

Before & After • Ephesians 2:1-7

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Before & After*

1. In the 60's, ad companies started using a style of advertising that had only been infrequently used up to that point
2. It was the "Before & After" ad
 - a. in which you would see a picture of someone or something before
 - b. and after the use of whatever product was being promoted
 - c. before & after ads were used to sell everything from toothpaste to shoes
 - d. they would show some poor bedraggled man or woman - just a mess
 - e. then, after brushing with UltraBright or coloring their hair - they would be this vibrant, excited, gorgeous person
 - f. the slogan - "Blondes have more fun" was a before and after campaign
 - 1) boring brunette Betty becomes
 - 2) babaliscious blonde Babs
3. Before & After ads were overused, and pretty much went out of fashion
4. You still do see them though - they are still a hit with weight management products and services
 - a. on TV and in magazines you see pictures of people before and after losing 45 lbs.
 - b. they go from a size 22 to an 8
 - c. and if you just drink SlimJim, you too can be svelt and lithe and shop in the petit section

B. *Ephesians Before & After*

1. Well, there is a "Before & After" statement in Ephesians
2. And it surpasses the ad campaigns of Madison Avenue by light years

II. TEXT

A. *Vs. 1-7*

- {1} And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,
- {2} in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,
- {3} among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.
- {4} But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,
- {5} even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),
- {6} and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in

Christ Jesus,

{7} that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

1. This letter of Paul to the Ephesians is filled with several run on sentences
2. Paul is so full of awe at what God has done and is doing in His people that he finds it hard to end his thoughts
3. So they just spill out - and that is the way here - this is one long sentence from vs. 1 thru 7
4. And in it we see both the *before* and the *after* of the Christian life

B. Before

1. What were we before Christ saved us?
2. What is the spiritual state of a man or woman *before* they are born again?
3. We find that in vs. 1-3

{1} And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,

{2} in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,

{3} among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

4. Before Christ, we are spiritually dead
5. We possess physical life, and we even experience a level of soulish life; the soul is the mind, emotions, and will
6. But before we are born again, we are *spiritually* dead
7. Now I realize this is terribly offensive to those who aren't Christians
 - a. it seems rather rude to tell someone they are a walking dead man or woman
 - b. be that as it may - that's the case
 - c. oftentimes, in order to be helped, we need to discover we need it
 - d. we don't curse the doctor when he or she informs us we have a treatable form of cancer
 - e. it hurts to hear, and may make us angry or sad, but we are thankful for the diagnosis and that it was caught before it was too late
 - f. and so it is with the diagnosis of our spiritual condition
 - g. before we come to faith in Christ, we are *dead* in trespasses and sins
 - a. *trespasses* are intentional acts
 - b. while *sins* are the unintentional moral errors we make simply because we are being careless and unconcerned about what pleases God
8. What this means is that in the most important part of life, the *spiritual* part, we are completely out of touch with reality
 - a. a person born blind is dead to the world of sight
 - b. a leper becomes dead to the world of touch
 - c. the deaf are dead to the world of sound
 - d. if you take away all the senses, you become locked in a state of living death, unable to interact at all with the world around you

- e. it exists, but you are trapped inside yourself with no way to live in the world
9. Before we come to faith in Christ, our spirit exists, but it has no sense, no ability to interact with the realm of the spirit
 - a. we cannot *see* the truth *as* truth
 - b. we cannot *hear* the Word of God as inspired and filled with life
 - c. we cannot *feel* anything of the Spirit
 10. The 19th Century philosopher Jeremy Bentham left his entire fortune to the *University College Hospital* in London, England -
 - a. on the condition that his body be preserved and placed in attendance at all of the hospital board meetings
 - b. to this day, they wheel him in, dressed in gentleman's clothes from 160 years ago
 - c. and the chairman says, "Jeremy Bentham: Present but not voting"
 - d. he never makes a motion, nor engages in discussion
 - e. he just sit there and slowly rots
 11. That's the picture here
 12. Before Christ, we are dead in trespasses and sins
 - a. our spiritual death is due to the fact that sin has driven a wedge between us and the God of life
 - b. God said that the day Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, they would die
 - c. while they didn't die physically, they did die *spiritually*
 - d. sin results in death
 - e. and the essence of death is *separation*
 - 1) when we die physically, the soul separates from the body
 - 2) spiritual death is a separation of our spirit from God who is the Author and Sustainer of life
 13. As long as sin is the ruling principle of our lives, then we abide in a state of spiritual death
 14. And the greatest sin of all, is the sin of rejecting Christ
 - a. you might be a morally good person - at least relatively speaking
 - b. you might be kind and generous, careful and considerate
 - c. maybe you are the kind of tree-hugging animal lover that wouldn't even hurt a flea
 - d. none of that really matters if you reject Christ
 - e. you are as spiritually dead as a Adolph Hitler or a Slobodan Milosevic
 15. You see, there aren't various degrees of death
 - a. either you are alive or dead
 - b. there is a line that marks a division between the two
 - c. and it is razor sharp
 - d. which side of that line are you on this morning?
 - e. if you're on the side of spiritual death - want to let you know you can be made alive by Faith in Christ
 - f. and we're going to give you an opportunity to do that a bit later
 16. But first, let's see what Paul says *identifies* this state of spiritual death . . .

