

# The Christian's Past, Present, and Future

Ephesians 2:1-20

Dr. Wendell Lang

Surrey Hills Baptist Church

September 19, 2010 AM Service

Today and tonight we are going to be studying about what the Bible has to say about *The Christian's Past, Present, and Future*. I do not do this every time, but this morning I was impressed that we ought to just read these verses as a body and see what God has to say to us before we dissect them.

I am in Ephesians 2:1, “<sup>1</sup> And you were dead in your trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you previously walked according to this worldly age, according to the ruler of the atmospheric domain, the spirit now working in the disobedient. <sup>3</sup> We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and by nature we were children under wrath, as the others were also. <sup>4</sup> But God, who is abundant in mercy, because of His great love that He had for us, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with the Messiah even though we were dead in trespasses. By grace you are saved! <sup>6</sup> He also raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavens, in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages He might display the immeasurable riches of His grace in [His] kindness to us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—<sup>9</sup> not from works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are His creation—created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them.”

We are going to see today that this passage directs us to our position in Christ—where we are and who we are positionally in our lives and the difference that Christ makes. Back in the day there was a guy by the name of Archie Jordan, and he wrote a song that kind of became famous, and it was popularized by a guy by the name of BJ Thomas. BJ Thomas sang this song that was popularized that said, “What a difference you’ve made in my life.” That is what Paul is trying to communicate to the church at Ephesus. Remember, this is a circular letter. This is a letter that was sent out to all of the churches in Asia Minor. It began with the Ephesians.

In chapter 1, we studied about *election*, we studied about *predestination*, and we studied about the *blessings of God*. Now we see that Paul is going to say to this group of Ephesians, “Before Christ you were dead. You were dead. And now the difference He has made in your lives.” Notice in verse 1, “you were dead.” Do you see that *were*? We are going to see today and tonight *The Past, The Present, and The Future of the Believer*. So, you see in verse 1, “you were dead.” Now, look in verse 4, “But God,” He sent us His great love, and in verse 5, “made us alive.” So that is the present. The past—“you were dead.” The present—He “made us alive.” Now look in verse 7, “so that in the coming ages.” What is that? The future. The past—you were dead; the present—you have been made alive; and the future is that you might glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and we will pick up on that tonight.

## *The Christian's Life Before Christ (v1-3)*

### *A. Before Christ One is Dead. (v1)*

The Christian's life before Christ—you were dead. Notice the two words. Do you see them? “You were dead in your,” what? “In your trespasses and sins.” How many of you have ever been out bird hunting, and you see on a fence it says, “No Trespassing.” What does that mean? That means you are not supposed to go there. What this says is that we have

gone some places we were not supposed to go. We have trespassed in an area that God would not have had us to do. The word literally means *a deviation from the straight and narrow*. So, you are dead because you have trespassed. You have gone where you should not go. Secondly, you are dead because you have sinned. That word *sinned* means *to totally miss the mark*. I like guns, and I like to go to a target range sometimes. Some of them are very cool. You can shoot, and then you press the button and the target comes back. I do not know about you, but there have been times in my life when I have missed the entire proverbial target. That is what it is to sin. We were not just off the bull's-eye a little bit. We were not just in the second rung of life, but we totally missed it. So, he said this, "You are dead. You are toast because you went where you were not supposed to go and secondly because you totally missed the target." Do you see it? "In your trespasses and sins" in which you did what? "Previously walked" before Christ. He is writing this letter to believers, and so he is saying "beforehand, you went where you should not go, and then you totally missed the mark."

Look again in verse 1, "and you were dead." In the language of the New Testament, there are two words for the word *dead*. Some of you will understand when I give this original word. It is *necros*—someone who is physically dead. You have heard that word or a derivation of that word. *Necros* means you are physically dead, when you become separated from your body. So if you die, the word *death* really means *separation*. It means separation from your body physically. But there is a second New Testament word that talks about being dead spiritually, and that is not when we are separated from our body, but that is when we are separated from God. Now, notice what he is saying in this first verse. "You were dead"—not *necros*, but you were dead spiritually that you were totally separated from God. We see the second word is what he is talking about. The first thing I want us to see is *before Christ we were dead*.

I go to the movies sometimes. I go to the movies every chance I get with our grandkids. The last one I saw last week was *Nanny McPhee*. If you read about what is on at the movies, there are two genres that are kind of popular right now. Back in the day there were a lot of Westerns. Then there were like these spaghetti Westerns they made in Italy, and then there were dramas and there were family things, but right now the genre has to do with two things—vampires and zombies. If you are kind of old, you will remember this movie that came out a long time ago, when I was young, called *The Night of the Living Dead*. It is about zombies. What is a zombie? A zombie is a dead person who is alive. What Paul is saying here is that really spiritually before Christ, you were a zombie. He is saying, "You before Christ were a dead man walking. You were a zombie." The movie industry seems to be infatuated with that kind of thing, also about blood. We know "without shedding of blood there is no remission." [Hebrews 9:22] He is saying in verse 1, "you were dead."

