

Dead or Alive?

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I. **Eph 2:1** And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

- ❖ We hear a lot today about people being clinically dead and then being brought back by CPR or by use of electro-shock using the paddles (defibrillator). This is what we call “a miracle” of modern technology.
 - Back in the day, when I was training karate in Hawaii, one of those students was killed by a well-timed blow by another student doing an art. The student who was killed just lay there on the mat, and the head instructor ran over there, dropped down beside him, listened for his heartbeat and when he didn’t hear one, he gave two strikes to the victims chest, and he revived.
- ❖ They say physical death is always one heartbeat away.
- ❖ But this verse talks about a kind of death that folks do not recover from by any act of doctors or others...spiritual death...being dead in trespasses and sins
- ❖ This is the condition of every human who is born upon earth
- ❖ And we are reminded here that God has made us alive although we were in that condition
- ❖ I believe that our appreciation of this miracle is a work in progress. I believe the longer we live and the more we worship and serve the Lord Jesus Christ, the deeper this appreciation grows.
- ❖ I believe that when we are first saved, regardless of the awe and amazement we may experience at that time, we are the most spiritually shallow we will ever be in our new life.
- ❖ To be brought back to life by the power of God is an absolute miracle that has no equal among humanity!
- ❖ Notice how personal this holy scripture is, “And YOU hath he quickened....”

II. The extreme blessing of this being made alive can be spotlighted by some contemplation about how it was before, so, next, our text points us to that very thing: **Eph. 2:2** Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

- ❖ Being dead in trespasses and sins begets a dead walk
- ❖ That walk is here called “according to the course of this world”
- ❖ The way of the world is the walk of the dead
 - Hollywood and the TV viewing crowd today is obsessed with zombies
 - Those zombies are obsessed with one thing...to make a meal of non-zombies
 - Eating...a premier, obvious, physical pursuit that every human can identify with
 - I think those zombie shows are a great symbolism for being dead in trespasses and sins (the eating can represent pursuing carnal things...things that have their beginning and end here on earth and have their beginning and end in satisfying a temporal carnal desire)
 - Those zombies don’t know they’re zombies...they are mindless to their condition
 - They only want to kill and eat
- ❖ Being dead in trespasses and sins is described in this verse also as walking “according to the prince of the power of the air”

- Did you ever watch an old puppet show where the operators were hidden from view and the puppets were on strings; those puppets moved whichever way those operators moved those strings
- People who are dead in trespasses and sins are like those puppets on strings...whichever way the prince of the power of the air moves them.
- The verse points out that in time past we who have been made alive in Christ walked that same way.
- What is the difference between how you walked before you made a profession of faith in Christ, and how you walk now? Is there a difference?
- ❖ Notice that the verse points out that the devil is that spirit that NOW works in the children of disobedience.
 - Nothing has changed from day to day in children of disobedience
 - The devil still has control...they still walk like zombies...walking dead

III. **Verse 3** continues the thought about how it was with us: **Eph. 2:3** Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

- ❖ Notice that nobody is left out of this description of behavior of the walking dead - "...we ALL HAD our conversation (another word for behavior) in times past," etc.)
- ❖ Notice how explicitly the Lord defines what that behavior consisted of, "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind..."
- ❖ This kind of behavior is a flashing sign pointing to the human nature of each of us (...were by nature...)
 - Illustrate: Bro. James and Bro. Ed have been having trouble with beavers for several years. Those beavers giving them trouble are causing that trouble by acting out their nature...they gnaw trees, eat crops and build dams - you can bank on this behavior from them - it is fixed in their genetic predisposition.
 - Likewise, man has the genetic predisposition to have his behavior rooted in the lusts of the flesh
 - That is what makes men "by nature" children of wrath.
 - Illustrate: A mosquito will always bite, a coyote will always howl, a hummingbird will always eat nectar, a cow will always eat grass, and the natural man will always act out things that are rooted in the lust of the flesh.
 - Their nature provokes the wrath of God, because God hates and must punish disobedience.
 - All the natural thought and behavior of man is rebellion against doing right according to God's standard.
- ❖ In this state of disobedience, mankind is dead in trespasses and sins, and destined to stay that way if no solution outside himself comes to the rescue.

IV. Which brings us to the next two verses: **Eph. 2:4** But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, **Eph. 2:5** Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

- ❖ I want us to notice that despite the fact that each and every one of us insisted on continuing in a state of rebellion, were destined to be walking dead, and had no possible way of rescuing

ourselves from that state... “but God” did something.

❖ Explain:

➤ “Even when”

- Illustrate: Trapping raccoons - their marauding, destructive behavior (they were just being raccoons) relocating or killing-turning some loose, even when they were actively creating damage.

