

Notes:

Lesson 2

The Spiritual Stillborn

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“YOU WILL DIE”

God created Adam and placed him in His garden. Later in the same day, He created Eve from Adam’s rib. When God gave Adam His first command, He was very precise about the consequences for breaking His one law:

*And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but **you must not eat** from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for **when you eat** of it **you will surely die**."*
(Ge.3:16-17 NIV)

Mankind could eat of any tree in the garden except one, the tree which God had reserved for Himself. The fruit of that forbidden tree was not intrinsically evil; for Adam and Eve did not die physically the moment that they ate of it. God commanded man not to eat the forbidden fruit just as a mother might command her child not to eat a cookie before supper. However, after supper, the mother might gladly give her child two cookies because he had finished his supper. The cookie was not evil, but the child would sin if he disobeyed his mother’s command. When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, they broke the only command that God had given them. Their prescribed penalty was their immediate death. But did they immediately die? People would argue that Adam and Eve did not instantly die because they lived to see their children’s children. Did God make a threat that He did not intend to keep? Did God lie?

“God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago.” (Ti.1:2 NASB)

God cannot lie. Consequently, Adam and Eve must have died the day that they ate the forbidden fruit. Because man was created a tri-unity, he could experience a physical death, a soulical death, or a spiritual death. When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, they did not physically die that day because they lived to see their grandchildren.

FOR FURTHER THOUGHT:

1. When did Adam first die?
2. How did Adam die when he ate the forbidden fruit?
3. How did our spiritual death affect our relationship with God?
4. According to the Old Testament prophets, what did God promise to do in man?
5. What proves that natural man is dead in his transgressions and sins?
6. Why did Paul ask God to rescue him from his body of death?
7. What changes when the reign of life replaces the reign of death in our lives?
8. Explain why you were dead before you were born-again. Include Scripture references.

Because we are in Christ, grace reigns in our lives and empowers us to live righteous lives. Thereby, we possess eternal life in the present. Where sin once reigned unto wickedness, righteousness now reigns unto holiness through the indwelling of Christ:

*For **the love of Christ compels us**, because we judge thus: that if **One died for all, then all died**; and He died for all, that those who live **should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them** and rose again.* (2Co.5:14-15 NKJV)

Therefore, the Bible states that without Christ we were spiritually dead even though we physically lived. But we Christians did not remain in this helpless state because the Holy Spirit gave life to our spirits when we were born-again.

Adam's and Eve's souls did not die because they were not brain-dead after they ate the fruit. The only other death that Adam and Eve could have experienced is spiritual death which would have prevented them from continuing their relationship with God. If we consider the interrelationship among the parts of man's tri-unity (body, soul, and spirit), we will conclude that man's body relates to the physical world (five senses); man's soul is the essence of his character (personality, preferences, and past experiences); and man's spirit relates to God (intuition, conscience, and communion). When God breathed His Spirit into man, man received his spirit. Man's spirit was to control his soul, and man's soul was then to control his body. This order was God's design and enabled spiritual communion with Him. Adam and Eve's spirits were alive in the garden of Eden and had the capability to live in constant fellowship with God. However, this communion was never realized because they ate the forbidden fruit. Before Eve was tempted, her soul lived under the control of her spirit as God intended:

*The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from **the fruit of the tree which is in the middle** of the garden, **God has said**, 'You shall not eat from it **or touch it, or you will die.**'"* (Ge.3:2-3 NASB)

Before Eve ate the forbidden fruit, she was living by her spiritual faculties. Her spiritual intuition knew what God had said, and she believed that eating the forbidden fruit would kill her. Eve's spiritual conscience discerned that it was God's will not to touch the fruit. Her spiritual communion with God caused her to distance herself from the tree in the middle of the garden. When Satan taught Eve the concept of evil, the sinful nature became alive and made her aware of the power of choice. Eve rejected her spiritual faculties because she coveted equality with God. Once Satan taught her the concept of evil, Eve's soul no longer had communion with God. Instead, her soul sought to gratify its own desires and was separated from her spirit's control. Hence, she functioned only on a soulful level:

*When the woman saw **that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom**, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.* (Ge.3:6 NIV)

