
The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON X : PAUL'S PARENTHETICAL THOUGHT: THE DEPRAVITY OF MAN (2:1-3)

God Makes Alive / Raises Up Dead Sinners by Grace (2:1-10)

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (KJV)

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (NIV)

Also you — being dead in the trespasses and the sins, in which once ye did walk according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all did walk once in the desires of our flesh, doing the wishes of the flesh and of the thoughts, and were by nature children of wrath — as also the others, and God, being rich in kindness, because of His great love with which He loved us, even being dead in the trespasses, did make us to live together with the Christ, (by grace ye are having been saved,) and did raise [us] up together, and did seat [us] together in the heavenly [places] in Christ Jesus, that He might show, in the ages that are coming, the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus, for by grace ye are having been saved, through faith, and this not of you — of God the gift, not of works, that no one may boast; for of Him we are workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God did before prepare, that in them we may walk. (Young's Literal Translation)

Form and Structure

Paul begins a new sentence (vv 1-7) but is broken, the subject and verb is not given until vv 4,5 where the sentence begins again

¹ And you — being dead in the trespasses and sins

having mentioned sin, Paul digresses into the depravity of man before continuing his original thought

² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience — ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

he now continues his original intent by repeating how he began

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses,

made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved —

⁶ and raised us up with him

and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Paul now begins the second sentence (vv 8-10) providing a summary of the nature of the salvation achieved by God

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

HOW DOES THIS PERICOPE RELATE TO THE PREVIOUS PERICOPE? — Since Paul begins his comments but then immediately departs into a parenthetical side-issue, we can see a little better the flow of Paul's thinking if we remove the parenthesis. Here is 1:15 - 2:10 without Paul's parenthesis:

Paul gives thanks for the readers

¹⁵ For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you,

intercessory prayer-report

remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, *that you may know*

what is the hope to which he has called you,

what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

¹⁹ and *what* is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe,

confessional material in praise of God's power in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, leading into the next section

according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ ...

when he *raised him from the dead*

and *seated him at his right hand* in the heavenly places,

²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

²² And he *put all things under his feet*

and *gave him as head over all things to the congregation,*

²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all....

the application of the power that worked in Christ in relation to believers

⁴ God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses,

made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved —

⁶ and *raised us up with him*

and *seated us with him* in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

NOTE HOW PAUL USED HIS PRAYER TO LEAD INTO THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION FOR BELIEVERS — (this is a repeat of notes made in the previous lesson) Paul prays for three things: the confidence we have in our calling, the peace of knowing we are God's inheritance, and the power of God. But why the emphasis upon God's power, over and above the other two items? One possibility could be how the power of God related to the occultism which was widespread in the Ephesian territory. More likely however is the practical application of that power in the lives of believers, as evidenced in Paul tying together the resurrection of Christ with the "resurrection" into new life of the believer in chapter two:

^{19b} according to the working of his great might

²⁰ that he worked in Christ *when he raised him from the dead*

and *seated him at his right hand* in the heavenly places (1:19b-20)

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses,

made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved —

⁶ and *raised us up with him*

and *seated us with him* in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (2:4-6)

“How does this unit fit into the surrounding flow of thought? The writer has already left the specific intercessory prayer-report of the thanksgiving period and will not return to this until 3:1, 14. That prayer-report had led him into the major theme on which he is now launched — the power of God’s actions in Christ and the relevance of this for believers. If the *berakah* and thanksgiving period in chap. 1 set out God’s work of salvation and its bearing on the lives by reminding the mainly Gentile Christian readers of their past and pointing out in contrast the privileges of their present situation as those who have experienced God’s salvation. The first half of this reminder (vv 1-10) depicts the readers’ past as a condition of death, sinfulness, and bondage to evil forces and the flesh, and contrasts it with the present as an experience of God’s mercy, of new life, and of the heavenly realms through their relationship with Christ. The second half (vv 11-22) rehearses the past more in terms of alienation from Israel, and describes the present, by contrast, as a belonging to the new people of God, the Church, consisting of both Jews and Gentiles and created by God’s reconciling work in Christ.” [Lincoln, 85]

“What God has done in Christ for the Church, which was the focus of the use of the confessional material in the immediately preceding verses, is taken up afresh. The writer asserts that the power of God which was manifested supremely in Christ’s resurrection and exaltation is the same power which his readers have themselves experienced. His point is effectively made by the parallels he builds between 2:5-7 and the credal material in 1:20, 21.

“Both Christ and believers have been raised from the dead (1:19; 2:5, 6), both Christ and believers have been seated in the heavenly realms (1:20; 2:6), and ‘in the coming age’ (1:21) balances ‘in the coming ages’ (2:7).

The actual phrase ‘in the heavenly realms,’ is employed in both contexts and the compound verbs ‘raised with’ and ‘seated with’ in 2:6 deliberately recall the simple forms ‘raised’ and ‘seated’ in 1:20. Yet the parallel is by no means exact. The death from which Christ was raised was according to 1:20 a physical death, while that form which believers have been raised is the death of an existence characterized by their sinful action. One reason for the anacoluthon of vv 1-3 may well be that before he completes his comparison, the writer wishes to clarify in what sense he speaks of his readers as dead. At the same time, this elaboration of their past condition functions as a backdrop setting in sharper relief the salvation God has now provided for them.” [Lincoln, 85f, Greek replaced by English]

OVERVIEW — “In the thanksgiving period [Eph 1:15-23] the writer had told his readers that his prayer for them was that they might know the surpassing greatness of God’s power toward them as believers. Now he plays his own part in helping them to gain such knowledge by reminding them how God’s power has affected their lives and what an immense change it has wrought. His reminder takes much of its force from the parallel he draws between the supreme demonstration of God’s power in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ (1:19-21) and his activity on behalf of believers. ***He wants them to realize that just as Christ was physically dead but God raised and exalted him, so they were spiritually dead but God raised and exalted them with Christ.*** The dramatic change that such an action produced is set out by means of a contrast schema which can be found elsewhere in the NT. It compares the pre-Christian past (‘then’) with the Christian present (‘now’) and could well have recalled for the readers much of what their baptism signified. The writer’s statement of the significance of what God has done for his readers employs and elaborates on language from Col 2:10-13, and takes up characteristic Pauline themes from elsewhere, particularly from Rom 3:24-28 in vv 8, 9. His statement falls into three parts: a description of the readers’, and in fact of all humanity’s, sinful past in vv 1-3, which syntactically do not form a complete sentence; an assertion in vv 4-7 of God’s loving initiative in delivering humans from their plight through their relationship with Christ; and an elaboration on the gracious nature of the salvation that has been accomplished in vv 8-10.

