

## **Eternity Is Coming**

There are at least three reasons as we progress through Advent that we need to remember our need for a Savior. Before we examine these reasons let us first address what is Advent and what does it mean for Christians? As we do this we will also see the three needs for a Savior. Advent is the 4 weeks prior to the celebration of Christ's birth on December 25<sup>th</sup>. It is meant to bring to the forefront our expectant waiting and preparation for the return of Christ. The word "Advent" comes from the Latin word "*adventus*" meaning "coming." The Greek word is "*parousia*" and is used by Christians to denote the Second Coming of Christ. For Christians, the season of Advent anticipates the coming of Christ in three different ways. First, Christ came in the flesh and was born in Bethlehem as the only begotten Son of the only Holy God. Second, for believers Jesus Christ was born in our hearts when God regenerated our souls and he gave us the Holy Spirit. If we submit to the Spirit he guides us daily. Thirdly, we anticipate Christ's Second Coming at the end of history. This season we should have a longing for Christ's return by celebrating his birth. Advent is also the season that should make us acutely aware of all people's need for a Savior.

The more keenly we feel our need for a Savior, the more precious will be the coming of the Savior, both his first and second. Reading from Luke chapter 1,

<sup>30</sup> "The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, <sup>33</sup> and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no

end.’ ” (Luke 1:30-33) Christ came to begin the end by saving those he calls from eternal death. We are to anxiously await his return. But, how does one maintain a sense of urgency and expectancy for Christ’s return when it has been 2000 years?

Maybe a story will illustrate this urgency both for believers and unbelievers.

Imagine two men are driving New Mexico highway 285 to Santa Fe. The passenger knows something the driver does not. While they went into the convenience store in Edgewood for a snack an evil person placed a bomb in the trunk of the car. The passenger tells the driver about the bomb in the trunk and the driver does not believe him and because the driver is running late and driving fast he does not want to stop and check the trunk. Not only does the driver not believe his passenger but thinks he might be insane for thinking it is possible for there to be a bomb in the trunk. The clerk at the store saw what happened and has called the State Police and they headed towards NM 285 looking for the car.

Like in the movies the passenger suddenly sees the police car with its flashing lights in the distance coming after them. His heart is suddenly hopeful that the police will stop the car and they will be able to get away before the bomb blows up. For the passenger, knowing there is a bomb in the trunk, the police car with its flashing lights is extremely important and the closer the police comes the more precious those lights become. The passenger has hope of a future. But, the driver, who has broken rules and even laws from time to time and is now speeding, he sees the lights and they are a threat. The driver mulls over, does he try and outrun the coming judgment or stop and face the consequences. For one, the police represents salvation and hope, and for one the police represents unwanted consequences. So, too it is with Christ.

This Advent season the most loving thing, my beloved, I can do is help each of us to remember our past and our hope by focusing on the Savior’s coming! Our hope

is as close as our heart, that is, if God has filled it with the Holy Spirit. Because then we have the only Savior and he will come before the bomb blows up and the earth is no more. For those who see Christ as a threat our job is to open their eyes to the fact that there is a bomb in the trunk of the world and it may blow up at any moment.

It is the Word of God that has eternal power and inspired Paul writes to the Ephesians in chapter 2, verse 1, “[you were dead in the trespasses and sins.](#)” The end has not yet come, the bomb has not blown up, but all without a Savior are dead, spiritually dead with no hope. God rescues those who have his Son as their Savior by his grace and through the faith he gives. He has defused the bomb and they are safe eternally. For those without a Savior they have a time bomb ticking in their soul.

### **Remember The Times**

Look in your Bible at what Paul wrote in verse 11, “[Therefore remember!](#)” What is it Paul wants us to remember? Verse 12 gives us the answer “[remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.](#)” (Ephesians 2:11-12) The key thing that Paul wants from us is to - remember – remember! Paul is saying, even though the police car stopped you and took the bomb out of the trunk you should never forget that awful chase and what the bomb in the trunk meant without Christ. Paul wants you to remember so that you can still visualize who and what you would be without Christ. So part of our devotional life of reading and meditating on God’s Word is to remember! Remember as Paul states in verse 12, you once were “[separated from Christ](#)” and “[alienated from the ... covenants of promise.](#)” You had no right to heaven and

God's promises did not apply to you, for you had no Savior. Remember what God has done for it is a miracle and you live spiritually because he rescued you.

