

FROM DEATH TO LIFE, PT. 1; EPH. 2:1-2b (Ed O'Leary)

INTRODUCTION.

TODAY, ~ WE ARE BEGINNING A DETAILED STUDY OF THE NEXT SECTION OF Ephesians, ~ 2:1-10.

▶▶ However, ~ before we get into this paragraph, ~ it would be good, ~ in order to keep the big picture of Ephesians in mind, ~ to once again set the overall context of the letter.

▷▷ And in order to keep the whole context in view, ~ we'll do this at the beginning of each section.

▶▶ As said, ~ Ephesians can be divided into three consecutive overarching themes.

▷▷ The first central theme is brought out in [chapters 1-3](#).

↪↪ In these chapters, ~ Paul spells out for us ~ "the breadth and length and height and depth" ~ of our salvation and many of its accompanying blessings ~ that God has brought about for us ~ and given us ~ in and through Jesus.

→→ In short, ~ Paul explains the doctrine of salvation.

▷▷ The second overarching theme is brought out in ~ [4:1 - 6:9](#).

↪↪ Here Paul highlights and describes ~ how we, ~ who have been given this salvation and its accompanying blessings, ~ are to live as a result.

▷▷ The third central theme of Ephesians is brought out in [6: ~ 10-20](#), ~ and deals with the spiritual warfare of the Christian.

↪↪ As noted at beginning, ~ immediately upon receiving Christ, ~ believers find themselves in a constant struggle. ~ We are engaged in a war, ~ a spiritual war.

↪↪ And in [Eph. 6:10-20](#), ~ Paul tells us how we are to fight this spiritual war in order to be victorious.

▶▶ Ok, ~ that is the overall context. ~ And I continue to encourage you to read

NOW LET'S TURN OUR ATTENTION TO A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THIS NEXT PARAGRAPH in Ephesians, ~ 2:1-10, ~ in order to set the context ~ and see how it all fits together. ↵ 1/9

▶▶ Basically, ~ in [Eph. 2:1-10](#), ~ Paul explains that God has brought believers from spiritual death to spiritual, ~ or new, ~ life by His grace alone.

▶▶ Paul begins, ~ in [verse 1](#), ~ by stating what our condition was prior to salvation, ~ and also the reason for this condition.

▷▷ He says, ~ "["And you were dead in the trespasses and sins."](#)*

▶▶ In [verses 2-3](#), ~ Paul describes our dead condition. ~ He writes, ~ "["in which* you once walked, ~ following the course of this world, ~ following the prince of the power of the air, ~ the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience — among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, ~ carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, ~ and were by nature children of wrath, ~ like the rest of mankind."](#)

▶▶ Then in [verses 4-6](#), ~ Paul explains the gracious, ~ merciful, ~ and loving act of God that brought us from spiritual death to new life.

▷▷ He says, ~ "["But God, ~ being rich in mercy, ~ because of the great love with which he loved us, ~ even when we were dead in our trespasses, ~ made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved — and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."](#)

▶▶ After that, ~ in [verse 7](#), ~ Paul points out a purpose of God's gracious act of bringing us from spiritual death to spiritual life.

▷▷ He writes, ~ "["so that in the coming ages ~ he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."](#)

▶▶ And finally, ~ in [verses 8-10](#), ~ Paul explains that our salvation, ~ this new life that God has given us, ~ is totally by grace alone.

▷▷ He says, ~ "["For by grace you have been saved through faith. ~ And this is not your own doing; ~ it is the gift of God, ~ not a result of works, ~ so that no one may boast. ~ For we are his workmanship, ~ created in Christ Jesus for good works, ~ which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."](#)

THIS MORNING, ~ WE WILL FOCUS OUR ATTENTION ON VERSE 1 THROUGH VERSE 2b.

[IN VERSE 1, ~ AS WE NOTED, ~ PAUL STATES WHAT OUR CONDITION WAS PRIOR to salvation, ~ and also the reason for this condition.](#)

FIRST, ~ IN VERSE 1a, ~ PAUL SAYS ~ THAT PRIOR TO SALVATION, BELIEVERS "WERE dead." ↯ ↯ 2/9

▶▶ The word "dead" ~ must certainly refer to our spiritual ~ and not physical ~ condition, ~ for the next two verses show that we were very much alive physically when we were unsaved.

▷▷ The prodigal son had been considered dead by his father ~ even though he was very much alive physically.

