

Dead in Our Trespasses and Sin

Ephesians 2:1-3

1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. (Ephesians 2:1-3)

In the verses that follow these, and especially verses 8 and 9, we are told clearly that we cannot work our way into the good graces of God and by our good works hope to earn a place within His kingdom.

And here, in verses 1-3, in the most simplistic of terms, we are told the reason why. Simply put, until God does His miraculous work of salvation within a person's soul, our souls, we are "dead", completely dead, undeniably dead. We look dead, we think dead, we act dead, we are inhabited by demonic spirits of death, and we conduct the matters of our daily lives in a manner that not only speaks back to our own soul that we are dead, it speaks that same message of death to anyone and everyone we encounter. We are dead! And no good thing, no good works can come out from a person who is dead! Listen again!

1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. (Ephesians 2:1-3)

With these words, God has again been gracious to my particular manner of receiving and processing the things that I read. Here He uses strong, clearly-defined imagery that leaves me no doubt about the condition from which I have come.

Until that blessed moment in 1974 when I finally and forevermore gave my heart to Christ, this was my exact condition of soul. I was dead in my trespasses and sin and I walked daily through the course of this world according to the prince of the power of the air. I was a "son of disobedience" and I walked with other "sons and daughters of disobedience" conducting my life in the "lusts of the flesh", fulfilling the desires of my flesh and of my mind. I was, in every way a child of wrath and all my friends were just

like me, each of us daily influencing each other, spreading sin and corruption to everyone who would join with us.

Did we know that we were doing that? Of course not! How could we have known? We were all in such a condition of death that we could not perceive anything of value?

I hesitate to bring up this next imagery, but it is so popular within our culture today. Hollywood has been so prolific in producing television programs and movies that depict this very condition, people walking around dead. And in their cleverness, they have made the conditions of death both entertaining and strangely “attractive” to our imaginations.

The offerings from Hollywood that seem to most attract our minds and our emotions are the vampire programs and the “Walking Dead” series. Those are vivid depictions of the ravages of death. And instead of fascinating and entertaining us, those programs should be speaking a message to our souls about the hopelessness of that condition.

But the same could also be said for some of the other, less vivid, portrayals of death, programs like, “The Big Bang Theory”, “How I met your Mother”, and even the late night shows like “Letterman” and “Conan O’Brien”. Though they are more subtle in their depiction of the condition of death, no obvious decay showing on the skin surface, do they not clearly reveal this awful “death” spoken about here in today’s passage?

Death has so many different faces, and the “prince of the power of the air” spoken about here is clever. He is able to match such things perfectly to our viewing pleasure.

My wife and I enjoy programs about police detectives. This past week, we were able to resurrect some old episodes of “Colombo”, and it has occurred to me to ask, “Are those programs really any better for us than the vampire movies?” Should we be “enjoying” those kinds of entertainment? We have not resolved that dilemma yet, but we need to.

But also, do not many of those programs bespeak the real-life conditions that go on all around us, in our neighborhoods, in our work places, even within many of our families. As I think about the “insulated” lives that my wife and I now enjoy each day, the quiet tranquility of our older ages, and our recent retirement from the rigors of daily employment; each day sitting comfortably behind the protected walls of our home there on Valley Road, we truly are very ignorant of most of the real pain and suffering taking place in the rest of the world, even that which might be taking place right down the streets of our small town. Were it not for the television, and an occasional news program, we might be completely unaware.

Thinking back on our former way of life, and the vivid description given to us here in these words of scripture, we were so oblivious to the real condition of our own souls. In those days, neither my wife nor I thought much about God or much about the consequences of our behaviors. And as I mentioned a moment ago, our lives were exactly as these words portray.

We did not know it, but as we walked daily through the course of this world we were truly dead in our trespasses and sin. And no, we did not know that the “prince of the power of the air” was always at our shoulder, working within us, pointing out and encouraging us on to all the many “fun” possibilities of trespass and sin.

And we did trespass. Think about that word for a moment! It implies that we go places and step across lines that belong to someone else, that we have coveted what another person has and we have encroached into their territory, their lives, and often that means that we have also taken something that belongs to them, and too often that thing that we have robbed from them is their innocence, their morality, their happiness.

But such is the lifestyle of those who do not have God’s “whispering voice” in their spirit to tell them that they are wrong and that they should not be doing such things. Fortunately for us, my wife and I probably seldom, if ever, broke a criminal or civil law. But we surely did break a lot of moral laws.

