

Remember How Dead You Were

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[0:00] What a blessing to be under the Word of God together in this letter to the church in Ephesus and through Ephesus to all the churches in Asia Minor and the churches over the centuries that will get to hear these glorious gospel truths preached over them and that God the Spirit will do the same among us.

Our sermon passage today is very short and I'm going to read it twice back to back for you so you can receive God's Word and let it wash over you and pull you in.

Our verses are simply Ephesians chapter 2, 1, 2 and 3. Hear those verses first and as you hear it, know that you're hearing God's inspired, inerrant, infallible, clear, sufficient, powerful Word for you and me, His people.

Ephesians 2, 1, 2 and 3. And you, He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 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 all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

Now hear these verses one more time, but with a few other verses around them and hear how Christ exalted is what envelops this reminder to the church.

[1:42] Look back at chapter 1. I'll start reading at verse 19 and I'll continue to chapter 2, verse 7. Paul is praying that the church will know, in verse 19, what is the exceeding greatness of God's power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come.

And He put all things under His feet and gave Him to behead over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 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 we also all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace, you have been saved, and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the age to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

[3:39] The word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God. Please be seated. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord stands forever.

Let's pray. Father, we praise you that you are the God of mercy. You are the God who is love.

And we look at Jesus Christ, who is now exalted, and He's exalted as the God-man, the only mediator for the redemption of His people, we who were dead, lost, imprisoned, and in bondage to the devil.

We praise you for this great redemption that we have in Jesus Christ. We pray, Lord, that your Holy Spirit will shine your light on these words and apply them to your people, Father.

Please do this for your glory, and for Christ's sake, we pray. Amen. G.K. Chesterton wrote these words.

[4:54] Thanks are the highest form of thought, and gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder. Thanks are the highest form of thought, and gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder.

I recently had a stressful experience, but I look back on it, and it was a gift. I got to go into an actual courtroom where a judge, on behalf of the state of Colorado, was presiding and making a judgment, ruling over several court cases.

It was a humbling gift and a reminder to me, because every single case that they had to open up and talk about in detail, and it included everything from domestic abuse to alcoholism to breaking the law to doing something to someone else at the grocery store.

I mean, I just heard case after case, and as I walked out of there, I was almost to choke up a little bit, and what came to mind were two quotes.

One was what John Bradford, the 1500s English reformer, said, as he looked at men being carried off for execution, he said, but for the grace of God, there go I.

[6:19] And the second is Robert Murray Machine. The seed of every sin knows to man, known to man, is in my heart. God reminded me of what I am outside of Christ, and it's not pretty.

God often does this, doesn't he? He reminds his people of all that he saved us from. Think back of the Old Testament, prophet after prophet, think of the Psalms time and time again.

Remember. Don't you see the wondrous works of God? He redeemed you. Remember what you were like. And this is the pattern that Paul continues here. And it's wonderful how this deep, dark, intense reminder, it's enveloped around the exalted Christ.

Did you catch that in the context? He's just put our gaze on Christ, exalted with all things put under his feet, and he takes the church down to this low place.

Remember what you were in order to remember again now that same exalted Christ. You're with him. And this is what Paul is doing, following that same pattern of God, reminding his people throughout all of the scriptures, Old Covenant, New Covenant alike.

[7:44] Remember how bad you were. Remember what you deserve. And he shifted his focus now from Christ, even at the end of chapter one.

Look at chapter one, verse 22. God put all things under Christ's feet and gave him to be head. Now here's where the focus on Christ shifts a little bit to earth. Gave Christ to be head over all things to the church.

Look at yourselves a little bit now, church, he says. Church is Christ's body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. And our eyes got to rest on Christ.

But now Paul says, bring those eyes to yourself and to those around you. Shift your eyes to the body of Christ on earth.

And who were these people that God so loved? Whatever is true of the church in Ephesus.

Remember, this is a letter to go out to all the churches preserved by the spirit for all centuries.

[8:50] So what is true when he says you, church, in Ephesus? This is true of all people in every generation, everywhere. So that's the sermon title today for us as well.

Church, Christian, remember how dead you were. It's good for us. Remember how dead you were outside of Christ.

echoing Chesterton's words as we remember, may God let our happiness in Christ be doubled by the wonder at all from which God has saved you and me.

Let's remember with thankfulness in doing this. It's the highest thought. It's an act of worship. It's an act of praise to God as we do this. Remember how dead you were.

I'll walk us through about five ways in which we need to reflect on this. Number one, you were born dead to God.

[9:52] You were born dead to God. That's how dead you and I were. Look at chapter 2, verse 1. And you who were dead in trespasses and sins.

