

Mitch Myer

Ephesians 2:1-10 – The Gospel – What is Your Story?

Sunday, September 4, 2022

- *Ephesians 2:1-10 says, “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience – among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”*

Hey everyone, good morning! We are glad you are here to worship the Lord with us today. If you have your Bibles, then please turn them to Ephesians 2:1-10. This is a monumental passage in the New Testament, this is the story of all stories; this is the story of us and God. I don't simply want to just preach this passage, but I want us all to internalize this passage and soak it up like a sponge.

This is the gospel right here, do not miss this. Last week Steve gave us a powerful sermon about the previous passage asking us good questions about the content of our conversations with others and what our relationships here within the church look like. When the gospel is the foundation of our lives, it will more easily be in the content of our conversations and the substance of our relationships.

And I always think about this in Paul's letters, why does Paul remind his readers so much about their past rebellion and sin? This is a consistent theme in almost all his letters. I mean the past is the past, right? Nobody likes being reminded of their sin or their shortcomings or their mistakes. However, Paul is not doing this to shame them. And maybe you have experienced shame when your past has been brought up to you or comes up in your mind.

Paul gives this reminder, this trip down memory lane, to point out the greatness of God in our story from death to life. And we all need that reminder of the greatness of God. We all need to remember the gospel, the story of our transformation. I have heard many people say that they think their conversion story is lame or uncool because they grew up in the church or I was so young when it happened. Sorry, just stop. Do not dare discount the amazing power of God in your story because of the circumstances.

That diminishes God and his glory and the work of Jesus Christ, just don't do it. Your story is the greatest story of conversion and transformation because it is true and because God did it and is still doing it today. And if you believe your story of how God changed you is just so-so, then other people will only believe God can do so-so work in their lives too. Our God is not a God of the so-so, but a God of power and transformation and complete life change!

- *Romans 1:16-17 says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God was revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'"*

In our passage today, there are three separate sections we will be looking at more in depth. Like I said earlier, I want all of us to internalize this passage and reflect on our own story for each section of the passage. After getting the main point, I will read the passage slowly and allow about 30 seconds of silence afterward for you to reflect.

1. **Our NEED for salvation – we were DEAD in our sin. (Ephesians 2:1-3)**
  - a. **Conforming to the world.**
  - b. **Following Satan and believing his lies.**
  - c. **Living out your fleshly desires.**

***"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience – among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."***

Paul does not mince words here when he talks about the previous spiritual state which we inhabited before our reconciliation with Christ. And there are three marks that identify people as being dead in sin are: conforming to the world, following Satan and his lies, and carrying out the desires of the flesh. It is those three marks that solidify our death in sin and outline our need for salvation.

He says that we "were DEAD in the trespasses and sins in which we once walked," and goes onto say that we "were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind." Paul here is describing unbelievers, in which sin renders them spiritually unresponsive and dead in their lives. Not only does the word "dead" describe their eternal state, but also the life they have created with sin where there is no communication with God and no ability to experience the goodness of life that God wants for them. Sin leads to death, eternally and physically. We all know and believe that sin destroys and breaks down our lives here on earth. This was all of us at one time and this is still many, many people today.

In Colossians 1:21 Paul describes it like this,

- *"And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds..."*

These phrases are tough for us, we don't like to think of ourselves like this. It makes us cringe and feel uncomfortable. I believe we all tend to downplay our former spiritual deadness before coming to Christ. I don't really know why for certain, I think it is all unique to each of us based on family of origin, whether we have a church background or not, our own personality and internal wiring. We are easily defensive and always seeking to prove our innocence. We don't like confession or honesty about our own motives or biases. We don't like to view ourselves in a negative light. We live in a culture that celebrates sin and

perversity, but instead villainizes righteousness and the created order. These are tools of the devil meant to confuse us and cause mistrust in God, which he has been doing since the beginning. Instead of Paul's description in Romans 3:11-12 where he says,

- *None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.*"

Now it has become the complete opposite and we are faced with it every day, "No one is ever not wrong, everyone understands and seeks good. All are good, and all do good things. You have never done anything wrong." The world has gone so far in avoiding shame, guilt, and fear that they have completely removed themselves from reality and truth. As people of God and followers of Christ, we must be people of reality and truth. The reality is that I am a sinner who by my nature is rebellious toward God and the created order. My flesh craves sin and transgression. I want to seek after the things of this world, not the things of God. The truth is that there is another way where I am saved from my sin and can be reconciled to God and live a fruitful life of love and service to others. We can have reality about ourselves without living in shame, fear, and guilt.

