

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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But God...

by Dan Trygg

“AND YOU were dead (lifeless) in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the age of this world, according to the prince of (‘the-one-ruling’) the authority/power of the air, of the spirit that is now inworking in the sons of disobedience. ³ Among them we too all formerly habitually-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. ⁴ BUT GOD, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ and WE being dead in our transgressions, HE made-alive-together-with (‘co-quicken-ed-with’) the Christ (by grace you are-presently-being having-been-saved-ones), ⁶ and HE-raised-us-up-together-with (‘co-raised’) Him, and HE seated-us-together-with (‘co-seated’) Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that HE-might-show (‘demonstrate, manifest’) in the coming ages the surpassing (‘thrown-above-and-beyond’) riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 2:1-7

It is important to remember that Ephesians was a *letter*, ...a *letter* to the church at Ephesus, and those in the surrounding regions. As such, it was read through at one sitting. **There were no chapter divisions or verses.** They were not added for over a thousand years! The chapter divisions we have were developed by Stephen Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1227, ...and the verses were not introduced until 1551 by Robert Estienne, who was also known as Stephanus. His fourth edition of a Greek NT was the first to include the numbered verses we have today. The reason that this is important is because **these verse and chapter divisions often seem arbitrary, and ill-placed. They artificially break up the flow of thought, and can cause us to miss important connections intended by the author.**

That is definitely the case here. There are a couple of common Greek words translated as “and”. One is a “disjunctive”, meaning it “dis-joins” thoughts, or indicates a change in context. The other is a “conjunctive”, meaning that it “con-joins” thoughts or phrases together. It indicates that it is building upon the same context, a continuation of the flow of thought. This latter word is the first word in the sentence of 2:1, which means that **2:1 is a continuation of the thought from the previous sentence or verse.** Our chapter division makes it appear that this is a *new context*, but in reality the actual language used by Paul strongly indicates that *this is intended to be a continuation of the previous verse.*

Remember the context. Paul recited a number of things God has blessed us with, “...every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ”. Then, he switched to say that **he was praying** that *we* would come to a deeper, fuller knowledge of God Himself, and **that we might know** (1.) **what is the hope/expectation He has called us to;** (2.) **what is the wealth of the glory of the inheritance He has set aside for us;** and (3.) **what is the immeasurable greatness of the power He has made available to us to do His will.** These are in accordance with the power it took to raise Jesus from the dead, and seat Him far above all other powers and authorities in the universe. **God has subjected all things under the feet of Jesus, and has given Him as the Source, Enabler, Empowerer and the One who can bring us to completion to the church, which is meant to be the full expression of His heart.**

If that were not enough to see how much God is at work in our lives, and willing and able to powerfully invest in us, Paul reminds us of the dramatic and powerful transformation that God has already worked in our lives.

We were dead, in our trespasses (‘stumbleings’) and sins (‘failures’), ...spiritually lifeless. The word was used specifically for one who had “breathed his last” or had “given up the spirit/breath”. Such a person had no life, no vitality. He or she was inanimate, destitute of force or power, unable to act. James observed that “the body without the spirit is dead” (2:26). On the morning that Jesus arose from the dead, an angel rolled away the stone. His appearance was like lightning, and the guards were terrified and “became as dead” (Matt. 28:1-4). What did that mean? If they remained conscious, they were unable to move. They were physically alive, but were “as dead”. Thus, we were spiritually lifeless, powerless, unable to act to walk righteously or serve God. We were in our trespasses and sins, and were totally unable to deliver ourselves. We were “help-less” and therefore “hope-less”. Interestingly, the words for “sin” here do not imply *rebellion*. They imply *inability*. The word translated as “trespass” literally means “to stumble aside”, and the word translated as “sins” refers to “missing the target”. We were in our stumbleings and failures, and we were powerless to live faultlessly. We lacked the inner life and ability to enable us to do differently.

We were walking according to the eon of this world-system, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit now working within the children of disobedience (‘unbelief, stubborn-resistance’). Clearly, Paul is describing a spiritual influence that permeates the world around us, ...a mind-set that operates in the people who don’t know God, or those who are resisting Him. Many people do not realize that there is this spiritual force at work, trying to program their minds, or direct their lives. The apostle John stated that the entire world-system lies in the power of the evil one (1 Jn. 5:19). He and his minions have been ejected from heaven, and are actively at work deceiving the entire world (Rev. 12:7-9). Three times Jesus Himself referred to Satan as “the ruler of this world” (Jn. 12:31; 14:30;

16:11). The spiritual influence of the enemy was not just external, ...he was “in-working” in us. He seduces, manipulates and dominates people with deception, and with the evil he stirs up in the minds and emotions of those under his sway. We were all entangled in his web, and the patterns of the world around us. We ourselves were caught up in his propaganda, and were blithely following the suggestions that led us farther away from God, and deeper into spiritual darkness. We were lost, lifeless, and actively being led astray, and it all seemed “normal”.