Now, in many of your Bibles, there might be some extra words in here. In some cases, they're italicized or put in brackets. In mine, it says, you were dead and he made alive.

But those words made alive are not there in the original Greek. They don't come until later. And I think it's best that we approach these verses in that same way. Hold off on that great news until verse 4.

Focus on you were dead in trespasses and sins. Trespass is to actively cross a line.

It's to commit a sin, breaking God's law. Then the other word there, sins, is to miss the mark. Like an arrow that's shot at a target but it misses.

[10:57] It falls short or goes the wrong direction. And some have taken, what are these two words put together? What are they communicating? It can be sins of commission and sins of omission.

Think of your life the moment you were born. You were born dead to God. You were born breaking God's laws. And we've piled on trespasses, transgressions, crossing his boundaries over and over and over.

But let's say hypothetically it's possible to go through your life without ever committing a sin. That's still not enough. Your life fails to be as holy as God requires.

We don't have a righteousness that's sufficient to make us be able to stand in the presence of the Holy God. Our lives fall short of his glory as well. Adam was guilty of both sin of commission and sin of omission as well.

Think about how Adam neglected to guard and to keep what God had entrusted to him. And on top of that Adam also transgressed. He also broke the law.

[12:09] He crossed that line God gave him. In Genesis 2:17 God said for in the day that you eat of this forbidden fruit you shall die.

And in Adam's death so died all of Adam's seed. That's how dead we were. We have been dead in Adam spiritually dead to God since Adam's fall.

There's not a century not a generation on earth that wasn't born already dead to God. Outside of Christ you and I are dead to God. This type of deadness that we have though is an active deadness.

We are dead in trespasses. We are dead in sins. We keep doing these things. Outside of Christ. And so this forces us to wrestle with why is that?

What's going on? What type of death did Adam die as God told him? Because that's the death we are born into. Jonathan Edwards had wonderful insights as he pondered this.

[13:17] To paraphrase his insights he wrote the problem is our nature. Even more than our will. He said the will simply does what the person believes is best.

The will is free to choose and does choose whatever the will deems most desirable. You see so the problem is that we will always choose to sin.

We will always choose to trespass. That's the end of Edwards insight. So our problem is that outside of Christ our nature is to not trust God.

Our nature is to hate God's law. Outside of Christ we are dead to God and so we trespass his good boundaries. We never hit the target. Outside of Christ our nature will never want to fulfill the chief end of man.

Outside of Christ our nature will never want to enjoy God. Outside of Christ our nature will never want to give God glory. Outside of Christ we are dead and unable to fulfill the reason that God created us for.

[14:30] You see how dead you and I were? We were born dead to God. Number two you and I were walking with the world to hell.

That's how dead we were. We were walking along with the world to hell. Church remember how dead you were. You were this dead also.

Look at verse two. These are the trespasses and sins in which you and I once walked according to the course of this world.

So you're dead but you're walking like this. That word walked can be translated you lived this way. You conducted yourselves this way. You followed this path.

You practiced these things. We were dead to God and we were actively dead to God by walking in these ways that are offensive to the holy God.

[15:30] Psalm one says the ungodly one walks in the counsel of the wicked and this is the way that shall perish. Jesus came and echoed that same message in Matthew 7.

He said wide is that gate at the end of this path you're on and broad is the way that leads to destruction and there are many who go in by it.

This is the way of the world outside of Christ our nature believes that the pattern of this world is good. We choose the gate that's broad but then we get there and it opens up to eternal judgment.

We choose the way that's easy but the end of this road is hell itself. This is how we were walking outside of Christ you and I are drifting along following the course or the pattern of this world.

Maybe you've been to a place that has a lazy river like at a water park where you just drop something in and it gets carried along following this winding path and if you picture dropping a dead

fish into a lazy river and where is that taking it slowly you just watch it do it can't do anything to stop that that's where it's drifting and picture that turning into an actual river and that actual river comes to the edge of a cliff like this you can't see over but there goes that dead fish right over the edge of the cliff and it's a hundred mile deep chasm it's in a bottomless abyss you can't even see that's how you and I were walking outside of Christ following the course of this world and the end of that path that we're on is hell itself for all eternity you and I were walking with the world to hell remember how dead you were church number three you and

[17 : 33] I were ruled by Satan who works in you that's how dead we were you and I were ruled by Satan who is working in you look at the rest of verse two says you walked following the course of this world according to the prince of the power of the air the spirit who now works the spirit of Satan the demons that work there who now works who now operates who now is active energizing in the sons of disobedience how do you become a son of disobedience you're enslaved you're you belong to that disobedience is your whole identity this is who you are and who is it that is your master who is it that's actively energizing and operating inside of you it's described as the prince of the power of the air a spirit working in you as you disobey that word prince is a local ruler or a high official a magistrate you can picture

Ephesus in these Greco Roman city states they have some ruler that's appointed that that dictates how it's going to go in their realm why is he called the prince of the power of the air I think that this is a figure of speech!

