

DEATH IN
EPHESIANS CHAPTER TWO

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So the smiling gentleman sits upon the finely crafted oak chair. He gazes out to the attentive audience seated before him, all of the 277 students sit with recorders in hand and pens at the ready. Finally as the great clock in the auditorium strikes 10, the distinguished speaker arises and walks to the podium. And what a podium! also crafted of oak, it has served the institution for 235 years, and has been used by some of the greatest theologians of the 19th and 20th centuries! Janitors had—as usual—just carefully polished the fine dark ruddy colored oak. They had also carefully positioned the podium in the very precise spot it should be in for this speaker's preference, he liked the podium somewhat to the left of center. The speaker placed his books and papers on the podium, and as he placed his arms upon its surface, it fell. Indeed, the right front leg simply snapped and the entire podium and the speaker tumbled forward.

Unknown to the janitors, the old podium had termites, and the little creatures had nearly hollowed-out the right front leg. In fact the leg almost gave out when they positioned the podium prior to the oration about to be delivered. No one suspected the frail condition! The whole auditorium seemed to have momentarily lost its traditional prestige, its solemn dignity shattered by the scene of an elderly man in a flailing black robe tumbling off the stage and down several steps nearly into the laps of the gaping students in the front row. The old gentleman had no way of knowing of the true condition of the podium, why it seemed so grand, so full of dignity and honor! It was also a sad note in that he was nearly killed, he suffered a broken hip and concussion; also sad was the fact that he did not deliver his lecture, "The Providence of God and Its Relationship to Accidents".

Also unknown to many Bible students of this day and age, is the actual meaning and intent of Ephesians chapter two. When curious students and scholars refer to most commentaries upon Ephesians, they are usually greeted with the same traditional exegesis. To them the podium seems fine, the

foundation appears secure. But all is not what it appears. Ephesians chapter two, has for centuries been misunderstood. This misunderstanding has often been unnoticed, and has infected other passages and doctrines as well. Rather than to try to replace the leg, match the oak type and match the stain, let us replace the entire lectern; let us envision a lectern based upon a deep solid rock foundation. Let us reexamine Ephesians chapter two, let us daringly propose the new podium BUT ONLY IF it is stable, if it can bear the scrutiny of truth seekers. Examine this paper, sink deep into the mind of Paul and of the Author of Ephesians. Perhaps you too will prefer the solid rock of exegesis, not based upon tradition, but upon the actual text as it was intended. Even if you cannot see the termites, it is to your advantage to consider strong testimony as to the meaning of texts you hopefully value.

There is no question or doubt but that Paul wrote (or dictated) all of Ephesians. Paul was the human instrument used by God to create this dynamic epistle (Tychicus, may have been the amanuensis). In many ways it contains the epitome of Paul's teachings, it reflects a mature and older Paul. It also reflects a very mature or sophisticated understanding of God's plans and of this dispensation in particular. Consequently, it is a fairly "meaty" diet, not meant for the toothless gums of theological babes. As I present information to you dear reader, I trust that you already have a grasp of Paul's theology, of his unique gospel and of the basic dispensations. If not, you too may find yourself walking up to the podium, the fine old traditional one, and then taking a fall.

One of the primary themes of Ephesians is *unity*. Unity between the various members of the body of Christ, and unity across the various dispensations! Unity between the Jews who idolize Moses, and unity with those Gentiles who have been graciously adopted into the family of God, into the very Body of Christ. Christ is pictured as the Head of this composite Body, and indeed He is. But despite these facts of unity, the early church (and this present one) seemed ignorant of the essential unity. Satan's divisions had penetrated deeply into the new and young congregations of Paul's day. Reli-

gious concepts from Judaism, from the Laws of Moses, from the restrictions imposed upon the Israelites of the former dispensation, from pagan idolatry, still lingered, still divided. Is there to be a heavenly inheritance? fears of past sins needed healing and attention, where is the altar? and how can sins be remitted outside Judaism?

