

# Sharing The Good News

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Preacher: Paudge Mulvihill

[ 0 : 00 ] I haven't got a page number if you're using a red covered Bible, Ephesians chapter 2 and verses 1 to 10. And that's on page 1174.

Ephesians 2 verses 1 to 10. So I'm going to read and then pray and then ask Paul to come and speak.

Page 1174, Ephesians 2, 1 to 10. As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 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.

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts.

Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. 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.

[ 1 : 30 ] 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, 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.

For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves. It is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast.

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Let's pray.

Our Father God, we thank you for the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we thank you for the grace that comes to us through your word, which helps us to understand who Jesus is. And we pray that your spirit, your presence, would be at work amongst us, as we hear your word.

[ 2 : 47 ] We pray that it would cause us to love you more. It would cause us to change the things in our lives so that we are aligned to your ways and your will.

And we pray that it would motivate us to live lives of worship, serving you where we go. We thank you for Paul.

We thank you for his ministry and work in Mayo. We pray your blessing upon the churches there, even today as they meet.

We pray that you would cause that good news to take effect in people's lives and to bring people to faith. And we pray that now through him you may encourage us.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Porch, thanks very much. Thank you. Thank you. Well, thanks very much, Johnny, and thanks very much for having us.

[ 3 : 53 ] Listen, this morning what I want to do is first of all start with a story from the Old Testament. Some of you will be very familiar with it and you might even know where I'm going with it.

But the background of the story is that the city of Samaria was surrounded, besieged, by the Syrians. No one was in, nobody went out.

And as a result, there was eventually a severe famine in that city. So severe was the famine that some people had even resorted to cannibalism.

And two women actually contracted that they would boil their children and eat them. That's how severe the famine had become.

In chapter 7 opens with Elisha, the prophet, saying that everything was going to dramatically change the following day. And that there would be an abundant provision of food and of drink and, you know, there would be freedom.

[ 4 : 54 ] In other words, that the Syrians would be gone. Well, verse 4 introduces us to the characters that we're going to concentrate our thinking on this morning.

Four leprous men were sitting outside the city walls as it were in a kind of a no man's land. And they were sitting against the wall in the hope that food would be thrown over the wall to them.

But of course, now because of the famine, that hope was gone and there was going to be no scraps thrown across the wall to them. So they were in dire straits. And then a desperate logic entered into their thinking.

If you like a logic of desperation, I'll just read for you the end of verse 3 and then verse 4. Why are we sitting here until we die?

One of them said. If we say that we will enter the city, the famine is in the city and we shall die. If we sit here, we will die also.

[ 6 : 00 ] Now therefore, come, let us surrender to the army of the Syrians. If they keep us alive, we shall live. If they kill us, we shall only die. So you can see the kind of desperation.

I don't know whether you know much about famine. We all here probably have never really experienced hunger at that level. Now these men were probably at this stage coming out in sores other than the leprosy that they were suffering from.

Their mouths would have been dry. Their tongues would have been swelling. They would have been in a pretty, pretty bad state. So they headed off to the besiegers camp.

The camp of the Syrians. But they weren't prepared for what they were going to see. And they were absolutely astonished with the surprise that came their way.

See, the Lord, to fulfil Elisha's prophecy, the Lord had caused the Syrians to hear the noise of a great army. And they kind of supposed that the Israelites had hired the Hittites and the Egyptians to come against them and release the city.

[ 7 : 13 ] So the Syrians fled even though there was no actual army there at all. The Syrians panicked and they fled and in such haste did they run from the place that they left behind everything.

Food, drink, gold, silver, all their military equipment, they left the lot and ran. These leprous, four leprous men, you can imagine what it was like.

They walked into the camp of the Syrians and everything that they ever dreamed of was just lying there waiting for them. Food, all they would ever want, clothing, drink, gold and silver, so they had a party.

You can imagine what it would have been like. It probably wasn't very good for them because it's not good to tuck into a pint of food after a long hunger of that nature but they tucked in nonetheless and then they took some of the gold and the silver and they hid it away for themselves.

But then a realization dawned on them. Listen to verse 9. And then they said one to another, we're not doing right here. This day is a day of good news and we remain silent.

[ 8 : 28 ] If we wait till morning light some punishment will come upon us. Now therefore come let us go and tell the king's household. I want to use this story this morning as a kind of a parable to help us as we unpack Ephesians chapter 2 which Johnny read for us earlier.

