

## 5. Before and after

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Several of you know that I used to be a graphic designer for a Yellow Pages company before I started our church. One of the most effective methods of advertising is showing before and after. I am sure that you've seen these kinds of "Before and After" images to sell products on TV commercials.

Here is one example. His first name is "Bradley ". This photo was taken before he started to use Premier Dead Sea Para-Pharmaceutical Exfoliating Facial Gel that is directly imported from Israel. Here is another photo of Bradley after he used the Premier Facial Gel for only one week. The same person. If you are interested in purchasing this wonderful product, please call 1-800- SUCKERS.

Honestly, I have something much better than what you just saw . Before, you were dead; but after, you are alive. Of course, I am talking about life in Jesus Christ. Apostle Paul expertly explains to us where we came from and where we will be, all because of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let's not miss anything that comes from our Lord.

We will start with the "BEFORE" Jesus saved us:

### A. WE WERE DEAD IN SINS

*Ephesians 2:1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, Unbelievers would be offended when they hear this verse. They don 't like to be called sinners or spiritually dead.*

The cause of this spiritual death is due to trespasses and sins of our sinful nature and inheritance from Adam and Eve. Let's not kid ourselves. We are not sinners because we sin, but we sin because we are sinners. In the Bible, death basically means separation, not only physically, as the spirit separated from the body, but also spiritually, as the spirit separated from God.

*Isaiah 59:2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear .*

The unbeliever of Jesus Christ is not sick, but they are spiritually dead. He cannot be revived with resuscitation, but the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. All unbelievers are dead and the only difference between one sinner to the other is the state of decay. The main point of dead corpses is they are ALL DEAD . This means that our world is one gigantic spiritual gravesite, filled with people who are spiritually dead though they are physically alive.

### B. WE WALKED IN SATAN'S WAY

*Ephesians 2:2-3a 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, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind,.*

In the invisible spiritual realm, there are only two ways – God's way or satan 's way. There is no middle ground where people who are undecided hold their votes. No, this is not like the American political landscape. Either they are for God, or against Him.

*Matthew 12:30a He who is not with Me is against Me*

How shocking to find that if we walked apart from God, we actually walked in Satan's insidious company, as apostle Paul calls him, "the prince of the power of the air."

Since the first disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, mankind has lived in disobedience to the Lord. There are three forces that encourage man in his disobedience – the world, the devil, and the flesh.

**1) The world, or world system, puts pressure on each person to try to get him to conform into ungodly lifestyle.**

Jesus Christ was not "of this world" and neither are His people. But the unbeliever, either consciously or unconsciously, is controlled by the values and attitudes of this world.

**2) The devil and his hosts of demons**

Unlike Hollywood's inaccurate interpretation of the Bible, the devil is not an arch enemy of God. He is nothing more than a mere creature that has gone bad. He cannot be at work in the life of every believer, since he is not omnipresence like our God. But because of his demons and his power over the world system, the devil can influence the lives of all the unbelievers, and influences, oppresses, and tempts believers. Satan himself was disobedient to the Lord, so he wants others to disobey Him and follow him to hell.

**3) The flesh**

It is bad enough to be surrounded by enemies – Satan, his demons, and the world system, we have a traitor within that encourages us to disobey God – our own flesh.

Apostle Paul is not talking about the body, because of itself, the body is not sinful. The flesh refers to that fallen nature that we were born with, that wants to control the body and the mind and make us disobey God.

Is it any wonder that the unbeliever is disobedient to God? He is controlled by the world, the flesh, and the devil, the three great enemies of God. And he cannot change his own nature or, of himself, overcome the world and the devil. He needs outside help, and that help can come only from God.

If you are not a born-again Christian among us and thinking now, "I don't believe what you said." That only proves two things – first, you are being deceived by these three enemies of God, and second, you are being disobedient to God. If you continue your way, You will be condemned eternally by your own choice.

**C. WE STOOD CONDEMNED**

*Ephesians 2:3b and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others*

The unbeliever lives to please the desires of the flesh and the wishes of the mind. His actions are sinful because his appetites are sinful.

I am not saying that everything unbelievers do is sinful and selfish. No, there are many good helpful people around the world who are unbelievers. However, all of their good works and behaviors are nothing in comparison with the holiness standard of God.

*Isaiah 64:6a But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags;*

Think about this: If our good works and behaviors are like filthy rags in the sight of our God, can we imagine what He thinks of our sins and trespasses?

So, is game over? Are we doomed forever without a shred of hope? No, not until the Lord says so.

