

Text: Ephesians 2:1-10

Title: Saved by grace, Part 1

Truth: God graciously saved us from sin and death.

Date/Location: Sunday PM, April 14, 2024 at FBC

Introduction

Vv.19-23 we looked at Paul's prayer for the believers in Ephesus. One of Paul's prayer requests was that we experience God's power in our lives as we live for Him (v.19). Through an extended set of examples, Paul illustrates the extensiveness of God's power as displayed in God's work in Christ (vv.20-23).

Paul turns his attention his attention to God's merciful and loving intervention in the provision of salvation by His grace. Paul begins by describing the past predicament of the Ephesians before God worked in them. The past is not considered for us to dwell on our past lives, but to serve to magnify the wonder of God's mercy, love, and grace.

Transition: Look at Ephesians 2:1-3 to begin where we find a description of our past condition.

I. We can better appreciate God's saving work by considering the extent of our past condition (vv.1-3).

Paul seems to deliberately delay to explaining God's work of salvation in the life of believers until he makes clear the state out of which God saved us. This is evidenced in that the main subject (v.4, God) and verbs (vv.5-6 "made us alive," "raised us," and "made us sit") don't appear until later in vv.4-6. To clarify the main subject and first of the main verbs in the English, some translations (e.g., KJV, NKJV) choose to include them in v.1 in *italics*. Though not wrong, it does seem to detract from Paul's purposeful intent to leave us in suspense concerning what God did despite our condition.

- A. Paul describes our former condition as being *dead*. The word *dead* always signifies some kind of separation. Physical death is the separation of the spirit/soul from the body. Spiritual death is alienation or separation from God. Such a person has no fellowship with God no spiritual life (Eph 4:17-18). Paul's

description fits the description of every human being from birth (Ps 51:5). That is, every person is born in this condition.

We use the theological term *original sin* to refer to that sinful state and condition in which man is born. Original sin is composed of two aspects:

- 1) Imputed Guilt: All men bear the guilt of Adam's representative sin: **Man has sin.**
- 2) Inherited Corruption (sin nature): All men are born with a nature that is *non posse non peccare*. **Man is a sinner and commits sins.**

All are dead in the realm of "trespasses and sins" Paul explains (cf. Col 2:13) The Scriptures use various terms to describe sin. Transgressions has an active sense, carrying the idea of "crossing a boundary" (Joshua 23:16; Mt 15:3). But no real distinction is being made by Paul. The picture Paul is painting is of people though physically alive, are spiritually dead and in peril of God's just punishment (Rom 6:23; Eph 2:3). Man has sin (imputed guilt), and man is a sinner who commits sin (inherited sin nature).

This puts all people in a perilous condition because a dead person cannot bring life to themselves. It's true in the spiritual realm as much as the physical. Some think that they have the will to choose to believe apart from aid from God, but the Scriptures are clear that "There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God" (Ps 53:1-3; cf. Ecc 7:20). That is why we need the gracious intervention of God that can bring life to the spiritually dead.

Transition: Now that Paul has laid the foundation for our past spiritual condition, he goes on to delineate this condition in the following ways:

- i. In our past spiritual condition, we walked according to the course of the world (v.2). Recall back to when you were an unbeliever. The way you conducted yourself, to one extent or another, was influenced by the worldly values, attitudes, and habits of society. You followed the world like everyone else. We might call it "the spirit of the times." Paul described it as "this

present evil age” in Galatians 1:4. Materialism, humanism, and sexual perversion are only some of the characteristics of the course of this world. You probably didn’t recognize this at the time, but you were in bondage to this way of life.

- ii. While your own sin nature is what caused you behave in that manner, Paul describes the agent behind the scenes that empowers (or causes to persist) this present evil age. Paul calls him “the prince of the power of the air” and the “spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (v.2b). Both “prince” and “spirit” refer to Satan. He is the “ruler of the demons” (Matt 9:34; 12:23; Mk 3:22; Lk 11:15) and the “prince of this world” (Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and the “god of this age” (2 Cor 4:4) Scriptures tell us. It’s not that Satan or demons indwell all unbelievers, but all unbelievers either knowingly or unknowingly are subject to him because they share his nature of sinfulness and exist in the same sphere of rebellion against God (1 Jn 3:8). 1 John 5:19 explains that “the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.” Unbelievers naturally follow his leading and do his bidding when they indulge in their fleshly desires and practice wickedness. He is, by nature, the Father of all unbelievers (Jn 8:44; 1 Jn 3:10).
- iii. He is the “spirit” who now works in the sons of disobedience. Sons of disobedience is a reference to unbelievers. They are given this description because their life is characterized by disobedience. Disobedience to God and to His commands. Satan is actively working to keep unbelievers from obeying God’s command to repent and believe in Christ. This also demonstrates that unbelief is not only a lack of trust, but a outward defiance or rejection of God. This also places emphasis on human culpability. Satan may have control over the world and have an influence on the unbeliever, but the unbeliever is not resisting it either. He or she enjoys sin. It is pleasurable to them. That is what Paul is going to point out next in v.3.
- iv. In our past condition, we indulged in our fleshly desires like the rest of the world. We were no different than the unbeliever next door. You were an unbeliever, you were equally under the way of Satan. We were sons of disobedience! In that state, we conducted ourselves *in the lusts of our flesh*. Walking (v.1) and

conducting (v.3) carry a similar idea. The flesh is the sinful tendency in man, which permeates his mind, heart, will, even his whole being. Our conduct was characterized by fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. The pursuit of serving our various passions is how we spent our days as an unbeliever.

B. This condition, us made us by nature objects of God's wrath (v.3b) just like every other human being. Just because God predestined us for salvation does not mitigate the fact that we at one time were under the wrath of God. There is only one class of unbelievers, those deserving of God's wrath. Until God mercifully saved you this was you! This amplifies God's mercy and love as he chose to intervene while we yet sinners!

Conclusion

As Paul describes our past condition, it should cause us to appreciate God's gracious intervention, the topic of vv.4-10. For those of you who have not received God's gracious gift, I encourage you today to consider your present condition.

For those of us who have been saved by God, we can better appreciate the God's saving work by considering the extent of our past condition.

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