

Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians
Knowing Your Privilege in Christ
"The Character of the Church"
(Ephesians 2:1-10)

1 And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins; **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: **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. **4** But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, **5** Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) **6** And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus: **7** That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. **8** For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: **9** Not of works, lest any man should boast. **10** For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

OUTLINE

- (1) Not Dead as the World Is (v1-3)**
- (2) But Alive in Christ (v4-10)**

INTRODUCTION

What is the church? Simply speaking, the church is God's people. A people (1) Chosen by the Father (2) Purchased by the Son and (3) Sealed by the Holy Spirit. The church is ***a privileged people separated from sin unto holiness.*** Secondly, the church is ***a purchased people in intimate fellowship with the living and true God.*** And thirdly, the church is ***a protected people destined for heaven.***

The church is a reflection of His Creator, pointing men and women to the living and true God. This is the glory of the church, that the world by the witness of the church may know God. What hope, what riches, what strength we have as God's children to live as a people destined for heaven, a people endowed with all hope, all spiritual riches through Christ and having the strength to overcome sin in our lives. That's given in Ephesians chapter 1.

Now, in Ephesians 2:1-10, we focus, zoom in and have a closer at the character of the church. What characterized God's people? They are not dead but alive!

Paul presents his case to us by a contrast with the adversative "but" found in the beginning of verse 4 that divides our text from verses 1-3 and verses 4-10. And so I submit to you that:

The character of the church is:

- (1) Not Dead as the World Is (v1-3)**
- (2) But Alive in Christ (v4-10)**

(1) Not Dead as the World Is (v1-3)

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

In this first thought, we observe that the character of the church is not dead as the world is. I want us to see the word “world”, to refer to men and women who are spiritually dead, unable to understand and appreciate spiritual things, in bondage to Sin (v1), Satan (v2), Self (v3). This is the meaning of the word “dead” in verse 1 and when Paul preached the gospel in Ephesus, some were “quickened” meaning “made alive” spiritually speaking, receiving spiritual life. If we consider carefully, we realize that the world is a graveyard consisting of men and women who are spiritually dead, walking dead. This was our condition before we are made alive spiritually in Christ.

Like a spiritual corpse, a sinner is unable to make a single move toward God, think a single thought about God, or even correctly respond to God – unless God is first present to bring the spiritually dead person to life, which is what Paul says he does do.¹

(a) Sin (v1)

Verse 1 says “And you hath *he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sin. The word “he” refers to God and finds its context in verse 4, “But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith he loved us. Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.” So, the Apostle Paul gives us the contrast that the world is “dead in trespasses and sin”. That was who we were, dead in sins, before we were made alive with Christ! This was our condition before God intervened in our lives.

Why does Paul begin by citing that “we were once dead in trespasses and sin”? He means “life for the non-Christian is a living death...being spiritually dead...they are ignorant of God; they do not know God.”² Paul tells us that man is dead – dead as far as his relationship to God is concerned.³

When Nicodemus, the Pharisee came to look for Jesus – He was spiritually dead. Jesus said to him, “Ye must be born again.” To be born again is the Scripture term to describe having spiritual life, having fellowship and communion with the living and true God.

In John 3:8, Jesus uses the illustration of the “wind” to describe one having spiritual life – He says, “*The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest not the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*”

The wind is invisible to the eye. You cannot see the wind with your bear eyes but you can hear its breeze. When you try to fly a kite, you see the reality of the wind blowing when you see the kite lifted up in the sky. The presence of the Holy Spirit and spiritual life is such. Not visible to the naked eye and yet the true believer is able to overcome sin and temptation by the power of the indwelling Spirit.

Paul is telling the Christians in Ephesus to recall their past life before God opened their spiritual eyes – they were like the people in the world – dead in sin and trespasses.

¹ Boice J. M. (1988). Ephesians: An expository commentary (47). Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library.

² D.M. Lloyd-Jones, God's Way of Reconciliation – Ephesians Series, The Banner of Truth Trust, 2004, 32-33.

³ Boice J. M. (1988). Ephesians: An expository commentary (46). Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library.

