

Get Out of the Graveyard

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Date: 09 August 2020

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[0 : 0 0] What do you have this morning? Well, if you know Jesus Christ as your Savior, you have more than you can ever imagine. We've been talking the last few weeks about our possessions in Christ. What do we have? What has God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit provided for us as a result of what Jesus did on the cross of Calvary? But what we're going to do this morning is we're going to turn the corner from our possessions in Christ to what the Apostle Paul is going to open up as our position, our spiritual position in Christ. First, what the Apostle Paul is going to do in the book of Ephesians chapter 2 is he is going to explain what God has done for sinners in general and what he's done for the Gentiles in particular. And the sinner who trusts Christ has been raised and seated on the throne. We see that in Ephesians chapter 2 verses 1 through 10. And believing Jews and Gentiles have been reconciled into the temple, into the body of Christ, verses 11 through 22.

And what a miracle of grace. God has taken all of us who could never deserve salvation to become a part of God's family, have been united together into the family of God, Jew and Gentile, and we have been placed, we've been taken out of the graveyard and been placed at the throne of glory. What grace.

We have so many things for which to be thankful. Welcome this morning to faith. We're so glad that you're here with us, whether you're here in body or whether you're here over the internet or listening to this at some time in the future, which this would be in the past for you. We're so glad that you are with us today. Maybe the easiest way for us to approach this very, very long paragraph that the apostle Paul writes is for us to divide it into four specific works that the apostle Paul deals with. And we will look at the first one this morning. So let's read. We're going to read verses 1 through 3, which is where we're going to be this morning. We've divided this up into a few sections rather than taking it so many verses at one time. We might go a little bit slower, a little bit deeper into these first three verses.

The apostle Paul starts out in the second chapter. He says, And you, he made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, which 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 once conducted ourselves in the lust of our flesh for fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. Have any of you ever had a full body portrait made? What I mean is, I mean, not just like the head and shoulder shot. I mean, they were saying like, okay, you're going to stand and going to take a picture of all of you. It's awkward, isn't it? You don't know what to do with your hands. You don't know what to do with your feet. And you're going, well, you know, is this my good, better side or is this my better side? It's a, it's a little bit awkward. It's also, you know, you're open to the entire world.

And it's a little bit about what the apostle does with the sinner in this section. He, what he does is he gives a complete picture of the sinner, who we are, what our problem is, where we came from, where the problem originated and where we're going. So he gives a complete picture of the sinner without Christ this morning. He lists out the characteristics and that's where he begins. First, what we see is without Christ, we're dead. Without Christ, we have no life. Verse one, and you, the Bible says he did what? When we come to Jesus, trust him as our savior, he makes us alive. Now, what does that mean? It means we were once, we were once dead. And so he says, and you, he made alive who were, and here it is, can't get any more plain than this, who were dead in trespasses and sins. Now, obviously he's talking about spiritual death here. And that is without Christ, we are unable to understand and unable to appreciate spiritual things. The person without Christ has no spiritual life whatsoever, can do nothing of himself to please

[5 : 27] God. No matter how good we are, no matter what we do, whether we help someone cross the street, whether we help them with their groceries, whether we give to the poor, whatever. It's of no spiritual value without the power of the Holy Spirit empowering us to please God. Just as a physical person or a person physically dead doesn't respond to physical stimuli, so a person who's spiritually dead doesn't respond to spiritual things. When you are at the funeral home and there's a body in a casket at the front of the room, that corpse, that body does not hear the conversations that are going on around them. They don't have any appetite for food or drink. They feel no pain. The body is dead.

Just so in the physical realm is it true in the spiritual realm. Without Jesus, without the regenerating power of God's Holy Spirit, the person without Christ is spiritually dead. We can't hear God. We can't feel God. And we can't respond. And we can't do what we need to do or we can't be who we need to be in order to be right with God. That takes something from the external. The spiritual faculties are not functioning and they can't function unless God gives life. So what is the cause of this spiritual death? What do we see in verse number one? We were dead where? In our trespasses and sins. Ephesians chapter 2 verse 1. What does Romans 6 23 tell us? The wages of sin is death.

