

# DEAD IN SINS

## Ephesians 2.1, Message 10: In time past we were dead in sins.

**Theme:** Remember your need for God to intervene and change you—remember you were dead!

### Ephesians 2: Remember how God changed you in Christ.

- After reminding us of our new beginning in Christ (Eph 1), Paul takes a step back in time and reminds us of the change God wrought in us when He saved us.
- Yes, we have a new beginning in Christ, but that means that God had to change us in order to give us that new beginning.
- And we should never forget where we came from; we should never forget what God saved us from.

### Ephesians 2 can be divided naturally in two parts:

1. (v1-10) Paul speaks of how God changed us: From death to life.
  - a) (v1-3) He shows us our need first: Why did God have to change us?
  - b) (v4-7) He then shows us the change: What did God do, in Christ?
  - c) (v8-9) Next he shows us how that change happened: How did God do it?
  - d) (v10) Finally, he shows us the results of the change: For what purpose did God do it?
2. (v11-22) Paul goes back and speaks of the same change, but from a different perspective: From being "far off" to being "made nigh" in Christ.
  - a) (v11-12) The need for change: Why did God have to change us?
  - b) (v13) The change: (v13: "But now..." cf. v4: "But God...") What did God do, in Christ?
  - c) (v14-18) How the change happened: How did God make us "nigh" to Himself?
  - d) (v19-22) The results of the change: For what purpose did God do all this?

### In this message we are going to start looking at our need for God to intervene and change us.

- If we do not understand our need, we will never understand the remedy.
  - ✓ If we do not understand the extent of our need (how great it really is), then we will never understand the extent to which went to save us.
  - ✓ When the debt seems little, the pardon offered by God will seem the same. But, when we understand what we were, what we have done, and from where God has brought us... we can appreciate more.
- Sin is the greatest evil and therefore calls for the greatest hatred and the greatest punishment.
  - ✓ This is where Paul starts in Ephesians 2: We were born in sin and we have sinned, therefore in time past (before knowing Christ), we were the the objects of God's hatred and punishment.
  - ✓ Yet God in Christ took the greatest evil and through the greatest sacrifice brought forth the greatest good: His glory in our salvation.

### I cannot but think again of the state of the modern church:

- It seems that the state in which we see most church-goers today (most are apathetic, indifferent, selfish, self-centered, entertainment-oriented fun-seekers) is because most today do not understand the basic, Gospel truths that Paul expounds in Ephesians 2.
- We don't appreciate the work of Christ because we don't understand what He did for us. And we don't understand what He did for us because we have no grasp on how wicked and evil we were.

- And when we have a small view of what Christ has done for us, then our lives reflect that smallness.
- Listen to this quote by Puritan Samuel Bolton (speaking to Christ): "*Thou art my life, I am Thy death. Thou my righteousness, I Thy sin. Thou my heaven, I Thy hell. Thou my riches, I Thy poverty.*"
  - ✓ And then he concludes his thoughts like this: "Oh, how are you bound to Christ, Who has borne sin!"
  - ✓ You see, if we do not understand sin (where Paul starts in Ephesians 2), we will never understand the debt we owe Him—we will never be compelled by His love and sacrifice to serve Him.
  - ✓ But, when we begin to grasp the truths of the Gospel (what God did for us in Christ!), we will serve the Lord with great love, devotion, and zeal for the rest of our days.

## **Ephesians 2 is a chapter about our "time past" (v2, 11)... "but God" (v4)... "but now in Christ..." (v13)**

- Ephesians 2 is about how God changed us in Christ. We need to understand that.
- So, where do we start? (v1) We start from our beginning: Death. Salvation brings us life (*quicken* means to make alive) and that means we were dead before God saved us.

### **I. The Implicit Quickening in the Italics: Death!**

#### **A. In the King James Bible you will see that the phrase "*hath he quickened*" is in italics.**

1. This is because that phrase does not appear in the Greek texts from which the King James was translated.
2. The translators put these additional words and phrases in italics so that the reader would know they were added and not translated. They were added to give the proper sense and structure in English.
3. Greek makes a lot of use out of the *placement* of words or phrases for emphasis (or, as in this case, the omission of the placement of a word or phrase).
4. The phrase "*hath he quickened*" is implicit in verse 1 because of Paul's statement in verse 5.
5. But, his omission of that phrase in verse 1 has a very distinct purpose: Paul did that in order to draw our attention, not to the quickening, but rather to what we were before that: Dead!
  - a) Just read the passage without the italicized phrase and you'll see how the odd structure draws your attention to something missing.
  - b) What's missing? Life! Hence the focus and emphasis of the passage: You were dead!

