

Eph 2.1-3 The Misery of Sin

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles and turn to the book of Ephesians.

We're continuing our series in the book of Ephesians, currently at chapter 2. Ephesians chapter 2, and while you're turning there, a bit of an introduction and review.

In chapter 1, we sort of laid out God's purpose of reconciliation, and that being to gather together in one all things in Christ by way of redemption, purposed by the Father, accomplished by the Son, and applied by the Spirit.

Now, in chapter 2, we see the details laid out of God's way of reconciliation, or His gracious covenant of reconciliation by His almighty power.

So whereas chapter 1 was God's purpose of reconciliation, chapter 2 is God's way of reconciliation. So we'll read chapter 2 in the book of Ephesians, we'll read the whole chapter.

[1 : 18] 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.

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 ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace and His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Therefore, remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision, made in the flesh by hands, that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.

For now, in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off, have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

[3 : 44] And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Lord, we thank You for Your Word that You have given us this divine testimony and special revelation. And I pray that as we consider the things of Your Word, that You would attend the proclamation of Your Word by Your Spirit and that You might grant us all spiritual understanding and help us to grow in our knowledge of truth and our fear of You.

So, Lord, I pray that You would be in our midst and illuminate Your Word to us. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. So, in chapter 2, as we've read, narrowing in specifically on verses 1 to 10, verses 1 to 10 speak about deliverance from the old life in death to new life in Christ.

So, within those 10 verses, being on deliverance from old life in death to new life in Christ, we see three important conjunctions in those 10 verses.

[5 : 22] particularly in verse 1, there's an and, in verse 4, there's a but, and in verse 8, there's a for. And you, but God, for by grace.

In verse 1, the and you, continuing in the context and the thought of God's power, it then focuses on the backdrop of the setting of human failure in verses 1 to 3.

The next conjunction, but God, in verse 4, focuses on divine intervention. So, amongst the focus in the backdrop of the setting of human failure, we have but God, divine intervention, which is a further illustration of God's almighty power, reaching back to verse 19 of chapter 1.

That's verses 4 to 7. The third conjunction, for, for by grace, in verse 8, focuses on new life in Christ by grace alone.

And that's 8 to 10. So, you see the three conjunctions there, and you, but God, for by grace. And those three conjunctions, and those 10 verses, are indicative of the saving grace of God towards those who have been purposed, purchased, and claimed by God.

[6 : 40] Which is what we saw in chapter 1. So, in chapter 2, with this focus, we see the covenant of grace according to the covenant of redemption.

So, again, where chapter 1 lays out God's purpose of reconciliation, we see that according to the covenant of redemption. Whereas in chapter 2, we see God's way of reconciliation, we see that by way of God's covenant of grace.

Let me explain a little further. The covenant of redemption that we see in chapter 1 is the pre-temporal, or the eternal, agreement in the unity of the Godhead concerning the work of the Son as mediator between God and humanity, guaranteeing payment of the debt of sin of those elected by the Father.

That's the covenant of redemption. Whereas the covenant of grace, as defined by Richard Muller, is the pact made by God, fulfilled in Christ. It is a gracious promise of salvation given to fallen humanity apart from any consideration of their ability to respond to it or fulfill it, and apart from any human initiative.

Human beings are drawn into covenant by God's grace alone. Remember, it's the covenant of grace, God's way of redemption.

[8 : 09] This gracious covenant of reconciliation is based on the eternal covenant transaction between the Father and the Son concerning the redemption of the elect.

In other words, the covenant of grace according to the covenant of redemption. Or in other words, God's way of reconciliation according to God's purpose of reconciliation.

Now, the display of God's almighty power or the exceeding greatness of God's almighty power is the context of what we're looking at.

And it's the display of God's almighty power with the backdrop behind it, with the setting of human failure in verses 1 to 3. Verses 1 to 3 starts off with, and you were, which is our former state or our former condition, namely, the misery of sin.

Now, the unbeliever would be averse to accusations of being a sinner. If you tell the unbeliever that he's a sinner, most likely he will respond unfavorably and might say something like, you don't know me, I'm well respected, I sit in high places, I've climbed the ladder in my workplace, people look up to me.

[9 : 26] With a horizontal view in comparison to worse people, or a horizontal view to Stalins and to Hitlers, one might think themselves not to be such a bad sinner.

However, what is the reality of sin? Or more importantly, how does God look upon sin? In Ephesians 2 verses 1 to 3, we see here the misery of sin.

