

From Death to Walking on Water – Part 12

Ephesians 2:1-10

This morning I felt led to resume our look at the letter from Paul to the Ephesian church. As we resume we will be looking at the first part of Ephesians 2.

If you remember the teaching that led into this study it was to answer the question of how Peter was able to walk on water. What gave Him the faith to step out of the boat and dramatically overcome his fears and his perceived limitations to the point where he overcame them and was able to have a miracle occur through his faith in Jesus.

When Peter walked on water it wasn't by his own power was it? There was no way he could, in his own strength, ability or anything he possessed, overcome nature and his own fears to walk on water. He needed something, someone, a Savior that would elevate him above his own limitations. Something or someone that could empower him where He could not go himself.

This is the same place we find ourselves in life at times isn't? In fact the reality is, we probably find ourselves here more times than not. We find ourselves in impossible situations in life, in marriage, in family and in our jobs and unless we have something, someone who can give us strength and direction we find ourselves drowning in the sea of doubt and discouragement.

This is the starting point for us in our relationship with Jesus as well. Seeing your own limitations concerning your relationships and life in general. You know your own abilities, your own tendencies, your own brokenness and your own weaknesses and you realize that you need something, someone to elevate you, raise you up, empower you to walk on water. To do the miraculous in your life.

To grab where we are heading with this series and this sermon I wanted to first draw your attention to verse 4 of chapter 2. **Ephesians 2:4a, “But God...”**

But God intervened in our lives, but God had grace and mercy, but God forgave, saved, restored, elevated and empowered us, you. But God...it is a big statement that you see throughout the Bible. Something negative was going on but God stepped in and intervened and the end result was fantastic, miraculous. But God...

But here's the thing. Yes, this is where we get to be, in a place where God intervenes in our lives, but for us to fully understand, appreciate and enter into the fullness of God's grace, mercy and love we must recognize what we were plucked from and that takes us back to verses 1-3, the verses before verse 4, before God intervened into our lives.

Look with me at **Ephesians 2:1, “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins...”**

The bible says that we,

1. As a race, we were dead in our sins.

But the backdrop of that is that God originally created us good and that's what makes this statement so shocking.

Genesis 1 tells us that we are created in God's image. That means that we are capable of extraordinary acts of goodness, kindness and love. Michal and I have a friend whose wife was mentally ill in the last years of her life and but our friend was faithful, selfless and sacrificial in taking care of her at home.

We see acts of kindness here in this church when a call is put out to support the Ronald McDonald house or buying books for kids and the many other acts of kindness and love.

So again, that is what makes Paul's statement here so offensive, so shocking. And you were dead in your trespasses and sins.

Now, as we go through this sermon this morning, remember, this is not who you are now but who you used to be. The passage says and you were...not you are.

Let's look at these first two words. And you.

2. You were dead in trespasses and sin. Not other people, but you...you were dead.

You see, we all recognize that some people are bad, but we always think it is somebody out there who has the problem. We put locks on our houses to keep the bad people out, and then locks on top of locks. Then we get a dog, get a security system and just in case all that doesn't work, we get a gun.

We all tend to look at people outside of ourselves and our lives as the bad people. Other nations, other religions, other people. They are the bad ones. We think it is the liberals, Hollywood, CNN, they are the problem. They are the ones who are undercutting family values. Or we think it was the people who lived a long time ago. They weren't as smart, sophisticated or educated as we are today.

In some ways we have come a long way from where we were in the past. Civil rights for people of color, women and children. We have progressed.

But wouldn't you say that today, we are more violent than ever before. Our protests are getting louder, more vulgar and violent. People are greedier and crave power over others more than ever. We've got more sexual depravity and family dysfunction than ever before.

The Bible teaches that as a race, we're not getting better, if anything we are getting worse. I don't believe in evolution but I think I believe in devolution. We didn't come from monkeys but after watching the Senate Judiciary Committee last week it looks like we are heading there.

The point is, there are no categories in the Bible. There is not primitive and advanced, educated or backwards or even bad people and good people. There is just bad people and Jesus.

All the problems, all the dysfunction is not out there somewhere, it is right here, in the mirror because you were dead. Dead in your trespasses and sins.

The second key word in this passage, the second word that challenges how culture, how we look at sin is the word Paul uses here is dead. This challenges the way we look at sin. Most people think sin is something we do rather than who we are. Most of us think of sin as bad things people do like adultery, stealing, lying or pornography. But the word dead shows us that

3. Sin is not an action, it is a condition of our heart.

Its not that we do bad things and that makes us bad, we do bad things because we're bad. Its not that people steal and cheat and that makes them greedy. People steal and cheat because they are by nature greedy.

We are not sinners because we sin, we sin because we are sinners.