Romans tells us all the wages all have sinned. So that's that's our spiritual condition. Romans 3 23. Romans 6 23. So we are we're all sinners. And the wages what we deserve because we are sinners is death. When the Bible talks about death primarily it's talking about a separation. To be spiritually dead is to be separated from God. To be physically dead is for the spirit of the human being to be separated from the body. So death is a separation in both the physical realm and the spiritual realm. So not only physically as a spirit separated from the body in James chapter 2 verse 26 but also spiritually that we are spiritually separated from God. Isaiah chapter 59 and verse number 2.

So if you're listening to this message today wherever you are if you don't know Jesus Christ as your Savior if you are not sure and you're going along life's journey trying to be good enough to get to heaven on your own you're not sick. You're dead. You're dead spiritually. And you say well that's hard words. I'm merely quoting what the Apostle Paul wrote under the authority of God's Holy Spirit. He says he is speaking to followers of Christ here the Ephesian believers. He's saying you were once dead as a sinner but you were made alive how?

[9 : 09] Through catechism. You were made alive through baptism. You were made alive through good works. You were made alive through what? We were made alive through grace in Christ. The Apostle Paul talks a lot about.

You see the only difference between one lost sinner and another is the state of decay. The derelict on skid row may be more decayed outwardly than the socialite.

The thing is they're both dead and it's just a matter of time. So our situation our condition apart from Christ is dire. We're dead in our trespasses and sins apart from Jesus Christ. So what does this mean? When we look out into the world we're looking out at a graveyard.

So many that we see we we we we rub shoulders with well maybe not during the pandemic but we at least see around us if they don't if they haven't yet placed their faith and trust in what Jesus did on the cross of Calvary. Our dead and trespasses in sin and are already in the graveyard so to speak spiritually and have yet to receive a yet to receive new life.

We're filled with people who were dead while they still live. First Timothy chapter 5 verse number 6. So without Christ we're dead. First thing that Paul says. Secondly what Paul says is our death began had to originate somewhere. It began with disobedience and that's basically what sin is.

[11 : 05] At its most basic level sin is disobedience. Let's take a look at verse number 2. Paul goes on to say 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.

He says among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lust of the flesh fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature the children of wrath just as others.

So what he's saying here is he says you once walked according to the course of this world and who works in the sons of or the children of disobedience. This was the beginning of man's spiritual death. Disobedience to the will of God. God said in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely what? Die. He said that to Adam. He said there you have the whole garden.

You have all the animals to name. You have a job. You're going to tend this beautiful garden. But there's only one thing. There's a tree in the middle of the garden. The tree of the knowledge of good

and evil. He said you can have everything you want in the garden except that one tree because in the day that you eat of that tree you're surely going to die. Satan said what? Oh come on you're not going to die. God that's not what God meant which is Satan's basic ploy. He likes to twist and distort what God said what God did. He distorts what God has made and he turns into something that is evil. And so what he did was he said no you're not sure you're not going to die. That's not what God meant. Verse 17 of Galatians chapter 2 excuse me Genesis chapter 3 verse 4 and because they believed the lie the first man and woman experienced immediate spiritual death and eventual physical death.

So their physical death began the moment they ate and disobeyed and ate of that fruit and they died immediately at that point in time spiritually. And since that time mankind has lived in disobedience to God. And there are three forces that are at work in our life. Three forces that the apostle Paul brings out here that encourage us that encourages mankind in his and her disobedience.

[13 : 41] The world the devil and the flesh. The first thing we see is the world or this world system. Not the mountains and the trees and what God created but it's this world system that puts pressure on every individual to get them to conform. We see that in Romans chapter 12 and verse number 2. Jesus Christ when he was on the earth was not of this world and neither are his people. John chapter 8 verse 23 and other verses that state that we're not of this world. We have a citizenship that's where? In heaven. We don't belong here. It's like a diver who's put on the the mask and the and the air take and is underneath the surface of the water and they're only there for a particular period of time because they can only survive in that hostile environment as long as they have that external protection. So you and I are on this earth. We don't belong here. The only way that we can survive is through the power of the Holy Spirit energizing us to please God while we're here and one day we're going to be ushered from this life into life eternal and we're going to be seated in the right hand of God the Father.

