

INTRODUCTION.

THIS MORNING, ~ OUR DETAILED LOOK AT EPH. 2:1-10 CONTINUES.

▶▶ To put it briefly, ~ in this paragraph, ~ as we have noted, ~ Paul explains that God has brought Christians from spiritual death to spiritual life by His grace, ~ and His grace alone.

CURRENTLY, ~ WE ARE EXPLORING VERSES 2-3, ~ IN WHICH PAUL DESCRIBES OUR spiritually dead condition prior to salvation.

▶▶ We have already looked at the first three of the five ways Paul describes our spiritually dead condition.

▷▷ 1st, ~ in vs. 2a, ~ Paul said that, ~ prior to salvation, ~ active sinning characterized our lives. ~ IOW, ~ in our pre-salvation condition, ~ sinning was a way of life for us.

▷▷ 2nd, ~ in verse 2b, ~ Paul said that, ~ before God saved us, ~ we followed the standards of this present evil world system.

▷▷ And 3rd, ~ in verse 2c, ~ Paul noted that prior to salvation, ~ when we were spiritually dead, ~ we followed Satan.

THIS MORNING, ~ WE WILL TURN OUR ATTENTION TO THE FOURTH AND FIFTH WAYS that Paul describes our spiritually dead condition prior to salvation.

THE 4th DESCRIPTION OF OUR SPIRITUALLY DEAD CONDITION IS IN VERSE 3a.

PAUL WRITES, ~ "AMONG WHOM WE ALL ONCE LIVED IN THE PASSIONS OF OUR flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind."

▶▶ Before getting into the details, ~ let's note, ~ and keep in mind as we look at the specifics, ~ that the main point of description is that, ~ prior to salvation, ~ we "lived in the passions of our flesh."

THE PHRASE "AMONG WHOM" REFERS BACK TO "THE SONS OF DISOBEDIENCE" IN verse 2.

▶▶ To put it differently, ~ Paul is saying that before we were saved, ~ we all, ~ i.e., ~ Christians, ~ too lived the same kind of life as all unbelievers do.

▷▷ And that is, ~ "in the passions of our flesh." ⇓ 1/8

IT'S IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND HERE ~ THAT PAUL IS NOT IMPLYING THAT OUR physical bodies are in any way inherently sinful or evil.

▶▶ In the context of Eph. 2:1-3, ~ Paul is using "flesh" here as a symbol of our sinful nature, ~ which is fallen and totally infected and corrupted by sin, ~ and that dominated us prior to salvation.

▷▷ Once again going back to Paul's personal testimony regarding the struggle with sin in his own life, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ Paul says in Rom. 7:18a, ~ 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."

▷▷ And Jer. 17:9, ~ speaking of our sin nature, ~ says, ~ NIV, ~ "The heart is deceitful above all things ~ and beyond cure. ~ Who can understand it?" ~ I.e., ~ who can understand just how bad our sin nature is? ~ On human level, ~ no one.

▶▶ Beyond cure, ~ no good dwells, ~ totally infected and corrupted by sin, ~ fallen.

▶▶ Our old nature is so bad ~ that God gives us a totally new nature when He saves us.

▷▷ God does not reform the old nature. ~ As Jeremiah says, ~ our old sinful human nature is incurable.

▷▷ God the Holy Spirit creates totally new life in believers, ~ enabling a life of God-centered ~ and God-honoring things.

▷▷ In 2 Cor. 5:17, ~ Paul writes, ~ "Therefore, ~ if anyone is in Christ, ~ he is a new creation. ~ The old has passed away; ~ behold, ~ the new has come.

↪↪ It's not a remodeling or repairing of the old nature. ~ When we are born again, ~ we become a totally new person in Christ.

▷▷ And in Ezek. 36:26, ~ God says, ~ "And I will give you a new heart, ~ and a new spirit I will put within you. ~ And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."

