

“Our Former Life – Part 1”  
Ephesians 2:1-3  
(Preached at Trinity, March 2, 2014)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Chapter 1** Paul has declared the wonder of God's work of grace in the life of His elect people. In **Verse 3** Paul announced the glorious spiritual blessings God has planned for His elect people and then spends the next 11 verses writing about these blessings. **Verses 3-14** are one single sentence in the Greek where Paul speaks of election and adoption, of redemption and forgiveness of sin, of Divine illumination and of our glorious inheritance and of the Holy Spirit who is the down payment of our inheritance.
2. In **Verses 18-21** Paul prayed that these Ephesian Christians would increase in their sense of awe over God's glorious work in their redemption.
  - That they might have greater insight into the hope of their calling
  - That they might have greater understanding of the riches of their inheritance
  - That they might have greater understanding of the greatness of God's power toward those who believe.
3. The same power that raised Christ from the dead has raised His people from death unto life. In **Verses 19-21** Paul describes it as: "the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might <sup>20</sup> which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion"
4. Now after describing the glorious work of God in our salvation we transition to **Chapter 2** and Paul describes what we were formerly. Sin has affected every part of the human being. It has affected his body, his mind, his will and his conscience. We were dead in our trespasses and sins. Nothing but a powerful raising from the dead will bring us out of this terrible state.
5. The grammar here is a bit difficult. **Verses 1-7** are a single sentence in the Greek. And **Verse 1** contains no subject or verb. You have to have **Verse 5** to tie it all together. We were dead but now we have been made alive.  
By describing where we came from we are able to fully comprehend the fullness of God's power and grace in our redemption. God has brought about an amazing transformation. In the first three verses Paul describes our former condition in four ways:
  - I. We were spiritually dead – **Verse 1**
  - II. We walked according to the course of this world – **Verse 2**
  - III. We were governed by the desires of our flesh – **Verse 3a**
  - IV. We were under the wrath of God – **Verse 3b**
6. This week we'll focus upon the first two of these descriptions of our former condition before God brought about His amazing work of grace.

I. We were spiritually dead – **Verse 1**

- A. God created human beings as amazing creatures
1. We were created in the image of God
    - a. We had the ability to reflect Him – to reflect His holiness, to reflect His wisdom. He gave us dominion over the earth to manage it.
    - b. We had the ability to commune with Him, to know Him, to enjoy Him.
  2. God entered into covenant with Adam  
**Genesis 2:16-17 NAU** - "The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; <sup>17</sup> but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."
  3. But Adam did not keep the covenant; he sinned and he died. He didn't die physically immediately but he became mortal.  
 But Adam immediately died spiritually
- B. Every human being since Adam has been born spiritually dead
1. The entertainment industry today has an infatuation with Zombies—zombie movies, TV shows, video games, and on and on. A zombie is the sick creation of a horror movie; a person who has died but is walking around—gruesome and decaying.
  2. This actually describes the reality of humanity. We are born walking corpses. Although alive physically, we are spiritually dead.
  3. The moment Adam sinned he died spiritually.  
 What was the result of this spiritual death?
- C. He became alienated from God, the source of true life.  
**Ephesians 4:18 NAU** - "being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart"
1. He lost the ability to know God. He no longer recognized the goodness of God or His glory.
  2. He lost the ability to commune with God. He now feared God and saw Him as an obstacle to his well-being.
  3. And he had no way of restoring what he had lost. He was dead to God and to the spiritual life he once enjoyed. He wasn't merely sick or weak where he might limp back to God. He was dead, a corpse in full decay
  4. *1689 London Confession* – Chapter 9 – *Of Free Will*  
 "Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto."
  5. Martin Luther referred to this as the "bondage of the will."
    - a. This doesn't mean the sinner doesn't do what he *wants* to do – he has volitional freedom. In fact he *does* do what he wants to do. But what he wants to do most is satisfy his own desires.
    - b. The sinner always makes the wrong choices or he makes them with the wrong motives
    - c. He has no ability to please God, even by his best efforts.

