

## Ephesians 2:1-4a

### "From Wrath To Workmanship" Part 1

From God's wrath, to God's workmanship. That's the truth of the transition that we undergo in Christ. We're recipients of transformation, becoming *new creations* in Christ. Old things pass away; behold, all things become new. We're lifted out of the graveyard (as it were) & into glory. (Today we'll see the objects of God's wrath, next time explore the transformation that makes us His workmanship).

Perhaps you recall that we left off last week reasoning through the tremendous power of God that raised Jesus from the dead. The surpassing magnitude, the excessive & unlimited power of God that was activated in Christ when He raised Him from the dead & seated Him at His right hand in heavenly places, *far above all* principality & power & might & dominion & every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come...

But Paul wasn't pointing that out only to give us some fascinating *information*. He was drawing our attention to a highly relevant *application* & that is that it's this *same power* that raised Jesus from the dead *physically* that raises us from the dead (having been dead in trespasses & sins) *spiritually*. This same power that caused Jesus to ascend to be seated at the right hand of God *physically*, is the same power that causes us to be seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus *spiritually*.

We refer to it as "resurrection power". It's something we want not only to *experience*, but to *exemplify*, yes? Paul will be talking about what it looks like in our lives as the letter progresses.

But I bring these things back to your remembrance because Ch 2 begins w/the little conjunction "And". What that tells us is that it's actually a continuation of the thought he was developing as the 1<sup>st</sup> Ch came to a close. The idea is that God raised *Jesus* to life, "*and you... who were dead in trespasses and sins*". Paul is continuing to magnify/amplify the resurrection power of God at work in our lives. Notice.

#### Vs 1

You might note that the words, "He made alive" are in italics in your bible. What that means is that those words aren't there in the Greek manuscript but they've been added by the translators to help us understand Paul's intent. It's where Paul is going, it's what Paul is saying, but it's not what he said, does that make sense?

What Paul said (w/in the context of the power of God that raised Jesus from the dead & seated Him at His right hand) is, "*And you, who were dead in trespasses & sins.*"

Listen, you are alive to God in Christ Jesus. But such has not always been the case. Before Christ came into your life, you were dead while you lived...

There is more than one kind of life... & there's more than one kind of death. There's animal life, agricultural life, there's mental life, moral life & of course there's spiritual life. There's physical death & there's spiritual death. Now, obviously mankind isn't dead physically, or morally, or mentally, but spiritually we're separated from God outside of Christ. That's what we're talking about when we're speaking of death, right? Death is separation. A person is dead physically when their spirit leaves their body, there's a separation that takes place. Even so there's a separation that's taken place between God & man *spiritually* rendering mankind *dead* in trespasses & sins.

Back in Genesis Ch 2 you discover that God told Adam that in the day he ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good & evil he would surely die. And when he partook of that fruit guess what happened? He died instantly. Oh, not physically (though death went to work in him immediately), but he committed suicide spiritually. He was no longer in fellowship *with* God, or in any way seeking *after* God. He was immediately separated *from* God. Truth is, he sought to run away & *hide* from God (& that's a perfect picture of unregenerate man today, not seeking *after* God, but running *away* from God, trying to *hide* from God).

But here's the rub. You can't pass on what you no longer have. Adam was created w/out sin, but once his nature had been corrupted by sin... that condemned us all. He couldn't pass on a sinless nature, he no longer had one. Therefore each & every individual who's ever been born since the creation of Adam has been spiritually still born, dead in trespasses & sins. To the Romans Paul put it this way, **"...through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—"**<sup>1</sup>

Now. There's a bit of a theological conundrum that people can get caught up in here & it revolves around the un-regenerate's ability to believe. Since man is "dead" in trespasses & sins, do they have to be born again so that they *can* believe? Or is there a work of God in them that falls just short of conversion that *enables* a man to believe so that he can be born again? It's no small debate among scholars.

Those who say that a man must be regenerated in order to believe will often times point to this passage to underscore their position saying that a dead man can't believe & if we're dead in sin, then how can we believe? One who's dead can't believe anything...

<sup>1</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Ro 5:12]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But listen, to say that one who is unredeemed is exactly like a dead man in every aspect of the word is to press the illustration too far. Why do I say that? Because it's true that a dead man can't believe. Yet it's also true that a dead man can't sin... He can't do *anything*. & "Death" isn't the only way that the bible describes man's condition outside of Christ.

The Bible uses *many* different pictures to describe the state of the unsaved man. The bible refers to the unsaved as · Blind (2 Corinthians 4:3-4) · A slave to sin (Romans 6:17) · A lover of darkness (John 3:19-20) · Sick (Mark 2:17) · Lost (Luke 15) · An alien, a stranger, a foreigner (Ephesians 2:12, 2:19) · A child of wrath (Ephesians 2:3) · Under the power of darkness (Colossians 1:13). All of these are NT phrases attached to the unregenerate/unsaved man.

