

Ephesians 2:1-10 Bible Study

Introduction

Good evening, or morning, or afternoon, sisters! If I have not met you yet, my name is Angela Suh, and I am married to John Suh, who is the new church planting resident here at New Life Dresher. I have two daughters, Mercy, who is 3 years old, and Reuelle who is 1 years old.

Before we get into the text, I just wanted to say that I am *so* sorry for not being there with you guys in person. I am currently on a work trip to Greece, and I will actually be in Ephesus by the time you're watching this video. Even I am so shocked by the Lord's timing of this last minute trip, I am truly sad that I am not able to share this teaching with you face to face. But I pray that God will bless this time, and for your hearts to be nourished and enlivened to live for Him!

Today, we will be diving into Ephesians 2: 1-10. READ THE PASSAGE. As you can hear and see, it's quite a sobering text, but it's also a passage that's full of hope and power! So to help us better understand these ten verses, I will be dividing it into 3 sections:

1. **The *Really* Bad News** (verses 1-3)
2. **The *Really* Good News** (verses 4-7)
3. **What is this all *for*?** (verses 8-10)

The Really Bad News (Verses 1-3)

1. Verse 1 begins with the conjunction KAI, which has three meanings in the Greek: “and,” “even,” or “also.” Here in this verse, as you can see, it is used as “AND.” [For our English teachers or majors] what does the conjunction “and” do? How does it function? According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, it is used “to connect words, phrases, or clauses of **equal** grammatical importance.” So even though we are starting a new chapter, the first 10 verses of chapter 2 are intimately connected or of equal importance to Paul’s prayer in chapter 1. Last week, Janel so beautifully highlighted and taught about the power of God. To reiterate, Paul prays for the Ephesians to *know* the “immeasurable greatness of God’s power” that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the heavenly places. It is God’s great power that resurrected Jesus and placed him at his right hand in heaven. So as we turn to chapter 2 verse 1, Paul is connecting that same power, that raised Christ from the dead, to the conversion of the believers in the church of Ephesus. As Paul is about to describe and remind the Ephesians where they have come from, he is grounding this sober reality in the powerful work of God.
2. So where have these believers come from? What was their identity before Christ? Paul describes them in verse 1 as ones who were “dead in the trespasses and sins.” Physically, they may have been “living” and breathing, but spiritually, they were dead.
 - a. As I was meditating and praying about this passage, I was constantly reminded of my testimony. Long story shorter (but if you are interested in hearing the long story, let’s grab coffee), there was a season in my life where I did not love God. I did not like the church. My relationships were falling apart, and I was aggressively living in sin. And after some sinful choices and prioritizing my desires, I ended up becoming really sick. It was my senior year of high school, and I was supposed to be in celebration mode, but instead, I was immobile, in excruciating pain, and in self-pity mode. I wasn’t able to go to the doctors for financial reasons, and my mom certainly could not and did not know why I was like this, so I reached out to trusty ol’ Dr. Google. Btw, this was way before AI, so

you can imagine what kind of results it was generating. But I was typing in all of my symptoms in the search bar, hoping to see that I just needed a couple days of rest, tylenol, you know, the home remedies. But everything that I searched said that I was going to die. Apparently, whatever sickness I had was incurable and I was basically counting down the days to my death. **Spoiler alert:** I did not die physically and by the grace of God, he healed me, but at the time, I really thought I was going to die, and truly as Paul reminds us, I was *dead* to my sins.

Going back to the passage, in verse 2, not only were the Ephesians dead, but Paul ironically states that they once “walked” in their sins. Which means, as one theologian (Charles Hodge) puts it, that they were “devoted to it...surrounded by it, and clothed with it.” They were eating, breathing, and sleeping sin. It was like second nature to them, but it actually *was* their nature. Not only did they walk in it, but they *followed* “the course of this world” and “the prince of the power of the air.” “The course of this world” is the governing principle that controls their lives, and “the prince of the power of the air” is Satan. So they were under the control of and influenced by the world and Satan. So essentially, the Ephesians were dead because of their sins. They hated God and were completely opposed to him. There was not an inch of good in them. They were basically the cast of the Walking Dead but in real life, walking as lifeless beings in this dark world while feasting on spoiled things.

