Ephesians 2 (Part 1): 1-7 • A Before and After Picture

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Ephesians chapter 2. This will be part 1 because I'm only going to get through about 7 verses here this morning. And I really wanted to save an entire message for Ephesians 2: 8, 9, & 10, just because it is such a crazy good passage and I really want to develop it thoroughly so, I didn't really want to rush.

Here we are at Ephesians chapter 2, follow along here as I read the first 7 verses. Paul writes, *"[1] And you were dead in the trespasses and sins [2] in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— [3] among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*

[4] But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, [5] even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— [6] and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, [7] so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." (ESV)

Stop there, let's pray.

Lord, we thank You so much for Your Word, we thank You for this incredible letter that the apostle Paul wrote. And God, we thank You for preserving it for us all these years.

I know there's many, many, many documents from antiquity that have been lost that are no longer available to mankind, but not this one. You preserved this one for us so that we might dig into Your Word, that Word which is living and active.

And, Lord, You have, through your Holy Spirit, made this Word come alive to our hearts. Now, incline our ear, Lord God, to Your voice, and help us to hear today what You would have us to learn from this passage.

We give our hearts to You today, that You might speak into them. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen.

This is really, an amazing first 7 verses of the chapter because of what Paul presents here. Essentially what he's presenting is a before and after picture of our lives; before coming to Christ and after coming to Christ.

I have to confess, and I've confessed this before from this very pulpit, that I am a sucker for advertisements that show before and after pictures. I've always just really liked it and it usually, I mean, I suppose probably the vast majority of before and after advertisements have to do with weight loss. Here's so and so, before they went on this glorious diet. Aren't those pictures just the worst? I mean, and it's like they try to make them as bad as possible too. And then, of course, the after picture…or it might be some bald guy trying to have hair. I say stay with bald, bald is cool. But, anyway, apparently there are some guys that are willing to invest a lot of money and time to grow a head of hair like they used to have or whatever.

Occasionally, we'll see an ad of before and after results of people who have had varying degrees of plastic surgery; fixing a nose, fixing a chin, or whatever. They're fun to look at. And then, of course, there's the ever popular pictures of women before and after their makeup. Some of those, let me tell you, some of those are scary, right? You look at a picture and you think, oh mercy! And I'm not talking about after the makeup is on either.

You can tell I'm an advocate of makeup. There are churches that require women never to wear makeup, we require women to wear makeup here at Calvary Chapel. You come here without makeup, we'll turn you around and send you home. No, I'm just kidding. That's terrible, isn't it? Oh, I'll get some dirty notes about that.

Anyway, whether it is weight loss, or whether it is a nose job, or whether it is orthodonture…I'll see some pictures, sometimes of just the worst teeth, and then all of a sudden they have these beautiful, straight, gorgeous teeth. But, here's the deal, every time you see one of those kinds of ads that the goal of that ad is to produce an after photograph that is so mind-blowingly incredible, that we look at it and we ask the question Who (emphasis on the word, who) can produce results like that?! That's what we want to know. And then, of course, they provide the answer to the question and, before you know it, you're entering your credit card number into this web page or whatever, and that's where they get us. But, before and after pictures are hard to argue with.

Anyway, in these first 7 verses of Ephesians, Paul masterfully paints a before and after picture of you and me before we came to Christ and after we came to Christ. And, I have to say, the contrast is pretty stunning. As we begin to look at this before picture in the first few verses.

Look what he says in verse 1, he starts off by saying, *"And you were dead…"* This is your before picture. You were dead! That's pretty crazy.

"[1]…you were dead in the trespasses and sins [2] in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— [3] among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."

Alright, all those verses right there make up this initial picture. Let me, for those of you taking notes, this might help a little bit. Let me put this list on the screen for you because this is Paul's before picture, and we're going to just talk about these for just a moment. He says, first of all,

The BEFORE picture

- (You were) Spiritually DEAD
- (You were) Walking according to the WORLD
- (You were) Under the control of the DEVIL
- (You lived only) Indulging the FLESH
- (And you were) Subject (therefore) to the WRATH of God

This is us before we met Jesus. Pretty stark picture, is it not? Concerning this first statement that we were, **Spiritually DEAD**.