The epistle to the Ephesians accomplished some of these needs. Recall that Paul, prior to writing this epistle, had spent at least two years preaching and teaching in Ephesus (Acts 19:10). Dr. Luke does not go into detail as to what Paul taught during those years in Ephesus. The Ephesian epistle does give us some insight into Paul's teaching there in Ephesus, it appears to be quite advanced! Perhaps this is the reason why so many able exegetes and expositors today, do not truly comprehend Paul's teachings in this glorious epistle.

Josephus informs us that the Jews living in Ephesus, had typical privileges accorded to them via the Roman government; an exemption from the draft, permission to send gifts to the temple in Jerusalem, and freedom to worship their God (most of the time). In the Gentile church in Ephesus, we would have some sort and degree of Jewish associations.

Typically, Ephesians 2:1-3, is thought of as displaying the state of a "Christian" before he/she turns to Christ. Note these quotes which I believe are representative of most theologians today:

The adjective (predicate accusative) "dead" must certainly describe their **spiritual** and not physical condition,¹

There are three principal topics treated of in this section:—First, The **spiritual** state of the Ephesians before their conversion.²

Spiritual death alone is spoken of...³

His love survived our **spiritual** death⁴ [in reference to Ephesians 2:5]

In several other explanations of this passage, some would declare that verses 1 and 2 refer to Gentiles, while verse 3 includes the added Jews.⁵ Yet another interpretation exists for the "we" of verse 3.

1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

3 **Among them we** too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

The "among them" refers to the "sons of disobedience", herein a distinction is manifest. These "sons of disobedience" are pure unadulterated pagans; and notice that the (evil) spirit is at work in them, it is not now at work in those who lived like these "sons of disobedience". So, "we" lived amongst these "sons of disobedience" we disobeyed just like them, and we lived per their spiritual source, and outwardly we appeared to also be lost pagans; observers would see no difference between the pagan and the elect.

The "we" of verse three may refer to the elect, to the chosen, as opposed to "Jews" which most commentators favor. We, the elect were by nature (flesh) children of wrath, just as the unadulterated pagans are, but we are/were not ever "spiritually dead". We were prior chosen, prior destined.

Note this passage from first Peter: (1 Peter 4:1-6)

Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. 3 For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. 4 And in all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excess of dissipation, and they malign you; 5 but they shall give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 6 **For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to**

those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.

Does not Peter illuminate the fact that some of the dead, are not spiritually dead? They may appear as dead, but they are spiritually different.

Expositors also often see Ephesians 2:1-10 as applying to individuals, whereas in verses 11-22 they note a "group" or a context which focuses upon the nations, Jews and Gentiles as opposed to individuals. Such an interpretation is quite common and few deviations from this traditional exegesis are noted.

In verses 1-10, we note that a former state is illustrated [via nature], the separation, and then the gracious incorporation. In verses 11-22, we also note a former state is illustrated [via genetics]⁶, the separation, and then the gracious incorporation, groups from multiple dispensations, now united in one new Body, (Jew and Gentile, UNITED, FUSED!).

Again, the NASB presents the first three verses thusly:

And **you** were dead in your trespasses and sins,

2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

The "you" in verse 1 is plural and refers to the same peoples as in verse 11, "...you, the Gentiles in the flesh...". These are of course the saints in Ephesus whom Paul addresses this epistle to. These saints "were dead", let us pause and examine this statement closer.

The Textus Receptus reads for verse 1:

και υμας οντας νεκρους τοις παραπτωμασιν και ταις
αμαρτιαις

"Were dead" is οντας νεκρους; now the tense of the participle is clearly a present, which throws some suspicion upon the meaning of "were". There are several ways one might put this "dead" into a past temporal frame, one stemming from the comment in verse 2 about them having "formerly walked", but this is not a correct handling of the Greek here. The other view takes into account the primary verb (συνεζωοποιησεν seen in verse 5) which is aorist, but more on this verb in a bit.

Some may translate verse 1, as: "you are dead", but then this should have been written as: υρεις εστε νεκροι. "You are dead" would be the easiest way to express this clearly in Greek, had Paul wanted to express this. Instead we have the participle, οντας which adds notions which the simple subject—verb—object sentence cannot convey. We also have the plural "you" in the accusative case, the object of the primary verb συνεζωοποιησεν. The participle adds another aspect if you will. But what exactly is the addition? may I suggest it is one of manner or of a type of participle referred to as the *modal* usage.

