

## Praise the Physician

When considering Biblical passages that talk about the contrast between how Christians once lived (in sin) and how they live now (in Christ), such as Ephesians 2:1-3, those who were born and raised in the Christian faith might think that these passages do not apply to them. After all, they never had a dramatic, conscious, articulable conversion experience. Can they really say with the Apostle Paul, *This is who I once was?*

We ought to be careful that, in trying to apply Scripture to covenant children, we not attribute a period of sinful living to them in the hopes that this Biblical contrast between past and present can be true of them, too. After all, those born and raised in the Christian faith may never have had a time when they did not know Christ as anything other than Savior and Lord. It is obvious, then, that those who have always consciously confessed Christ cannot say they “once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind.”

However, we ought not make the mistake on the other extreme, which is to think that those raised in the Christian faith have a nature untainted by sin. Paul describes Jews, who had been raised in the Christian faith of the OT, as those who “were by nature children of wrath, just like the rest of mankind.” The implication of a text like Ephesians 2:1-3 for those raised in the covenant is twofold:

1. All, Jew and Gentile, those raised in the Christian faith and those who come to the Christian faith later on in life, are by their sinful nature children of wrath who stand under God’s condemnation.
2. This passage is true of all, including those raised in the Christian faith, who seek to live apart from Christ. This is what life independent of Christ would have looked like for Christians had God not saved them.

Augustine said it well when he noted that the grace of God is seen in both the covenant child preserved from a life of sickening sin and the believer who is healed from such spiritual malady. The thing they have in common is the same: their spiritual health is due to the same Physician. Hence, they are to praise the Physician:

*“What shall I render unto the Lord” for the fact that while my memory recalls these things my soul no longer fears them? I will love you, O Lord, and thank you, and confess to your name, because you have put away from me such wicked and evil deeds. To your grace I attribute it and to your mercy, that you have melted away my sin as if it were ice. To your grace also I attribute whatsoever of evil I did not commit--for what might I not have done, loving sin as I did, just for the sake of sinning? Yea, all the sins that I confess now to have been forgiven me, both those which I committed willfully and those which, by your providence, I did not commit. What man is there who, when reflecting upon his own infirmity, dares to ascribe his chastity and innocence to his own powers, so that he should love you less--as if he were in less need of thy mercy in which you forgive the transgressions of those that return to you? As for that man who, when called by you, obeyed your voice and shunned those things which he here reads of me as I recall and confess them of myself, let him not despise me--for I, who was sick, have been healed by the same Physician by whose aid it was that he did not fall sick, or rather was less sick than I. And for this let him love thee just as much--indeed, all the more--since he sees me restored from such a great weakness of sin by the selfsame Savior by whom he sees himself preserved from such a weakness.*