Some of you might be thinking, gee, I remember my life before I came to Christ and I didn't feel dead. Well, it's not about feeling, it's not about how you feel, it's not something you feel. According to the Bible, it's something you are before you come to Christ and, dead, means just that; not alive. And we were not only dead, we were hopelessly dead because a dead person can't do anything about their condition. A dead person can't change their circumstances, they are just dead. And that describes our before condition; we were not just dead, we were hopelessly dead.

You might say, well, what are you talking about when you say dead? You'll remember that when the Lord, our God, created the man and the woman, He put them in a beautiful garden and He basically gave them the run of the place except with one condition. He says, you can eat from any of the fruit bearing

trees that you'll find in the garden, however, there's one tree that is in the center of the garden and from it you may not eat. Then God went on to tell them the consequences, He said, on the day you eat of it, you will die. (Gen 2:17)

Well, you might recall as you go through that passage, that they didn't actually drop dead when they ate of that fruit. It wasn't like it was some kind of poisonous fruit that they ingested and caused their heart to stop and drop dead.

But, make no mistake about it, God told them, on the day you eat of it, you will die. What death took place on that day? It was a spiritual death. Before that, there was a connectedness to God that was part of the creation; man was tuned in to God, there was a fellowship, there was a closeness, there was an intimacy. God walked with man! But after the disobedience in the garden, there was a deadness that came upon the man and the woman at that point and, from that point onward, they gave birth to dead human beings from the spiritual standpoint of a connection to God.

And so, we are born into this world disconnected from God, we are born spiritually alienated from God, and we are powerless to do anything about that condition.

The BEFORE picture

- (You were) Spiritually DEAD
- (You were) Walking according to the WORLD
- (You were) Under the control of the DEVIL
- (You lived only) Indulging the FLESH
- (And you were) Subject (therefore) to the WRATH of God

Because we are dead toward God, the next elements of the before picture that we still have up on the screen naturally come into play, such as; before we're just, **Walking according to the WORLD**. What that means is we're just taking our cues from the world, how the world does things. Our lives reflect the world, right?

I mean, before I came to Jesus, I blended right in with the world. Everything the world did, I did the same. I looked at the way they did things, I had the same views on marriage and divorce that the world had. I didn't have any different sort of viewpoint on those things.

When it came to child raising, man, I'm glad I didn't have any children before I came to Christ, because I was very, very worldly as it relates to my ideas or my views on child raising. My own personal goals were all very, very worldly

oriented. Life for me was: get out of high school, get a good job, make a lot of money, which was really kind of strange because I went into radio, which pays peanuts, but I loved it. My career path was just the same as the world's.

We had counselors in high school that would help us to chart out our path. Okay, after graduation what are your plans? Are you planning to go to a trade school? Are you planning to go to a junior college? Do you want to get into a university? What are your plans? Not one of my counselors or anybody who ever talked to me about my future ever said to me, well, Paul, have you given that area of your life to the Lord? Have you prayed about it? Have you sought the Lord's direction for your future? Are you kidding me?!

The people around me really weren't believers and so, and I wasn't a believer, and I gave no thought to the idea of surrendering my life to Him for His purposes or His direction. It was completely a secular determination and viewpoint related to my future, just like many of you…and certainly in the pursuit of pleasure.

My pleasures were the same pleasures that the world sought after, and I sought after them the way the world sought after them. I blended in because I was of the world at that time, right? That's what Paul's saying here. This is the before picture! We blended in with the world, we were of the world, we did things the world's ways.

