

## *“The Family of God Continues”*

### **Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians**

Ephesians 2:1-10

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October 23, 2020

**Jeff:** Okay. Why don’t we pray before we get started? And so let’s do that now.

Our Father in heaven, we are thankful. We’re thankful for the Lord and for life in Him. We’re thankful for the Holy Spirit who indwells us. We’re thankful that You loved us when we were yet sinners and sent Your only-Begotten into the world that we might have life in His name, and have it abundantly in the present life. Father, as we stand here in this present evil age we possess the age to come by virtue of standing in the Lord Jesus Christ, the resurrected Christ.

And Father, we stand in Him, and we live between the overlap of the ages. And Lord, in doing so it is indeed a struggle. And we pray that You will continually sanctify us. Bring about what is pleasing in Your sight, and bring out in us what You’ve planted in us. Father, we pray that You will bless us in that regard.

But not only that. We live in this life and we encounter its struggles. And oftentimes they are near to us. We think of Vivian and her ailment, and how the doctors are uncertain of what that is. Lord, we pray for her, that You would give the doctors wisdom that they might be able to discern what’s happening in her body, that they might be able to cure her. And Lord, we commit her ultimately to You and ask that You will bless her and give her strength and give her a cure.

Father, we also pray and give You thanks for Don Maurer our friend. And Lord, we ask that You’ll heal him. We pray that whatever he has will not be debilitating. We pray that it will be passing. And we pray, Father, that he’ll already be enjoying strength this morning. We pray, Father, that You’ll bring him back with us soon.

And Father, we ask and pray that You’ll use our Bible study this morning. Use it in our lives, knowing that Your word is a means of grace. Use it to develop us into Christlikeness. Lord, we pray these things in His precious name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** All right. Let’s turn to Ephesians chapter 2. And I think I’m just going to read the first ten verses. All right. So why don’t we get started here. And here is Ephesians 2:1. This is the word of the living God.

*“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins 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, 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.*

*“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

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“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not a result of works so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” This is the word of the Lord.

**Brave Men:** Thanks be to God.

**Jeff:** Did you notice how smooth that sounded? It almost sounded like I knew what I was doing. (*Laughter*) I mean, I felt like that was the first time that I actually remembered, and the right words. Thank you very much; I appreciate it. (*Laughter*) I feel so dumb! (*Laughter*) That’s great.

So here’s what we’re doing. This is an outline of all of chapter 2. And it won’t make much sense to you, I think, until we get to each of the points. But we’re going to think about *the blessing of life in Christ*, and ask the question *where have you been?* And then we’re going to move from that question—where have you been?—because, you know, what we’re going to do is that we’re going to go backwards and think now not about all of the abundant blessings that we possess in Christ, but we’re going to think about where we’ve been—the cesspool of life that we’ve been lifted from. And then we’re going to look at the idea that *you belong here*, wherever here is. And then we’re going to look at the idea of *walking*. And then we’re going to remind ourselves *not to forget our coats when we go out*, whatever that is. And we’ll look at what that is as we go.

So first of all let’s look at the first set of these. Now the question that we have to ask is this. *Why start where we’re starting?* I mean, when you open up to Ephesians chapter 2 the obvious question is, why start here? Why start here in chapter 2?

Now I want you to think about it. When you look at chapter 1 it’s a cascade of blessing. Verse 3: Blessed are we in God with every spiritual blessing that is in Jesus Christ. And then he goes on and he enumerates those blessings. And all of a sudden we leave this wonderful chapter—chapter 1, where we’ve been told that the Spirit is a down payment, a deposit of better things yet to come.

We leave this chapter and it’s almost a downer. He tells us, “remember where you came from.” And why is it that he starts almost in this backward trajectory?

Well, I think there’s a natural trajectory that we have to make between chapter 1 and chapter 2. And we have to elaborate on it a little bit. For instance, notice that in 1:18 we were told that “the eyes of your heart have been enlightened.” But the idea now is that if they were enlightened, that means they were once dark. And the idea of 2:1 just basically helps us to understand what it is that stands in the background of that 1:18 statement. If you were enlightened, if your eyes were opened, well then they were once closed.

