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THE BELIEVER'S BIOGRAPHY

Ephesians 2:1 - 10

An autobiography is a memoir of one's life written by one's self. A biography is one's life story written by another person. It may or may not be accurate. Here in Ephesians 2 is a biography - the believer's biography, written by the Author whose knowledge of us is perfect and therefore accurate. Let us read about ourselves as God sees us.

I. THE BELIEVER'S PREVIOUS LIFE. Eph. 2:1-3 & v.12

"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 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, 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."

When a medical Doctor runs tests and takes x-rays and then sits down and says to us, "It doesn't look good," our level of concern rises exponentially. The Great Physician has x-ray vision and He diagnosed our spiritual condition long before we experienced the operation by the Holy Spirit that transformed us. Our pre-salvation condition was as follows:

A. Dead in sin.

"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins...."

We were physically alive, spiritually dead. That is, we had no connectivity with God. And how did this condition come about? The answer is given succinctly by Paul in Romans 5:12 as follows: *"Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned."*

"There is not anywhere a more explicit proof of depravity than this, and no stronger language can be used. A corpse is insensible. It sees not, and hears not, and feels not. So with the sinner in regard to the spiritual and eternal world. He sees no beauty in religion; he hears not the call of God; he is unaffected by the dying love of the Saviour; and he has no interest in eternal realities. The same power is needed in the conversion of a sinner which is needed in raising the dead; and one and the other alike demonstrate the omnipotence of him who can do it." (Barnes)

Paul continued to describe the sinner's dire condition by saying, *"At that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."* (Ephesians 2:12)

What a hopeless condition apart from the initiative of the God of love, mercy and grace! How could anyone in such a hopeless spiritual condition do anything to merit God's favor?

B. Devoted to worldly living.

“..... in which you once walked according to the course of this world....”

We were captivated by, caught up in and infatuated with the system of this present evil world with little or no thought of the world to come. We were conformed to the customs, concerns, conversations and corrupt practices just as other godless people. The mind-set of such is to live for the here and now, not the hereafter. Regardless of resolutions to do better and reformations in order to be better, there was no life within from above.

C. Directed by Satan.

“.....according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience....”

The devil influences humans to disobey God. His diabolical scheme in relation to Eve and Adam in the Garden of Eden, resulted in their disobedience and consequent divine judgment.

He *“works in the sons of disobedience”* to bind and blind them. *“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.”* (II Corinthians 4:3-4)

D. Dominated by the flesh.

“..... among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind....”

A popular soft-drink TV commercial said, *“Image is nothing. Thirst is everything. Obey your thirst.”* This seemingly harmless and innocent statement is a good illustration of the lust of the flesh to dominate one’s life. *“If it feels good, do it!”* - *“What the stomach craves enjoy it!”* – *“Grab all the gusto you can get!”* – *“Satisfy every urge, for we only live once!”* This is the philosophy of those who live only for the present.

Uncontrolled desires and out of control appetites characterize the power of fleshly lusts to completely dominate one’s life. Living to satisfy our sinful nature and gratify the body’s sinful impulses describes one who is controlled by the flesh. The focus of such a mentality is concentrated upon this world only and for only a brief span of time and then comes the end.

The tangible, not the spiritual is that for which such a one lives. Someone may say, *“That lifestyle did not characterize me before I was born again.”* Well, Ephesians 2:3 says, *“We all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh.”* All of us! The Great Physician has never been guilty of a mis-diagnosis!

E. Doomed to wrath.

“ and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”

Not all sinners are social misfits, uncultured, unintelligent, criminal types. In fact, many are sophisticated, well educated, religious, law abiding. But all of us, in our pre-born-again lives *“were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”*

Again, Ephesians 2:12 sums up our pre-salvation lifestyle: *“At that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”* Certainly, this was a condition requiring emergency treatment!

II. THE BELIEVER'S PRESENT LIFE. Ephesians 2:4-6

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, 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...”

We were dead, *“but God!”*; we were doomed, *“but God!”* Using a colloquialism, “we were goners” – *“but God!”* God initiated the change in our status before Himself. *“There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God.”* (Romans 3:10-11) *“But God!”* This is nothing but the sovereign grace of God!

In verses 1-3 we have the depths of sin in which God found us and in verses 4-6 we have the heights to which He raised us. Notice seven blessings of salvation in verses 4-6. Each phrase is rich and deserves our attention.

A. **We have experienced mercy.** v.4 – *“But God, who is rich in mercy....”*

As recipients of God’s mercy we must show mercy. *“Blessed are the merciful”* said Jesus. (Matt. 5:7)

B. **We are loved by God.** v.4 - *“because of his great love for us....”*

As objects of God’s love we are to be conduits of that love, not reservoirs. We are to share God’s love to a world of mankind dying without knowledge that *“God is love.”* (I John 4:8)

C. **We are alive in Christ.** v. 5 - *“made us alive together with Christ...”*

To have mercy extended by God and love expressed, without new life experienced, leaves the sinner in the same state as before. When God begins a work He completes it!

