

EPHESIANS 2:3
The Wonderful Work of Salvation
Message 3
Nov. 6/2011

INTRO: We are in Ephesians 2:3 tonight. Let me read the passage once more from chapter 1:22-2:3, as I see the flow of it. "And He (God) put all things under His (Christ's) feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all, even you who were dead in trespasses and sins, 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, 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 others!"

In our last message we discussed the meaning of the phrase, "...the course (or age) of this world...". Then we considered the prince of the power of the air. So, let me read a brief portion of the quote I gave you from the commentator John Gill on why the devil is called the prince of the power of the air, "...because he is the prince of that posse of devils, the principalities and powers of darkness, that have their dwelling in the air; hence the air, encompassing the whole earth, stands for the kingdom of Satan all the world over..." We saw that the last of the seven bowls of the wrath of God was poured out on the air. That is tremendously significant, because just before that an unclean spirit comes out of the mouth of the devil, the god of this world; and one out of the mouth of the antichrist, the leader of the secular world; and one out of the mouth of the false prophet, the leader of the religious world.

Now what I failed to mention to you last message is that the words in both Hebrew and Greek for spirit, wind and breath are all the same. Wind and breath are moving air, and there is the word for spirit. And so this seventh angel poured out his bowl on the air, signifying with it, I think, the whole demonic realm.

Now we are in Ephesians 2:3. Paul has told them in verse 2 why they were dead in trespasses and sins as verse 1 said they were before they were saved. They had walked according to the age of this world. They had followed the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that works in all the sons

of unbelief. But Paul will now say something that is about equal to Romans 3:21, which says, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Since they had followed the devil, Paul now says, "...among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, just as the others."

The task before us tonight is to expose the meaning of this verse, and so, let us go to it.

b) The cause of this death (2:2-3)

(1) Their life conduct (2)

We are still under the topic of the cause of this death. Last message we saw that the cause was their life conduct before they were saved (2:2). Now we will see that their life conduct was the same as that of everybody else who was ever born.

(2) The universal life conduct
(3)

-the conduct

So, we want to consider the next point I have titled, 'The universal life conduct.' We will begin with the words, "...among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of the flesh and of the mind..." It was not true of these Ephesians alone that they walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air. No, Paul now says, "...among whom also we all once conducted ourselves..." You see, we have here a universal problem. Now I ask you a question. When Paul says, "...among whom also WE all..." Whom

is he talking about by the pronoun 'we'? Then in the end of the verse he says, "...just as the others" (read the whole verse). Well, there is no question to me that he is talking about the Jews as 'we' and the Gentiles as 'the others'. What Paul is saying is that we, as Jews, also found ourselves in this conduct or misconduct. In short, the whole world is guilty of sin before God! So Romans 3:23 says, "...for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

But though Jew and Gentile all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, we must not say there is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile. Romans 1 demonstrates very clearly that the whole Gentile world is under sin. Romans 2, then just as clearly shows the whole Jewish world to be under sin. And Romans 3 begins with a very important question and keeps us from a very important mistake. Now don't turn to Romans 3 yet. Let me ask you this question from Romans 3:1: "What advantage then has the Jew, or what profit is there of circumcision?" Now when you read that Jew and Gentile both are sinners, the natural Gentile response is: There is no advantage to being a Jew, or to circumcision.

And now I want you to go to Romans 3 to see Paul's answer to his own question (read). Wow! Let that go down good and deep and grow a soft spot in your heart for the Jew. But as far as being sinners is concerned, Paul now

identifies himself and the Jews with the Gentiles in that they are all sinners.

So, when Paul says, "...among whom..." in verse 3, he is referring to the sons of unbelief. And he says, "Even we Jews all conducted ourselves among the sons of disobedience once, in the lusts of the flesh..." etc...

So let us take a moment for the word translated 'conducted' or the KJV word, 'we had our conversation'. The original word is *anastrepho*. Like most good Greek words it is made up of two words, *ana*=back, and *strepho*=to turn. The word literally means 'to turn back'. But this word came to speak of one's behavior or conduct. The KJV translates it as 'conversation'. That English word came from the word 'converse' which literally meant to be turned and then came to speak of one's manner of life, which is the meaning of the old English word 'conversation'. So it basically refers to a way of life or conduct.