And how were they once closed? In what way were they closed? Paul tells us that they were closed in death. You were dead in your sins and your trespasses.

Now when we think about *dead*, what do we think about? Well there are all sorts of ways to think about death in the Scriptures, or at least this idea of our condition outside of Christ. We were “*apart from Christ*.” We were “*not citizens of the commonwealth*.” We dwelt in the realm of sin and death—all sorts of ways in which the Scripture talks about this deadness.

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For instance, in 1:18 of Romans we find that Paul says that this death is described as the suppression of the truth of God in unrighteousness. So there are all sorts of ways that this sinful condition can be described. It doesn't have to be just described as *death*.

It is in one sense an activity. I want you to think about that for just a minute. We often talk about spiritual death. And sometimes people mistake that for meaning no activity at all, as if to say that there is nothing there in the person. And that's oftentimes used as a criticism. And it's the way we sometimes paint the picture for people as to what spiritual death means.

And yet we don't mean that there is inactivity because someone is spiritually dead. We mean that there is activity. It's just that that activity is contrary to God. It's a suppression of anything of God and His righteousness as revealed in the truth.

So the question is this. What aspect of death do we have in mind when we think about something like this text? What aspect do we have in mind? And I think the answer to that is fairly straightforward, especially when you look at the letter to the Ephesians. The aspect of death that's in mind is the dissolution of a relationship.

You know, when you find that here in this text, you find it elsewhere, for instance in Romans chapter 1. I'm sorry; Romans chapter 7.

In Romans chapter 7, *“Do you not know, brothers, (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? For a married woman is bound by the law to her husband while he lives. But if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies she is free from the law. And if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.”*

Now when you think about this aspect, we've got a principle and then we've got an ideal situation, and then we've got a less than ideal situation in Romans 7:1-3. For instance, what's the principle? Well, a man is bound to the law as long as he lives.

And then he gives this illustration. If you're married to this woman and the woman dies, you're no longer bound to the law, but you're free to re-marry. But what if the woman is still alive and you leave her or she leaves you? You're both still bound to the law. And if you leave her and marry another then you're an adulterer. And if she leaves you and marries another she is an adulteress. It's a less than ideal situation.

But the point is that you're still bound to the law. The idea is about relationship. And in this case it's about dying to the law, and so the dissolution of the relationship.

Now that idea is here in the text. The dissolution of a relationship, the dissolving of a relationship, is here in the text. For instance, in Ephesians 4:18 we were *“separated from God.”* We were not in a relationship with God.

Now I use Romans 7 just as an example. But there are other implications to Romans 7 that I don't necessarily want to go into here. But the idea is that because we're separated from God there is no relationship with Him. And the characteristics of what that manifests are also here.

For instance, it's like a bad divorce. It's like Romans 1:18. The people in Romans 1:18 know God but they hate Him. And they suppress what they know of Him in

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unrighteousness. That’s kind of how it is with a bad divorce. You know him but you hate him, or she knows but she hates.

And the idea with us is that if you stand outside of Christ you know Him, but you hate Him. And you suppress the knowledge that He gives in unrighteousness. That’s the idea. It’s basically a life gone wrong.

And we find here that Paul tells us the three influences that really set a life like this in the direction of this separation. So I just want to walk through these three influences for just a minute.

And the very first one is “*the course of this world.*” Now when you think about the course of this world what do you think about? Well, you can translate this as *course* or *age*. And the idea is this. The sinful behavior was natural for us to do; it was natural for us to engage in. In other words, when you think about it, we just went along with the crowd. We did whatever the culture did.

And that’s easy to do. And in fact, when you think about typical controversies in history, one of the things that you realize is that there are really convicted people on one side, just as convicted folks on the other side—two opposing views. And then there’s this really soft middle.

