

Sermon Ephesians 2:1-10

Made Alive in Christ

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh[a] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

The unit of thought at a minimum is the selection, but maybe as much as chapters 1 through 3.

Subject: How have we been saved? From what have we been saved? To what have we been saved?

Compliment: We have been saved by grace through faith with resurrection power from sin and to reconciliation/relationship with God and good works.

Homiletical Idea:

God, because of his love and grace, saved us from sin and death to life, relationship, and good works.

Introduction

Any passage that starts with, as for you, makes me immediately wonder who the author is talking to. Are they talking to me? Does it apply to me? Ephesians is a letter Paul wrote to the Christians in the city of Ephesus; a largely Gentile population. I think, however, it applies to all Christians in

all contexts. For obvious reasons it does not apply to those who have not yet been saved. Any passage that starts with, as for you, makes me immediately also wonder what was just said in the previous section. As Jonathan preached through in the last couple weeks, Paul spends the first part of Ephesians chapter 1 telling the Gentile believers in Ephesus of the incredible blessings they have in Christ; how they have been chosen and sealed with the Holy Spirit. In the second half of the chapter, Paul prays that they will fully understand all of the spiritual blessings they have in Christ and that they will know God, know the hope they have, know his riches, and know his power. The same power, Paul says, that raised Christ from the dead. And this is where we pick up our passage for today.

In reading and studying the passage, three questions jumped out to me that Paul seems to be answering: (1) from what have we been saved? (2) how have we been saved? (3) to what have we been saved? By the way, I feel that last question is often overlooked. The other, perhaps more random, thing that jumped out to me was that incomparable (or incomparably) was used in our passage and the immediately preceding passage. I didn't remember seeing that word a lot in Scripture, and sure enough, those are the only two times it appears in the NIV. I think we can add one thing to remember here is that Paul is certain our God is like no other.

1. From what have we been saved?

- a. Verses 1 through 3: As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

Paul, speaking to fellow Christians, says all of us were like this. This IS the pre-Christ state of man. It is hard for us sometimes to really believe this. Were we really that bad? Would be really be that bad without Christ? How much more difficult is this for someone to grasp if they don't know Christ?

- b. Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned Romans 8:7-8 The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.
- c. We need to understand that while this is true, this message, really throughout the New Testament, is a message to believers and generally impossible for the mind governed by the flesh to agree with. This is truer and truer in our culture today. You may have heard of the poem, The Horseman and the Lake of Constance by Gustav Schwab. It is old English and clunky due to translation from the original language, so I will not read it, but it tells of a horseman riding in the winter snow to a destination on the other side of Lake Constance. He rode for days and it talks of riding across a great beautiful and open plain. Thinking he is a day or so from the lake, he stops and asks a woman how far it is to the lake, and she informs him he just rode across the frozen lake. Amazed and terrified he falls from his horse realizing the danger he had unwittingly put himself and his horse in by thundering across a lake that is not generally thought safe to cross. In the devotion our family read yesterday, Skye Jethani noted that, *This is the human situation when the sky opens and the earth is bright, when we may hear: By grace you have been saved! In such a moment we are like that terrified rider.... We look back, do we not, asking ourselves: Where have I been? Over an abyss, in mortal danger?... I was doomed and miraculously escaped and now I am safe!* Sometimes we do not recognize the peril of our sin until the danger has already passed. It is only after we embrace the beauty of Jesus and his cross that we discover the full magnitude of what he has delivered us from. It is when we come to an understanding of our salvation that we are given the capacity to understand our sin, and not necessarily the other way around.
- d. We were dead in our transgressions and sins. We were captivated by the flesh and the desires of the world.

2. How have we been saved?

- a. Verses 4 through 9: But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

This is one of the famous “but God” turning points in Scripture. We did this, or we deserved this, but God... Paul makes very clear in this passage that salvation is from God. It is a gift, it is not from us, no one can boast. This often is the focus of the passage, and that is not wrong, but I want to look at some more subtle points.

