

# THE WALKING DEAD

## Ephesians 2:1-3

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We talked about the living dead in the last study. This time we are going to talk about the walking dead. It is so tragic to look back and see what all of us used to be. Sometimes I think one of the problems when you get into the wonderful joys of our salvation is that we have forgotten what it was like to be lost. The text is reminding us of that. Paul in chapter 1 talked about the joy of our salvation, what God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit did for us. Then in chapter 2, he takes them back and reminds them and himself of what it was like being without Christ. He says, "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins."

Last time we saw that the definition of being dead is not physical death, but spiritual death. When Adam sinned, immediately the Spirit left him. He was no longer able to communicate with God, to know God, to experience God without God's personal intervention in his life. That's the way it is with a lost person. He has no ability within himself to communicate with God, to know God, to experience God.

We saw that the evidence of being dead, spiritually dead, was also there. He says, "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins." The word "trespass" means "a willful neglect of God's Word." A sinner, a person without Christ, sins and breaks God's Law and breaks God's Word with no consciousness whatsoever as to offending a Holy God.

The result of that is sins, *hamartia*. It's in the plural, and it refers to anything that we do, when we don't have Christ in our life, that misses God's mark. Because of Adam, the whole situation was set off course. The whole focus is off. You can go to church, you can give, you can pray, you can do whatever you want to do, but if you don't have Christ in your life, everything you do apart from Christ misses the mark. As a matter of fact, Isaiah said all of our deeds or righteousness are filthy rags in God's eyes. They're awful, soured rags in God's eyes.

We also saw the vital signs of having spiritual life. It is so helpful to contrast these two. You don't want to just leave people dead in trespasses and sins. You want to make sure you bring them over to the other side and show them what life is all about. We looked at I John. We could have looked at many passages, but we just chose I John. I John 2:3 says that a believer, a person with God's life in him, obeys the commandments of God. Now why does he obey? Jesus said in John Chapter 14, if you love Me, you will obey Me. In other words, the obedience flows out of the loving relationship with God. If I love Him, I will obey Him. You don't obey Him so you can love Him, you love Him so you can obey Him. That's the way it works. That's the mark on a believer that life is inside of him. He doesn't just love the promises of God. He loves the commandments of God.

Psalms 1 says, "Blessed is the man who loves the law of God," not just the promises, but the will of God. A person who loves somebody wants to do whatever they can do to please them. He will do that.

If you love God, you will want to please God. If you don't love God, you won't obey His commandments. That proves to everybody you don't love Him. What's the mark? You love the Word. You love the Commandments. You love His will. That's the mark of people with life inside of them.

Not only that, we also looked at I John 3:16 and 5:2. You will also love your brother. It's not going to be your love that you have for your brother, it's going to be His love. Listen, love didn't just happen. It has already happened. Jesus has loved us, and now that love He gave to us is **in** us and now reaches **through** us and touches somebody around us.

Jerry White, the speaker at a recent conference, said something that really pierced through my heart. He said the love of God is so powerful that it even loves the Judas that is in your life. I know that if I love God, that love He has for me is going to love even the people who betray, who belittle and who spread things falsely about me. Jesus can love the Judas in your life through you. How do you know a person loves God? How do you know he's got spiritual life in him? Watch him in his relationships to others.

The third thing we looked at is in I John 3:6. A believer does not habitually commit sin. Now, every believer has a problem. All of us have our weaknesses, but we don't live lawlessly. We may fall into the trap of sin, we may go for a while in that one particular sin, but it's not sin in general. It's not a lawless attitude. A person who has been weakened perhaps by not loving God may fall into that trap, but he doesn't live lawlessly. There is no such thing as a habitual, carnal Christian, because the seed of God's life lives in us. That's what salvation is all about, God putting His life in us.