So, in some ways the unregenerate man is dead; in other ways he's not. In some ways he's blind, he's lost, he's a slave to sin... Therefore, it's valid to appeal to all men everywhere to *believe*. Jesus did, Paul the apostle did (as did all the other apostles). To repent & believe is the appeal of the gospel isn't it? Turn from your sin, believe in the Lord J.C. & you will be saved... **Now, we realize that it's the convicting work of the Holy Spirit drawing near to an individual that pricks the conscience & shows them their need. I can't do that, you can't do that. Only God can do that, however it's the responsibility of the individual to believe nonetheless.**

It's true that man is dead in trespasses & sins. As far as God is concerned that's the spiritual state of every man everywhere outside of Christ. We don't need resuscitation, we need resurrection & that to is the work of God in our lives. But to say that man has to be born again in order to believe seems to me to press the picture too far w/in the overarching context of the entire counsel of the word of God.

**Now; I should point out before we press on the fact that there's a difference between "trespasses" & "sins". A trespass is a line that I knowingly, willfully press beyond. I know I shouldn't do it, I do it anyway. There's the sign, "no hunting", but I saw a giant buck cross the field & enter that patch of timber, so I take my chances & head on in. I've "trespassed".**

To "sin" is to miss the mark. Here's the target, I take aim, I'm trying to hit the bullseye but I fall short. I didn't meet the mark of perfection, I've "sinned". Trespasses points to man's rebellion, sin speaks of man's failure. Be it active, or passive, through commission or omission (doing wrong, or not doing right), we have rebelled *against* God & failed to meet the perfectly righteous standards *of* God. Not just once or twice, it was our

practiced pattern outside of Christ. That's what he's pointing to as he describes our life outside of Christ in Vs 2-3. Dead in trespasses & sins, notice.

### Vs 2-3

This is the biblical description of your life before you were saved. Walking (or living, just sort of meandering) according to the course of this world. The pathway you traversed was the course of this world. You just sorta went w/the flow of whatever the spirit of the age was, however the culture developed. You were just kinda floating down the stream of life. You might envision a balloon just floating through the sky, whichever way the wind blows, that's the way it goes.

You were just going along w/the spirit of the times, the attitude of the age in which you lived, which is orchestrated & facilitated (notice) by the "prince of the power of the air". Who is the prince of the power of the air? It's Satan. The word "air" here refers to the spiritual realm through which he facilitates & orchestrates the system of this present world. **Now when we speak of the "world" it's not necessarily a reference to this physical planet so much as it is the invisible, worldwide system that is bent on rebellion against God. That system is directed by Satan, it sends temptations your way, contentions, frustrations, things that seek to lead you in ways counter to Christ.** That's why John exhorted us in his epistle, *"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world."*<sup>2</sup>

It's when you were made alive in Christ that though you were *in* the world, you were no longer *of* the world because Jesus calls us *out* of the world. I think it's important to note the phrase in Vs 4, "in which you *once walked*". **The words "once walked" indicate a change don't they? A dead man feels fine & dandy in his coffin; but if he were to be made alive again, he would instantly feel suffocated & the need for a new environment. He wouldn't want to remain there.**

In the same way when we were spiritually dead we felt just fine in trespasses & sins, but having been made alive in Christ there's now a sense of urgency to leave those things behind & live in an altogether different environment. **Perhaps you recall Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. He was fine in his grave clothes so long as he was dead. But once he'd been made alive his urge was to be free of them & live in a manner that reflected life, not death. He left the graveyard & found fellowship in the presence of Jesus.**

<sup>2</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (1 Jn 2:15-16). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

So, this world system is satanically charged, it's bent on rebellion against God & is still very much active in the "sons of disobedience". This is another description of the unsaved, they're the "sons of disobedience". You see, being "dead" spiritually doesn't mean we're irresponsive to influence socially, or morally, or politically or emotionally that's rooted satanically in the spiritual realm. In sin we're *very* responsive to Satan's guidance...

Now again, that doesn't mean everyone is sitting around on pentagrams w/candles actively seeking satanic strategies by which to rebel *against* or lead people away from *God*. The truth of the matter is that we (as humanity) only have 1 of 2 choices. We're either for God or against Him. We're either light or darkness, children of God, or children of the devil. Biblically speaking there is no neutral position. If you're not governed of God you're under the influence (albeit for most unwittingly/unknowingly) of the prince of the power of the air who sets in motion the course (the culture & general attitude) of this world. John said that like this, "*...the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.*"<sup>3</sup>

They are "sons of disobedience". The idea is of one who is distinctly disobedient, consciously content to stand in opposition to God. They're not interested in the things of God, they're satisfied in being active in things God warns against.

But check it out, the indictment goes farther still. Not only are the unregenerate (unredeemed, unbelieving) following in the flow of the world's system & under the sway of satanic influence, they *love* to have it so! We've *all* been there, look at Vs 3.