And the idea of the course of this present age is when that soft middle starts to drift in one way or the other, and then you just move with it. You don’t necessarily think about what you’re doing. Maybe you do and you’re happy with it. But the idea is that you just move with it, or tend to flow in the direction of the world, the course of this age.

The idea is this. One way of translating this word here in the text can be “to breathe.” And it’s not necessarily the word we think of when we think of “to breathe.” But it develops into *course* or *age*. Why? Well, words develop over time; you know that. Etymologically they sort of move in a direction. And they sort of adapt to their use.

Well how was it then that “to breathe” could turn into or adapt to *course* or *age*? Well, think about it. *Course* or *age* is the idea that you’re sort of breathing in the air of the present moment, whether it be the culture or the society or some sort of trend. You know, that’s the idea. So you’re just sort of breathing in the air of the course of the age and doing it. You’re engaged in it.

Did you ever notice this? I’ll just give you this example and then I’ll shut up for a second in case you want to say something. (*Laughter*) But did you ever notice this? Did you ever notice that when you’re watching TV regularly, and then you stop watching TV—you just go cold turkey and stop,—that you realize all the junk that you’ve been taking in.

**Tom Hansz:** Yeah.

**Jeff:** You realize just what sludge you’ve been pouring into your life. And then when you go back to it you’re appalled by some of the things that you used to watch so easily. I mean, you’re really appalled. You’re like “I can’t believe I used to watch this,” that sort of idea.

And that’s an illustration in my mind of sort of being so into the course or the age that we live in that sometimes we’re just oblivious to how terrible it actually is. Anything you want to say about that or talk about? Yes?

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**Ted Wood:** Is that kind of like watching Pitt football? You really become disgusted when you watch it.

**Jeff:** Pitt football. I really can't comment on college ball; I just don't know.

**Ted:** Thank you.

**Jeff:** Anybody else? No?

**Sig Tragard:** I find that with friends who recommend TV shows. We watched this one, and I forget the name. It's about two couples, and very good actors. All four people are recognized and nationally known—Jane Fonda, Lilly Tomlin, Martin Sheen, and the last guy is probably the best of all (Sam Waterson). Anyway, the first scene is at a dinner. There are two married couples. The two men announce to their wives that they're in love with each other, that they're gay and that they're leaving their wives. And this is over dinner. And it's like why did my friend recommend this show?

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Sig:** And it wasn't even funny. It wasn't even clever. I mean, the worst part of it was that these were well-known actors who I thought were very talented. And it wasn't so much the homosexual thing. But it just wasn't even well written or clever. And I thought, how did this get there? Who puts money behind this?

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Sig:** I'm saying that because it's the first thing that came to mind. Or worse, this “Shittz's Creek.” It won all kinds of Emmy Awards this year. I only watched it once or twice. But it's a wealthy family that lost all of its money. And now they're living in some sleazy motel. And the premise was stupid and the acting was stupid and the writing was stupid. But somehow people put money behind it.

**Jeff:** Mm-hmm.

**Sig:** Anyway I just thought I'd share it—not to reinforce it, (*laughter*), but what he was saying about watching TV.

**Jeff:** So I think that's the first thing I think that we have to be aware of, that we live in the context of the world. And we can't live any place else. We may choose to live somewhere other than Pittsburgh, somewhere other than Pennsylvania. But we can't divorce ourselves from the world. And the lie is that we can somehow take ourselves out of the world.

Years ago I knew some guys that were buying up land in Belize. And they were going to go down and establish a commune. They did leave. But I've never heard from them again; I don't know where they are. But they did ask me to be their chaplain.

And I said to them, “Hey, give me the Biblical basis for what you're doing.” And they said from Revelation, “Come out from among them.”

And I said, “That's not what this means. This doesn't mean to buy land in Belize and live somewhere apart from the world. It means to come out from the present evil age and live differently.” It doesn't mean to hide from it. It means to live differently in the midst of it. And I think that's the idea that we have to keep in mind.