"And existing *as* dead are you..."

The "as" functions to express the manner of their existence, they exist as dead (due to their trespasses and sins). Several other examples of this use of a participle [incorporating "as"] would be seen at Acts 9:38 and Mark 14:66. It is true that many translations (as the KJV) add words to solve an ellipsis. The KJV renders all this as:

And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

The addition (hath he quickened) as seen in verse 5, is most likely the subject and verb of these sentences. The KJV's "who" would seem to make the participial phrase a relative. One might even consider the participial phrase at verse 5 as also modal, "as we are dead...we were made-alive-together". The unity stressed here is *with Christ* not with other folks, nations or religions.

If, however, the modal usage of the participle (existing *as dead*) is correct herein, we could state that Paul is **not** referring to these saints as actually being dead. That is—dead as being eternally separated from Christ, spiritually dead. They are *as* or *like* dead people. Living in sin corrupts. Prior to their knowledge of salvation in the shed blood of Jesus Christ, Gentiles outside the code of Laws given by Moses, lived lives based upon the Laws of nature (Romans 1:18-20). Additionally in a dispensational sense, they were outside the covenants existing between God and Israel. Legally (Mosaic Law) they were as dead men. As Gentiles they lived outside of the relationship which God had with His chosen nation, Israel. Since they were as a group *outside* this relationship they could be reckoned as "dead". The only Gentiles we read of in the Old Testament who seem not to be reckoned as dead, were proselytes; at least since the institution of the nation of Israel. Rahab (of Jericho) and numerous others would fall into this category, yet they are not always seen as dead, as they submitted to the God of Israel, and thus came under the Law of Moses; they were then reckoned as not outside. Ruth, the Moabitess, is a fine example as she seems to be a type of the unity Paul now tries to explain.⁷ She even asks Boaz, why is/was grace extended to her?

Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found favor in thy sight, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a foreigner?
[Ruth 2:10, ASV]

Generally speaking, the ancient Chinese, Indians, Africans and Asians (including those of Ephesus) were outside the relationship which God had

with His chosen nation. The chosen Israelites were told to be separate from all pagans, to live distinctive lives, *et cetera*.

In Hebrews 11:17, Abraham offering his son Isaac, is viewed as an accomplished fact (perfect tense, indicative mood), Isaac was truly then reckoned as "offered" one might even say, "as good as dead".

So the Ephesians existed *as* dead people because of their transgressions, they existed as dead because they were **legally** seen as such, dead because they were transgressors of the Laws of Moses and nature.

In the above interpretations I have presented the issue I wish to address:

§ A spiritual death is not intended or implied to all the peoples in Ephesians 2:1 and 5.

As I now write this, I am aware that I too have died. In some ways I exist as a dead man, for indeed, I have died to sin:

knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin; ⁷for he that hath died is justified from sin. ⁸But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; ⁹knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him. ¹⁰For the death that he died, he died unto sin once: but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God. ¹¹**Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.**
[Romans 6:6-11, ASV]

The above is true for all Christians, since the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. But this is not the death of Ephesians 2.

The very moment Adam sinned, he died. The sentence was guilty, and after some time, he died physically. Fellowship had been broken; however, God reestablished this severed fellowship. While Adam existed as legally

dead, God reacted by covering Adam's sin, with the skins of a slain animal, an innocent animal (Genesis 3:21). Also immediately after Adam chose to die (to be with his wife!), God graciously sought him out, separated by sin, but still loved by God! This appears to be a judicial death, a violation of God's command. This death which Adam experienced, was a state an experience. This state culminated in the punishment of physical death. Adam and Eve, were never spiritually dead! Spiritual death leaves no room for a restoration of a fellowship, in fact no prior fellowship ever existed. Adam's death is similar to our death in Ephesians chapter 2, a judicial death, a state (not our heavenly standing, or position).