After Satan taught Eve the concept of evil, she used her soul's intellect to assume that the fruit of the forbidden tree was good food and the

means to gain wisdom. Through her soul's emotion/desire, Eve became pleased with the fruit's appearance, and she lusted after the fruit. Influenced by her soul's intellect and emotion, her soul's will finally caused her to pick the forbidden fruit and eat it. When she ate the fruit, she died spiritually:

"The day you eat of it you will surely die." (Ge.2:17 NIV)

Through Eve, mankind's spirits died that day; consequently, mankind could no longer relate to God. After Eve ate the fruit and experienced the death of her spirit, she needed a different purpose to direct her life/soul. Before Eve was tempted by Satan, her spirit dictated the actions of her soul; and her soul compelled her body to remain obedient to God. God intended man's soul to serve man's spirit, for the soul was not created to be master of man's life. Consider man's innocence before he ate the forbidden fruit:

*And the man and his wife **were both naked and were not ashamed**.*
(Ge.2:25 NASB)

Similar to an infant boy and girl who can share the same bathtub without lust, Adam and Eve were also innocent. Once man's spirit was deadened, man was ultimately controlled by his soul. Without his spirit's faculties that connected him to the spiritual realm, man's soul needed to find a new purpose in the earthly realm. Hence, the soul began to please the body through sensuality. God intended man's spirit to control the soul and man's soul to control the body. However, through the fall, the body's sensuality actually gained control of the soul. Suddenly, Adam and Eve sensed the new feeling of lust that made them uncomfortable. This new feeling caused them to cover their naked bodies. Hence, after man ate the fruit, his soul became a pawn for the body's senses because sensuality began to preoccupy man's life:

*Then the **eyes of both of them were opened**, and they **knew that they were naked**; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.*
(Ge.3:7 NKJV)

When mankind's focus shifted from the spiritual to the soulical, their perspective on all of life changed. Mankind became captivated with pleasing the body's senses. Some Biblical translations refer to man's pursuit of sensuality as "walking in the flesh." Paul used the Gentiles' way of life to describe "walking in the flesh":

which we were physically born, is a life apart from God. Natural man's life is controlled by sin, which manifests itself through the sinful actions committed by man's body. For this very reason, Paul asked God to rescue him from his body of death:

*What a wretched man I am! **Who will rescue me from this body of death**? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, **I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin**.*
(Ro.7:24-25 NIV)

At this point in his life, Paul had not yet been rescued by Jesus. When Paul described his life under the law, he referred to his body as a body of death; for even though his body was alive, his spirit was dead. Hence, Paul realized that he was spiritually dead because his sensuality forced him to live for pleasure even when his soul was decidedly against it. His solution was Christ! Through the accomplishment of Christ Jesus, we have been set free from the law of sin and death, the law that we could not overcome. We now live by the law of the Spirit and life, the law that empowers us to be holy:

*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the **law of the Spirit of life** in Christ Jesus has set you free **from the law of sin and of death**.*
(Ro.8:1-2 NRSV)

Death reigned in all of mankind because of Adam and enslaved them to sin. But the Spirit's life now reigns in Christians through Christ because His abundant grace enables them to live for righteousness:

*For if, by the trespass of the one man, **death reigned** through that one man, how much more will those who receive **God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life** through the one man, Jesus Christ.*
(Ro.5:17 NIV)

A king that reigns has sovereign control over his subjects. Hence, King Herod killed James to please the people, and no one could oppose him. The Scripture states that spiritual death reigned our lives, making us helpless sinners. When we became Christians, the Spirit's life reigned over our lives, replacing the reign of spiritual death. Since the Spirit's life reigns our lives, we can experience all that spiritual life encompasses:

*And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, that, **as sin reigned in death**, even **so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life** through Jesus Christ our Lord.*
(Ro.5:20-21 NASB)

*For **sin**, **seizing** the opportunity afforded by the commandment, **deceived me**, and through the commandment **put me to death**.*

(Ro.7:10-11 NIV)

Paul was spiritually dead from birth. However, every time a law was given, he experienced the power of death and was unable to obey the law. Even when no law existed, mankind still committed evil, following the ways of the world. Hence, man's random acts of sin apart from a command also reflect that he is spiritually dead. When a person willfully continues to live for sensuality rather than submit to God's laws, he proves that he is spiritually dead:

*As for you, you **were dead in your transgressions and sins**.*

(Eph.2:1 NIV)

