

From Death to Life Part 4 – Ephesians 2:10 How not to be an Angry American

In our study of Ephesians we find ourselves in verse 10 of chapter 2. Let's take a look.

Ephesians 2:10, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

How many of you want to know what good works God prepared beforehand so you can walk in them? I think we all do. This is the search of many Christians but I believe the beginning of understanding of the good works does not come as most people expect.

One of the first good works God has for us is to end the battle that exists inside of us, at least to a degree. The best work we can experience is the good work of becoming who God has re-created us to be.

I spoke last week about how some of the behaviors of the past can have an effect on our present relationship with God. Christians living out lusts of the flesh experience a breakdown of relationship with God and that heaps a load of guilt on them. Guilt which Satan can use to keep them oppressed, depressed and non-functioning in the kingdom of God.

As I was studying Ephesians as a whole this past week, trying to get direction on how God would teach us, I found a theme throughout this letter Paul wrote to the Christians in Ephesus.

Remember, that as we quickly go through these passages, the Ephesians are individuals who have accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior and Paul is encouraging in their walk with Christ.

I wanted to look at these passages because they come up over and over in different ways but the message is the same and I didn't think we needed to cover them over and over again as we come to them.

We start by remembering Paul telling us in Ephesians 2:1-3 who they used to be. How they formerly walked in and indulged in the lusts of the flesh. Paul's message throughout this book stays the same but then it changes a bit.

Ephesians 4:1, "Walk in a manner worthy of your calling..."

Ephesians 4:14, "No longer be a child (in the faith)..."

Ephesians 4:15, "grow up in Christ..."

Ephesians 4:17, "Walk no longer in the futility of your mind..."

Ephesians 4:22, "Lay aside the old self..."

Ephesians 4:23, "be renewed in the Spirit of your mind..."

Ephesians 4:24, "put on the new self..."

Ephesians 5:1, "be imitators of God..."

Ephesians 5:8, "Walk as children of the Light..."

Ephesians 5:11, "Do not participate in the deeds of darkness..."

Ephesians 5:15, "Be careful how you walk..."

Ephesians 5:15, "walk as wise men..."

Ephesians 6:10-12, "be strong in the Lord"

Over and over again Paul is encouraging the Christians in Ephesus in the way they are to walk in their new found relationship with Christ and God.

Why was it so important for Paul to do this?

Look at two more passages.

Ephesians 5:15-16, "Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men (people) but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil."

Paul was encouraging them because he knew the evilness of the days they were living in. I think we can see how evil the days we live in as well.

One of the passages I have shared over the last couple of weeks is **Ephesians 6:10-12, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of the Lord so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”**

We are engaged in a battle and that battle is for our own souls and the souls of those around us. And if we are not wise, if we are not walking, living and being renewed in our souls on a regular basis, we can become washed out, ineffective and not accomplishing the good works God has prepared for us in the days during our stay on earth.

How do we protect ourselves from this?

I entitled this sermon – How not to be an angry American because that is what America has become hasn't it? Every where you look someone is angry about something. The upcoming election is being called the angry election because supporters on both sides are really mad and lashing out in all different kinds of ways. I can't imagine what it is going to be like in two years leading up to the presidential election.

But it's not only in politics that we are seeing childlike anger being acted out but in every aspect of life. Vegetarians are angry at meat eaters and meat eaters are angry at vegetarians and vegans are mad at everybody.

The truth is that people have come to a place that if someone is not like them, if they don't think like them, act like them, look like them or even dress like them, they become outraged and they express it in a number of unhealthy and violent ways.

Anger has seeped into our society and it is effecting our way of life.

But what is behind all of this anger. Well the easy answer is the lack of Christ in the world and in people's lives. But I think it is also the lack of truth, which of course we know to be Christ because He is the way, the truth and the life isn't He?

Romans 1:25, "For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator..."

Jesus was speaking with the religious leaders of His day when He said the following.

John 8:44, "You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

Satan has blinded the mind of the non-believers. He has fed them a lie about how things are and how things are supposed to be and they received it, believed it and are now are living it out. They are not Satan worshippers per sea but individuals who have bought into the lie Satan has facilitated.