“Throughout the pericope it is primarily from the vantage point of what God has done in Christ that the writer views humanity. This applies not only to the new humanity, whose destiny is seen as incorporated in that of Christ, but also to the old humanity. By contrast to their present enjoyment of resurrection life, the pre-Christian existence of his readers can only be regarded as death. As one who has experienced deliverance from it, the writer has the ability to recognize and describe the pre-Christian situation in all its tragic seriousness. ***He reminds the readers, therefore, that at one time they were already experiencing in this life that exclusion from a living relationship to God through Christ that will eventually involve physical death and final judgment. This living death was characterized by trespasses and sins, which also brought it about, and tied up with the trespasses and sin are the forces of the world, the devil, and the flesh. The readers’ sinful deeds were dictated by the norms of ‘this world-age,’ human activity in this age and this world organized in opposition to the will of the Creator. In more mythological language, behind these sins was ‘the ruler of the realm of the air.’ An ultimate personal center of evil (the devil; cf. 4:27; 6:11) is seen as influencing this age, particularly through the rebellious spirit still at work in disobedient humanity. This explanation of sin does not, however, do away with human responsibility, for in the next breath the writer can say that not only the readers, but all believers, were at one time those who chose not to obey, who instead gave their consent to the inclinations of the flesh, and who therefore fully deserved God’s wrath. Their existence was dominated by the flesh, life lived in pursuit of one’s own ends, and controlled by their corrupt thoughts. Left to their fallen natural condition, they were, just like all humanity, deserving of and liable to God’s righteous judgment.***

“Having depicted the readers’ past as characterized by death, bondage, and condemnation, the writer now turns to God’s decisive action which reversed that condition. The mood changes from one laden with doom to one of exultation. The mention of God’s wrath has shown how seriously he takes human sinfulness. But against the background of the real possibility of God’s wrath, his mercy and his love shine out in all their radiance. ***God’s initiative to deal with the human plight was launched, not on the basis of some potential within the condition of humanity, but on the basis of his rich mercy and great love. The divine reversal involved making men and women alive with Christ, raising them up and seating them with Christ in the heavenly realms. What God did for Christ, therefore, he has also done for believers. This rescue act is not simply parallel to the events of Christ’s***

triumph, however. It takes place through them. For what God accomplished for Christ in those events, he accomplished for him as representative of a new humanity, seen as included in him. The writer's perspective on what has been achieved for humanity is in line with Pauline thought about union with Christ in his death and resurrection, but here the death aspect of that relationship has been omitted, and there is a stronger emphasis on the present status of believers resulting from the relationship. Union with Christ is extended to a union with him in his exaltation to heaven, sharing his triumph over the cosmic powers, and such a notion is the most developed formulation of realized eschatology in the Pauline corpus. It serves to remind the readers that they have been transferred to a new dominion inaugurated by Christ's resurrection and exaltation, in which they can experience new life and liberation from the powers which previously held them enslaved. ***This whole rescue procedure was designed to show God's grace. The writer senses that what has happened to believers is the supreme demonstration of the overwhelming richness of that grace, a demonstration which will continue to be effective into the coming ages, and which in the limitless future will be recognized by all for the marvel that it is.***

“Already this statement about God's decisive action on behalf of believers has been interrupted in v 5b by the writer's impassioned assertion that the salvation which God had provided for the readers, and which had a continuing effect in their lives, was brought about by grace. Now, in the last section of the pericope, this assertion is expanded in a summary of the nature of salvation. By this grace the readers have been saved through faith. What God has done in Christ is seen as a still-effective deliverance, liberation, or rescue from their previous state and one that is provided freely, as a gift, for undeserving rebel subjects. ***With grace as its ground and faith as its means, this salvation can have nothing to do with any notion of merit. That it is 'by grace' means that it has not originated from a human source but comes from God as a gift. That it is 'by faith' means the exclusion of human effort and, therefore, of any pride or boasting in the presence of God. The writer wants his readers to be absolutely clear that it is God, and not humans, who is to be given the credit for salvation, and that means the whole of salvation, including believers' good works. The notion of 'the self-made man' is totally out of place in such a perspective on Christian existence. In fact, believers can be said to be made by God, his work, his new creation, the goal of which is the life of goodness which was the Creator's original design for humanity.*** This new way of walking completes the contrast with the walk in trespasses and sins mentioned at the beginning of the pericope. The powerful and gracious activity of God operative on behalf of believers finds its completion, as regards human lives, in a goodness that is expressed in specific works. The writer attempts to make doubly sure that even these do not become the ground for boasting by describing them as objects of God's advance preparation. They were already prepared as part of God's sovereign purpose and therefore must be attributed solely to grace.

“It is worth standing back from the flow of thought and underlining the completeness of the contrast between pre-Christian past and Christian present which shapes the major part of the pericope. The movement from then to now is a movement from death to resurrection life, from a lifestyle characterized by trespasses, sins, sensual indulgence, and disobedience to one characterized by good works, from this present world-age to the heavenly realms, and from bondage to the forces which rule this world to victory with Christ above hostile powers. It is a movement from the sphere of selfish autonomy to union with Christ, from domination by the devil to a life controlled from start to finish by God, from what humanity is by nature to what it becomes by grace, and from liability to God's wrath to experience of his mercy, love, kindness, and grace.” [Lincoln, 116ff]

“Before God had made them alive with Christ they were deeply affected by evil, determining influences. These included their environment (the ways of this world, v. 2), an inner inclination towards evil (the cravings of our sinful nature, v. 3), and a supernaturally powerful opponent (the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient, v. 2).” [O'Brien, 155f]

“Paul's teaching suggests that the explanation for our behavior is not to be found exclusively in human nature or in terms of the world's influence. Similarly, an exclusively demonic explanation for deviant behavior is unduly myopic. Rather, we should explain behavior on the basis of human nature, environment and the demonic — all three simultaneously. One part may play a leading role, but all three parts need to be considered.” [C. E. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, 125-6; q.v. O'Brien, 164]

v. 1 — A BROKEN SENTENCE — “The Greek text here does not have a finite verb but rather a participial clause, lit. ‘you being dead...’. In fact there is an anacoluthon in the Greek syntax, for this clause is the object of a verb whose subject is introduced in v 4 but which itself does not appear until after the opening clause has been repeated in the first person plural in v 5, lit. ‘we being dead,’ and can then be seen to be ‘made alive with.’ In translating v 1, one can either supply the main verb from v 5 — ‘And you he made alive, when you were dead’ — and repeat this when one comes to v5 (cf. RSV) or simply translate the participle as a finite verb (cf. NIV).” [Lincoln, 84; Greek replaced with English] “AE commences 2.1-10 with a reference to the condition of his readers before they believed (v. 1) and seems to have intended to go on at once to speak of God's remedy for their condition when he realises he has not described that condition adequately; a simple reference to sin is insufficient. So he breaks off from what he was about to say, causing an anacoluthon; syntactical irregularities like this are not unusual in Paul but he is by no means unique in this.... ***In a sense AE leaves here his major theme of the togetherness of Christians to take it up again in 2.11-22, but he does so because it is essential to explain before going further how his readers have become Christians; togetherness in the church is only possible for Christians. This passage is thus a necessary preparation for what is to follow.***” [Best, 198f; note: Ernest Best did not disqualify Paul as being the author of Ephesians but did not think he was, therefore Best used AE = “author of Ephesians”] The first six words of vv. 1 and 5 are the same except v. 1 says “you” and v. 5 says “us.” Paul begins his sentence then digresses until v. 5 when he completes his original

an-a-co-lu-thon — n. : An abrupt change within a sentence to a second construction inconsistent with the first, sometimes used for rhetorical effect; for example, I warned him that if he continues to drink, what will become of him?

thought. “The apostle chooses not to explain the grace of God until he makes inescapably clear the desperate need of human beings.” [Hoehner, 307]