Though Adam died, he was not forsaken by God. As the Law came about in later times, we learn that most sins could be atoned for, and that the separation imposed by violation was temporary until the guilty person repented and performed the sacrifice or compensation for the sins committed via the regulations of the Mosaic law. After proper compensation, sacrifice, and repentance, unity (or, fellowship) was restored. Now, is this a description of "spiritual death"? "Spiritual death" is ... according to Chafer:

Each person of the [human] race is born spiritually dead—separated from God—and receives that fallen kind of nature directly from one's parents.⁸

Separated from God! This is the definition some theologians give to the phrase "spiritual death", though I do not accept Chafer's statement that this "spiritual death" is passed on to the children. What is passed on to all humans, is the sentence of death, we all will die a physical death. This applies likewise to the elect as well, but a spiritual death is not implied.

I might add that to me, one who is "spiritually dead" is also one who lacks the seal of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13, 14 and 4:30). I believe that all elect are born with this "seal" (σφραβων). When these elect first hear and

respond to a particular gospel, the Spirit within them is activated, and He then seals (σφραγίζω) their minds and helps them believe and be convinced. Thus, for me two definitions exist for "spiritually dead",

- (1) eternal death, and
- (2) all those without the seal of the Holy Spirit

Both #1 and #2 will experience the second death. For more information on "seal" and "sealing" do refer to the essay— *Theoretical Reflections Upon the Doctrines of Election, Salvation and Sealing*, at www.Biblical-data.org.

Though a possible modal type of participle may exist in verses 1 and 5, indeed, it is **not** a questionable type of participle (οὐτως, "as" or "when" or ?) upon which I base my understanding. A much stronger position is attained via basic semantics. You Gentiles in Ephesus were as dead, or you are dead (remember the present tense!). If I were asked to define "spiritual death" within the pages of the New Testament, I would offer:

And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, *even* the lake of fire. ¹⁵And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.
[Revelation 20:14,15, ASV]

This "second death" is true "spiritual death", it is eternal separation from God (which also implies lacking the "seal" of the Holy Spirit). Consider this also:

And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. [i.e. Gehenna]
[Matthew 10:28 NASB]

"Kill the body" the first death, is not the spiritual death, rather the second death is the true spiritual death! In Ephesians 2:1 and 5, Paul is referring to the death imposed by violation of the Law, it is a state, a punishment which results in physical death. All who sin are guilty. The wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23). Certainly this sentence is not always a "spiritual death"; it is not that second death, that eternal separation from God. It seems clear to me, that this sentence is related to the physical death. The unadulterated pagans who live under the same sentence, however, will experience a second death. This second death is a true "spiritual death". When expositors refer to a spiritual death, as they describe the death in Ephesians 2:1 or 5, they need to indicate just who they are referring to: the pagans or the elect? They need to explain the "we" of verse 3, and who "even as the rest" are in verse 3. In most cases, they are just simply following other statements concerning these passages, without really thinking about the actual meanings implied!

It is possible that many folks use "spiritual death" to mean eternal separation, in which case they perhaps should be more specific. All of the peoples in verses 1-5 of Ephesians 2, are or were dead in sin. Certainly not all, however, were/are spiritually dead. It is error to subsume all of the groups of peoples in verse 1-5 as spiritually dead. Some are, some are not.

Let us examine the view that the "we" in verse 3 = Jews:

Among them **we** too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. [NASB]

If Paul is utilizing "we" to mean "Jews", then he must be speaking of the Jewish nation after God had left (rather divorced) them, and before Jesus Christ was resurrected. Jeremiah speaks of the divorce:

Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. ⁷And I said after she had done all these things, She will return unto me; but she returned not: and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. ⁸And I saw, when, for this very cause that backsliding Israel had committed adultery, **I had put her away and given her a bill of divorcement**, yet treacherous Judah her sister feared not; but she also went and played the harlot. ⁹And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that the land was polluted, and she committed adultery with stones and with stocks. [Jeremiah 3:6-9, ASV]

God divorced Israel, and had Israel (and Judah) repented—then His anger against them would have melted away, but they did not repent. Even in Acts 3:19, 20, the nation rejects Peter's offer:

"Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; ²⁰ and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, [NASB]

It was the Jewish nation as a whole which rejected Jesus as their Messiah. A small percentage of the Jewish population (probably less than one percent) did accept Jesus as their Messiah and did seek to serve the Lord. Paul was amongst these believers, though he was primarily a member of the Church in Antioch, not subject to the Messianic earthly hopes, he was one who looked for a heavenly Kingdom.