- b. Introduce the Doctrine of Total Depravity: This doctrine basically says that because of Adam’s fall and sin against God in Genesis 3, they became corrupt and unable to do good. So every man that comes after him is defiled, aka unclean and sinful. We sin against God, but it is not only an act but it becomes the fabric of our being. Every part of our being (mind, will, emotions, affections, and conscience) is tainted by sin. We are unable to convert ourselves, prepare ourselves for salvation, and choose to follow God. We are truly dead in our sins and guilty before God, and only God’s grace can “reverse the curse.” (Taken from OPC Q&A).

3. Now in verse 3, I'm not sure if you noticed, but there is a subtle shift in pronouns in the greek. In verses 1-2, Paul refers to the Ephesians in the 2nd person plural, "**You** were dead...in which **you** once walked." But in verse 3, he changes it to the first person plural, "among whom **we** all once lived in the passions of our flesh." Here Paul is stating that both the Jews *and* gentiles are dead and living in the passions of our flesh. And even Paul, an Apostle who was "circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee, a persecutor of the church, and under the law blameless" – even he once lived in the passions of the flesh (Phil. 3:4-6). No one is exempt. I know I've been teaching the last two verses in context of the Ephesians, but sisters, this letter and reminder is for us. We were once dead in our trespasses and sins. We walked in disobedience, and followed the course of this world and the prince of the power of the air. We lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh AND the mind.

- a. You know, at our infant baptisms, Anthony prays that our covenant children would never know a day when they didn't know Christ. I'm sure many of us can identify with this statement, as we have been raised in a sound and gospel teaching home and church. And while I pray this for my own children, I also pray that they would know the weight and depth of their sins despite how "small" it may feel.
- b. I remember when John and I were dating, we spent one of our dates sharing our testimonies. As I mentioned earlier, there were some really broken and sinful years in my life. And although I was healed and no longer in that season anymore, I knew my sins were more explicit and physical than John's. And I almost felt like the woman at the well, hiding in her shame, and I was well prepared to be okay if John didn't want to pursue me anymore. After I shared my testimony, John looked over at me, thanked me for being so honest and vulnerable, and confessed that even though he may have never acted on his sinful desires, that his sins were not any less than mine. He stated that his internal sins were just as bad as my sins that were executed externally. And that's when I realized I

wanted to marry him, AND that all desires and sin, in the flesh or in the mind, were ALL equally wrong before our holy God. And it takes a lot of humility to confess that, you know, when we've lived that semi-good life.

4. Sisters, this is the *really* bad news: we “were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind” (v. 3). Because of our sin, we have fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). We were “destined to experience the wrath of God” (Ferguson). Sinclair Ferguson describes God’s wrath as “the settled hostility of God’s holy will towards everything that rebels against him.” It is not “a fit of rage” or like when we lash out on our husbands or our kids because of our lack of self control. But God’s wrath is actually “perfectly controlled...totally concentrated, absolutely just, completely holy.” There is *nothing* that we could do in our own strength to save ourselves. We cannot talk ourselves into being better people or wake ourselves up from our death. This was our trajectory without Christ.

- a. Paul even makes this point of man not being able to do anything grammatically. In the last two teachings, Maureen and Janel mentioned how Paul writes his longest sentences in the first chapter, and it is remarkable for its length. But here in chapter 2, his “lengthy delay of a main verb” is just as remarkable (Ferguson). He waits 5 whole verses before he inserts a main verb, and it can be found in the middle of verse 5 where it says, “Made us alive together with Christ.” A commentator highlights that “Paul’s sense of delayed action is intentional” as “nothing happens to man in terms of salvation until Christ enters the scene and makes him alive” (Harry Uprichard).

*The **Really** Good News (Verses 4-7)*

So now, ENTER CHRIST.

1. Verse 4 begins with two abrupt yet familiar words: BUT GOD. There are echoes of these two words all over the Psalms, and they are “reminiscent of the turning points of the personal or corporate laments in the Psalms” (Ferguson). For example, in Psalm 41, David is surrounded by enemies, suffers a betrayal of a close friend, and physically and spiritually cannot see a way out.