How different translations handle Paul’s broken sentence		
<i>literal translation</i>	<i>some supply the main verb from v5</i>	<i>some translate the participle “being dead” as a finite verb</i>
YLT — Also you – being dead in the trespasses and the sins,	KJV — And you <i>hath he quickened</i> , who were dead in trespasses and sins; NKJ — And you <i>He made alive</i> , who were dead in trespasses and sins, RSV — And you he made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins ASV — And you did he make alive, when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins, Amplified Bible — AND YOU [He made alive], when you were dead (slain) by [your] trespasses and sins	ESV — And you were dead in the trespasses and sins NASV — And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, NIV — As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, NRSV — You were dead through the trespasses and sins

YOU ... WE ... — Somewhere between the beginning outburst of praise in the first chapter and the last half of chapter two, Paul begins to make a distinction between the Gentile believers and the Jewish believers. But commentators differ as to exactly when Paul begins to make that distinction. Some state that in these verses the basic distinction between “you” and “we” is not intended to be between Jew / Gentile as much as readers in particular and Christians in general, including the writer (Lincoln’s view); Best states the “you” denotes the readers, mainly Gentiles but including Jews. O’Brien agrees, saying this section as “you” (plural) as being Gentiles and “we” being Jewish believers. I have no opinion on this myself, I just wanted to bring the discussion to the reader’s attention.

WE ARE NOT “ALIVE” AND THEN DIE BUT WE ARE BORN SPIRITUALLY DEAD — shows the state or condition before God took action. The tense denotes an ongoing condition. This obviously refers to their spiritual condition and not their physical death for the next two verses shows they were very much alive physically. “The prodigal son was considered dead or lost from home, but when he returned home he was reckoned as alive or found (Luke 15:24, 32). This concept of spiritual death would be familiar to the readers of this letter for the same language was used in Greek philosophy. It can especially be seen in Stoic writings, in Hellenistic Judaism, where Philo speaks of the estrangement of the wicked from God as true death in contrast to physical death, and also in rabbinic literature.... *As those who are physically dead cannot communicate with the living, so also those who are spiritually dead cannot communicate with the eternal living God and thus are separated from God. They are lost and need to be found. They are dead and need to be made alive.*” [Hoehner, 307f] *“The idea is not that people are born alive and slowly die through sinning and are then made alive again at conversion.... In using his phrase he is not passing a moral judgement on society but a theological judgement on the pre-conversion existence of all. He is not indicating that there is a certain point in the development of human life at which ‘death’ takes place (e.g. when sin comes to be recognised as sin). The lifestyle of the non-Christian is one which may be described as death or as one of sins and trespasses. People are born dead and remain so until they come to believe. Those who are dead in this way cannot come to life of their own accord; only God can make them live; so the passage goes on to speak of the way God gives life (vv. 5, 6).”* [Best, 201] More will be said about this when we get to verse 3.

“DEATH” — “Obviously this weighty phrase needs to be read in the light of other truths; such as the existence of spirit, and the full presence of conscience, and of accountability, in the unregenerate. But those truths must not be allowed unduly to tone down this statement, which distinctly teaches that the state of the unregenerate has a true analogy to physical death; and that that analogy on the whole consists in this, that (1) it is a state in which a living principle, necessary for organization, growth and energy, in reference to God and holiness, is entirely lacking; (2) it is a state which has no innate tendency to develop such a principle of life. The principle must come to it altogether ab extra.... *The state here described is not one of suppressed life, but of absence of life.*” [Moule, 65f] *“It should be kept clearly in mind that death is not extinction of being or inactivity. Spiritual death is the state of separation from God and His life. Death itself is a separation, whether physical, the separation of the person from his body, or spiritual, the separation of the person from God.”* [Wuest, 59] *“In Scripture the word life is the term commonly used to express a state of union with God, and death a state of alienation from him. Life, therefore, includes holiness, happiness and activity; and death, corruption, misery and helplessness. All the higher forms of life are wanting in those spiritually dead; they are secluded from all the sources of true blessedness, and they are beyond the reach of any help from creatures. They are dead.”* [Hodge, 96] *“Let a man be abandoned by God, and he is absolutely hopeless. It is the voice of God that arouses, that awakens, that causes a man to think and enquire; it is the power of God that gives strength to act; it is the same power which makes provision for the need of the new life.”* [Foulkes, 75f; quoting C. Brown, *Ephesians*] “How is it that the readers’ pre-Christian past can be described as a condition of death? Such a description was a natural implication of the way of thinking in which the death and resurrection of Christ was the turning point of history. If Christ’s resurrection introduced the life of the age to come ahead of time, then one’s state prior to participation in that resurrection life must, comparatively speaking, be viewed as death. In addition, the notion of participation in the events of the end ahead of time can be seen to have a reverse, negative side. The death which comes to all as the wages of sin (cf. Rom 6:23) and which in its final form involves

physical death and the judgment of exclusion from the life of God is experienced partially in this life.... The depiction of this life in terms of an experience of spiritual and moral death, while it took on special force in the light of Christ's resurrection, was not unique to the early Christians. Already in the OT, particularly in the Psalms, a life in disease, sin, alienation, captivity, or under the rule of one's enemies was seen as a life in Sheol or in the realm of death (e.g., Pss 13:1-3; 30:3; 31:12; 88:3-6; 143:3; Hos 13:14; Jonah 2:6).... In the NT itself 'dead' is used metaphorically in the saying found in Matt 8:22 and Luke 9:60 and in the parable in Luke 15:24, 32. In 1 Tim 5:6 and Rev 3:1 it is used of members of the Christian community who are not living the new life as they ought. Outside of the Pauline corpus the greatest similarity to the usage in Eph 2:1, 5 is found in the Johannine literature where there is a strong realized eschatology of life and death (cf. John 5:24, 25; 1 John 3:14).... Obviously the most immediate influence of the usage of the writer to the Ephesians is Col 2:13. But lying behind this are other references in Paul which depict death as a power of the old age and connect it closely with sin (e.g., Rom 5:12-21; 6:23; 1 Cor 15:56). In such references the physical aspect of death's power is very much to the fore, but there are also places where the spiritual aspect of death's reign is in view. In Rom 6:13 believers are those who have been brought from death to life, and in Rom 7:9, 10, 13 the person under the law is in a state of death. The realized eschatological view of death in Col 2:13 and Eph 2:1 is a natural continuation of such thinking, as the past is contrasted with the present experience of resurrection life. The same concept occurs later in Ephesians when the baptismal hymn is quoted in 5:14, 'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead,' and 4:18 with its description of Gentile existence as 'alienation from the life of God' provides further comment on what the writer means when he says his readers were dead. It is a theological assessment on the part of the writer, for whom the reality is determined by one's relationship to God and who therefore sees the tragic situation of those who are not in a living relationship to God through Christ as one of death." [Lincoln, 92f]

The world's philosophy: "where there is life, there is hope" — the Lord destroys that in one sweeping statement

Life:	expresses union with God	Death:	separation from God
	holiness		corruption
	happiness		misery
	activity		helplessness

1) *people that are dead are absolutely dead* — not: *ill, partially dead, dying* but: *dead*

this affects one's teaching of salvation; if dying then with proper aid one may recover — God calls unbeliever dead therefore helpless to save himself