And we'll unpack the misery of sin by looking at three particular things in the text. One being the state of sin, the second one being the magnitude of sin, and the third being the gravity of sin.

this is a comparison from when we looked at the spiritual blessings in Christ, comparing those spiritual blessings with our former condition.

And that can be summarized in verse 11, which says, therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh, that at that time you were without Christ, and you being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.

[10 : 44] So, back to our text, in chapter 2, verses 1 to 3, the misery of sin, it starts off by saying, and you, he made alive who were dead in trespasses and sin.

Now, something that's very important is how it starts off with and, the conjunction and, when it says and you. This and is a conjunction that signifies a connection and furtherance of explanation.

So, it's connecting what was previously looked at. So, we don't want to isolate it from the previous chapter, namely, verses 19 onward, which is the context of speaking to the exceeding greatness of God's almighty power on display in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ.

Right? Remember back, so, the exceeding greatness of God's almighty power on display in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ and, you and you he made alive.

Made alive or brought to life. So, what's on display is God's almighty power and you he made alive, brought to life.

[11 : 59] So, that then makes us question, well, what necessitated being made alive? What necessitated being brought to life?

and that is that they were spiritually dead. And you he made alive who were dead in trespasses and sin.

And to the unbeliever, is this offensive? Is this something that might incur an adverse reaction? yes. Yes. But, the discovery of God's infinite greatness, his awful holiness and severe justice shows the exceeding sinfulness of sin which necessitates a new state.

That is, being made new. The problem of fallen man's condition is that he needs to be made new. he needs to be made alive.

The realization of fallen man's condition is not only essential for repentance, it also magnifies the glory of the riches of God's grace and his almighty power in salvation.

[13 : 11] Being unconvinced of sin means being unconvinced of need of deliverance. In other words, a clear view of redemption demands a clear view of man's sin problem.

Redemption is not just that man needs a friend. Redemption is not an insurance policy. It is not a retirement plan. Rather, fallen, sinful mankind has a sin problem which requires payment.

payment that sinful mankind cannot pay. And all mankind is fallen in sin. The necessity of redemption is that man's sin problem required the second person of the Trinity being very God to assume our nature to suffer and die by the shedding of his blood and pouring out of his life in our place to pay our debt on our behalf and not just to leave us then without a positive righteousness but imputes or accredits to our account his righteousness and the merits and mediation of Christ.

So, what is man's sin problem? The first thing that we're going to draw to this text is the state of sin.

What is man's sin problem? What is the misery of sin? First of all, the state of sin. If you look to the text says, were dead in trespasses and sins.

[14 : 49] This is by very nature. There are four natures of the human condition. The first is the state of innocence. That was the state in which Adam was created, where Adam was created upright and without sin, but was able to sin.

Adam, however, did sin and because of sin fell into a state of sin or state of nature.

So, all of Adam's posterity, all the descendants from Adam are, therefore, in a state of sin by nature and are not able not to sin.

All descendants of Adam are not born innocent, are not born able not to sin, but are rather born with a sin nature. Those who are regenerated or who are born anew receive a new state or born into a new state and that is being the state of grace.

It's a new nature. The state of grace being regenerated being able not to sin but yet still able to sin. And those who are in a state of grace when they die and pass into eternity pass into a state of glory.

[16 : 04] we're no longer able to sin. The state of innocence, the state of sin or nature, the state of grace and the state of glory. But our focus today is on the second one, the state of sin by nature.

So, the state of sin. Fallen nature is a state of sin and misery, of self-conceit, corrupt nature, unwillingness to confess sin, discontentment with God, opposed to the will of God, seeking freedom and self-autonomy, going one's own way, walking contrary to God's order, with no care for the world to come.

This is by nature, our sin, fallen mankind's sin nature. If you remember, in chapter one, we looked at divine appropriations attributed to each person of the Trinity, the work of redemption, and in those divine appropriations in the work of redemption, I am not the fourth person of the Trinity.

Our text says, dead in sin. Dead in sin means obstinate opposition and enmity to God. If you recall the parable of the lost sheep, the lost sheep is an emblem of the lost sinner.

The lost sheep did not come and reconcile, rather the shepherd had to go and seek out the lost sheep and return the lost sheep to the fold. So if you remember the divine appropriations in the work of redemption, you'll remember chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and sealed by the Spirit.

[17 : 47] What was my involvement? I was dead in sin. Redemption purposed by the Father, accomplished by the Son, applied by the Spirit, and me, I was dead in sin.

purposed, purchased, and claimed by God, you were dead in sin. This is contrary to the Pelagian influence and its denial of original sin.

