

The World, The Flesh and the Devil

Eph. 2:1-3 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 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. ESV

1) Intro (were, once, once, were)

- a) In 1959 the movie “The World, The Flesh and The Devil”, starring Harry Belafonte made its debut in theatres.
 - i) You may have heard this phrase used to describe the three great areas that Christians wrestle with on their journey with Jesus
 - (1) _____ – a mindset against God that is filled with challenges and temptations, _____ – our own selfish desires that trip us up, and the _____ – that great enemy of our souls who oversees an army of spiritual enemies with which we wrestle
- b) The idea of the world, the flesh and the devil comes from this Bible passage.
 - i) Paul’s interest is not so much in their on-going challenge to us (although this is true), but in them being realities of our former life in which we once lived.
- c) Some intro thoughts:
 - i) And - Continuation of the previous section about the power of God:
 - ii) Once – Discussion of their former condition, which God, by the working of His choice, love, grace and wisdom, has rescued them out of.
 - iii) Like the rest – This condition is the current condition of everyone who is not “in Christ”, i.e. a believer in and follower of Jesus.
 - iv) Love sandwich – Love, lavish grace, kindness, mercy, etc. are in Ephesians both before and after.

2) Outline/Structure

- a) Rather than giving you a grammatical outline, I want to follow Paul’s thought around 4 words.
 - (1) _____ Dead
 - (2) _____ Walked
 - (3) _____ Lived
 - (4) _____ children of wrath

3) Body -

- a) Were Dead
 - i) Were – past tense
 - ii) Dead
 - (1) General word for dead in body or spiritually dead
 - (2) Used of Jesus in Eph. 1:20 - ...When He raised Him from the dead...
 - (3) This word can refer to three kinds of death
 - (a) _____ death (Eph. 1:20)

The World, The Flesh and the Devil

(b) _____ death (This verse) – Like Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:17, 3:1+

(c) _____ I death – called the “second death” – Rev. 2:11, 20:6,14, 21:8

(i) The lake of fire is called the second death

(4) Their former condition is one of spiritual death and separation from God

(a) Eph. 4:18 – They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God...

(b) Eph. 2:12 - remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (ESV)

(5) Were “In” Transgressions and Sins

(a) Contrast with Alive _____

(b) The words are probably synonyms with not much difference.

(i) The two terms may be interchangeable and we may chalk this up to the Asiatic style,¹ (Witherington)

(6) _____ – Paraptoma

(a) Root means to fall

(b) Thus, in the word *paraptōma* (παράπτωμα), sin is looked upon as a lapse or deviation from truth or uprightness, a trespass, a misdeed.²

(7) _____

(a) Root means to miss the mark

(b) In the N.T., it speaks of sin as the act of a person failing to obey the Word of God, failing to measure up in his life to the will of God.³

(c) Rom. 3:23 - For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God – The glory of God is the target and we have fallen short, or missed the mark

b) Once _____

i) Once – past tense, contrasted with their new reality described starting in vs. 4.

ii) Walked

(1) Jewish concept for lifestyle

iii) Connects the two thoughts – they once walked in transgressions and sins and they once walked in the course of the world...

¹ Witherington, B., III. (2007). [The letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians : a socio-rhetorical commentary on the captivity Epistles](#) (p. 253). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

² Wuest, K. S. (1997). [Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader](#) (Vol. 4, p. 60). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

³ Wuest, K. S. (1997). [Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader](#) (Vol. 4, p. 60). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

The World, The Flesh and the Devil

- iv) According to the Course of this world
- (1) Literally Aeon/Aion of this world
 - (a) Aion – Age
 - (i) Bronze age, iron age, etc.
 - (b) World – Kosmos (universe, created order)
 - (c) Zeitgeist – Spirit of the age
 - (d) Could have been the name of an evil spiritual ruler
 - (i) This current fallen world system is personified as an enemy (cf. Gal. 1:4). It is fallen mankind attempting to meet all needs apart from God.⁴
 1. Gal 1:4 - 4 who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, (NIV)
 - (e) Doubtless the two words are used together for emphasis here. As John Stott puts it, both words 'express a whole social value-system which is alien to God.'⁵
 - (f) Example: Tower of Babel – direct contradiction to what God asked.
 - (2) They were walking in a mentality and perspective about life that was alienated from God's way of seeing things.
- v) According to the _____
- (1) Spirit now at work in the sons of disobedience
 - (2) Ruler is Archon – Prince
 - (3) Power is Exousia – which is also a name for supernatural beings
 - (4) Air – the space above the earth inhabited by and under the control of certain supernatural powers
 - (5) This is likely a reference to the _____ (who is mentioned twice in Ephesians).
 - (6) The spirit now at work in the sons of disobedience
 - (a) The devil is at work in those who are not in Christ. He is a spirit and is spiritually affecting them.
 - (7) Work
 - (a) Same word used to describe God's work
 - (i) Eph. 1:11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,
 - (ii) Eph. 3:20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,

⁴ Uteley, R. J. (1997). [*Paul Bound, the Gospel Unbound: Letters from Prison \(Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon, then later, Philippians\)*](#) (Vol. Volume 8, p. 84). Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.

