

Ephesians 2:1-10: From Death to Life

Review:

The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians is a wonderful piece of Scripture helping us to grow in our relationship with God. We have looked at the spiritual blessings we have in Christ which began when the Father chose us before the beginning of the world. We have been redeemed and forgiven for our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. As well, we have been sealed in the Holy Spirit guaranteeing our inheritance until we are fully redeemed at the return of Jesus Christ.

Paul lays before us some great foundational doctrine. His passion is that we would know God better and better each day, seeing his glory and knowing the hope to which he has called us. As a reflection of God's glory on earth our ultimate passion and desire should be that Christ would be exalted in all we say and do just as the Father has exalted him above all rule, authority, power and dominion. As a result of God's Power, Jesus Christ is now the Head of the Church and fills us with God's fullness.

Introduction:

Eph 2:1-10 - As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.¹⁰ For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Paul carries on his discourse with the church at Ephesus contrasting their previous life as disobedient objects of wrath to the new life they have in Christ Jesus. This distinction is seen later on in Ephesians when he speaks to walking in the light and not in the darkness as the Gentiles do. Similar ideas of thought can be seen in Paul's other writings as well. Galatians tells us to live by the Spirit and not by the flesh. Paul reminds the church Colossae **“Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior” (Col 1:21)**. It is Paul's desire to remind the church that we were dead but now are alive as believers.

Details of Death:

There are several descriptions of the life of death we once lived apart from God. Paul gives us a sober reminder that we have been transferred out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. We must remind ourselves that God the Father exerted great power as he raised Jesus from the dead. The same power is now applied to you and me. Paul tells us that we “were dead” – past tense. The KJV describes it this way; we are told that God has quickened us to life just as he did for Jesus. But before Paul describes the details of the kingdom of light he now describes the particulars of this life of death in which we once lived.

- Several translations use the word “trespasses”, although some use transgressions or offenses. Death is described as when we miss the mark or trespass or transgress. It is a conscious choice of violating a command, law or right and therefore involves a guilty conscience. Just like “don’t eat the fruit from this tree” in Adam and Eve’s situation. Don’t walk on the grass! Etc...
- The word for sins is a general word describing an offense against spiritual or moral law. In other words, we are at fault for our shortcomings or sins which have offended God.

The stark reality is such, all of us have lived in the ways of the world and have trespassed against God’s Laws and have fallen short of his glory because of our sins. However, Paul does not stop there. As a result of the fall of mankind into sin, sinners all have the tendency to follow the ruler of this world – Satan himself and the kingdom of evil spirits he represents.

- Several things need to be mentioned here. Firstly, the ways of the world have influence over people today, believers or unbelievers. To some degree, hopefully less, we all struggle with “**the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life...**” (1 John 2:16).
- Secondly, the pressure of Satan and his evil spirits fill the air, not the heavenly places where Christ is seated and we by his side. The realm of earth and the atmosphere is the boundary marked out for Satan and his demons. The unfortunate reality Paul is addressing is this; while on earth whether believer or unbeliever, we are under the sway of the enemy’s schemes and strategies.
- Paul also highlights this truth, “**the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient**”. Disobedience gives access to the spirit to work in us his evil plans. Some of us may reject the idea that the devil and his demons can cause such evil in the world. However, here the Scriptures confirm that the power of the devil on the earth is directly related to the evil at work “in the sons of disobedience”.

Paul now tells the believers at Ephesus that no one is with excuse before God. “**All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.**”

There is no one righteous before God, we were all disobedient before God and stuck in the full effect of our sinful nature.

- The Bible primarily uses two words to describe our tendency towards sinful and evil behaviour; the sinful nature and the flesh. This describes our nature apart or separate from God's nature; God who is Holy and we who are un-holy. Paul describes the acts of the sinful nature in **Gal 5:19 - sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery** (extreme indulgence in sensual behaviour); ²⁰ **idolatry and witchcraft** (control or manipulation using drugs); **hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions** ²¹ **and envy; drunkenness, orgies** (wild drinking parties), **and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.**
- Paul reminds the church at Ephesus that at some point in their past lives as unbelievers they engaged in unholy activities. The things Paul describes in **Gal 5:19-21** would be an apt description of what took place in the various cults and temples throughout Asia Minor. These sinful thoughts and deeds made us objects of God's wrath.

In Conclusion:

In this passage of Scripture, Paul has given a sober reality check to the church in Ephesus. By reminding them of their sordid past, he highlights their desperate need for a Saviour.

- We need a Saviour because of verse 1 because we are dead in our transgressions and sins.
- We need a Saviour because of verse 2 because we are captive to demonic power.
- We need a Saviour because of verse 3 because we are children of wrath.

In other words they were sick with sin resulting in death, they were sabotaged by Satan and they were sentenced to hell. Sobering thoughts for the church at Ephesus and sobering thoughts for us today. We too find ourselves in a desperate place when we look at the effects of sin and Satan upon our lives today. Paul writes this letter to the church at Ephesus but this is not something we would ever see documented in Newsweek or Time. Sin, Satan and Hell are not politically correct terms and yet all three of these realities point to our need for a Saviour. Why are these truths not spoken of in public media? Why do people have such a difficult time believing in sin, Satan and hell?

- First of all, believing in sin is so unflattering to our human nature and pride.
- Secondly, spiritual things – i.e. Satan – are not learned from man's wisdom and understanding.
- Thirdly, hell and heaven cut across humanistic thinking.

In Application:

I am reminded of the song that we have sung several weeks in a row - "Welcome to the place of level ground"...

As we sing this song, we need to:

Let the Holy Spirit convict us of the acts of the sinful nature and be reminded that we were set free from these transgression and sins.

Let the Holy Spirit set us free from Satan and his influence through the ways of the world.

Let the Holy Spirit reveal to us that we are no longer children of wrath deserving hell.

Thanks be to God who sent us all a Saviour...