2) *people that are dead can initiate no action* — Rom 8:7 unable to respond to appeals / commands of God to change; Rom 8:8 unable to produce favor in God's eyes

3) *people that are dead may have various degrees of corruptness* — e.g. man at VA dead 40 years but was no more dead than one that one who recently died; in like manner men may differ in outward appearance (corruption) but God declares us all dead. Cp Mk 5 Jairus' daughter had just died; Lk 7 widow's son's at funeral; Jn 11 Lazarus had been dead 4 days

TRANSGRESSIONS AND SINS — used synonymously, forming a hendiadys (the use of two words coupled by 'and' to express one concept). *"Trespases and sins both bring about the condition of death and characterize the existence of those who are spiritually dead."* [Lincoln, 93] Both of these words have been discussed in 1:7. It should be repeated however that inherent within these words is intent. *"They connote more than an inadvertent mistake for they express a conscious and willful action against God's holiness and righteousness and thus a failure to live as one should. Human beings are responsible for these acts of treachery against God."* [Hoehner, 308] *"This state of death was linked with trespases and sins in that it had to do with the moral and ethical part of the individual, his reason, will, and emotions. He was living in a state of separation from God and His life in that the latter did not energize and control the reason, will, and emotions of the person. These were very active, but were energized by the totally depraved nature."* [Wuest, 60]

trespass, transgression = literally "a fall beside", sin is a blunder, fall, a false step, losing one's way, straying from right way; e.g. if I needed to take I-75 south to Cincinnati but I leave Dayton heading NE on Rt 4 — God declares path of righteousness but we go other direction.

sin = literally "missing a mark", i.e. failing to measure up to God's standards; Rom 3:23 for all have "missed the mark" and fallen short of glory of God

"The World" – According to this Present World-Age

v. 2 — *in which you formerly walked* — *in former times they were living day to day in this condition.*

walk = literally "to walk around". The verb occurs 95x in the NT; 46x in the Gospels where it is used literally with the exception of four times; 49x outside the Gospels where it is used as a metaphor except for two times (Rev 2:1; 21:24). Metaphorically it refers to one's lifestyle or conduct, both positively (Eph 4:1; 5:2) and negatively (Eph 2:2; 4:17). **The word is used in Ephesians 8x, thus one's conduct is a very important issue in this book.** "Believers do not now walk under the control of the devil though they once did. In the Pauline corpus Christians are regularly reminded of their pre-Christian condition (cf. Rom 5:7-11; 6:19-21; 7:5; 11:30; 1 Cor 6:9-11; Gal 4.3, 8; Eph 5.8; Col 1.21; 2.13; 3.7; Tit 3.3). **'Once' they lived in such and such a way; 'now' they live differently. The verb is aorist here rather than imperfect, presumably because the past life of believers is regarded as a**

unified whole which is over and done with.” [Best, 202f] *“They walked in sin. They were daily conversant with it, and devoted to it. They were surrounded by it, and clothed with it.”* [Hodge, 97] “The Jews called their laws of conduct *Halachah*, which means ‘Walking’.” [Foulkes, 69]

according to the age of this world — lit. “in accordance with this world-age.” [Lincoln] *This indicates the standard by which the Ephesians had walked prior to their regeneration.* “The phrase ‘world-age’ thus becomes a way of talking about both spatial and temporal aspects of fallen human existence. Instead of being oriented to the life of the age to come and the heavenly realm, the past lives of readers had been dominated by this present evil age and this world. Their sinful activities were simply in line with the norms and values of a spatio-temporal complex wholly hostile to God.” [Lincoln, 95] The usage is probably descriptive, *the age of this world*, “...meaning *the era characterized by this ungodly world in contrast to the age to come, which will be of a different character. Wink labels the present age as ‘the era of the Fall.’ In other words the unregenerate are found ‘conforming to the standards of the present world order.’ They go along with what is fashionable and acceptable and are not out of step with the rest of the world, hence, they embrace temporal values. They are concerned only with activities and values of the present age and are not concerned with God and eternal values or with the judgement to come.*” [Hoehner, 310f]

age, course = αἰῶνα [aiōna] normally denotes “time, age” and is used in this manner in the LXX 417x. In the NT it is used mostly to denote time, either a specific limited period of time or an unlimited time. In a few cases it may refer to the world. Normally it is translated ‘course’ (AV, RV, ASV, RSV, NASB, NRSV) but it could be translated ‘age’ or ‘era,’ depicting a span of time. “‘Course’ is aiōn, which Trench defines as ‘*All that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations, at any time current in the world, which it may be impossible to seize and accurately define, but which constitutes a most real and effective power, being the moral, or immoral atmosphere which at every moment of our lives we inhale, again inevitably to exhale, — all this is included in aiōn, which is, as Bengel has expressed it, “the subtle informing spirit of the kosmos, or world of men who are living alienated and apart from God.” The Germans have a word for it, zeitgeist, ‘the spirit of the age.’*” [Wuest, 61]

“AION’ OF THIS WORLD” UNDERSTOOD BY SOME TO BE PERSONAL BEING — Thought to have Gnostic undertones by some because “Aion” (translated “age”) is the name of a person deity or power in Gnosticism. This is mentioned by several of the commentators. F. F. Bruce, while denying the strict Gnostic interpretation, does take this in a non-temporal sense: “The two following phrases, ‘according to the *aiōn* of this world’ and ‘according to the *archōn* of the domain of the air,’ are naturally taken as parallel to each other. Since, then, *archōn* unquestionably means ‘ruler,’ it is natural to conclude that *aiōn*, which normally means ‘age,’ is personified here. It is certainly difficult to take it in its usual sense: what would ‘the age of this world’ mean? [Bruce does comment in his footnote at this point: ‘*the age of this world*’ might be understood to mean ‘*the age characterized by this godless world in contrast to the age to come, which will bear a different character*’] The traditional rendering, ‘the course of this world,’ makes good sense, but it assigns an unnatural meaning to *aiōn*. Paul sometimes uses ‘this world (*kosmos*)’ as a synonym for ‘this age (*aiōn*),’ the present age dominated by the force of evil (cf. ‘the present evil age’ in Gal 1:4). This force is personified in 2 Cor 4:4, where the minds of unbelievers are said to be blinded by ‘the god of this age.’ The suggestion that ‘the *aiōn* of this world’ in our present text is identical with ‘the god of this age’ is attractive, but if so, this is by far the earliest certain Christian instance of *aiōn* in a personal sense.... In the second century *aiōn* occurs in Valentinian and other gnostic systems to denote a divine entity or emanation.” [Bruce, 280f] Note that those who places a Gnostic emphasis upon this word usually places a later date on the book of Ephesians than we would probably accept.

world = κόσμου [kosmou] could refer to the material world as in 1:4 but in this context most likely refers to the ethical world; i.e., the satanically organized system that hates and opposes all that is godly (cf. John 15:18, 23; 18:36; 1 Cor 3:19).