Let me explain. Man is not born indifferent to either good or evil, but is born guilty, corrupt, born with a disobedient nature, in utter need of divine intervention, sin.

And nothing other than the almighty power of God can help. So what is this original sin?

Original sin is being dead in Adam as a public representative. Adam being a public representative, all of his descendants are dead in sin.

[18 : 50] Romans 5.15 says, by the one man's offense, many died. This is a state of nature. The state of sin is a state of nature.

In verse three it says, by nature. So the state of nature is by nature in the state of sin. Romans 5.12 says, therefore just as through one man sin entered the world and death through sin and thus death spread to all men because all sinned.

Our text in verse one says, were dead. Dead. Like the valley of dry bones. No nerves. No flesh. Dead.

Dried up. Without life. Without hope. And cut off from God. John Owen describes this death as being twofold.

First, being legal and second being metaphorical. Legal, that is the sentence under the law. That upon sin, man must die. Adam and all his posterity became dead in law.

[20 : 05] Therefore, deliverance from this sentence can only be by justification by faith alone in Christ. As Romans 8.1 says, there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Second, metaphorical, this is a spiritual death, utterly disabled from doing anything that is spiritually good. And therefore, deliverance from this state is the quickening by the almighty power and irresistible efficacy of the Holy Spirit, redemption applied by the Spirit.

Because of original sin, mankind is corrupted and guilty at the source. Descendants of Adam conceived in sin by nature antagonistic towards spiritual good, dead and sin.

It also says, sons of disobedience, not just committing disobedient acts, but the offspring and posterity of disobedience. Dead, spiritually separated and alienated from God, who is the first cause, almighty supreme being, the source of true life.

Dead, because alienated from the source of true life. Second London Baptist Confession in chapter six, paragraph two, says, our first parents, by this sin, fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and we in them whereby death came upon all, all becoming dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.

[21 : 45] Baptist Catechism answer number 19, says, the covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression.

sin. Furthermore, from original sin, mankind is guilty of actual sin, proceeding from the sin nature, willful disobedience and opposition.

There's love of the world, carnality of the flesh, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, an inner longing, and carnal passion, fulfilling the will of the flesh, the desires of the flesh, which we see in verse 3.

Back to the text in verse 2, it says, 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, and the sons of disobedience.

So secondly, in the misery of sin, the magnitude of sin. Now James 2, 10, it says, for whoever shall keep the law and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

[23 : 17] So stumbling in one point, committing one sin, is being guilty of all. It only requires the commission of one sin to be guilty of all.

But yet, fallen mankind does not just commit one sin. Rather, proceeding from iniquity to iniquity, heaping up wrath upon wrath, violating the commands of God a thousand times over, sinful actions, sinful words, sinful thoughts, sinful intentions, public sins, private and secret sins, clinging to sin, loving sin, unable and unwilling to part with or turn from sin, being in allegiance to sin and self above all else, being attracted to the course of this world, loving this world, allured by it and the charms and vain deceit of the prince of the power of the air, following the prince of this world, or the prince of the power of the air, who dominates over men, who subject themselves to him by sinning, by following after him and the ways of darkness, following the prince of darkness, the ruler of the realm of the air, the ruling authority of the domain of darkness, the serpent,

Satan, the devil, working in opposition to Christ. Now in hearing this the unbeliever might think, me? Follow Satan?

I don't even believe in Satan. However, whether unconsciously believing in Satan and following Satan, the Bible tells us that the course of this world is the realm of Satan.

I'm sure that some might profess to worship Satan, but others might deny it, however, are following the course of this world.

[25 : 22] The course of this world is the domain of darkness, darkness, is the domain of darkness dominated by the forces of evil, the dominion of spiritual forces of wickedness, a city of vanity, carnality, bondage, and destruction.

Following the course of this world and walking according to the course of this world, being like this world, conforming to this world, governed by this world, ruled by this world, therefore, governed and ruled by the prince of the air, that is, governed and ruled by Satan.

Augustine, in his book Confessions, describes his conversion and his state leading up to his conversion. He said this, The enemy had seized my will and had made a chain of it, binding me.

A thwarted will gives rise to lust, and whoever serves lust turns it into something customary, and what is customary is not resisted, but becomes a necessity.

It was through these links, joined together, which is why I call it a chain, that a harsh bondage was holding me fettered. One of Satan's effective deceptions is the idea that doctrine is not important for the Christian life.