↪↪ "a new heart" and "a new spirit," ~ which by instinct want to please, ~ to live for, ~ and to serve ~ God. ~ The total opposite of our old nature.

▶▶ So Paul is referring to our sinful nature here in verse 3a ~ in his use of the word "flesh."

TO EXPAND THEN ON PAUL'S 4th DESCRIPTION OF OUR SPIRITUALLY DEAD LIFE, ~ he's saying ~ that ~ like all unbelievers, ~ when we were unsaved, ~ we "lived in the passions of our sinful nature."

▶▶ Again, ~ this is the main point of description.

▶▶ The word for "lived," ~ when Paul says that formerly, ~ we "lived in the passions of our sinful nature," ~ refers to conduct in daily life.

▶▶ The word "passions" refers to evil desires since they come from our sinful nature.

▶▶ Furthermore, ~ Paul is pointing to us having been dominated by the passions of our sin nature before salvation.

▶▶ Paul is saying that, ~ like all unbelievers, ~ when we were unsaved, ~ we were dominated on a daily basis by our sinful nature and its sinful desires.

▷▷ In brief, ~ when we were spiritually dead, ~ we were slaves to our sinful nature and its sinful desires.

▶▶ Being slaves to our sinful nature and its sinful desires further indicates our separation and alienation from ~ and enmity toward, ~ God.

▷▷ That's because the sinful nature dominates human behavior in ways which run counter to God's purpose ~ and is opposed to God and his will.

▷▷ Paul points this out clearly in Rom. 8:5-8. ~ "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh ~ [i.e., ~ on what the flesh desires], ~ ¶¶

↳↳ but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit ~ [i.e., ~ on what the Holy Spirit desires]. ~ ¶¶

→→ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, ~ but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace ~ [i.e., ~ letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace]. ~ ¶¶

↳↳ [Paul continues] ~ For the mind that is set on the flesh ~ [or, ~ governed by the sinful nature] is hostile to God, ~ for it does not submit to God's law; ~ indeed, ~ it cannot. ~ ¶¶

⇒⇒ Those who are in the flesh ~ [i.e., ~ those who are still under the control of their sinful nature] ~ cannot please God." ¶¶ 3/8

▶▶Getting back to Paul's fourth description of our spiritually dead life, ~ like all unbelievers, ~ when we were spiritually dead, ~ **we were enslaved on a daily basis by our sinful nature and its sinful desires.**

AT THE END OF VERSE 3a, ~ PAUL ADDS THAT, ~ IN OUR SINFUL STATE, ~ WE fulfilled the sin nature's evil desires.

▶▶He says that we were "carrying out the desires of the body and the mind."

▷▷"body" here, ~ like "flesh," ~ refers to our sinful nature, ~ not our physical body.

▶▶By saying "the body and the mind," ~ Paul may have been once again driving home the point of how totally sinful we were.

▷▷Recall, ~ in **verse 1**, ~ Paul combined the synonyms "trespasses" and "sins" to emphasize the utter sinfulness of our condition prior to our salvation.

↪↪Again, ~ we said at **verse 1** ~ that Paul was saying that we were totally, ~ thoroughly, ~ 100%, ~ **[Yes, ~ we got Paul's point]** ~ sinful.

▷▷Here at the end of **verse 3a**, ~ Paul may be doing the same type of thing with the phrase "of the body and the mind."

↪↪I.e., ~ he's emphasizing the fact that sinful desires totally, ~ thoroughly, ~ 100% ~ saturated our whole person.

▶▶Paul says that when we were spiritually dead, ~ we were "carrying out the desires of the body and the mind."

▷▷The Greek grammar indicates that the word for "carrying out" indicates the habitual carrying out of "the desires of the body and the mind."

↪↪IOW, ~ this was not occasional behavior ~ but routine behavior for us.

▷▷Reinforces Paul's 1st description of our unsaved life, ~ that prior to salvation, ~ sinning was a way of life for us.