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(b) Satan (v2)

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:

Verse 2 tells us that the people in the world, are not only spiritually dead, but is governed by this world and the mind of this world. He is governed by the principle of evil that is operating in this world – governed by the ‘prince of the power of the air’, that is Satan, the devil, the god of the world, the controller of all these evil spiritual powers and forces that govern and rule men and determine the kind of life that is lived by man in this world.⁴

What characterized the people of the world? They walked according to the course of this world. Jesus calls this the broad way that leadeth to destruction, the popular way, and warns us to get out of it in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 7:13-14 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

When God made Adam from the dust of the ground, Adam was dead physically and spiritually speaking. But the Bible says, “God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” (Gen. 2:7). God gave Adam life – physical and spiritual life – and Adam became physically alive and was able to have communion with God.

Then God said to him and to Eve whom God created as Adam’s companion in **Genesis 2:16-17** *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*

To die you shall die is the warning God gave them. What happened after? The Bible says that they were beguiled by Satan, who is the ‘prince of the power of the air’, thereafter disobeyed God’s commandment, as a result physical death came upon them and all mankind soon after.

David rightly assessed himself and all men in **Psalm 51:5** *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

Disobedience is the distinctive character of the world. This is sin. It is departure from obedience. It is querying the right of God to command us. In other words, disobedience is rebellion against God. Man is a rebel against God and deliberately rebels against God.⁵

And it all arises with self-love.

(c) Self (v3)

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.

⁴ D.M. Lloyd-Jones, God’s Way of Reconciliation – Ephesians Series, The Banner of Truth Trust, 2004, 32-33.

⁵ Ibid., 43-44.

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Although spiritually dead, the sinner follows the ways of the world and of the devil and spends his time gratifying the cravings of his sinful nature.⁶

Paul speaks here of the kind of person who lives only for sensual gratification. It includes talking about people who lives to eat – the lust for food, people whose whole outlook seems to be just that. Their interest in food and drink. We have to realize that hunger is perfectly legitimate, we have to eat in order to live but if you live to eat, you are guilty of the lust of the flesh, it is exactly the same as drinking.⁷

1 John 2:16-17 *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

Sin does not only come to the ‘flesh’ but also to the ‘mind’. We can sin with our mind as well as out flesh. The children of God, on the other hand, keep their minds clean and straight and in tune with the Word of God.⁸ Jesus exposes the Pharisees, the religious leaders in Israel.

Matthew 15:18-19 *But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:*

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.*

Paul says, we are ‘by nature the children of wrath’. This is a Hebrew expression that means they are characterized by being under God’s holy wrath against sin that is taught throughout the Old and New Testaments, especially in the final book of the Bible, Revelation. It refers to God’s holy hatred against all sin that will result in His final, eternal judgment against all sinners, casting them into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15).⁹

John 3:36 *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.*

Verse 3 give us finally the consequence of living a worldly life. Paul tells us that all who are born into this world are under the wrath of God. He says, we ‘were all children of wrath, even as others’; we were all the children of wrath, as the rest of mankind. That is what ‘even as others’ mean. That God is a God of wrath. God is judges us after our sins.

One of the most common of men’s lusts is the lust for money. Many have spent the larger part of their life pursuing after material wealth only to be disappointed by it.

Testimony – THE RISE AND FALL OF NINE RICH MEN

A popular story recounts a meeting that may have taken place at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago in 1923. There is debate whether the meeting in fact occurred, but what

⁶ Boice J. M. (1988). Ephesians: An expository commentary (47). Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library.

⁷ D.M. Lloyd-Jones, Life in Christ – Studies in 1 John, Crossway, 2002, 217.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Steve Cole, The Deadly Power of Sin, 2007, 9.

is not in question is the actual rise and fall of the men featured in the story, who were nine of the richest men in the world at that time: (1) Charles Schwab, President of the world's largest independent steel company; (2) Samuel Insull, President of the world's largest utility company; (3) Howard Hopson, President of the largest gas firm; (4) Arthur Cutten, the greatest wheat speculator; (5) Richard Whitney, President of the New York Stock Exchange; (6) Albert Fall, member of the President's Cabinet; (7) Leon Frazier, President of the Bank of International Settlements; (8) Jessie Livermore, the greatest speculator in the Stock Market; and (9) Ivar Kreuger, head of the company with the most widely distributed securities in the world.

What happened to these powerful and rich men twenty-five years later? (1) Charles Schwab had died in bankruptcy, having lived on borrowed money for five years before his death. (2) Samuel Insull had died virtually penniless after spending some time as a fugitive from justice. (3) Howard Hopson became insane. (4) Arthur Cutten died overseas, broke. (5) Richard Whitney had spent time in a mental asylum. (6) Albert Fall was released from prison so he could die at home. (7) Leon Fraizer, (8) Jessie Livermore, and (9) Ivar Kreuger each died by suicide. Measured by wealth and power these men achieved success, at least temporarily. But it did not surely guarantee them a truly successful life.