But the problem with following a lie, it has no fulfillment and those who are following a lie will defend it to the death of themselves and others.

I had a pastor friend who wrote an article recently on this. He used the Civil War as an example. When the Confederate Army was loosing it was suggested to arm the Negro for fighting. But the Secretary of War for the Confederate army said, "I think it is preposterous to even suggest that the Negro would make good soldiers. They can do menial work in support of the army but fighting is a white man's task."

The day you make soldiers of them is the beginning of the end of the revolution. If slaves make good soldiers, then our whole theory of slavery is wrong.”

To acknowledge that African-Americans were capable of being good soldiers, as good as the white soldiers would have been proof that the entire culture and economy of the South was built upon a lie.

While many in the south knew that it was a lie, they also knew their livelihood, the standard of living they wanted was at stake, so they defended it vehemently. They were willing to fight to the death and to send their sons and daughters to die.

We’ve seen this happen throughout history most notably Nazi Germany. Most Germans knew in their heart what they were doing was wrong but they bought into the lie that the oppression as a nation they were experiencing would be lifted if they followed Hitler and the lies he was promoting.

When someone has fallen for a lie, they defend it, and in their defense they become unreasonable, angry and vehement. They feel they need to do everything in their power to defend their ideas. They use hate, gossip, lies and even violence because the lie they have bought into does not have the ability to stand on its own.

True Christianity does not need such a hateful and violent defense because as truth, it will and has stood on its own. We can have faith that the Word of God stands perfectly, just as God can defend Himself quite ably.

As we walk in the truth, our faith in the truth becomes more unshakeable. Our confidence in the truth allows us to communicate that truth with confidence and there is no need to use hateful, controlling and angry methods.

I share all this to remind us that the first thing I believe we are to enter into when it comes to the good works mentioned in Ephesians 2:10 is the good work, the ongoing work we do by submerging ourselves in the truth.

We have come to the place where we know our sins are forgiven. We know we are to lay aside the past life, and now we get to move on with God.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5, “For we walk in the flesh we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”

1. Taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ is the first good work God has prepared for us to walk in.

How do we do this?

Submerge yourself in the truth by

a. Read the truth

2 Timothy 3:16, “All scripture is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness so the person of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

How do we enter into good works God has prepared for us to do? Read the good word.

Remember one of the first sermons I preached here? Jesus spent a lot of time telling His disciples to remember what He said and as His disciples of today, you cannot remember what you have not read.

So we begin moving into the good works God has for us by reading the truth.

b. Spend time coming to understand the truth

There are different ways you can do this. Taking a portion of scripture like the Psalms and journaling about it. **Read the truth, re-read it, write about it, ponder it, ask God about it, spend time with it, go to a Bible study. Spiritual revelation and transformation doesn't just happen. It happens when we intentionally, purposefully spend time with God's Word.**

c. Live the truth by faith

Hebrews 11:1, "Now faith is the assurance of things hope for, the conviction of things not seen."

It is not always easy to live out our relationship with God. A lot of times He asks us to have faith in His processes which means we pray and we wait.

We don't always know the answer or the timing of what is going to happen in the future, when our pain and suffering will end or when He is going to provide or even when transformation is going to happen in our lives and the tough sin is going to go away. But we know God is in control and if we will just be faithful and wait until He shows up, the answer He provides is way beyond what we could have accomplished on our own.

Lastly,

d. Be it

After a time of reading the truth, spending time with the truth, living the truth out in our lives by faith, we become the truth. We are the light, you are the light in the Lord.

I like how Paul puts it.

Ephesians 5:8, "...but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth...)

YOU ARE THE LIGHT IN THE LORD!

But now you are Light in the Lord. Church, you are the light, you are the truth, and you are the way because you are in the Lord and the Lord is in you.

As we walk in the truth we are protected from the lies and deceptions of Satan. Not only this but we begin to see the fruit of being the Light in the Lord. The fruit that is goodness, righteousness and truth and that is what the world needs.

Let us all walk in the good works God has prepared for us by reading the truth, understanding the truth, living the truth and being the truth.

Amen

Let us pray