

Ephesians 2 God Saved Dead People

2 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins **2** 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— **3** 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. **4** But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, **5** even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— **6** and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, **7** so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. **8** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **9** not a result of works, so that no one may boast. **10** For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Good morning and welcome to ABC today. We are going to look at one of the most life altering pieces of scripture today. It has changed the “story” of 1,000,000s of God’s people through the last 2000 years. In terms of ‘history’, for the last few years, Tanya and I, and the girls have been discussing how 2020 was going to be a huge year for us. The reasons why, for us personally, include, in order, me turning 50, Sarah graduating from high school, our 20th Anniversary and Sarah turning 18. We were looking forward to all of these things, which on their own are major milestones. As we all have seen recently, God in his sovereignty, and even mystery, threw us, and the world a huge curveball with Covid-19. Ephesians 2, in some ways is a curveball for those that hear God’s call, and still step up to the plate.

In order to proceed through our text we need to recap some of the key things that were said regarding Ephesians 1, since that was over a month ago, and a lot has happened since then! When Paul wrote this book he was writing to the people of Ephesus which was a city of about 250, 000 in the ancient world. It was a major trade city and was sort of a cultural melting pot meaning that it had all kinds of ideas and all kinds of people. There would have been Jews, Gentiles etc. It would have been like many of our cities today, including a mixture of religious and non-religious of all kinds. Our context is similar.

As Matt stated back in February the big idea of Ephesians is that everything is to the praise of his glory. This means also that Christ has reconciled all of creation to himself, and that he has united the church in himself. The Apostle Paul asserted that Christians should lead lives that are a fitting tribute of gratitude to their Lord. Today this means simply that no matter what is happening, we should be focused on him, and give him praise and glory in the good and the bad. Not always easy, I know.

As an English teacher, I am always thinking about words, so I want simply to draw our attention to some of the amazing key words of the first part of chapter one: blessed, heavenly, chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, predestined us for adoption, purpose of His will, glorious grace, redemption, forgiveness, riches of his grace, wisdom and insight, plan for the fullness of time, unite in him, inheritance, works all things according to the counsel of his will, heard the word of truth, sealed with the promise, guarantee of inheritance, praise of his glory. We could spend hours and hours on each of these words and phrases in themselves. We should let them soak into us, and we should abide in them, as Jesus told us. Sometimes just one word or phrase can get us through a tough time.

In the next part of chapter one, verses 15-23 we heard from Pastor Leland about faith in Jesus, unceasing thanks for the saints, prayers, the Father of glory, the spirit of wisdom, having the eyes of our hearts enlightened, glorious inheritance, working of his great might, raised him from the dead, above every name, for all ages of time, gave him as head over all things. In chapter one we also saw that we are spiritually blind to the resurrection power of Jesus, and that we need to have our hearts opened up and illuminated. The Holy Spirit gives us wisdom and revelation of the knowledge of him to show us the immeasurable greatness of his power. These are enormous concepts, that require time to process and then incorporate into our lives. My prayer for you, and me, and all of us is that we would never stop abiding in His word(s). Again, one each day is often all it takes.

The first chapter of Ephesians is so incredibly deep and rich with ideas about God that it's very difficult to bring down to our level for understanding. In chapter 2 though, Paul begins to write about things are perhaps more relatable, to a degree.

Ephesians 2 contains **three main segments** which focus on some of the characteristics of God that I think all kinds of people can relate to.

Hermann read them already, but I will repeat the sections, before going through them.

Verses 1-3 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins **2** 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— **3** 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.

These focus on fallen man, and his hopeless condition (dead) as a result of his sin—every person knows that they have regrets and flaws or shortcomings, even if they don't like to admit them to themselves, or others, or to God. Knowing that we're broken is the beginning of submission to Him.

Verses 4-6: But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, **5** even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— **6** and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

These three focus on God, and on His mercy and grace in making a provision for man's salvation in Christ—every person wants to be shown mercy, and in fact seem to demand mercy for themselves more than they even like to extend it to others—people also want to be saved from this life and world, even if that is not how they necessarily articulate that concept-- for example, even the ardent atheist is hoping that there's nothing after this life, which is in itself a kind of escape, or salvation from this life.

Verses 7-10: so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. **8** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **9** not a result of works, so that no one may boast. **10** For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

These last verses focus on the purpose of salvation, to the praise of the glory of His grace. All together, they spell out the essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ—again, every person wants to be saved from this world—

These verses are overwhelmingly large in many ways, despite their relatability, as they strip away “**our** choices” and “**our truths**” which is a very common concept today. Accepting that God is sovereign over the earth is every single human being’s issue. As we saw in Genesis, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”. Unless we start with God, nothing else makes sense. Everything else in Ephesians 2 is also an example of Sola Gratia, meaning through grace alone, which makes this different than any other religious world view, since it’s all about God’s doing, not ours.

I am going to walk us through the verses in pieces now and discuss some of the key parts and how they stand out individually

V1-2-“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked” —Paul’s “and” connects back to the previous chapter and shows us the past tense of how we were dead, which implies some other time. We’re dead in every way that is not only physical death. We walked in trespasses reminds me of the Lord’s prayer that so many people know. Also, our life, along with Jesus’ life is a moving journey—before God entered our lives we were dead.

