

# The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON XVIII : PAUL'S PARENTHETICAL THOUGHT: THE DEPRAVITY OF MAN (2: 1-3)

## God Makes Alive / Raises Up Dead Sinners by Grace (2:1-10)

*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (KJV)*

*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (NIV)*

*Also you — being dead in the trespasses and the sins, in which once ye did walk according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all did walk once in the desires of our flesh, doing the wishes of the flesh and of the thoughts, and were by nature children of wrath — as also the others, and God, being rich in kindness, because of His great love with which He loved us, even being dead in the trespasses, did make us to live together with the Christ, (by grace ye are having been saved,) and did raise [us] up together, and did seat [us] together in the heavenly [places] in Christ Jesus, that He might show, in the ages that are coming, the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus, for by grace ye are having been saved, through faith, and this not of you — of God the gift, not of works, that no one may boast; for of Him we are workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God did before prepare, that in them we may walk. (Young's Literal Translation)*

### STRUCTURE —

<sup>1</sup> *And you — [being] dead in trespasses and sins,*

**'The World' – According to this Present World-Age**

<sup>2</sup> *in which you once walked*

*according to the course of this world,*

**'The Devil' — According to the Prince, Ruler of the Power of the Air**

*according to the prince of the power of the air,*

*the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,*

**"The Flesh" – According to our Sinful Nature**

<sup>3</sup> *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. (Eph 2:1-3 NKJV)*

## ***“The Flesh” – According to our Sinful Nature***

**v. 3 — among whom also we all once conducted ourselves** — ἐν οἷς καὶ ἡμεῖς πάντες ἀνεστράφημέν ποτε [en hois kai hēmeis pantes anestrāphēmēn pote] The first two assertions each began with kata, ‘according to’ whereas this phrase begins with ‘among whom,’ referring back to ‘the sons of disobedience’ in v. 2. **“It is not ‘in the midst of whom,’ but ‘numbered among whom.’ The saints at one time were numbered among the sons of disobedience.”** [Wuest, 63]

**CHANGE FROM ‘YOU’ TO ‘WE’** — Note the change from second person (‘you were dead... you once walked’ of vv. 1,2) to the first person (‘among whom also we ...’). There is a difference of opinion why Paul makes this change. Some would say the distinction being made is between the Gentiles and the Jews; this is possible because as we have noticed in previous lessons, that distinction is definitely made in 2:11-22. Some comments from those teaching this interpretation:

**“Paul had begun by speaking of the moral condition of these Gentiles before their conversion. He now adds that these Gentiles were in no exceptional position in that respect, but that all, Jews as well as Greeks, Jewish-Christians like himself no less than Gentile Christians like his readers, had been among those who once lived in obstinate disobedience to God. Paul seldom misses the opportunity of declaring the universal sinfulness of men, the dire level of corruptness on which all, however they differed in race or privilege, stood.”** [Salmond, Expositor’s GK Testament, 285; so also Robertson] “Lest it should be supposed that what he had now said was a slanderous reproach against the former character of the Ephesians, or that Jewish pride had led him to treat the Gentiles as an inferior race, he associates himself and his countrymen along with them in the general accusation.” [Calvin, Ephesians]

**If that was Paul’s intent, we must be careful not to make the distinction too sharply since what he had just said in verse 2 also pertains to unsaved Jewish people as well as the unsaved Gentiles.** There are also those who do not take Paul’s words to refer to the Jews and Gentiles but rather that he was merely identifying himself with his readers:

“Observe too the change of person, from the second (ver. 2) to the first. **The Apostle willingly, and truly, identifies his own experience with that of his converts.**” [Moule, 69] “Paul here joins himself in the same category with them, passing from the second person (Eph 2:1, 2) to the first person here. [JFB, Ephesians]

**our conversation, our conduct, our walk, how we lived** — ἀνεστράφημέν [anestrāphēmēn] had the literal idea ‘to turn upside down, turn around, turn back, convert.’ “Second aorist passive indicative of [anastrephō], old verb, to turn back and forth, to live’.” [Robertson, Word Pictures] It is also used figuratively of human conduct. It is used in both senses in the LXX and the NT. This compound form of the word is the only common compound used by the church fathers and is used both positively and negatively for our conduct. [TDNT] It is used figuratively here ‘to denote one’s walk, his active, open life, his way of conducting himself,’ therefore, ‘among whom also we all were formerly living.’

