

Ephesians 2A

- The word “Christian” was first used to describe follows of Jesus in Antioch
 - Shortly after the martyrdom of Stephen in Jerusalem, some men from Cyprus escaped the persecution in Jerusalem traveling to Antioch
 - Once there, they began preaching about Jesus to the Greeks there
 - And among these Greeks, a new following of Jesus emerged, the first outside Jerusalem
 - And this new Greek follower of Jesus began calling themselves Christians
 - It’s a uniquely Greek word meaning follower of Jesus
 - And the Greek idea of follower is imitator
 - For the Greeks, a follower is one who is like the one he follows
 - We might say Christian means “a little Christ”
 - Of course, we all say we want to be like Christ, because we know that is the goal Christ has for us
 - And we also know that many days we are not at all like Christ
 - Despite trying to following His commandments, we fall short of His perfection
 - And sometimes we aren’t even trying
- But here’s the good news...a Christian is going to follow in Jesus’ footsteps in the end
 - As Paul was teaching at the end of Ephesians 1 last week, Christ’s future will be our future too
 - Christ died, and then the Father raised Him
 - Christ entered into the Father’s presence and received a position of honor
 - Christ has an inheritance and all authority over Creation

- And since we are fellow heirs with Christ, we have a similar future
 - We too will be raised
 - We too will share in Christ's honor and inheritance
 - We too will have authority and inheritance in the Kingdom
- Why do we expect these things? Simply because we have been made fellow heirs in the New Covenant by God's grace
 - Paul said in v2.19-20 that these things were secured for us by the Father's might
 - The Father's might accomplished these things for His only begotten Son
 - And the Father's might will likewise do these same things for all His children by faith
- Isn't it a wonderful thing knowing that your eternal future has been secured for you by God Himself
 - God isn't waiting for you to do something to secure that future
 - He already secured it
 - You are just waiting to see it come to pass
 - And surely, it will come to pass for all those who are in Christ by faith
- So now as we enter chapter 2, Paul wants us to see this clearly, so at the beginning of chapter 2 Paul traces the Christian's path as we walk in Christ's steps
 - As a "little Christ" we will do all that Christ did in a spiritual sense
 - But once again, Paul wants you and me to understand we take this path in God's power, not in our own
 - This explanation begins in vs.1-7
 - Today we look at the first step of that comparison, moving diligently if slowly as we have been
 - Paul begins the chapter talking about our death

[Eph. 2:1](#) And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,
[Eph. 2:2](#) in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

- In chapter 1 Paul said the path Christ took as the first fruits of the children of God began with a death
 - Christ's death was on the cross for our sins
 - And now Paul says our path as a Christian (i.e., a "little Christ" following after Jesus) also begins with death
 - But in our case, death refers to our existence before we came to faith in Jesus Christ
 - Paul says that before we knew Christ, we were "dead" in our trespasses and sins
 - Certainly, we were alive, at least in a sense
 - Our heart was beating and our spirit was alive
 - But in terms of our relationship with God, we were dead, spiritually speaking
 - Had we never come to faith in Jesus, then the moment our heart stopped beating, our eternal future would have been determined
 - We would have been forever separated from God for our sin
 - We would have experienced the second death
 - Like a convict on death row, we were alive, but only temporarily and we had no hope for rescue
 - You could say we were as good as dead
 - But being "dead" goes even deeper than just our spiritual future
 - Being dead also describes our spiritual inability to rescue ourselves from our predicament
 - To understand why this is rue, we need to look more carefully at Paul's explanation of our "deadness"