↳↳ After he returned to his father, ~ we read in [Lk. 15:24](#) ~ that his father declared, ~ "For this my son was dead, ~ and is alive again; ~ he was lost, ~ and is found.' ~ And they began to celebrate."

▶▶ So here in [Eph. 2:1](#), ~ Paul is referring to spiritual death, ~ i.e., ~ separation and alienation from ~ and enmity toward, ~ God.

▷▷ As Paul puts it in [Eph. 2:12](#), ~ when we were unsaved, ~ we were "separate from Christ . . . having no hope and without God in the world."

↳↳ "without God" refers to not having any relationship with God

↳↳ "hope" ~ The totality of what God has promised the Christian at the end of this age ~ and in the life to come. ~ And also the confident expectation of what God will do in the future

▷▷ In [Col. 1:21a](#), ~ Paul notes that before we were saved we "were alienated and hostile in mind ~ [i.e., ~ we were alienated from ~ and had a hostile attitude toward ~ God]."

▷▷ And according to Paul in [Rom. 5:10](#), ~ prior to salvation, ~ we were God's enemies.

▶▶ Prior to salvation, ~ we "were spiritually dead," ~ Paul says. ~ And "dead" here ~ means exactly that, ~ "dead."

▷▷ Scripture does not picture people as just having some character flaws ~ or of just having low self-esteem ~ or as being imperfect but basically good.

▷▷ The reality Scripture presents is that outside of Christ people are spiritual corpses.

▷▷ Prior to salvation, ~ we were not almost dead or barely alive ~ "were spiritually dead."

▶▶ Now physical death is a state from which people cannot break free on their own ~ Why? ~ because they're dead.

▷▷ When people are dead ~ they have no capability to generate life. ~ Lazarus

▶▶ The same is true of spiritually dead people ~ Spiritual death is a state from which people cannot break free on their own. ~ They have no capability to generate spiritual life.

▷▷ In Rom. 5:6, ~ Paul writes, ~ "For while we were still weak ~ [i.e., ~ when we could not do anything about it.], ~ at the right time Christ died for the ungodly."

▷▷ My fellow Christians, ~ we could not ~ and did not ~ raise ourselves from spiritual death to spiritual life.

↳↳ As we'll see, ~ Paul makes it crystal clear, ~ here in Eph. 2:1-10, ~ that it was the gracious, ~ merciful, ~ and loving act of God alone ~ that raised us from spiritual death to spiritual, ~ or new, ~ life.

→→ It was God, ~ and God alone, ~ Paul says in verses 5b-6, ~ that "made us alive together with Christ . . . and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

AND SPEAKING OF SPIRITUAL DEATH, ~ WE SHOULD MENTION HERE THAT PEOPLE who are spiritually dead are facing a horrifying and terrible eternity.

▶▶ Because spiritual death leads ultimately to "the second death."

▷▷ John explains in Rev. 20:13-15. ~ "And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, ~ Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, ~ and they were judged, ~ each one of them, ~ according to what they had done. ~ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. ~ This is the second death, ~ the lake of fire. ~ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, ~ he was thrown into the lake of fire"

▶▶ But, ~ my fellow believers, ~ because God has raised us from spiritual death to spiritual life, ~ we will never, ~ never, ~ experience "the second death."

▷▷ John declares this in Rev. 20:6a. ~ "Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! ~ Over such the second death has no power."

▷▷ And in 1 Thess. 1:10, ~ Paul says that Jesus "delivers us from the wrath to come."

NEXT, ~ IN VERSE 1b, ~ PAUL ADDS A REASON FOR OUR PRE-SALVATION spiritual death.

▶▶ For context, ~ let's take all of verse 1. ~ "And you were dead ~ [and here's the reason why:] ~ in the trespasses and sins."

▷▷ The Greek construction may indicate cause here. ~ So we could paraphrase verse 1 as "And you were dead ~ because of your trespasses and sins." ↴ 4/9

▶▶ When Paul connects death with sin in Romans, ~ he points to death as the biblical penalty for sin, ~ especially sin against the commandment of God.

▶▶ But before we look at Romans, ~ keep in mind that, ~ though Paul is specifically talking about spiritual death in Eph. 2:1b, ~ physical death is also the penalty for sin.

▷▷ Death was not a part of God's original plan for creation.

↳↳ In 1 Cor. 15:26, ~ Paul notes that death is our enemy. ~ "The last enemy to be destroyed ~ [i.e., ~ by Jesus] ~ is death.

▶▶ Okay, ~ that said, ~ let's see a sampling of how Paul connects spiritual and physical death with sin in Romans.