*‘For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.’* (2 Cor 1:12 NKJV)

*‘knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers’* (1 Pet 1:18 NKJV)

**EVEN THE ‘GOOD’ WALKED IN SIN** — “It may excite wonder, indeed, that [Paul] should speak of himself as having walked ‘in the lusts of the flesh,’ while, on other occasions, he boasts that his life had been throughout irreproachable. *‘Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.’* (Philippians 3:6.) And again, *‘Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblamably, we behaved ourselves among you that believe.’* (1 Thessalonians 2:10) I reply, the statement applies to all who have not been regenerated by the Spirit of Christ. **However praiseworthy, in appearance, the life of some may be, because their lusts do not break out in the sight of men, there is nothing pure or holy which does not proceed from the fountain of all purity.** [Calvin, Ephesians]

**in the lusts of our flesh** — ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῆς σαρκὸς ἡμῶν [en tais epithumiais tēs sarkos hēmōn] “This was the domain or element in which our lives were once spent. We kept within the confines of the appetites and impulses of our fallen nature.” [Salmond, Expositor’s GK Testament, 285]

**LUSTS, CRAVINGS, DESIRES** — ἐπιθυμία [epithumiais] has the basic sense of ‘intense desire,’ either good or evil. It is used in the NT 38x, 19x by Paul and twice in Ephesians (2:3; 4:22). It is used in the NT three times in a good or neutral sense:

*‘Then He [Jesus] said to them, With fervent desire [ἐπιθυμία, epithumiai] I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer’* (Luke 22:15 NKJV)

*‘For I [Paul] am hard pressed between the two, having a desire [ἐπιθυμίαν, epithumian] to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.’* (Phi 1:23 NKJV)

*‘But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire.’* [ἐπιθυμία, epithumiai] (1Th 2:17 NKJV)

Note as well Gal 5:17 where the Spirit ‘lusts’ as well as the flesh:

*‘For the flesh lusts [ἐπιθυμεῖ, epithumei] against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.’* (Gal 5:17 NKJV)

The other 35x has a negative connotation. *Therefore whether this “intense desire” is positive or negative depends upon the context and what is being desired.* In the present context it has a negative meaning. *“Lusts’ is narrowed in modern usage to a special class of sensual appetites, but the older English knew no such fixed restrictions.... Sinful ‘lusts’ are thus all desires, whether gross or fine in themselves, which are against the will of God.”* [Moule, 69]

**flesh** — σαρκός [sarkos] originally was used to refer to bones, sinews, blood and other material parts of the body, in contrast with the gods who had no flesh. In the LXX it is used 158x, mainly in reference to the material of which animals and humans are composed or the whole person, not just the physical aspects. It is used in the NT 147x, 9x in Ephesians. While this aligns with the usage of the word in the OT, the NT adds another dimension by denoting the moral dynamics of fallen humanity.

**‘FLESH’ = MORE THAN PHYSICAL FLESH** — There are those who limit this term to our physical flesh and in essence limit sin to those of sensuality. I believe the NT places a much wider sense on this word. *The flesh is that which opposes God (Rom 8:5-8; Gal 3:3) and produces works in opposition to God (Gal 5:19-21).*

*‘For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.’* (Rom 8:5-8 NKJV)

We can see Paul’s use of the term ‘flesh’ here cannot be limited to our physical flesh. Note how Paul uses the parallel phrases:

*For those who live according to the flesh set their minds ... but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the things of the flesh ... the Spirit.*

*For to be carnally minded is death ... but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

The ‘carnal mind’ is therefore those who live according to the ‘flesh’ but the ‘spiritually minded’ are those who live according to the Spirit. Paul also states it is not possible for those ‘in the flesh’ to be pleasing to God; but it is possible for believers to live pleasing to the Lord while in this life, therefore ‘in the flesh’ must mean more than our mere physical bodies.

