best intentions and our right acts are like menstrual cloths. That's how this verse translates [in Hebrew]. Our rightness, our righteousness, in comparison to God's perfectness and holiness is like menstrual cloths. ... God sees the human heart as filthy."

It's True That We Are Like A Shriveled Leaf

12. Pastor Gary said: "Sin doesn't make us flourish. Sin is a terminal illness that we are all dying from. ... Sin takes a toll."

It's True That Our Sins Sweep Us Away Like The Wind

13. Pastor Gary said: "Our sins carry us along like the wind until eventually sweeps us away and we are no more. ... Death is the result of our sinful condition."
 - a. **Romans 6:23** – *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Conclusion

14. When need to dismantle the myths of our culture and accept the truths of how God assesses the human condition and recognize that no amount of doing good things can compensate for our sin.
15. In **Isaiah 64:5c**, we read Isaiah's all-important question: *"How then can we be saved?"*

⁴ <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/a-sight-of-self#flipbook/>

- a. The implication is that **need** a Savior! (Emphasis added)
16. Pastor Gary said: “Seven hundred years after Isaiah [wrote] this, God [came] from heaven to earth in the form of Jesus Christ, taking on flesh to become like us to die for us. He came to save us because we cannot save ourselves! ... [God] knows that we are incapable of saving ourselves, so [he] worked salvation on [our] behalf. ... The single act of Jesus Christ dying on the cross for our sins satisfied the wrath of God that was directed at us because of our sinful condition. The punishment that we deserved [was] placed on Jesus, so that believing in him and having faith in what he did for us, by dying in our place, by taking the punishment intended for us on himself, we might be saved! Through faith in his finished work; not because we deserve it, not because we can earn it, not because we can do anything to gain the greater grace of God than what he’s already determined by his own initiative to bestow upon us. He is a gracious, loving Father in heaven who saw the human condition and realized [that] we are pitiful, we are sinful, we are wicked, so [He sent his] only Son to die on a cross to redeem wicked people for the righteousness of God!”
- a. [Isaiah 59:16](#) - *“He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm worked salvation for him.”*
- b. [Isaiah 63:5](#) - *“I looked, but there was no one to help, I was appalled that no one gave support; so my own arm worked salvation for me...”*
17. [Isaiah 64:8](#) - *“Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.”*
18. Pastor Gary said: “The solution [for] the human heart is to surrender your life to the lordship of Jesus Christ, who [loves] you and died for every sinful thought [you’ve ever had and every sinful thing you’ve ever done].”

Discussion Questions

1. Read [Isaiah 64](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Read and discuss [1 Corinthians 3:18-19a](#), and spend time talking about Pastor Gary’s remarks. (See #1 above)
3. Read and discuss the quote Pastor Gary shared from Melody Beattie’s book, *Codependent No More*. (See #2 above)

4. How has the Holy Spirit made it clear to you that you aren't a good person who just needs a pep talk or a big dose of self-esteem to get you going on the path to self-improvement?
5. Read and discuss the Scriptures concerning God's view of the human condition. (See #3 above)
6. What are your thoughts about Pastor Gary's comments concerning the way our culture views good deeds? (See #4 above)
7. Why do you think people believe that God grades on the curve? (See #5 above)
8. Provide an overview of each of the four truths Pastor Gary shared in his outline. (See #6 through #13 above)
9. Spend time talking about Isaiah's question: *"How then can we be saved?"* (See #14 and #15 above)
10. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's remarks and the Scriptures he shared about God being the one who does the work of salvation in the lives of all who would believe. (See #16 above)
11. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).