- Paul specifically says we were dead in our “trespasses and sins,” and these two words are not synonyms
 - The Greek word for trespasses means literally “false steps”
 - We could say going the wrong direction, as in walking somewhere we shouldn’t go
 - Like trespassing on someone else’s property
 - Trespasses are offenses against law, against standards of righteousness
 - So anytime we do something different than what God wants, we trespass
 - But also, when we violate the laws of our country, we trespass
 - When we disobey a parent or teacher or boss, we trespass
 - When we break the rules and norms of society, we trespass
 - Even when we just fail to show common courtesy, when we say mean things or think unkind thoughts, we trespass
 - Simply put, when we do the wrong thing in any way, under any circumstances and for any reason, we are trespassing
 - Even one trespass makes us lawbreakers
 - And all lawbreakers receive the penalty of the law
 - And the penalty for trespassing God’s law is eternal death
 - So Paul says we were dead in our trespasses
 - We may have been alive and walking around, but we were the walking dead
- But then Paul adds that we were also dead in our sins
 - The Greek word for sin means to miss the mark
 - It’s an interesting idea because it implies trying to do the right thing yet still coming up short in the end
 - Imagine a university student who was trying to pass a very difficult college course

- The student studies diligently and takes the tests carefully, but in the end the student fails the exams and flunks the course
- The student was trying to succeed yet still missed the mark in the end
- The result was no better than if the student had never tried in the first place
- This is exactly the situation of every unbeliever who is dead in their sins
 - They may be trying to do the right thing from time to time
 - Nevertheless, they always come up short in the end
 - What they thought was good turns out to be a mistake
- Speaking as a man, I think this is an idea every husband understands instinctively
 - We know what it's like to set out to do the right thing for our wives
 - But somehow, in the end we miss the mark anyway
- Like the time we bought our wife a weedwacker for Mother's Day
 - It seemed like such a good idea at the time
 - She had often complained about the appearance of the yard
 - So surely a new yard tool would be an obvious demonstration of our love
 - It was only after she started unwrapping it and we saw the expression on her face that we began to reconsider our decision
 - We had tried to the right thing, but we missed the mark
- The Lord describes the dilemma of unbelievers (and husbands) this way in Isaiah:

**Is. 64:6 For all of us have become like one who is unclean,
 And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;
 And all of us wither like a leaf,
 And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.**

- The Lord says that the unbeliever is unclean before God
 - The Bible uses the image of wearing a clean, white robe as a picture of being innocent, righteous before God
 - Conversely, the Bible pictures a sinful person under condemnation as being unclean, as if dressed in dirty clothing
 - This is the state of everyone who has not accepted Jesus as Lord
 - The world of unbelievers are unclean, standing before God clothed in dirty clothing, so to speak
 - Isaiah says the good works done by unbelievers does change their standing before God
 - Unbelievers may do good works of various kinds
 - Maybe they give donations to worthy causes, or volunteer to build houses for the poor
 - Maybe they send greeting cards to soldiers on Christmas
 - Or they volunteer to cut their neighbor's lawn after he's forced to return his weedwacker
 - And though they don't know the Lord, they still have many reasons for doing these good works
 - Perhaps they think they are buying their way into heaven
 - Or maybe they just want to absolve their guilty conscience for past mistakes
 - Maybe they hope it makes them look favorable before friends and family
 - Or maybe they just like how they feel when they help someone
- Whatever good works they do and for whatever reasons they do them, the Lord says these works are like another filthy garment
 - They may have been seeking to be clean before God, but they came out just as dirty as ever
 - Their righteous deeds were worthless in the sight of God
 - Which is ironic since religious people expect their good deeds to impress God

- Yet God Himself says such works have no value to Him
- And therefore, they offer us no benefit either
- Now we need to ask is Isaiah suggesting no one can ever do a righteous deed?
 - Not at all, it's a question of our motives...of *why* we do what we do
 - Are we acting according to our own thinking and desires?
 - Or are we motivated and directed by God by His Spirit?
 - If we act according to the leading of the Spirit, then our works are truly good because God Himself is directing our work
 - But of we work out of our sinful nature, then our works are not of God and therefore cannot be righteous
 - Since unbelievers don't have the Spirit of God, they can *only* act according to their sinful nature
 - Therefore, they always miss the mark as they attempt good works
 - What they choose to do isn't what God desires
 - They will do it for the wrong reasons or in the wrong way, etc.
 - That's why scripture tells us in Hebrews 11:6 that without faith it is impossible to please God
 - A person not motivated by the Spirit of God is incapable of pleasing the Lord
 - And that means their any efforts they may make to please God will always miss the mark
 - Like the example of two people throwing a rock...
- So Paul says trespasses are doing wrong things, while sins are doing wrong things even though we were trying to do right things
 - So prior to faith in Jesus Christ ,we were spiritually incapable of doing the right things
 - It didn't matter if we were trying or not trying
 - Either way, we were just falling deeper into the hole of debt we had before God

