

Lesson 2

Why We Need a Messiah

Introduction

Dead in our Trespasses and Sin

Genesis 3 records a monumental change in our world with the introduction of sin. In the garden, Adam and Eve were given three positive commands:

- be fruitful and multiply—fill the Earth, Genesis 1.28a
- subdue the Earth and have dominion over it, Genesis 1.28b,
- tend the Garden of Eden, Genesis 2.15.

The one negative command was to avoid eating the fruit of the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” Genesis 2.17. If they violated this command, God promised death. After succumbing to Satan’s lies in Genesis 3, Adam and Eve did die. Separated from God, they died spiritually. Physically, their bodies began the process of death. Have you ever wondered what it must have been like when these two encountered their first aches and pains? The sting of sin would have been all too real for them.

From this point, there has been a barrier between mankind and God. Because of sin, we are separated from God. No darkness can dwell with God, 1 John 1.6-7. From Genesis 3.15 on, the Biblical message turns its focus toward Jesus, *the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world*, John 1.29.

In what way does the Holy Spirit describe the condition of the person lost in sin? Ephesians 2.1-3, 11-22 is perhaps the best Scriptural reference one can turn to in order to learn about our dreadful condition. The language of death is intentional. We did not need an ordinary Savior; **we needed a great Savior with great power!**

Once, you ordered your conduct in the ways of sin. You walked according to the ways of the world. You once lived in the passions of the flesh. You participated in the same customs, thoughts, and aspirations as the evil world. The ugly truth is that you, and every person of accountable age, has participated in the evil works of Satan.

Before moving farther, it is important to spend a moment on Ephesians 2.3. When Paul uses the term *by nature*, he is not discussing genetics. We put ourselves in our awful condition by personal choice. Somewhere, at some time, we made a conscious decision to follow the wrong path. It has been said, *the continued practice of sin leads to the inclination of sin*. Colly Caldwell goes on to say that *by nature* describes the “habitual, regular practice that becomes part of our character. It develops because of a person’s manner of living.”

The term, *children of wrath*, comes from a root of a Greek word that has been translated into English as “ornery.” Previously, *we were the ones who stubbornly rebelled against God, becoming slaves to sin*. We rebelled, knowingly and voluntarily, against the loving authority of God.

- We were dead to righteousness and faith.
- We were alive to disobedience, but dead to obedience.
- We were alive to rebellion, but dead to submission.
- We were alive to unbelief, but death to faith.

Obviously, we were not physically or morally lifeless, but we were spiritually dead. *It is hard to imagine a gloomier picture than the one Paul paints in Ephesians 2.1-3.* These verses present the world following Satan through selfish desire down the path of least resistance. The world is presented as living in open hostility and total opposition to God, with the great mass of humanity haplessly following along.

Clearly, the destiny presented in the opening verses of Ephesians 2 is one of disaster. It was your destiny, and it was mine. We need to see how utterly horrible our condition was without a Savior.

The Remedy and The Abundance of God's Grace

Thankfully, the story doesn't end with verse 3. In the next two verses, a glorious **remedy** is introduced.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.

– Ephesians 2.4-5

It is only our realization of our desperate plight that leads to a full appreciation of the magnitude of God's mercy. The darkness of our sin plus the hopelessness of our condition provide the background for the brilliance of His mercy to brightly shine through.

God's mercy was demonstrated in Jesus, Isaiah 53.4-5, 7-8a, 11-12. As you remember what Jesus did, how He suffered, bled, and died, give praise to the Father.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

– 1 John 4.7-11.

The Abundance of God's Grace

The story of Jesus did not end at the cross. Three days later, Jesus was resurrected. He lives! Not only did God demonstrate His love for us that day by giving Jesus as a sacrifice on the cross, but He continues to love us each and every day. Your former life does not matter. Every person can always come to the cross.

God saved you because He loves you. *Love* is used twice in 2.4. In both instances, the original word is *agape*. God chose to love us when we were not lovable, Romans 5.6-8.

Paul had no difficulty of speaking of God's wrath in 2.3, but yet in the very next verse he speaks of God's great gift of love. *Only the person who has experienced the greatness of God's mercy can understand*

something of how great His wrath must be. Look again at 2.4-7. See the strong emphasis on the vocabulary of grace:

- 2.4: *mercy, love.*
- 2.5, 7: *grace.*

We also see the language of abundance here:

- 2.4: God was **rich** in *mercy*. He has **great** *love*.
- 2.7: We read about the **surpassing riches** of *His grace*.

Our God is not small, sporadic, or meager. His love and care for you is infinite. He sympathizes with us and pities us in our lost condition. His mercy relieves us of the penalties, which accompany us from our sin.

God's sympathy for us is exhaustless. His desire to forgive abounds and overflows. See Isaiah 55.6-7. Every day is a blessing. Use it for the glory of God.

For Thought and Reflection

1. Why is it so important to remember and feel a need for a Savior?
2. Why do you think the effects of sin would have been particularly hard for Adam and Eve?
3. How does Isaiah describe the effects of sin? See 59.1-2. See also 1 John 1.6-7.
4. Why is the language of death intentionally used in Ephesians 2.1-3?
5. How does it make you feel when you remember that you were once aligned with Satan?
6. What does *by nature* mean? See 2.3.

7. What spiritual meaning is attached to the term *children of wrath*?

8. Besides Ephesians 2.1-3, can you think of other passages which present the desperate condition of the person lost in sin? List some here.

9. What is the significance of Ephesians 2.4-5? What type of feeling should these verses generate inside us?

10. Consult a Bible dictionary and define *agape* love. Why is the meaning of that word so important in comprehending God's love for us?

11. What does the language of "grace" and the language of "abundance" mean to you in Ephesians 2.4-7?

12. How can Isaiah 55.6-7 serve as a source of inspiration to you today?