17. Spiritual death is identified by living our lives according to the *world*, the *devil*, and the *flesh*
18. Notice first how the world influences us . . .

{1} And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,

{2a} in which you once walked according to the course of this world,

- a. the word *world* here is used often in scripture and it refers, not to the physical planet, but to the system - as they used to say in the 60's - the Establishment, Man! (notice - "they")
- b. it speaks of an ordered system that is dominated by evil
- c. that evil is subtle, but nevertheless opposed to God and His goodness
- d. when we talk about the world, we're talking about the whole scene that is concerned with getting and hanging on to power and money and pleasure
- e. and we see it everywhere we turn; media, government, society at large
- f. when we live by the standards and values of the world rather than God, we are walking ***according to the course of this world***

19. Then see how the *devil* influences us before we come to Christ . . .

{2b} according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,

- a. Satan gets several titles in scripture - each one indicative of some way in which he opposes God
- b. here he is called ***the prince of the power of the air***
- c. Paul uses technical language to say that the devil exercises authority in the realm in which we live
- d. he is a real spiritual being who is at work in the lives of those who are spiritually dead
- e. really, he is the creative force and animating energy behind the world system
- f. he is the piper who plays the world's tune, and when we are dead in trespasses and sins, we dance to his music
- g. again; I realize how offensive this is to non-christians
 - 1) to see yourself as a good moral person -
 - 2) and to hear that you are in fact living a life inspired and energized by the devil is deeply disturbing and offensive
- h. but this is because people jump to the conclusion that the devil's mode of operation is always blatantly and obviously evil - they picture Pinhead from the movie *Hellraiser*
- i. that is not at all the case - as Paul writes, if it suits the devil's purposes, he can appear as an angel of light
- j. you see, Satan's goal is your destruction
- k. if making you think you're fine without Christ by being a good moral person can get the job done - why tempt you to be wicked
- l. make no mistake, hell will be full of good, moral people
- m. because morality isn't the issue - faith in Christ is!
- n. being a child of disobedience simply means being disobedient to God and the most important issue of obedience is trusting Jesus

20. Last we see the flesh's influence before we come to Christ . . .

{3} among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

- a. after years of living by the world's standard and the devil's inspiration, we develop habits of behavior and attitude
 - b. we no longer need the world's or the devil's influence - our flesh has been so deeply patterned that we can ride along in sin all on our own
 - c. like one of those toys you have to pull backwards and then let go [elab]
 - d. Sally's mother asked her, "Honey, why did you let the devil make you kick your brother and pull his hair?"
 - e. Sally replied, "The devil only told me to kick him. Pulling his hair was *my* idea!"
21. Because we were dead in trespasses and sins and because our lives are dominated by the world, the flesh and the devil, we are by our very nature, in a place of wrath
22. Meaning that if we are not rescued from that state, we will experience the full measure of God's judgment on sin.
23. Child of wrath or child of God: Relationship = What's yours?

C. After

1. Badwater in Death Valley is the lowest spot in the United States
2. It is 280 feet below sea level and the accumulation of salt and minerals there is so strong, nothing can survive
 - a. the record for hottest spot in the US was recorded there at 134 degrees!
 - b. the environment is brutal
 - c. and so it is called *Death Valley*
3. Vs. 1-3 are the **Death Valley** of the scriptures - they amply describe life apart from Christ
4. But just 80 miles from Badwater is Mt. Whitney, at 14,495 feet, it is the highest place in the continental United States
 - a. and there the air is pure and clean
 - b. the water is abundant in the snows
 - c. and it is always cool
5. If vs. 1-3 are Death Valley, then the next verses are Mt. Whitney . . .