- i. Power: Looking back into the preceding passage, Paul’s prayer is that we would know, that we would understand, “his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength 20 he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms” and this parallels what we see in verses 5 and 6 of our passage. It took the same power make us alive in Christ as it did to raise Christ. Think about that. How amazing is that. We too often think about being raised one day from physical death. Do we stop to give thanks for being raised from our spiritual death into spiritual life?
 - ii. God’s Character: great love, mercy, grace, grace, kindness, grace. Grace three times and described as incomparable. How were we saved? Because we have a powerful God who is also full of love, mercy, kindness, and grace.
- b. How many people followed the story this past summer of the Thai soccer team trapped in a cave 2.5 miles deep and

flooded? How many people have no idea what I am talking about? The team and their coach had traveled deep into this cave, and while they were in there rain caused the waters to rise trapping them 2.5 miles deep in the cave; they were as good as dead. The way out was narrow and cramped, filled with murky water, dark, full of obstacles, and the boys didn't know how to swim even if they could. Rescue teams brought air, food, water and light to those trapped while they figured out how to get them out. They were trapped for more than 2 weeks. The rescuers needed power, kindness, love, grace, and mercy. In fact one navy seal died bringing in oxygen to those trapped, giving his life for the life of the 12 boys and the coach. The team didn't realize they were heading down a dangerous path until way too late. They couldn't save themselves. All they could do is have faith in their saviors and surrender to them, trusting them with their lives. In fact, the boys were sedated for the 6 to 8 hour trip out. It was an amazing story. I can tell you two things; none of the boys came out boasting about how great their faith was in the person that saved them, how their faith made all the difference, rather they boasted about their savior. And second, what God has done for us took more sacrifice, more power, more kindness, more love, more mercy, more grace; incomparable you could say.

- c. n/a
 - d. How have we been saved? By a powerful, loving, kind, merciful, and gracious God who while we were still sinners sent his Jesus to die for us. A great thought from David Bisgrove is this: Sin is us putting ourselves in God's place, where he deserves to be; salvation is God putting himself in our place, where we deserve to be.
3. To what have we been saved?
- a. Verse 10: For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. The first, and perhaps more obvious answer as to what we have been saved is good works. If you were here and remember back to our series going through the book of

Genesis, all the way back to God's covenant with Abraham, his plan was that the world would be blessed through us, his people.

Now, the second thing this passage illustrates we are saved to is relationship with God. Verses 4 through 6 say "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus" Did you see three times the word with? With Christ, with Christ, with him. Saying I am not a Greek scholar is an understatement, so I always share these things with full disclosure that it is according to what I have read and found in my research. In Greek there are two words for our one English word with. There is the standard with such as would you like fries with that. And, there is the intimate with such as I long to be with my wife tonight. In all three cases here, the with is the intimate version. And, from what I understand, that intimate with is only used one other time in the New Testament (not that intimacy is not conveyed in other ways). The point, is that we have been raised with a purpose and in addition to walking in good works, we are saved to be alive with Christ, raised with Christ, and seated with him in Heaven. The first one is now and forever. We are alive with Christ. The second two, like the Kingdom of God, have a now and not yet aspect. We have been raised to life spiritually, and we will be raised physically. Our heart belongs in Heaven with Christ now, and in the future we will dwell with him there.

- b. 1 Peter 3:18 says, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit."

Colossians 1:21-22 "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of [g] your evil behavior. 22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation"

- c. n/a

d. We have been saved to walk in good works and in relationship with God.

God, because of his love and grace, saved us from sin and death to life, relationship, and good works.

Conclusion:

God, because of his love and grace, saved us from sin and death to life, relationship, and good works. From what are we saved? Sin and death. We didn't even realize what danger we were in. How were we saved? By God's great power, love, kindness, mercy, and grace. It is a gift, and we cannot boast even if we are blessed to have great faith in our savior. To what are we saved? To walk in good works and in an intimate personal relationship with Jesus Christ. If you are sitting here tonight and don't yet have a personal relationship with Jesus and want this gift, please talk with me or someone else. Please pray with me.

Prayer, and don't forget the offering.

Benediction: Ephesians 3:20-21 "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."