#### **B. The King James, with the phrase in italics, perfectly preserves in English the emphasis in Greek.**

1. Greek grammar allows for the omission of the phrase, whereas English grammar does not. So, the implicit phrase was added by the translators, but they put it in italics so that we would know that Paul left it out in Greek in order to draw our attention to the fact that we were *dead*.
2. So, don't miss the focus in the first three verses! Even the grammar speaks of the expressed truth in the passage: In time past, before knowing Christ, we were all dead!

### **II. The Expressed Truth in the Passage: Death!**

#### **A. Before salvation in Christ, you were dead.**

1. (Rom 6.23a) Death is what we *earn* when we sin.
  - a) That is what God established from the beginning: (Gen 2.17) He clearly told Adam that in the day he (Adam) disobeyed, he (Adam) would surely die.
  - b) That is what God continually confirmed throughout history (e.g., Ezek 18.20) The soul that sinneth, it shall die.
2. (Rom 5.12) But we also need to understand that we were *born dead* because, in Adam, we were all born in sin—we were born sinners.

- a) (Gen 1.26-27) When God originally created man, He created him in His own image and likeness. That image and likeness still remains, but it is tainted and twisted by sin.
  - b) (Gen 5.1-3) All of Adam's descendants are now born with the image and likeness of Adam: We are all born dead in sin.
3. We need to understand what death is and what death is not.
- a) Death in the Bible is never the "end," as if a person were simply and totally annihilated (by ceasing to exist).
    - (1) Death, rather than an "end" is actually the beginning: Death is a consequence of sin; death is the punishment that God established for those who have sinned.
    - (2) Death is not the end. Death is the beginning of the ultimate penalty and punishment for sin.
  - b) (Isa 59.1-4, esp. v2) Death in the Bible is primary a separation.
    - (1) When Adam sinned, he died that very same day spiritually: he was separated from God in his spirit (which is why we are "born again" by the Spirit: God gives us the spiritual life—the life in our spirit—that Adam lost when he first sinned).
    - (2) Physical death is the separation from the person (you, your soul) from his physical body. But the person (you, your soul) continues to exist.
    - (3) The death of the soul (you, the person inside the body) is complete and eternal separation from God.
      - (a) It is, therefore, the complete separation from all that is good.
      - (b) It is the complete separation in a place where all is evil (where there is nothing good).
      - (c) (Rev 20.14-15) That is why the death of the soul is called the "second death": It is a total and complete and eternal separation from God (from all that is good).
      - (d) (Rev 21.8) The second death is the final and ultimate penalty for sin.

**B. (Eph 2.1) Before our salvation in Christ, we were dead "in trespasses."**

1. Yes, we were born dead in Adam. But, God is gracious and merciful, therefore He will judge each sinner, no so much for Adam's transgression, but rather for his own trespasses.
  - *Trespass*: [def] An unlawful act; an offense; to break or violate a law. A *trespass* is a crime, a voluntary action that is punishable by law.
2. God divides lost men into two groups: Jews and Gentiles (Jews and non-Jews).
  - a) (Rom 2.12-13) The Jews have God's written law in Scripture.
  - b) (Rom 2.14-15) The Gentiles have God's moral law written on their hearts (we know "naturally" that certain behaviors are wrong, and our conscience bears witness to us of that!).
  - c) (Rom 2.16) God will judge each (Jew and Gentile) according to the law.
    - (1) What Jew has never trespassed against the written law (broken it or violated it)?
    - (2) What Gentile has never trespassed against the moral law written on his heart?
    - (3) (Jam 2.10-12) One trespass (one violation of the law) brings the punishment prescribed by the law: Death!
3. Before salvation, in time past (for Christians), we were dead in our trespasses (separated from God and bound to be separated from Him forever in the lake of fire because we broke His law).
  - a) This is one reason I believe it is imperative that we use the law in evangelism.
  - b) The sinner must be made aware of the seriousness of even the most "simple" trespass.