*“Not merely our physical flesh but our human nature, our physical, mental and moral being considered apart from God.”* [Salmond, Expositor’s GK Testament, 285] *“Hence, one who lives in the flesh is depicted as one whose existence is apart from God and thus opposed to God and his ways. The believer is considered as one who no longer lives in the flesh but in the Spirit (Rom 8:9). This means that he no longer follows the desires of the flesh but the will of God. Certainly, the believer’s earthly existence continues in a material body called ‘flesh’ but he desires to live not in its power but in the power of God and to see Jesus’ life manifested in it.”* [Hoehner, 320] *“As those whose lives were characterized by disobedience, the readers of this letter were once under the control of the sphere of the flesh. Its desires dominated their lives and had to be fulfilled. Sin pervaded their whole person so that there were no inner recesses untainted by it. Even their thoughts were corrupt and controlled their actions.... Flesh, in such a context, stands not simply for a person’s physical existence, but for the sphere of humanity in its sinfulness and opposition to God. It is the sphere in which a person not only displeases God but is also in fact incapable of pleasing God (cf. Rom 8:8). It is the sphere in which life is lived in pursuit of one’s own ends and in independence of God. As such, it is not limited to indulgence in sensuality but can take on various forms, including allegiance to the law (cf. Gal 3:3).”* [Lincoln, 98]

**fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind** — ποιούντες τὰ θελήματα τῆς σαρκὸς καὶ τῶν διανοιῶν [prouiountes ta thelēmata tēs sarkos kai tōn dianoiōn] *Doing the wishes of the flesh and the reasoning processes.* “To fulfill these desires, is to live according to the guidance of our natural disposition and of our mind. *The flesh* means here the disposition, or, what is called, the inclination of the nature; and the next expression means what proceeds from the mind. Now, *the mind* includes reason, such as it exists in men by nature; so that *lusts* do not refer exclusively to the lower appetites, or what is called the sensual part of man, but extend to the whole.” [Calvin, Ephesians]

**fulfilling** — “Rev., *doing*. The verb implies *carrying out* or *accomplishing*, so that the A.V. is more nearly correct.” [Vincent, Word Studies, vol 2, Ephesians] This shows “... how the desires of the flesh were being carried out, namely, by ‘doing’ the will of the flesh. *This is not a needless repetition, for it is one thing for the flesh to have desires but another to act on those desires. The present tense shows an action that regularly occurs.*” [Hoehner, 320f] “The participle is present in tense, thus, durative in action. *It speaks of the habitual performing of acts that satisfy the desires of the evil nature and of the evil thoughts, thus a fulfilling of those desires. We went the limit in sin. The evil nature had full sway.*” [Wuest, 64]

**‘DESIRES’ NOT SAME WORD AS ‘LUSTS’ IN PREVIOUS PART OF VERSE** — will, desires, wishes = θελήματα [thelēmata] this word was discussed in 1:1 where we concluded it means “*desire, wish, will or resolve.*” *It is used 62x in the NT but only here it is plural. That is the reason why instead of translating it “the will of the flesh and of the mind,” most translations say “desires, cravings, wishes” which brings forth the plural aspect yet retains the idea of will or determination.* “‘Desires’ is a rare word outside of Biblical Greek. It denotes properly ‘the thing willed’ but is also used of the Divine Purpose (e.g., Eph 1:9) or command (e.g., Eph 5:17). Here it has the sense of ‘inclinations, desires.’” [Salmond, Expositor’s GK Testament, 286]

**mind** — διανοιῶν [dianoioōn] has the sense of “*thought, reflection, intention, process of thinking, reasoning processes.*” “It

