

CONDEMNED TO WRATH

Ephesians 2.2-3, Message 1: In time past we were condemned to wrath

Ephesians 2: We are taking a step back with Paul from what we saw in Ephesian 1.

- In Ephesians 1 we saw our new beginning in Christ (v3: all spiritual blessings in Christ).
- But it wasn't always that way: A new beginning implies an old past and a change that God made in us.
- And this is exactly what we see in Ephesians 2:
 - ✓ (v2) In time past... (v4) But God...
 - ✓ (v11) In time past... (v13) But now...
- (Eph 2.1-10) Paul first speaks of our change from life to death.
- (Eph 2.11-22) Then he speaks of that same change, but how it made us “nigh” when we were “far off.”

Ephesians 2.1: In our last message we saw how in time past we were dead.

- We were dead in “trespasses”: In our crimes, our violations of the law.
- We were dead in “sins”: And we defined what sins are... they are transgressions of the law (any law), whatever is not of faith, and knowing the good we should do and then not doing it.
- These willful acts of disobedience, just like Adam's in the garden, resulted in our death: spiritual death, physical death, and eternal death (the eternal separation of the soul from God in the lake of fire).

Ephesians 2.2-3: Today we are going to finish up this first passage about our “time past.”

- We are going to see that, before our salvation in Christ, we were condemned to suffer God's wrath.
- (Eph 2.2-3a) We condemned ourselves to wrath by how we chose to live (we did wicked things).
- (Eph 2.3b) We were condemned to wrath by our very nature (we were wicked people).

The point to remember in this first passage is this: Sin is the greatest evil and therefore calls for the greatest hatred and the greatest punishment.

- Each and every sinner has deceived himself into thinking that sin is not so bad and that he, the sinner, is relatively good.
- What we need is a clear understanding of ourselves so that we will look to God for salvation.

I. (v2-3a) In time past, we lived in wickedness.

- As Christians, we have to face three enemies (the world, the flesh, and the devil); and yet before salvation we “walked according to” each of these three same things...

A. (v2a) The World: In time past, we were carried by the course of this world.

1. The “course” of this world is like the “course” of a river.
 - a) A “course” is a direction, route, or channel along which something moves.
 - b) Before our salvation in Christ, we were carried along by the course of the world just like a river carries a dead piece of wood downstream.

- c) In a river, you don't have to try to get downstream; you're pulled there naturally by the course of the river. And the course of this world pulls sinners naturally downstream to condemnation.
- d) The “course” of this world refers to everything in the present world system that carries people along: it's values, it's goals, it's promises, etc.

2. One example: The “American Dream” in Luke 12.

- a) (Luke 12.16-19) The world holds up comfort and economic security (a “planned and early retirement” to sit back and do what you really want to do) as worthy goals in life.
- b) (Luke 12.20-21) And when we let the course of the world carry us downstream with the rest of society, we end up under God's condemnation.
- c) (Luke 12.21) The problem is not so much with a good education and a good job. The problem is when we live for the world (walk according to the course of this world), and not for God.

B. (v2b) The Devil: In time past, we were manipulated (led around by the nose) by the devil.

1. The prince of the power of the air is the spirit who rules with authoritative power within our atmosphere .
2. (Luke 4.5-6) The undisputed ruler of the kingdoms of this present world is the devil.
3. (John 8.44) And although a lost person may not like it (and he will almost certainly deny it), he walks and lives according to the desires of the devil—according to the lies the devil feeds him.
 - a) The lost sinner is a child of the devil and as such is a “child of disobedience” (as Paul says in Ephesians 2.2). His father, the devil, disobeys God and he, the sinner, does the same.
 - b) There are only two spiritual families: God's and the devil's, and they are mutually exclusive.
 - (1) God's family: You can be born into God's family (as Christians are) or you can be adopted into the family (as Israel was).
 - (2) The devil's family: We were all born into this family when we were born physically.
 - (a) We were all born “children of disobedience” and because of that, we disobey by our very nature (it's is our nature to disobey and do wrong).
 - (b) We were all born “children of the devil” and because of that, all lost sinners live according to the lies of their father (the do has he has always done: disobey God).

C. (v3a) The Flesh: In time past, we lived to satisfy the desires of the flesh.

1. Our “conversation” is like our “walk”: It refers to our consistent and constant *lifestyle*.
2. (Gal 5.19-21) Paul gives us a list of what the flesh desires and what it continually wants us to satisfy. Who can say they do not know this list intimately and personally?
3. Before knowing Christ, the goal of our existence was to fulfill (to fill to full) whatever the flesh desired and lusted after.
 - a) Christian, don't think your flesh and sinful nature have gone away with salvation.
 - b) In Christ we are given a new nature (God's nature), but the old nature (the flesh) is still there.
 - c) (Gal 5.16-18) The two natures war in our members and God calls on each of us to choose to walk in the Spirit (not in the flesh) by allowing the Spirit to lead us (through Scripture!).