Well, we looked at the living dead, let's look at the walking dead. There are two characteristics. First of all, the walking dead, people who are dead in their trespasses and sins, walk according to the people of this age. Now, I want you to look in verse 2. If you put verse 1 with it, it makes the thought complete. "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world." Now, the word "course" there is the word "age," *aion*. The word "age" has to do with a period of time. We are living in a particular age. Each age has particular characteristics about it. We know that at the last of this age, the church is going to be taken up and there is going to come another age and then another age when Christ comes to rule and reign on this earth. The word "world" there has more to do with people than it does with the lifestyle of people or the system of the world.

What Paul is saying here is, that as unbelievers, the Gentiles used to walk according to the people of this age. There was a certain characteristic of those people of that age. What was that characteristic? Verse 1 says, "in your transgressions and sins," but look at verse 3. It clarifies what it was like once when we lived in our transgressions and in our sins. That is not only the characteristic of the people of the age they were in, but also in the age that we are living in. People don't understand the things of God, folks, because they don't have life in them. Therefore, they live in a certain way.

In verse 3 look at what he says. Paul puts himself not only with the Gentiles, but also the Jews. This is the theme that carries through Ephesians. "Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh." What in the world is he talking about? Suppose somebody asks you the question, what does it mean to live in your transgressions and sins? Well, it means to live in the lusts of your flesh. The next question is, what does that mean? Let's see if we can figure it out.

First of all, the term "to live," *anastrepho*, literally means "to spend your time, to conduct yourselves, within the sphere of something, to live in something." The tense there is passive, which means we did at one time, but we could do nothing about it. We were forced into it. Why? Because of Adam, we were born that way, as he will tell us in just a moment. We would get up, go to bed, and live in the lusts of our flesh. Now what does he mean,

“the lusts of our flesh”? The word for “lusts,” *epithumia*, is referring to the sinful passions of the flesh. It is in the plural. When most people think of lust, they think of one thing. They think of sensual, sexual lust. Yes, that’s part of it. But it’s a whole lot beyond that.

The word “lust” could be described by an 800 pound parrot: “Polly wants a cracker, NOW!” You’ve got to immediately fulfill that desire. That’s the desire you have within you that pulls to satisfy itself. It’s not only the lust to have sex, but it is also the lust to eat, to feel good, to get our way, and to manipulate and control others. You can make a list ten miles long. These lusts, as many as they were, dominated and controlled our lives. A man lived solely to please himself, not to please God. That’s how it used to be. It’s not supposed to be that way now.

Remember in our last study we said that man is made up of three compartments. They are body, soul and spirit. What’s the spirit? It’s where he communes with God. That’s where God’s life left Adam. His soul is his mind, will and emotions. That’s how he relates to this world. In fact, that’s why we’ve got to have this spiritual life, or we will relate to it in a wrong way. Then you’ve got the body, the flesh. That’s where all your desires come from.

In I Peter 2:11 he tells them they are no longer like they used to be. They don’t belong in this world which everybody else is living in. They are different. He says, “Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers, to abstain from fleshly lusts.” That is where those lusts are, in our bodies. They are fallen bodies, which wage war against the soul.

Galatians 5 says the flesh wars against the spirit, here it says it wars against the soul. No, that’s not contradictory. It is easy to understand. What’s the battleground? Where does it take place? On one side is the spirit, the life of God. On the other side is the flesh, the old self life, what we were in Adam before we came to know Christ. What is the battleground? The soul, which is the mind, the will and the emotions. The old flesh says, “Come on, let’s go do this. Let’s go do that. Let’s go do this. Let’s feel good.” I saw a sticker one day, “Do it if it feels good.” That’s exactly the way we all used to be before we were saved. Maybe we were not as belligerent as some people. Maybe we were not as obvious as some people. Maybe we were more cultured and restrained in ours, but it was all the same thing. We were all pulled that way. You see, that’s where the war is.