has the idea of the ‘ability to think, faculty of knowledge, understanding’ and is parallel to the OT idea of the heart, inner person, or the thoughts of the heart. It expresses calculations formed by a thinking mind and is best translated ‘thoughts, reasoning processes.’ ... Hence, the unregenerate does the wishes of the flesh and of the reasoning processes, showing that *it is more than an occasional lapse but rather a deliberate or premeditated activity of flesh and the mind.*” [Hoehner, 321] Lincoln translates: *in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the wishes of the flesh and the thoughts* (plural). “The plural of the noun should be translated, as one might expect, as ‘thoughts, dispositions, imaginations.’ The context will indicate whether such thoughts are seen as good or evil.” [Lincoln, 98] “Of the mind [*tōn dianoion*]. Plural again, ‘of the thoughts or purposes.’” [Robertson, Word Pictures] This gives us two sources of evil desires and impulses: our sinful fallen human nature in general and “*the laboratory of perverted thoughts, impressions, imaginations, volitions, in particular.*” [Salmond, Expositor’s GK Testament, 286] “*The plural use is remarkable.... Thus ‘thoughts’ will be our nearest word — those phases of mind which may or may not affect the will, but which then in our natural state we allowed to lead us by the desires they excited.*” [Alford’s Greek Testament: Ephesians, 90f] Note the progression:

*lust of flesh arises: we desire earnestly something — (note this does not need to be sensual, it could be the desire for recognition or security, greed, or other such inanimate desire)*

*lust hardens into an object of ambition: lust of flesh → will of flesh*

*mind actively plans to achieve this goal, mental attitude is developed: lust of flesh → will of flesh → will of mind*

**and were by nature the children of wrath** — *καὶ ἤμεν τέκνα φύσει ὀργῆς* [*kai ēmen tekna phusei orgēs*] This sentence is a parallel sentence with the beginning of the verse: “*we all were formally living in the desires of the flesh.*”

**and were** — *καὶ ἤμεν* [*kai ēmen*] or *καὶ ἤμεθα* [*kai ēmetha*] “*‘Were’ is in the Greek text, imperfect in tense, which tense speaks of continuous action or state of being. Our totally depraved condition before salvation was a continuous one, from birth on without cessation of that condition.*” [Wuest, 64] “Paul now turns from what they did to who they were. The ‘we were’ is in the imperfect tense, denoting a past action with continued results. Therefore the emphasis is no longer what we did but who we presently are as a result, our ‘being’ or ‘condition.’” [Salmond, Expositor’s GK Testament, 286] (Note the minor textual variant; the Stephen’s and Byzantine text has the former, being in the active voice whereas Nestle-Aland 28<sup>th</sup> edition text has the latter which is in the middle voice. The differences are minor; the middle voice often has the sense of the active voice.)

**by nature** — *φύσει* [*phusei*] The use of this word is debated by some; it could denote:

- (1) *origin, source, or descent such as lineal descent*; it is used by Paul in Gal 2:15 of those who are Jews by nature or descent versus those who were proselytes; or
- (2) it could have the idea of *natural condition, state, or quality*, like the natural lay of the land; it is used by Paul in Rom 11:21, 24 to refer to the *natural* branches of the olive tree; or
- (3) it could refer to the created world or nature and is used by Paul as women having long hair according to *nature* (1 Cor 11:14) and the misuse of the *natural* relations between men and women (Rom 1:26).

The first sense seems to best fit the context. *‘By nature’ means properly what is innate, implanted. “The clause means, therefore, that in their pre-Christian life those meant by the [‘we all’] were in the condition of subjection to the Divine wrath; and that they were so not by deed merely, nor by circumstance, nor by passing into it, but by nature. Their universal sin has been already affirmed. This universal sin is now described as sin by nature.... Here is the essential meaning of the doctrine of original sin.”* [Salmond, Expositor’s GK Testament, 286f] *‘Nature’ has the fundamental idea of that which has grown as distinguished from that which has been effected, this is not something acquired but inherent. “The [nature] of an individual thing denotes the peculiarity of its being, which is the result of its being, as opposed to every accessory quality.”* [Alford’s Greek Testament: Ephesians, 91] “*Unbelievers are ‘dead’, not because of a succession of sins which brought death, but because they have never come alive as believers. As dead they are subject to judgement (cf Jn 3.36) and so may properly be described as ‘subject to wrath’. ‘Children of wrath by nature’ thus describes ‘a permanent condition’ in the relation of unbelievers to God.*” [Best, 211] “*We were, because of our ancestors, children of wrath. It is the natural endowment or condition inherited from our ancestors, particularly from Adam (Rom 5:12-21), that brings wrath.*” [Hoehner, 323] “So, in their natural condition, through birth, men and women are ‘children of wrath.’ Some commentators (e.g., Robinson, Barth) wish to dissociate the thought expressed in this verse from any notion of original sin. But if original sin refers to the innate sinfulness of human nature inherited from Adam in consequence of the fall, then such a notion is not entirely alien to the thought of this verse when it speaks of the impossibility of humanity of itself, in its natural condition, escaping God’s wrath. *To be sure, the verse does not explicitly teach original sin by making a statement about how this tragic plight came to be humanity’s natural condition. Yet the idea of the natural condition in which one finds oneself by birth being a sinful state deserving of God’s judgment surely presupposes some such view of original sin as is found in Rom 5:12-21, where Paul recognizes that, as well as sinning themselves, men and women, in solidarity with Adam, inherit a sinful situation by sharing in the one sin of the one man.*” [Lincoln, 99]