D. (v2-3a) In time past, we lived in wickedness (that is what we did always and continually).

1. (v2a) We were carried along by the course of this world just like a river carriers along a piece of dead wood. The world carried us downstream, toward condemnation.

2. (v2b) The devil manipulated us because we were his children, and we obeyed him as our father. The same condemnation that God has reserved for the devil, He has also reserved for his children.
3. (v3a) And we all also lived each day serving the flesh, trying to satisfy its lusts and desires. And the desires of the flesh and totally and completely contrary to the desires of God.
4. These three things that are now our enemies (the world, the flesh, and the devil) were, in time past, our very *lifestyle*. We *lived in wickedness*. Why...? Because we were *by nature* wicked people.

II. (v3b) In time past, we *were* wicked.

A. In time past, our *nature* was wicked.

1. All that we have seen thus far in this passage has served to get us to *this one point*: We *do* bad things because we *are* bad people.
2. (Mat 15.16-20) All of our wicked *doings* (our wicked works) stem from our *wicked heart*.
 - a) (Mat 12.33-36) We speak evil because we *are* evil.
 - b) The visible fruit simply reveals the nature of the tree.
3. (Jer 17.9) The use of the law in evangelism is the first and necessary step toward salvation because the wicked sinner *cannot* know the depths of his wicked heart by himself.
 - a) The law points to the *fruit* of his wicked heart with the hope of showing him his true *nature*.
 - b) That is why we begin by asking the sinner: *Do you think you are are good person?*
 - c) And then we proceed to show that lost sinner (who is deceived by the devil, serving the flesh, and carried along by the course of this world) his *works*, that those *works* are *bad*.
 - d) However, the whole point of the exercise (using the law first in evangelism) is this: You *do* bad things because you *are* a bad person.
 - e) (Jer 17.9) We are desperately wicked *by nature* and we have *deceived* ourselves into thinking that we are basically good people.
 - f) (Jer 17.10) But God knows the heart and He will judge every man in righteous judgment.
 - And this brings us to our final point of study in Ephesians 2.3...

B. In time past, by nature we were worthy of God's wrath.

1. We were “children” of wrath because we were *born* into it—by our very nature we deserved God's wrath. Why is that...?
 - a) Because we were born in sin; we were born sinners. We were born *wicked* by nature.
 - b) (Ps 51.5) Just as dogs reproduce dogs, and cats cats, so sinners can only reproduce sinners.
 - c) (Ps 58.3) Thta is why *no one* has to teach a child to *do wrong*. As natural as it is for a dog to bark or a cat to meow, so it is natural for people to sin (it's our very nature; it's what we *are*).
2. (Rom 5.12-13) And yet, even though we are born worthy of wrath, God is completely *fair* with each and every sinner.
 - a) (Rom 5.12) Yes, it is our sinful nature that brings God's wrath upon us.
 - b) (Rom 5.13) And yet there is a “period of innocence” when God does not legally impute sin to the sinner.
 - (1) The child is born in sin, but God does not count him a sinner worthy of condemnation just because he is *born* wicked.

- (2) When the law enters the life of that sinner (whatever law that allows him to consciously discern between good and bad), then that sinner has a choice.
 - (3) At that very moment, the sinner becomes personally responsible before God for his actions.
 - (4) And when he sins willfully and knowingly for the time, God assigns him the full guilt his worth of: Guilty by nature and guilty by choice.
3. So, when we look at our condition and condemnation before God, we cannot say, "It's not fair!"
- a) God is completely and perfectly "fair" with each and every individual sinner.
 - b) We should not be clamoring for "fairness" but rather for grace and mercy! And that is exactly what we see in the next passage, in Ephesians 2...

Conclusion: Ephesias 2.4-7...

But in order to get to God's intervention in verse 2.4, we have to understand our condition in verses 1-3.

- If we do not understand our need, we never desire the remedy.
- However...
 - ✓ When we understand that we are condemned by our actions, condemned by our lifestyle, and condemned because of our very nature...
 - ✓ When we understand that we have done wicked things because we are wicked people...
- Then we will look outside ourselves for salvation from the condemnation we know we deserve.

(Eph 2.4-7) God saves sinners because He is loving and kind, but the sinner must come to God on God's terms.

1. Repentance: The sinner must understand that he is wicked and therefore has lived in wickedness and done wicked things.
 - Sin is not a small matter!
 - God calls the sinner to recognize his wickedness, to "own it" and to turn from it.
2. Faith: The sinner must trust in Christ and Christ alone for salvation.
 - God will not save the sinner any other way because no other person has paid (or can pay) the full price for sin.
 - Jesus made the greatest sacrifice on the cross when He suffered the greatest hatred and the greatest punishment (the wrath of God) for the greatest evil: us.

God has grace, mercy, love, and kindness for all those who will repent and place their trust in Jesus Christ to save them.

- But look what we had to go through to get to this wonderful salvation: v1-3.
- The sinner must first be confronted with his sins and his sinful nature before he is ready for salvation: v4.