However, as pointed out, above, I do not think Paul is referring to Jews with the "we" of verse three, rather he is referring to the "elect" he and the members of the church in Ephesus.

A mighty little Greek word begins Ephesians 2:4,
"But" (δε),

But God rescues, He saves. In verse 5 it is stated that "even as we were/are dead, God **had** "made us alive together": συνεζωοποίησεν, aorist,

active, indicative. Note that he does not say "**they** are made-alive-together", all of the dead in verses 1-3 are not included. Only the elect are included. Only we are redeemed. There is good reason to note that we were made alive [a unique joint-construction] before we were even born! We were made alive (in the mind of God) before we each began breathing! We were each predestined; which needs not be read into the text here, it is clearly declared in the preceding chapter of Ephesians, chapter 1:

even as **he chose us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love: ⁵having fore-ordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will
[Ephesians 1:4,5 ASV]

He **predestined us** to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, (6) to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. (7) In Him we have redemption through His blood, **the forgiveness of our trespasses**, according to the riches of His grace,
[Ephesians 1:5-7, NASB]

Since Ephesians chapter 2 follows chapter 1, it would be very odd to declare that these saints in Ephesus, and believers like Paul, were spiritually dead! Ephesians 2:4 is also clear: "God loved us", again an aorist tense, while we were in a state of death, a state imposed via violation of God's law, even the basic laws of nature! Now, it is agreed that while we were living in this state, we were ignorant of our state and we were seemingly without hope. In our minds escape appeared impossible, or not even contemplated. It was only when we encountered the truth, the good-news of our salvation by grace, that hope bloomed, that the Holy Spirit within us was activated. We could then begin really living, not like dead men. We could then begin to experience our heavenly status; justified, redeemed, saved, washed, glorified, *et cetera!*

Like the prodigal son, our wandering was temporary. Though he left his home, he was still a son. Though we was pictured as lost, he was still a son! Here, I might add, that much of my interpretation is not original, others have also seen the correct view of death here in Ephesians 2: one such person was Hermann Cremer. In his dictionary, (s.v. "νεκρος") he presents views nearly identical to those expressed in this present paper.⁹

To clarify the above comments concerning "death", let us list the various types of "death" (θανατος, νεκρος) seen in the Scriptures.

- physical death - Acts 7:60-8:1 (a.k.a. "falling asleep")
- legal death - John 5:24, Romans 5:13, Romans 6:11, 7:6,9
- the second death - Revelation 20:14, 21:8
- death personified - I Corinthians 15:55
- the antithesis to life - II Corinthians 4:12 (here a physical death is also understood; at Revelation 3:1, a church is seen as "death".)

No "spiritual death". In fact the phrase "spiritual death" is not found anywhere in the Hebrew or Greek testaments! It is a phrase created to typically attempt to explain the "second death"; and, as observed in Chafer (above), it was coined to define "separation from God". A quote relating the second death to spiritual death, would be from Robertson:

The second death (ho deuterios thanatos). The spiritual death of 2:11; 20:14; 21:8 [in Revelation] in contrast to the first or physical death.¹⁰

Robertson correctly refers spiritual death to the Lake of Fire, to the eternal separation from God and all good. [Yet, in Ephesians 2, Robertson ,

also sees "spiritual death"]. I also add, that anyone lacking the "seal" of the Holy Spirit, is also eternally dead. Unfortunately this meaning of death—as spiritually dead— has been inadvertently applied to any type of separation from God, even temporary separations, which are similar to a broken fellowship. Once sons (or, children) of God, once chosen, we can never ever somehow become "spiritually dead". We were chosen before the creation of the universe!

After I had finished the first draft of this paper, I was reading in the always useful commentary edited by Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer: the *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Ephesians*, a copy of 1884; I noticed on page 109 the following observation. I quote it as it meshes well with my view.