**SINNERS BY BIRTH AND SINNERS BY CHOICE** — Illustration: A man is born in USA but moves to Germany, becoming a citizen in 1920. His son becomes involved in Nazism. During the war with the USA, the son is fighting his father’s native land. The son had no choice in the matter, he was born a German citizen by the choice of his parents. Thus, (1) the son was in a position of enmity with USA by birth, and (2) the son was willingly maintaining his position of enmity by siding with the land of his birth.



We are in a position of enmity with God by birth due to the choice of another (Adam) but we willingly maintain that enmity by our own sin.

**ORIGINAL SIN** — *“The implication of original sin is here, but not in the form that God’s wrath rests upon little children before they have committed acts of sin. The salvation of children dying before the age of responsibility is clearly involved in Rom 5:13f.”* [Robertson, Word Pictures] “A greater mystery we could not state; but neither could we name a surer fact. ‘Original sin is, fundamentally, simply *universal* sin. That is the fact which is at once the evidence and the substance of it... Universal sin must receive the same interpretation that any other universal does, namely that it implies a *law*, in consequence of which it is universal. Nobody supposes that anything takes place universally by chance... we know there must be some law working in the case... What we *call* the law is a secondary question. The great thing is to see that there is a law. If all the individuals who come under the head of a certain nature have sin in them, then one mode of expressing this law is to say that it *belongs to the nature*, the nature being the common property and ground in which all meet.” [Moule, 70f, quoting J. B. Mozley] “This is a remarkable passage, in opposition to the views of the Pelagians, and of all who deny original sin. What dwells naturally in all is certainly original; but Paul declares that we are all naturally liable to condemnation; therefore sin dwells naturally in us, for God does not condemn the innocent. Pelagians were wont to object, that sin spread from Adam to the whole human race, not by descent, but by imitation. But Paul affirms that we are born with sin, as serpents bring their venom from the womb. Others who think that it is not in reality sin, are not less at variance with Paul’s language; for where condemnation is, there must unquestionably be sin. It is not with blameless men, but with sin, that God is offended. Nor is it wonderful that the depravity which we inherit from our parents is reckoned as sin before God; for the seeds of sin, before they have been openly displayed, are perceived and condemned.” [Calvin, Ephesians]

**the children of wrath** — τέκνα ... ὀργῆς [tekna ... orgēs] *“Grace finds us by nature the children of wrath — that is the original sin. Then it found us dead in trespasses and sins — that is practice.”* [Carroll, 106] “‘Children’ is teknon, from tiktō, ‘to give birth to.’ Thus, *teknon emphasizes the birth relationship. We were born children having a totally depraved nature.*” [Wuest, 64] “Tekna” is similar to “huiois” which was used in v. 2 to translate “sons of disobedience” but denotes a closer relationship to the parent. *“The word ‘son’ has ‘the thought of individual freedom, and the dignity or responsibility of personal choice,’ while ‘child’ depicts a close relationship and dependence on the parent. One does not call an eighteen-year-old male in the family a child but a son. Thus to be a son of disobedience is one who by his own choice disobeyed God. To be a child of wrath is one who by his relationship to his parent or ancestor comes under God’s wrath.”* [Hoehner, 322] Hodge quotes Plato as saying, “‘They were by birth [φύσει, phusei] barbarians but by law Greeks.’ *In these writers the expressions, ‘by nature selfish,’ ‘by nature swift to anger,’ ‘by nature avaricious,’ &c., are of very frequent occurrence. In all such cases the general sense is the same. The thing predicated is affirmed to be natural. It is referred to the natural constitution or condition as opposed to what is acquired. According to this uniform usage the expression, ‘We were by nature the children of wrath,’ can only mean, ‘We were born in that condition.’ It was something natural. We did not become the children of wrath, but were already such as we were born.... The Scriptures do indeed teach the doctrine of inherent, hereditary depravity, and that that depravity is of the nature of sin, and therefore justly exposes us to the divine displeasure.... [W]hen it is said, ‘We are by nature the children of wrath,’ the very thing denied is, that we become such by a process of development. The assertion is that we are such by nature, as we were born. The truth here taught, therefore, is that which is so clearly presented in other parts of Scripture, and so fully confirmed by the history of the world and faith of the church, viz. that mankind as a race are fallen; they had their probation in Adam, and therefore are born in a state of condemnation.*” [Hodge, 108f, 111f]

