

Before and After Jesus (Eph 2:1-3)

We are all familiar with before and after pictures. Some of the most popular shows on TV are about people skilled at restoring cars and houses. Commercials are filled with before and after photos. The before picture always looks terrible doesn't it?

If the product is skin cream, they might show a person with bad wrinkles. If the product is for hair loss, they might show a guy who 's losing his hair. If the product is for weight loss, they show someone who used to be overweight.

Here is the **before picture** but because they used our product this is what the person **looks like now**. In Eph chapter 2:1-3, Paul is going to do something similar to those advertisements. Here we have a before picture of what we used to look like and how we used to be before Jesus entered our lives.

1. Before Christ we were dead:

Verse 1 says, "We were dead because of our wrongdoings and sins."

In Rom 7:24 Paul describes the effects of sin saying, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from this body of death?"

What an interesting way to describe the before. During the days of the Roman Empire, warfare was vicious. Sometimes captive soldiers were tied to the corpse of a fallen soldier until they died. A famous Roman Poet named Virgil wrote about it in 70 B.C. He described those captive soldiers during the battle of Troy as "Lingering wretches" who were tied to a dead body.

I don't know if this is the image Paul is alluding to, but this is how he sees himself without Jesus. "Wretched man that I am, Who will free me from this body of death?"

2. Before Christ we walked in the ways of the world: Verse 2

Paul says, "this is how you once walked. You walked in the ways of the world, according to the prince of Power (The Devil)"

"The spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience." Among whom, we at one time conducted ourselves in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind."

When it comes to what we used to be before becoming a Christian, all of us fit into this category. At one time, we lived for the desires of the flesh and of the mind. This is the picture of what we once were before Jesus, but Paul isn't done. He saves the worst description for last.

3. Before Christ we were children of Wrath: Verse 3

Wrath is a word used to describe God's holy anger against sin. We see it with the flood that destroyed the entire human race except for Noah and his family.

We see with Sodom/Gor where the city is vaporized. The word “Wrath” is also a word used to describe God’s response to our sinful condition prior to accepting Jesus. God is loving, God is just, God is merciful, but unless the gospel is obeyed, sin will be punished.

Now, we have the after picture.

Verse 4 begins with one of the greatest words found in Scripture. “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

Gal 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

2 Cor 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” This is the after picture that shows what happens when Jesus is Lord of my life.

With the time remaining, I would like to look at some “Before and After pictures.” Can Jesus really change my life? Can Jesus change the condition I am in? Can something be done about the before picture?

Picture #1 – Mary Magdalene

Mary is named in all 4 Gospels as a witness to the Lord’s crucifixion, burial and resurrection. She came from Magdala, a town located on the Sea of Galilee. Mary Magdalene along with several other women had been healed of evil spirits and diseases.

Luke 8:2 says that Mary had had 7 demons taken out of her. From other examples we learn that demons were able to make people sick, experience seizures and act in socially unacceptable ways. We don’t know what kind of negative influence those demons were having on Mary, but she needed to be liberated and there was only One person who had that kind of power.

It was Jesus and notice the immediate change that took place. From this point forward, she financially supported Christ and the disciples. She faithfully stood by Jesus during his crucifixion. She was at His burial and was the first to see him resurrected. Mary Magdalene – before and after – what an amazing picture!

Picture #2 – Simon Peter:

Peter was a type of guy who thought he knew everything. In John 13, Jesus stooped down to wash the dirty feet of the disciples to teach them about being a servant. Peter being Peter said, “You’re not washing my feet.”

He even argued with the Lord about him dying (Mark. 8:31-33). He also bragged that he would not forsake Jesus, even if everyone else did (Mk.14:29-31).

Jesus said, “Here’s what is going to happen. “Before the rooster crows, you will deny me 3 times.” Jesus invested a lot of time and energy in preparing Peter to be the man He wanted him to be. The real transformation for Peter began when Jesus spoke to him after the resurrection.

In John 21, Jesus made the Apostles a nice breakfast. Not one word was spoken until Jesus asked Peter, “do you love me?” Peter replied, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” (verse 15)

Despite all that had happened. Despite the fact Peter had failed, Jesus said, “I want you to feed my sheep, even if you are called to die.” Did Jesus change Peter’s life?

In Acts chapter 2, Peter delivers the first gospel sermon where huge crowd gathered to celebrate Pentecost. 3,000 responded to his message, 3,000 repented of their sins. 3,000 souls were baptized and added to the church. Peter wasn’t perfect, but he was faithful and because of Jesus his life was changed forever. He went from proud fishermen/Fisher of souls.

Picture #3- Zacchaeus (Luke 19)

Zacchaeus had a job that made him instantly despised. He was a selfish money-hungry tax collector. Tax collectors were skilled not only in collecting money for Rome, but also in collecting money for themselves. Verse 2 says he was rich.

In the beginning verses, Zac climbs a sycamore tree to get a better look at Jesus who is coming down the road. Jesus stops and says “Zac, come down. I’m going to have lunch at your house today!”

Zac was so thrilled to be with Jesus that afterwards he rises up from the dinner table and stands in the middle of the room saying, “Ladies and Gentlemen, from now on, I’m going to give half my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I will pay them back four times over!”

What an amazing transformation that took place. Instead of having a passion to get, he now has a passion to give. Jesus said, “Today salvation has come to this man’s house.”

Picture #4- The women at the Well (John 4)

In John chapter 4, Jesus encounters a Samaritan who is simply known as, “The women at the well.” The disciples went into town to buy food and Jesus is tired and thirsty from the journey. When Jesus sits down, low and behold a woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus says, “Give me a drink.” We know the rest of the story.

Jesus offers to her a water that leads to eternal life. He talks to her about the sin in her life. Then they have a conversation about worship. Like Zac, we don’t have all the details of the conversation, but afterwards this women’s life is changed forever. In verse 39, many Samaritans believed in Jesus because of her testimony.

Close: The question I would like to think about is “What is our before and After picture like?”