Then in verse 10, he looks up to God and cries out, “But you, O Lord, be gracious to me.” Again in Psalm 102, the psalmist is afflicted, distressed, and groaning because of all that has happened. But then in verse 12, he turns his gaze to the Lord and proclaims, “But you, O LORD, are enthroned forever.” When you see a “BUT GOD,” this is the climax or turning point or the HOPE that these saints turn to, who is Jesus.

2. So here is the *really* good news: Because God is “rich in mercy” and because of “the great love with which he loved us, *even* when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.” This main verb, “to make alive” is synonymous to “to raise from the dead.” Because God so loved the world, because God so loved sinful people, because God so loved you and me, he sent his one and only Son to die on the cross, so that whoever believes in him should not perish (aka DIE) but have eternal life. He drew near to us when we were dead; when we were in our sin; when we hated him. And there is absolutely nothing that we could’ve done or not done to earn this gift of salvation. It is God alone who works powerfully in raising dead hearts back to life.
 - a. Lazarus – You may be familiar with the story of the death of Lazarus in John 11. Jesus comes to Lazarus in verse 17, and the bible explicitly states that he “had already been in the tomb 4 days.” Earlier in the chapter was still ill, which infers that he was breathing and his five senses were still working. But here in the passage, Lazarus cannot hear or see anything. Not only is his body dead but he is enclosed behind a big tomb. Now, do you think that Lazarus was able to muster up all of his strength to get up? Do you think he was able to talk himself into living again so that he can see Jesus on the other side of the tomb? Or maybe figure out a way to crawl out of the tomb? Absolutely NOT. Dead people cannot do ANYTHING. It wasn’t until Jesus shouted the good news: “Lazarus, come out” for anything to happen Lazarus. Jesus made him alive, raised him from the dead, and he sat down to share a meal with him in Chapter 12. Through Jesus’ words and by the power of the Holy Spirit, Lazarus was able to wake up and live! And this is what God has done for us.

- i. He makes us alive in Christ and saves us.
- ii. He raises us up with Christ.
- iii. He seats us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.
- iv. God unites us to Christ, and we get to live a life with him – together. Bryan Chapell, “Life, pardon divine righteousness, and eternal glory are mine because I am ‘in Christ’ ... All of these blessings are the fruit of my union with him.”

*What is this all **for**? (Verses 8-10)*

1. Paul reminds us again in verse 8: “FOR BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED,” but this time, he adds “THROUGH FAITH.” Faith requires activity. But right afterwards, Paul notes that “This is not your own doing” but that “it is a gift of God.” So where does our activity fit in? If we are dead and God is the one who chooses, imitates, and saves his people, why does Paul state that it is *through faith*? Sinclair Ferguson beautifully articulates that our faith is a **response** to God’s powerful work, but it is not our **contribution**. He states, “The gospel calls for a faith response. That faith is our activity...The genius of God’s plan of salvation is that he has devised a means by which we are actively engaged in faith, and yet contribute nothing towards salvation...Salvation is all, and always, of grace.”
2. Verses 9 and 10 teach us how to live as miracles on this earth. Just like Lazarus, it was truly a miracle of God to save our dead souls and bring us back to life. And though the gospel calls for a faith response, because it is not a result of our works and because it is a gift, we cannot boast. We cannot take any credit or take pride. So it calls us to live humbly, to live in humility. But because we are also God’s workmanship, we are called to do good works. Actually Paul states that we should walk in them. He is bookending this passage: verse 1 stated that we once walked in the trespasses and sins, and now in verse 10, it states that we should walk in the good works, which God prepared beforehand. Ferguson states, “Good works do not save, yet we cannot be saved without beginning to walk in the good works.” As we are given new life in Christ, we are called

to a new lifestyle. One that isn't walking in sin or following the things of this world, but one that is humble and walking in good works because we were created in Christ for Christ.

Conclusion

- Do you believe that you were once dead in your sins? Do you believe that
- This text can be like a hard pill to swallow. But we need to understand the true state of what we were saved from.
- Jack Miller, "Cheer up! You're a worse sinner than you ever dared imagine, and you're more loved than you ever dared hope."
- The same power that raised Christ from the dead, raised your life and is working in your life, and will be working in your life until Christ returns.
- Let's pray.