▶▶To further expand on Paul's fourth description of our spiritually dead life, ~ like all unbelievers, ~ ¶¶

▷▷when we were spiritually dead, ~ we were enslaved on a daily basis by our sinful nature and its sinful desires which saturated our whole person, ~ **and we habitually carried those sinful desires out.** ¶¶ 4/8

▷▷ In Gal. 5:19-21a, ~ NASB ~ Paul lists some of these desires that we carried out.

↳↳ "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, ~ which are: ~ immorality, ~ impurity, sensuality, ~ idolatry, ~ sorcery, ~ enmities, ~ strife, ~ jealousy, ~ outbursts of anger, disputes, ~ dissensions, ~ factions, ~ envying, ~ drunkenness, ~ carousing, ~ and things like these."

WE WERE ENSLAVED, ~ BUT, ~ THE GOOD NEWS, ~ MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS, ~ IS that we, ~ believers, ~ have been delivered from this slavery.

▶▶ In Rom. 6:14, ~ Paul says, ~ "For sin will have no dominion over you, ~ since you are not under law but under grace."

▷▷ Because we are now under God's grace, ~ neither sin ~ nor our sin nature and its sinful desires ~ is master over us any more.

▶▶ And in Rom. 8:2, ~ Paul writes, ~ "For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death."

HOWEVER, ~ IT IS STILL POSSIBLE FOR CHRISTIANS TO ALLOW THEMSELVES TO BE dominated by the sinful nature and its sinful desires ~ and to carry out those desires.

▶▶ Peter addresses this issue in 1 Pet. 1:14. ~ He writes, ~ "As obedient children, ~ do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance ~ [... refers unsaved life]."

▷▷ And the implication is that it is possible for us to still "be conformed to the passions of [our] former ignorance."

▷▷ Peter is exhorting us here to no longer yield to the evil desires that were characteristic of, ~ and that dominated, ~ our unsaved life.

▶▶ Paul addresses this issue as well in Col. 3:5, ~ He writes, ~ "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: ~ [examples] ~ sexual immorality, ~ impurity, ~ passion, ~ evil desire, ~ and covetousness, ~ which is idolatry."

▷▷ Paul says that we are to take decisive action against the practices of our unsaved life. ~ There is to be a permanent separation between us and them. ~ They are not to be revisited on occasion.

↳↳ What's more, ~ putting to death the practices of the old life ~ is not like a 12-step process ~ today sexual immorality

→→ No, ~ there is to be a clean and undying break with all of the practices. 📖 5/8

THE 5th AND FINAL DESCRIPTION OF OUR SPIRITUALLY DEAD condition is in verse 3b.

PAUL WRITES ~ THAT, ~ WHEN WE WERE SPIRITUALLY DEAD, ~ WE "WERE BY NATURE children of wrath, ~ like the rest of mankind ~ [i.e., ~ like all unbelievers]."

▶▶ Now, ~ being a child of wrath is not a way of speaking about someone's ill temper. ~ Paul is not saying that, ~ when we were unsaved, ~ we were wrathful or angry children.

▷▷ The Greek word for "of wrath" here should be understood as "destined for wrath." ~ I.e., ~ prior to God saving us through Christ, ~ we were headed straight for God's wrath.

▶▶ The whole phrase "children of wrath" was a saying that meant those who were subject to, ~ deserving of, ~ and destined for ~ wrath.

▷▷ And in the context, ~ "wrath" refers to God's wrath.

▷▷ Notice especially ~ the phrase "deserving of." ~ Not deserve

OK, ~ TO EXPAND ON PAUL'S 5th DESCRIPTION OF OUR SPIRITUALLY DEAD LIFE, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ He's saying that, ~ like all unbelievers, ~ when we were unsaved, ~ we "were by nature" subject to, ~ deserving of, ~ and destined for ~ God's wrath.