Ephesians 2 verses 1 to 3 says this, you he made alive while speaking about us this morning who were dead in trespasses and sins in which you once walked according to the course of this world according to the prince of the power of the air the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience among whom you also once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature children of wrath just as the others.

these verses describe our state yours and mine before conversion like the people in the besieged city we were without Christ held trapped hopeless in bondage devoid of any true spirituality for some ways that Paul describes our condition that is very very graphic he says we were dead in trespasses and sins as a result of the fall each one of us were dead spiritually lost and under the dominion of sin sin was in control if you like sin took us and controlled us the state of alienation and separation was there between us and God and we were under his just and holy wrath listen to the way

Ephesians 2 and 12 puts it it says at that time you were without Christ being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel strangers from the covenant of promise having no hope and without God in the world you see God made us for the purpose of delighting in his glory that's where we should have been we delight in his glory when we rejoice in his character believing his promises or as the Westminster catechism put it what is man's purpose what's man's chief end it's to glorify God and to enjoy him forever but man and sin is not there we're not in that place where we glorify God instead we were seeking to replace that joy that can only come from knowing

God to replace that joy by seeking joy in every other conceivable place some pursued some of us pursued outright sin others searched for meaning and fulfillment in self righteousness so whatever end of the spectrum we were on whether you were on that pathway which was just you know laced with outright sin or whether you were on the so called clean side of the road where you were involved in self righteousness whichever way we were going we were away from God and we were in darkness and it was actually idolatry and in this foreign state there were three influences three things that were if you like playing on our lives three influences that were at work in our lives bringing us further and further into the bondage of sin and Paul tells us that this bondage is made up of three hostile forces if you like at work in our lives the world the devil and the flesh in 1 John he juggles the order and he puts down the world the flesh and the devil it's the same thing in its effect first of all we have the world system he talks he says in which you once walked according to the course of this world world to walk there is the world world and the world and the world the world the whole thing was being dictated to us by the world system we were being moulded by what the world required of us the course of this world the attitudes and the value systems of this age that were opposed to God and his kingdom the various world views that work against God and his rule in our hearts these things controlled us these things dominated our lives these things dictated the pace so our actions were dictated by this present age which is characterised by rejection of God's kingship

[ 13 : 44 ] I was at a family wedding recently trying to understand trying to see whether I could get an opportunity to talk to some of my brothers I had forgotten something when the music came on you couldn't hear yourself thinking never mind trying to have a conversation with somebody and I just sat there thinking this is what the world system is like everybody is just deafened by the sound of the world system and they cannot hear another voice they can't hear another voice that's why people are the way they are dominated by what the world system is pumping at them on a constant basis then the second influence that Paul outlines here is the devil's influence the second hostile influence that works promoting sin and rebellion in our lives he calls it this way he says the prince of the power of the air the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience now this is not talking about demon possession because we cannot blame the devil for our sin regretfully we're all too willing participants the devil encourages and promotes but regretfully he finds us too receptive the devil loves sin and rebellion and he uses all of his persuasive powers which are considerable to encourage to encourage and to arouse sin in our lives the third hostile force is regretfully within us it says among whom also we all conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind he says we all conducted ourselves and Paul is including himself here and all the

Christians to whom he is writing you see human sinfulness is universal it's not the things sorry it's one of the things that we share in common all have sinned and for and short the universality of sin is one of the proofs of the doctrine of the fall you see nobody ever had to take you and bring you to a seminar to teach you how to tell a lie that's right none of your children were ever taken and taught how to be nasty regretfully it comes naturally the evil will influence us of the world and of the devil and regretfully they find a welcome in our hearts when the world and the devil comes knocking they find already a mat at our doorway saying welcome the world and the devil broadcasts and we regretfully receive the signals too readily we are by nature fallen self-centered rebels or as

Paul puts it by nature children of wrath Paul in Galatians 5 lists the activities of our sinful nature our inclinations that are extensive and they're wide ranging cover every conceivable sin that you could think of they're far more deeper than just sex and murder and drunkenness they go down into the depths of our being let's just listen to the list for a moment he says the works of the flesh are evident which are these adultery fornication uncleanness lewdness idolatry sorcery yeah we'd say that that's sin but then he goes on and he talks about hatred and contentions and jealousies and outbursts of wrath and selfish ambition dissensions and heresies envy and then he goes on murder and drunkenness and revelry and the like of which I tell you before and I tell you often in past times that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God we're sinners in thought in word and in deed we sin by omission and commission what that means is we do things we ought not to do and there's things that we ought to do that we don't do and all of this made us children of wrath just as the others we were under the just and holy righteous wrath of almighty

