

“The Making of a Masterpiece”
Ephesians 2:1-10
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(Lord’s Day Service, October 28th, 2018)

Ephesians 2:1-10

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins² 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.

Introduction

Short video about a rescued dog named Blossom.

“Rocky Kanaka brought Blossom to his home and became her foster father. Although he fostered rescued dogs for years, he quickly realized Blossom was unlike any other dogs he fostered. Mentally, she could not function as a dog as both grass and sunlight terrified her. Through Rocky’s persistence in loving Blossom, she overcame her fears and finally became a dog that she was meant to be.”

The video has many truths as to how God takes care of us. It is a great illustration of the book of Ephesians because today’s passage tells us how we are restored just as Blossom was restored. Ephesians chapter 1 was about salvation through God’s point of view and His plan for the whole creation. Chapter 2 is salvation through a Christian’s perspective and God’s plan for human beings.

I. You Were [1-3]

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins² 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.

A. Dead [1]

“*Dead*” refers to the condition of being spiritually dead. Being spiritually dead means lacking inclination towards God and the ability to respond, obey, and please God. Apart from Christ, we are spiritually dead because of our trespasses and sins. Trespasses refer to the violation of God’s commands and sins refer to

missing the mark or falling short of God's standards through our thoughts, deeds, and works.

Think about zombies. They are physically living but dead and their bodies are continuously decaying. Apart from Christ, we are like spiritual zombies who are unaware of the decaying of our souls through our trespasses and sins. Not only that, but we are incapable of defending ourselves from the influences that harm us.

B. Enslaved [2-3]

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.

1. Satan [2]

“The prince of the power of the air” refers to Satan, who is the prince of the demonic forces, or demons. This is supported by Ephesians 6:12.

Ephesians 6:12 – For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over the present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

It seems to say that the norm of the world is evil. God does not cause evil but permits evil and essentially permits Satan to be in control through a given degree.

2. World [2]

How does Satan personally influence us? He works through the world and the world reflects the intentions and motives of our hearts. 1 John 2:16 describes what the world is.

1 John 2:16 – For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life – is not from the Father but is from the world.

“The desires of the flesh” include our selfishness and our wants to glorify ourselves and not God. *“The desires of the eyes”* indicate the temptations in our hearts. *“The pride of life”* comes from the love of the world and exalts something else other than God. The intentions, thoughts, and motives of the sinful nature of our hearts are expressed in life, in culture, and evidently, in the world.

The word “*spirit*” does not refer to Satan but rather illustrates the general atmosphere/*spirit* of the world. The selfishness, pride, lust are some examples of the *spirit* that is pervasive in this world. Anyone apart from Christ as non-believers and the areas in our hearts that are apart from Christ as believers are in disobedience against God.

As believers we need to discern the *spirit* of worldliness in our minds and our hearts. This doesn’t mean everything in this world is bad. Our goal is not to protect ourselves from the world, but to change the world with the Gospel as we go into it with discernment through the Word.

In this environment, Satan enslaves men and women. Although he can enslave a person through direct possession, he is mostly using the worldliness in the world and in our hearts to enslave us. He would rather work through few, influential people to create cultures that will tempt our minds and cause us to sin. Just as Satan affected Eve’s thinking process to affect Adam, which affected all of humanity. Therefore, we need to discern what we read, listen, and watch.

3. Flesh [2-3]

Why are we so drawn into the culture of this world? It’s because of our flesh. It is important to understand that neither Satan nor his demonic forces can force us to do anything. In fact, the world itself cannot make us do anything. When we are tempted, it is our voluntary following of the worldliness in our hearts that cause us to sin. Then to live “*in the passions of our flesh*” is to live according to the things of the world that match the worldly desires of our hearts. Therefore, on judgment day, we cannot blame anyone else but ourselves. This pertains not only to non-believers but also to believers because sinful nature still exists in our hearts. But for believers, we have hope because as we slowly grow, we become freer in Jesus Christ from enslavement to sin.

C. Cursed [3]

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.

In the world, there are many deaths, diseases, and natural disasters but they are only glimpses of a curse called eternal wrath. Through these glimpses, God is lovingly warning us to repent and come back to Him. His wrath is consistent, holy, righteous, judicious, and gracious. We are sinners who are deserving of His eternal wrath. Yet, He chooses to see us as saints and as His children and forever working towards that end for those who are in Jesus Christ *through* Jesus Christ.

Whatever we face in this world is nothing compared to what we deserve and what we will receive if we are apart from Christ.

II. But God [4-7]

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.

A. God's Motive [4]

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,

“*But God*” is the turning point and the phrase that epitomizes the Gospel. There exists a turning point because God is both powerful and caring enough to save us. He saves us in His mercy because He is rich in mercy. His richness in mercy underlines how rich we are in sin. Mercy is the subset of love that highlights the pardoning of our sins and allows us to go to Him again and again. Mercy shows favor to those who deserve the opposite. Mercy is only the beginning.