“The Devil” — According to the Ruler of the Power of the Air

according to the ruler over the realm of the air — this is the second prepositional phrase that begins with kata, “*according to.*” *Not only is the standard of the unsaved the temporary values of this world’s ethics but is also in accordance with or under the control of the ruler of the realm of the air.* “Only now is the solidarity of evil, of which the recipients of the letter were once a part, given a personal connotation. Their lives were under the control of a ruler. Supernatural powers hostile to human welfare and to God’s redemptive purposes have already figured in 1:21 and will do so again in 3:10 and 6:11, 12. In Ephesians, however, not only do such principalities and powers appear, but equally prominent is an ultimate personal power of evil behind them, designated here as the ruler of the realm of the air, but in 4:27 and 6:11 as the devil, and in 6:16 as the evil one.” [Lincoln, 95]

Satan is called the ruler of demons:

But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils. (Matt 9:34; cp Luke 11:15)

But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. (Matt 12:24; cp Mark 3:22)

Satan is called the prince of this world:

Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. (John 12:31)

Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. (John 16:11)

Satan is called the god of this world:

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them

which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (2 Cor 4:3,4)

“RULER” HAS BOTH GREEK AND JEWISH CONNOTATIONS — ruler = ἄρχοντα [archonta] is used in classical literature to mean “ruler, commander, captain” or “chief, king, lord.” It is used in the LXX 544x to refer to leaders of nations, armies, and infrequently of angelic beings. It is used 37x in the NT, only five of which is outside the Gospels. It is used of Roman and Jewish officials, of Jesus as the leader of the kings of the earth, and of Satan who is the prince of demons and ruler of this world whose power has been broken by Christ. “While it is clear the second ... phrase refers to the devil, it is not obvious why AE chose this particular phrase or what is its peculiar flavour. [The ruler, ho archōn] is used elsewhere in the NT and early Christianity of a personal power of evil (Jn 12.31; 14.30; 16.11; Ign Eph 17.1; 19.1; Magn 1.2; Trall 4.2; Rom 7.1; Philad 6.2); the plural is also used widely of supernatural evil powers. **It was thus perfectly natural for AE to choose the word to designate the devil rather than a Jewish name like Satan; he knows it will be understood in the Greek world.**” [Best, 204] Therefore while men may boast of being “free moral agents”, having a “free will” or being “my own boss”, they actually are devoted subjects to the devil himself — Jesus: “*ye are of your father the devil*”. This subjection is willingly done: John Calvin said: “*Whence comes it that they are subject to (the devil’s) tyranny, but because they are rebels against God? If none are the slaves of Satan, but those who have renounced the service, and refuse to yield to the authority, of God, let them blame themselves, for having so cruel a master.*”

realm, kingdom = ἐξουσία [exousias] was discussed in 1:21 where it has the sense of “right to act” and could therefore be translated “authority, government, power” or “domain, realm, kingdom.” Some translate it here “power, authority” but Hoehner argues it is best understood as “domain, realm, kingdom.” [Hoehner, 311f] Illustration: the “power of USA” = jurisdiction of USA, area over which USA has authority.

“AIR” — ἄερος [aeros] was thought in the ancient world to be that which filled the space between earth and the moon. The Greeks used it to refer to the lower atmosphere, the air mortals breathe, the impure air which was the home of the spirits, in contrast with the higher, more pure air they called *ether* (*aithēr*). The word is used only 2x in the LXX (2 Sam 22:12; Ps 18:11) and 7x in the NT. It is used of that place above the earth where Christ will meet his saints (1 Thess 4:17) and as an idiom “to beat the air” (1 Cor 9:26) and “to speak into the air” (1 Cor 14:9). It was considered in Paul’s day as the dwelling place of evil spirits. “Here the realm of the ruler’s authority is said to be the air. Elsewhere in Ephesians, hostile powers inhabit the heavenly realms (cf. 3:10; 6:12). This notion has its background in OT and Jewish thought where angels and spirit powers were often represented as in heaven (e.g., Job 1:6; Dan 10:13, 21); it was also developed in Philo. What is the relationship of ‘the air’ to ‘the heavenly realms’? It may be that the writer is using terminology from different cosmological schemes, but it is fairly certain that he intends the two terms to indicate the same realm inhabited by malevolent agencies. If there is any distinct connotation, it could be that the ‘air’ indicates the lower reaches of that realm and therefore emphasizes the proximity of this evil power and his influence over the world. In later Judaism the air is in fact thought of as the region under the firmament as in 2 Enoch 29.4, 5, ‘And I threw him out from the height with his angels, and he was flying in the air continuously above the abyss.’” [Lincoln, 95f] Lincoln goes on to quote several other Jewish authorities “where the firmament is called the air and the ruler of this world and his angels are said to live in it.” “The ‘air’ is the region, or part of the region, between heaven where God dwells and the earth and is peopled with evil beings; alternatively it is the sphere in which the evil powers are active.... **Before their conversion believers therefore lived lives controlled by the ruler of the demonic spirits or evil angelic beings who inhabit or control the space above the earth and below heaven. As spirits ‘of the air’ they are near to man and can easily lead him into evil.**” [Best, 204f] “The ‘domain of the air,’ in fact, is another way of indicating the ‘heavenly realm’ which, according to Eph 6:12, is the abode of those principalities and powers, ‘world-rulers of darkness’ and ‘spiritual forces of wickedness’ against which the people of Christ wage war.” [Bruce, 282] “**The fact asserted in this clause, viz., that Satan and evil Spirits work in men, or influence their opinions, feelings, and conduct, is often elsewhere taught in Scripture. Matt. 13, 38. John 12, 31; 8, 44. Acts 26, 18. 2 Cor 4, 4. The fact is all that concerns us, we need not know understand how they exert this influence. We do not know how the intercourse of disembodied spirits is conducted, and therefore cannot tell how such spirits have access to our minds to control their operations. The influence, whatever it is, and however effectual it may be, does not destroy our freedom of action, any more than the influence of one man over his fellows. Still it is an influence greatly to be dreaded. These spirits of wickedness are represented as far more formidable adversaries than those who are clothed in flesh and blood. Blessed are those for whom Christ prays, as he did for Peter, when he sees them surrounded by the wiles of the devil.**” [Hodge, 102f] “**On the whole we gather, as the revelation of this passage, that as earth is the present abode of embodied spirits, mankind, so the airy envelope of earth is the haunt, for purposes of action on man, of the spirits of evil, which, if not bodiless, have not ‘animal’ bodies (cp. 1 Cor xv. 44). Observe our Lord’s use of ‘the birds of the sky’ (Luke viii. 5) as the figure for the Tempter in the parable of the Sower.**” [Moule, 68]

IS “SPIRIT” A REFERENCE TO OUR SPIRITS OR SATAN? — **the spirit that now works** — Hoehner lists four possible meanings for the word “spirit”, the first two of which are not likely:

- *an attitude* — This is unlikely here because whenever it is used in this manner, there is a word following to describe the “spirit,” e.g., the “spirit of gentleness” or “spirit of meekness.”
- *a mixture of a personal spirit and a spirit of influence* — found mainly in the Qumran mss / teaching, it was thought God appointed equally to all people two spirits, the spirit of truth and the spirit of deceit or injustice. In an Arminian fashion, it was then upon the individual to choose which of those two spirits they would follow. This is not likely here because in no place does Paul use such terminology to describe mankind.

The other two possible meanings are equally likely, both of which have good men in support of its teaching. How one understands

this term also influences in how the rest of the verse is understood.