And so in this world system Jesus was not of this world neither or neither are we and so what we do we do is we obey him but the person without Christ lives in disobedience because they listen they follow the values of this world system either consciously or unconsciously it's controlled by the values and controlled by the attitudes of the world things they read on social media things they hear things they they see and just simply out of our basic human nature. The second force that's at work is Satan the devil the spirit that now worketh in the sons of or the children of disobedience as Paul puts it. Now this doesn't mean that Satan's personally at work in everybody's life because Satan is limited Satan is not like God he's not omnipresent he is not everywhere and so people say well the devil made me do it just like the comedian from many many years ago. Now well the devil didn't necessarily make you do it uh the the apostle James said no we did it because that's our human nature and we wanted to do it and we ended up doing it but Satan has a force out there his demons that are at work all over creation and so Satan and his minions so to speak are at work trying to keep people blinded to the truth of the gospel and also he's there to thwart you and thwart me as followers of Christ and and cause us to be ineffective to do things that would maybe destroy our testimony or do things say things that would cause other people no longer trust us as a follower of Christ and so that is what he is up to uh unlike God who's omnipresent Satan can't be in all places at once but since Satan was disobedient to God he wants us to be disobedient to people as well as I said earlier one of Satan's main tools is lies he wants us to believe a lie and that's how primarily he works his initial lie at the beginning of of human history was you shall not surely die that's not what God meant obviously that's not what he meant is what Satan is saying and that plunged the human race into sin when Adam chose to disobey God and to eat of that fruit and the unsaved multitudes today disobey God because they believe the lie of Satan or the lies of Satan and when a person believes and practices a lie the apostle

Paul says they become a child or they become a son of disobedience and then number three it's the flesh Paul says in whom he says you conducted yourself in the lust of our flesh fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind it's that nature within us by the flesh Paul doesn't necessarily mean our bodies because there's nothing innately evil with our body there's nothing wrong with our bodies other than the fact that as we get older they begin to fall apart and we begin to have aches and we begin to have pains that's part of the death do you realize that you're dying the moment you you're born cells are dying and we're on that pathway to ultimately one day we're going to breathe our last breath on planet earth so the body itself is not evil it's not bad it's just a vehicle it's just the

the tabernacle the way the Bible puts it or the or the tent or the temporary house that our spirit lives in but the flesh the way

Paul uses it refers to that fallen nature our fallen our humanness the human part of us now we're body we're soul and we're spirit body is that fleshly part that we can see we can feel we can touch the the soul is that inner part of us that encompasses the mind it encompasses the will it's the part that gives our us our personality and then there's a spiritual part the spirit part of us and that's the part that God energizes when he comes into our life after we trust Christ as our savior and so the flesh that Paul's referring to is that humanness part of us that that soul part of us the part that that is uh the the part that that remains it's still there because we're not perfect the moment we trust Christ we still have the ability to sin we have now a new ability to say no to sin but as Paul said in Romans chapter 7 the more I try to do what's good that's when that fallen human part of me say uh stops me from doing good or keeps me from doing good from what I want to do and when I don't want to do it that's when I do it and when I when I try to do it that's when I don't do it that's the flesh part of us the sinful nature the Bible calls the flesh so is it any wonder the person without Christ is disobedient to God first of all we've got Satan they're believing Satan's lie and then next we have the unregenerate human nature that can't understand God because the things of God Bible says are spiritually understood it's the Holy Spirit that has to come in and open our mind to the truths of God so we need outside help and that help only comes from God so that brings us to the third thing the third part of the the the full body portrait so to speak of the sinner secondly not only are we dead apart from Christ not only did that death begin with disobedience but without Christ we are depraved you say well that sounds like a bad word well it is because normally when we think of depravity it's not a nice term to use to about somebody so the Bible says we are depraved verse 3 he says among whom also we all once conducted ourselves that's what we just went over he says the last part we were by nature what children of wrath children of wrath just as the others the lost sinner the person without Christ pleases what the desires of the flesh and the wishes of the mind that's the Greek literal translation apart from Christ we live to please the desires of the flesh and the wishes of the mind meaning if it feels right then it's okay if I can think it it's okay for me to do it that's the attitude of a person without Christ of course sometimes that's the attitude of those who are who are followers of Christ as well and that comes back to our fallen nature comes back to believing a lie of Satan so we are depraved our actions and our appetites apart from Christ are sinful if you look up the word depraved in the dictionary Webster or just about any other dictionary the dictionary definition means morally corrupt or wicked morally corrupt or wicked and when you apply the word depraved to a person without Christ you're not saying that they only do evil what you're saying is that they can't do anything that is spiritually good or that they're incapable of doing anything good so when we apply the word depraved to a person before Christ you're not saying that they only do evil and they can't do good what we're simply saying is they can't do anything to merit salvation or to meet the high standards of God's holiness doesn't mean we're all bad and doesn't mean we can't be good it just means we can't be the good that God requires which would be sinless perfection and since no human can reach that on planet earth in comes the sacrificial death the atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary he took our place he took our penalty so Jesus even said in his own words he says the loss the sinner does good to others Luke chapter 6 verse 33 he says look look at those look at the wicked they do think they do good things to each other sometimes doesn't mean they can't do good he says they do good to their children Luke 11 13 they give their children good gifts but they can't do anything spiritually to please God is what he's saying here then think about the natives on Malta you remember when the apostle Paul was shipwrecked the natives on Malta were without Christ they were dead in sin but they helped the apostle Paul they did

