

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

"Before Conversion" (2)

Ephesians 2:3

Introduction

1. As Christ was resurrected from the dead, so the believer is taken from death to life (vv. 1, 5). This is the way God is creating a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).
2. The indictments against us at birth include our death in trespasses and sins (v. 1) and total disobedience against God (v. 2). Non-believers are actually controlled by Satan (v. 2). This is in direct contrast to the work of the Word and God in the believer (1 Thess. 2:13; Phil. 2:13).
3. Two more indictments are levelled by Paul against the non-believer in this text.

1. OPPOSITION TO GOD

There is a dramatic change in emphasis here. Apparently Gentiles are indicted earlier (vv. 1, 2), but now Jews are also included in the phrase "we all." This is the force of "among whom," a specific reference to Gentiles who are described as "children of disobedience" (v. 2).

a. By a life lived

This is expressed by the verb "had...conversation." Literally it means "lived" and explained by the temporal practice in times past (better: "once"). Actually the verb is an aorist passive which means to turn back and forth. The Hebrew equivalent means "to walk," hence it denotes one's active open life, one's way of conducting himself (cf. v. 2 "walked"). It is clear, therefore, that all the accusations of vv. 1, 2 regarding Gentiles are equally true of the Jews! Further study of this verb is helpful (cf. 1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 10:33; 13:18; 1 Pet. 1:17; 2 Pet. 2:18).

b. By passions expressed

1) Lust of flesh. The word "lust" is plural and its root means "desires." The thought is craving in relation to that which is forbidden. Obviously the "flesh" is that depraved nature inherited from Adam. This nature continues in the believer, but God has gained a ground for triumph over it (Rom. 6:1-10). The self life dominates the non-believer. The believer has a choice over it.

2) Satisfaction of flesh. While the craving of the flesh was the pre-converted "life," here a new verb is used--"doing." As a present tense participle, it describes the activity of the flesh in a positive way. Moreover, the word "desires" is really rooted in a verb for will. Being plural, the noun affirms that the wills (decisions) of the flesh were actually produced. This is a step beyond the cravings of the flesh.

c. By a perverted mind

This is an addendum linked with the verb "doing." The context indicates wicked thoughts. The noun used for mind denotes the widest concerns of understanding, feeling, and desiring. From the laboratory of perverted thoughts, volitions, impressions, imaginations, and concerns, God is opposed.

NOTE: The indictment of God against the Ephesians relates to the world (v. 2), Satan (v. 2) and the flesh (v. 3). It is easy to observe that an unconverted person is totally overwhelmed by forces (personal and conceptual) which place him in utter antagonism to God and His purposes.

2. CONDITIONED TO WRATH

a. By name

The phrase "children of wrath" indicates the unsaved as not only worthy of God's wrath, but subject to it. Children is anarthrous so a class of this sort is indicated. The use of "even as others" shows Jews and Gentiles are equated in the problem (Rom. 3:9). The noun "children" indicates the inborn character of the name. Many are troubled by "wrath," but this is a consistent part of God's character, for without wrath love will degenerate into mere sentimentality.

b. By nature

Here is the doctrine of original sin. God's wrath comes upon people because of what they are and not only because of what they have done. We are sinners by grain, by warp and woof (cf. Psa. 51:5; 58:3).

CONCLUSION Total depravity is a Scriptural doctrine. It is the crucial acknowledgement to receive the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 6:23). Wipe out God's indictment against you through the blood of the Lamb (2 Cor. 6:2).