➤ “quickened us together with Christ”

- this statement by the Lord may be the most solid message confirming security of the believer that has ever been written.
 - Illustrate: Baking a cake - you have the ingredients (cake mix, salt, sugar, butter, eggs); you put all ingredients in except the butter. You cook the cake, put it before your family or guests, put the butter out there in a separate bowl for them to take or not.
 - How is this different from the actual way you bake a cake? The difference is, the butter is stirred in with the other ingredients and it is all cooked together. The cake becomes the ingredients and the ingredients become the cake! This is what God is telling us here about the nature of our quickening! We were made alive TOGETHER WITH Christ!

➤ Acted in grace

- This is like catching a man breaking into your house and instead of shooting him or running him off, you invite him in, feed and clothe him, and give him some money to go on his way. He was a burglar when you saw him, he was living out the life of a burglar, and he was targeting you! But you extended to him unmerited favor.

❖ Notice why: “...rich in mercy...”

➤ The mercy of God is what I call unexplainable...just like His grace. Mercy defined is: “kindness or forgiveness shown especially to somebody a person has power over”

➤ Now, let me try to illustrate the mercy of God using earthly things: you have a quart fruit jar full of caterpillars which you pulled off your garden plants and your fruit trees. You know what they have done to your plants. Justice demands that you stomp them. When you think about what they are and what they are doing, you can’t find anything in them that stirs you to show them kindness, nor overlook what they have done to your plants. But instead of killing them, you put them in a greenhouse full of plants they can eat, you give them light and warmth, food and everything they need to become what they are destined to become. You control their fate with the intention of doing them good. They feed, get large, pupate in cocoons and emerge some time later as beautiful butterflies and moths. What did you just do?

➤ I want to remind us that Jesus Christ is the fountain head of all eternal mercy that comes from God.

➤ I also want to remind us that scripture teaches us that God extends a common mercy to every creature on earth (from germs to men)

❖ His great love for us was His incentive for this unique mercy (for his great love wherewith he loved us)

➤ I need to admit right here that we are in very deep spiritual water on this. It is hard for us as humans to be able to even comprehend a love that spans all obstacles to make something happen for good to someone who is an active enemy. Not a passive enemy,

but one who is actually actively doing things that only enemies would do. This is especially hard to comprehend when we are thinking about this kind of love coming from someone who holds all the aces. To think of someone willing to love another who is a sworn enemy and without seeing anything in that enemy that is lovable...this is the ultimate expression of love, and the ultimate form of love. Then to see someone express that love in a real and meaningful act of total pardon for that enemy; to see someone not bring judgment on that enemy; to see someone not exact justice upon that enemy, but rather to act out only good and that which makes peace between them. This is how love and mercy conspired to make us alive to God...to make us eternally alive in Christ.

V. And what is the outcome of this act of love from God?

❖ **Eph 2:6** And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus:

- The first thing we see here is that the resurrection of Christ was a collective action which involved every one of us who are redeemed
 - The second thing we note is the ascension of Christ to heaven and Him taking His place seated at the right hand of God brought us into God's presence in a new and living way.
 - How many of us have actually realized that we are sitting next to God by proxy right now, in heaven? That's what **verse 6** tells us.
 - Folks, I want to illustrate both these truths by drawing your attention to the human body. When you look at yourself or someone else, you see this human form made up of flesh and blood and bones. Within that flesh and blood body are billions of microscopic cells that are joined together and function together as that body. Now let's just let such a body, like mine, represent Jesus Christ, and let's let each cell of that body represent a child of God. So, if I step down from this pulpit, and then step back up to this pulpit, you see my body do the action. But do you realize that every cell in my body also stepped down from the pulpit and every cell stepped back up to the pulpit. Just so, is Christ's resurrection, ascension, and current position.
 - So, we are positioned with Christ in a condition or state of exaltation, because time is irrelevant to the status and state of God the Son!
 - Have you ever become confused or not been able to understand what Holy Scripture meant in **Romans 8:29** when it said, "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also **glorified**." Do you notice the past tense in "glorified" there! How can that be? This that I am talking about is how it can be!
- ❖ But, there is more in this outcome. We see it in **Eph. 2:7** - "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."
- We are going to be a permanent, an eternal, exhibit as to how rich the grace of God is
 - We will eternally exhibit how kind God is
 - We will eternally exhibit that it was through Christ that He manifested this grace toward man
 - Now all of this may sound and seem sort of mundane or unexciting until you realize that we are going to be on display in a world shepherded by Someone who can create anything and have anything exactly the way He wants it. When you see it that way, THEN you begin to understand how precious and important we are to the Lord!