If you look at that list again, the next…the third thing that he mentions is that we were, **Under the control of the DEVIL**. And that's a pretty offensive thing to say to somebody. But Paul is saying that we specifically followed, and he goes on in that passage to say, *"[2]…the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-"* I was a son of disobedience. I have to recognize that the work of the enemy was being played out in my life before I came to Christ.

Some people, as I said, find this sort of a statement very offensive. They'll say things like, listen, before I came to Christ, I might have been a pretty worldly individual, but I think it's saying quite a lot, I think it's going overboard to say that I was actually under the control of the devil.

Well, here's the deal, if you're not under the control of God the Holy Spirit, if you're not yielding your life daily to the work of the Holy Spirit, and the control and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, you are, and we become, completely vulnerable to the purposes of Satan. He is a very real and malevolent

personality. And here's how the apostle John puts it. Let me show you this from 1 John chapter 5, verse 19. Here's how John says it. He says,

1 John 5:19 (ESV)

We know that…the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

We know that…the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

Now, again, John was one of those men who just kind of laid it out there. This is the deal, we know that the whole world is under the power of the evil one. And that included us in our before picture, in the life that we had.

The BEFORE picture

- (You were) Spiritually DEAD
- (You were) Walking according to the WORLD
- (You were) Under the control of the DEVIL
- (You lived only) Indulging the FLESH
- (And you were) Subject (therefore) to the WRATH of God

The next thing that he (apostle Paul) mentions as we go back to the list is that we lived to **Indulge the FLESH.**

Just let me remind you how he said it. He said in verse 3, "*among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind…" "The body and the mind…"*

Do you understand Christians, that just as God is a Trinity, He created you and I as a triunity. What I mean by that is that you as an individual, as a person, you are made up of body, flesh, soul, which is your mind and your emotions, and spirit. You are body, soul, and spirit, okay? But you need to understand something, before Christ, that spiritual part of you was dead. What's left? The flesh and the mind, literally the flesh and the soul.

Our before picture is that we were governed by those things, and should that be any surprise to you and I, that we were governed by our body and our soul, our flesh and our soul? Should it surprise any of us if the spirit in us wasn't even alive if we had not yet been born again by the Spirit, made alive in the Spirit? No, none of us should be surprised! We should say, well, yeah.

Furthermore, we should not be surprised when unbelievers act like that. It's crazy to me that Christians, they'll look at people in the world, and how they act

and the things they do, and the things they're influenced by, and they go, I just can't believe it! Can you believe they said that, or did that, or want that, or desire that?

I'm just going, pff, yes, I can believe it! I lived that way before I knew Jesus! I was governed by my flesh! I was governed by my soul, my emotions, and my mind directed me. I had no Spirit that I was allowing into my life. God, the Holy Spirit, it was like I ignored Him completely because I was cut off from Him before Christ! Yeah, I can believe it. We should all be able to believe it; this is our before picture, right? Governed by the flesh and the mind. Is anyone surprised at the level of evil in this world apart from Christ? If you are, you need to go back to the Word of God and get some good learning in you, because the Word of God explains to us why this world is corrupt.

We're told in the Scripture that the heart of man is evil, deceitfully wicked, and beyond cure so none of us should be surprised at what we see going on every time we turn on the news or even our own past lives. Listen, when mankind lives according to his heart, which governs the flesh and the mind, anything is possible. Anything can happen. And in my life it did.

And then, the last thing that he lists here in this before picture, which is at the end of verse 3, is he says that because of all this, *"and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."* You know, I talked about how the fact that God is a Trinity; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are created to be a triunity; body, soul, and spirit.

And then you have this interesting unholy triunity of; the world, the flesh and the devil, which have an influence in our lives to the degree that we now live, rightly speaking, as under the, **WRATH of God, only deserving God's WRATH**. Wow. That's your before picture. Sure hope the after picture's a little better because we need a little uplifting here after all this. This is pretty bleak. I mean, it paints a pretty hopeless picture. If this were one of those advertisements I was talking about, we're talking about a worst case scenario here.