▷▷ In Rom. 5:12-21, ~ Paul declares that Adam's disobedience led to death.

↳↳ E.g., ~ in verse 12, ~ Paul writes, ~ "Therefore, ~ just as sin came into the world through one man, ~ and death through sin, ~ and so death spread to all men because all sinned."

▷▷ In Rom. 6:23a, ~ Paul says, ~ "For the wages of ~ [or payment for] ~ sin is death."

▷▷ In vv. 9-11, ~ from Paul's personal testimony regarding sin in Rom. 7, ~ he says, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ "I was once alive apart from the law, ~ but when the commandment came, ~ sin came alive and I died. ~ The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. ~ For sin, ~ seizing an opportunity through the commandment, ~ deceived me ~ and through it killed me." ~ Here Paul is speaking only of spiritual death.

▶▶ James weighs in on this as well. ~ In James 1:13-15, ~ he writes, ~ "Let no one say when he is tempted, ~ 'I am being tempted by God,' ~ for God cannot be tempted with evil, ~ and he himself tempts no one. ~ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ~ ¶¶

▷▷ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, ~ and sin when it is fully grown ~ brings forth death."

↳↳ James' primary reference seems to be to spiritual death, ~ but physical death is certainly included.

▶▶ And this is probably also the thought here in Eph. 2:1b, ~ although Paul has only spiritual death in view. ~ Paul is saying that we were spiritually dead ~ because of our "trespasses and sins." ¶¶ 5/9

▶▶ We should add here that this is not the only reason for our spiritual death.

▷▷ When we get to [verse 3](#), ~ we'll see that Paul says we "were by nature children of wrath."

▶▶ Now, ~ in saying, ~ here in [verse 1](#), ~ that prior to our salvation we "were dead because of the trespasses and sins," ~ Paul is not pointing out two different kinds of wrongdoing.

▷▷ These are synonyms, ~ so Paul is most likely using the two terms to express one idea.

↳↳ It would seem that Paul is emphasizing the utter sinfulness of our condition prior to our salvation ~ rather than making any distinction between "trespasses" and "sins."

▷▷ Paul wants us to truly grasp just how completely infected by sin we were. ~~ This was not a mild case of some wrongdoing.

↳↳ We were totally, ~ thoroughly, ~ 100%, ~ [get Paul's point?] ~ sinful.

↳↳ Going back to Paul's personal testimony regarding sin in [Rom. 7](#), ~ Paul says in [verse 18a](#), ~ and the [NIV](#) paraphrase brings it out quite well, ~ ¶¶

→→ "For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, ~ that is, ~ in my sinful nature."

IN VERSES 2-3, ~ PAUL THEN DESCRIBES THIS STATE OF SPIRITUAL DEADNESS that we were in prior to salvation.

HE DESCRIBES IT FIVE WAYS. ~~ TODAY, ~ WE'RE just going to briefly look at the first 2.

1st, ~ IN VERSE 2a, ~ PAUL SAYS THAT IN OUR PRE-SALVATION LIFE WE "WALKED" IN our "trespasses and sins."

▶▶ "walked" is being used here by Paul as a metaphor for one's conduct in everyday life. ~~ It could be paraphrased by the word "lived." ~~ I.e., ~ we "lived" in our "trespasses and sins."

▶▶ "walked" can refer to good or bad conduct. ~~ Here Paul is using it negatively.

▶▶ And his point is that actively sinning characterized our lives prior to salvation. ~~ IOW, ~ in our pre-salvation condition, ~ sinning was a way of life for us. ~~ Sin dominated our lives.

▷▷ An implication here is that sin is not to dominate our new life in Christ.

↳↳ Sinning not to be way of life for believers. ~~ Not to characterize ¶¶ 6/9

↳↳ Col. 3:5-10. ~ ~ "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: ~ ~ sexual immorality, impurity, ~ passion, ~ evil desire, ~ and covetousness, ~ which is idolatry. ~ ~ On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ~ ~ ¶¶

↳↳ In these you too once walked, ~ when you were living in them. ~ ~ But now you must put them all away: ~ ~ anger, ~ wrath, ~ malice, ~ slander, ~ and obscene talk from your mouth. ~ ~ Do not lie to one another, ~ seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, ~ which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator."

2nd, ~ IN VERSE 2b, ~ PAUL SAYS THAT, ~ PRIOR TO SALVATION, ~ WE WERE "following the course of this world."

▶▶ I.e., ~ Paul asserts that ~ when unsaved, ~ we followed the standards of this world.

