

Ephesians 2:1-10 | David Vinyard

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[0 : 00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church. Knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. Thanks guys, what great words those are.

To be hidden in Christ Jesus. What a privilege that is. Amen. It really is. Well again, Happy Father's Day from me to you. What a great privilege that is.

Once again, to be a father and even a grandfather. So, I hope you have a great day, wonderful time with your family. Today we're going to continue our verse-by-verse study of the book of Ephesians. If you have your Bibles, please turn with me to chapter 2. Last week in verses 15 to 23 in chapter 1, Paul revealed his heartfelt desire and even prayer for the believers in Ephesus.

That they would fully understand. That they would be able to really get a grip on what it means to be saved. Now, obviously Paul knows what that means, right?

[1 : 17] But do they? Do the Ephesians know what that means? Well, in our text this morning, Paul's going to be describing what salvation is.

And friends, I've got to tell you, this is a wonderful text. I mean, it's a great description of what God did for mankind. Many people believe that this is one of the greatest sections in the New Testament.

If you compared the study of the Bible with mining for gold, this passage would represent hitting payday. Please read with me chapter 2.

And we're going to begin in verse 1. And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit, that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

Among them, we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

[2 : 40] But God, being rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved. And raised us up with him. And seated us with him. In heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.

In order that, in the ages to come, he might show the surpassing riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is a gift of God, not as a result of works, that no one should boast.

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

[3 : 40] Heavenly Father, it is such an honor that we have today to look at your word and to see these, what you have done for us. Father, we're so grateful for that.

How can we say thanks enough? Perhaps we will see, Lord. May through your spirit that these words would come alive to us as we ponder them and as we share them with others.

We thank you for this. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, I don't have any jokes this morning, but I do want to tell you this story about this guy named Jeremy Bentham.

He's an English philosopher, and he died in the year 1832, so I'll give you just kind of an idea of the time frame here. Jeremy Bentham is known for two things.

The first thing is that he's considered to be the founder of utilitarianism. Now, we don't use that word very much. It's very simple.

[4 : 42] It's the belief that whatever what you do, if it satisfies the most people, that's what you should do. So you might think of like a utility.

We all have utility bills. What works? What makes us happy? And so he's considered the founder. But here's the other thing he's known for, this outrageous request that he made in his life. There was the university hospital in London that he made this request to, and the first thing you have to know is Jeremy Bentham was very wealthy. And he said to this university hospital, he said, upon my death, I'm going to leave you all my money. But there's one catch. You have to preserve my body the best that you can, and I need to be brought in attendance to all your board meetings. And that's what they did. They did that. They preserved his body the best that they could, you know, using different embalming methods and so on they had in the 1800s. [5 : 57] And he would be brought, you know, through this little shell that they made to every board meeting. And he was encased in this clear box and made to be mobile.

And so every board meeting, the minutes of the meeting, the chairman would say, Mr. Bentham is present, but he will not be voting today. What an outrageous thing to say here. Paul is writing to believers in Ephesus, And I believe that our passage shows that before we placed our faith in Jesus Christ, we were just like Mr. Bentham. We were present, but not voting. But here's the thing. God came to our rescue. When we were spiritually dead, he made us alive in Christ Jesus. Paul begins here by showing who we were before we were Christians. Look with me, verse 1. [7 : 05] He says, You were dead in your trespasses and sins. As I said here, Paul is writing to believers. And there's probably no clearer statement in the New Testament that describes the human condition before a person becomes a Christian.

Paul's referring here to spiritual death, being separated from God. And friends, this applies to everyone. He's not describing a particular group or segment of society. He's not talking about the homeless. He's not talking about beggars or lepers. He's talking about everyone. I mean, look around this morning. Just look around. Here's a room full of sinners. We are. Each person here has committed sins. What are trespasses? Well, those are sins that actually cross a line that has been established. It's where we transgress a standard that's out there. But I want you to notice two things. Both sins and transgressions are plural. And that indicates that this is not a one-time problem for us. [8 : 18] No, we're talking about many, many sins. I mean, that's true, isn't it? But the second thing is that our situation is actually much worse.

Notice here he says that you were dead in your sins and trespasses. Why not say you were dead because of your sins and trespasses? Here's why. Paul's referring to a much deeper problem we have. And that's this, that we have a sin nature. We are not spiritually dead because we sinned sometime in the past. No, we're dead because we were born into sin. It's a condition that we inherited from the father of all of humanity. I'm talking about Adam. This is believed to be the original sin. Every descendant of Adam is spiritually dead. And we sin because we have a fallen, sinful nature. [9 : 22] It's natural for us to sin. Look at the top of your handout here. Notice Psalm 51.5. Maybe you've read this before. Where David says, I was brought forth in iniquity.