Paul does this well actually when he talks about himself:

- 1 Timothy 1:15-16 says, "The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life."
- Romans 7:24-25 says, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

## **2. The PURPOSE for salvation – the IMMEASUREABLE riches of grace forever with Christ.**

**(Ephesians 2:4-7)**

- a. Alive with Christ.**
- b. Raised us up with Christ.**
- c. Seated up with Christ.**

***"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."***

Verses 1-3 display a hopeless humanity trapped in sin, under Satan's power, and unable to save itself. However, verse 4 starts with two small, but glorious words..."But God." And this small phrase begins a cosmic plan so great in love and mercy that our minds can barely comprehend its power and truth. Paul here describes the purpose and reason for salvation is found in God's rich mercy and great love. God could have left us hopeless in sin and enslaved to our flesh, but he did not. He acted and worked out of his mercy and love on behalf of us, in spite of what we actually were – dead, sinful, slaves, fleshly.

Even though we were dead in sin, God made us alive together with Christ. The only way spiritually dead people can have relationship with God is to be “made alive.” And God is the only one who can accomplish this, which he did through Jesus who defeated sin and death through his death and resurrection. Colossians 2:12-13 says,

- *“having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God make alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.”*

When we are raised in Christ, it means we participate in a new kind of “resurrected” life from the moment we believe. We now live a new life of obedience that looks completely different from the life that the world offers us. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says,

- *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away, the new has come.”*

And being seated up in Christ means we get to share in His victory and exaltation now. Jesus has been exalted and now sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven, and we are seated up with him as well. Some might say this is meaning a future event, but to Paul in Ephesians this is something that is happening now. Philippians 3:20-21 says,

- *“But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.”*

Philippians 3:21 gives us a picture of what we will get to experience in heaven for eternity from our passage today, “so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

### **3. The MEANS for salvation – saved by GRACE through faith. (Ephesians 2:8-10)**

- a. This is a gift from God.**
- b. We are God’s masterpiece.**
- c. Created to do good works.**

***“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”***

These few verses are probably the most popular of this passage. They are wonderful to memorize and repeat when we feel lost or scared. It gives us assurance and hope, and it takes the pressure off us completely. Paul begins with the means for salvation, how we enter into relationship with God – “for by grace you have been saved through faith.” Paul already said this earlier in verse 5, but he left out the “by faith” and just said, “by grace you have been saved.” The phrase itself refers to a past event “being

saved” that has present and ongoing results in the lives of the saved. Being saved is about receiving salvation or being free, which Paul already described in verses 5-6 about being made alive, raised, and seated with Christ. This brings up an important point about the mode at which salvation has been delivered. Salvation is not something we are waiting to happen, it is in fact already happening in our lives and has been given to us already.

Grace describes the amazing gift that God has made possible for us to receive despite our unworthiness. Grace and mercy are often used interchangeably, however, they carry different meanings. Mercy is more about God holding back judgment and punishment we definitely deserve, while grace means giving the forgiveness of our sins so nothing is owed on our behalf. We enter into saving grace through our faith, which is our belief in Christ as the savior. Romans 10:9 says,

- *“if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”*

This grace is a gift from God. It is not something we can earn or live up to, but it is just that, a gift that we do not deserve. Romans 3:23-24 and 6:23 shows us this truth as well,

- *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”*
- *“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Because this gift is free, we cannot boast in ourselves or what we do. The only thing we can boast in is God himself and Jesus Christ. We were made by God and created to do good works in this life. You have so much more to offer this world with God on your side than you ever would have been able to before. You are a masterpiece, God’s workmanship. And if you walk in obedience to the Lord, those wonderful good works that he has planned for you in advance, you will continue to do them faithfully.

We all have a story, the story of how we came to be saved. And it’s all based on this story found in Ephesians 2:1-10. If your story is hard, that’s ok. If your story is simple, that’s ok. If your story is boring, that’s ok. If your story is confusing, that’s ok. It’s all ok as long as your story is at the forefront of your life in everything you do. Let your story be the lens through which you see the world. Let this story, the gospel, be the lens through which you see the world. It’s a beautiful lens full of hope and full of grace. It is the lens this world needs and you can bring it to them. I hope this trip down memory lane was good and encouraging, I know it was for me as I looked back this week on my story. I thank God for it and that he saved me even when I was still dead in my sin. Let’s pray.