Notice in your Bible in Ephesians 2:12 what the scripture has to say, "at that time you were," this is before Christ, "without the Messiah, excluded from the citizenship of Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, with no hope and without God in the world." Here is the ticket. Before you come to Christ, you have no hope. Sorry. There is no hope before Christ, and that is what Paul is trying to communicate.

Over the years, I have done a lot of funerals. I have worked with a lot of funeral home personnel, and it is a little bit unusual. One thing I have noticed is that dead people have no feelings. Dead people have no preferences. Dead people have no appetites. What Paul is trying to get around to the Ephesians is that you were dead spiritually, and that accounts for the fact that before Christ no one has a spiritual appetite. They are not hungry for the things of God. If you have ever played basketball, and you go out there for the first week and the coach runs you a lot and you come home and your feet are all torn up. When you stop and you start over and over, your feet are just in ribbons. Then you put on something like "Tough Skin." You put this spray on your feet. Then you develop a callus, and then your feet can take anything. You could take a needle and put it in your foot and not feel it because you have "Tough Skin." What happens to us before Christ is we become callused to the Holy Spirit, and we become insensitive to the things of God because we have sprayed on the ointment of the world, the "Tough Skin," and we just become totally insensitive, and that is the person before Christ.

I read about a letter a little girl wrote to God. She wrote this:

Dear God,

I just want to know what it is like to die.

Sue

P.S. I just want to know, I don't really want to die.

The truth is, no one really wants to die, but what he is saying is before Christ you are already dead. You are dead in Christ.

Now where did it begin? In Genesis 2:17, the Bible says this, "but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die." So that is where it all began. In the beginning. In the garden. If you look at a verse right below that in Genesis 3:4, what did the serpent say? "You will not surely die." So it began by eating, and the serpent did what? Lied! That is what he did. The Bible says in John 8:44 that the devil is the "father of lies." So where is he going to try to get us? He is going to try to lie to us. You know what he is going to say? "God does not love you. You can't be forgiven. There is no way you can be saved and do the things you do. If people knew what you were thinking. You can't really be a child of God the way you act." The devil will do nothing but feed our minds with lies. Outwardly, we are as dead as a post. We are as dead as dirt before Christ. Now, what does the Bible say? Before Christ, our righteousness is as "filthy rags." The metaphor and the picture there is shop rags. I do not know if you have ever seen some greasy shop rags, but they are just dirty and they are filthy and essentially they are good for nothing. That is what our righteousness is before Christ. Our life before Christ ... first of all, we are dead.

### *B. Before Christ One Is Disobedient (v2-3a)*

Secondly, before Christ, we are disobedient. Notice what the Bible has to say beginning in verse 2, "in which you previously walked according to this worldly age, according to the ruler of the atmospheric domain," that is the enemy, "the spirit now working in the disobedient." So we are dead before Christ, and we are disobedient before Christ as well. Every lost sinner is wretched and wayward before Christ. That is just what he is saying. If you want me to try to placate and be nice, that is just not the way it is. Romans actually says that before Christ we are an "enemy of God." We need to understand. The old hymn writer had it right, "Come, every soul by sin oppressed; There's mercy in the Lord." Listen to the Bible, Isaiah 53:6, "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Here we find ourselves disobedient. Paul said it like this, "The things I want to do, I don't do. The things I don't want to do sometimes I do." [Romans 7:15] Does anyone resonate with that? That is exactly where we are.

This is an old preacher's story. Imagine that this is the old west. There was a miner that came into the town with his mule and his pack. He has been up in the hills. He comes down, and then some cowboys come out of the saloon. One cowboy says to another, "Hey, watch this." And the cowboy says to the old miner, "You ever danced in the street?" The miner says, "Well, no." And so he gets his six-shooter and pow! pow! pow! and the guy starts jumping because he is shooting at his feet and kind of dancing. So they are all laughing uproariously as the miner is dancing in the street. About that time the six-shooter is emptied. The guy is trying to reload, and the old miner gets his shotgun out of his pack. Before the guy can reload his six-shooter, the miner points the shotgun at the cowboy, and he says to the cowboy, "Have you ever kissed a mule?" The cowboy looks at that shotgun, he is not reloaded yet, and he said, "No, but I've always wanted to." He did not really have any choice. When we are before Christ, there is no choice here. We are depraved, we are destined, and we are disobedient to the Lord Jesus Christ. I think that kind of speaks for itself. Before Christ, we are dead. Before

Christ, we are disobedient.

### C. *Before Christ One is Destined for Wrath (v3-4)*

Before Christ, we are destined for wrath. Notice in verse 3, “We too all,” here it is in the past, “previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and by nature we were children under wrath.” Do you see that? “Children under wrath.” So we are destined for wrath. Today, if you are outside of the shed blood of Jesus Christ, you are under the wrath of God. I do not love this. I do not enjoy preaching like this. It is just where we are today. You are not going your way, but you are going the way of the enemy. By the way, what is the most famous verse in the Bible? John 3:16. We love to read that verse in John 3:16, but listen to a few verses below that. John 3:18, “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” It is all about Jesus. It is not about which church you love. It is not about which pastor you love. It is only about our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you see it? That is where we were.