- *an evil spirit* — certainly the NT (especially the Gospels) mention evil or unclean spirits. Although Paul never uses those terms himself, he does speak of “*deceitful spirits*” (1 Tim 4:1), “*different spirits*,” and five times of “*demons*.” Many good expositors accept this interpretation (e.g., Aquinas, Hendriksen, Best, O’Brien). The meaning would therefore be “*the ruler (the devil) himself is the one who now works in the sons or daughters of disobedience*.”
- *the inward or immaterial part of a person* — in this sense taken to refer to the human spirit, the seat of insight, emotion and will, in contrast with that which is material, the flesh of man. Hoehner argues this position as being the area of human beings which is now being influenced by Satan, the ruler of the realm of the air. Others agree (e.g., Abbott, Meyer, Lincoln, Robinson, Wallace). Taken in this manner, the phrases would be parallel, “*the ruler over the realm of the air, [the ruler over] the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience*.” “[I]f ‘spirit’ refers to immaterial or inward part of a person, then Paul is saying that the devil rules over the inward person, a function he now performs in the sons or daughters of disobedience.” [Hoehner, 315]

Lincoln goes through the theories of interpreting who the “spirit that now rules” is, going into detail of the Greek grammar and how the phrases relate to each other, etc. He concludes with the following: “[T]he personal power of evil is the ruler of the realm of the air, the ruler of the spirit that is now at work in the disobedient.” [Lincoln, 96] O’Brien takes the opposite view, “the devil, that ruler that now works...”

WE WERE PREVIOUSLY IN BONDAGE BUT SATAN STILL OPPRESSES BELIEVERS — “*The mention that this spirit is now at work makes clear that although the writer has attributed bondage to the ruler of this world to his Christian readers’ past, this does not mean that the ruler’s power no longer exists. It is at work in the present in those who have not benefitted from God’s deliverance in Christ. In fact, the later paraenesis will remind believers that it still poses a threat to them (cf. 4:27; 6:10-20). Here we see something of the ‘already / not yet’ tension so characteristic of Paul’s eschatological thought. Although the ruler of this world has been defeated (cf. 1:20-22), he is not surrendering without a struggle and without still making his powerful influence felt.*” [Lincoln, 97]

in the sons of disobedience — this locates where this spirit is working, namely, in the sons of disobedience. “*Sons of...*” is a Hebrew idiom. “*This form of expression is due to the more vivid imagination of the oriental, who viewed any very intimate relationship — whether of connection, origin, or dependence — as a relation of sonship, even in the spiritual sense.*” [Hoehner, 315f] “The expression ‘sons of disobedience’ for those in whom that influence is operative is a Hebraism denoting men and women whose lives are characterized by disobedience. The rebellion against God’s will which this term implies includes rejection of the Christian gospel, since the writer states that it is occurring in the present. But the disobedience is not to be limited to this and involves general disregard for God’s will.” [Lincoln, 97] Phrases of this type are regularly found in the NT: Mk 3:17; Lk 10:6; 16:8; 20:34; Acts 4:36; Eph 5:8; 1 Pet 1:14.

UNBELIEF = DISOBEDIENCE — **disobedience** = ἀπειθεῖας [apeitheias] is the negative of a word meaning “that which is persuasive or convincing.” It is not used in the LXX although a different form of the word is found in the LXX 8x to mean “*disobedient, rebellious*.” It is used in the NT only 7x with the idea of “*disobedience*” or “*unbelief*.” “*Disobedience comes from unbelief, for the person is not persuaded or convinced to trust what has been stated.... So, the unregenerate are characterized as disobedient because they do not believe in what God has provided. It shows that unbelief is more than the absence of trust — it is a defiance against God.*” [Hoehner, 316] “[The Greek word used here, *apeitheias*,] can refer either to unbelief (cf. the contrast in Jn 3.36; Acts 14.1, 2) or disobedience (cf. Rom 10.21; 2 Tim 3.2). It is often difficult to determine which meaning is primary in the NT for the two senses are closely related; disobedience is not just disobedience to a set of moral rules, but disobedience to God in the rejection of the salvation offered in Christ and is therefore unbelief.... [O]bedience cannot be far from faith and disobedience from unbelief.” [Best, 206]

PAUL IS NOT TEACHING ALL UNSAVED ARE DEMON POSSESSED — “This is not to suggest, as some contemporary Christians do, that those who live in disobedience to God are necessarily ‘possessed’ by an evil spirit. *All* who are outside of Christ live in a kingdom called ‘the tyranny of darkness’ (cf. Col 1:13) in which the evil one holds sway. But not all ‘sons of disobedience’ are demon-possessed.” [O’Brien, 161]

“The Flesh” – According to our Sinful Nature

v. 3 — **among whom also we all were formerly living** — The first two assertions each began with *kata*, “*according to*” whereas this phrase begins with “*among whom*.” Paul also changes from the second person plural (“*you*”) to the first person plural (“*us*”).

among whom = ἐν οἷς [en hois] refers back to “*the sons of disobedience*” in v. 2. Some take this to contrast the Jews vs. the Gentiles, but no real contrast is made between these groups until 2:11. It is better to understand this as between the writer and the recipients of the letter, thus saying ***all humans in the unregenerate state are in the same condition before God, including those who are now freed from that state.*** “The words, ‘among whom,’ refer back to ‘the children of disobedience.’ It is not ‘in the midst of whom,’ but ‘numbered among whom.’ ***The saints at one time were numbered among the sons of disobedience.***” [Wuest, 63]

lived, living = ἀνεστράφημέν [anestraphēmen] had the literal idea “*to turn upside down, turn around, turn back, convert*” and is

used figuratively of human conduct, “to conduct oneself, walk, behave.” It is used in both senses in the LXX and the NT. It is used figuratively here and most English versions translate it “to live.” **“The readers’ former lifestyle, which characterizes all who are outside of Christ, was not true freedom but evidence of a fearful bondage to forces over which they had no control. Three compelling influences directed their lives: the world (v. 2), the devil (v. 2), and the flesh (v. 3).... This analysis is consistent with the teaching of James (cf. Jas. 3:15) and John (1 John 2:15-17; 3:7-10).”** [O’Brien, 158, 163]

in the desires of our flesh — lusts, cravings, desires = ἐπιθυμίας [epithumiais] has the basic sense of “*desire*,” either good or evil. It is used in the NT 38x, 19x by Paul and twice in Ephesians (2:3; 4:22). It is used in the NT three times in a good or neutral sense: of Jesus’ desire to eat the Passover with His disciples (Luke 22:15), Paul’s desire to be with Christ (Phil 1:23), and Paul’s desire to be with the Thessalonians (1 Thess 2:17). The other 35x has a negative connotation. **Therefore whether this “intense desire” is positive or negative depends upon the context and what is being desired.** In the present context it has a negative meaning.

