

Once Dead, Now Alive! (Ephesians 2:10 & Deut 9:1-6) 17-Sep-2017

So this morning we're continuing our series on the Apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians. So if you can have your Bibles opened at Ephesians chapter 2 verses 1 to 10. This is a really important passage on how we get to be right with God. You have the usual outline there in the bulletin for you to jot down notes if you wish.

Let's ask God for His help in understanding His Holy Word - this morning

Recap

Just quickly recapping where we've got to so far in the book of Ephesians

[Powerpoint 1-Recap]

The Apostle Paul has told us in chapter 1 - we have spiritual blessings - only available to us because of Jesus. Because of Jesus...

- God chose us to be His - before creation
- Predestined to be adopted into God's family
- Jesus redeems us (buys us back to God) and forgives our sins
- Jesus reveals God's will and purpose
- Eternal inheritance - sealed and guaranteed by God's Holy Spirit

And then Paul prays a prayer of encouragement to keep the church in Ephesus and us here in our little church going - as we face tough times in our lives - praying that we keep hanging on to the hope we have of Heaven

Now in Ephesians chapter 2 - our passage this morning - Paul describes what happens to us when we believe in Jesus

First he describes what we are like without Jesus in our life

And then what we are like with Jesus in our life

Intro

But let me begin with a story

[Powerpoint 2-Blank]

A Christian man was talking to his coal miner friend one day

And the coal miner said "I would give anything to believe that God would forgive my sins, but I cannot believe that He will forgive me if I just ask. It's too cheap - it's too easy!"

How's the Christian man going to answer?

(pause)

We'll come back to the coal miner later...

Without Jesus - We are dead (vv1-3)

In our passage this morning - in verses 1 to 3

The Apostle Paul describes what we are like without Jesus - what we are like before we believe in Jesus

He describes it this way

He says this is what you Christians in Ephesus were like before you trusted Jesus

You were

[Powerpoint 3-Dead]

- **Dead in your transgressions and sins** - now clearly they weren't physically dead otherwise Paul wouldn't be talking to them. But it is like they are dead to God because of their transgressions - transgression means deviating from God's truth - and it's like they are dead to God because of their sins - sin means breaking God's rules in his Holy Word.
- And not only that - they are dead to God - because they are **following the ways of the world** - what's wrong with the ways of the world? Well the ways of the world are at direct odds with God's way - the world promotes relying on one self - especially in the western world - where we can achieve anything, own anything - we can buy as cheap as we can and sell as dear as we can - it's all about looking after number one - our self - that's the world's way. The world also promotes - self-rule - whatever makes us happy is okay - even if it doesn't agree with God's Holy Word
- Which leads to Paul's next point - why people are dead without Jesus - and that is the **influence of the ruler of the kingdom of the air** - who's that? Satan - the Devil - Paul describes his kingdom as being in the air - to show that it's a spiritual battle - which we can physically see - but non-the-less it's real - and Satan tricks people and tempts people into thinking and believing that the world's way is okay - God won't mind - God wants us to be happy - Just like Satan tricked Adam and Eve in the garden!
- And so people's own sinful nature and Satan's deception - leads people to **gratifying their flesh and following their own thoughts and desires** - what

Paul means here is that people without Jesus in their life - are just looking to pursue things they satisfy them physically and emotionally - without any regard for loving God or loving others - things like sexual immorality, idolatry - worshipping ourselves, other people or things - hatred - war - revenge - jealousy - fits of rage - selfish ambition - drunkenness - addictions

- All of this sin and rebellion - Paul says deserves God's wrath (anger)
- And it makes people **spiritually dead**

[Powerpoint 4-Spiritually dead]

People have inherited the sinful nature of the first man - Adam

Paul describes it this way in Romans 5:12

¹² Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned— Paul also says this in Romans 3:23

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

We ALL sin and we ALL fall short of God's perfect standards

And then again in Romans 6:23

²³ For the wages of sin is death...