God is also great in love or full of agape. The Father loves us as if we are Jesus Christ and we can receive His love through Jesus Christ. This is only possible because of our union with Jesus.

God's mercy shows the magnitude of our sins and God's great love shows the magnitude of the worth of Jesus Christ. Which is why God's love for us will never run out.

B. God's Actions [5-6]

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,

1. Resurrection [5]

God “*made us alive*” means that we were spiritually resurrected. God came to us when we were under the just sentence of wrath. Not only are we made alive, but we are made alive to be forever loved by God in Jesus Christ.

2. Ascension [6]

In this passage, the phrase “*raised us up*” talks about ascension and not resurrection. We are spiritually ascended. Although the Father resides in heaven, He also resides in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. We are physically here on earth, but we are also spiritually in heaven with the Father because we are in union with Christ. The intimacy with God allows us to pray

and talk to Him at His right hand. As we pray at His throne, He pours out His grace, mercy, and power.

3. Exaltation [6]

The phrase “*seated us*” refers to position of authority and it is described in Psalm 110:1, 5.

Psalm 110:1, 5 – *The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool... The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath.*

Who is seated at the right hand? Look at Ephesians 1:20.

Ephesians 1:20 – *that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.*

The One seating at the right hand of God is Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 6:12 – *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*

Satan is working in the spiritual realm, but we are above him because we are in Jesus Christ who is above him. Look at Ephesians 1:3.

Ephesians 1:3 – *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places*

Why does God place us there?

Ephesians 3:10 – *so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.*

The church refers to individual believers who make up the church of Jesus Christ. God exalted us so that we can help others who are spiritually dead come alive by pointing them to Jesus Christ.

III. We are [7-10]

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.

A. Our future destiny [7]

7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Verse 7 is talking about our future destiny. Paul is talking about what God has begun and will continue to do. What we are amazed by is nothing compared to what is coming. Paul continues to explain what is coming in Ephesians 3:16.

1. All of our lives

Ephesians 3:16 – that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being

Holy Spirit is already working in us in such a way that He is producing in us riches of God's grace. This will continue for the rest of our lives. We haven't seen anything yet.

2. All generations

Ephesians 3:21 – to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

God will continue to pour His grace through all generations so that His redemptive plan will continue.

3. All intensity and all fullness

Ephesians 3:19-20 – and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power of work within us,

How full is God? Infinite and eternal. God is not just giving us small aspects of Christ-likeness. He is continuously pouring in all fullness and in all intensity.

4. All eternity

Ephesians 3:21 – to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

This is what we're headed towards. We assume we know what Christians are. However, none of us really know what Christians are because the Christians we are, and we see on earth is the smallest glimpse of what Christians are meant to be. God is continually and will continue to work in us to make us more like Him.

B. Our past history [8-9]

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.*

There is God's sovereignty in His giving of grace, but there is also our responsibility of receiving in faith. There is an incredible correlation between God choosing us and us choosing God. It is by grace that we are saved through faith. "Saved" is in passive tense, meaning someone else is the active agent – God is saving us. It's also in perfect tense, meaning it's talking about a present state that has happened in the past – what Christ has done.

Grace is all that God does for us in Jesus Christ and faith is the trusting condition of the resurrected heart that releases God's immeasurable and unending grace. Proof of being saved is a heart full of gratitude.

C. Our present identity/reality [10]

¹⁰ *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

Being "his workmanship" means we are His masterpiece. But we are a working progress. Do not be discouraged by your flaws. Hang around the throne of the Father because we are the poetry of God in motion.

But we are not The Masterpiece. Rather, Jesus is The Masterpiece and that is why verse 10 says "*created in Christ Jesus.*" We are masterpieces created in Christ Jesus and being made to be like him.

Why is Christ perfection? He was never created. He always existed in perfection.

Hebrews 1:3 – *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,*

Jesus Christ is the perfect representation of the Father. He is the master imprint of His nature and His being. We are being made into masterpieces to do good works for the glory of God. We are to display what God is like to the world. So, keep on walking with God so that you can continue to work for God.

Conclusion

Luke 1:38

And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Mary is dedicating every aspect of her life to God. Christ was in her and she was in Christ. In the same way, we need to give ourselves to the Lord.

There is a movie called Jerry Maguire. Tom Cruise (Jerry Maguire) marries a single mother and struggles to know if he really loves her or not. At the end of the movie, his client wins a big amount of money, but he feels empty during the celebration. At that moment, he realized that he loves her. So, he runs to her to let her know with the famous phrase, "*You complete me.*"

When we find Jesus worthy and beautiful to live for, we will also joyfully say, "*Jesus, you complete me.*"