

## “God Has Transformed You!”

Have you ever heard the phrase ‘He’s a dead man walking’? Do you know what it means or how it is originated? It is an idiom, a phrase used figuratively rather than literally, that originated as a way to describe prisoners who were on death row walking to their place of execution. Now, the phrase often refers to someone who messed up at their job and is sure to get fired. Or maybe if you’re anything like me, you felt this phrase applied to you as a kid after making a mistake and hearing these words from your mom “Wait until your dad gets home.” It is not a phrase that you would want to hear used to describe yourself, after all it is used to describe people who are helpless, someone whose situation is so dire that there is nothing they could possibly do to help themselves or change their situation. ‘Dead man walking’, that phrase used to apply to us, and not because we were on death row. In fact, our situation was worse. We were physically alive, but spiritually we were quite literally dead. But God stepped in and changed our hopeless situation. Paul wants us to realize just what God has done for us as he shows us how God has transformed us from death to life.

Paul couldn’t be any more clear when he says in verse 1 that “you were dead in your transgressions and sins.” There is no room for debate. Paul says “you were dead”. Helpless. After all, what can a dead man do? Nothing! Paul expands on his picture of “dead man walking in two ways.

First, Paul says that they were walking in the ways of this world. What does he mean that they were walking in the ways of this world? He means that they were following the devil, who is described as the “ruler of the domain of the air”. That’s an interesting way to describe the devil isn’t it? He has a lot of power, he’s a ruler, but in the end it’s just power over the air. But the problem is that it’s the air that we give so much attention to and that we spend a lot of time in and care so much about. The devil directs the things of this world so that they take over our lives. The Ephesians, prior to Paul, were not spending their days walking in the right places or with the right people.

Think about how you spend your day and your week. What do you do with your time? Do you spend it walking with the wrong people? Or walking in the wrong places? How often do we find ourselves walking too close to the line, thinking we are too strong to be tempted? We love to see how close we can get to the ‘sin line’ don’t we. Maybe you don’t want to sin, but you also are thinking ‘I don’t want to miss anything either’. We try to see how much fun we can have without ‘really sinning’. We also tend to move that ‘sin line’ as we get closer. It moves further and further back. Thoughts start to enter our mind that go something like this, “This really isn’t so bad after all.” Or “God understands what I’m going through, I just need to do this right now.”

Ultimately here's the problem with trying to walk so close to the 'sin line'. None of us are strong enough to walk away under our own power. When we go near that line all of a sudden it just takes one more glance, one more click on the computer or your phone, one more excuse, or one more lie and we find ourselves on the wrong side of that line. Rather than seeing how close we can get to the line, we ought to turn and run the opposite direction. But so often we don't, and we end up crossing that line. We cross that line of sin daily, whether that's in the way we treat others, the lack of respect we show to our parents, or even just in our own thoughts. And finally, we cross the line every day just by simply not being perfect, because perfection is what God demands.

Now, Paul expands on his "dead man walking" image in the second way. He says that the Ephesians were following the thoughts and desires of their sinful flesh. The devil was powerful and active in getting the Ephesians to follow these sinful cravings, and the devil is still around today. He is still powerful. Don't think the devil is still active and powerful? Take a closer look at the world around. Look at all of the sinful cravings that people have fallen into. People steal things, they cheat to get their way, everything is about 'me' and how can I do what's best for myself. But don't just look at the world around you, take a closer look at your own life as well. Unfortunately, I think we can easily relate to this as well. We have cravings for unhealthy things that can consume our lives. Have you ever wanted something so bad, that that there was nothing else you could think about until you got it? Maybe it's a new phone or video game, and time that should be spent focused on your job or on your homework turns in to time spent figuring out how to get the latest technology. Maybe it's a new set of golf clubs or some new clothes that you just have to have. Maybe it's an unhealthy craving for money that starts to have a negative impact on your relationship with your spouse or with your family. It's things that are on your mind 24/7 and they start to have a negative impact on you at your job or in your classes at school. Time you should be spending working, doing homework, or with your family is time that ends up being consumed by this unhealthy craving.

These first 3 verses are not easy to hear. Paul describes the situation of the Ephesians and us as dead. Following the devil. Carrying out the desires of our sinful flesh. And in verse 3 on top of it all he adds "**Like the rest, we were by nature objects of God's wrath.**" Objects of God's wrath. Because of our sinful nature we deserve to be nothing other than an object of wrath for a holy and just God. Paul leaves no doubt as to just how dire the situation was. We were walking, living, breathing people. Yet we were dead. That is how we used to be and by our sinful nature still are. However, thankfully Paul did not stop writing after verse 3. There's more, and it's the good news that God has changed things, he has totally transformed us by making us alive with Christ.

Let me read verses 4 and 5 again, "**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.”** This was a complete life transformation. We were dead men walking. Dead people can't do anything to help themselves. But God could, and God did. Don't ever think that God's mercy or God's grace isn't enough for what you've done. Our God is rich in mercy! God has lavished his grace upon us providing redemption and forgiveness of sins. God is described as rich in mercy and loving us with a great love. What an amazing comfort for us who realize that we are not able to escape the influence of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature on our own. We know what we deserve after hearing the first 3 verses, yet God put his great love into action by not giving us what we deserved. In fact, he gave us the complete opposite of what we deserved. God gave us his only Son. God gave us Jesus. Because Jesus died we are no longer dead. Because Jesus rose to life on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day, we too were raised to life with him. Look at how extraordinary the love of God is! God's love isn't just for people who are mostly good, people who seemingly have their lives together. God's love is for the ungodly and for his enemies. That's the love that sent Jesus to the cross. That's the love it took to save you and me. That's the love that takes dead people and makes them alive.

Not only did God save us from death, he saved us for a purpose, for a new life. Look at what Paul says in verse 10. **“For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do”** Remember how we were walking? We were dead men walking, following the control of the devil and following the cravings of our sinful nature. Now look at where we are. We are walking with a whole new purpose, in the new life that God has given us.

What then are these good works? They are not some exotic or extraordinary acts. They are simply acts done by those who are saved by faith in Jesus. When a believer acts as what he really is, when his new man acts, he produces good works. It is the response of love to what our Savior has done for us shown in everyday things like showing love and kindness in the different interactions you have with people throughout the day, whether that's friends, family, coworkers, strangers, or even people you struggle to get along with. It's showing respect to those in authority. It's doing your chores the first time your parents ask you. It's showing love to people even when they make it hard to show love.

This is the basic gospel message, something we can never know well enough or hear too often. Even though we were helpless, dead men walking, God, rich in mercy, showed us his grace by sending his Son. What a wonderful blessing that the phrase 'dead man walking' no longer applies to us. God has transformed us so that we are now the opposite of a dead man walking. Now we walk in our new life in Christ heading toward eternal life.