

Saved by God

Ephesians 2:1-10

Ephesians 2:1-10 (ESV) And you were dead in the trespasses and sins [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. [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

- A. This text is the heart of this great letter to the Ephesians. The words contained here are so lofty that commentary almost seems to detract from their glory.
1. So far as I know this is not my final sermon to Living Hope. I hope to return to you from Africa in 5 weeks. If this was my final sermon I could not improve on the text.
- B. In chapter 1 of Ephesians (remember divisions are not inspired) we surveyed the glorious gospel. Here is a brief review.
1. Ephesians 1:1-2 is the greeting (with doctrine of course).
 2. Ephesians 1:3-14 is this outburst of praise and adoration. Paul thanks God for His work in:
 - Being chosen by God
 - Being adopted by God
 - Being redeemed by God
 - Being sealed by God
 - Being owners of every spiritual blessing in heavenly places (an inheritance that we own but we did not yet possess).
 - This is all the praise of God's glorious grace (these realities are true whether we believe them or not, they are taking place behind the curtains).
 3. But Paul (and therefore God) desires for the Ephesians to know these realities. So in Ephesians 1:15-23 Paul prays that their hearts would be enlightened to know God (Jesus Christ).
- C. Now, in Ephesians 2:1-10, Paul is concerned to explain how the glorious gospel of the grace of Jesus Christ came to those who believe.
1. The title of this sermon is **Saved by God**. I hope to show you the problem, what God did to solve the problem, and why He chose to solve the problem.
- I. **The problem could not possibly be more serious.**
- A. John Stott (p 71) says that Ephesians 2:1-3 is a “devastating description of the human condition apart from God, we need to be clear that it is a description of everybody.”
1. Here we are informed about our condition pre-Christ. This description also applies to anyone

who is outside of Christ now.

2. What Paul says here in three verses he takes the first three chapters of Romans to unpack. It is all there at length but here it is condensed. There are three problems:

B. First, we were dead. How is it we were dead?

1. We were dead in trespasses and sins in which we once walked. These two words give a complete description of human evil.

A 'trespass' (*paraptoma*) is a false step, involving either the crossing of a known boundary or a deviation from the right path. John Stott in *TBST Ephesians*, p 71

A 'sin' (*hamartia*), however, means rather a missing of the mark, a falling short of the standard. John Stott in *TBST Ephesians*, p 71

Together the two words cover the positive and the negative, or active and passive, aspects of human wrongdoing, that is to say, our sins of commission and omission. Before God we are both rebels and failures. John Stott in *TBST Ephesians*, p 71

2. Dead is a strong term. It speaks of a fixed condition. The non-Christian, though living, is dead spiritually. It is our soul that matters most.

Ex: The rich businessman, the famous actor, the great athlete, the homeless, the welfare mom in poverty, outside of Christ ... are dead spiritually.

3. The condition is not sick, or ill, or weakened, or poor, the condition is dead. The best way to define this deadness is to look at the life we have in Christ. It is the total opposite.

Ex: All are dead in trespasses and sins because all sin. We teach no one to covet or lust or steal or lie. The disease has infested our hearts.

C. Second, we were enslaved. How is it we were enslaved (folks think they are free as they do what they want, they are in bondage)? We were enslaved in three ways (our three enemies).

1. We followed the course of the world.

Ex: People tend not to have a mind of their own - jocks, motorheads, geeks, certain ways of dressing, we all tend to act like someone we know.

2. We followed the prince of the power of the air (Satan - on a leash).

Ex: He tempts, he lies (deceives and blinds), he murders, evil may be traced to Satan.

- Jesus spoke to the Jews about their blindness. How hard for them to accept this teaching because they thought they were the people of God by birth.

John 8:44-47 (ESV) "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. [45] But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. [46] Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? [47] Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."

- In following the ways of Satan we followed the passions of our flesh (eat, sleep, sex) and the desires of our mind (pride, selfish ambition, coveting, etc.). Inevitably.