And so the personal question that each one of us has to ask ourselves is this. What is it that we're engaged in that's really worldly, that we ought not to be engaged in? That's one of those old words that we just have a tendency not to use anymore. But worldliness

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is an evil. Friends of the world are enemies of God. So what is it that we’re engaged in? What is it that we give our lives to that is worldly, that we ought not to be doing? That’s one of the questions. That’s one of the things that we used to do.

You know, I’ll just say this last thing, and then you can interact with it if you’d like. Then I’ll move on. But do you remember when you first believed? When you first believed you went through every belonging you had. You went through and scrutinized it and got rid of a lot of stuff.

I can remember going through my music, going through my books. When I was converted I got rid of a bunch of stuff. And what I noticed is that over the years you get those people who try to talk to you about bringing that stuff back into your life. “It’s not bad; you just have to manage it.” Or, “you just have to think about it carefully. You have to engage with it,” and so on.

And you know, over the years I’ve gone back and forth on that question. And one of the things that I have a tendency to think is, I have a tendency to think that the first impulse is the right impulse. I think, *what harm could come from living in such a way that you’re insulating yourself from worldliness?* I don’t think there’s a downfall to that, except that maybe your best buddy could call you naïve. I’m not sure that’s such a bad thing. But I’m not sure that it’s actually good to allow all that stuff to be creeping back into our lives, and oftentimes it does. But anyway, enough of that.

The second thing is *the prince of the air, the devil*. We were once friends with him; now he’s our enemy. Ephesians 6:12 tells us that he desires to have us back.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Ephesians 6:12, ESV. “*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*”

**Jeff:** You know, the idea of this, if you’ve read *Pilgrim’s Progress*,--our friend John put it up on the website at one point,--but if you’ve ever read this, this is a great book, because Christian leaves the City of Destruction which was under the power of Apollyon. And he gets down the path in some ways. And as he’s going down into the Valley of Humiliation he runs into Apollyon.

And Apollyon says to him, “*You belong to me; now return home.*”

And Christian says, “I no longer belong to you. I belong to the Lord of the hill.” You know, that wonderful picture that I think so encapsulates what we have here. We were once his friends; we once belonged to him. And now we no longer do.

You know, I sometimes wonder about our view of the evil one, especially those who are Reformed. When you’re Reformed, one of the things that you have a tendency to think about is not the activity of the devil. But you have a tendency to think about providence—God’s sovereignty. This happens because God is sovereign. You know, down to the wiggling of my finger God sovereignly ordained from ages old that I would wiggle my finger. And we talk about that sort of thing. And that’s not wrong; that’s right.

But I think that sometimes Reformed believers will lose the idea that there’s a real devil that’s “prowling about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour.” And one of the things that I always think about is this story.

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In Ipswich, Massachusetts, there is The Devil’s Footprint. And it’s on the rock beside the Congregational church on the hill. If you drive through Ipswich you can kind of look up. And there’s a Congregational church at the top of the hill.

And there’s this great story. And the story is about George Whitefield. George Whitefield preached at that Congregational church to masses of people. And he preached so powerfully, the story goes, that the devil who was clinging to the steeple of the church threw him down, seeking to take his own life. But he was unable to do so. And he ends up landing on the rock below and leaves a footprint.

Now you and I both know that’s a crazy story, right? The devil is not going to materialize to leave a footprint in the rock, and so on. But here’s what I love about that story. What I love about that story is that it reminds us when there was a time and a place in our own history where people were actually mindful of the devil who was “prowling about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour,” and that he hated the word of God. He was frustrated by it and it frustrated his purposes.

And I just think that is something that we need to regain. I think it’s something that we need to refresh our memories on daily. And the point is that he is real. The devil is real. And the point is that he is ready to deceive us.

I want to show you something that you may find interesting and maybe you won’t. But it’s something that I have found interesting over the years. And I want you to look at 1 Peter. He answers this question. 1 Peter chapter 5, verses 6 and 7: let me read it to you.

