

Open the Eyes of My Heart (Part 7)

Ephesians 2:1-3

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My father used to tell us of the poverty he experienced back in China to make us realize how lucky we were. One day he was going to bring us back to his home and see that poverty up close, he would tell us. Then we would understand that relative fortune in which we lived. Each generation wants the next generation to understand how good they have it by letting them look back to the way things used to be. And this is exactly what Paul does in Ephesians 2. After explaining all the blessings we received from the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in 1:3-14, he reminds us of where we came from so that we would not take it for granted and become complacent.

In vv. 1-2 he addresses the Gentiles (second person plural), who were once pagan idol worshipers. They were dead in their transgressions. Their state was worse than just being wayward, errant, or foolish. Paul says that they were dead, decaying, rotting. This is the gravity of their sin. He mentions in v. 12 that they were without hope and without God. On Thanksgiving, unbelievers can only give thanks to each other, but don't know the One they should really be thanking. Verse 2 says that they walked in the ways of the world, following the ruler of the kingdom of the air, which is Satan. Though the throne of the earth belongs to Jesus, Satan has temporarily usurped it, and he intends to lead all those who belong to the world away from Jesus. He works in the sons of disobedience. Fathers more often than not raise their children to be like themselves. Children of God become like Jesus, but children of Satan become more like Satan. All those who belong to the world are children of Satan and do his will, which is to remain dead in sin, never to experience the life that Jesus gives. Before we believed, like these pagan converts to Christianity, we were also children of Satan, as are those who do not believe now.

Is it true that we were all once so disobedient and wicked? What about our many unbelieving friends and neighbors who are compassionate, kind, honest, and generous? How can we call them children of Satan? If it's true that they are children of Satan, and it is also true that they are not terribly wicked as compared to the worst of society, perhaps Paul is meaning to say that it's not about how many wicked deeds they have done. God isn't keeping a tally of your works. It all boils down to one thing, which is, whether or not you pledge allegiance to Jesus. In

1:20-23 Paul described how Jesus is at the seat of authority, and how the Father placed Him above all other authority to rule over all and to be the head of the Church. Philippians 2:10 says that one day every knee will bow before Jesus. Those who put their faith in Him will gladly bow, but those who rejected Him also will be forced to bow. Jesus is above all else, so no matter what else you do, if you reject Jesus you are dead in your sin. Those who say Jesus is not their King have done exactly what Satan wants. This is all that is required to be a child of Satan, and this is how he traps even the most kind and wonderful people. There are only two sides. Those who are not on Jesus' side are on Satan's side. It doesn't matter what other good deeds you do, because Jesus is the only way to forgiveness of sins and to the Father.

In v. 3 Paul then turns to the Jewish Christians (first person plural), who were probably looking down on the Gentiles at this point in the letter. He says that the Jews were just like the Gentiles, dead in their transgressions, because they also rejected Jesus before they became Christian. The former state of both Jews and Gentiles was the same. They were dead in sin until God opened their eyes to accept Jesus. How many of you have ever faced a life or death situation? When I was on a houseboat trip with my youth group I tried to swim across the river delta with my friends. But I wasn't a good swimmer and 50 feet out I ran out of steam. Nobody was on the deck of the houseboat and I felt hopeless, not knowing whether I could make it back to the boat. This is how we once were, without hope and without God. But now we are no longer dead but alive in Christ, through Him we are children of God, and all our hope is in Him.