D. Third, we were condemned.

1. We were by nature children of wrath. The problem runs deeper than what we do--the problem is what we are.

The fatal mistake is to think of sin always in terms of acts and of actions rather than in terms of nature, and of disposition. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in *God's Way of Reconciliation*, p 33

2. The wrath of God is without question a difficult doctrine to accept because we do not tend to grasp the seriousness of our rebellion.
 - If God is just there must be wrath.
 - If God is love there must be wrath or there would not be any contrast (love would be meaningless).

II. What God did to address our problem (dead, enslaved, & condemned).

A. Verse 4 begins with two simple, precious words—"But God."

These two words, in and of themselves, in a sense contain the whole of the gospel. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in *God's Way of Reconciliation*, p 59

1. God, being rich in mercy and love, made us alive in Christ. What God did was save us. God made us (dead, enslaved, condemned sinners) alive in Christ!
2. You may be tempted to believe that you did it. We are so self-centered and self-aware that we may believe that we are the reason we are saved. It is not so.

B. By grace you have been saved. You and I did not deserve, merit or earn salvation by anything you or I did. Salvation is completely by grace.

1. We were unable to help ourselves. We were dead, enslaved, and condemned. But God!!
2. What about faith. Faith is a conduit or a medium. Faith does not save.

Faith is not the cause of salvation. *Christ* is the cause of salvation. The grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ is the cause of salvation, and I must never speak in such a way as to represent faith as the cause of my salvation. What is faith then? Faith is the instrument through which it comes to me... We must always be extremely careful, therefore, never to say that it is our believing that saves us. Belief does not save. Faith does not save. Christ saves - Christ and His finished work. Not my belief, not my faith, not my understanding, nothing that I do - 'not of yourselves', 'boasting is excluded', 'by grace, through faith'. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in *God's Way of Reconciliation*, p 136

Ex: We are wise to avoid saying all that you need to do to be saved is What we do is throw ourselves at Christ and plead for mercy. Christ must act.

3. God raised us up and seated us with Christ in heavenly places. We did not pull ourselves up, but God raised us up.

III. Why did God save us?

A. Verse 7: So that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness

towards us in Christ Jesus. It is for his glory (not ours)!

1. You have been saved by grace through faith and this is not your own doing. It is a gift.
 2. Not by works so no man may boast.
 3. We are his workmanship (created in Christ for good works).
- B. Paul will unfold those good works in Ephesians 4-6. We will get to those good works in time but first comes our condition. But God ... saved us ... by grace.

Close

- A. Please read Ephesians 2:1-10 again and again. Memorize it, meditate on it, pray and ask God to help you see and know and feel His glorious grace.
- B. Our problem was severe (dead, enslaved and condemned). But God! I end with two questions:
1. For those of you who are in Christ, how do you perceive yourself?
 - What God wants you to know is that you are seated now in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. You are no longer dead, enslaved or condemned. Think it.

Romans 8:1 (ESV) There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

1 Corinthians 4:7 (ESV) For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

2. For those of you who are not in Christ I appeal to you to consider your position. I would like to make you aware of your need for a Savior.

The height of sin is not to feel any need of the grace of God. There is no greater sin than that. Infinitely worse than committing some sin of the flesh is to feel that you are independent of God, or that Christ need never have died on the cross of Calvary. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in *God's Way of Reconciliation*, p 34

- I pray to God because God acts to open your eyes to see your spiritual condition (dead, enslaved, condemned) and to see the glorious gospel.

1 Corinthians 2:14 (ESV) The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

- How can you be saved? Throw yourself on God's love and mercy because you are helpless. Ask God to do that which you are powerless to do.
3. I pray that you will see your trespasses and sin and see your need for a Savior. When that happens it will be the saving grace of Jesus Christ at work in you.

Ex: When you get tired of pig slop and when you are tired of having no hope, look to Christ for help.

- C. For all of us the gospel is our foundation. When you find that you hate sin and desire holiness you will know that you have been saved by God in His love and grace.