- D. He fell in love with his sin - "you were dead in your trespasses and sins"
1. His entire will was now predisposed towards sin and predisposed away from God.  
**John 3:19 KJV** - "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."
  2. Notice in **Verse 2** the lost man is a part of a fallen race referred to as "the sons of disobedience." We are rebels by nature.
  3. This doesn't mean that the lost man lacks the ability towards any moral good. Lost people can be very virtuous. They can show great acts of kindness. They can selflessly serve others. But the lost man's greatest desire is service to self. Although he is capable of outward good he has no ability towards spiritual good.
  4. He has no desire for the spiritual things that point to God. His proud heart stops him from humbling himself and confessing his sins before God.
- E. This spiritual death is universal among all of humanity
1. Paul is saying to the Christian, "This is what you were."  
"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins"
  2. Adam acquired a sinful nature and we were born with this same nature.
  3. I also need to point out again Paul's continuing use of the pronouns "You" and "We." I've pointed out that one of the themes in Ephesians is the union of Jews and Gentiles.  
**Verses 1-2** – "You"  
**Verse 3** – "We too . . ."  
**Verses 4-6** – "Us" – both Jews and Gentiles – God's elect people; the true Israel of God.  
**Verses 11-22** – All division removed. Both Jews and Gentiles brought together as one.
3. We need a new life. Paul is said in 1:20 regarding Christ that God "raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*"  
Chapter 2:1 begins literally, "And you being dead. . ." Paul's point is that we too have been raised from the dead.
- II. We walked according to the course of this world – **Verse 2**  
"in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world"
- A. The "course of this world" describes the fullness of this fallen world
1. The word for "course" is αἰών – Paul is talking about the "age" of this world—this age in contrast with the age to come.
  2. Human beings are born into this world - this present age, and it consumes them. The lost man truly adores this world.
  3. The people of this world become a part of the collective voice of a world without God.
  4. There is a collective way of thinking – the mindset of this world  
**Lloyd-Jones** – "They think as the world thinks. They take their opinions ready-made from their favorite newspaper. Their very appearance is controlled by the world and its changing fashions. They all conform; it must be done; they dare not disobey; they are afraid of the consequences."

- B. What is the course of this world?
1. It is a mindset consumed by the things of this world where all attention is spent on earthly things – earthly goods, earthly pleasures, earthly power, earthly advancement, earthly opinion.  
The love of this world squeezes out God.  
**1 John 2:15 NAU** - "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."
  2. It is a world that denies God's right to rule. It is a world void of moral absolutes where everyone does that which is right in their own eyes.  
We see this clearly in the current advance of the homosexual agenda. They have declared it to be a moral good.
  3. It is a mindset that lives chiefly for today without regard to eternal matters  
It is this mindset that lives only for the present  
It is this mindset that places the satisfaction of the flesh as the highest goal
  4. It is a course that is completely deluded by the lies of Satan  
"according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience."
- C. Satan is described as the god of this world
1. This world is the domain of Satan  
**Job 1:7** – "And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it."  
**2 Corinthians 4:3-4** – "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."
  2. Satan has influence over this world's opinions, aims, goals, values. He influences this world's ethics, education, politics, philosophy, sociology and economics.
    - a. Notice the text. Many translations read as if the "prince of the power of the air" and the "spirit that is now working" are two synonymous expressions to describe Satan. Many commentators do the same. Hendriksen – "The spirit is Satan who is busily engaged in the hearts and lives of wicked people."  
This isn't really consistent with the grammar.
    - b. The NASB is more accurate here. The word "prince" is in the accusative case – direct object, while the word "spirit" is in the genitive case just like the words "power of the air."
    - c. In other words Satan has reign over the spirit now at work in the sons of disobedience. He is responsible for the spirit of the age. He controls the mindset of this world.
  3. We have to understand that Satan is under God's absolute authority. But God has given fallen humanity over to their depraved lusts and He has given them over to the jurisdiction of Satan.  
**Romans 1:28 NAU** - "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper"

4. We can see this jurisdiction of Satan in Paul's description of church discipline:  
**1 Corinthians 5:5 NAU** - "*I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*"

D. Satan demonstrated his possession of this world/age in the wilderness temptation  
**Matthew 4:8-9 NAU** - "Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; <sup>9</sup> and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me."

**Luke 4:6 NAU** - "And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish."

1. Satan is allowed to lie and deceive the lost man in the darkness of his mind. He has no ability to see the lie. Satan meets little resistance
2. All of humanity has been taken captive by Satan  
 Man is simply unable to resist the most powerful creature God has ever created.  
 He walks, "according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." (Eph 2:2)
3. Paul instructed Pastor Timothy in the work of the ministry  
**2 Timothy 2:24-1 NAU** - "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, <sup>25</sup> with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, <sup>26</sup> and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. "
4. Satan is called the "father of lies" – he deludes humanity  
 How are lost men deceived? What is the nature of their ignorance?
  - a. They are deceived by the false treasures of his kingdom described as "the world" in Scripture
  - b. The lost man is deceived into loving this world of darkness and have made it their home. They have no defenses against the schemes and cunning devices of Satan.

#### Conclusion:

1. Paul is saying this is what you were. Do you understand the power now working in you?
2. Do you understand just how great God's grace is in you? Does this bring you to great choruses of praise?