

Ephesians 2:3—Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, (2:3a)

“*Among them*” (Ephesians 2:3a) refers to “*the sons of disobedience*” of Ephesians 2:2c. Paul’s main point is not that the redeemed once lived among the sons of disobedience, but that they were once sons of disobedience. In fact, all saints (before they accept Christ) live “*in the lusts of*” their “*flesh*.”

“*Lusts*” refers to “*evil desires or cravings*.” “*Flesh*,” as it applies to this verse, can be perceived as the sinful habit patterns formed in the brain of an unbeliever (the brain being a piece of flesh) as he walks “*according to the course of this world*” (Ephesians 2:2a). Consequently, these sinful habit patterns are etched in the brains of the unredeemed. (Our *Romans 1-8* course addresses this topic in great depth.)

Conclusion: Prior to exercising personal repentance and faith while depraved and receiving God’s gift of salvation, the saints at Ephesus responded naturally to the sinful habit patterns created (generated) by sin’s influence. These habit patterns were lodged in their brains, a piece of flesh. These sinful patterns were based on evil desires and cravings, the very definition of lust. Therefore, Paul uses the phrase, “*the lusts of our flesh*” (Ephesians 2:3a), when describing their lost condition. Some of these sinful patterns were removed the moment they were saved/justified, while others remained until months or years later. Some even continued until physical death. This same truth applies to believers today. Again, our *Romans 1-8* course deals extensively with this subject matter.

indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, (2:3b)

“*Indulging*” can also be interpreted “*fulfilling*,” “*performing*,” or “*accomplishing*.” I think “*indulging*” translates best, for the sin nature in unregenerate man results in more than a passive involvement with sin. He desires to “*indulge*” in sin because of the sin nature’s addiction to sin. Fear of getting caught is the only factor that keeps him from sinning without restraint. That sin hurts God’s heart is a nonissue.

Note: Should you possess a copy of the *Romans 1-8* course distributed by this ministry, the circle diagrams located in the Reference Section of that material will assist your understanding of the following input.

As the sin nature in unregenerate man builds sinful habit patterns in the brain (the brain being a piece of flesh), the unbeliever is programmed to pursue particular areas of sin. Thus, as unbelievers we were programmed for sinful behaviors and passions. We may have been programmed in one or several of the following areas: to pursue power, indulge in illicit sex or pornography, consume ourselves with amassing wealth, view ourselves as inferior, view ourselves as superior, be overly concerned with our appearance, be too little concerned with our appearance, feel insecure in our relationships, be unfaithful in our relationships, feel depressed when facing specific situations, deny reality, worry about everything (even those things about which we can do nothing), etc. We had no alternative but to commit habitual sin in some of these areas due to the sin nature’s addiction to disobedience. Paul’s use of “*indulging the desires of the flesh*” (Ephesians 2:3b) is more than appropriate, for we were programmed for failure through the sinful habit patterns etched in our brains (made of flesh).

The previously described condition would have been bad enough, but Paul also mentions the “*mind*” (Ephesians 2:3b). “*Mind*” in the Greek means “*mode of thinking and feeling, disposition of mind and heart, the affections*.” Consequently, the sin nature, which includes the mind of an unbeliever, gave us a natural resolve to sin in our lost state (although we were capable of exercising personal repentance and faith while depraved). Hence, Paul uses the phrase, “*the desires of the flesh and of the mind*” (Ephesians 2:3b). No wonder we indulged ourselves in sin! Note: The sin nature includes the soul and spirit of unregenerate

man, the soul being the mind, will, and emotions. Remember, our *Romans 1-8* course addresses this subject matter in great detail.

and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. (2:3c)

The sin nature inherited from Adam condemns unregenerate man to hell, not the sins he commits during his stay on earth. Stated differently, the lost are condemned by God, not because of their misdeeds, but because of who they are. Man in his lost condition is the sin nature (or Adamic nature, old man, old self, dead spirit—all synonymous terms), which was inherited from Adam due to his genes having been in Adam's gene pool when Adam sinned. Thus, Paul states, "*and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest*" (Ephesians 2:3b). (A baby is not condemned by God should he experience physical death, for David realized that he would again see his son who died as an infant—2Samuel 12:23.)