Many people think of fame and fortune when they measure success. However, at some point in life, most people come to realize that inner peace and soul-deep satisfaction come not from fame and money, but having lived a life based on integrity and noble character.¹⁰

1 Timothy 6:8-10 *And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

This first thought – the church is not dead as the world is. This first thought is rather depressing. But Paul is saying to us that this is the plight of men without God. This is the contrast he wants to bring for us.

The second thought is the character of the church, how it is alive in Christ (v4-10).

(2) But Alive in Christ (v4-10)

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

Until now we have been speaking about the misery of life under the sun, this worldly life that doesn't satisfy. And now we come to two wonderful words 'But God...' in verse 4. With these two words, we come to the introduction of the Christian message. What does the Christian faith offer us? Why is the Christian church different from the world? This conjunction 'but' is also an adversative to provide a contrast, in a sense contains the whole of the gospel. Everything else in the world has been tried and found wanting. Everything else has failed. 'But God...' There is hope for the world with God.

¹⁰ <http://www.sermoncentral.com/illustrations/sermon-illustration-sermon-central-staff-stories-money-78597>

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Paul tells us that when men were helplessly lost in sin, God intervened. By His rich mercy, He reached out to us. Mercy is “kindness or good will towards the miserable and the afflicted, with a desire to help them.”¹¹

Why did God intervene? Because He loved us! How did He intervene? By making us alive spiritually – that is the phrase ‘hath quickened us together with Christ’. To be quickened is to be made alive. This verb emphasizes the action – a one-time action. A once for all action, one who is made alive cannot lose that spiritual life. This is the sense of the verb here. The church is characterized by men, women and children who are spiritually alive.

The Scripture term used to describe how we are made alive is the word ‘grace’. By grace ye are saved. Paul emphasizes that it is fully the work of God. Grace is getting what we do not deserve. Salvation is something we do not deserve, and it is not earned by what we do.

There is a difference between Grace and Mercy. Grace is positive – getting something we do not deserve – **HEAVEN**. Mercy is negative – not getting something we deserve – **HELL**.¹²

God shows His mercy towards us by providing an offering for our sins in the Person of His beloved Son.

5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

God is able to quicken us even when we were ‘dead in sins’. Notice the word ‘together’ used three times in our text – verse 5 ‘*quickened us together with Christ*’ and the other two ‘togethers’ are in verse 6, ‘*raised us up together with Christ*’ and ‘*made us sit together in heavenly places*.’ He has quickened us together with Christ. When we are saved, we are made alive by the Lord Jesus Christ. God the Father quickened us with Christ. We are in Christ.¹³

Romans 8:11 *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

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

As far as the Lord is concerned, those who are saved and regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God are seated with Christ at the right hand of the Father. Now we are seated here in this Praise Chapel, I am standing and you are seated. But according to God’s plan and according to His way of looking at things, we are also seated with Christ at the Father’s right hand. This is our positional seating. He has seated us in heavenly places where the Lord Jesus Christ is with God the Father in glory. One day, we who are saved are going to be in heavenly places physically with our new resurrected and glorified bodies.

¹¹ D.A. Waite, Ephesians – Preaching Verse by Verse, The Bible for Today Press, 2002, 45.

¹² Ibid. 45.

¹³ Ibid., 46.

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Jesus bore our sins on the cross. He died, His lifeless body was taken down, it was buried in the grave, the stone was rolled over the grave. There was no question about the fact, He is dead. He literally died for our sins. But the morning of the third day He arose, He was raised from the dead. The grave clothes were left in the grave. He appeared to His disciples for forty days at various times, and then He ascended to heaven.¹⁴

What Paul is saying is that the Christian is no longer spiritually dead. He is no longer in a spiritual grave. He was! We were dead in sins and trespasses. But as Christians we have come out of sin. As Christ came out of the grave, we are out of the grave. We have left behind our grave clothes.

7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

God has a place 'in the ages to come' for saved people. He did this by showing kindness toward us.

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

It means that you are saved not 'out of anything' in yourselves, but it is God's gift. It is by the grace of God – getting something we do not deserve, unmerited or undeserved favour.