-the lust of the flesh

So our text says, "...among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh..." Now let me clarify two things with regard to the lust of the flesh. The original word for lust is 'epithumia'. It's root goes back to *thuw*, to kill. Which in turn becomes *thumos*, anger, and then by adding the preposition *epi* to it, it becomes

epithumia. It is used 38 times in the NT and usually it is translated as lust or concupiscence, which are about the same thing, and that is evil desire. But three times it is translated desire and it can be used in a good sense. When it came to the last Passover, Jesus said that with desire He had desired to have this meal with His disciples. That is the same word. In our passage, when it speaks of the desires of the flesh, it speaks of it in a negative sense and so it is translated 'lust'.

Now we note that it is the desires or lusts of the flesh. Now the word *sarx*, or flesh literally means *flesh* as we would use it. But it can also stand for what we call the sin nature, since it works largely through the corrupted desires of the flesh. It is used in this sense in Romans 7:18 which says, "For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) nothing good dwells..." Romans 8:8 says, "So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God." The flesh is directly opposed to faith. So Scripture says that without faith it is impossible to please God. But in Romans 7:18 it said that those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

In verse 2 Paul spoke of the sons of disobedience. The root word of the word translated disobedience is *peithw*. That is also the root word of the word *to believe*. It basically means to persuade. The sons of disobedience are un-

persuadable sons. That is a sign of the flesh. The sons of God are persuadable. That leads to faith. So the works of the flesh and of faith are exact opposites.

So, how did we all once conduct ourselves? What was our manner of life? It was in the evil desires of the flesh. And what did we do with those desires? We fulfilled them! The word here is *poiew*, meaning literally we 'did' them. Martin Luther says, "...und taten dem Willen des Fleishes..."

Now, while I have Luther's translation before us, let me point out as well that he says, 'dem Willen des Fleishes...' not the *desires* of the flesh as our Bibles read, but the will of the flesh. Now the word translated 'desires' of the flesh is the word 'theleemata'. It is the wills, or the wishes of the flesh. It is in the plural. The flesh does not have a single will or wish. It has myriads of wishes. You see, the sin nature has many wills or wishes. It wishes for many things, that are evil. And when we are unsaved we do not have the power to master the wishes of the flesh, so we cave in to them. We are carried by them. We are impotent to them.

-the will of the mind

Now these things we did before we were saved were not only fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, but they were also doing the will of the mind. It is important that we deal with the word translated 'mind' here. In

the original it is the word
dianoia.

Let me explain what I see is in view in this word. Man is made up of three basic parts; body, soul and spirit. And as I see it, the soul is that part of man where, what the Bible calls the 'heart' is. It is also where the 'self' is. And this thing called the heart, is what we in English call the mind. Neither the Hebrew OT nor the Greek NT have a word for mind. In the OT, various words like soul and life and spirit have been translated mind. But there is no word for mind in the OT. The NT does the same.

To picture the mind for us in the OT and in some places in the NT as well, the word heart is used. So it says, "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." But you and I know a man does not think in his heart. He thinks in his mind. Now the word 'heart' is used to show us the vital center of the soul. As the heart is the vital center in the body, so the 'heart' or mind is the vital center of the soul.

Now since the soul and spirit of man are non-material, to teach us these parts of man, God uses the picture of the tabernacle. One of the many purposes of the tabernacle is to picture the non-material part of man and let us know how it works.

So the tabernacle has three parts, corresponding to body soul and spirit. The body, like the tabernacle building, is the

material part of man. The holy place pictures, I believe, the soul. The holy of holies pictures the spirit.

We often quote the Scripture, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps. 139:14). We know that is true of the body. The more scientists find, the more true this statement becomes to us. But we are usually talking about the body. But I propose to you that this statement is true of the whole of man, including soul and spirit.

Now I want you to turn to Hebrews 4:12 (read). I have told some of you before but let me repeat for it was most instructive to me. I was teaching this verse in Bible School one time. And I said, "I do not know about the joints and the marrow, and the thoughts and intents, but I do know what this teaches about the soul and the spirit. What it does not mean is that the word of God divides between the soul and the spirit. But because of the genetives used in the Greek it means the Word of God can divide the soul into its parts and the spirit into its parts. In the body, we can do this with body parts. In the spiritual aspects of man, God can do that with the soul and spirit as well.