- And when you find yourself in a hole, you have to find a way to stop digging
- And we were dead in two ways
 - Our trespasses left us in jeopardy of the second death
 - And our efforts to reverse the situation were fruitless because even our good works missed the mark
 - We were we were dead because we were spiritually incapable of correcting our problem
- Imagine a dead body laying in a casket at a funeral
 - That body has zero potential to correct its situation
 - It's already dead and it can't bring itself back to life
 - Even if someone held out a magic pill with the power to restore life, the dead body couldn't reach out and take it
 - It's condition was a barrier to participating in a plan of resurrection
- So it is with the unbeliever who is dead in his trespasses and sins
 - The unbeliever is already as good as dead waiting for judgment day
 - And the unbeliever's desire to please God through good works can only produce more sin
- Paul uses this as the starting point of his comparison with Christ, because this is the very reason Christ died for us
 - Christ is our fellow heir so He walked this path first
 - He endured spiritual death on our behalf because we deserved that penalty
 - He died on a cross
 - Likewise, we following in this step, but unlike Christ we were born into our condition of death
 - Notice in v.2 Paul says we were formally walking according to the course of the world

- The normal state of every person on earth from birth onward is to be dead in the ways Paul described in v.1
- Everyone from Day 1 is under the penalty of sin
- Even a 1-day old child is already a sinner by nature, and therefore he or she is already under condemnation for sin
- Elsewhere in Romans Paul says:

Rom. 3:9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;

Rom. 3:10 as it is written,

“There is none righteous, not even one;

Rom. 3:11 There is none who understands,

There is none who seeks for God;

Rom. 3:12 All have turned aside, together they have become useless;

There is none who does good,

There is not even one.”

- Scripture never shrinks back from this truth, and neither should we
 - There is simply no such thing as an innocent person born of the family of Adam
 - No one starts innocent and becomes bad
 - We all start bad, and by faith some become justified
- This is the course of the world, Paul says
 - It’s not something specific to an individual
 - It’s common to everyone
 - And therefore, we all must contend with it
 - All humanity is fallen and all humanity is in capable of correcting their problem
 - Furthermore, Paul says this course had a starting point in the prince of the power of the air
 - The term prince generally refers to a spiritual authority

- The ultimately spiritual authority in all Creation is God Himself, of course
- He is the Prince of Heaven and Earth
- But Paul isn't talking about that spiritual authority
 - He's talking about Satan, which Paul calls the prince of the power of air, that is the prince of this fallen world
 - Satan is the spiritual authority on earth among the unbelievers, at least for a time
 - He's the head coach of Team Unbelievers
 - He leads the world into furthering his purposes
- Paul says Satan is working in the sons of disobedience at the end of v.2
 - He means that Satan uses unbelievers as pawns in his game of opposing God and God's people
 - The unbelieving world are collectively the sons of disobedience
 - They are sons, as in children, of a spirit that seeks to disobey God
 - Paul's drawing on a Eastern principle that as the father goes, so goes the children
 - So the enemy is the father of lies, the source of all sin and rebellion
 - And through his influence in the Garden, he brought all humanity into the same state of rebellion by nature
 - So every person is born into this family and into this state of heart
 - Think of it as spiritual DNA, which we inherit from Satan and which programs us for disobedience
- This is the death we all know
 - It's a death made necessary by the spiritual nature we inherited from Adam
 - And it's a death made worse by our feeble efforts to reverse our condition
 - It's a death that separated us from God

