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HOW WE LOOKED WHEN WE WERE UNDER SATAN'S CONTROL

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS
NUMBER 12
EPHESIANS 2:1-3

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EPHESIANS 2:1-3 "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 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: 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 Ephesians, Chapter 1, we have studied the provision God made for the Christian in eternity past. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit had you in mind. God made provision for every problem you will ever face, and the plan is called "operation grace". We are going to study how grace operates here in Ephesians 2.

God the Father was perfect and he has perfect righteousness and perfect justice. God was not free to love sinful man, but Christ came and died for man, thereby satisfying the righteousness and justice of God the Father, thereby opening up the way for God to love us with a perfect love. The only way this could be accomplished was by the cross.

ACTS 4:12 "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." The Lord Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation. God was propitiated and man was reconciled by the way of the cross.

Now this is the plan of salvation and it is all built on grace. We are going to see here in Ephesians the condition we were in when grace found us. Then in verse 4 of this second chapter we have that great contrast "But God, who is rich in mercy..."

We must realize that our salvation depends on a relationship, never on the basis of who and what we are, but always on the basis of who and what God is. Since God is perfect, his plan is perfect and his plan always excluded any human good. We call this the concept of grace. We see that grace means that God does the work and man simply receives the benefit of what God has done for him. So all we can do for salvation is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and this is non-meritorious thinking. It is the object of faith that receives the credit, not the one who is exercising the faith. Believing is non-meritorious thinking and compatible with grace. That is the meaning of Ephesians 2:8. Then in Ephesians 4 and 5 we will see how sin is handled. We confess and God forgives and this too is a grace operation, and we get no credit for it. In every phase of salvation and the Christian life, God is to receive all the credit.

Now religion is the great enemy of grace. Religion is man doing the work, which is human good, and God is supposed to bless man. Religion says that man must do a certain number of things in order to gain the attention of God in salvation. But if it contains anything that man has done, then it is not salvation at all. For in salvation, Christ does it all. Man can't help God by feeling sorry for his sins, or by going through some pattern of human activity.

In this study we are trying to discover how God is trying to get us oriented to grace and in Ephesians 1 we have already seen what God did in eternity past. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit designed perfect happiness in eternity past, and they desire to share that perfect happiness with us. But this is impossible apart from the cross.

Now here in the first three verses of Ephesians 2, we go back to eternity past and see ourselves as we were when we were unbelievers. We are not saved because we are such fine and nice people. Some of us go around with the attitude, "Now God, you should be complimented that I believed on Christ, for you see, God, I am somebody special and I have great talent and great ability. God, you are fortunate to have such a great person as I am." Instead of that attitude we should remember that we are saved because of what God did for us, and not because of anything we have done for him. We are new creatures because of the 34 things he did for us at the moment we were saved. No one should ever enter into the plan of God with the idea that I am going to help God. So many of us take the idea that God is not running the plane fast enough so we want to climb out and help push. Now this is a great tragedy and this is the way we distort the idea of grace. One of the great results of grace is that we come to have no illusions about ourselves. And that's a good place to start; for once you have no illusions about yourself, then you have no illusions about anyone else.

Illustration--Now when you are criticized because you part your hair in the wrong place, or can't part it at all, or have too much hair or none at all, you become shocked because sweet smiling Christians have it in for you, and they say unkind things about you. Now you really can understand this if you have no illusions about yourself and have a relaxed mental attitude. These things don't bother you any more, for you know this is just the way people are. So when you have no illusions about yourself and no illusions about other people, and learn BIBLE DOCTRINE, then you have your illusions where they belong and you have real occupation with Christ.

The first three verses of this second chapter of Ephesians are designed to destroy any illusions we may have about ourselves or about others. Verse 1 reminds us that when grace found us we were spiritually dead. Verse 2 reminds us that when grace found us we were under Satan's control. Verse 3 reminds us that when grace found us we were under the control of the old sin nature.

So here in Chapter 2 the believer is looking back, looking back and seeing himself as he was before he met Christ at the cross. How did grace find me? Every believer must answer that question and say, "Grace found me spiritually dead." Now since that was our status, there was nothing any one could do to gain the attention of God. Not one person in the universe ever had enough within himself that would gain the attention of God. God found us under the control of sin, under the control of Satan, and under the control of the old sin nature.

NOW WHAT DID GOD SAVE? HE SAVED A NOTHING. David expressed it this way--
PSALM 8:4 "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

Now this is the correct perspective.

This is the way our soul looked to God before we were saved--

In self-consciousness--we are filled with self pity and pride.

In our mentality-----we had self-induced sins which produce misery.

In our volition-----we made decisions contrary to the will of God and plan of God and therefore eliminated any possibility of sharing in divine happiness.

In our emotions-----we got involved with the details of life which cannot produce happiness.

In our conscience-----we operated on human norms and human standards.