*“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him because He cares for you.”*

Now when you look at this, it says, “Humble yourselves, and in the proper time God will exalt you.” And then this phrase: *“casting all your anxieties on Him because He cares for you.”* The question that I would ask is, when do you cast your anxieties? Is it simultaneous with humbling? Is it before humbling or after humbling? When does this occur?

And I think that if you look at this idea of casting all your anxieties, if you look it’s an aorist participle. And oftentimes introductory grammars give you a leg up in translating a text. So for instance they’ll tell you what words to use to make your translation accessible and understandable. So for instance, if it’s a genitive you use the word *of*, showing possession. If it’s dative you use the word *to*. They put these in your translation to give the sense. Well, in introductory grammars that instruct you in this sort of way, when you have an aorist participle you’re supposed to put the word *after* in to get the sense of time.

Now let me show you how this would look if you put the word *after* into the text in order to show the sense of time, so as to answer the question that we just posed. Here’s what it looks like. *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time He may exalt you, after casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you.”* In other words, casting all your anxieties comes before.

Now I want you to think about that. Why is that the case? Well, as long as you hold on to anxieties you are thinking that you are in control. When you hold on to anxieties you’re holding on to them because you are the captain of your future. But when you cast

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your anxieties on Him, realizing that you’re powerless, then you’re able to humble yourself before Him. And in fact that is the way you humble yourself before Him.

Now one of the things that I want you to catch is this. What you see is really, really something! When you relinquish control you accept humbling.

But here’s the point; here’s the point of this. He goes on to say, *“Be sober-minded, be watchful. For your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”*

Who is it that he’s seeking to devour? The one who is prideful, who thinks himself able to be the captain of his own future. The one who is able to handle his own anxieties is the one who is prideful and not humble.

Now when you read that account what does that put you in mind of? It puts you in mind of the Garden story. Adam doesn’t cast his anxieties on God. He doesn’t humble himself before the Lord. Instead he is prideful. He manages the situation itself. And he’s devoured by the roaring lion of the evil one.

And I think that when you think about it that way, it just reminds us that there is a real devil, a roaring lion. And sometimes we invite him in the door by the way we handle situations. Any thoughts or comments on that before I move on?

**Sig:** Corky?

**Corky Semler:** Yes--

**Sig:** You have a mike coming up.

**Corky:** Yeah. I don’t need a mike. *(Laughter)*

**Sig:** But the recorder needs a mike.

**Corky:** Ah, the recorder needs a mike. You know, it’s been said that all fear and all anxieties come from the fear of death.

**Ted:** Amen.

**Corky:** And so what we really understand who Christ is that fear of death,. Although in our sinful nature we obviously have that fear of the unknown,--

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Corky:** That fear leaves us, right? We are so immersed in the love of Christ and the confidence of the life hereafter that those things disappear.

**Jeff:** That’s right.

**Corky:** And so obviously when those things disappear Satan no longer has power over us, right? He has power over us, as you said, when we want control over things. And I love what you said there about humbling yourselves, because you’re exactly right. That anxiety comes from us wanting to control the issue. And then isn’t that our biggest idolatry?: it’s ourselves, right? We really want to control these things. What a beautiful way to unpack that!

**Jeff:** I think that one of the things, just following up on what you said, (and this is not a criticism; this is an observation and not a view of our present situation.) When you look at our world, here in America anyway, at least, one of the things that you find to be the case is that more people are on anxiety medicine than ever, right? And even with Christians, the stats don’t change with regard to Christians. You know, I think there are just as many Christians on anxiety medicine.



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Now listen. If there's a physiological problem then that's one thing. But if there isn't a physiological problem, and we're just anxious because we're not casting our cares on God because He cares for us, then it's a spiritual problem. And the medication may help us. But it's only masking a bigger issue. The masking of the bigger issue is that we're just unable to relinquish anxiety and hand it over to God and let Him care for it.