## II. *The Christian’s New Life in Christ (v. 5-6)*

I do not know about you, but I am ready to get out of that. I do not want to just talk about where we were, but I want to talk about where we are in Christ. So I am going to share with you a couple of the greatest words in the Bible. You are going to absolutely love this. Go back to Ephesians, to our text. In Ephesians 2:4 Paul is talking about where we were—we were dead; we were disobedient; and we were destined to wrath. Do you see that? Now notice in verse 4, my Bible says, “But God.” A couple of the greatest words in the Bible. You were dead; you were toast; you were a zombie; you were a dead man walking ... But God. Out beside that in your Bible you ought to write “Hallelujah!” Keep your eyes on your scripture because I want to share with you what God did in verse 5, but God “made us alive.” In verse 6, but God “raised us up.” In verse 6b, but God “seated us with Him in the heavens.” Listen to the Word. Romans 8:38-39, “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” What we see is that before Christ, we are disobedient and we are dead and we are destined, but now in Christ life is totally different.

### A. *We are Recipients of Life*

Notice what the Bible says in verse 5. What did He do for us? He “made us alive.” In the New Testament, there are 3 words for this word *alive*. The first word is *bios* where we get our word *biology*, and that is the physical body life. The second word for *life* in the New Testament is the word *sukay* (sp?) which is *the soul*—the mind, the will, and the intellect. Those are not the words that Paul is referencing here when he says, “you have been made alive.” There is a third word, *zoe*, which we use for the word *zoology*. That word means *abundant life, supernatural living*. Paul is saying, “I have made you alive, not physically, not emotionally, but I have made you alive spiritually in abundance.” You have been made alive with the Messiah, and that is very interesting because the whole mystery of what he is talking about to these people here is that in the Old Testament, the gospel was just for a few people—the children of Israel. But now, you see the gospel being opened to all folks, to Gentiles. Paul is going to be the ambassador to the Gentiles. The mystery is being unveiled that all men through the Messiah have been made alive who were dead in their trespasses and sins.

Now just listen to this verse and the inflection thereof. Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I

who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” When we died to ourselves, we died to sin and to satan and to self. But when we were made alive, three things happened.

### *B. We are Resurrected to New Life*

We have been recipients of life—*zoe* life. Extraordinary life. Above-the-circumstances-type life. Verse 6 says not only have we been recipients of life and mercy, but verse 6 tells us that we have been resurrected to this new life. Here is how it works. He gave us life, and He gave us a lift. I do not know about you, but sometimes we do not need a handout, but we need a hand up. We need God to lift us up out of that miry clay that we find ourselves in. Go ahead and read in verse 6 with me, “He also raised us up.” That is the resurrection. In the New Testament there are 3 people that were raised from death to life. There was the widow’s son who had been dead just a few hours. Secondly, there was Jairus’ daughter who had been dead 24 hours. Then, there was Lazarus who had been dead 4 days. I want to ask you a question. Do you find that sometimes we get a little bit more pumped when somebody gets saved who is older in life than when a child gets saved? Don’t we kind of do that? So, I want to ask you the question. Which is more significant miracle-wise? The one who had been dead a few hours? The one who had been dead a few days? Or the one who had been dead 1 hour? They are all miracles! They are all awesome! In all 3 of these occasions, how were the dead made alive? The Bible says, “Jesus spoke the word.” Hebrews tells us that the word is life. Not only have we seen that we have been raised to new life—this *zoe* living. We have been resurrected to this new life, and it is a miracle of God.

### *C. We are Rewarded With the Fellowship of The Savior*

In verse 6b, I want us to see that furthermore we have been rewarded with fellowship from the savior. Here is how I like to say it. We have been given the lift. We have been recipients of His mercy. We have been given the resurrection. We have been given life. Furthermore, we have been given love. Notice in 6b what the Bible says, “seated us with Him in the heavens, in Christ Jesus.” So we are with Him. We are rewarded by having the fellowship of the Savior.

Now, church, we are not just raised to sit, soak, and sour. God wants us to be busy about the work of the Lord. We have talked about the believer’s life before Christ—dead, depraved, just terrible. Then we have talked about how God made us alive. He gave us *zoe* living. Tonight we are going to talk about the future. I just want to bait you a little bit. Notice what verse 7 has to say, “so that in the coming ages.” This is the blessing of what we are going to have in the future. These are famous verses that we are going to study tonight. I suppose we could not go any further without asking you the question. Through the grace of God, have you transitioned from being a spiritual zombie, a dead man walking, to being alive in Christ? Has there ever been that time that you have really committed yourself to Christ and said, “I’m dying to my own desires, my own flesh, and I want to live for you. I want to be a Christian.” You know what Christianity is? Christianity is Christ in me. Today I would ask you. Have you ever trusted Christ as your Savior? Let’s stand for prayer.