{4} But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,

{5} even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

{6} and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

{7} that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

6. Dear friends, notice how this all begins: "But God . . ."
 - a. after all the dark of vs. 1-3; after the terrifying picture Paul paints of man's depravity

- b. he turns and says, "But God . . . "
 - c. we must never count God out of the picture
 - d. no matter how dark it gets or hopeless it seems, God is still able to move and work a miracle
 - e. and if we are dead in sin, then a miracle is exactly what we need, isn't it?
7. Notice how Paul puts all the emphasis for our salvation on God and God alone!
- a. in contrast to man's sinful and wicked bent, God is rich in goodness
 - b. He is "**rich in mercy**"
 - 1) meaning He delays judgment to allow us time to come to faith in Christ
 - 2) how sad that so many people confuse God's mercy in not pouring out judgment on them as a *reluctance*, or *impotence* to judge sin
 - 3) what they fail to understand is that mercy is merely a delay that provides them time to repent and seek forgiveness
 - 4) story:
 - a) one day in a frontier town, a horse bolted and ran away with a wagon carrying a little boy
 - b) seeing the child in danger, a young man risked his life to catch the horse and stop the wagon
 - c) the child who was saved grew up to be a lawless and wicked man and one day stood before a judge to be sentenced for murder
 - d) he recognized the judge as the man who years before had saved his life, so he pled for mercy on the basis of the past
 - e) but the judge just said, "Young man, then I was your savior, today I'm your judge and I sentence you to be hanged."
 - f) one day Jesus will say to rebellious sinners, "During that long day of mercy, I was the Savior, and I would have forgiven you. But today I am the Judge; depart from me into everlasting fire."
 - c. God shows us mercy, not because we deserve it *but* "**because of His great love with which He loved us,**"
 - a. God withholds judgment because out of love, He wants to bless, save, and forgive
 - b. it is the nature of love to want to be *with* the one loved
 - c. but judgment will see in sinners separated from God forever
 - d. that is the *frustration* of love, not the fulfillment of it
 - g. so, motivated by love, God moves to effect a change in man's state of spiritual death
8. He begins this work, "**even when we were dead in trespasses,** "
9. And in the midst of this deadness, he "**made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,** "
- a. just as Christ was raised from the dead—
 - b. even so, we have been raised from *spiritual* death
 - c. not by our own effort, but solely and completely by His grace
 - 1) after all, what can a corpse do to raise itself?
 - 2) nothing, it's dead, all it can do is rot and go into an even more obvious state of death
 - d. we have been raised up, meaning that God has given us *new* life; this new

- life . . .
- 1) is no longer lived according to the course of this world
 - 2) is no longer subject to the prince of the power of the air
 - 3) and it isn't ruled by the lusts of the flesh
- e. rather, it's seated with Christ in heavenly places, which is another way to refer to the spiritual realm
10. So while we were spiritually *dead* before faith in Christ - afterwards we are spiritually alive and are privileged to sit together with Him
 11. But Paul isn't finished describing our new life
 12. In v. 7 we read, "**that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.**"
 - a. you know how some people who are really good in sports will amass a trophy collection?
 - b. they set aside a certain area of their home as a display
 - c. sometimes mom or dad will set up a little sports shrine as an act of parental pride in the accomplishments of their children
 - d. in a way, God has a trophy display too—it's His people, those He has saved
 - e. His grace has conquered the power of sin and death and secured a prize that will be His forever—that prize is you and me
 - f. the ages to come will be the unfolding story of the greatness of His grace at work in our lives

III. CONCLUSION

A. *In Him*

1. As we end this morning, don't miss where all the riches of God's grace are to be found:
 2. They are IN CHRIST JESUS!
- {7} that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.**
- a. where does salvation lie? In Christ
 - b. where is grace located? In Jesus
 - c. where are life, and hope, and joy? In Him!
3. Christian - Let this passage be a reminder that apart from Christ, people are lost!
 4. The gospel is their only hope - and you have the opportunity to see them cross over from being a child of wrath to being a child of God
 5. The means of that transition is the gospel

B. *The Appeal*

1. What about you?
2. What side of the line are *you* on this morning?
 - a. are you in vs. 1-3 - or vs. 4-7?
 - b. are you spiritually dead - or alive in Christ?
3. Don't think that spiritual life is found in morality, or religion, or anything else
4. Life is in Christ and in Christ alone

5. And God in mercy has delayed judgment so you might have the opportunity to be here this morning, hear this message, and respond
6. Even now the Spirit is calling you - you can hear Him, which means life stands at the threshold beckoning you
7. Come!