To sin is to fall short of God's holiness, an act which is different than transgression. Transgression is to break a law of God. Therefore, a person is spiritually dead if he transgresses against God's laws or if he sins against God's holy order, the intended purpose for His creation. For example, to use drugs does not break the law of God; for God never said, "Do not use illegal drugs to get a high." Drug abuse is not a transgression, but drug abuse is sin because it leads to the destruction of people's lives for the pursuit of pleasure:

*When you **were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature**, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.*

(Co.2:13 NIV)

Under sin's control, we were not only spiritually dead, but we also proved our spiritual death because we continued to sin after we were convicted of a sinful action. The power of sin exercises control over man because man has a sinful nature that is predisposed to sin. Consequently, when presented with a choice, mankind is naturally inclined to rebel against God. To sin is to miss the mark of God's perfect holiness, and the sinful nature is man's natural inclination to take pleasure in the things opposed to God:

*For before the law was given, **sin was in the world**. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. **Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses**, even over those who **did not sin by breaking a command**, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.*

(Ro.5:13-14 NRSV)

Because death came before the law, death reigned in the lives of those who sinned before God gave the law. The life of natural man, into

*You must no longer live as the Gentiles do, **in the futility of their thinking**. . . . Having **lost all sensitivity**, they have given themselves **over to sensuality** so as to **indulge in every kind of impurity**, with a **continual lust for more**.*

(Eph.4:17, 19 NIV)

The Gentiles, who were ignorant of God, were consumed with sensuality; their motto was "if it feels good, do it." Pleasure consumes natural man, a man who is not born-again. Man only does what gives himself pleasure. Therefore, mankind's spiritual death caused them to live by the power of their souls which were consumed with sensual indulgences.

THE CONCEPT OF SPIRITUAL DEATH

The penalty for Adam and Eve's disobedience was instant spiritual death; however, the penalty also resulted in physical death. Spiritual death brought instant separation from God while physical death brought eternal separation. Before Adam and Eve's disobedience, God would come and walk with them in His garden:

They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

(Ge.3:8 NRSV)

After the fall, Adam and Eve could no longer walk with God because God is holy, and their natures had become bent on sin. Man's experimentation in sensuality caused him to do things which were ungodly—against God's perfect intent. God is morally perfect, and sin is imperfection. Hence, man's sin forced a permanent separation between God and mankind. This separation ended Adam and Eve's intimate physical walks and spiritual fellowship with God:

But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.

(Isa.59:2 NKJV)

God is holy—absolute sinless perfection. Man rebelled against God, indulging in ungodliness. Consequently, man became repugnant to Him. God cannot tolerate fellowship with the wicked:

You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil; with you the wicked cannot dwell. The arrogant cannot stand in your presence; you hate all who do wrong.

(Ps.5:4-5 NIV; He.12:14)

Man's imperfection in thoughts, words, and actions is offensive to God. Consequently, God cannot allow mankind into His presence:

Your eyes are too pure to behold evil, and you cannot look on wrongdoing. (Hab.1:13 NRSV)

Through sin, man's spirit died and therefore could no longer commune with God. Solomon, the wisest man of the Old Testament, sensed this spiritual separation within himself when he wrote:

*Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, **everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind;** nothing was gained under the sun.* (Ec.2:11 NIV)

Most modern versions of the Bible translate the above verse as all of life is "a chasing after the wind." However, the Hebrew word "ruwach" which is translated "wind" could also mean "spirit" or "breathe." Hence, the King James Version translates "ruwach" as "spirit":

*Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do: and, behold, all was vanity and **vexation of spirit**, and there was no profit under the sun.* (Ec.2:11 KJV)

Solomon wisely sensed that life was more than the physical and that a spiritual void existed within himself. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit would come upon a prophet and prophesy through him. The Spirit would then leave until God desired to proclaim another revelation through the prophet. Every prophet knew the brief experience of communion with God and thereby was aware of the Spirit's absence the moment the revelation ended. David, a prophet, also sensed this spiritual void in himself, for he wrote:

*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and **put a new and right spirit within me.** Do not cast me away from your presence, and **do not take your Holy Spirit from me.*** (Ps.51:10-11 NRSV)

Every prophet of God sensed what David experienced. David encountered the Holy Spirit's presence in his life for brief "God moments" of inspiration. David knew that his heart was unclean because he had a sinful nature. Consequently, David asked for a clean heart and a new spirit—the two things that would enable him to have constant communion with the Holy Spirit. In the fall, man's spirit died in **its ability** to commune with God, but man's spirit could not leave his physical body unless he died physically:

*For **as the body without the spirit is dead**, so faith without works is dead also.* (Ja.2:26 KJV)

learned the extent of the damage. The patient accepted the diagnosis; but in the coming days, he failed to complete some simple tasks because of his brain. Through these failures, he began to realize the level of damage that the stroke had done. Every failed attempt at a motor skill was not evidence of new damage but a confirmation of the damage already done. Even though his brain was deemed one-third dead, this condition was realized through his life experiences. Before we were born-again, we were spiritually dead. However, every time that we learned a new law, we realized our spiritual deadness because we could not obey that law. Consequently, even though we might have known that we were spiritually dead in sin, failure to keep a new law reminded us that we had spiritually died and were powerless to obey God's laws. People believe that sin is merely an action that they choose. However, sin is a power unto itself. Sin sprang to life in Adam and also caused mankind to die in Adam. Natural man commits sins because he is controlled by the power of sin. Hence, when natural man is presented with a law from God, sin as a power springs to life and prevents him from obeying the command. Thus, natural man experiences his spiritual deadness:

But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. (Ro.7:8-9 NKJV)

In Romans 7, Paul addressed his life as a Jew under the law. Every time Paul was presented with a new law of God, sin as a power consumed him; and he always yielded under sin's control because he was helpless. In the same way, a person, who does not have Christ living in him as his Lord, experiences his spiritual deadness with a new command. Transgressions prove that a person is spiritually dead:

*But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when **we were dead in our transgressions**, made us alive together with Christ.* (Eph.2:4-5 NASB)

Many times people know what God asks of them, but they are not born-again. Hence, they are spiritually dead and unable to submit to God's commands. Man does not become righteous if he only knows God's law, for the power of sin incites man's sinful nature to rebel against God's law. The power of sin controls mankind. Hence, mankind realize their spiritual death whenever they become aware of God's law:

If we continue to live to please our bodies rather than to please God, we prove that we are still spiritually dead. Once our spirits are reborn, we stop living for our souls' pleasures and begin to live for God. For example, God is love. If God lives in us, then we will also love. However, if we continue to hate, we prove that we are not born-again but are estranged from God and spiritually dead:

*We know that we have **passed from death to life** because we love one another. Whoever does not love **abides in death**.* (1Jn.3:14 NRSV)

People do not die when they choose to hate. Rather, when they hate, they prove that they are spiritually dead; for the love of God is not within them. If someone continues to sin willfully, he remains spiritually dead; for the wages of sin will not **be** death but **is** death:

*For the wages of sin **is** **death**, but the gift of God **is** **eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Ro.6:23 NKJV)

The wages of sin are not physical death; for the wages of sin are eternal death, an eternal separation from God that begins at birth. In the same way that spiritual death starts the moment that we are physically born, eternal life starts when we are born-again. Once our spirits are born-again, we begin to live for God and discontinue living for sin:

***No-one who is born of God will continue to sin**, because God's seed remains in him; **he cannot go on sinning**, because he **has been born of God**.* (1Jn.3:9 NIV)

The previous verse states that we cannot continue to sin once we are born-again. But the Bible does not say that we are perfect and have no sin:

***If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves**, and the truth is not in us.* (1Jn.1:8 NKJV)

Christians have sin in their lives; but once they are taught that an act is sin, they do not continue to commit the act. With the newly acquired knowledge that an act is sin, Christians confess the sin and receive the grace to overcome it. Hence, as we grow in our knowledge of sin, we grow in grace to overcome our sin and are transformed into God's holiness. We must understand this point in order to understand that we Christians are dead to sin. As we have established, every descendant of Adam has been born spiritually dead in sin. For example, a man had a massive stroke and was told that he had lost one third of his ability in the right side of his brain. Through various medical imaging, the doctor

Because man ate the forbidden fruit, his spirit died; in other words, man's spirit became incapacitated. For example, a man broke his back because of a fall. In the accident, his spinal cord was severed; and he became a paraplegic. His legs' muscles and bones were in perfect condition before and after the accident. But the nerves that communicated messages from the brain to the muscles were severed. Hence, the legs were dead in their ability to communicate with the brain. In the same way, Adam and Eve were born spiritual beings who were capable of communing with God. But when they sinned, their spirits, which were created for a relationship with God, were deadened.