Now I'm not saying that's not a battle, and sometimes a lifelong battle. Sometimes the casting of anxiety is not an easy fix. It doesn't just go away. Sometimes it persists. It's a besetting sin, you know? But sometimes I think we just forget to call it what it is. And the idea that I'm anxious means that I'm not trustful in God. And if I'm not trustful in God it's probably because I'm trusting more in my own ability than I am in His ability. And if I'm trusting more in me, maybe that's why I'm anxious. And if I'm trusting more in my own abilities, then I've made myself just a delicate little morsel for Satan to prowl about and seek to devour, because he loves that kind of tasty food, you know? Yes?

**Ted:** Freud identified the fear of death as the determining factor of the human psyche. It's right up there with what Corky said.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Ted:** And the refusal to humble ourselves is the result of our fearing death, thinking that we can overcome death. And when I hear, for instance, one political party talks a lot about people dying all the time.

**Jeff:** Mm-hmm.

**Ted:** And I often hear the other party say, out of fear, “I'm very fearful that This will happen if this President is elected.” I think most people forget the fact that we have a Savior that overcame death.

**Brave Man:** Amen.

**Jeff:** Yes. Well, one of the things—and I think this goes off of what you said,—Hebrews 2:14. “*Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all of those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.*”

**Ted:** Excellent.

**Jeff:** Yeah. And here's the thing about this. Probably in the last five years I've read a number of books on anxiety. And one of the things I recognize is that they'll often talk about what you mentioned that Freud did, where people are afraid to die. They can't control that fear.

So there's a thing called *transference*. So they transfer their anxieties to a fear that they believe they can manage or control, right? So for instance, I may not be able to control my fear of dying. But with transference I now have a fear of flying. And I can control my fear of flying because I just won't enter onto a plane, right? I just won't get on the plane.

So the idea then that if I just move my fear I readjust it to something that I can manage. And the longer I read, it's just not helpful to me.

You know, I'll tell you this. I did read this book. It's just an absolutely hilarious book by this guy who struggled with all sorts of anxieties, and it was really, really good. He

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was essentially not a doctor. But he had been through so many doctors in his life, trying to educate himself on his anxieties, that he knew things up and down and backward and forward.

At the end of the book he asks the question of himself? He said, “Am I cured?” And he said, “No, I’m not cured. I just move from managing one fear to the other.” He understood that was a lifelong battle that he had.

And I thought to myself, here’s the idea, right? The idea is that he will not submit himself to the One who has conquered death, which is the root of all fears. So anyway, okay.

**Jim OBrien:** It strikes me that when people are anxious that their first response is that they don’t have the power. And so it’s not so much pride but anger that they don’t have it. But at the end of that verse it says, “*because He cares for you.*”

**Jeff:** Mm-hmm.

**Jim:** And I think He is sovereign over the problems we deal with in life, and our disappointments. I think that a lot of people don’t think that God cares for them. “If he cares for me, why does my three-year-old have to reject his food while vomiting? I’m not saying you have that. But it’s the kind of thing that can tear us apart.

**Jeff:** Yes; that’s right.

**Jim:** And if God doesn’t care and God won’t answer our prayers, then what can I do with that pride to rely on myself? So that the apostle puts that at the end is crucial, to believe that God cares in the midst of pain and suffering. Maybe that’s not a good example.

**Jeff:** No, I think it’s a good one. And you know, I think that Christians don’t often respond to this well. But oftentimes one of the things that you find in Scripture is that you find the word (*a Greek phrase*) is used repeatedly not just for the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to us, but it’s this idea of reckoning something true, thinking something true. And I think it’s used in Philippians chapter 3, or is it 4? It’s 4, where Paul talks about “*think on these things.*” Reckon these things to be true.

And he talks to us in Romans 6 about “reckoning ourselves dead to sin in Christ”—in other words, thinking certain things to be true. And I think this is the idea of preaching the gospel to ourselves.

And I think it’s just what Jim was saying. This idea that God cares for me is something I’ve got to preach to myself, reckon to be true, count true, and act as if it’s true despite and sometimes in the face of contrary evidence, (my three-year-old being very ill.)

