

REGENERATION AND RECONCILIATION

Ephesians 2

It is a wonderful thing to be a Christian. It is very important to know how and why we are Christians. That is the matchless story unfolded here by Paul. This great chapter presents in panorama the past, present and future of every child of God. It contains one of the clearest and most comprehensive statements of the wonderful work of God in lifting people out of sin into fellowship with Christ that is to be found anywhere.

I. Our Past Condition--What We Were.

1. Dead in trespasses and sins. 2:1.

We were physically alive, but spiritually dead. Spiritual death is the state of separation from God and His life. Death itself is a separation; whether physical, the separation of the person from his body, or spiritual, the separation of the person from God. We were alive to much in this world that was honorable and desirable, but we were dead to God, and dead to all things that pertain to the things of the Spirit. We were dead to everything pertaining to God. We were dead to the songs of Zion. We were dead to the prayers of God's people. We were dead to the Bible. We were dead in trespasses and in sin.

This is not a strange thing. Men are dead to anything with which they are not acquainted. Those of us who can speak only the English language may sit in a meeting where the proceedings are carried on in another language, but we will be dead to what is being said. So it is with the unbeliever. He is dead to the kingdom of God, for the things of the kingdom are spiritually discerned. He may be very much alive to the material world, but, not having the spirit of God, he is dead to the things of God. The cause of this death is sin.

The word "trespass" means a deviation from the right path. "Sin" means the missing of the mark. It is the same word as was used in the Greek classics of a spearman missing the target at which he aimed the spear. In the ethical terminology of the Greeks it meant to go wrong. In the New Testament it speaks of sin as the act of a person failing to obey the Word of God, failing to see that his life measures up to the will of God. The use of this word is illustrated excellently in Romans 3:23, "All have sinned (missed the mark), and at present come short of the glory of God." The mark or target is the glory of God. Man was created to glorify God.

2. Disobedient to God. 2:2-3a.

We belonged to the present age. We moved along in the stream of a world system. We were a part of it, and were carried along with it. The current of world opinion swept us on our way. We thought as the world did and lived as it lived. We followed the opinions, ideas and tendencies of the world.

We were the willing subjects and slaves of Satan. We were living like the people around us. We were under the influence of sinful associations, unholy companionships and entangling affections. Every sinner does what Satan wants him to do.

We followed our own evil natures, "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." Two classes of lust are here described--the one is the more coarse and sensual, the desires of the flesh; the other is more refined and aesthetic, the desires of the mind. The unsaved are controlled by the lusts of the flesh.

We walked according to the world's standard. We were in agreement with the world. Kosmos is the word which is here translated world, and it refers to the system of evil of which Satan is the head, his demons are his emissaries and all the unsaved are his slaves, together with the purposes, pursuits, pleasures and places where God is not wanted.

3. Deserving of wrath. 2:3b.

In John 3:36 we are told that "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." This wrath, which rested upon us before we were saved, rests now upon every unsaved person. It may be difficult for us to understand this doctrine, but we are not asked to understand it; we are to accept it and believe it. We "were by nature the children of wrath." "Were" in the Greek is in the imperfect tense, which tense speaks of continuous action or state of being. Our condition of depravity before salvation was a continuous one, from birth on to our salvation without any cessation.

4. Gentiles in the flesh. 2:11.

We belonged to the idolatrous world, which was entirely ignorant of the true God. We belonged to the great unsaved mass of humanity. We were outside the pale of religious recognition. We belonged to the family of the "withouts."

5. Without Christ. 2:12a.

All that Christ now stands for in our personal experience and future hopes at that time had no existence in our lives. We had no fellowship with the Mediator, and no knowledge of the hopes and glories which His name inspires. It is a fearful thing to think of anyone being without Christ, and yet that is the condition in which all of us were.

6. Without a place among God's people. 2:12b.

Each Christian was formerly a stranger as contrasted with one who is at home with a person.

7. Without a share in God's covenants. 2:12c.

There are thirty-thousand promises to the children of God in the Bible, but not one of them is for the person whose mind is at enmity with God. There are "exceeding great and precious promises," but the Christless soul sees no value in them.

8. Without hope. 2:12d.

"Having no hope." Being without a promise, we were without hope. This is God's judgment of our case, although it may not have been ours. However, it is the state of all who are not children of God. They have no hope of the pardon of sin, of the resurrection of the body or of the immortality of the soul. Ignorant of Christ and His salvation, they have nothing to hope for beyond this world.

9. Without God. 2:12e.

"And without God in the world." We were without God in a world teeming with evidences of His wisdom and power. We had various gods, but we did not have the only God Who could help. We were living without any real knowledge of Him. We were in a state of complete separation from Him. We left God out of our consideration.

This diagnosis of our spiritual disability reminds us that we were in darkness and despair, that we were helpless and hopeless.