In our old sin nature--we had an area of weakness which produces sins. We had an area of strength which produces human good.

We had a lust pattern mentioned in verse 3.

But before we get to the work of the old sin nature, we have to get to the very root of sin. We have to get to the person behind all evil, namely, the Devil himself. There are two principles of evil, and both reside in the person of Satan. So we are spiritually dead, we are under Satan's control, and we are operating on the power of the old sin nature. Now that is not a very nice picture to look at, but it is a true photograph of us before we met Christ.

Spiritual death means no fellowship with God and this means we are under the world system of evil controlled by Satan, the person of evil. Satan was the first sinner of all time, and right down to the present moment he has tried to usurp the place of God. Being under the person of Satan, we therefore operate on the power of the old sin nature. Satan seeks to get inside us through deception. Man adds up to 00.00, but God can take a NOTHING and by grace make out of it a child of God.

In verse one we saw that we were constantly dead. It was a present, active, participle of the absolute status quo verb "Eimi." So it reads "You being constantly always dead in trespasses and sins." This means that we broke God's norms and standards and sins mean that we missed the mark and therefore we failed to measure up to God's requirement. Now here in verse two we find that we are under the personal control of Satan.

EPHESIANS 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:"

"Wherein" really means "in which" and it refers to being dead in trespasses and sins. These add up to spiritual death. "In time past" refers to the time you were an unbeliever. Now why is God asking you to look back there at yourself in that awful condition? So you can orient to the grace of God.

(Illustration--Do you remember that love scene in the school play when the rich prince married the country girl, and she was made to say in the play--"I was nothing until I met you. I really didn't live at all before." Now that's exactly our condition before we met Christ.)

Now we can remember some good times we had before we were saved. But once we were saved and once we came under the grace of God, we look back and realize that all those good times were nothing, they amounted to absolutely nothing. When there is no relationship with God, life is nothing and means nothing.

So this verse introduces his majesty, the Devil! He is the greatest genius that ever came from the hand of God. The Devil is the best looking creature ever created by the hand of God. He has the most magnetic voice ever heard. This comes out in passages like Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. Remember, the Devil is the highest of the angelic creation. The Devil with his genius has deceived millions. Therefore let's look at some of his strategy in dealing with believers.

It says, "Ye walked according to the course of this world." One word for walk is "stoicheo" and this is used in Romans 4:12 and Phil. 3:16. It means to take action along the line of a principle or plan. It means about the same thing the sports announcer means when he refers to "The game plan." This word means to follow a certain plan. Then there is a second word for walk and that word is "anastrepho" and it means to follow a pattern of social action and is often translated "conversation." But the word used here for walk is "peripatteeo" and this refers to the mechanics of walking. It means some kind of system where you follow a certain life pattern and it means thinking a certain way and living by the way you think. So this aorist, active, indicative of "peripatteeo" gathers up into one point your whole pattern of thinking and living before you were saved. And the person who controlled your thinking and acting and living was none other than Satan himself. You walked according to the course of this "Kosmos" or in English, cosmos. Cosmos refers to the organization the Devil has for running the universe. The Devil has organized the world around certain principles and tries to run everybody according to that plan. This refers to the dispensation of Satan. The little word "ion" is translated here "course," and it means dispensation. Satan has a certain doctrinal system.

1 TIMOTHY 4:1 "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;"

2 CORINTHIANS 2:11 "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."
Satan has a strategy for unbelievers and also for believers.

SIX DIFFERENT PATTERNS SATAN PRESENTS

1. He maligns and accuses believers. He deceives. He tries to get us to ignore mental attitude sins and tells us they are not really important.
He is the Prince of the power of the air, as called here in our passage. The word for air is "aer" and refers to the dense atmosphere around the earth. There is another word for air "aither" and we call it "ether" and that is the atmosphere of space. Here it says Satan is the ruler of the "aer."
2 CORINTHIANS 4:4 "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."
JOHN 12:31 "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out."
JOHN 16:11 "Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."

2. Satan tries to get believers to ignore the Word of God. Ignore the four divine institutions--volition, marriage, the family, and the nation.
3. Satan tries to frustrate the will of God in the Christian's life. He tries to get us into human works.
4. Satan encourages believers to worry. He wants us to worry and really get upset about what other people think of us.
1 PETER 5:7-9 "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."
5. The Devil tries to obscure your focus. Tries to get our eyes off God and get our eyes on ourselves and on others.
6. He tries to persuade believers to be obsessed with temporal solutions and never consider God's solution. He tries to make us believe that man by man's efforts can solve man's problems.

He is called "The spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." The word "spirit" really means the life principle that works in the children of disobedience. That life principle we have just stated above. Satan makes men think that they can do it on their own, that they can get by without God, that fig leaf aprons are adequate. That has always been Satan's strategy.

But the only answer to it all is Jesus Christ, as we will see in our next study.