συνεζωοποίησε τῷ Χρ.] is by most expositors (including Flatt, Rückert, Meier, Matthies, Harless, Olhausen, de Wette, Baumgarten-Crusius, Schenkel, Hofmann, Bleek) understood of new *spiritual* quickening ("*justificationem et regenerationem nostram complectitur*," Boyd; Rückert would have us think mainly of the *justification*). But how is this to be justified from the context? If the reader was reminded by νεκρούς τοῖς παραπτ. of the *eternal* death, to which he had been subjected by his pre-Christian life of sin (see on ver. 1), he would now have to think of the *eternal* life, which begins with the resurrection, and he could the less think of anything else than of this real resurrection-life, since afterwards there is further expressed the translation together into heaven, and then, in ver. 7, the intention of God is referred to the times *after the Parousia*. And had not already i.18f pointed definitely to the *future κληρονομία*? How, in *this* connection, could a reader light upon the merely ethical, spiritual quickening (Rom. vi. 4f; 2 Cor. v. 15; Gal. ii. 19f)? No, God has *made* believers *alive with Christ*; i.e. in Christ's revivification, which God has wrought, theirs is also included. [all emphasis is per Meyer]

Clearly Meyer saw their position as moving from "dead" to being "made-alive-together" as just that—a real union/incorporation with the living Christ. Thus, he too rejects the notion that these saints had been somehow spiritually dead and were now somehow spiritually quickened.

Before concluding we may make a few further observations: notice in verse 1,

1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

You (the Ephesians) were dead in YOUR trespasses...: in contrast Paul here, does not allude to the imputed sin nature of Adam. Here he refers to their own transgressions. Unlike Romans chapter five, Paul is not developing the doctrine of the fall of all humans. Here in Ephesians 2:1, he is making clear that the position of the Gentiles as a whole has changed. The door is now opened to them as well. No longer is Israel the exclusive nation, chosen by God. These folks are *conscious/aware* of their own sins, as they are elect.

In verse 3 we note:

Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by **nature** children of wrath, even as the rest.

"Nature" (φύσις) in the above text has been defined in several ways: the comments in the ICC Commentary (the older one by T. K. Abbott) gives some idea of the varieties suggested. Yet, I prefer Calvin's comments here to all others;

We say then that man is corrupted by a natural viciousness, but not by one which proceeded from nature. In saying that it proceeded not from nature, we mean that it was rather an adventitious event which befell man, than a substantial property assigned to him from the beginning. We, however call it natural to prevent any one from supposing that each individual contracts it by depraved habit, whereas all receive it by a hereditary law. And we have authority for so calling it. For, on the same grounds the apostle says, that we are "by nature the children of wrath," (Ephesians 2:3.) How could God, who takes pleasure in the meanest of his

works be offended with the noblest of them all? The offense is not with the work itself, but the corruption of the work. Wherefore, if it is not improper to say, that, in consequence of the corruption of human nature, man is naturally hateful to God, it is not improper to say, that he is naturally vicious and depraved. Hence, in the view of our corrupt nature, Augustine hesitates not to call those sins natural which necessarily reign in the flesh wherever the grace of God is wanting. This disposes of the absurd notion of the Manichees, who, imagining that man was essentially wicked, went the length of assigning him a different Creator, that they might thus avoid the appearance of attributing the cause and origin of evil to a righteous God. [from vol 1, "Institutes..." Beveridge. pages 219f.]

By "nature" refers to the innate or birthed status. And since the fall of man in Adam, all humans have this natural status. But in the very beginning, Adam was created perfect, without a fallen nature. Consequently, verse 3 is referring to the *fallen nature* of man, not to his/her state before the fall.

As mentioned in Romans 5:14: "death reigned from Adam until Moses"... This of course was the penal charge (punishment) meted out to Adam and Eve, resulting in physical death, it affected all men. It cannot be any sort of a "spiritual death", for what of Abraham, or Isaac, or Noah? This same death still terminates all of our plans today, but it has now a leash restraining and illuminating it, the Law. This death too has been defeated by the glorious life and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we are in Christ, so we too are alive, not seen as dead any longer.