I think we're ready for the after picture. And it begins with one of my favorite words in the Bible. It begins with the word, but. I actually like that word, that word is a conjunction, okay?

For those of you that are just remembering back on your grammar lessons. And you'll remember that a conjunction, like the word, but, introduces a contrasting statement because, you see, Paul has just gotten done painting this bleak picture

of you and I before Christ and now he's about to paint an encouraging picture so he begins with a contrasting conjunction; but. And that's a beautiful word; but.

And so, here we go; *"[4] But God,"* That's even better. *"being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, [5] even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—"*

And then, Paul says, *"by grace you have been saved—"* The first contrast that we're going to see here is that we are now alive. And, you got to admit, that's a pretty, that's a pretty big deal. I mean, it's a bigger deal than losing some weight around your waist or wherever you need to lose it. It's a bigger deal than growing a head of hair. It's a bigger deal than straightening your teeth, it's a bigger deal than looking pretty plain without makeup and then looking gorgeous with it. It's a bigger deal than all of those things.

In fact, I dare say if a doctor came along today and claimed, when you're dead, I can make you alive again. Doesn't matter how long you've been dead, I can make you alive. It would get our attention. We would want to know what that doctor knew. We'd want to hear his story. Because anybody who can take dead people and make them alive again is worth our attention.

And what Paul is saying about what God did in our life as he begins to paint this after picture, is that you were dead and now you're alive. He made you alive. But, I want you to notice what motivated this amazing transformation in your life, this first of the amazing transformations.

Look with me again in verse 4, it begins by saying, *"But God,"* and here it is, *"being rich in mercy,"* And then it even goes on to say, *",…because of the great love with which he loved us,"* Boom!, He *"...made us alive…"* There it is, it's mercy and love.

I got a note just a couple of weeks ago from a gal, I think she was in Canada, who was writing to tell me that she had been chatting with a Christian friend of hers and they were talking about why God saved us. And this other woman was saying something to the effect of, well, I think God saw something worthy in us that caused Him to reach down and send His Son to die for us on the cross.

And, although I understand where that attitude and that opinion probably comes from, I need to let you know that there is absolutely no way to corroborate that attitude in the Word of God, none whatsoever.

You cannot go to the Scripture and prove the fact that somehow, someway, God looked at us and went, yeah, I think they're worthwhile. In fact, every time we read about the salvation that is ours in Jesus Christ, we see that it's because of God's mercy and love.

And mercy, by the way, is not giving you what you deserve, right? We deserve the hottest spot in hell, what we get is heaven. He gives us heaven. Why? Because He saw something in us that was worthwhile? No! It was because of Him. It was His mercy, His mercy. See, we got to get this out of our minds; this whole idea that, somehow, I deserve what God gave me, because, if you start off there with this idea of, oh, well, I think God saw something in us that was redeemable or something like that. Then you're going to carry that idea in through your Christian walk and you're going to live a performance track life with God and then, when something happens in your life that isn't all that great, you're going to think, well, now what did I do to deserve that? And when you have something good happening in your life, you're going to think, wow, I guess I've been being a pretty good person.

And you're going to be fearful that you might do something wrong and it'll all go away. And you just live this tormented sort of a life that also falls back on you in terms of the responsibility to keep the good stuff going.

Listen, the good things happen in our life, including our very salvation, because of God's mercy, not because you've earned anything or deserved any good thing from Him. And that's why Paul says here, *"...God, being rich in mercy,"*

Do you know He delights to show mercy, the Bible tells us? He delights to show mercy. That means you and I were, some of us were pretty bad apples. I mean, some of us were rotten to the core. I would venture to say, maybe all of us.

The point is, God delights to show mercy to those rotten apples and to create this new work of grace in their lives, whereby we begin to bear fruit for God not because we were good. In fact, we were the worst and God showed mercy. What a wonderful God that we have.

