

# WHO AM I?

Ephesians



## GIVE ME THE BAD NEWS FIRST...

### INTRODUCTION

Ephesians 2:1-3

One of the fundamental truths of the Christian faith that Paul has just outlined in his pastoral prayer, is that as believers, our lives are uniquely woven together with Christ, in His death and resurrection. These few verses are the beginning of a section of Paul's letter in which he contrasts the Ephesians' (and our own) lives as they were before Christ and as they are now in Christ.

In doing this, Paul takes a brief moment here in the first few verses of Ephesians 2 to outline the bleak reality of what our lives were before coming to saving faith in Jesus Christ. His goal is not to dwell long on this reality, but rather use the darkness of it to paint a contrast to the beauty and vibrancy of what life is for us now in Christ (Eph. 2:4-22).

As we learn from this passage, it's important that we don't neglect to heed the sobering reminder that is given here. The severity of the words that Paul uses in these verses remind us of our helpless and hopeless reality apart from Christ - a life in which we were "dead in our trespasses and sins" and "by nature children of wrath".

For those who have placed your faith in Jesus alone for your salvation, these are former realities for you, a reflection of your past. For those who haven't yet placed their faith in Jesus for your salvation, God's invitation is for you to leave this reality in your past by turning to Him and trusting in His Son, Jesus, as your Savior and Lord.

For all of us, these are words that we should carefully consider. In short, this passage reminds us that sin and its consequences are far worse than we often recognize or want to admit, that life apart from Christ really is that bad.

### OPEN IT

1. What did you look forward to the most about becoming an adult?

### READ IT

Ephesians 2:1-3

## EXPLORE IT

2. **What tense (past / present / future) does Paul use in these verses?**
3. **As a believer, how is our “former life” characterized here?**
4. **How did we formerly live? What things did we do?**
5. **What were we previously children of?**

## APPLY IT

### **“And you were dead”**

As Christ died and was raised from the dead, so, too, you were once dead and were raised to new life. Though the deadness that you once lived was on the basis of the trespasses and sins in which you once walked. You were, if you will, the “living dead,” living for self-gratification and self-glorification. In other words, worshiping the god of your perception - the god of self. And the result was death.

This is a death that separated you from God (2:12), in which you had no power, ability, or even interest in bridging. You were dead.

6. **Why is spiritual death such an uncomfortable thing for western culture to accept?**

7. For those in Christ, spiritual death is a personal history, yet for those apart from Him, it is a present reality. How does the doctrine of spiritual death impact how you witness to others?

**“You’re responsible for your own actions!”**

How should we make sense of Paul’s meaning when he refers to “prince of the power of the air” and “the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience”? I appreciate how one commentator put it: “The devil’s standing is limited. He is not the ‘marquee player’; most of us do evil well enough by ourselves.”<sup>1</sup>

Paul’s emphasis is far more on the personal responsibility of the individual than on the influence of the enemy. We were dead in the trespasses and sins in which **we once walked** when **we were following** the prince of the power of the air...”. In verse 3, he puts it as straight forward as possible, indicating that **we all once lived in the passions of our flesh**, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind”.

“The more we emphasize the devil, the less we emphasize human depravity. An overemphasis on the devil is a way of overvaluing ourselves so that we escape the blame.”<sup>2</sup>

My mom used to always say, “You’re responsible for your own actions.” And that’s exactly what Paul is saying here!

8. What is human depravity? To what extent is humanity depraved? How does scripture support your answer?

---

<sup>1</sup> Snodgrass, Klyne. Ephesians: The NIV Application Commentary.

<sup>2</sup> Snodgrass, Klyne. Ephesians: The NIV Application Commentary.

**9. How is the ministry of our church calling people to repent and turn from their sins to Christ?**

**10. How do we keep the “passions of our flesh” in check?**

### **“Children of Wrath”**

The wrath of God is an unpopular doctrine in western culture today, the emphasis most often being placed on God being a God of love. Yet perhaps the love of God is best seen and valued in view of His wrath.

The doctrine of God’s wrath is couched in the fact that God is a holy God and a just God. As a holy God, He is by nature the definition of that which is infinitely pure, righteous, and good. As a just God, He is opposed to all that is evil and unjust.

Therefore, if He wasn’t holy, there would be no such thing as sin. If He wasn’t just, there would be no concern about sin. If God wasn’t holy or just, then what kind of God would He be?

Overall, the doctrine of God’s wrath serves as a reminder of the seriousness of sin and the need for salvation, which helps believers turn to God and seek His forgiveness. It also helps us to understand the magnitude of God’s love and grace, which is demonstrated through the gift of salvation.

**11. If you remove God’s wrath from Christianity, what are you left with?**

12. How do we answer the question of there being good people who are “children of wrath” and are destined for an eternity of God’s judgment?

13. What would be an appropriate response to understanding the magnitude of God’s love and grace in view of His wrath?

#### “B.C. Days”

This passage has not offered us much good news, but take heart, dear Christian, this passage is not the end of the letter. Remember, Paul is contrasting the believer’s life before and after Christ. What it comes down to is a matter of identity. The dark realities of these verses are a reminder of who we were apart from Christ but it’s important that we not forget that in Christ, our identity has been rewritten and made new. As Spurgeon once encouraged believers to do, this passage invites us to, “Look back to what you used to be, to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged.”<sup>3</sup>

14. Think back to your own “B.C. (Before Christ) Days”. How would you describe the *quality* of your life as a whole before coming to Christ? What are some of the things that would cause you to describe it that way?

---

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.preceptaustin.org/ephesians\\_21-2](https://www.preceptaustin.org/ephesians_21-2)

15. Theologically and tangibly speaking, how is our struggle with sin different “in Christ” than apart from Him?

Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 3:13-14