- (1) Remember: "Simple" to us is *the greatest evil* before God, and therefore calls for the *greatest hatred* and the *greatest punishment*.
- (2) Remember: Adam's one "simple" sin (he took *one* bite of *one* piece of fruit) resulted in all of the evil, wickedness, pain, suffering, and death in our world today.

**C. (Eph 2.1) Before our salvation in Christ, we were dead "in sins."**

1. What is sin?

- a) (1Jn 3.4) Firstly, sin is the transgression of the law—any law.
  - (1) Sin was the transgression of the Law of Eden: Do not eat of the forbidden fruit.
  - (2) Sin is the transgression of the Law of Moses: 613 commandments given to Israel.
  - (3) Sin is the transgression of the moral law of God written on the heart of every man.
  - (4) Sin is even the transgression of the civil law of man's governments, according to Rom 13.
  - (5) But, sin goes even farther than this...
- b) (Rom 14.23) Secondly, whatsoever is not of faith is sin.
  - (1) Faith is belief in and action based on the Word of God—it is trusting in God's Word and living according to that Word (because you believe it, trust in it, depend on it).
  - (2) Everything else is sin! Whatever you do that is not of *faith* (whatever is based on you, your capacity, your confidence in yourself, the world, etc.) is sin.
  - (3) But sin goes even farther than this...
- c) (Jam 4.17) Thirdly, sin is knowing the good you ought to do, and simply not doing it.
  - (1) So often we think sin is something we "commit" (and it is!).
  - (2) But, God is so holy and just and good, that before Him, even knowing the good we ought to do and then not doing it, that is sin!
    - (a) We use the law to witness, and when we do we ask people things like, "Have you ever told a lie?" We want people to understand they have sinned.
    - (b) And yet James 4.17 says that when we know we should speak the truth, and we *say* *nothing*, that is sin also.
    - (c) To *not* do good is just as wicked and wrong and to do bad.

2. Before salvation, in time past (for Christians), we were dead *in sins*.

- a) Don't take this lightly. If you take this lightly, you will take your salvation (and the sacrifice of Christ) lightly.
- b) How many sins? How many times have you broken the law? How many times have you acted without faith? How many times have you known what is good, and did not do that?

**Conclusion:**

**According to Ephesians 2.1, God is willing and able to quicken all who are dead in trespasses and sins.**

- But He requires something of the sinner first: Repentance and Faith—turning *from* sin *to* the Savior.

**Think of Adam and the first sin, the first trespass:**

- What was Adam's first reaction after he sinned and became aware of sin's consequences?
  - ✓ He *hid* from God (ran from the light) and sewed fig leaves together to try to cover up the consequences of his actions.

- What was God's first reaction to Adam's sin? He called out to Adam where he was hiding!
  - ✓ He called and asked, "Adam, where art thou?"
  - ✓ God knew where Adam was! But, He wanted Adam to come out from where he was hiding from God and "fess up" to what he did (to confess what He did).
  - ✓ That is a call to repentance: Stop hiding. Stop trying to cover up you sin. Your sin is the greatest evil that results in the greatest hatred and the greatest punishment. Do you really think you can hide it?
- And then, instead of man-made fig leaves, God gave the sinner a new covering: coats of skins.
  - ✓ God slew an innocent creature (shed its blood) to give sinful man a covering for the consequences of his sin.
  - ✓ That is a picture of salvation offered to every sinner in Christ, our innocent substitute that died in our place.

**Sin is the greatest evil and therefore calls for the greatest hatred and the greatest punishment.**

- Because of this, sin required the greatest sacrifice: Jesus took our place so that we could take His.
- And because of the greatest sacrifice, the greatest good is now offered to sinful man: Salvation (God's glory in saving wicked men).
- Ask yourself: Do you think lightly of sin? If you do, undoubtedly you think lightly of the Savior and your life and lifestyle reflects that.
- We need to remember what we were in time past so that we can know and appreciate what we now have (and will have for an eternity) in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.
  - ✓ We need to understand what Paul is teaching in Ephesians 2. We owe a debt we can never repay.
  - ✓ When we begin to grasp these truths of the Gospel (what God did for us in Christ!), then we will serve the Lord with love, devotion, and zeal for the rest of our days. He is worthy of that.