**‘CHILDREN OF WRATH’ NOT EXACTLY SAME AS ‘SONS OF DISOBEDIENCE’** — *“At first sight ‘children of wrath’ appears to employ a similar idiom to ‘sons of disobedience’ (2.2) but the genitive functions differently; sons of disobedience are disobedient people; children of wrath are not angry people but people subject to the wrath of God; for this form of the idiom see Jn 17.12; Lk 20.36; 2 Th 2.3; 2 Pet 2.14.... [T]he wrath in mind is the eschatological wrath of God, though as such this wrath is not necessarily future and may be experienced now (cf Rom 1.18ff; 13.4f), for [Paul] has a realised eschatology. It should be understood as personal wrath rather than impersonal, though the parallel with human wrath should not be drawn too closely for unlike human anger God’s anger is neither malicious nor spiteful.”* [Best 210f] Although I prefer Ernest Best’s explanation, I did want to give Andrew Lincoln’s comments. Lincoln places a different emphasis upon the term, making it more like the Hebraism of ‘sons of disobedience.’ “This is a Hebraism, like ‘sons of disobedience’ in v 2, which means they were deserving of and liable to wrath. This wrath is clearly God’s wrath (cf. Eph 5:6; also Col 3:5, 6) rather than merely an impersonal process of cause and effect or a principle of retribution in a moral universe. The wrath of God is a concept which occurs frequently in Paul’s letter to the Romans. It refers to God’s active judgment going forth against all forms of sin and evil and is evidence of his absolute holiness (cf. Rom 1:18; 2:5, 8; 3:5; 4:15; 5:9; 9:22; 12:19; 13:4, 5). The Hebraistic expression used here in Eph 2:3 reminds one of the way in which in the OT a person deserving of punishment is spoken of as a ‘son of stripes’ (Deut 25:2) or a person doomed to die is spoken of as a ‘son of death’ (cf. 1 Sam 26:16; 2 Sam 12:5; Ps 102:20). It is also reminiscent of the way in which in apocalyptic literature Cain, in being marked out for judgment, is described as a ‘son of wrath’ (Apoc. Mos. 3). In the NT also, Jesus is represented as condemning the proselytizing of the Pharisees, declaring that when they made a convert he was twice as much a ‘son of Gehenna’ as they themselves (Matt 23:15). The children of wrath, then, are those who are doomed to God’s wrath because through their condition of sinful rebellion, they deserve his righteous judgment.” [Lincoln, 98f]

**WRATH OF GOD** — This particular word for ‘wrath’ is not to be identified with punitive righteousness, punishment, future judgment or the effect of God’s present judgment of men, but denotes the quality of the wrath. “It is the Divine wrath that is in view here; as it is, indeed, in thirteen out of twenty occurrences in the Pauline writings, and that, too, whether with or without the

definite article or the defining [‘of God’]. ***This holy displeasure of God with sin is not inconsistent with His love, but is the reaction of that love against the denial of its sovereign rights of responsive love.*** [Salmond, Expositor’s GK Testament, 286]

