

Eph 2:1-2 And you were dead in your offenses and sins, 2 in which you previously walked according to the course of this world,

And you being dead in your transgressions and sins.—Before Paul begins to explain the grace of God, he makes it absolutely clear that before we were redeemed from the power of the enemy, we were in desperate need of a savior. When Paul says “and you”, remember that he is reminding us of the state that we were in before we met Jesus. The terms transgressions and sins mean a conscious and deliberate false step, not a mistake because we didn’t know. To be spiritually dead is to be separated from God. When Adam sinned in Genesis 3:6, he ushered in death for all humanity. But it is not just inherited sin that causes spiritual death; our own sinfulness contributes. That’s why we are dead in our trespasses or transgressions and sins, not just Adam’s sin. Reminding us of our spiritual condition before we were saved, Paul is going to remove the temptation to point back and say “see, it’s all Adam’s fault, and place the blame where it belongs

in which you formerly walked

In which you formerly walked. The way that we used to live our lives before we knew Jesus. Metaphorically, in the Bible, our walk is the way that we conduct our lives. When Paul talks about our Christian walk, it’s in a spirit of encouragement, as in **Eph 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.** Or, Gal 5:16-17 **16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For the desire of the flesh is against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, in order to keep you from doing whatever you want.** And the opposition to this Spiritual walk comes from the flesh, which we still struggle with, as believers, to the extent that we have not yet put it to death. Our flesh always opposes the Spirit within us, and our spiritual walk. Our fleshly desires, or as Paul put it—doing whatever our flesh, wants, is exactly how we’re NOT supposed to walk as believers. But Paul is reminding us of what Jesus has saved us from—we don’t have to walk this way anymore. We are not supposed to live our lives as the world does, and be conformed to it’s attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. We’re supposed to be being transformed into the image of Christ. And that means that we must resist the devil, so that he flees from us. We are to resist temptation, and seek the way of escape that has been provided. Col 3:5-7 **Therefore, treat the parts of your earthly body as dead to sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. 6 For it is because of these things that the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, 7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.** Paul is asking us to consider our former life, for a particular purpose—to consider the kind of life that Jesus has saved us from! To consider the change that Jesus has made in our life. As a rule, we are not supposed to spend our time thinking of our former life, or of things past, but to press on and look forward. Philippians 3:13-14 **Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.** For the Christian, looking back can be informative, if we’re being instructed by God to obtain wisdom by learning from the experiences that we’ve had, so as not to make the same mistakes, and to consider the blessings that God has bestowed upon us. Unfortunately, looking back can also stir up a longing for former things that aren’t in God’s will or plan for us, or that are in the past and can’t be changed anyway. The general principle is that we are to look forward. Proverbs 4:25, urges, **“Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you.”**

Looking back can be disastrous--Scripture gives strong caution in looking back. Lot’s family, during their evacuation from Sodom and Gomorrah, although instructed by an angel to not look back at the destruction taking place, Lot’s wife couldn’t resist and ended up being turned into a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:17-26). Looking back by the Israelites out of Egypt, away from a life of slavery and bondage, a place where they should have been overjoyed to leave with no desire to turn back—but they looked back. Both examples warn of the danger second thoughts can bring, and how deceptive the thoughts of

how good things were are. We forget all of the pain and suffering that we experienced and caused. Sodom and Gomorrah was the most evil and wicked place of its time, so why would anyone want to return there? Egypt was a place of slavery for the Children of Israel, so why would they ever be tempted to return there over being free? Past things often lures individuals who have been set free, back to places of entrapment and oppression.

What Does Jesus Say about Looking Back

If we attempt to try to save our old life without Christ, instead of living our new life in Christ, then all that we can do is lose. We must not hesitate to walk in the New Life that we've been given. It's easy to get caught up in day-to-day life, but we must remember that this is not the true life in Christ, and if we just focus on these things, then we will not be living our lives in Christ. Christ cautions about looking back. **"Jesus replied, 'No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.'"** If we take our eyes off what we're doing to look back, our purpose can be marred the instant we turn away to look at the past with desire; even if we're not actually planning on returning there. It reveals a serious heart issue.

How Looking Back Can Benefit

In many ways though, looking back without a desire to return, can be helpful to moving forward as we learn wisdom, insight, and knowledge through the various experiences. We can celebrate what Jesus has done in our lives, giving glory to Him. As the psalmist declares, **'I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago' (Psalm 77:11)**. Hindsight can also offer us wisdom for future situations. As James 1:2-4 describes, we can see how various trials and testing in life help us to grow in our faith and push us forward in perseverance **2 Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.** It's not going to have these effects, if we don't grow in Christ and learn from our mistakes, and our victories. And we can't do that, without truly discerning the lessons to be learned by looking back at them.

When we are in a low place and it seems that finding God is difficult, remembering what He has done for us in the past helps us to trust that God will meet us in our present circumstance also. Isaiah 43:1-3, God says, **"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior."** Remember a previous difficulty you face and think about how God was with you during that time and remember that He is with you now too. Remembering what God has done for us in the past is an opportunity to offer Him praise. In Psalms 34:1, the psalmist wrote, **"I will praise the Lord at all times; His praise will always be on my lips."** It's easy to praise Him when we can see His mighty works active in our lives, but when we are facing difficulty or trouble it becomes easier to grumble and complain than to praise. It's a good time to get alone with God and praise Him for what He's done for you in the past and acknowledge that even if you can't see it, you know He is at work in the present too. Remembering the works of God in our past, keeps our minds and hearts focused on Him. When life is going great, we can easily fall prey to claiming the glory for ourselves. Our focus becomes all about ourselves. It is human nature to have an "I-dependency" problem. When the promotion comes, it's "Look what I have achieved." Whenever our "I-dependency" problem shows up, we need to remember 1 Chronicles 29:14, **"But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? For everything comes from You, and we have given You only what comes from Your own hand."** When we remember that it's God who does these things, then we become God-dependent, instead of self-reliant!