[26 : 50] God is light. doctrine is the teaching of God and the things of God. Satan is the prince of darkness.

Darkness is a veil that blinds. So where there is darkness, when light shines in darkness, it reveals much.

God is light, which is why Satan, one of his most effective deceptions, is to not want light to shine. The seeker-sensitive church tries to suppress the doctrine of sin in fear of offending those whom they are attempting to attract to come into the church.

In fact, I once heard a church say that their church is a place that is not safe for sin, but safe for sinners, or a place where sin is not safe, but sinners are.

However, God doesn't send sin to hell for eternal punishment. He sends sinners, sons of disobedience, in opposition to and enmity with God.

[28 : 03] So I assert that the church should not be safe for sinners, because by the faithful preaching of the word and the power of God, sinners are called to die to the world, die to self, die to sin, where the old man dies, being buried with Christ, and raised to new life, separated from the world and sin, to live unto Christ, who reigns in the church, who rules in the church, who is head and mediator, prophet, priest, and king, where the king of kings and lord of lords, faithful and true, Lord God almighty, reigns.

Then no, sinners in a state of sin nature are not safe, and the doctrine of sin is crucial in our understanding of salvation. Godly living, and the calling of the church.

So if man looks horizontally, he is safe. If man looks horizontally to compare himself, whether or not he is doing good, by comparing himself to others and those perhaps who have done more heinous things than himself, he is safe.

However, when he looks vertically, when he looks to God, he is not safe, but apprehends his sinful condition and discerns his plight. The greatness of God's holiness shows the inexcusable vileness of sin and an absolute need of mercy.

Verse 3, 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.

[29 : 47] the misery of sin is the gravity of sin, the gravity of sin and its all-inclusive reach.

Verse 3 starts off by saying, among whom also we all. What does this we all mean? It starts off addressing the Ephesians who are Gentiles.

Now Paul says, also we all. This is all-encompassing. This is Gentile and Jew. In other words, all mankind.

Jew and Gentile, all mankind, all under sin. None righteous. No, not one. None who understands. None who seeks after God.

They have all turned aside. They have together become unprofitable. There is none who does good. No, not one. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

[30 : 51] The misery of sin we see also in the gravity of sin by way of the severity of sin. First of all, the fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.

Well, what is the misery of sin? What is the severity and gravity of sin? first of all, it is a depraved mind.

Depraved mind being lustful desires and actions, being given to sin, willing to sin, covering up sin, excusing sin, rationalizing sin, defending sin, and affirming sin.

It is an abysmal sinking mire, a slew of despond, accursed misery, an agonizing condemnation, crushed under the power of sin, alienated from God, under divine judgment.

Ezekiel 18, 20 says, the soul who sins shall die. Romans 6, 23 says, the wages of sin is death.

[31 : 57] This is spiritually dead. Dry bones without life, without hope, cut off from God, at the heart of stone, at enmity with God, enemies of the cross of Christ, veiled in darkness, blind, and self-oriented.

Self-oriented with self-righteousness, self-pity, self-confident, self-sufficient, self-admiration, self-love. This self-oriented tendency is encapsulated in our culture's expressive individualism's catchphrase of you do you, which means put yourself first, do what's best in your own eyes, do what pleases you, you are your own compass, blind and self-oriented, spiritually dead.

Aquinas in his commentary on the text said that sin is termed a death because by it man is separated from God who is life, spiritually dead, without God, without hope.

Death is not annihilationism of the wicked ceasing to exist and escaping God's judgment, justice and wrath.

No, rather it is the worst type of death. Its final consequence being eternal damnation and unspeakable torment of both body and soul, the wrath of God.

[33 : 40] Ephesians 5, 6 says, because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Thomas Boston gave a description of hell.

Separation from fellowship with God, the very hell of hell, exposure of both body and soul to the fiery torments of hell, blackness of darkness, ears filled with frightful yellings of the infernal crew, taste nothing but the sharpness of God's wrath, the dregs of the cup of his fury, the stench of the burning lake of brimstone, extreme pains forevermore.

When we consider these things, in consideration of the gravity of sin, the cure is not to seek to satisfy God's justice by obedience of the law.

It's too late for personal, exact, entire, and perpetual obedience. The remedy is not to try harder and try to achieve merit by church attendance.

That is not enough. The only satisfaction of sin is the shed blood of Christ poured out on our behalf and in our place. The only way to be right with a holy and just God is by being united to Christ, to receive Christ and rest on him alone for salvation.