So it's not just in the atmosphere it's on planet earth this realm that will soon be recreated when Christ returns in this figurative speech it was addressing the wrong teachings at Ephesus this idea that these principalities of darkness are really calling the shots of what happens among humans Paul is saying Christ is put way above those I've seen his glory but if you are not in Christ above all these powers you are in bondage to Satan on this fallen realm Satan is pictured here like an invisible tyrant who exists in the spiritual realm and he's using that works that operation to have real influence real dominion over this fallen world in this present evil age how is it that

Satan came to this position of power because God had put Adam as the one a little bit below the angels to rule everything that was creaturely but when Adam trespasses and sins against God he loses that place and he forfeits that place to Satan we all died in Adam Adam's brought under the curse and the rule and the dominion of Satan by his sin and if you're born in Adam outside of Christ you still are under this evil tyrant you're in his influence in this realm outside of Christ Satan works in you to his accord you're walking according to the prince of the power of the air Satan is accusing speaking lies about God and he's making those who are in bondage to him align to his lies outside of

Christ our nature is to swallow whole bait with the hook and everything all of the devil's lies that he's spewing at us you picture that here he dangles this little morsel you don't know what's inside that but it's a barbed hook and outside of Christ we can't help it we go and we swallow that up and we get hooked in the deep part of our gut outside of Christ and he has us on his hooks Satan does that's how dead we are to God the one thing that will characterize you while you're hooked to Satan that way is disobedience to God you're ruled by Satan who worked in you that's number four it gets worse outside of Christ church you were slaves to your own lusts remember that remember how it is to be a slave to the lust of your flesh look at verse three you're in the middle of the sons of disobedience on earth among whom we all once conducted ourselves in the lust of our flesh fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind up to this point

[22 : 58] Paul has spoken to the church in Ephesus as you you were this dead you were being worked in by Satan and now he says we all once conducted ourselves this way what's different between Paul saying we and including himself and the church in Ephesus is they know Paul is a Jew he's a man who's preaching from the Old Testament showing how Christ fulfilled it and here they are Gentiles worshipping these pagan demons in the Greek world and Paul is doing here in just a few verses what he does in Romans chapters 1 2 and 3 he's saying before the holy God there is no!

you are either darkness or you have the light of God shining on you through Jesus you are either a slave to sin and Satan in your own lust or you are a slave to Christ righteousness who's working powerfully in you as Paul is reminding them he can't help but pulling himself into this and leaving no one without any excuse outside of Christ you were a slave to your lust that word can be translated your own desires your inclinations your impulses the shallow pleasures of your body that was our

nature outside of Christ whatever twisted craving that our minds could think of we put our bodies in the business of doing it until that craving that desire that impulse is fulfilled that's what he says fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind outside of

Christ our nature proves over and over that we live as though we are our own little gods we think we are free but we're slaves to our own sin that's how dead we are outside of Christ and everyone in the church is to be reminded this is how dead you were well that was four reminders and if you think it's not possible it does get even worse here's the fifth one and the final one for today your nature required that you and I suffer eternal death we're required to suffer eternal death because of this nature you were dead but eternal death is what you deserve even beyond this life verse three finishes up and were by nature children of wrath the only way to escape the wrath that we deserve is to get a different nature the word could be you were subjects of

God's wrath you were objects of God's wrath you are the targets that the wrath is aimed at and that word wrath could be condemnation you've been sentenced to this you can't get out of it it could be punishment and it could be judgment this is what we deserve just as the others anyone outside of Christ deserves eternal death the root word for God's wrath here it comes from the idea of something ripening you know you picture a fruit on a tree it starts hard and green and small but as it gets bigger it starts to turn yellow depending on the fruit it's going to maybe turn bright red and full so it's so heavy it's ripe and it's just going to drop and we were by nature!

children of God's ripening judgment God is not desiring that any should perish but God is loving and because God is loving he will pour out his justice he will call all things to account one day and as we look around and we see injustice still now the ripening of this justice is coming it's so to speak it's waiting and bidding because God is forbearing but it's ripening and it will drop this is inevitable and you and I were so dead that our very nature made us children of wrath in the Roman legal and social context status and lineage were determined by who your parents are

