

Ephesians 2:1-10 • Leaving Our Corpse Behind

Introduction

Do we really consider the difference Jesus has made in our life, the contrast of our present course versus our old life? And that it's not just so we can be counted with the saved but for specific purposes in **this** life?

¹And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

[Read 2:1]

Q: Don't rush too fast because some of the simplest points are the most important: Before we came to Christ, how did God see us? What was "reality" from God's point of view? What are some of the implications of this?

A: We were dead. The Greek word can be literally translated "a corpse". Since God sees us from an eternal view – our condition in eternity based on this life's choices – God's description of us before coming to Christ is "dead."

Q: How does a corpse communicate with God?

A: It doesn't, it can't. A corpse is incapable of initiating anything.

Q: What was the cause of death?

A: Our "trespasses and sins."

Q: What exactly is the difference between a "trespass" and a "sin"?

A: A "trespass" expresses a "fall" or "lapse" from doing what you know is right, such as Adam and Eve's fall; "sin" is our continued separation from God through our behavior of doing the wrong thing. Together they combine to show a condition that results from our own actions, choices and will.

²in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

[Read 2:2]

Q: What is the inference in Paul's statement that we "formerly walked" in our sins and trespasses?

A: The inference is that we no longer walk in them. Taken a bit further, it should be clearly visible that we no longer walk or behave in the same manner.

Application: *Is this true? Are there any pursuits of your "old life" that are still with you? Are they compatible with walking with Christ?*

Q: What are the 3 contributing factors to the old life which produces a "living corpse"?

- (1) The course of this world
- (2) Satan
- (3) The spirit of disobedience.

Q: How are these things trying to work on us?

- (1) "The course of this world" implies that sin feels "normal" – it's the normal working of the physical world.
- (2) "Satan" clearly shows that there's a deliberate, manipulative force at work.
- (3) And the "spirit of disobedience" is the unseen spiritual darkness at work within us.

Together they cover simultaneous attacks on the heart, soul and mind.

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³Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

[Read 2:3]

Q: It's subtle, but how did the pronoun Paul uses change in v.3 compared to v.1-2? What's the significance?

A: It changed from "you" to "we". Paul is including himself.

Q: How did the effect of the world, Satan and disobedience become evident in our life?

A: By our pursuit to satisfy our lusts and desires.

Q: What does it mean when Paul links our lusts and desires to "the flesh"?

A: It means we were consumed with pleasing ourselves: Sexual immorality, greed, lust, etc. Whatever brought us the most **personal** pleasure.

Q: How does Paul characterize the result of all these forces that were at work in our former life?

A: "By nature, children of wrath." The word "nature" describes something growing with our own growth, strengthening with our strength, as opposed to merely being influenced by outside forces. "Children of wrath" has Hebrew overtones denoting objects of God's wrath since childhood. Together it's the result of the forces of this world, Satan, and the spirit of disobedience producing someone growing more and more apart from God and therefore inheriting more and more wrath at the eventual time of judgment.

⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

[Read 2:4-7]

Q: Since a corpse is incapable of communicating or initiating action, how was this condition reversed according to v.4?

A: God's mercy and love. It was **INITIATED** by God, not us.

Q: And what tool did He use? How did He put His mercy and love into visible effect on our behalf?

A: Christ.

Q: According to v.5, what is the definition of God's mercy and love shown through Christ? What does this combine to become revealed to us?

A: Grace. Giving us, out of love and mercy, what we did not deserve nor could not produce.

Q: According to v.5 and 6, how does God NOW see us?

A: Alive, raised up, and seated in heaven. Whereas before God saw us as a "living corpse" that was bearing all the consequences of eternal damnation, now God sees us as already inheriting the attributes of eternal salvation.

Q: But when is it promised that our inheritance – the riches of God – will be lavished on us?

A: "In the ages to come." God sees us in view of eternity.

Application: *If this is the way God truly sees us, how do we accept the trials, obstacles and imperfections of this present life? Could we cope with the present a little better if we saw ourselves as God sees us from an eternal point of view?*

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Q: And what, specifically, are God's riches for us?

A: His grace in kindness toward us in Christ. It's everything that transcends physical and material treasure comprising the loving character of God.

Application: Do we acknowledge and really live by Christ's own principle expressed in the Sermon on the Mount, "for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"? (Mt. 6:21)

⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

[Read 2:8-9]

Q: We were once a corpse. Then we became alive. What is a word that might describe this cycle of God's power?

A: Resurrection. Just as Christ was raised up and is seated in heaven, so God has done the same for us.

Q: How is the power of this faith described in Ephesians 1:19-20?

A: The mighty working of the resurrection of Christ.

Q: And since we know that we were a corpse, incapable of initiating anything on our own, how could this possibly come about?

A: Through God, as His personal gift to us, raising us from the dead. The power of the resurrection is already working in us.

Q: We learned of the old "nature", which is something that grows with our growth, is strengthened with our strength. How is that contrasted here?

A: Not as a result of our works, it is not something that grew with our growth or became stronger with our strength. It is the gift of life bestowed by the Giver of Life on a corpse, something decaying, dying, incapable of growth.

¹⁰For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

[Read 2:10]

Q: What does it mean to be God's "workmanship"?

A: Literally, "a thing of His making." (Contrast that to the fact that we were a corpse based on our own making through our sins and trespasses.)

Q: And why did God do this? Was it just to provide us with an eternal reward?

A: It was to give us purpose for the present life to accomplish visible, real, tangible, "GOOD" works in Christ. God not only sees us eternally, already living in heaven, but accomplishing His work in this present life.

Q: Are we talking about "random acts of kindness", that these good works are just the logical outgrowth of following Him?

A: We have a specific destiny in this life for His kingdom. The "walk in them" part refers to the fact that these are not just one-time events but a continual, life-long commitment and work.

¹⁵“No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.”

[Read John 15:15-16]

Application: *What is God’s burden on your heart today? What is His destiny for you? Have you not completely immersed yourself in the good works He desires from your life because you’re still clinging to some of the desires of the old life? What would happen to your local church if every member went forth from this day forward empowered by this teaching through Paul?*