[24 : 49] good they just weren't good enough to please God they needed Jesus they needed they still needed to be saved Acts chapter 28 verses 1 and 2 and then finally without Christ you see the bad news gets worse just like the Bible all have sinned that's bad news Bible goes on and gives even worse news to the sinner he says the wages of sin is death I thought the bad news was bad well it gets worse without Christ we're doomed he says we were the nature or by nature the children of wrath just as the others by deed by nature children of wrath and by deed children of disobedience John chapter 3 verse 18 that uh John chapter 3 16 we could probably all quote

John chapter 3 verse number 16 for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life well he goes on in the next few verses to talk about in Christ we're good we're saved from the penalty of uh from the penalty of

sin we are now part of the family of God we are born again into the family of God but he says those who don't trust those who don't believe Jesus they're what they're condemned already John chapter 3 verse 18 the sentence has already been passed we don't have to wait to be arraigned we don't have to wait till we get to heaven or to get before the throne room of God for God to decide oh yeah yeah I'll put your I'll put your life on the scales and we'll see which one outweighs the other and it where it's going to determine where you spend eternity you know the Bible says in this life before we die we make the choice of our eternal place so he says we are condemned already apart from Christ the sentence has already been passed but

God in his mercy is staying the execution sentence second Peter chapter 3 verses 8 through 10 is where he talks about that he is giving all of us the opportunity to believe so just as we said all have sinned and fallen short the wages of sin is death but God demonstrated his love toward us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us so what can we do God demonstrated his love he said Jesus Christ the cross of Calvary Jesus Christ who is perfect and sinless God in the flesh died on the cross in our place took the wrath of God upon himself paid for your sin and paid for mine and the Bible says by grace through faith we're saved not by works because if it by work if it were by works we could boast about it and say look at how good we are so by God's grace he makes it possible through faith to be made right with God and to be made alive just like

Paul said in verse number one to be made alive in Christ so the bad news got worse there's good news and the good news gets better we're going to get into that next week as we get into what God has done for those who've trusted Christ as their Savior mankind cannot save themselves we can't do anything we can't be good enough we can't pray enough prayers we can't do enough good deeds to get to become right with God Jesus already took care of that on the cross of Calvary but God but God in his grace and the steps that he took he made salvation possible but God what a difference those two words make and this will lead to the second work that we're going to look at next week let's pray father this morning as we've come together by your grace we ask that you would be with us through this week if anyone does not know Jesus Christ as their Savior we ask that you would open their minds to the truth and understand that you love each and every one of us where we are no matter what we've done no matter how disobedient no matter how wicked no matter how depraved or no matter how good but yet still apart from you Lord I ask that you would open our eyes help us to see who you are what you've done through Jesus on our behalf and that we would be able to receive the free gift of eternal life and brand new life simply by your grace through our faith and trust in Jesus Christ and thank you for the promise that all who call upon your name will be saved delivered from the penalty and the power of sin and ultimately delivered from the presence of sin we thank you we praise you for it's in Jesus name that we pray amen you