**even as others** — ὡς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ [hōs kai hoi loipoi] literally, “as even the rest.” Therefore we were not the only ones who were children of wrath but the rest of humanity has the same destiny. “As Paul does in Rom 1:18-3:20, the writer makes this category cover all humanity outside of Christ. ‘[L]ike the rest of humanity,’ and in this way the sinful condition and its consequences, which the writer has been describing, become all-embracing in their extent. What was once true of the readers (vv 1, 2) was also once true of all believers (v 3a), and what was once true of all believers is also true of the rest of humanity (v 3b).” [Lincoln, 99]

**WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?** — *And you also, as the Father’s power was manifested when He made our Lord Jesus Christ alive physically after the crucifixion, raising Him physically from the dead and sitting Him at His right hand in heaven, that same power was manifested in making you alive spiritually, raising you from the dead spiritually and sitting you together with Christ spiritually in the heavenly places. But before discussing this, allow me to explain more fully your spiritual condition prior to your salvation.*

*As for you, you were not spiritually ill or in a weakened condition but you were spiritually dead, separated from God, unable to respond to God spiritually, without hope, unable even to understand spiritual truths. You hated God and were at war with Him. You were incapable of doing anything spiritually pleasing to God, you had no fear of Him and were enslaved and captive to Satan. You were therefore not even willing to seek after the things of God. This was not a condition that came upon you slowly but you were spiritually dead from birth. This spiritual death was in part brought about by your transgressions, your willful and conscious straying from the ways of God, and your failing to live up to the standards of God.*

*Your everyday life and conduct was habitually lived in these trespasses and sins. You lived after the leading of, conformable to, and in accordance with this world-age. You were not oriented to the age to come and the heavenly realm but your life was dominated by this present evil age. Your sinful activities were according to the temporal values of this world which is hostile to God, His attitudes and His manner of thinking.*

*Not only were your standards that of this world which is alienated from God and is passing away, but you also lived in accordance with and were under the control of Satan, the ruler of his evil realm, domain, kingdom located locally in our atmosphere. Satan’s wicked demonic spirits is all around and near you, and at that time you willfully allowed them to lead you into temptation and rebellion against God. Even though the devil no longer has his control over you, he is even now at work in all those outside of Christ, those whose essential character is one of unbelief and disobedience to God.*

*All of us at one time conducted our lives as one who distrusted God. We did not believe His record of truth, we were defiant and rejected all the Lord had been pleased to reveal to us. We lived according to the appetites, the impulses, the intense desires that came from our fallen nature and not according to the will of God. We not only had those intense desires but we were habitually performing, continually carrying out and fulfilling those cravings and passions of our fallen nature and our sinful reasoning processes. These were not occasional lapses of our thoughts but were rather continual, deliberate and premeditated.*

*That being so, we were under a continued state of the wrath of God. This was not something we obtained slowly or something acquired because of our environment or circumstances, but rather we were under the wrath of God from birth, it was inherent, something peculiar to our very existence, a permanent condition prior to our coming to Christ, even as the rest of humanity.*

## *The Depravity of Man*

- we were not ill or dying but dead, denoting beyond recovery and helpless to save himself
- we were unable to initiate any action towards God, unable to produce any favor in God's eyes

Life: expresses union with God	Death: separation from God
holiness	corruption
happiness	misery
activity	helplessness

- we continually and willfully strayed from the path of righteousness
- we “missed the mark” – we failed to live according to God's standards

### *“The World”*

- our lifestyle and conduct was according to this present world-age, a period characterized by ungodliness in contrast to the age to come
- our concern was only with the activities and values of this present age and not concerned with God, eternal values nor future judgment

### *“The Devil”*

- our conduct was according to and under the control of Satan's desires
- demonic powers surrounded us and were in close contact with us, and they influenced our opinions, desires and conduct
- note: while the demonic powers lied to us and tempted us to evil, they could never force us to any action

### *“The Flesh”*

- we were characterized by unbelief and disobedience
- we lived our lives according to the desires which were opposed to God's will, and we habitually performed those acts which satisfied the desires of our evil nature
- our fulfilling those desires was not a momentary lapse of judgment but was a deliberate, premeditated activity
- our entire life was one characterized as being under the wrath of God
- our condition was not something which we slowly became but it was a condition with which we were born