V2-“following the course of this world, following the price of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience”—we are often tempted to chart our own course, even though in Matthew Jesus said to follow him—also, in this world we often do not feel “at home” but rather feel like aliens—the prince of this world, our enemy, however, is not the King of Kings, thankfully—we do have our own work to do to overcome ourselves, while the enemy is all around, trying his best to derail and destroy us.

V3--“we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind”—we hear so often today that we should follow our heart and think for ourselves, and many people live in an overly emotional state—the Oxford Dictionary word of the year for 2016 was “post-truth”—we need to rise above our own instincts and emotions and follow the one that has overcome the world. Even today, we may not “feel like” washing our hands for 20 seconds, but that’s the way it’s supposed to be done!

V3--“we were by nature, children of wrath, like the rest of mankind”—if you’ve ever babysat a child you know that we do not need to be taught to disobey—the wrath here is God’s eternal wrath, unleashed in the garden after Adam’s sin—all of mankind is destined to experience God’s wrath, but those of us in Christ are set apart—amazing!

Then comes the most incredible and eternity altering “but” in the world.

V4-“But God, being rich in mercy”---grammatically “but” signals a change in direction—it was raining, but then it stopped. I had some money, but then I had kids. The world was trucking along, but then we had Covid-19. It’s different than “and”.

Like many of you, I experienced this type of “but God” almost exactly 20 years ago now when God saved me—**Brief testimonial info here**—away from the church, self-destructive habits, depression, Amway people, then “boom”--what if I am wrong about Him? And spaghetti dinner—intellectual truths and kindness—don’t underestimate how you tell people about him.

V4-“because of his great love with which he loved us”--the *because* is a huge statement also, since it reveals some of God’s motivation—how many people would want to know that God loved them enough to save them? All of them! Forever. Everywhere. This brings to mind famous passages of comfort that even non-believers know—Psalm 23 and John 3:16, for example. Everyone wants to know that God loves them. Perhaps now, during a pandemic, more than ever. The time is ripe to share God’s love with people. So many people are having so many questions.

V5-“even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ”--again, there’s the past tense of our position of being dead before, and that now God makes us alive—and this is forever life, and it’s God’s doing—this is infuriating for some people to hear that they cannot do it for themselves, because that’s what we’re taught, but for many others, like me, and hopefully you, it’s incredibly liberating and encouraging and reassuring to know that God did it for me--because I either would not do it, or I would likely mess it up.

V5--“by grace you have been saved”--grace is getting what you don’t deserve, and we all want to be saved from all kinds of things—start with any and all of the issues related to Covid-19 and then proceed to the rest of life—everyone wants to be saved from this world, even if temporarily at times.

V6--“we’ve been raised up with him and seated with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus”- Jesus was raised up on the cross so that we can join him at God’s throne—just--wow. What is God’s throne like? A lot nicer than what you’re sitting on right now, for sure!

V7--“so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus”--God’s time is much longer than ours—imagine being in his riches and kindness for all of eternity—bird and ocean example for eternity? God’s kindness?! Wow.

V8--“For by grace you have been saved”--it’s all his doing! We “simply” respond to his work—again, incredible—I recently read *Robinson Crusoe* in full for the first time. After Crusoe was shipwrecked, but somehow made it to shore he said “I was now landed, and safe on shore, and began to look up and thank God that my life was saved, when some minutes before there had been scarcely any room to hope. I believe it is impossible to express in full what the ecstasies and transports of the soul are, when it is so saved, as I may say, out of the very grave”---that’s us, too!

V8--“and this is not your doing: it is the gift of God”--again we see here that God strips away our Towers of Babel and any idols that we have—so often we want to credit ourselves for so many things—and it is a gift from the one that created the universe—who would not want that?! It’s also not our choice. He did it!

V9--“not a result of works, so that on one may boast”--Every other “belief system” is about works and doing things—this again leads to ourselves—God however, takes that away since he knew that our greatest undoing is our pride and boasting about doing it “my way”--sorry Frank. We would surely boast about saving ourselves, if we could.

V10--“for we are His workmanship”--Jesus himself did all of the work—we are made and designed in the image of God. We’re not an accident. In this time of chaos and uncertainty people want to know that their lives have purpose and meaning—what better meaning is there than being made by God himself?

V10--“created in Christ Jesus for good works”--if we’re in Him—abiding in him and following him and living out his word, then we should feel compelled and driven to do good things in his name so that others would see him, in us. There are so many opportunities for this today. And tomorrow...

V10--“Which God prepared beforehand”--this means that before time began, God knew that we would be right here, right now at this time. That could be taken many ways, but he wants us to hear from him, and be used by him right now—whatever that may look like in your life, for His glory.

V10--“that we should walk with him”--in verse one we saw that we walked in sin and trespass—now God calls us again to walk with him, freed from the eternal burden of sin, as we’ve been freed by his gift of grace. Jesus walked everywhere in his life. That means he’s also with us everywhere we go, in everything that we do.

To wrap things up, as English evangelist and writer Leonard Ravenhill said, “there are only 2 kinds of people in the world. Only 2 kinds. Not rich or poor. Not black or white. --my emphasis--Not Canadian or American. Not hockey fans or football fans. Not those that put pineapple on pizza and those that don’t.-- Those that are dead in sin, and those that are dead to sin”.

Furthermore, Abraham Kuyper said something similar: “there are two kinds of beauty; there is a beauty which God gives at birth, and which withers as a flower—and there is a beauty which God grants when by His grace we are born again. That kind of beauty never vanishes, but blooms eternally”.

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