But that takes realizing a number of other things that I need to know that are true—for instance, sin in the world and the Fall, and the need for salvation, and so forth. But you know, this is why I’m so moved by Martin Luther. What he would do is that he would preach the gospel to himself regularly. And what he would do is, he had a prayer book that he lifted from the medieval Catholic Church and sort of rewrote it and made his own. It had the Lord’s Prayer, it had the Apostles’ Creed, it had the Ten commandments. And it had an explanation of those things. And what he would do is, he would take that book with him. And when his dad died he took that book with him and his Psalter. And he went into his room and he just spoke the gospel to himself repeatedly.

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And you know, I have found that that’s a helpful thing. I oftentimes do that, especially in the shower. I’ll recite the Apostles’ Creed. I’ll go over a passage in the Scripture that I know. And I will say to myself, “These are things that I believe. These are things that I must believe.” And I’ll just talk to myself about things that I believe. And you know, it is a wonderful way to help yourself.

**Ted:** Yeah.

**Jeff:** And it’s not self-help, because what you’re doing is that you’re reminding yourself of what God has said. So it’s reminding yourself of what the ultimate Therapist has told you. *(Laughter)* Anyway, all right.

**Ted:** You know, whether you believe it or not, you must believe it, like you just said. Whether you believe it or not, whether you actually feel it or understand it, I mean Watchman Nee in his book *The Normal Christian Life* talks a lot about reckoning yourself *(unclear.)* I’ve always struggled with that because I said, “I’m reckoning it, but I don’t feel it.” But whether I feel it or not is actually irrelevant.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Ted:** Or even understand it. I must believe it because God says that these things are true.

**Jeff:** Right.

**Ted:** Whether you feel it or understand it is irrelevant.

**Jeff:** You know, if you go to Romans chapter 7 and think about the implications of that, the idea is that Paul has been telling us that if you’re in Christ you’re dead to sin. And think about it this way. Paul says, “Jealousy, envy was in my heart. And what happened was that the law provoked the jealousy that was in me and I died.”

And then Paul says, “Look, I’m dead in Christ now, which means that I’m dead to the law. I died to the law’s obligation in Christ because Christ fulfilled the law’s obligation on my behalf.” So I’m dead to the law in that sense.

The implication of Romans 7 is this. I may now struggle with envy. But envy cannot kill me like it once was able to do by virtue of the law. And so I need to reckon my new relationship to the law in Christ. I’m dead to the law. And so I may struggle with the old sin, because though the power of sin is crushed, the presence of sin remains. And I’ve got to deal with the presence of sin and envy in my life. But it does not have the same power because it does not have the same relationship to me.

And that’s reckoning, right? It’s reckoning what is true, not what I feel about it, because I feel envious. But what I know to be true is that I no longer have the same relationship to the law that I once did.

**Ted:** Therefore you must believe it.

**Jeff:** Therefore you must believe it.

**Sig:** I think too, Jeff, that what you’re bringing forth in my mind is this transformation that I’ve gone through in my life in unlearning the things that I bought into so quickly as a young man and wanted to be a part of in the world.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Sig:** And then coming to know Christ, and realizing that I don’t want them anymore. But it is an ongoing unlearning process.

## “The Family of God Continues”

**Jeff:** Yeah, yeah.

**Sig:** And it’s like the transforming of your life. I can’t think of any better way to say it then how Paul did.

**Jeff:** Mm-hmm.

**Sig:** In fact, you’ve referred to Romans so often this morning that a couple of us were thinking—in fact you know this stuff; this is our chance! (looking at Don Rimbey)—that your next course should be on Romans.

**Jeff:** On Romans. Anyway, the third thing—*(Laughter)* You know, I actually thought that very thing on the way here this morning. But then let’s go to the third, and that is *the passions of the will*. He talks about the passions of the will. And I’ve labeled that so because we’re “*sons of disobedience, children of wrath*.” In other words, our passions, our wills were enslaved to our sin. And therefore we were sons of disobedience and therefore under God’s wrath.