Remember, remember – bring your life before Christ – back into you mind and it will intensify your love for Christ, your Savior. The Greek word in verse 11 translated as “remember” is in the present tense and means it is to be a constant remembering. You see God created us and knows we quickly forget. We see how forgetful people are about God over and over in the Old Testament accounts. Today it is the same; a recent study showed that 25% of Americans do not remember September 11, 2001; now commonly referred to as 911. What a difference there would be if once a year everyone watched a couple of hours of video of that horrible day! They would remember! We are to constantly remember Christ by our study of God's Word and time in prayer.

Over the next three Sunday mornings of Advent I desire to help us remember and see our desperate need for a Savior and not just any savior but the only Savior of mankind's spiritually dead souls. This morning we focus on verse 1, “[you were dead in the trespasses and sins.](#)” Next Sunday our focus will be on verses 2 and 3, we were held captive by “[the prince of the power of the air ... and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.](#)” Finishing Christmas Eve with verse 4, “[But God, being rich in mercy...](#)”

The first reason one needs a Savior is that everyone is dead in his or her trespasses or sins. Paul emphasizes that one is spiritually dead by saying this twice. In verse 1, “[you were dead in the trespasses and sins](#)” and then again in verse 5, “[we were dead in our trespasses](#)”. If you were to ask people, those who believe in God, why sin is a problem and why one needs a Savior, they would hopefully say because sin makes one guilty before God and brings one under his judgment and his condemnation. Therefore, we need a Savior who can atone for our many sins and

remove God's condemnation and punishment. That answer would be right, but this is not the point of Ephesians 2, verses 1 and 5. This is not all one needs.

The reason one desperately needs a Savior is not just because everyone offends God by their sins and needs to be forgiven. One also needs a Savior because everyone is spiritually dead and lying in the morgue. As one who is dead there is no hope and without a Savior, one will remain spiritually dead for eternity. One might look at their life and recognize some of their sins like the driver of the car knowing he is speeding and breaking the law, so they see God as a threat because they do not want the consequences of their sin. One might even become remorseful over some of their sins and say they are sorry to those they sinned against, although this is a good beginning it is not good enough because first and foremost they have sinned against God. One might even decide to do some good works to compensate for their wrongful deeds, but this is also not good enough because these deeds do not remove one's sins. When one is spiritually dead they can do nothing of spiritual value. They lay in the spiritual morgue and at some point they will lay physically in a morgue and from there they will move to an eternity of torment. Is this not a terrifying thought!

Paul writes, "[you were dead in the trespasses and sins.](#)" If this means what it says, then one does not have a need for just a Savior, but for the greatest of all Saviors. To gain a deeper understanding we must see Paul's statement in its context. Paul makes a statement in verse 3 that brings home who we were before Christ, we "[were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.](#)" Restated, the things we have done to bring the wrath of God upon us, we have done by our nature. We put the bomb in the trunk, sped away and tried to deny it still is with us. We need a Savior not just because we have sinned but also because it is our very nature to sin. Verse 2 says we are "[sons of disobedience](#)" meaning disobedience is our very nature and this also is sin.

## Eternal Destiny

What does being “[sons of disobedience](#)” have to do with being spiritually dead? It sounds like we were very much alive and active in our rebellion and disobedience. Indeed we were. But in being alive to disobedience, we were dead to obedience. In being alive to rebellion, we were dead to submission. In being alive to unbelief, we were dead to faith. We had no living spiritual nature to incline us to do anything for the glory of God and live in reliance on his power. Lacking that spiritual nature, we were dead – lying cold in the morgue: dead to righteousness, dead to holiness, dead to obedience, dead to faith. We were dead as dead can be spiritually.

Being dead spiritually is also implied in verse 10, “[For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works...](#)” Please take note of the word “[created](#).” It implies that what we were before we had a Savior was so bad that we needed a Savior to not only forgive our sins but to create us. Verse 10 implies we were dead and God had to create us anew. Paul wrote, “[Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.](#)” (2 Corinthians 5:17) Paul says as believers we were created anew. Paul is saying to both the Ephesians and Corinthians that for us to be regenerated, to come to the saving faith in Christ it took a miracle like the creation of Adam or the resurrection to give our dead spiritual souls life. Our spiritual life was non-existent and had to be created. We were dead and we had to be raised from our spiritual grave. Before Christ if the bomb in the world’s trunk had gone off our condition would not have changed because we were already spiritually dead. For believers if the bomb goes off we may die physically but we are guaranteed by faith in Christ to spent eternity with him in heaven.