[28:05] Paul is telling reminding the church reminding Christians like you and me you come from a long line of evil sons of Satan you deserve judgment this is your identity this is your nature and this is your destiny outside of Christ as Sinclair Ferguson pointed out when God is against you it doesn't matter who might be for you well that's how dead you and I were and that word dead in verse one is *necros* some of you have training in the medical field you've heard that that term *necros* borrowed from the Greek sometimes *necros* is translated as dead men or lifeless or slain you picture an army in the age of hand-to-hand combat going through with the sword and just whacking and then there they are as dead men slain that's the word for how dead we are outside of

Christ complete incapacity to respond to God outside of Christ we are not a spiritually sick patient in bed needing just to open your mouth for some medicine outside of Christ we were spiritually still born we are like a dead corpse that never lived for a single minute never saw a single color never breathed a single breath outside of Christ we're as dead as a rat run over by an 18 wheeler semi truck buried six feet deep under the ground with worms crawling through it outside of Christ we're not there in the water about to drown unable to swim bobbing up and down trying to get our hand to get attention outside of Christ we're at the bottom our lungs are filled with water there's no pulse there's no chance of resurrection and that corpse at the bottom is bloated and the brain has been turned off for years that's how dead we are *necros* outside of

Christ you were born dead to God you who were dead in trespasses and sins but Jesus Christ prayed for you and he stirred others to pray like Paul now look look to the previous chapter one more time look at chapter one verse 17 put put your finger on it Paul prayed that God may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation and the knowledge of him the eyes of your understanding being enlightened that you may know what is the hope of his calling you were walking with the world to hell the way you walked according to the course of this world but now Paul gives thanks for the church because we who were dead now in chapter one verse 16 we have a living faith in the Lord Jesus and a love for all the saints that would be impossible if we were still dead you were ruled by Satan who worked in you Ephesians 2:2 says according to the prince of the power of the air the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience but God look back at chapter 1 verse 21 God seated Jesus Christ at his right hand in the heavenly places far above all principality far above the prince of the power of the air far above all might and dominion and every other name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come and God put all things under the feet of Jesus!

! God the judgment that you and I deserve as a child of wrath for chapter 1 verse 18 for the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

[33:49] You see how gracious our God is. You see how good it is for us to remember his wondrous work for us. Dear brothers and sisters, beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus, yes, your nature and mine required that we suffer eternal death, but Jesus Christ defeated death, the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Amen. Romans 8, starting at verse 2, reminds us God did not spare his own son, but delivered him up for all of us.

Who shall bring a charge against God's elect now? It is God who justifies. Who is it? Who is he who condemns? Well, the prince of the power of the air is trying to do that all the time.

But it is Christ who died. And furthermore is also risen. Who is even at the right hand of God. Who makes intercession for us. If God is for us, who can be against us?

Yes, you and I were walking with the world to hell. But Christ came to this world and he walked the blameless, righteous path, the narrow way, the only path that leads to life.

[35:13] And he says, and turns to you and me and says, I am the way. Follow me. Follow me. Walk to Christ and live.

Yes, you and I were ruled by Satan who worked in us. What a terrifying reality. But Jesus Christ has dethroned Satan.

He can no longer deceive those whom Christ has called. Satan no longer has any power over you, Christian.

The holy counselor, your advocate dwells in you. You now will still hear those attacks. You'll hear Satan's lies. But the spirit in you advocates and calls Satan out on him, puts him back in his low place.

You now hear Christ's truth. And your inner being shouts. Amen. Yes, you and I were slaves to our lusts because that was our nature that we inherited.

[36:31] But Christ's nature, which is the most pure human nature that God recreated in order to give to you and me, transforms us so that every inclination of Christ's heart, which is always good and always right, God works into us now, into our new nature, our new desires.

And God gave us the Holy Spirit in order to make Christ's desires overcomingly our own. He renews our mind to want to please God, who we would never want to please and glorify if you were still dead.

Can there be greater assurance of your salvation? Romans 8 verse 10 continues. If Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness.

But if the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit who dwells in you.

So yes, you and I were born dead and it's good that we remember how dead we were and that we do this often. Remember what it was like outside of Christ, but trust this, Christ died so that you and I may live.

[38:11] In Christ, you are made alive. And now in Christ, we live unto God for the glory of God alone. Amen. Well, let's praise our God for this great salvation.

Oh, Father, your word is so clear. Help us to receive you, to trust this glorious gospel. Lord, I pray that you protect our minds from distortions, from any attempts to make God a little bit lower, to raise up us a little bit higher.

Anything, Lord, that will rob Christ of his glory as our mediator between the holy, exalted God above all and us who were dead and would be dead still outside of Christ.

May Christ be glorified in your church, we pray. Amen.