How does the rest of this after picture look? Look at verse 6 with me. It says, *"and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, [7] so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."*

Alright, let me put this list up now because this is the after picture. Again, for those of you taking notes, starts off here;

The AFTER Picture:

- ALIVE
- Seated with Christ
- A living display of God's grace and kindness

We're **ALIVE**. Guys, we're alive. Isn't it a good thing to be alive in Christ? I think about my life before I met Jesus and I think about all the things I ran around doing, thinking. I think about my goals, how I was pretty apt to use people to get where I wanted to go.

I remember how I thought, I remember my thought patterns. I can, it's not that far away that I can…I was in my 20s when it came to Christ, but it's not like a lot of those things change overnight. Sometimes those things change over time as God…this work of sanctification goes on progressively in our lives.

And He does; He sanctifies our desires, He sanctifies our thoughts, He sanctifies our goals and stuff over time. But, we can think back on the way we used to live, the way we used to respond. And, I think, wow, I was dead. I was dead to God.

I mean, I grew up in church, I grew up going to church as a little boy in the 60s. I had to wear a suit, I had to wear a sport coat and a tie to church as a kid. That's why I never do it anymore, I got burned out. But I was in church every Sunday, I went to Sunday school, I went to vacation Bible school in the summer, I went to youth group and I didn't know the Lord. I didn't know His salvation, I was dead. And I thought like a dead person, just like the world. But He came along and made us alive and we get it. And He gave us understanding and began to make us aware of things that we had no idea even existed before.

Oh, what it is to be alive in Christ. To be alive to a new paradigm, a new ideology, a new sense of Biblical vision and view, to now pray about things before making a decision, offering things up to the Lord even when it's painful.

We sang that song this morning, even though, even when there's pain in the offering, even when I'm offering a sacrifice to you that includes pain I have a whole different attitude. There's not this bitterness and this anger. There's just this, blessed be the name of the Lord, You give and take away.

To understand that my life is not my own, that I've been bought with a price that He purchased me from those wayward and empty ways of my previous life and purchased me and brought me back to a place of understanding that there's a Kingdom here that I wasn't even aware of; the Kingdom of God.

I lived in the kingdom of the enemy, and I operated like that was just as normal as the day is long and yet I was completely unaware of the realities of the Kingdom of God. But now, I've been made alive to them. As Jesus said to Nicodemus, unless a man is born again, he can't even see the Kingdom of God. (John 3:3) It's not even in his visual ability to grasp it apart from being born again. But, once we're made alive, I see it. I see what I couldn't see before.

Next, he says we're, **Seated With Christ**. This is one of those crazy statements in the Bible because it seems a lot like I'm standing right here right now and you're seated right there. But the fact is, we have to remember that God dwells outside of time, you with me? God is not hindered by time, as we are.

He is not held back by time, He is in the ever-present present, but He's also in control of the scope of eternity at the same time. And, within the context of the scope of eternity, you and I are seated with Christ in heavenly places.

I don't fully get that because I am, just like you, a prisoner of time. But in some crazy way, we are now also seated with Him in heavenly places. Wow! What an after picture. And then this last thing is really pretty crazy too.

The AFTER Picture:

- ALIVE
- Seated with Christ
- A living display of God’s grace and kindness

He talks about the fact that…I'll read verse 7 again, *“so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”*

You know what that means? That means that for now and for eternity you and I are a display of God's grace and kindness. We literally are displaying His grace and kindness, you see, because I didn't deserve…I don't deserve anything that He has given me, and yet He's given me a lot, and He's given you a lot. And we didn't deserve it.

Now, you and I are a display of His kindness, and we will be, even in the age to come, for all ages, we will literally… whereas I used to be a display of

selfishness, a display of worldliness, a display of corruption, that was what I was. That's what you were. Now we're a display of God's kindness, His overflowing grace. It's a pretty stark contrast with the other picture, isn't it? Wouldn't you say? We were dead, now we're alive. We used to live our lives for the passions of our own, our lusts, now we live our lives for Him, seated with Him in the heavenly places. We used to display all of the things of worldliness and corruption, and now we are a display of God's grace and kindness.