In this class was a male nurse. And he said, "Well I don't know about the soul and spirit or thoughts and intents, but I do know about the joints and marrow. The joints and marrow can be divided into their parts as

well!"

In my view, I have concluded that the entity the Bible calls the heart, like loving God with all our heart, is that which we call the mind, and it too has its parts. I have not time to show you all my studies and the words related to it but let me show you a few [open soul part and show various parts].

Now all of that to say this. In our verse, when it says we fulfilled the desires of the mind, it is the word 'dianoia'. It comes from the word 'nous', the storage part of the mind. And the word translated 'mind' in this passage is plural. It does not mean 'minds' plural. A dianoia is a thought thought through. When the Bible says we are to love God with all our mind in Matthew 22:37, the word is 'dianoia', the same one used in our text here. It is a thinking through. When information is pulled back into memory and thought through in the phreen, we have a dianoia happening. It is here we are to love God. It is here that we fulfill the desires of the flesh, when we do not love God. Our 'thinking throughs' are to be taken up with God, not the desires of the flesh.

So, to conclude our discussion on fulfilling the wishes of the mind, dianoeemata, do you want to know how much you love God? See what thoughts you think when your mind is idle! You see, in our text the word translated 'mind' is in the plural. It is not our

minds, plural, but our thinking throughs, or thoughts. It is when we pull things out of the storage part of the mind and think them through. If we had one gauge that showed the thinkings through that we do when we are idle and showed what percentage of thoughts are related to God and what percentage are related to others things, we would have a gauge to show how much we love God! This is where it shows up. This is where worldliness and all other such things show up too.

-the sons of wrath

Now let us go to the last part of verse 3, which says, "...among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of the flesh and of the mind..." And Paul now adds this, "...and were by nature the children of wrath, just as the others." When one is among the lost and fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and of the mind, one is among the children of wrath.

Now the close of verse 2 spoke of the 'sons' of disobedience. The KJV has it as the 'children' of disobedience. The original word is not *children* but *sons*. But now in verse 3, when it speaks of the lost as children of wrath, it is the word 'children', *teknon*.

Now the word 'wrath' is in the genitive case. Two of the major modern Greek tools I have, "The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key To The Greek NT" and book, "Greek Grammar Beyond The Basics" say that this could be translated,

"children destined for wrath."
Charles Ryrie says this is a difficult Hebraism to translate but which means 'deserving of wrath.' As sons, born to disobedience or unbelief, we were children destined for wrath or deserving of wrath.

Now comes a major question, one I have pondered for a very long time and over the years I have come to some conclusions on. What wrath is this talking about? (Open for questions?) What is this wrath that the sons of unbelief are destined for? Well, my first understanding, which lasted for some years, was that this wrath spoke of hell.

But I do not find that the Bible ever speaks of hell as the place of wrath. What I do find is that it speaks of Daniel's 70th week. This 70th week is called the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7). Daniel 12:1 says of this time, "And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, *Even* to that time." But turn with me to Revelation 6 (read 14-17). Look at Revelation 14 (read 8, 10, 19). Look at Revelation 15 (read 1, 7). Look at 16 (read 1, 19).

So, for a good number of years I held the view that this refers to the tribulation time of the future. The tribulation time is sometimes likened to a woman in birth pangs. We know that these get worse and worse once that time begins. The tribulation will be like that. And by the mid point of the tribulation, the

strong pangs will set in.

In our last message on Ephesians 2 we spent a little time in Revelation 16. We talked about the seventh vial being poured out on the air. But today we have found in Revelation 16 and other passages in Revelation that the tribulation is the time of the pouring out of God's wrath. These bowls that are poured out are the bowls of the 'wrath of God.' This is not hell. This is the tribulation. Study these seven bowls of God's wrath through and you will come away with one horrifying picture.