### Vs 3

Like it or not, we're all born rightfully deserving God's wrath! We were born with a "sin nature" (remember Adam couldn't give what he no longer had). Now, I'm not suggesting that babies who pass away don't go to heaven. We absolutely believe they do & believe we can support that position scripturally (God is good, He is gracious, He is merciful). When David's child died he said, "I know that the child won't return to me, but I will go to him." 2 Sam 12:23

What we're saying here & seeing here is that we're still born spiritually (dead in trespasses & sins). Remember this Vs, "*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.*"<sup>4</sup> Sin is present at the moment of conception. We're not victims of society, sin isn't simply something that's impressed upon us socially. It's woven into the fabric of our nature. We are therefore *by nature* children of wrath.

<sup>3</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (1 Jn 5:19). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>4</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ps 51:5). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

“We *all* once conducted ourselves *in the lusts of our flesh*” ... Of course, when we speak of the flesh scripturally we’re not talking about skin, & muscle fiber, but that inner nature that has an inherent bent toward sin... & This is how we prove that we’re sons of disobedience, through sinful conduct, embracing the lusts of the flesh. They might even be legitimate desires, but they’re exaggerated to the point of perversion, going beyond their intended context.

& Just like when we say that the world is under satanic influence that, that doesn’t mean they’re all actively pursuing a satanic agenda. Even so to fulfill the lusts of the flesh doesn’t necessary imply some grossly perverted carnality. It may surface in the seeming noble pursuit of a moral cause, but the intent behind it is to be recognized & honored of man (it’s prideful, it’s fleshly). But even beyond that, the bible doesn’t in any way imply that the unsaved is incapable of morally good acts, that simply wouldn’t be true. But rather that no one is capable of doing anything to merit salvation or somehow meet God’s standard of perfection.

Notice Paul speaks of fulfilling the desires of the flesh “and of the mind”, suggesting that even the rationale of the unbeliever is perverted, or twisted, not computing along godly lines. In Ch 1 of the book of Romans Paul calls it a “reprobate mind”. Again, the idea is that the whole of our person is contaminated by sin.

**Ladies and Gentlemen: this is a staggering indictment & incredible description of the human condition apart from J.C. . In bondage to the world, the devil & the flesh. Dead in sin, influenced by Satan, controlled by lust... which adds up to one more inescapable reality; under God’s wrath...**

Look at what Paul says here. He says that we were by nature *children* of wrath. Now I touched on this earlier. The bible knows nothing of the idea that all of mankind are “children of God” w/the exception perhaps of the fact that He is our common Creator. Jesus called the Pharisees a brood of vipers (a family of snakes) & said that their father was the Devil (Jn 8:44)!

Here Paul says makes a similar correlation of the unbelieving, unregenerate society in general saying that they’re children of wrath... (That is the righteous wrath of God that the unbeliever resides under). Many times when we think of what it means to be saved we think of being saved from sin (& that’s valid), we think of being saved from the power of Satan (& that’s true as well). We think of being saved from hell (from eternal separation from God). But there’s something else we need to be saved from that we don’t often stop to consider.

We need salvation from the righteous wrath of God that we so justifiably deserve as willful rebellious sinners against Him!

Now, when we speak of being saved from God's wrath, let's not misunderstand so as to think that God is against you. He's not. It's true that He must deal justly/righteously w/sin. But let's not forget that *He's* the One who provided the means that we might *be saved* from His wrath! But unless you accept it... you are (by nature) a child of wrath.

Well this is quite the summation is it not? The picture that's been painted by these 1<sup>st</sup> 3 Vs is one that is dark. It's a picture of spiritual death, of willful disobedience & rebellion against God, of people who are rightful targets of the *wrath* of God. **The moment we're born, death goes to work in us physically, we're still born spiritually, on a course to die eternally & there's nothing we can do to save ourselves...** Look at Vs 4 (1<sup>st</sup> 2 words).

#### Vs 4

"But God..." Ladies & Gentlemen we're gonna stop right here on the edge of this cliff ☺! These 2 words are 2 of the greatest words (if not *the* greatest words in your bible). They signal God's intervention into our hopeless, sinful condition. **There's a reason that diamonds are often displayed against the contrast of black velvet. Because that's where they shine the most beautifully. Paul has laid out the black background & now he's preparing to display the beautiful diamond of God's grace.**

These words "but God" break through our hopeless condition like a ray of light, shattering the darkness & we'll see that... next time.

#### Prayer Points:

Father we thank You that You love us. That You deal directly & honestly with us that we might understand who *we're not* & who You are. Magnify Your grace in our lives. Having rescued us from the course of this world, satanic strongholds, the bondage of our flesh & even Your justifiable wrath. Help us to lead lives set apart to You, that bring honor & glory to You...the light of the world, the salt of the earth.

I want you to know that God has loved you w/an everlasting love. He gave His only begotten Son for you & for me. He suffered the wrath of God in our place, dying so that we might live through faith in Him. If you've not surrendered to Him, God is calling you today. I'm encouraging you to respond to the unction of God upon your heart & believe on the Lord J.C.