

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Wed. Eve. Bible Study - 6/8/16

Letter To The Ephesians

God's Picture Of The Natural Man

Scripture Portion: Ephesians 2: 1-12

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² 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. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ 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. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Jew and Gentile Reconciled Through Christ

¹¹ Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)— ¹² remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

The Bible, God's inspired Word (2 Timothy 3: 16), is a picture book, a kind of family album of the human race. The pictures in God's album are true to life; they are not touched-up, and therefore they are sometimes very uncomplimentary. By "the natural man" we mean the man who is not a Christian, who has never been born again, and who is described in Ephesians 2: 3 by the words "by nature..." - compare 1 Corinthians 2: 14.

In this study we are to look at God's photograph of fallen humanity, of every man and woman who is not a Christian, and of ourselves, apart from the grace of God and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. But before looking at God's life-sized portrait of ourselves in Ephesians 2, notice the following pictures of the "natural man" in

Genesis 6: 5; Psalm 14: 2-3; Isaiah 1: 5-6 and Isaiah 64: 6; Jeremiah 17: 9; Matthew 15: 18-20 and Romans 1: 21-32. When we turn to Ephesians 2: 1-12, we see what we were like before we were saved and what we are like now apart from the Lord Jesus.

1. The Natural Man is “dead in transgressions and sins” (verse 1).

Compare Genesis 3: 15-17 with Romans 5: 12; then look up John 5: 24 and 40; 1 John 3: 14 and 5: 11-12; and compare Ephesians 4: 18. Physical death is the separation of the body from the soul; spiritual death is the separation of the soul from God, and by nature we are all spiritually dead.

2. The Natural Man walks “according to the ways of this world” (verse 2).

That is, his conduct is according to the trend of the age in which he lives. The unregenerate person lives according to the standards of this world - with regard, for example, to his attitude towards sin, pleasures, dress, desires - look up Matthew 7: 13-14, and compare Psalm 1.

3. The Natural Man follows “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” (verse 2).

In other words, by nature he is controlled by Satan. Our first parents listened to the lie of Satan, and when they yielded to him they became dominated by him - look up Genesis 3: 1-13; and we are likewise under the control of the Enemy of souls. Satan is a real person whose domain is the air, and he is tremendously active - look up 1 John 5: 19.

4. The Natural Man is a child “of disobedience” (verse 2).

Our first parents disobeyed God, and we have inherited their fallen nature; consequently our natural tendency is to disobey the Lord - look up Psalm 51 :5, which tells us that by nature our tendency is to commit sin.

5. The Natural Man wants to gratify the cravings of his sinful nature and to follow its desires and thoughts (verse 3).

The word “craving” does not necessarily refer to that which is revolting and impure, but to that which we naturally desire, and because we are spiritually dead and controlled by Satan our desires are fleshly, perverted, often sensual. Notice the words “sinful nature” in verse 3, and look up Romans 7: 18 and 8:8.

6. The Natural Man is a child “of wrath” (verse 3).

This means that by nature men and women are condemned and are under sentence of death. Look up the following references and notice how forcibly this truth is brought out: - John 3: 18-19 and 3: 36; and Romans 1: 18-20. How solemn this is! Everyone who is not a Christian is condemned already and is under the wrath of God.

7. The Natural Man is "separate from Christ" (verse 12).

See what the Lord Jesus said in John 14: 6. What a solemn thing it is to be "separate from Christ"! Millions around the world today are without Christ, the only Saviour of men - look up Acts 4: 12 and 1 Timothy 2: 5-6.

8. The Natural Man is "excluded from citizenship" (verse 12).

To be unregenerate is to be a poor wandering outcast, a spiritually displaced person; it is to have no country, no Heavenly Home (John 14: 1-30) and this is the position of everyone who is not a Christian.

9. The Natural Man is a "foreigner" (verse 12).

A foreigner has no claim whatsoever upon God. Only those who are related to God through faith in Christ Jesus and who are therefore members of His family have any claim on Him at all - compare Matthew 22: 11-13 and Luke 13: 25-26.

10. The Natural Man is "without hope" (verse 12).

He is helpless, and apart from Christ his state is hopeless. Sometimes a doctor has to tell his patient that his case is hopeless - physically hopeless; but God tells us that apart from Christ our condition is spiritually hopeless - look up John 8: 21 and 24.

11. The Natural Man is "without God" (verse 12).

He is a God-less man, like the rich farmer of whom we read in Luke 12:16-21 - look up and compare Luke 12: 24, where we read of the ravens who had no barns but they had God; and Luke 12: 18, where we read of the farmer who had barns but who had no God.

12. The Natural Man is an "enemy" of God (verses 15-16).

By nature we hate God - Psalm 14: 1 (lit.) - "No God for me!" Here, then, is God's picture of the Natural Man. According to God's estimate man by nature is lost, helpless, completely ruined by sin, under the domination of Satan, and is therefore in need of a Savior and of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

How very wonderful it is that in spite of all that we are by nature, God loves us and wants us - look at and revel in the glorious truth of Ephesians 2: 4-7.