flesh = σαρκός [sarkos] originally was used to refer to bones, sinews, blood and other material parts of the body, in contrast with the gods who had no flesh. It is transitory and will pass away. In the LXX it is used 158x, mainly in reference to the material of which animals and humans are composed or the whole person, not just the physical aspects. It is used in the NT 147x, 9x in Ephesians. While this aligns with the usage of the word in the OT, the NT adds another dimension by denoting the moral dynamics of fallen humanity. **The flesh is that which opposes God (Rom 8:5-8; Gal 3:3) and produces works in opposition to God (Gal 5:19-21). “Hence, one who lives in the flesh is depicted as one whose existence is apart from God and thus opposed to God and his ways. The believer is considered as one who no longer lives in the flesh but in the Spirit (Rom 8:9). This means that he no longer follows the desires of the flesh but the will of God. Certainly, the believer’s earthly existence continues in a material body called ‘flesh’ but he desires to live not in its power but in the power of God and to see Jesus’ life manifested in it.”** [Hoehner, 320] **“While evil desires are often used to describe non-Christian existence (1 Pet 1.14; Tit 3.3; 1 Th 4.5) they are also present in Christians (Rom 13.14; Gal 5.16; Eph 4. 22).”** [Best, 209] “As those whose lives were characterized by disobedience, the readers of this letter were once under the control of the sphere of the flesh. Its desires dominated their lives and had to be fulfilled. Sin pervaded their whole person so that there were no inner recesses untainted by it. Even their thoughts were corrupt and controlled their actions.” [Lincoln, 98]

FLESH = MORE THAN PHYSICAL FLESH — “Flesh, in such a context, stands not simply for a person’s physical existence, but for the sphere of humanity in its sinfulness and opposition to God. It is the sphere in which a person not only displeases God but is also in fact incapable of pleasing God (cf. Rom 8:8). It is the sphere in which life is lived in pursuit of one’s own ends and in independence of God. As such, it is not limited to indulgence in sensuality but can take on various forms, including allegiance to the law (cf. Gal 3:3).” [Lincoln, 98]

doing the wishes of the flesh and the reasoning processes — This shows “... how the desires of the flesh were being carried out, namely, by ‘doing’ the will of the flesh. **This is not a needless repetition, for it is one thing for the flesh to have desires but another to act on those desires. The present tense shows an action that regularly occurs.**” [Hoehner, 320f] “The participle is present in tense, thus, durative in action. **It speaks of the habitual performing of acts that satisfy the desires of the evil nature and of the evil thoughts, thus a fulfilling of those desires. We went the limit in sin. The evil nature had full sway.**” [Wuest, 64]

will, desires, wishes = θελήματα [thelēmata] this word was discussed in 1:1 where we concluded it means “*desire, wish, will or resolve*.” **It is used 62x in the NT but only here it is plural. That is the reason why instead of translating it “the will of the flesh and of the mind,” most translations say “desires, cravings, wishes” which brings forth the plural aspect yet retains the idea of will or determination.**

mind = διανοιῶν [dianoioōn] has the sense of “*thought, reflection, intention, process of thinking, reasoning processes*.” “It has the idea of the ‘ability to think, faculty of knowledge, understanding’ and is parallel to the OT idea of the heart, inner person, or the thoughts of the heart. It expresses calculations formed by a thinking mind and is best translated ‘thoughts, reasoning processes.’ ... Hence, the unregenerate does the wishes of the flesh and of the reasoning processes, showing that **it is more than an occasional lapse but rather a deliberate or premeditated activity of flesh and the mind.**” [Hoehner, 321] ‘And of the mind’ (Lincoln translates: *in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the wishes of the flesh and the thoughts* (plural)) “The plural of the noun should be translated, as one might expect, as ‘thoughts, dispositions, imaginations.’ The context will indicate whether such thoughts are seen as good or evil.” [Lincoln, 98] Note the progression:

lust of flesh arises; we desire earnestly something

lust hardens into an object of ambition, lust of flesh → will of flesh

mind actively plans to achieve this goal; mental attitude is developed, lust of flesh → will of flesh → will of mind

and we were by nature the children of wrath as even the rest — This sentence is a parallel sentence with the beginning of the verse: “*we all were formally living in the desires of the flesh.*” “We ‘were by nature the children of wrath.’ **‘Were’ is in the Greek text, imperfect in tense, which tense speaks of continuous action or state of being. Our totally depraved condition before salvation was a continuous one, from birth on without cessation of that condition.**” [Wuest, 64] Illustration: A man is born in USA but moves to Germany, becoming a citizen in 1920. His son becomes involved in Nazism. During the war with the USA, the son is fighting his father’s native land. The son had no choice in the matter, he was born a German citizen by the choice of his parents. Thus, (1) the son was in a position of enmity with USA by birth, and (2) the son was willingly maintaining his position of enmity by siding with the land of his birth. We are in a position of enmity with God by birth due to the choice of another (Adam)

but we willingly maintain that enmity by our own sin.

by nature = ἤμεθα [ēmetha] much debated; it could denote (1) *origin, source, or descent such as lineal descent*; it is used by Paul in Gal 2:15 of those who are Jews by nature or descent versus those who were proselytes; or (2) it could have the idea of *natural condition, state, or quality*, like the natural lay of the land; it is used by Paul in Rom 11:21, 24 to refer to the *natural* branches of the olive tree; or (3) it could refer to the created world or nature and is used by Paul as women having long hair according to *nature* (1 Cor 11:14) and the misuse of the *natural* relations between men and women (Rom 1:26). The first sense seems to best fit the context. ***“We were, because of our ancestors, children of wrath. It is the natural endowment or condition inherited from our ancestors, particularly from Adam (Rom 5:12-21), that brings wrath.”*** [Hoehner, 323] ***“Unbelievers are ‘dead’, not because of a succession of sins which brought death, but because they have never come alive as believers. As dead they are subject to judgement (cf Jn 3.36) and so may properly be described as ‘subject to wrath’. ‘Children of wrath by nature’ thus describes ‘a permanent condition’ in the relation of unbelievers to God.”*** [Best, 211] ***“So, in their natural condition, through birth, men and women are ‘children of wrath.’ Some commentators (e.g., Robinson, Barth) wish to dissociate the thought expressed in this verse from any notion of original sin. But if original sin refers to the innate sinfulness of human nature inherited from Adam in consequence of the fall, then such a notion is not entirely alien to the thought of this verse when it speaks of the impossibility of humanity of itself, in its natural condition, escaping God’s wrath. To be sure, the verse does not explicitly teach original sin by making a statement about how this tragic plight came to be humanity’s natural condition. Yet the idea of the natural condition in which one finds oneself by birth being a sinful state deserving of God’s judgment surely presupposes some such view of original sin as is found in Rom 5:12-21, where Paul recognizes that, as well as sinning themselves, men and women, in solidarity with Adam, inherit a sinful situation by sharing in the one sin of the one man.”*** [Lincoln, 99]