Here is the "AFTER" Jesus saved us:

#### **D. BUT GOD LOVES US**

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

Hundreds of times in the Bible, these two words "But God" show us how the Lord made a stark contrast between what we were before and what we were after. Though we were spiritually dead; walked in Satan's way; stood condemned, He loves us with His everlasting love.

When God's love is related to sinners, it becomes grace and mercy. It comes as a shock to some people that we are not saved by God's love, but by God's mercy and grace. In His mercy, He does not give us what we do deserve; and in His grace He gives us what we do not deserve.

And all of this is made possible because of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. It was at Calvary that God displayed His hatred for sin and His love for sinners

#### **E. BUT GOD MADE US ALIVE**

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

The only way spiritually dead people can have a relationship with God is to have a spiritual resurrection. Christ defeated sin and death through His own death and Resurrection and, as a result, can give us spiritual life.

#### **F. BUT GOD RAISED US UP AND WILL SIT WITH US TOGETHER**

*Ephesians 2:6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,*

As God raised Jesus from the depths of the tomb to new, incorruptible life, so He has lifted us from the depths of sin to new life in Christ. We not only look forward to our future physical resurrection and glorification in heaven, but we also participate in our new righteous and hopeful life here and now, which became available to us the moment we believed.

We know that Christ sits at the Father's right hand, but isn't it amazing to know that we, too, have a place reserved in heaven right now? We have a permanent citizenship in heaven that gives us hope and helps us live for God during our time here on earth.

#### **G. BUT GOD KEEPS US**

*Ephesians 2:7-9 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

God's purpose in our redemption is not simply to rescue us from hell, as great a work as that is. His ultimate purpose in our salvation is that for all eternity the church might glorify our God. So, if God has an eternal purpose for us to fulfill, He will keep us for all eternity.

There are two types of salvation goal achievers:

**1) The unbelievers who think that they can earn salvation through their work**

This can be either very religious people or flat-out prideful dreamers. People with religious work think that they are working for God, but in truth, they are working for themselves by trying to earn salvation to heaven all the while they completely reject the simple salvation message of Jesus Christ in faith. Then, there are dreamers who think that God owes them salvation for whatever the reason they come up with. There is a Greek word for that you guys know .

**2) The believers who have the audacity to think that they were a part of the ingredients for their salvation**

I cannot judge their salvation status, because it is not my place to do so. But these people demand other believers do the same things that they do and they become self-appointed legalistic Gospel gestapo.

Listen, there is no more need for earthly sacrifices of any kind or our work for the great work of salvation. It was done with the one permanent sacrifice – the perfect Lamb of God. God did it all, all to Him we owe.

**H. WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP**

*Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

I don't know how many times I've read this verse, memorized, studied, and talked about it. But it just dawned on me yesterday afternoon that in this very verse, our God shows His omnipresence attribute that transcends above time with His sovereignty and omniscience.

I can see some of you are thinking , "There goes his theological mumbo, jumbo. Blah, blah, blah." Please allow me to explain it to you.

In His sovereign knowledge, God knew that we, born-again believers are going to come to Him and receive Him as our Savior and Lord. So He predestined us and prepared good works for us to do for His glory as we walk in the fellowship with Jesus Christ and glorify Him.

But how does God work in us that we walk in the fellowship with Jesus? Through His Holy Spirit, He equips us to do His work by using three important tools: the Word of God, prayers, and suffering.

As we read God's Word daily, understand it, meditate on it, and feed on it; then, the Word goes to work in our lives to cleanse us and nourish us. As we pray , God's Spirit works in us to release His power. And as we suffer, the Spirit of God ministers to us. Suffering drives us back to the Word and prayer, and the cycle is repeated.

We do not perform good works to glorify ourselves, but to glorify God. Nor can we manufacture these good works ourselves, rather they are the results of the work of God in our hearts.

This brings up a very important point. After your conversion as a born-again Christian, if your life does not bring forth good works for the Lord, you really need to ask yourself whether you are born-again or not. Our good works are evidence that we have been saved by Him.

*James 2:26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*

When an unbeliever reads this verse 10, he would say, "It's a karma." According to Dictionary.com, it defines karma – "Hinduism, Buddhism – action seen as bringing upon oneself inevitable results, good or bad, either in this life or in a reincarnation." No, this is not an impersonal fate that happens to you randomly. Our loving Heavenly Father provides a gracious plan that gives His very best for us.

There is a French word for karma – GARBAGE. Don't ever use that word in your life.

### **I. APPLICATIONS**

- 1) God has to work in us before He can work through us.
- 2) The will of God for us comes from the loving heart of God for us.