And lest you think that these words only apply to my wife and I, may I say, clearly and plainly, that such has also been true for you! Until you came to that condition of soul in which the Spirit of Christ came to live within you, you did many of the very same things that we have done. How do I know that? I know it because these words tell me so! We are all alike. None different! No exceptions! Without the presence of salvation and the presence of the Spirit of Christ living within us, this is who each one of us is. Please do read along with me! Verse 1,

1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. (Ephesians 2:1-3)

Notice the emphatic nature in which God presents these words, leaving you and me to have no other response but to say, “yay and amen”, you are right Lord, this is, or at least was, me! Verse 3 again,

3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. (Ephesians 2:3)

May I ask . . . are you able, right now to admit that this is you, or at least was you? And the only reason that you can use the word “was” is if you have truly and completely surrendered your life to Christ. Is this, or was this you?

Again, may I say, on the authority of these words, yes, this is, or was, you!

Thinking back on our former ways of life, my wife and I have often questioned how a Pure and Holy God could take such wretched beginnings as ours and work them all together for our good, and then bring us to where we are today? The verse that these thoughts evoke is Romans 8:28.

28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

But knowing that during those days of disobedience we truly did not love Him, and neither were we aware that we were called according to His purposes, so then, why should He have worked things out so well for us? I must conclude that it was the next verse, Romans 8:29 that brought us to where we are today. Listen!

29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. (Romans 8:29 (NKJV))

This word, “foreknew” has to do with “love”. For some reason that we will probably never really understand, He loved us, even long before my wife and I ever met each other; and especially long before we ever met and received Him as Savior.

I do wish that these words of our text were not describing me. I do wish that I had not left the trail of pain and suffering and corruption that followed in my “wake”.

May I give you a quick “visual” picture of how I perceive my earlier life? Living in Florida, I have often observed boats almost literally “flying” down a waterway, the driver of the boat not paying any attention to anything except his own enjoyment. Along those channels are signs that tell the boat drivers to “leave no wake”, else the other boats, moored along the seawalls, will be slung against the walls and damaged. And other boats passing by will also be disrupted. But that never seemed to occur to the one who was caught up enjoying the thrill of his speed.

And such was the same with me and my lifestyle as I trespassed and sinned, leaving a “wake” of hurt and broken lives in my trail.

Again, think with me for a moment! Have you ever taken the time to consider those trespasses and sins in your life before Christ? Perhaps God would have you to do as King David did. Listen to David's plea in Psalm 139.)

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: 24
And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.
(Psalm 139:23-24 (KJV))

You say, but I am now saved and God has forgiven me of all my past sins. And He has removed all my sins from me as far as the East is from the West. And that is true.

But may I say that such a request as this in Psalm 139 can never hurt you. God is always good. He is fully trustworthy and He will never hurt you wrongly.

David was also already saved. So why then would he ask this of God?

It is because sin is a very clever predator. It has the ability to hide within the corners of our soul. And we will often bring predispositions for certain sins with us into our relationship with Christ, pride, lust, a judgmental spirit, and any number of other predispositions.

And may I emphasize "pride", that predisposition to "my claim to my right to myself". That surely is one of the deepest of the engrained sins that gets resurrected within us no matter how long we have been saved. Do you still hold onto any claim to your right to yourself? Do you like for things to be "your way" even and especially to the disregard of others.

The Blood of Christ has the ability to cleanse us from all sin, but part of that cleansing requires "repentance". That was the reason that God sent John the Baptist ahead of Jesus to prepare the way of salvation by first convincing men and women of sin and bringing them to repentance. Have you, do you, repent of your sins, regularly?

May I urge you, forgiveness is only one surrender away.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8-9)

Forgiveness truly is "only one surrender away!"

We who have truly received Christ must understand that we are now without excuse. We are no longer "dead"! Verse 1 tells us so, and you He made alive, who were dead

in trespasses and sins. We are alive and our hearts and our minds are alive and we can now understand what we need to do.

I must tell you that for myself, I count my sins today to be far more wretched than all those that I was caught up in before I received Christ as my Savior. Why? It is because then I truly did not know any better. I was dead and completely unaware of the real nature of my behavior. But now I do know better. Now, every time that I am about to sin, God is gracious and He sends a “check” into my spirit, telling me to stop before I do it.

13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13 (NKJV))

Thanks be to God for His loving reminders. And thanks be to God for the good work He has begun in us, which He will be faithful to complete. And thanks be to God for the truth in verse 1. . .

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Thanks be to God!