We were habitually living in the cravings of our flesh, acting on the desires of our flesh and our perceptions. We were choosing to do what felt good, or what we thought would benefit us. “Cravings” are strong desires or lusts, and the word translated as “desires” means “wishes, wants and wills”. Basically, we did what we wanted. Again, the suggestions and promotions of the world around us tend to direct us down certain paths that promise fulfillment. We were repeatedly choosing to live for ease, security and pleasure, following the scripting of the world-system. We were living for self-comfort, self-promotion, self-fulfillment.

We were being by nature children of wrath, even as the rest of humankind. In Romans 1:18-24, Paul wrote that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all disregard (lit., “undevotedness”) toward Him and injustice or unrighteousness of people, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. For even though they knew of God, they did not honor Him, or give thanks to Him. Rejecting Him, they became fools, and their minds and reasonings became darkened. God gave them over to the lusts of their heart, and they became futile in their thinking. That passage describes a process of degradation that culminates in the state of mind that is described in Ephesians 2. When our hearts are hard and resistant toward God, we store up even more wrath toward ourselves (Rom. 2:5). To those who are selfishly-ambitious and stubbornly-resist the truth, but are persuaded to follow unrighteousness, there will be wrath and indignation from God (Rom. 2:8). Just from these passages alone, you can see how, in our natural inclinations, we choose to live contrary to God, and disregard Him. We are under His condemnation, and there will come a day of wrath, where all people will be held accountable for their attitude toward God, and how they chose to live.

We were dead, lifeless and unable to live upright lives.

We were walking according to the influence of Satan and the propaganda of this world-system.

We were habitually living to suit ourselves, serving our own desires, pleasures and reasonings.

We were being children of wrath, ...ones who disregard God, suppress truth, and live for sensual lusts.

BUT GOD... God was unwilling to leave us there in our lostness, selfishness, and inability!

BUT GOD, ...being rich in mercy... This was not just sympathy or compassion. This is “mercy that *acts*”.

BUT GOD, ...because of the “much love” of Him with which He loved us... God loved us so much, ...He had mercy that impelled Him to action. “For in this manner God loved the world, so that He gave His unique Son, in order that everyone believing unto Him might not be ruined, rather he or she might have life of the age to come.”

BUT GOD, even when we were dead, He made-us-alive-together-with Christ (by grace you are-being having-been-saved-ones). We were dead, lifeless, void of the spirit, powerless, un-able to help ourselves, or to change our circumstances. We were help-less, hope-less for any solution to come from ourselves. **BUT GOD!!** He gave us life *in* and *with* Jesus! He *co-quicken*ed us with Him. He made *us* alive, *when* He made *Jesus* alive from the dead. **And, in case we missed the point, Paul plainly stated it, “by GRACE you are-being having-been-saved-ones.”** We couldn’t DO anything to save ourselves. We were DEAD. LIFELESS. UNABLE. But, ...**BUT GOD, made us alive together with Christ**, so that now our status has changed. Now, we are-being “having-been-saved-ones”. **The language here is very carefully chosen.** We are in-the-present-and-ongoing-state-of-being “ones-who-have-been-saved-in-the-past-with-ongoing-effect”. **In other words, we have been saved, are saved, and we remain saved! GOD did it, ...and it is DONE!**

BUT GOD, raised-us-together-with and seated-us-together-with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. This is a mind-blowing statement, but what Paul is saying is that *when* Jesus was raised from the dead, *we were raised from death with Him*. Not only that, but *when* Jesus was elevated far above every other ruler, authority, power or lordship, and seated at the Father’s right hand in the heavenly places, *we were seated-together-with-Him!*

What does that mean? It means that the grace of God is so extensive, so amazing, that we cannot possibly wrap our heads around it!! Did you ever imagine such a thing? Why would I sit together with Christ in the heavens? Why would I be seated far above all rulers, authorities, powers or lordships? Why would I be seated at the Father’s side in glory? It is unimaginable! It is mind-boggling! Just as God took the dead and broken body of Jesus, defaced and destroyed by sinful men for sinful humanity, and raised HIM from the dead, and exalted HIM, ...in a similar way, He took dead, defaced, degraded and destroyed people and raised *them* to life, transformed *them* through and through, and lifted *them* to sit with Jesus in glory, at the Father’s right hand, ...WHY?

In the next verse, we have God’s explanation: “...in order that He might display in the ages to come the surpassing abundance of His grace in kindness upon us in Christ Jesus.” God wants to demonstrate and manifest His amazing grace. This is who He is, and this is what He does. And this is how He wants to be known.