When we consider all that Jesus accomplished, we begin to understand more fully what transpired when man ate the forbidden fruit. Jesus' death and resurrection accomplished more than granting us eternal life. Jesus came to reconcile us with God so that we could once again commune intimately with God:

***For Christ also suffered for sins once for all**, the righteous for the unrighteous, **in order to bring you to God**.* (1Pe.3:18 NRSV)

Through His death, Christ reconciled us with God by removing our offense. Through His resurrection, Christ gave our spirits new birth. Jesus' death and resurrection enabled us to regain fellowship with God. The Scriptures teach:

***That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit**. Do not be amazed that I said to you, '**You must be born again**.'* (Jn.3:6-7 NASB)

Every descendent of Adam is born dead to his own spirit; but because of Christ's death and resurrection, any person can be born-again in his spirit by God's Spirit:

*Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, "The two shall be one flesh." But **anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him**.* (1Co.6:16-17 NRSV)

Christians have the ability to experience perfect oneness with God. Through the Old Testament prophets, God promised Israel that one day He would place a new heart and a new spirit in them. This new heart is where God's Spirit would dwell:

I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God. (Eze.11:19-20 NIV)

Doctors usually replace their patients' hearts to give their patients longer lives. But when God gives a man a new heart and a new spirit, the man's perspective on life changes completely:

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. (Eze.36:26 TNIV)

Israel was promised a new heart and a new spirit that would cause them to obey God. But God did not fulfill this promise until after Christ's resurrection. The Holy Spirit could not live in man until Christ died to cleanse man of his offense:

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Ro.6:23 NKJV)

Once Jesus paid the penalty for our sins through the death of His perfect life, He ascended into heaven and sent His Holy Spirit to live within us:

*"Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." **By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.*** (Jn.7:38-39 NIV)

Only after Jesus was glorified, could God's Holy Spirit give birth to our spirits and indwell us. Man's spirit was alive when he was created; his spirit died through the fall; and his spirit can be born-again through Christ. In conclusion, mankind died spiritually in Adam, but they can have their spirits born-again through Jesus Christ.

THE LIVING DEAD

Jesus told the parable of the lost son to symbolize man's separation from God. In the parable, the father represented God, and the wayward son represented man. When the rebellious son who had left home returned, his father said:

***For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!** And they began to celebrate. . .* (Lk.15:24 NRSV)

In this parable, Jesus taught us that just as the wayward son was dead to his father even though he was still alive in another country, man is also dead in his spiritual relationship with God even though he lives in the physical world. Permanent separation is a form of death. In many shame-based countries, a father will declare a son dead because the son

has dishonored the family. The father would never see that son again and would talk of him as though he had died. Through the parable of the lost son, God declares that all mankind are considered dead to Him even though they continue to live physically:

*For as **in Adam all die**, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

(1Co.15:22 KJV)

The New Testament teaches that even though a person is not yet born, he has already died in Adam. This death of all mankind happened the moment that Adam ate the forbidden fruit:

*For if **the many died by the trespass of the one man**, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!* (Ro 5:15 NKJV)

At the beginning of time, all of mankind died ^(past tense) by the trespass of one man. This trespass ended man's relationship with his holy God, similar to how death ends relationships on earth:

*Therefore, just as through one man **sin entered into the world, and death through sin**, and so **death spread to all men**, because all sinned.* (Ro.5:12 NASB)

Some people think that the death mentioned in Romans 5 is physical death; however, the Scripture sometimes uses the word "death" to indicate spiritual death. In the following verse, Jesus referred to those who were not His disciples as being dead:

*But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and **let the dead bury their own dead.**"* (Mt.8:22 NKJV)

All mankind apart from Christ are spiritually and eternally dead to God. In Revelation, Jesus regarded the people in the church of Sardis as dead because they continued to disobey Him:

*I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, **but you are dead**. 'Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God.* (Re.3:1-2 NASB)

The people of the church of Sardis were dead. The Scriptures state that a person who claims to be a Christian but continues to walk in the sensuality of the world is still dead. The Scripture considers the widow who lived for bodily pleasure to be dead, even while she was physically alive:

*But the widow who **lives for pleasure is dead** even **while she lives**.*

(1Ti.5:6 NIV)