Well, there is no battle at all to a person who is lost. He has nothing in there to counter that pull of the flesh. Therefore, he is dominated by it every day. That’s why he willfully lives in his transgressions and in his sins. He is living to please himself, whether it be religious pride or whether it be any other kind of flesh, it’s all the same thing. But when life comes in, oh, now we have a choice. Now the battle is on. The war rages. The flesh is not used to not being satisfied. The spirit says, “No! He’s conquered death. You are no longer people of the flesh. You are people in the Spirit of God. You are children of light, not of darkness. Now, live this way. Here is the power to do it. You just choose and love God. God will give you the energy. Don’t fear the flesh. Don’t fear sin. Don’t fear the devil. Fear God and look to God and live for God, and you can conquer the desires of the flesh.”

Galatians 5 says if you fulfill the desires of the spirit, you won’t fulfill the desires of the flesh. It didn’t say you wouldn’t have them. It said you wouldn’t fulfill them. Thank God he didn’t say you wouldn’t have them. Man, if he says you wouldn’t have them, all of us would just need to go and repent in sackcloth and ashes. It is not the temptation. It is how you respond to it. How did we used to live? We used to live in such a way we were totally in bondage to whatever the flesh wanted. Now we can die to the flesh. Now we can submit

to the spirit. Why? Because life has come inside of us.

Well, Paul goes on and explains it even further in Ephesians 2. He says in verse 3, “we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind.” “Indulging the desires” really means “doing the wishes of the flesh.” It is in the present tense. This was your lifestyle! Can you believe we used to live this way? Whatever the flesh wanted, the flesh got! If we were too proud to do certain things in one area, we just transferred all that energy into another area. We were all living for self, regardless of what it was.

The word “mind” there is “understandings”. He is saying our minds were preset like a compass on fulfilling the desires of the flesh. That’s the way you and I used to live. We live in the day of watered down evangelism. But friend, if you are a believer, life is in you. Oh, you might be in a trap. You might be in a sin, but you **will** repent. You **will** make it right, somehow, because the spirit of God lives within you. That person who lives that way habitually might be the nicest person you know, and may not know Jesus from a hole in the wall.

Verse 3 goes on to tell us the real problem. He says we “and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.” That word “nature,” *phusis*, is the word that refers to the natural condition of birth. Boy, anybody who ever doubts that we are born depraved, there it is right there. By the natural condition of our birth, we were this way. Hey, we were all this way because of Adam, by birth.

Folks, once somebody said that if you could take a little baby, when it is squalling at 3:00 in the morning, and give it the vocabulary of a 20-year-old adult, what you would hear would ruin your ears for years to come. The first thing they learn to say is “mine, mine, mine.” From then on it’s downhill. Folks, listen, you’ve got to realize you are not just dealing with immaturity. You are dealing with a nature. The nature of Adam himself is in those children. We are children of wrath. Moms, that’s why the greatest thing you could ever do for your children is take them to the gospel of Jesus Christ and show them what Jesus came for, what they are like and what they can be like if they receive Him as their Lord and as their Savior.

People do what they do because they are what they are. You do what you do because you are what you are. You can’t change that. Jesus can. You can’t. We used to walk according to the people of this age.

There is a second thing here that is more scary. Verse 2 says, “...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.” Not only did our flesh control us, but there was another power controlling us, the prince of the power of the air. The word “power” is *exousia*. It means “the authority of the air.” Let’s see if we can understand who this is.

The word for prince is the word *archon*. It is the word for ruler, chief, and magistrate. It is the word Jesus used in John 12:31, John 14:30, and John 16:11 when He referred to the ruler of this world. Guess who he is? He is Satan himself in all of his demonic powers. “You mean to tell me, if I don’t know Christ in my heart, I am totally under the control and domination of Satan?” That’s exactly right. He has every right and reign to walk in and out of your life to use you however he wants to use you, to make whatever depravity come out of your soul. You have no control against him whatsoever, if there is no spiritual life within you.