⁵ Foulkes, F. (1989). [*Ephesians: an introduction and commentary*](#) (Vol. 10, pp. 77–78). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

The World, The Flesh and the Devil

- (8) They were under the influence of the devil
(a) 1 Jn. 5:19 - and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

vi) Sons of _____

- (1) Apeitheia – literally to not be convinced or persuaded. To not believe or even to refuse to believe.
- (2) Might we say that disobedience in behavior flows from a lack of being convinced or from a lack of faith? Would the opposite be true? If I believe then I would behave in accordance with my belief?
- (3) Son of – have the characteristics of, embody
 - (a) Barnabas – Son of encouragement
- (4) The disobedient are those who live their lives following the mentality of the world under the anti-God guidance and influence of the devil and other evil forces.

c) Once _____

i) Passions of our flesh

- (1) Passions – deep desire
 - (a) Negative and positive
- (2) Desire of the body and the mind
 - (a) Not about normal physical appetites. Flesh refers to selfish, sinful cravings.
 - (b) Not just our instincts and physical desires, but even our reasoning led us astray.
- (3) Eph. 4:17 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. 19 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

ii) Selfish desire and reasoning focused on satisfying ungodly cravings.

d) Were _____

i) By nature

- (1) **nature**, the character or make up of something, as a natural result or condition⁶
- (2) Their condition, maybe even their essence (nature vs. nurture)

⁶ Swanson, J. (1997). [*Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek \(New Testament\)*](#) (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

The World, The Flesh and the Devil

- (3) Used by theologians to support the idea of a sin nature. Not just behavior, but a condition.
- ii) Children –
- (1) **Teknon** - 58.26 **υἰός**^h, **οὔ** *m*; **γέννημα**^b, **τος** *n*; **τέκνον**^f, **ου** *n*: a kind or class of persons, with the implication of possessing certain derived characteristics—‘son of, offspring of, child of, kind of, one who has the characteristics of, person of.’⁷
- iii) _____
- (1) Awkward topic to deal with. Our world, and even the church, is uncomfortable talking about God’s anger.
- (a) Love sandwich – Love, lavish grace, kindness, mercy, etc. are in Ephesians both before and after.
- (2) Orge – anger, punishment
- (a) The anger/wrath of God are found in both the OT and NT.
- (3) A couple thoughts on the wrath of God
- (a) It is closely connected to the _____ –
- (i) Rom 2:5 But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. 6 God “will repay each person according to what they have done.” u 7 To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. 8 But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.
- (b) It can also be poured out in this _____
- (i) 1 Thes. 2:15-16 - They displease God and are hostile to everyone 16 in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last.
- (c) A person who is _____ is still under the wrath of God
- (i) John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.

⁷ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). [*Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains*](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 587). New York: United Bible Societies.

The World, The Flesh and the Devil

- (d) Sin and evil behavior is one of the reasons the wrath of God is coming
 - (i) Eph. 5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.

- (e) Through Jesus we find _____ from God's wrath
 - (i) 1 Thes. 5:9 For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. 10 He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him

(4) The wrath of God is a real thing. And it has come at various points in history and is ultimately coming on the day of Judgment.

- (a) But God's desire is not wrath, it is mercy, compassion, grace and love.
- (b) Example: _____ – those in the ark were saved from wrath and judgment; those outside the ark experienced the wrath and judgment.
 - (i) You must believe that judgement is coming and that there is a new/renewed world on the other side of judgment
 - (ii) This will cause you to ask: what or where is the ark, and what do I do to get on it.
 - (iii) The ark is _____ – we enter by faith
- (c) Connected to the second death (see above)
 - (i) They were spiritually dead and were headed for eternal death

iv) Like the rest

- (1) Appears to be an expression referring to all of humanity. All those not in Christ are children of wrath. And headed for eternal death

4) Conclusion

- a) Our former life was a condition of _____. We lived our lives in sin following the world, the flesh and the devil. Our destiny was the wrath of God and eternal death. Were, once, once, were.
- b) But just as God used His power to raise Jesus from the dead, He has used His power to place us in Christ and to raise us spiritually from the dead and seat us with Him in heavenly places. Because we are in Him we are saved from the wrath of God and receive _____ rather than eternal death
- c) Our response
 - i) Be _____ for what God has done for us
 - ii) Be _____ (Sober) – the awareness of the plight of the world should sober us up to the seriousness of the reality of the world around us.
 - (1) The people around us are in grave danger and they don't know it.

The World, The Flesh and the Devil

- iii) Be _____ – prayer for those who don't know God and for the lost in the world in general
 - (1) God does not want any to perish but all to come to repentance. 2 Pet 3:9
 - (2) God wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 1 Tim. 2:4

- iv) Be _____ – seeking the Lord for opportunities to minister to people around us and, if possible, to share the Gospel

- d) Col. 4:2
 - i) 2 Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. 3 At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— 4 that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. 5 Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. 6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

The World, The Flesh and the Devil

5) Research and Notes

i) And

(1) You were dead in your transgressions and sins

(a) In which

(2) You formerly walked

(a) According to the course of this world

(b) According to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit

(i) Now working

1. In the sons of disobedience

(ii) Among whom

(3) Also we all

(a) Lived formerly

(b) In the desires of our flesh

(c) Doing the will of the flesh and of the mind

(4) And

(a) We were by nature children of wrath

(b) As also the rest (of mankind)