Seen in verses 2 and 3, "you formerly walked"... and, "we too all formerly lived"... indicates that they now (during the time of Paul's dictation of the Ephesian epistle) no longer live as such. A change occurred. Paul states the change clearly as that one effected by Jesus Christ. Namely that we have been raised up with Him, and seated in the heavenly places. This position occurred in God's mind before the creation of the universe, it was planned, but it could not come into a full being until the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord. Even, now as I sit here and write this on earth, my eternal position is that of a heavenly one. I am seated in Christ, now in heaven!

The "new creation" is not a remaking of man, it is the fusion of Jew and Gentile into one new man or creature (Ephesians 2:15). When each of the elect were created, they were created in Christ—Ephesians 2:10:

For we are His workmanship, **created** in (or, by) Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

It does not say "recreated". "Created" in the above quote is an aorist, passive participle, it thus represents an action prior to the present tense "we are". The "new creation/creature" of II Corinthians 5:17 is also referring to the new status of Jew and Gentile fused into this "new" man, the very Body of Christ. **This Body of Christ is *the new creation*, the new creation is not a person who has been transferred into this life of Christ.** The person, him/her self, has not been recreated or "spiritually quickened". *When* were we created in Christ Jesus? May I suggest Genesis 1:27, John 1:3, and Colossians 1:16-18. God (or Christ Jesus) did not need to recreate us, He just moved our earthly state (or, status), from the kingdom of flesh, evil and wrath, to His heavenly realm and into the very Person of Christ Himself! [Do note, Colossians 1:13]. "Putting on the new man" is our accepting and living this way now on earth, it is not our being recreated, (Ephesians 4:24).

So, in standing back, and looking at Ephesians chapter two, we note that God altered the status of the Gentiles (nations), in that they were no longer excluded from the benefits Israel received. It also displays, in parallel, the status of some of the individual Gentiles; the believers. As elect or believers they are no longer "children of wrath", they are to treat the flesh as dead, and are to live in the already provided Spirit (Ephesians 2:22, and Colossians 3:5-10). "Election" is seen in the "we" of Ephesians 2:3; in one respect, Paul is taking the believer back to his/her status *before* the fall, to that earlier nature. He also illustrates that our fallen natures were of the same type as that of the pure pagans (except we were in an elected state). He is simply showing

that believers should now live like believers, as distinct from the pagans. Knowing these truths, and *knowing that indeed, we are alive in Christ, should motivate us to live proper lives.* This is what Paul labors to extrapolate. He shows that both believers and pagans have the sentence of death upon them, which for the pagan results in the final second death. However, the believers are rescued or saved from this dilemma, the grace of God gives the believer peace, the Holy Spirit within us opens up the truth, the Word from God says that we have been raised and are now seated in the heavenly places: no longer in the kingdom of darkness, (Colossians 1:13). God transferred us, from a sphere of death, to one of life in Christ. For the pagan, death in Ephesians two, means the ultimate end—the second death: not so for the believers in Ephesus and for all of the members of the Body of Christ.

IN CONCLUSION

To prevent misunderstandings and abuse, one should not indiscriminately apply "spiritual death" to any of the usages of the word "death" (be it νεκρός or θάνατος) in the Bible unless the context demands such! In Ephesians 2:1 and 5, eternal (or, spiritual) death cannot possibly be applied to all these Gentiles and Jews, as some are already referred to as "chosen", "predestined", "redeemed", "sealed", "saints"; all in Ephesians chapter one. In Ephesians two—unity, and salvation can and should be experienced by the recipients! They can experience aspects of their eternal heavenly position, **NOW** despite their former state of judicial death. Each had been vivified in Christ! As chapter one makes clear, this is applicable only to the predestined, to the elect. The elect did live like the unadulterated pagan, like children of wrath, and still can live that way if we so choose (but we will suffer discipline). However we had been prior chosen, we have another blessed gracious option, provided by the power of God Himself. We should no longer live like the Gentiles (nations) of Ephesians 4:17-24:

This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the **Gentiles** also walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. 20 **But you** did not learn Christ in this way, 21 **if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him**, just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.
Ephesians 4:17-24



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