I see this in my grankids, especially the cutest little girl. No one taught her to be mean and selfish, she was born mean and selfish. She didn't learn that behavior because her parents were mean and selfish and that is the example she saw. It didn't come from them, it came from her.

When Kaylee was staying with us along with two other grandchildren, we saw this behavior and Michal confronted her about it. Little Kaylee said she didn't know why she acted that way she just did.

You see this in your kids and grandkids don't you? It is not a learned behavior. They run around and cry mine, mine, mine. And we yell, don't hit your brother or your sister.

The problem is we are born spiritually dead. I don't know if you have ever thought about this but what Paul is saying is that, in the sin nature you were born into, you are dead and decaying.

I heard a illustration of this once. You notice a Tupperware bowl in the back of your refrigerator. You pull it out and it is a piece of steak you put there weeks ago. You open it and the smell almost knocks you over. Have you had that happen? When this happens you don't reach for the ketchup, you don't reach for some pepper or other spices you can use to cover up the rot so you can eat it do you?

No, it's dead and rotting meat. It is the same place Christ found us. We were dead, in our nature. Spiritually dead and rotting. We may have learned to cover up some areas of stench in our lives with different kinds of spices but it doesn't change the fact that we were dead, dead in our trespasses and sins.

Pause...

I sure hope you will be back for next week's sermon because this one is going to get worse before it gets better but when it gets better, it really, really gets better. But for now we need to see what Paul says in verses 2-3.

He goes on to describe what spiritual death looks like in verse 2-3.

Let's read verse 1-3. **Ephesians 2:1-3, "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 desire of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."**

Paul breaks this down into three phrases that basically mean the same thing.

1. Spiritual death is:
 - a. walking (living) according to the course of this world
 - b. following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience
 - c. living in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desire of the flesh and of the mind

Remember as we go through these that this is talking about the former you before God found you and brought you into His kingdom.

The first one says that we, you and I and all of humanity, before we accepted Christ, we walked according to the course of the world. What does that mean, to walk according to the course of the world.

- a. What is the course of the world?

1500 years ago St Augustine, a biblical scholar wrote that our world marches to the drumbeat of the three things: money, lust of the flesh and power. We see this in the world today don't we. Much of the world is obsessed with getting more and more money. We also see the lust of the flesh in many forms from sex to fulfilling our appetites for food,

material goods, entertainment, alcohol, marijuana and many other things.

And power. Who doesn't want power. We want to be the smartest, best looking, most religious because that gives us power over others.

- b. Following the prince of the power of the air (Satan), the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience

If I were to say someone is following Satan you would probably picture a person who is extreme looking and who is out in the woods killing chickens or something. No, what this says is that it is Satan is the one who is behind the attractiveness of making money, sex and power appear attractive.

And we can blame Satan for all of it. Satan never forces us to do anything, he simply baits the hooks and let's us bite it. He only tempts us with things that our sin nature already loves.

- c. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desire of the flesh and of the mind

Again, this is just another way of saying the same thing. Our lives were controlled by the desires of our body and our mind rather than the will of God.

Our body says its okay to spend a lot of money on me and we obey it. Our body says live a life of luxury without any thought of giving to the poor and needy and we do it. My will is more important than the will of God in my life.

All these things, the lust of the flesh, following the prince of the power of the air, and doing everything we see the world around us doing is where we found ourselves before we found Christ...before Christ found us.

But it doesn't quite end there. Verse three ends with this statement.

5. "...and (we) were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."

Children of wrath. Children who deserved only God's wrath. Why? Because who we formerly were had nothing to do with God. We served only ourselves, only our own fleshly impulses. We sat on our own throne and the Creator of the universe, our Creator had no place in our lives.

We exploited every resource around us, resources created by God including our own lives to serve ourselves. We served ourselves not God therefore we deserve the wrath of God. Some of you don't like to hear this type of negative message and I get it but here's the deal.

It is the truth and only by knowing the truth can you ever be totally set free. You, before God found you, you were deserving of God's wrath, punished by eternity in hell.

This is where God found you and brought you out of. This is where we find the glorious statement we will look more into next week.

Look with me at verses Ephesians 2:4-7, "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 (for by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus."

But God...let the force of those two words hit you...but God...**PAUSE**

This sums up all of the bible doesn't it? But God, being rich in mercy...

I think the reason some Christians have not fully surrendered their lives and entered into a life of worship is because they have no concept of how much mercy God has shown them. We were all objects of God's wrath, lost in our sin but God loved us anyway. He absorbed all of the horrors of our sin through His love.

Pause...

Let me encourage you to give thought and prayer to these words found in Ephesians 2.

Next week we will dive into where God has taken us. From death to walking on water. Let's pray.