- And it's a death we all knew before we knew Christ
- We were all dead, which is exactly why Christ had to die in our place
 - There simply was no other option available
 - We couldn't rescue ourselves
 - We were as powerless as a dead body
- So Jesus walked our path into the grave so that we could follow His path into Heaven
 - And that was just step one of our likeness in Christ
- Then Paul adds, our nature drove our behavior

[Eph. 2:3](#) Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

- Though today we have the grace of God in Christ and have come to know Him and are becoming like Him, we start that way
 - On the contrary, we all started just as everyone in the world starts
 - Paul said that we too were formally like the world
 - It's important to remember where we began
 - We never want to begin living as if we have always been Christian
 - As if we had no need for grace in the first place
 - No one is born a Christian
 - Even if we sprinkle water on a baby's forehead and call it a baptism, the child is not magically made a Christian
 - To be born again requires the movement of the Holy Spirit in the heart to raise a dead person into new life
 - That moment comes as a matter of faith in Jesus Christ, the scripture says
 - And until that moment happened in our life, we were as dead as the rest of the world

- Paul says too were dead just as the rest, since we were children of wrath
 - And as a result of our dead condition, we acted in accordance with our nature
 - That nature came to us through a process of inheritance, which is why Paul calls us children
 - Our parents were under God's wrath when they were born because they inherited that condition from Adam
 - And likewise, we inherited it from our parents
- The nature of a person defines the person's actions and thoughts
 - Think of your spiritual nature as a computer program
 - It is hardcoded into us and it determines what we will do
 - The source code of all fallen humanity was written by the devil himself
 - And it made us his children by nature
 - And it condemned us to God's wrath
 - The result of a spiritually dead nature is that we obey that nature, we obey the lusts of the flesh, Paul says
 - We "indulged" the desires of our flesh, allowing them to dictate our thinking and acting
 - We submitted to the base impulses of our nature routinely and without forethought
 - Because that's what a fallen, sinful nature produces automatically
 - Now you see why Isaiah says that even the "good works" of an unbeliever are filthy garments
 - Because our nature was incapable of producing anything truly good
 - We acted as our nature demanded
 - Like trying to swim in a pool without getting wet...we were saturated by the water and every part of us was wet

- If you were saved as an adult, then you can probably remember back to past years prior to coming to faith and see the deadness working in your body
 - You can remember life prior to the sanctifying work of the Spirit of God through the word of God
 - You should be able to clearly see the changes that comes in your life since being born again
 - You should notice how you think differently and act differently
 - You feel differently about sin, you desire it less, it makes you feel uncomfortable with yourself
 - Moreover, you have a new desire for God's word, for knowing Him and hearing Him
 - You are draw into a life with God's people
 - You have become aware of your spiritual future and that future excites you
 - You are become more Christ-like
 - Obviously, some of us move down that path farther and perhaps faster than others
 - This does not mean that the exemplary followers of Christ among us are to be praised or valued above the rest
 - Nor does it mean that the slow or spiritually lazy among us are excused for their poor efforts
 - It simply reflects that the journey of sanctification is difficult at times and won't look the same for everyone
 - Meanwhile, we can all celebrate the changes we do see and give the Lord glory for them
 - It's proof to us of how far we've come even if it reminds us of how far we have yet to go
 - And Paul reminds us that it all started with us being dead like the world
- This truth is important because it begins to raise an important question for the believer

- How did I move from death to life?
 - We know we are following Jesus' footsteps in the path Paul is outlining
 - He died for us, because we were already dead
- And then He was raised from the dead so we could follow Him into life also
 - But how does a dead body raise itself?
 - We just learned that we were so dead that even our attempts to do good things failed every time
 - We missed the mark every time, so we couldn't go what was good
- So then how did we ever manage to accomplish the good work of receiving the Gospel so as to become alive again spiritually?
 - It's like asking how does a dead body raise stretch out its arm to take the magic pill?
 - In other words, what overcame our nature so as to allow our salvation?
 - Paul answers that question next