Before Christ we resided on the slab of the spiritual morgue. Whatever thoughts, feelings and deeds we did were not the thoughts, feelings and deeds of the Spirit but of the flesh. Everything we did came from our natural nature as sons of disobedience and as children of wrath. As children of wrath everything we did was sin. Without Christ as our Savior everything we do is sin. Oh, some might say, “That cannot be true. I know unbelievers who do wonderful deeds.” Think about this statement; when one says this they do not have a Biblical worldview. When one says that unbelievers do good works, they are thinking from man's point of view. Now, think as the Bible teaches. We were made to bring glory to God. God is worthy of all our love and our honor and we are to be obedient. Jesus said, “**you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.**” (Mark 12:30) We may build schools and hospitals, clothe and feed the poor. But if our desire is not to bring God glory then all we do is sin. The Bible teaches us, “**For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.**” (Romans 14:23) Further we are taught “**For there is no distinction: <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**” (Romans 3:22-23) From God's view - for men to do good works without the goal of bringing God glory is sin. All one can do without a Savior is sin. One is spiritually dead until they are made alive, created anew by Christ the Savior. Without Christ as one's Savior as Isaiah writes, “**all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.**” (Isaiah 64:6)

Paul wanted people to know what spiritually dead means. He wrote to the believers in Rome, <sup>6</sup>“**For to set the mind on the flesh is death and as we know the dead can do nothing righteous, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.**” <sup>7</sup>“**For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God.**” The sinful mind knows only the world and even if the truth is before them they cannot see it and they live in rebellion against God. The unsaved mind, “**does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.**” <sup>8</sup>“**Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.**” (Romans 8:6-8)

One who is not saved simply cannot submit to God or please God because they are spiritually dead. Without a Savior ones entire life is lived in rebellion against God and they are displeasing to God and their life is sin.

Hammering home what it means to be spiritually dead Paul writes, “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Corinthians 2:14) To the Romans, Paul wrote, “Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. <sup>10</sup> As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one; <sup>11</sup> there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. <sup>12</sup> All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.’ ” (Romans 3:9-12) One who is spiritually dead is completely unable to do anything that is not steeped in their sin nature. Their works may appear good but underneath the foundation is sin. Without a Savior, ones heart is as hard as stone and they are spiritually ignorant and alienated from God. This is the death that Paul writes of in verses 1 and 5 of Ephesians chapter 2.

After spending a considerable amount of time examining what Paul has to teach us about the condition of those spiritually dead we may ask, are Paul’s teachings his own or were they based upon divine revelation? To answer this question we draw our time to a close by examining what the Savior, Jesus Christ, says concerning the deadness of sin.

### **It’s Time**

In Matthew chapter 8 a disciple comes to Jesus and says he wants to follow him, but says, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” <sup>22</sup> But Jesus told him, ‘Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.’ ” (Matthew 8:21-22) Jesus is saying to follow me you must separate yourself from the world system for it is filled with the

spiritually dead and they will bury their own dead. So Paul did not originate the idea that there are people who are physically alive but spiritually dead.

What did Jesus think and have to say of this spiritual deadness? Was this state of spiritual deadness forgivable? Jesus said, “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean.”<sup>28</sup> In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.” (Matthew 8:27-28) Jesus gives us an example of those walking and speaking death. They appear clean on the outside and religious, but in truth, they are dead in the spiritual morgue but the bomb has not gone off yet. Our spiritual deadness is not excusable in God’s sight. As we read in Paul’s letter to the Romans,<sup>18</sup> “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.”<sup>19</sup> **For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.**<sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. **So they are without excuse.**<sup>21</sup> For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.<sup>22</sup> Claiming to be wise, they became fools.” (Romans 1:18-22) To be clear what can be known about God is plain to all mankind; therefore man is without excuse. One’s unwillingness to submit to God does not excuse one. One’s spiritual deadness is no excuse. The true reason one does not submit to God is they choose not to. They see God like the police car as a threat and they want to avoid the price of their behavior.

Jesus gives a clear warning in Matthew 8 saying, “Woe to you ... are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean. ... on the outside you appear to people as

righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.” Without a Savior one is physically alive but spiritually dead – the bomb is in the trunk ticking. Apostle John recorded Jesus’ words and there are only 2 positions – Position 1: <sup>36</sup> “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life.” Position 2: “whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.” (John 3:36) If you are alive spiritually you owe it all to God and his Son, Jesus Christ, the Savior.

If you do not know Christ as your Savior the bomb is in your trunk and the only one who can save you is Jesus. Stop speeding, listen and hear His voice, “The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.” (Revelation 22:17) On behalf of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I say, “Come!”

My beloved for those of us who are created anew by Christ and saved this is the most blessed time for sharing the gospel of good news to those in our lives who do not yet know him. To those who do not believe in Christ as Savior there is no better time than right now. Come!