And in sin, my mother conceived me. What's he talking about? This is one of seven penitential psalms from David. And it reflects one of the darkest moments in King David's life. We're talking about the affair and sin with Bathsheba. He's not blaming his mother here, nor the process of conception. Rather, he's talking about the sin nature he has. He's saying his actions were in character with what sinners do. What do sinners do? We sin. We habitually sin. You may have heard of the doctrine of total depravity. It says that, in effect, that sin is so pervasive in a person's life that it extends to every dimension of our being. [10 : 34] Our body, our soul, our mind, our will. We're like the walking dead. Maybe you've seen movies of the walking dead.

Walking dead, people have no inclination or ability to please God. And we're totally incapable of saving ourselves. Now, I'm going to say this before panic sets in here. Remember, Paul's making a contrast here. If you are a believer, this was your previous condition. Verse 1, he says, you were.

It's past tense. You were dead. Sins and trespasses, he says, that you formally walked in. To walk is a metaphor for how a person lives his or her life.

But I'll tell you, if you are not a Christian right now, right now you're dead. And friend, I mean no offense to anyone. I'm just a messenger.

[11:40] Those who have not trusted Christ for salvation are alienated from God, who is the fountain of life. He's the source of everything good that we see.

And I know these are hard words. And I also know that this is the complete opposite of what the world tells us about ourselves.

Isn't that right? We're told about ourselves that we're basically good. We just need to believe in ourselves. The doctrine of total depravity does not mean we're totally worthless.

No, people are capable of some wonderful things. You know, for instance, we are still made in God's image.

Fallen beings can still think, can still feel, can still choose. Consider the arts. Or maybe consider architecture.

[12:39] We do that because we were made in God's image. How about humanitarian works? Yeah, we can do those things. But in God's final courtroom, that will not save you.

No. No one measures up. Only Jesus lived a perfect life. Well, how does Paul support his claims here? Well, he describes three ways that the walking dead live their lives.

Follow along with me here. Notice in verse 2. We walked according to the course of this world.

Now, that word world there, that's not referring to the physical world.

That word's used 186 times in the New Testament. And virtually in every instance, it has an evil connotation. It's referring to the ideas and attitudes that oppose God's word.

That oppose him. In John chapter 15, Jesus says this. If the world hates you, you know that it has hated me before it hated you.

[13:50] If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. When the Bible speaks or adds the course of this world, it's actually referring to the value system of this world.

And that's where any and all philosophies try to eliminate God from every aspect of life. I want you to consider with me the pop culture today.

Consider the media. Consider the talk shows, what's talked about. Consider the habits and lifestyles of Hollywood celebrities. Consider man-centered religion.

All of these things can and do influence people away from God. And it's because they're designed to do that very thing.

To draw people away from God. Who came up with that? Well, notice he says, and we continue in verse 2. We walked according to the prince of the power of the air.

[15:02] Paul is now changing gears here because he's referring to a spirit being. A spirit being who's called the ruler of this world in 1 John.

He's called the God of this world. In 2 Corinthians, he says, He's the God of this world who has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they may not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

What does he mean by saying he's the prince of the power of the air? Most likely, Paul's referring to the spiritual, unseen, or non-material world, where Satan commands legions of spirits, whose goal it is to influence people away from God.

Have you heard that expression, there's something in the air? Yeah, there is. Surely there is. Some of the things that you and I hear about, they originate right out of hell.

They do. Human trafficking. How terrible. How about the abortion industry, where now you can sell fetal parts for money?

[16:23] How about transgender programs taught to young children? Who comes up with this stuff? I'll give you one guess.

Satan. Paul's going to speak about this when we get to chapter 6. Notice in verse 2, he goes on, the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

Now, in my Bible, that word spirit is lowercase. And so it may be referring to Satan himself again.

But I'll tell you what, if it's referring to Satan, or if it's referring to just the air in the culture, it certainly refers to an agenda that is against Christ.

And I also believe it's against the nation Israel. The devil wants to establish a worldwide climate of opposition against God's ways.

Just think, friends, when the influence of the Holy Spirit is removed from this earth through the catching up of the believers, just think of this field day that Satan's going to have with the course of this world for a while.

[17 : 44] What's the third thing? A spiritually dead person indulges, verse 3, in the desires of the flesh and of the mind.