▶▶ Phrase "by nature" refers to our natural condition, ~ in which we are, ~ as Paul puts it in Eph. 2:12, ~ "separated from Christ . . . having no hope and without God in the world."

▷▷ I.e., ~ Paul's fifth description of our spiritually dead life ~ is that when we were unsaved, ~ we were in our natural condition. ~ And in our natural condition, ~ we were subject to, ~ deserving of, ~ and destined for ~ a horrifying and terrible eternity.

↪↪ And that is because ~ in our natural condition, ~ we were spiritually dead and sinners. ~ And spiritually dead sinners are subject to, ~ deserving of, ~ and destined for ~ God's wrath.

▶▶ Most likely Paul is alluding here to the doctrine of original sin. // ~ Sin's entrance through Adam ~ brought about a sinful nature in all humanity.

▷▷ In Rom. 5:12, ~ Paul writes, ~ LEB, ~ "Because of this, ~ just as sin entered into the world through one man, ~ and death through sin, ~ so also death spread to all people because all sinned."

▶▶ Peter points to the doctrine of original sin as well. ~ In 1 Pet. 1:18, ~ Peter refers to our sinful, ~ unsaved life, ~ as our "futile way of life inherited from your ancestors." ¶¶ 6/8

▷▷Grk. word translated "inherited from . . . ancestors" means "delivered down from one's fathers, ~ handed down from ancestors, ~ hereditary."

↳↳Peter is most likely referring here to the hereditary chain of sin begun by Adam and Eve ~ and passed down from generation to generation.

▶▶And in Ps. 51:5, ~ David wrote, ~ NASB ~ "Behold, ~ I was brought forth in iniquity, ~ And in sin my mother conceived me."

▷▷David is not suggesting that his mother was committing sin, ~ like adultery, ~ here. ~~ His focus was not actually on his mother ~ but on himself. ~~ Ps. 51 confession

▷▷The verse could be translated as, ~ "Look, ~ I was guilty of sin from birth, ~ a sinner the moment my mother conceived me." NET

▷▷David's point here ~ is that ~ he entered the world a sinner by nature ~ long before he became one in action.

▷▷And notice exactly what David says: ~~ "a sinner from the moment my mother conceived me."

↳↳We see that David traced his sinfulness all the way back to the moment he came into existence.

→→We are lost from the moment we come into existence.

▶▶Human beings in our natural condition ~ are sinful, ~~ hostile to and estranged from God, ~~ and subject to, ~ deserving of, ~ and destined for ~ His wrath.

▷▷We had a big problem. ~~ But the good news is that Jesus suffered and died on the cross to provide a solution to that problem.

▷▷The most excellent news, ~ my fellow believers, ~ is that, ~ as Paul puts it in 1 Thess. 1:10, ~ Jesus "delivers us ~ [i.e., ~ believers] ~ from the wrath to come."

↳↳And in 1 Thess. 5:9-10, ~ Paul writes, ~ "For God has not destined us for wrath, ~ but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ~ who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him."

→→And all those who confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord, ~ and believe in their heart that God raise Him from the dead, ~ will be delivered from the wrath of God! ↴↴ 7/8

CONCLUSION.

ACCORDING TO PAUL IN VERSES 1-3, ~ 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," ~ we were following Satan, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ we were enslaved to our sinful nature and its sinful desires ~ and we carried those sinful desires out.

↪↪ And, ~ tragically, ~ we were lost, ~ and we were subject to, ~ deserving of, ~ and destined for ~ a horrifying and terrible eternity from the moment we came into existence.

MY FELLOW BELIEVERS, ~ WE WERE IN THIS HORRIBLY SINFUL, ~ HELPLESS, ~ AND hopeless condition, ~ and headed for an eternity separated from God.

▶▶ But God, ~ because He is "rich in mercy," ~ and because of "the great love with which he loved us," ~ acted on our behalf! ~~ And we'll begin to talk about this next week.

▷▷ So, ~ stay tuned!

LET'S PRAY 8/8