

# Fourth Sunday in Lent – Epistle

## IT'S HARD TO WALK WHEN YOU'RE DEAD

Ephesians 2:1-10

Fourth Sunday in Lent

Analysis by Paige G. Evers

1 You were dead through the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. 3 All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us 5 even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ-by grace you have been saved-6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God-9 not the result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

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## DIAGNOSIS: “I See Dead People”

**Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem)** – *Dead Man Walking*

Whether this letter was written by the Apostle Paul himself or

by one of his associates (let's call the author Paul), it is clear that the Ephesians' condition was dire: "You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived" (vv. 1-2). The verb for "lived" (*peripateo*), also means "to walk." Paul is not talking about physical walking here, getting from one place to another, but the readers' entire way of life (as in v. 10). In the past, the Ephesians chose "the course of this world" and "the ruler of the power of the air" (v. 2), i.e. Satan. Walking this path, living this life, following Satan instead of God, brought a premature death. It's hard to walk when you're dead, when your "trespasses and sins" (v. 1) and "the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient" (v. 2) guide your dead skeleton away from the living God.

### **Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – Flatliners**

Paul explains why people who are dead through their sins so easily fall into line with the course of this world, behind Satan's disobedient spirit. Their hearts are ruled by "the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses" (v. 3). The empty promises of Satan and the desires of the flesh cannot deliver what is needed to sustain life. A person who is already dead through her trespasses cannot jumpstart her heart, and so the heart dies, too.

### **Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – Children of Wrath**

As if the charge "You were dead" (v. 1) is not enough, Paul gives another stark description of the Ephesians' near-hopeless situation. Paul writes, "We were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else" (v. 3). In other words, Paul, the Ephesians, and every already-dead human being are destined for wrath. Dead through trespasses and sins, there is no way to save oneself from God's judgment and God's wrath. Radical intervention is necessary to bring dead sinners back to life.

## PROGNOSIS: Not Dead, But Alive

### **Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution)** – *With Christ, You Are No Longer Dead*

Radical intervention comes from God in the form of God's great love. After his grim assessment of the Ephesians' past, Paul proclaims, "But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ" (vv. 4-5). God alone can turn a dead woman walking into someone made alive with Christ. In addition to being made alive with Christ, Paul tells his readers that God has "raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places" (v. 6). Right in the middle of this proclamation that his readers are no longer dead, but are alive, Paul reminds them that a dead person cannot save herself. The transformation from being dead through sin to being alive with Christ comes only through God's mercy and grace. Paul notes parenthetically, "By grace you have been saved" (v. 5). A few verses later, he repeats, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast" (vv. 8-9). God loves even those who are dead because of sin. God has his heart set on bringing dead sinners back to life, which is made possible through Christ.

### **Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution)** – *Hearts That God Made*

Having received God's gift of being saved by grace through faith, the Ephesians have a new eternal future, along with new hearts and new lives. Paul puts it this way: "For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus" (v. 10). God in Christ Jesus has created the Ephesians' entire being, hearts and all. Their hearts are no longer controlled by "the ruler of the power of the air" (v. 2), or "the passions of our flesh" (v. 3), but by the fact that they have been made "alive together with

Christ" (v. 5).

**Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution)** – *Good Works Walking*  
God created the Ephesians anew out of his great love and mercy. They are "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life" (or "to be our walk," *peripateo*, v. 10; see also v. 2). Now that Paul's readers are no longer dead, they can walk the path and live the life of forgiven sinners. They have been brought back to life by God's grace through faith in Christ Jesus who died on the cross and was made alive and raised up for their sake. Now that they are no longer dead, they can do good works, trusting that serving others is the very thing God has created and equipped them to do as their ongoing "way of life."