The verb 'saved' is in the passive voice. Meaning that salvation is not earned but given. The perfect tense describes a present state resulting from a past action. The action is the finished work of Christ on the cross. It was Christ's work that gives us this complete salvation. We cannot work for this salvation. That's what verse 9 means – not of works lest any man should boast. It is by grace. And it is through faith. Faith is not a work. Faith is not the cause of salvation. Christ is the cause of salvation. Faith is the instrument through which this salvation come to you. We must be very careful never to say it is our believing that saves us. Even the faith we have to receive Jesus is from God. He gives us this faith to receive this free gift. That we may not boast. Faith is just the medium through which this grace of God bringing salvation enters into my life and your life.

Salvation through faith alone means that we receive salvation through trusting in what Jesus did for us on the cross.

Saving faith must have first knowledge, of the truth of salvation. And there is an agreeing to the truth and there is an element of personal trust and commitment.¹⁵

What we are saying here is that we may see how a man who is 'dead' in trespasses and sin cannot save himself. How a man who is an enemy and alienated in his mind whose heart is at enmity against God is unable to save himself except God quickened. When God does that, new life has been put into us.¹⁶

¹⁴ D.M. Lloyd-Jones, God's Way of Reconciliation – Ephesians Series, The Banner of Truth Trust, 2004, 112.

¹⁵ Steve Cole, Salvation by Grace through Faith Alone, 2007, 4-5.

¹⁶ D.M. Lloyd-Jones, God's Way of Reconciliation – Ephesians Series, The Banner of Truth Trust, 2004, 178-179.

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We cannot put the cart before the horse. The horse goes not go behind the cart and push it. The horse goes in front of the cart to pull it. Salvation comes first and then the good works should follow. If good works do not follow, we wonder if there is any salvation there at all.

We will be judged when Christ comes by our works. With genuine salvation will also come spiritual fruit!

Matthew 25:31-46 (KJV) ³¹When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: ³²And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats: ³³And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. ³⁴Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: ³⁶Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. ³⁷Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink? ³⁸When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee*? ³⁹Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? ⁴⁰And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me. ⁴¹Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: ⁴²For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: ⁴³I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. ⁴⁴Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? ⁴⁵Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me. ⁴⁶And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

CHARACTER: PROTOTYPE PLUS PNEUMATIC FORCE

Jesus is the very imprint or prototype of God's essential reality. The word used in the Greek here is pronounced "kah-rahk-TEER" (sometimes "kah-rahk-TAYR") and it is the word from which we get "character." In the original Greek usage, it meant an imprint or reproduction of what something or someone looked like. The image of an emperor or king was imprinted on coins to show by what authority the money had been minted and the stamp, die, or press that enabled the image to appear in the metal was the "character."

I remember working in a tool and die shop when I was in college. Aluminum in a roll would reel through these giant machines and great pneumatic engines would thrust a die down into the unformed metal—cutting, shaping, and bending the raw metal into the washers, gaskets, louvers, and grills we made for aircraft. Yes, even this guy in front of you was allowed to work the little punch press machine that made washers used in the Apollo space program. And yes, before you smart-alecks make a comment about what a crummy mechanic I am, they MIGHT have gone on the Apollo 11. But it was amazing! These machines would force the impress down upon the metal and out would come a product conformed to the design.

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Now, bear with me. Character could also refer to a tooled prototype that served as a model for the Greek and Roman craftsman to build or sculpt something. By measuring their work against the character, the prototype, the essential design, they were able to build an accurate construction.

In the same way, it is only as we open our lives up to the influence of the PERSON of Jesus Christ that we are able to conceive of what God wants from us. He is the prototype of what God wants a person to be, the metric against which we are measured. So, when we fail, we are able to let our Creator (Jeremiah's potter) as we know God in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit keep shaving off the problems to make us conform to the prototype, the character of Jesus.

But we can't follow the prototype alone. We can't manage the transformation needed to be what God wants us to be by ourselves. We need the pneumatic force of God's Presence in the Holy Spirit to conform us to God's Will. And when we allow that to happen, we actually begin to take on the shape of "sons" of God who are becoming and acting more according to the character of the Son of God.¹⁷

This is the second thought – the church is alive in Christ, the life of Christ flows through you.

CONCLUSION

The character of the church is that if is not dead as the world is (v1-3), bound by sin, Satan and self. But alive in Christ (v4-10) manifesting good works, bearing the spirit's fruit! Amen.

¹⁷ <http://www.sermoncentral.com/illustrations/sermon-illustration-johnny-wilson-stories-jesuschrist-potter-fix-73317>