D. **We are saved by Grace.** v.5 – *“by grace you have been saved....”*

Note the order: *“made alive”* and then follows the declaration, *“you have been saved”* – that’s past tense! To be alive in Christ is to be saved. One can be baptized, join a church, act religious but unless one has new life in Christ, that person cannot say, *“I have been saved.”*

We have been graced with salvation because of the grace of God! *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”* (v.8,9)

E. **We have been raised with Christ.** v.6

The Gospel, as Paul articulated it, is this: *“I declare to you the gospel for I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures....”* (I Cor. 15:1 & 3-4)

The believer’s past life is described as being *“dead”*; when we experience new life in

Christ, we are resurrected – as surely as Christ was resurrected from the dead, and we were raised with Him to *“newness of life.”* (Romans 6:4)

F. We are seated with Christ. v.6b – *“and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...”* In body we are on earth, in spirit we are *“in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”* From the grave of our sins to the throne of God, for our Savior is now *“sitting at the right hand of God.”* (Colossians 3:1) Why then, does he average Christian live so far below their station in Christ?

G. We are his workmanship to do good works. v.10 – *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”* Seated in heavenly places with Christ yet serving Him on earth, that is our present assignment. His workmanship should be busy doing good works!

What a Savior! What a salvation! From death to life; from the depths to the heights; from doing bad works to doing good works. But that is not all – the best is yet to come!

Illust. My wife and I stopped in a furniture store to shop for an item of furniture. We did not stay for long because the place was disorganized, dirty, uninviting and the salesmen were not customer-friendly. We left disappointed. A couple of years later we were in the same area and saw on the furniture store a sign that read: *“Under New Management.”* We thought we would check it out and went in to discover a totally new atmosphere, beautiful furniture appealingly displayed and warm and friendly employees. It was obvious that a change of management had been made.

We were all born under an old management system. Without Jesus Christ in our lives, we will remain lost under that old management. Only by accepting the new Manager, Jesus, into our lives and experiencing His transforming power, will we have life more abundantly and a future in heaven with Him. The old has gone, the new has come and now we are under new management.

III. THE BELIEVER'S PROSPECTIVE LIFE.

“That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” (Eph. 2:7)

Many of God's people are so focused upon this present life and this present world that they have little thought of the life to come. They are living totally for time, not for eternity. However, there are *“the ages to come!”*

A. There is more life to be lived! *“That in the ages to come....”*

“From Here to Eternity!” Was a Hollywood movie, set in Hawaii. It was originally made in 1941 and was a fleshly flick. But the real *“From Here To Eternity”* story was written by God and, although it begins on earth, will be fully realized in heaven. Our salvation is forever! It is a continually unfolding story and there is much more to come! The believer in Jesus Christ is the true futurist.

B. There is more grace to be received! *“He might show the exceeding riches of His grace”*

The best is yet to come! God's grace is not only abundant for the here and now, but it is superabundantly experienced hereafter! Grace is rich now, but in the future the Lord will show His "*exceeding riches*" of grace.

"Heaven, the home of the redeemed, will exhibit the most impressive proof of the goodness of God that the universe furnishes. There will be a countless host who were once polluted and lost; who were dead in sins; who were under the power of Satan, and who have been saved by the riches of the divine grace - a host now happy and pure, and free from sin, sorrow, and death - the living and eternal monuments of the grace of God." (Barnes)

Paul speaks of the "*abundant grace of God*" that we experience now (I Tim. 1:14) and we sing of "Amazing Grace" but in the life to come God's grace exceeds anything we have experienced on earth. Let us praise God for the eternality, the plentifulness, liberality, immenseness and inexhaustibleness of His grace! We often refer to the present age as "the age of grace." But the age to come supercedes this grace-age for there we will experience "*the exceeding riches of his grace*"!

C. There is more kindness to be experienced! "*in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus*" The kindnesses of God have not been expended or exhausted in our lives upon this earth. We have only begun to experience the eternal happiness that God has in store for His children.

The story of the prodigal son, recorded in Luke 15, ends with a feast in the father's house. Christians are all prodigals who have returned to The Father. The kind Father has a feast awaiting in the Father's House. We have much for which to look forward to because our Father has more kindness to bestow!

Conclusion

The biography of a believer has a sad beginning but a glad ending:

- From being dead in sin to being alive in Christ;
- From being "children of wrath" to becoming children of God;
- From being in the kingdom controlled by Satan to be in the kingdom of God – what a transformation!

Why did our status, state and standing change? Note in verse four and five the words "love", "mercy" and "grace." From objects of wrath to objects of love, mercy and grace! That is the explanation.

Is that your biography? If it is not, to this date, it can be beginning the moment you believe the Gospel of the Grace of God and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior! From that moment you will be under new management, have a new life and a fantastic future.

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