So the bottom line is - without Jesus we are all spiritually dead!

[Powerpoint 5-Separation]

We are like dead people walking

We not only die physically one day

But by being spiritually dead - the relationship between us and God is broken - and there is a separation - like any broken relationship we might have

With Jesus - We are alive (vv4-9)

Clearly if we're dead - we need to be made alive again

So how are we made alive again?

[Powerpoint 6-Alive]

Paul explains that in verses 4 to 9...

- He says we are made alive again - by God's **great love for us** - He desires the relationship to be fixed - so that we are no longer separated from Him - that great love is described in John 3:16 - **For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life** and in John 3:36 - **Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.**
- And we are made alive again - because of **God's rich mercy** - mercy is the act of forgiving someone when it's within our power to punish them - that's what God did by sending Jesus - our sin deserved punishment - but instead God didn't punish - He loved and forgave us. Here's an example of God's rich mercy - On 10th May 1748 - slave trader John Newton's life was changed forever. Now remember how horrible a business slave trading was. Newton's slave trading ship encountered a terrifying, violent storm. Just as it seemed that the ship would sink, Newton cried aloud, "Lord, have mercy upon us!" And the ship and crew were all saved! That night in his cabin, he began to

reflect upon God's rich mercy. Through faith in Christ's sacrifice for him, John Newton experienced God's amazing grace in a personal way. In time, he left the slave trade and entered Christian ministry. Although he became a preacher of the gospel, he is most remembered for his much-loved hymn "Amazing Grace." It's an amazing testimony of his own experience.

- That's what God's great love and rich mercy is - **GRACE** - Grace is God's undeserved favour on humankind - we don't deserve God's love and mercy but He gives it anyway. Just like He did for the Israelites in our OT passage from Deuteronomy 9 - God allowed the Israelites to enter the Promised Land - but look what He said to them: [Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people \(Deut 9:6\).](#) No - God allowed them to go into the Promised Land - despite their wickedness - All because of Grace - God's undeserved favour on the Israelites
- In the same way we can enter our Promised Land of Heaven - despite our sinful nature - because of God's grace in sending Jesus
- And because of Jesus - Paul says in v6 - It's like we're part of Jesus' resurrection - it's like our sin died with Jesus at His death - and our old self died and was crucified with Jesus - and then as Jesus is raised to life - so **we are raised to live a new life** - united to Jesus - so that when God looks at us - He doesn't see us anymore - but sees Jesus standing in front of us

- Paul goes on to say it's like we are already taking part in Heaven and receiving the benefits of Heaven right now - and we receive all the grace and kindness from Jesus -
- You see because of Jesus - our Citizenship is in Heaven - not on Earth (Phil 3:20). There's been a lot of talk about citizenship in parliament lately - and there seems to be some doubt for some of the politicians as to whether they are Australian citizens or have dual citizenship - But there's no doubt for Christians - their citizenship is in Heaven - it's not dual citizenship with Heaven and Earth. No! Our passports are stamped with Heavenly permanent residency

[Powerpoint 7-Picture of Grace]

- So Paul sums it up in the key verse - verse 8 - we are saved from the punishment of sin - saved from spiritual death and separation from God - by **God's grace** - God's undeserved favour in sending His precious Son Jesus to die for the sin of the world - on a cruel cross to build a bridge back to God
- And so we are saved by grace - **through our faith in Jesus** - but notice in v8 - that not only is grace a free gift from God - but even our faith in Jesus is a gift from God - God does all the work. There's the story of a man who gave his testimony at church of how he had been delivered from a life of sin after many years of running away from God. He gave God all the glory and said he had done nothing to deserve the blessings of being saved by Jesus. A member of the congregation asked the man: "Didn't you do your part, before God did His part". The man who gave his testimony replied: "Oh yes I did!