children of wrath = τέκνα φύσει ὀργῆς [tekna phusei orgēs] “Tekna” is similar to “huiois” which was used in v. 2 to translate “sons of disobedience” but denotes a closer relationship to the parent. ***“The word ‘son’ has ‘the thought of individual freedom, and the dignity or responsibility of personal choice,’ while ‘child’ depicts a close relationship and dependence on the parent. One does not call an eighteen-year-old male in the family a child but a son. Thus to be a son of disobedience is one who by his own choice disobeyed God. To be a child of wrath is one who by his relationship to his parent or ancestor comes under God’s wrath.”*** [Hoehner, 322] ***“‘Children’ is teknon, from tiktō, ‘to give birth to.’ Thus, teknon emphasizes the birth relationship. We were born children having a totally depraved nature.”*** [Wuest, 64] ***“This is a Hebraism, like ‘sons of disobedience’ in v 2, which means they were deserving of and liable to wrath. This wrath is clearly God’s wrath (cf. Eph 5:6; also Col 3:5, 6) rather than merely an impersonal process of cause and effect or a principle of retribution in a moral universe. The wrath of God is a concept which occurs frequently in Paul’s letter to the Romans. It refers to God’s active judgment going forth against all forms of sin and evil and is evidence of his absolute holiness (cf. Rom 1:18; 2:5, 8; 3:5; 4:15; 5:9; 9:22; 12:19; 13:4, 5). The Hebraistic expression used here in Eph 2:3 reminds one of the way in which in the OT a person deserving of punishment is spoken of as a ‘son of stripes’ (Deut 25:2) or a person doomed to die is spoken of as a ‘son of death’ (cf. 1 Sam 26:16; 2 Sam 12:5; Ps 102:20). It is also reminiscent of the way in which in apocalyptic literature Cain, in being marked out for judgment, is described as a ‘son of wrath’ (Apoc. Mos. 3). In the NT also, Jesus is represented as condemning the proselytizing of the Pharisees, declaring that when they made a convert he was twice as much a ‘son of Gehenna’ as they themselves (Matt 23:15). The children of wrath, then, are those who are doomed to God’s wrath because through their condition of sinful rebellion, they deserve his righteous judgment.”*** [Lincoln, 98f] ***“It was not that Christians became children of wrath because they sinned... V. 3c is a statement of status. At first sight ‘children of wrath’ appears to employ a similar idiom to ‘sons of disobedience’ (2.2) but the genitive functions differently; sons of disobedience are disobedient people; children of wrath are not angry people but people subject to the wrath of God; for this form of the idiom see Jn 17.12; Lk 20.36; 2 Th 2.3; 2 Pet 2.14.... [T]he wrath in mind is the eschatological wrath of God, though as such this wrath is not necessarily future and may be experienced now (cf Rom 1.18ff; 13.4f), for AE has a realised eschatology. It should be understood as personal wrath rather than impersonal, though the parallel with human wrath should not be drawn too closely for unlike human anger God’s anger is neither malicious nor spiteful.”*** [Best 210f] ***“Grace finds us by nature the children of wrath — that is the original sin. Then it found us dead in trespasses and sins — that is practice.”*** [Carroll, 106] Compare Deut 25:2, “son of stripes” = one to be beaten; 1 Sam 20:31; 2 Sam 12:5, “son of death” = one who is to die

Hodge quotes Plato as saying, “‘They were by birth [φύσει, phusei] barbarians but by law Greeks.’ ***In these writers the expressions, ‘by nature selfish,’ ‘by nature swift to anger,’ ‘by nature avaricious,’ &c., are of very frequent occurrence. In all such cases the general sense is the same. The thing predicated is affirmed to be natural. It is referred to the natural constitution or condition as opposed to what is acquired. According to this uniform usage the expression, ‘We were by nature the children of wrath,’ can only mean, ‘We were born in that condition.’ It was something natural. We did not become the children of wrath, but were already such as we were born.... The Scriptures do indeed teach the doctrine of inherent, hereditary depravity, and that that depravity is of the nature of sin, and therefore justly exposes us to the divine displeasure.... [W]hen it is said, ‘We are by nature the children of wrath,’ the very thing denied is, that we become such by a process of development. The assertion is that we are such by nature, as we were born. The truth here taught, therefore, is that which is so clearly presented in other parts of Scripture, and so fully confirmed by the history of the world and faith of the church, viz. that mankind as a race are fallen; they had their probation in Adam, and therefore are born in a state of condemnation.”*** [Hodge, 108f, 111f] ***“A greater mystery we could not state; but neither could we name a surer fact. ‘Original sin is, fundamentally, simply universal sin. That is the fact which is at once the evidence and the substance of it... Universal sin must receive the same interpretation that any other universal does, namely that it implies a law, in consequence of which it is universal. Nobody supposes that anything takes place universally by chance... we know there must be some law working in the case.... What we call***

the law is a secondary question. The great thing is to see that there is a law. If all the individuals who come under the head of a certain nature have sin in them, then one mode of expressing this law is to say that it *belongs to the nature*, the nature being the common property and ground in which all meet.” [Moule, 70f; quoting J. B. Mozley, *Lectures*, italics his]

even as others = ὡς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ [hōs kai hoi loipoi] literally, “*as even the rest.*” Therefore we were not the only ones who were children of wrath but the rest of humanity has the same destiny. “As Paul does in Rom 1:18-3:20, the writer makes this category cover all humanity outside of Christ. ‘[L]ike the rest of humanity,’ and in this way the sinful condition and its consequences, which the writer has been describing, become all-embracing in their extent. What was once true of the readers (vv 1, 2) was also once true of all believers (v 3a), and what was once true of all believers is also true of the rest of humanity (v 3b).” [Lincoln, 99]

TRANSPARENCIES

Paul gives thanks for the readers

¹⁵ For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you,

intercessory prayer-report

remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, *that you may know*

what is the hope to which he has called you,

what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

¹⁹ and *what* is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe,

confessional material in praise of God's power in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, leading into the next section

according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ ...

when he *raised him from the dead*

and *seated him at his right hand* in the heavenly places,

²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

²² And he *put all things under his feet*

and *gave him as head over all things to the congregation,*

²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all....

the application of the power that worked in Christ in relation to believers

⁴ God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses,

made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved —

⁶ and *raised us up with him*

and *seated us with him* in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Paul begins a new sentence (vv 1-7) but is broken, the subject and verb is not given until vv 4,5 where the sentence begins again

¹ And you being dead in the trespasses and sins —

having mentioned sin, Paul digresses into the depravity of man before continuing his original thought

² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience — ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

he now continues his original intent by repeating how he began

⁴ But *God*, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses,

made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved —

⁶ and *raised us up with him*

and *seated us with him* in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Paul now begins the second sentence (vv 8-10) providing a summary of the nature of the salvation achieved by God

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

The Depravity of Man

- we were not ill or dying but dead, denoting beyond recovery and helpless to save himself
- we were unable to initiate any action towards God, unable to produce any favor in God's eyes

Life expresses union with God

Death: separation from God

:

holiness

corruption

happiness

misery

activity

helplessness

- we continually and willfully strayed from the path of righteousness
- we “missed the mark” – we failed to live according to God's standards

“The World”

- our lifestyle and conduct was according to this present world-age, a period characterized by ungodliness in contrast to the age to come
- our concern was only with the activities and values of this present age and not concerned with God, eternal values nor future judgment

“The Devil”

- our conduct was according to and under the control of Satan's desires
- demonic powers surrounded us and were in close contact with us, and they influenced our opinions, desires and conduct
- note: while the demonic powers lied to us and tempted us to evil, they could never force us to any action

“The Flesh”

- we were characterized by unbelief and disobedience
- we lived our lives according to the desires which were opposed to God's will, and we habitually performed those acts which satisfied the desires of our evil nature
- our fulfilling those desires was not a momentary lapse of judgment but was a deliberate, premeditated activity
- our entire life was one characterized as being under the wrath of God
- our condition was not something which we slowly became but it was a condition with which we were born