In 1 John, he tells us, he says, do not love the world, nor the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the boastful pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world. Friends, these are some influential, powerful, pervasive things that we see in culture.

So much so, notice in verse 3, Paul even includes himself at one time living in the, that we in one time lived in the lust of our flesh, indulging in the desires of the flesh and of the mind.

Therefore, he says in verse 3, we were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. Here, Paul's introducing now God's justice.

[18 : 59] And that's because wrath comes to those whose sins have not been paid for. All those who have transgressed God's ways.

Notice here, Paul even throws in all of humanity. He says, even the rest. That tells us, this is a universal problem.

For the great, for the small, for the short, for the tall, God has a right to condemn us. And this world, I don't know about what you think, but I think our world is ripe for judgment.

Amen? Yeah. Now, I know that not everyone would agree with that, but most people would agree that humanity is in trouble.

And so some people will say our problems are social. We need to figure out how to live in harmony with each other. Others may say our problems are psychological. We need to have a better view of ourselves because we suffer from poor self-esteem.

[20 : 07] Some others may say, no, our problems are environmental. They're external. All of the problems come from fossil fuels, chemical poisonings.

The earth has turned against us. There's another group that I heard about just last week from my son. It's called the World Economic Forum. You heard about them?

These are a group of billionaires. And they're the best and brightest in the world, at least in their own eyes. And they say that our problems are economic.

And so what they're going to do for us is reset the global economic, or the global economy with a one-world government. Where have you heard that before?

Amazing. Lots of problems in this world. But here's the thing. All of these problems are symptoms of the main problem.

[21 : 09] And the main problem is that we are, that man is spiritually dead. We're spiritually separated from God. I tell you, if we left it right there and closed our meeting today, it'd be pretty depressing, wouldn't it?

Aren't you glad you came today? There's good news. We won't leave because God has a remedy. Look at verse 4 with me.

But God. But God. Friends, those have to be two of the sweetest words ever uttered. Because God came to our rescue.

Before we look at how he did this, I want you to look with me as to why God did this. Because it's grounded in God's character. Look with me.

Verse 4. Being rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us. Oh man.

[22 : 12] What descriptive words. God is rich in mercy. His love is the highest kind of love there is. The agape love. Which is why it's great.

So how is this love expressed to sinners? To zombies? To the walking dead? God did.

What did God do? He did these three things here. He rescues the walking dead. Notice here he says, verse 5. Even when we were dead in our transgressions, first, God made us alive with Christ. Hallelujah. The first thing God had to do is to make a dead man alive. Even before we could believe, we had to be awakened.

Maybe you've heard the word quickened. Maybe you've heard the word regenerated. That's what it's talking about here. You know that there's an outer call.

[23 : 16] And that occurs when the gospel is proclaimed. And God's word. And all the ears in the room or in the field, wherever, pick up the sounds.

But it just goes in one ear and out the other. But thank God that there's an inner call. And this is the work of the Holy Spirit, where God enables God's word to penetrate the soul.

Christianity is not about becoming a nice person. It's not about becoming religious. It's about becoming a new person.

Paul would say in his second letter to the Corinthians, therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a what? A new creature. Old things have passed away.

Behold, all things become new. That's the first thing. He makes us alive. Secondly, God raises us up with Christ.

[24 : 20] Friends, you can put your name right in there for that word, us. When Christ was raised from the tomb, yours truly, David Baumgartner, was raised up with Christ.

Even though we're not physically there yet, we are already in the heavenlies by virtue of our union with Jesus Christ.

Paul would write to the church at Colossae in chapter 3. He says, If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Set your mind on things above, not on the things on the earth. What a great passage. And it's because all my blessings, all your blessings, if you're in Christ, are up there.

All the apostles are up there. Others who have gone before you are up there. My home is up there. I talk to the Lord Jesus, who is up there.

[25 : 30] This is where our citizenship is. It's up there. And someday, my body will be up there as well.

Amen. Look what Paul says in the third chapter of Philippians. He says, Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humble state.

Amen. Into conformity with the body of his glory, by the exertion of the power that he has, that he has even to subject all things to himself.

Wow. What power God has. Maybe you've attended a wedding reception, and maybe you saw that there's name tags placed all over on each table.

That name tag says, that name tag says, I'm expecting you. I'm expecting you. I'm expecting you. I'm waiting for you. God made a reservation for our bodies.