Ephesians 2:4—But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,

Many things in life are certain—things you can hang your hat on. The first is that God loves His children. Why shouldn't He if His very nature is "*love*" (1John 4:8 and 16)? Not only does He display unconditional love toward his children, but the degree to which He loves them has no bounds. As a result, Paul references God's unconditional, limitless "*love*" in Ephesians 2:4. Therefore, if you have accepted Christ, you are not on a performance-based acceptance with God. You are on a Jesus-based acceptance!

Verse 4 communicates that God is "*rich in mercy*" toward us because of the unconditionality and completeness of His "*love*" directed our way. Oh, by the way, God also loves those who reject His free offer of salvation (John 3:16), never rejoicing over "*the death of the wicked*" (Ezekiel 33:11).

Ephesians 2:5—even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

even when we were dead in our transgressions, (2:5a)

Because of God's great "*love*" and "*mercy*" (Ephesians 2:4), He did something extremely special for us. He sent His Son to die so any depraved individual might exercise personal repentance and faith and receive God's gift of eternal life. As unbelievers "*we were dead*" (Ephesians 2:5a) because we, as Adam's descendants, lacked spirit life ("*God is spirit*"—John 4:24). Our bodies functioned, but we "*were dead*" spiritually (Ephesians 2:5a)—separated from "*God*" Who "*is spirit*" (John 4:24). (Remember that death in Scripture does not always mean extinction—it can also mean "separation.") Because of our sin nature (dead spirit), we committed numerous "*transgressions*" (Ephesians 2:5a). In fact, "*transgressions*" came as naturally and as frequently as our breathing. Remember: We were not spiritually dead because we had committed acts of disobedience, but the habitual disobedience confirmed that we were born spiritually dead. Yet, this spiritual death did not prevent us from turning to Christ in our depravity and, thus, prior to spiritual regeneration (2Corinthians 3:16):

but whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. (2Corinthians 3:16)

Note that "man turns to the Lord" prior to the "veil" being "*taken away*," disproving Reformed Theology (make use of the diagrams in the Reference Section if necessary, especially Diagram 11).

made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), (2:5b)

We can be certain that we have been “*made...alive...with Christ,*” for Paul is addressing New Testament believers here. When we (while depraved) repented of our sin and accepted Christ as Savior, God placed us in (baptized us into) Christ through the avenue of the Holy Spirit (1Corinthians 12:13; 2Corinthians 5:17). We received His kind of life—eternal life, life with no beginning or ending. This means that from God’s vantage point, which is reality, we have always been in Christ. Therefore, when Christ was crucified, our sin nature (Adamic nature, old man, old self, dead spirit—all synonymous terms) “*was crucified with Him*” (Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20). We were also “*buried with Him*” (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12) and “*raised*” to new life when He came out of the grave (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12-13). Hence, Paul says, “*made us alive together with Christ*” (Ephesians 2:5b). Note: “*Baptism,*” in Romans 6:4 and Colossians 2:12, does not point to water baptism, but to our Spirit baptism which placed us in Christ (1Corinthians 12:13). “*Baptism*” can also make reference to our identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, much the same as Israel was identified with Moses, their leader, through baptism (through identification) according to 1Corinthians 10:1-2.

All of these magnificent “events” occurred because of God’s “*grace*” (Ephesians 2:5b). We have not only been saved by grace (Ephesians 2:5b) but are in the process of being kept by grace (1Corinthians 15:10; 2Corinthians 12:9; Hebrews 4:16; 1Peter 5:10; 1Peter 5:12). Paul, in dealing with the fact that we have been saved by grace, uses the perfect tense in the Greek—pointing to a salvation in past time that will continue throughout eternity (Ephesians 2:5b). Thus, Paul taught that the New Testament believer is “*sealed*” in Christ (Ephesians 1:13).

Ephesians 2:6—and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus,

God actually “*raised us up with*” Jesus and “*seated us...in the heavenly places, in Christ....*” Because we are in Jesus (“*sealed*” in Jesus—Ephesians 1:13) and He is at the “*right hand*” of the Father (Ephesians 1:20), we are also at the Father’s right hand. Consequently, unlimited power is available to take authority (in Christ’s strength, of course) over anything Satan sends our way. We do battle in God’s armor (Ephesians 6:11-12), which is actually Christ’s armor (Isaiah 59:16-20), in the heavenly places. For this reason we must learn to love war!