▶▶ Paul here does not use the word "world" in the literal sense of the physical world, ~ but in the theological sense of people organized in their opposition against God.

▷▷ This could be understood as referring to the various non-Christian religions, ~ ideologies, ~ philosophies, ~ values, ~ and economic structures, ~ as well as to the influence of peer pressure, ~ fashion, ~ and the media.

↳↳ And also to the people behind all these things.

▷▷ In brief, ~ when he says "world," ~ Paul is talking about the present world system. ~ ~ In Gal. 1:4, ~ Paul refers to it as "the present evil age."

↳↳ And this "present evil age" is in rebellion against God ~ and opposed to everything and everyone associated with Him.

→→ In Jn. 15:19, ~ Jesus tells believers, ~ "If you were of the world, ~ the world would love you as its own; ~ ~ but because you are not of the world, ~ but I chose you out of the world, ~ therefore the world hates you."

▶▶ It comes as no surprise then, ~ that the standards of this present evil world system, ~ that we followed prior to salvation, ~ are the exact opposite of God's standards.

▶▶ E.g. ~ the ancient writer Plutarch reflects well the standards of this "present evil age."

▷▷ He said that the sign of a good man was that he was useful to his friends and terrible to his enemies. ¶¶ 7/9

▷▷ In contrast Jesus said, ~ in Lk. 6:27-29, ~ "But I say to you who hear, ~ Love your enemies, ~ do good to those who hate you, ~ bless those who curse you, ~ pray for those who abuse you. ~ To one who strikes you on the cheek, ~ offer the other also, ~ and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either."

▷▷ And in Rom. 12:19-20a, ~ Paul says, ~ "Beloved, ~ never avenge yourselves, ~ but leave it to the wrath of God, ~ for it is written, ~ 'Vengeance is mine, ~ I will repay, ~ says the Lord.' ~ ~ 11

↳↳ To the contrary, ~ 'if your enemy is hungry, ~ feed him; ~ if he is thirsty, ~ give him something to drink.'"

▶▶ Furthermore, ~ one of the major standards of this present evil world system is to put self in the center of everything.

▷▷ In contrast, ~ Christianity sets Jesus in the center of everything ~ and others before self.

↳↳ In Phil. 2:9-11, ~ Paul writes, ~ "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ~ 11

→→ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, ~ in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ~ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, ~ to the glory of God the Father" ~ Centrality of Jesus in Ephesians

↳↳ And in Phil. 2:3-4, ~ Paul says, ~ "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, ~ but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ~ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, ~ but also to the interests of others."

▶▶ Before God saved us, ~ Paul says in Eph. 2:2b, ~ we followed the standards of this "present evil age," ~ 11

▷▷ that is in rebellion against God, ~ opposed to everything and everyone associated with Him, ~ and where self is on the throne.

↳↳ And not only did we follow the standards of this present evil world system, ~ we too were in rebellion against God, ~ opposed to everything and everyone associated with Him, ~ with king "self" seated squarely on the throne of our lives.

↳↳ But the good news, ~ my brothers and sisters in Christ, ~ is that, ~ as Paul says in Gal. 1:4a, ~ Jesus "gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age."

↳↳ Col. 1:13 11 8/9

CONCLUSION.

PRIOR TO SALVATION, ~ WE WERE SPIRITUALLY DEAD, ~ BECAUSE OF OUR trespasses and sins, ~ ¶¶

▶▶we were 100% sinful, ~ sinning was a way of life for us, ~ we were following the standards of this "present evil age," ~ ¶¶

▷▷and we were headed for a horrifying and terrible eternity.

MY FELLOW BELIEVERS, ~ WE WERE IN THIS HORRIBLY SINFUL, ~ HELPLESS, ~ AND hopeless condition.

▶▶"But God, ~ [to give us a preview of the good news that comes later in this paragraph, ~~ Paul writes in verses 4-6] ~ ¶¶

▷▷"But God, ~ being rich in mercy, ~ because of the great love with which he loved us, ~ even when we were dead in our trespasses, ~ ¶¶

↳↳made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved — and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

▶▶Praise the Lord, ~~ praise the Lord, ~~ Let the earth hear His Voice! ~~ ¶¶

▷▷Praise the Lord, ~~ praise the Lord, ~~ Let the people rejoice! ~~ O come to the Father thro' Jesus the Son, ~~ ¶¶

↳↳And give Him the glory, ~~ great things He hath done.

LETS' PRAY ~ 9/9