[26 : 40] Friends, this just goes to show the security that we have, that is, for our eternity. What's the third thing he did? Notice here in verse 6, it goes on, that God seated us with Christ in the heavenlies.

Being seated with Christ points to the authority that we have right now because of our position in Christ. We are seated right next to Christ who is seated right next to the Father.

Did you know that you have authority right now? Here's just a few examples. You have the authority to be called a child of God.

John chapter 1 verse 12. You have the authority to approach God's throne with confidence. That's out of Hebrews chapter 4. You have authority over the powers of evil.

We will see this in Ephesians chapter 6. You have the power, the authority to share the gospel with people. Now I could look at Matthew 28 there, but look at this verse in your handout, 1 Peter.

[27 : 55] Look at what 1 Peter says in chapter 4. This is to us. Whoever speaks, are you going to speak? Whoever speaks, let him speak as it were, the utterances of God.

Whoever serves, is anyone going to serve this week? Whoever serves, so by the strength which God supplies, so that in all things, God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever.

You see, from Peter's point of view, all of this magnifies God. And Paul agrees.

Notice here in verse 7, he says, Paul says, all of this, in order that in the ages to come, he might show the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Friends, you and I are like trophies for God, such that in the age to come, that everyone can say, look, look at what God did for those people.

[29 : 13] They were such a mess, but God did it. He transformed us. God gets the glory. And just so that we're not confused, look here, Paul reminds his readers, verse 8, for by grace, you have been saved through faith, that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one would boast.

I remember hearing one time about what a crummy place heaven would be if we got up there through our works. Everybody would be boasting about what they did.

No, that's not it. All of this is from God. And many of us were the walking dead at one time, but God came to our rescue by sending his son to bear the penalty of our sins so that by faith we receive the forgiveness that he purchased for us.

Notice that all three of these actions here place us in or with Christ. We're alive with Christ. We were raised with Christ.

We're seated with Christ. Wow. What great promises, what great truths that we have. As I said, this passage is considered one of the greatest passages that Paul wrote because it shows our transformation.

[30 : 44] I have a theory and I think I'm right about this. Please see me later. You look around, there's gospel literature, there's Bibles, there's stuff on the radio.

People can hear the word anywhere and everywhere in this country. What's the problem? I tell you what I think the problem is. People do not see their need for a savior.

It's because for some reason people do not see the depth of their depravity. You can tell people all about Jesus, but unless they see their sin, it means nothing.

And they'll come up with all kinds of things. Yeah, Jesus was a good guy, but it doesn't matter to them. Friends, Jesus died for sinners and we need a savior.

For this Father's Day, dads, consider the blessed standing that you have in Christ. What a privilege we have. Amen? Perhaps you're wondering, how can we, what can we do?

[31 : 58] How can we say thanks enough? Well, Paul has a suggestion here. Verse 10. He says, we are God's workmanship.

That word there is like a masterpiece. That's the word from which we get the word poem. We are God's poem. We are God's work of art.

In fact, the Jerusalem Bible even says, we are God's work of art. Created in Christ Jesus for what? For good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

That word that's used for created there, it applies only to God. And that's because only God can do it. Consider this thought as we go from here.

God has prepared a path for you. And it's a path that will be good for you. And it's a path that brings glory to God.

[33 : 00] What might that path be? What might it be? Some of you are heading down to Dayspring this week. Some of you may be going to head off to help a neighbor somewhere.

Whatever it is, the realization that God has laid it out already before you, that ought to give a different perspective to it. What a great opportunity it is.

It's an opportunity for us to say thanks. Thanks for all you've done. He made us alive. He raised us up. He seated us with Christ.

If I can invite the musicians to come up here. If anybody isn't sure about their relationship with God, please stay and talk to someone.

We should not be like the body of Jeremy Bentham. He's carried about here and there, but he has no life at all. You see, Jeremy Bentham, he will never raise his hand and utter a word.

[34 : 06] He will never ask a question at a board meeting. He can't because he's dead. The same thing with us at one time, but because of God who is rich in mercy, full of grace, abounding in love, he made us alive, gave us a new birth.

What a great God we have. Heavenly Father, we are so grateful for the gospel. Lord, we're grateful that you did it all because none of us could.

In fact, we would fail miserably even if we tried. And we know that there are many who are deceived because they think that they've achieved something. But in your heavenly courtroom, we know there's a different story.

Thank you, Father, and may you be glorified in all that we do and that we would walk in those good works which you prepared beforehand for us. Thank you for your grace.

In Christ's name, God's people said. Sence, you necessary treasure opportunity or in the process or you■