I'm going to ask Ken to come back up and we're going to close out our service here this morning with another worship song. But, as he comes back up here and gets ready, I have a question for you that I'd like to pose. And here it is, are we living…listen, this is important, I'll even make it personal; are you living like a reflection of the after picture? Or are you still living as a reflection of the before picture?

You see, because that's the crazy thing. All of these things we talk about, all the blessings that we have in Christ, they're not automatic that we're going to necessarily walk them out. They're a reality in our lives, but here's the thing, you still have the freedom to choose. And you can go back and you can still live the old way if you want to. It's kind of sad, but it is a reality. And I got to be honest with you, I see way too many born again Christians who are defaulting to the before picture.

And what I mean by that is, I see them making decisions and living what they've learned in the world. I see Christian parents raising their children after the wisdom of the world and not the wisdom of God's Word. I see people making decisions about their career path, how they counsel their children about their coming career, how they counsel their children about the person they're going to marry. And I see them doing it after the pattern of the world. And I'm thinking, Why are you doing that?

Well, I know why, I know why. It's easier, it's easier. It's easier to just default back to the way we learned before we came to Christ, because you don't have to make any real effort to follow the old pattern, the old flow, if you will. You just have to hop in the stream of the world and get carried with the current and Christians can do that. Christians, okay?

Christians can hop into the stream and get carried along by the current of the world in their thoughts, and ideas, and jobs, how they think of their money, how they should spend it, how they raise their children, how they treat their spouse. And we just become Christians who are reflecting, rather than a display of the glory of God, we're reflecting the old ways of the world. And it is completely

inappropriate for us as believers, it is completely backwards. And yet I understand it, I understand it. I understand that it's easier.

Listen, the way to life is narrow and hard and, when you're going contrary to the stream, when the world's going that way and you're pushing to go this way, that is a hard life. It's a challenging life because everybody and everything around you is going the opposite direction. But you have been called to live a different life, a life that reflects Christ, not reflects the ways of the world. And so, rather than just caving into the pressure of doing things like the world, and again, sometimes it's because we have family members in our life who are yipping in our ear, and they're very worldly in their counsel, and we're not spending as much time in the Word as we should. We're not under the teaching of God's Word like we should be, we're not spending time in prayer. Guess what's going to win? We're going to default back to the old ways.

It's time to stand up and say to the Lord, I want to live a life that's consistent with this new picture. I want to live a life that's consistent with the after picture of what You've done in my life. I want to live a different life, I want to live a changed life. But remember, it's not going to come about by you and I making promises to God. Boy, haven't we all been there? We realize we fail, and so what do we do? We go to God and we go, God, I'm so sorry. I promise I'm not going to do that anymore. And then, what happens? That lasts about a day or two. And we're right back to where we were before, so what's the answer?

Remember this, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. (Matthew 26:41) You and I have to come to God, and we have to say, Lord, I can't do this apart from Your grace. You told me in the Scripture that Your power is made perfect in my weakness. I'm going to get weak before You right now and tell You, I can't live this after picture that You've called me to because my flesh is so strong and the gravitational pull toward the world, my flesh, the temptations of the enemy… Listen, the enemy's been doing this a lot longer than you have, he's got his game down. And, if you and I are trying to battle that in the flesh, we're going to lose every single time.

We have to walk in the spirit, we have to battle in the spirit, we have to be empowered by the spirit. We have to say to God, I can't do this, but You can, and I'm going to yield to You in my life that You would create in me a new heart, a new desire, a new passion to live this after picture of what it means to be a child of God. You saved me. You've made me alive, You've seated me with Christ in heavenly places. I am now a display of Your mercy and grace. Let me live it now, let me live it today and for the rest of my life, by the power of Your Spirit.