For more than 30 years I ran away from God as fast as my sins could carry me. That was my part. But God came after me and ran me down. That was his part." The point is God seeks and loves us before we come to put our faith in His Son - so even our faith is a gift

- But Paul hasn't finished he follows up the key verse - verse 8 - that we are saved by Grace through faith - by saying in verse 9 that we are not saved by any works we might do - because if we were saved by our own efforts - then we would boast about it - and then our salvation would be about ourselves - and about how good we are - and not about God. We cannot work our way to forgiveness of our sins - We cannot work our way to Heaven - only Jesus can do that by His death on a cruel cross - and His resurrection.

Response (v10)

So if we were dead in our sins - without Jesus

And now we are alive - with Jesus

[Powerpoint 8a]

There needs to be a response - doesn't there?

- Firstly we need to **accept God's free gift** of grace and faith in Jesus. If someone gives us a gift - we don't offer to pay for it - it's a gift - already paid for - we just accept it - don't we?

[Powerpoint 8b]

- Second - if we are saved from the punishment of sin by Jesus' death as Paul rightly tells us we are - **we should not go on sinning**. Paul puts it this way in

Romans 6:12-14 - ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³ Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

[Powerpoint 8c]

- c. Thirdly Paul says in v10 - we are God's handiwork - the Greek word is *poiema* where we get our word poem from - So because of Jesus we are like **God's masterpiece of poetry**. If you look at say a painting masterpiece or poetry masterpiece - you don't add to it - as it's already a masterpiece. What Paul is saying is that Jesus has made us into a masterpiece. When Jesus died on the cross He said "It is finished" - He has finished the job the Father gave Him to get rid of sin and death - and has made us a masterpiece of God's forgiveness. Therefore we can't add to what Jesus has done - he's already saved us - so we don't need to work to be saved. We simply need to say **thank you Jesus** and be forever grateful

[Powerpoint 8d]

- d. Lastly- v10 - says as God's masterpiece - God has prepared in advance some good works for us to do for Him. These good works are not to save us and get us to Heaven - but they are as a response and thank you for the gift of grace and faith in Jesus. Therefore **we need to be obedient and do the good works**. What might these good works be - well they will be different

for each of us - but here's some examples: being faithful in telling others about God's grace in Jesus; praying for others, helping others practically, visiting our church family, phoning our church family, putting your hand up to serve and support our ministries here at church: growth groups, prayer meeting, communications corner, choir, music, family fun day coming up, invite people along, hospitality, working bee, kitchen, cleaning, and so on. God has prepared these works for us to do in advance. Are we being obedient or are we ignoring his prompting to do these works? Because the apostle James says our faith without the evidence of good works is a dead and empty faith. When you see lightning in the sky - thunder normally follows after it. Likewise - good works should follow our faith.

Conclusion

Remember the story of the coal miner I mentioned at the beginning?

Remember he said: "I would give anything to believe that God would forgive my sins, but I cannot believe that He will forgive me if I just ask Him. It is too cheap."

His Christian friend answered "My dear friend, have you been working today?"

The coalminer said: "Yes, I was down in the mine."

"How did you get out of the pit? Did you pay?"

"Of course not. I just got into the cage and I was pulled to the top."

"Weren't you afraid to get into the cage? Wasn't it too cheap?"

"Oh, no," said the miner, "it was cheap for me, but it cost the company a lot of

money to sink the mine shaft and build the cage."

Suddenly, the truth struck the miner. That even though salvation of his sins - cost him nothing salvation—it had not come cheap to God. It cost God the Father, His innocent son. The miner had never thought of the great price God paid to send His Son so He could rescue fallen humanity. Now he realized that all He had to do was accept God's free gift of grace and faith. And get into the "cage of salvation" through the faith God offered him.

[Powerpoint 9-Conclusion]

Friends we have assurance - a rock solid guarantee - of being made alive in Jesus
We are saved BY Grace - THROUGH faith - all a gift from God - NOT by works -
so we don't boast about ourselves. We are saved BY Grace, THROUGH Faith - FOR
Good works which God has prepared for us to do.

Let's pray...