[35 : 08] By grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Sinful, guilty souls must either be separated from the guilt of sin to all eternity or else be separated from God to all eternity.

Sinful mankind requires penal substitutionary atonement. Let me explain. In the Old Testament day of atonement, the sacrificial lamb and scapegoat points to Christ.

There's a shadow of Christ and Christ being the substance through the shedding of his blood and pouring out of his life for the payment of sins for a full pardon and the guilt of sin taken away never to return.

those in the state of sin nature are in absolute need of Christ. In need of being made new, to be born anew into Christ, a real spiritual union that establishes an intimate and undissolvable union with Christ and all the blessings of salvation are ours in him.

In other words, you must be born again. The almighty power of God, effectually working by the Spirit on the souls of men, applying the work of redemption, delivering them out of this state of sin and misery by regeneration.

[36 : 45] You must be born again. Recovering and restoring lost men to Christ by quickening or bestowing new life, a new man being born anew.

Now, if you recall when we started in verse 1, understand the context that this book of Ephesians is written to saints, to the saints.

Chapter 2, verse 1 says, and you he made alive. This is good news. The backdrop of human failure and the misery of sin, this is good news.

Romans 6, 21 says, For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. 1 Corinthians 15, 22 says, For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

Made alive, meaning brought to life. the exceeding greatness of his almighty power to us that were dead in trespasses and sin, quickened to new life.

[38 : 03] Redemption applied by the Spirit of God. Being transferred into the state of grace. The state of sin into the state of grace. Having turned to Christ, embracing Christ, receiving Christ, resting on Christ, joined to Christ in the covenant of grace.

So further points of application. To the Christian, having been bought with the blood of Christ and born again by the quickening of the Spirit, consider well the vileness of sin, the destruction of sin, the gravity of sin, the misery of sin.

Why return to the habits of the old man, to the course of this world? See sin for the vileness that it is, hate sin, continue to confess it, have a change of mind about it.

It is our duty to continue to repent of our sins. So as such, meditate on Christ's blood, Christ's blood poured out for a full pardon.

Meditate on the indwelling Holy Spirit, our helper. Meditate on the evil of sin and mortification of it.

[39 : 25] And meditate on having an apprehension of free grace and the mercy of God. A clearer view of the guilt and punishment of sin yields a clearer view of the grace of God.

And a clearer view of the grace of God and the unsearchable riches of Christ yields a clearer gratitude. Blessed be the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ to the praise of his glorious grace.

Furthermore, in the state of eternity, there are no spectators. There is the inheritance of the redeemed in God's kingdom of glory, and there is the condemnation of sinners in hell.

when this veil of flesh is drawn away, you must take your place in one of the two destinations, being either in Christ or being outside of Christ.

Your eternal state will be according to your state in which you die. If one dies being outside of Christ, in the state of sin by nature, there will be no more hope for him.

[40 : 41] he will find himself without Christ, without excuse, and without hope forever. For those who are in Christ, death marks the entrance into the state of glory, being covered by the shed blood of Christ, forgiven, pardoned, robed in Christ's righteousness, co-heirs with Christ, eternally blessed in the glorious inheritance of the saints in Christ Jesus our Lord, where there will be no sin, no corruption, no misery, no suffering, no pain, no sorrow, no disorder, no confusion, no hostility, no death.

The redeemed will be with our glorious Lord, Christ risen, Christ exalted, Christ all glorious, Christ altogether lovely, in the fullness of joy, exceeding joy, unspeakable joy, in perfect communion and enjoyment of God with clarity of God's glory and truth.

Christ will return to judge the living and the dead. Evaluate your spiritual condition now and whether you are born anew into Christ and under grace or spiritually dead, still in Adam and under the law, in sin, misery, condemnation, and by nature, child of wrath.

All praise be to God for the Lord God almighty reigns. Praise God for Christ all glorious and his glorious gospel of salvation of dead, guilty sinners.

Amen. Lord, we praise you for your almighty power, the exceeding greatness of your almighty power on display in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ and in making alive dead, lost sinners in a state of misery.

[42 : 46] I thank you, Lord, that on this Lord's day that we can dwell on these things from your word and offer to you much praise and gratitude in our worship.

I pray that indeed, Lord, you would be praised. Lord, if there are those who are outside of Christ here today, I pray that if it be your will that you would open their eyes, that you would cause darkness to flee and shine light in darkness, call them out of this world, call them out of sin, call them out of death, call them out of misery into marvelous light to Christ's kingdom.

I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's stand and sing the doxology. Amen.