Oh, folks, if I could draw a picture for you. The apostle John said the whole world lies

in the arms of the evil one. Picture darkness as being a big globe. In the center of that darkness put the world. If you could do that you could see all the demonic forces around the world. You could see Satan ruling and reigning through those forces. The world is totally saturated and dominated by all the darkness. The darkness has infiltrated mankind. It has gone in through Adam, and it has gotten into every person ever born on this earth, from Genesis 11 until now. It has gotten into every nation on this earth. There is no nation that honors God. None seeketh after Him, the scripture says. There is none righteous, no not one.

The Lord Jesus, however, is Light. Nobody can turn Him off because nobody ever turned Him on. He is perpetual light. He came down to this earth. He broke through the darkness, and He came to the cross. Why do you think it was so irritating? John 3:19-20 said men loved the darkness because their deeds were evil. They would not come to the light because it exposed them, and they loved what they were doing. People of darkness hate the light. They took Him to a cross, and Satan smiled until He said, "It is finished." Then Satan said, "Uh Oh." He went into the lower parts. He came out the third day. Buddy, when that Light rose up, the eternal, perpetual Light that has always been there, He ascended and was glorified. Now He comes to reign in you and me.

There is not just one light on this earth. There is a light here and a light there and light here. Ephesians says, "You were once darkness. Now you have become light." In the midst of all the surrounding darkness of our world which infects everything that we know, the lights shine. That's why our lights are to shine forth in this darkness. We have the authority over darkness. You don't turn light on or off as far as Christ is concerned. Light definitely puts out darkness. That's why the Apostle John said to keep on doing what you are doing because the darkness is passing away.

There was a day when we were so dominated by this darkness and by all the demonic forces Satan could muster, we couldn't get out from under the control of our flesh. We were by nature the devil's children. That's what we were. But oh, thank God, the message doesn't end there.

Folks, I don't want you to leave thinking, "Oh, how depressing." Oh, no. How exciting. There are two words that I want to share with you in our next study. Look what it says in verse 4: "But God,..."

Chapter 1 of Ephesians tells us God had a much better way. Before the foundation of the world, He knew that darkness was coming. He knew exactly what was going to take place. He designed the salvation, folks. So many of us say, "Ho-hum" and go to sleep when we hear it preached. We have forgotten what it was like to be lost. He says, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)."

Look with me in Psalm 40. Have you forgotten what it is like to live as if we are controlled by darkness? We listen to the deceitfulness of darkness. We listen to the lies of the world. We are not listening to God. What's wrong with us? We used to be that way. We are not that way any more. Verse 1 of Chapter 40 of Psalms says, "I waited patiently for the Lord; And He inclined to me, and heard my cry." Aren't you glad!

I remember that morning I prayed to die. I had been in the ministry eight years. I cried out to God and said, "God, I don't know what's wrong with me." I didn't even know I was lost because I didn't understand the terminology. I've learned a little bit of it since then. I said, "God, help me." I prayed to die. Diana will never forget the morning. I'll never forget

the morning, because I have never been the same since. God heard my cry. "God, I can't do anything. I can't save myself. The things I don't want to do, I do. I can't do it." Psalms says, "...He inclined to me and heard my cry. He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay."

The word for "miry clay" gives us the picture of how they trapped animals. When an animal fell into a pit, if it was a solid foundation, he could get out. Fill the pit with quicksand, and it becomes a mire. The more the animal struggled to get out, the deeper it got in. That's exactly the picture of a person without Christ.

Folks, our hearts ought to break. We used to be that way. We need to get the message out that when you cry out to God, God hears you. Whether it is a child six-years-old, 11-years-old, or a man 70-years-old, God hears you. God reaches down, and the verse says, "He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay," those old sins and transgressions that I was mired in. "And He sat my feet upon a rock, making my footsteps firm." Verse 3 blesses me. "And He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; Many will see and fear, And will trust in the Lord."

Can you remember that day when God brought you out of that old miry clay? Isn't it wonderful? "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish but have everlasting life." Hallelujah. God brought us up. He set our feet on the rock. He put a new song in our life.