fore, since our source and our first creation is by being begotten in Jesus Christ, let us realize that we can do nothing and our power can bring forth nothing, but we have all of the free goodness communicated to us in Him" (*Sermons on Isaiah's Prophecy*, Isaiah 53:9-10).

These are certainly very stirring and creative illustrations, but they do not prove what they seek to illustrate. The soul who is "dead in sin" is not a "non-being" but rather a conscious soul in rebellion to God. He can still think and choose, he can rebel or repent—the choice is up to him. Thanks be to God that in His mercy the soul who is "dead in sin" can spiritually be **"born again"** (1 Peter 3:23) if only he is willing to **"obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ"** (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

By Kyle Pope

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"When the word of God is despised, all reverence for Him is gone. His majesty cannot be duly honoured among us, nor his worship maintained in its integrity, unless we hang as it were upon his lips" **(John Calvin,** *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* **II.1.4).**

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Services
Sunday: 9:30 a.m.
                        10:20 a.m.
                          6:00 p.m.
Wednesday: 7:00 p.m.

Elders:
Ken Ford
Charles Kelley
Pat Ledbetter

Deacons:
Dean Bowers
Eddie Cook
Bill Davis
Pat Goguen
Neil Ledbetter
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"Dead in Sin"

A primary text to which many in the religious world appeal in defense of their false doctrine of "original sin" is Ephesians 2:1-3. In this beautiful text, which teaches about the saving grace of God in Christ, Paul first reminds the Ephesians of their condition before coming to Christ. He writes, **"…You He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 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** (Ephesians 2:1-2). The Bible teaches us that sin leads to spiritual death, which is separation from God. Paul describes the condition of one in sin and out of Christ as "dead in trespasses and sins." Paul defines the nature of the conduct which produces this spiritual death. It is a death "in trespasses and sins"—as one walks "according to the course of this world"—following the desires of Satan, as "sons of disobedience." This is clear.

It is the next verse where many stumble. Paul continues, **"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"** (Ephesians 2:3). This raises the question, how were the Ephesians, "by nature chil-

ren of wrath?" The word translated "nature" is the Greek word *phusis.*

It is the next verse where many stumble. Paul continues, "**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**" (Ephesians 2:3). This raises the question, how were the Ephesians, "by nature children of wrath?" The word translated "nature" is the Greek word *phusis.* In Greek, as in English, nature can have several meanings. Thayer defines it as follows, "Nature. a. The nature of things, the force, laws, order of nature, natural sense, native conviction or knowledge… b. Birth, physical origin… c. A mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become nature. d. The sum of innate properties and powers by which one person differs from others" (*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament,* 660-661). We may note in this definition that *phusis* can refer to something that is connected with "birth" or "physical origin" but it can also refer to "a mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become nature." Whenever there are different definitions of a word it must be the context of a passage which determines which definition applies. In Ephesians 2:3 Paul is talking about the Ephesians' past conduct which followed a course of "disobedience"

and "trespasses." The most reasonable definition which fits the context is that Paul is describing the *long habit* of their past *mode of acting* which *had become nature.*

The Protestant reformer, John Calvin saw in this text validation for his theory of man's "corrupted nature" which he believed that is passed down from Adam's sin. After commenting on Paul's reference in Ephesians 2:3 to those who are "by nature children of wrath" Calvin wrote, "If then we are children of wrath, it follows that we are polluted from our birth: this provokes God's anger and renders him hostile to us" (*Commentary on Ezekiel* 18:20). In his commentary on Ephesians he went further, writing, "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" (*Commentary on Ephesians* 2:3).

There is no evidence in Ephesians 2:1-3 which demands that Paul's reference to nature refers to a condition at birth, which is inherited. Simply because it is the habit of man to sin doesn't mean that it is his inherent nature. An example of this is seen in Paul's teachings in 1 Corinthians 11:14-15 when he writes, "**Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? But if a woman**

has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering." Paul is illustrating from hair, what he is teaching about a woman's covering in the first century. Is it biological human nature that a woman's hair is longer than a man's? Does inherent nature teach that there is dishonor in long hair on a man? No. However, the habit which had become nature in the first century was that a man had short hair and a woman had long hair. Paul uses the term nature in this same way in Ephesians 2:3.

Much of the problem with many in the religious world rests in the misuse of various Biblical figures of speech which its advocates couple with human illustrations. They then use their own illustration to prove their misuse of the figure of speech. For example, the Bible clearly teaches that as a result of personal sin we become "**dead in trespasses and sins**" (Ephesians 2:1). As Scripture defines it, death is a separation. The body is dead when the spirit is separated from the body (James 2:26) and the spirit is said to be "dead" when man is separated from fellowship with God. This doesn't mean that the spirit no longer exists. Nor does it refer to an end of consciousness. Even at the Last Day, those who receive the "second death" (Revelation 21:8) will have "no rest day or night" (Revelation 14:11). They will not be non-existent, but they will be eternally separated

from God. The one in sin is separated from fellowship and communion with God to such an extent that they are considered "dead in trespasses and sin."

Calvin claimed, "we are all born as dead men" (*Commentary on Ephesians* 2:1). He another others like him take the concept of being "dead in sin" and apply it to human illustrations which go beyond the teaching of Scripture. Edwin Palmer, the executive secretary of the translation of the New International Version (a translation notorious for its Calvinistic bias), in his book *The Five Points of Calvinism,* writes, "The Biblical picture… is of a man at the bottom of the ocean in the Marianas trench, more than thirty-five thousand feet deep. The weight of the water on top of him is six tons for every square inch. He has been there for a thousand years and the sharks have eaten his heart. In other words the man is dead, and is totally unable to ask a lifeguard to save him. If he is to be saved, then a miracle must occur. He must be brought back to life and to the surface, and then he can ask the guard to rescue him" (18). Palmer even goes further to speak of one who is dead in sin as a "spiritual non-being" who cannot desire to be born again (17). Calvin did much the same thing. In one sermon he argued: "How could he, who is not yet conceived in his mother's womb, have the industry to bring himself into being? There-