God now the wrath of God is not some out of control outburst where God just loses the rag now that's not what the Bible is talking about here it's talking about his settled determined opposition against sin and rebellion in fact the psalmist says that he's angry with the wicked every day again Paul includes himself in this category before conversion he was heading for judgment day with no hope of escaping God's just and holy penalty against his sin eternal conscious punishment in hell now thankfully our passage doesn't end there thankfully see it goes on to talk about the position that we've come into because of grace because of mercy because of God's goodness verse 5 starts out it says but God but God

God intervened he stepped in he as it were interfered with the flow and he changed things but God who is rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and sins made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved what Paul is doing here is he's setting up an awesome contrast he's contrasting two things the contrast if you like of all contrasts the blackness and the darkness of our previous position contrasted against this spectacularly glorious wonderful position that God has brought us into if you ever went into a jeweler's just to buy diamonds not maybe the ring but just the diamonds and the jeweler wanted to show them to you at their best he'd lay them out on a black cloth so that you'd see them in all of their glory and that's what Paul is doing here he's taking the black cloth of our previous position and he's putting on that cloth the glory some of the gems some of the wonders of what

[ 20 : 26 ] God has done for us in Christ we were lost and undone and without hope but God God took the initiative he stepped in where he didn't have to there was no need either in God himself or there was nothing in us that would cause him to do it but solely and only because of his awesome love and his mercy that he stepped in and he rescued us he could rightly and justly have left us to the consequences of our sin but his spectacular compassion his love that is beyond compare moved him to reach down and meet our need God so loved the world that he gave let's consider some of the jewels spread out on that black cloth some of the jewels of this great salvation first of all of course it's the forgiveness of sin but God who is rich in mercy because of his great love with which he has loved us even when we were dead in sin met us alive together in Christ by grace you have been saved this is the most awesome blessing of all every other blessing that comes our way is it's wonderful but it's very much secondary to this greatest blessing of all to know your sin forgiven the word forgiven there means sin is taken out of the way the psalmist puts it this way he says your sin has been removed as far as the east is from the west out sin is taken out of the equation of our relationship with God it's no longer in the equation if you like our sin is removed price paid in full the Lord

Jesus Christ became the propitiation for our sin in other words he bore on his own body the wrath of God against all of our sin he absorbed all the penalty for your sin and for mine he absorbed that penalty into himself during those six hours on the cross paid in full he cried out and because of all that when we do sin we have an advocate with the father somebody that represents us someone that stands in our place and pleads our case for us he is our representative because of his propitiation on our behalf then the second jewel that I want to just look at this morning is sin's dominion is broken so we talk about the penalty of sin now we talk about the power of sin and he says here even when we were dead in trespasses he made us alive met us alive together with

Christ by grace you have been saved see Jesus describes sin as slavery he that sins says Jesus is a slave of sin now because we have been made alive together with Christ because we are united with Christ because we have been born from above we no longer need to serve sin we can walk with God not wonderful we can walk with God listen how Paul puts it in Romans 8 and verse 2 for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and death we can actually look our favourite sin in the face and tell it to go away no not happy anymore I'm going to walk with God not perfectly at all times the battle is very real but nonetheless the Christian can and does make progress by grace we advance step by step nearer to

God's ultimate goal for our lives which of course is Christ likeness that we would be like Jesus God's ultimate goal listen to how Paul put it in Romans 6 and verse 14 he says for sin shall not have dominion over you for you are not under the law but under grace listen to how Ezekiel put it in Ezekiel 36 and verse 27 I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and do my judgments then the third jewel on that black cloth that I want to look at this morning there are many many others that we could look at but just to think about this one for a moment the alienation that barrier between us and God completely removed he says it says here he raised us up together and he made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ

Jesus you see so utterly remarkable is this awesome salvation that we have come into is that we're already seated with Christ in heavenly places there's a hymn we sing sometimes back in Westport it captures it just lovely it says so near so very near to God I cannot nearer be for in the person of his son I am as near as he the hymn writer is capturing the truth that is it's there in Ephesians 1 and verse 6 and it talks about us being accepted in the beloved it's a technical term and what it means is you remember when Jesus was being baptized and he came up out of the water and the voice from heaven said this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased it's speaking of God the father's love for God the son this is my beloved son and then

[ 26 : 31 ] Paul borrows that phrase and he says of us us Christians it that you have been accepted in the beloved into that same fellowship that the father has with the son and John in 17 and verse 23 puts it this way he says that we are loved with the very same love that God loves his own son it's phenomenal isn't it that God the father has set his love so much upon you that it's equal to the love that he has for think about it he gave his very own son so that you could be sitting where you are this morning and man it's absolutely phenomenal so we have this alienation that was there completely removed listen to Ephesians 2 and verse 18 for through him we both have access by one spirit to the father listen to

Ephesians 3 and verse 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in him so I can come to God I can walk with God I can know him I can come to him in prayer I can access God if you like that which the high priest could only do once a year and with an awful lot of parlava before he done it we can do freely with confidence and with boldness we can come into the presence of God and even when I sin I can come to God in fresh repentance and faith and that sin is put away the relationship is beautiful again so why did God do it why did God do it well actually our passage tells us first if you look at verse seven there it says that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us in

Christ Jesus God in the ages to come is going to make a display out of you and out of me he's going to hold us up as an example of his wisdom and he's going to show it by the church listen to Ephesians 3 and verse 20 or verse 10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places so there's going to come a time when God will put on display before the principalities and powers the church and he's going to say that's what my wisdom achieved that's what grace has done that's what mercy has done and you and I we're going to be as it were examples of that because of God's grace the second reason I want to concentrate on just in closing and that is the one that really comes to us from that parable it says for we are his workmanship created in

Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them God wants us to live for his glory he wants us to glorify his name in the way we live and the things we do we are to be a people Paul tells us in another place zealous for good works in closing I want to look at the example of our four leprous friends they were after having the party they were after stashing away some of the gold and silver hope they didn't put it into Anglo-Irish Bank and they wanted to do themselves good they said life is going to be different now we're rich life is going to be different now we've got food and clothing we've got all we need but the lepers even in the midst of this awesome provision a realisation gripped them verse 9 of 2nd

Kings 7 says then they said one to another we do not do well this day is a day of good tidings and we hold our peace if we tarry till morning light some mischief will come upon us now therefore come let us go and tell the king's household they remembered the people that were behind those walls starving they remembered those people that were behind those walls in bondage and in darkness they remembered these people even though maybe they might have just caused not to be very kind towards them but they remembered them nonetheless and they said we don't do well this is a day of good tidings we need to go and tell them that they can come out from behind those walls they can come out from behind their bondage and they can find the provision that they need and we've got the same message much better much much much better much more glorious and the church is God's strategic plan for evangelism that's one of the purposes for which we're left here is that we might tell others about this awesome provision that is available in Christ this glorious thing that God has done this wonderful event that took place on

[ 32 : 06 ] Calvary this awesome glorious provision that he has made so in closing two things that we need to see and one thing that we need to do first of all do we see the state do we really see the state that our neighbours and our friends our family our work colleagues do we really see the state that they're in have we got a real grasp have I got a real grasp of where my neighbours are where my friends are do we really see the state that they're in locked down in their sin do I see the awesomeness that God has done for me has it really captured me that I am loved by God that I am forgiven that my sin has been removed as far as the east is from the west has it really captured my heart I find it no wonder that

Paul in Ephesians chapter 3 and these people that he would have been praying for were Christians for quite a period of time at this stage and he prays for them that they might know the love of Christ and pass his knowledge Paul wanted if you like that God's Holy Spirit would take the great truths of salvation and rub them afresh into the people's hearts that they would just revel in this great goodness of God delight in his great mercy be thrilled with it all and then and then to go there were many other works that people were to be engaged in but I think the primary one is to bring this message it's a day of good tidings amen and you have an opportunity very very soon you have Christianity explored taking place come yourself but bring somebody with you amen bring somebody with you take your courage in your hands take one of the invitations and bring it to your friend or bring it to your family member bring it to your work colleague bring it to your enemy and give them a copy and encourage them to be here that they too might hear of this awesome provision amen thanks very much for listening thank you

Johnny thank you