Now let me show you something else. Go with me to Daniel 9 (read 24-27). It is very important to note that these 70 weeks are determined on Israel and Jerusalem. Now let me show you on a time chart where these 70 weeks started. From verse 25 we learn that they start from the command to restore and build Jerusalem. That is about 444 BC (show on time line). Then from the same verse we learn that 69 of these weeks will take us until Messiah the Prince. That Hebrew word translated 'Messiah' is the Greek word 'Christos'. That is Christ. That uses 69 of the 70 weeks. Jesus was born somewhere in the 65th week. He started His ministry just over 2 years or just over 3 years, depending on the length one views His ministry to have been, before the end of the 69th week. I see His ministry as just over 2 years, not just over 3 years as most believe.

Now note in Daniel 9:26, that after the 62 weeks, that is the 7 + 62 weeks, which is 69, Messiah shall be cut off. That refers to the death of Christ. So Jesus dies right at the end of the 69th week.

The 70th week is the time of God's wrath. So now, let us go to Matthew 3. In this chapter we have the preaching of John the Baptist. He started preaching just before Jesus did and so he preached just 3-4 years before the end of the 69th week. And I want you to notice what he preached (read Matthew 3:1-12).

Now notice that in verse 7, John says to the Pharisees and Saducees, "Brood of vipers! Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" That wrath to come was only 3-4 years away! That is what made John's preaching so very urgent. That is why he did not marry or live in a luxurious house. He had a very urgent message. The wrath of God, the time of Jacob's trouble was about to come upon them!

But now let me show you something. At the end of the 69th week, Jesus died, just as Daniel had prophesied. And right there the 70th week should have started, the wrath of God, the wrath we are talking about in Ephesians 2:3 as I understand it. But something incredible happened. God's time clock of Daniel's 70th week stopped! And the mysteries of the kingdom Jesus preached about in the parables of Matthew 13 started.

This is the same mystery Paul revealed in the third chapter of Ephesians! It is the mystery of the Church age!

So, let me show you from a time chart that which I call the slide rule of the 70th week. (Show from slide rule of 70th week and explain.)

Now let me show you this time of wrath from the perspective of the Church age. (Show where we are.) You see, the unbeliever, the disobedient, the unpersuadable are children destined for wrath. And that wrath lies right there before us. When the time is right, that slide rule will stop, and this world will enter the 70th week of Daniel.

But I want to show you something I find very encouraging. Turn with me to 2 Thessalonians. (read read 6-10). When Paul brought the Gospel to Thessalonica, he had taught them clearly that Christ's coming was soon and imminent. He had also taught them that the wrath of God was right there before them, and he had also taught them that they would be delivered from it! And these Thessalonians were waiting for Jesus to return. They were not waiting for the wrath to come. They were waiting for the One Who delivers us from the wrath to come.

So, in chapter 4 of this book, Paul clarifies some things the Thessalonians had misunderstood about the coming of Christ for them. He clarifies those things

for them (read 4:13-18). Having clarified this, he then informs them a little further in chapter 5. So let us read verses 1-9a (read). God did not appoint the believer in the Church age to this time of God's wrath! But He did appoint the believer to salvation, and that, in the context is salvation from the coming wrath!

Now I want you to notice in Ephesians 2:3, that the unbeliever is a child of wrath or destined for wrath. Let us turn to one last Scripture in John 3 (read 36). The wrath of God hangs over the head of every unbeliever. When God's time clock for the Jew starts ticking again, this unbeliever will enter the time of God's wrath! It is imminent. It will happen just any time now!

CONCL: And so, let us conclude on Ephesians 2:3. What have we seen? We have seen that all have sinned and conducted their lives in the lusts of the flesh and in the desires of their thoughts. We said the lusts of the flesh speaks of the desires of the sin nature which works through our flesh. That is why Paul breaks out like this at the end of Romans 7, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" And then he heaves a tremendous sigh of relief and finishes like this, "I thank God -- through Jesus Christ our Lord!" There is the deliverance, and only there!

And then we learned that all unbelievers are children destined for wrath. This wrath I held, is the tribulation time, the 70th week of Daniel. This wrath is what John the Baptist referred to when he said to the Pharisees and Saducees, "Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" John was preaching about this time just a few short years before they should have started. And now, every day, the wrath of God hangs over the heads of this lost, sinful, wicked world. But the believer is delivered from this

wrath, and like the Thessalonian believers, he should be anxiously awaiting Christ's return who also delivers us from this wrath to come! Glory be to God!