Now the next question that we ask ourselves is *where are we now?* And one of the things that I think that we have to contend with is that we oftentimes don’t think about chapter 2 as much as we think about, say, chapter 1. If we thought about chapter 2 a little more, we would be in better shape to think about chapter 1.

Why do I say that? Well, you remember Anselm in his book *Cur Deus Homo—Why the God-Man?* He wrote it back in the 1100s. And basically it was an argument for the penal theory of atonement.

And basically he’s got this guy that he’s arguing with, this imaginary friend whose name is Bozo, appropriately so. And one of the things that he says to Bozo is this. He says to him, “*You have not yet considered the greatness of the weight of your sin.*”

Let me ask you a question. Why do we need to understand that? Why is it that we need to understand the greatness of the weight of our sin? And I think that the only answer to that, at least in light of what we’ve been looking at, is this. It’s only then that we will see God’s love and mercy. It’s only then, it’s only when I see how undeserving I am, that I actually see the greatness of God’s love and His mercy in Christ for me.

You know how it is, right? I want you to think about it like this. You know, you have a five-year-old. And you’re going to send him to a private school. And that private school is going to cost you \$30 thousand just to send him to a year of kindergarten.

And you set him down and you say, “How did you enjoy your first day of school? Did it feel like \$30 thousand worth?” *(Laughter)*

And he says, “I liked the orange crayon,” you know? They have no concept of what the investment is. And I sometimes think that the way we talk about the gospel we have no idea what the investment was. And so it’s only when we spend time thinking about being a part of the world in which we once lived and being friends with Satan, and being enslaved to our own wills because we were addicted to disobedience. Only then do we understand the greatness of God’s love in saving us from that very thing.

For instance, Romans 5:8—Oh, no; there I go! Romans 5:8, you probably have it memorized. But it’s a great text. It says this. “*But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*” It’s a great text. And so He came to us in our deadness.

## *“The Family of God Continues”*

Now I think that what we’ll probably do is stop there. But the next time we’re going to talk about the three things that He did when He came to us. Any questions before we go? Kirk?

**Kirk Ellerbusch:** Just as a clarification, going back to the verse, “you were once dead in trespasses and sins.” I know you talked about going back to romans, that they did not honor Him as God.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Kirk:** They suppressed the truth. When Paul talks about death in Ephesians chapter 2, if I’m correct, he’s also communicating the condition of the soul, right? You were dead. So some change has to happen.

**Jeff:** Well—

**Kirk:** There’s a nature there that can’t be broken by mankind alone.

**Jeff:** Well, you’ll have to flesh out what you mean. If you mean that my soul was dormant, then I wouldn’t agree.

**Kirk:** No, I don’t. Maybe I can clarify it more broadly in terms of the Arminian caricature of the Calvinist. The Arminians believe that we’re not so dead. We may be sick, but we can still choose. But the condition is that we were dead.

**Jeff:** Yes; that’s right.

**Kirk:** Period. And just like a physical body leaning on a marble slab that can’t raise itself up, neither could we apart from Christ.

**Jeff:** That’s right. The question is, what do you mean by that, right? And so that’s the word picture he uses. You were dead in sin. And he’s right. You’re not sick in sin; you’re dead in sin.

But what does that mean? It means that you’re separated from God. You’re not even in the same commonwealth as God. And you can’t enter His commonwealth on your own. God has to bring you into that commonwealth.

**Kirk:** I just wanted a clarification, because—

**Jeff:** Well, that’s going to be what we talk about the next time. So you’re right on the money. That’s part of what He did.

Okay, let’s pray. Father, we thank You for this day, for the time You’ve given. Lord, though we spend a lot of time thinking about where we were and what we once did, and how despicable and ugly that was, we know we do that because it reminds us of Your great love and mercy for us in Christ Jesus. So Lord, it’s not a downer that You would remind us of these things. But it’s a reinforcement that You are good, that You’re kind, that You’re loving, even to those who are unlovable. We thank You for this in Christ’s name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen. (*Applause*)