

Ephesians 2:1-10

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[0:00] Amen. Some of you are old enough to remember that comedy series, Get Smart.

! Remember that? And Maxwell Smart, almost every program would say, ! Missed it by that much! Well, I want to tell you something.

When it comes to earning our own eternal salvation, we missed it by that much! That's what this sermon is about. In Lent, we look at the bad news, don't we?

We don't like to hear the bad news, but until we hear the bad news, we don't understand the good news. So today, we're going to be using the epistle that was read from Ephesians chapter 2.

If you want to look in your pew Bibles or bring it up on your phone, Ephesians chapter 2. I'm going to find it in this big Bible I've got here.

[1:07] Ephesians, Corinthians, here. Okay, so here's Ephesians chapter 2. All right. This passage is bedrock for Anglican theology.

This really says who we are. And so we're going to look at it line by line. This will be an expository sermon, verses 1 through 10 of chapter 2 of Ephesians.

The first three verses, you might entitle, We missed the target by that much. The next three verses, 4 through 6, tells us about how Jesus gets us back on the target.

Target being eternal life. And then 7 through 10 says, Okay, you've got salvation, now don't get uppity about it. So that's where we're going today.

We'll start with the first three verses, and I'm going to read those again. Chapter 2, Ephesians. And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

[2:42] What wonderful, encouraging words. Well, so what is Paul doing to us? He's telling the truth.

He's giving us a reality check. And the first thing he says is, We are dead in sins. We are walking around, so we are the walking dead.

Does anyone ever remember reading about the Bataan Death March? That was during World War II. It was in the Philippines. Philippines. And the Japanese came and attacked the Philippines.

And the American generals surrendered all the troops to the Japanese. 60,000 Americans. The Japanese started them on a march to their port, where they were going to put them in ships and take them up to Japan for prisoner of war camp.

Along the way, it was hot. There was no food. There was beating of Americans. And by the time they got to the port, most of them were dead.

[3:53] It's one of the vilest stories in history. The Bataan Death March. So for us, we're on a death march.

The difference is, those Americans and some Filipino soldiers, it wasn't their fault. That they were on that death march. It is our fault that we are on this death march.

In fact, we're kind of lying dead in the spiritual casket. You know the story about Eli. Eli keeled over with a heart attack one night.

Stopped breathing. The coroner declared him dead. They took him to the funeral home. And the funeral director said, well, I'll get to this in the morning.

So they laid him in the casket. In the middle of the night, Eli woke up. He looked around. He said, I have a question in my mind.

[4:58] If I'm alive, what am I doing in this casket? And if I'm dead, why do I have to go to the bathroom?

That's for us, the over 60 crowd. Okay. We are caught in death. Death is actually, spiritually speaking, eternal separation from God equals hell. Hell is eternal separation from God. And we're caught in it. And verse 2 tells us about the originator of this whole debacle.

The prince of the power of the air. Isn't that interesting? Interesting name for Satan. Prince of the power of the air. He's lesser than Jesus.

He's not king. He considers himself a prince. And he's been around a pretty long time, hasn't he? I think we saw him in the Garden of Eden.

[6:10] I'm not sure. And as prince of the power of the air, he can cause a lot of trouble. Now, did any of you notice the heavy winds this week?

Now, up in Beeville, we had winds. And I sat there looking out our glass door and thought, you know what, if one of those trees comes down, we're going to have some serious damage on our house.

you know, we got tornadoes. We don't have tornadoes. Alabama is having tornado season right now. We used to live there and we know about March.

March is tornado season. It can devastate houses, villages. Well, that's kind of what the prince of the power of the air is all about.

You and I know he's defeated, don't we? He knows he's defeated. He's defeated, yet defiant.

[7:14] C.S. Lewis told a story about how to characterize this. He said that when the British, American, and Canadian troops landed in France on D-Day, everybody knew the war was over.

But it was from June 6, 1944 to April 45 until the war really got over. Hitler didn't give up. He was defeated but defiant.

That's kind of where Satan is in our world. Still makes trouble. And so we can honestly say then as we move to verse 3, we missed it by that much trying to do it on our own.

Paul uses a word in Greek it's *sarx*, the flesh, and it doesn't mean this kind of flesh. It means human passions.

Our human passions take control of us. And it moves into our mind, it moves into our body, moves into our relationships, relationships. Yay!

[8:29] Welcome! Come on in kids. Some of the neatest kids in history right here. Welcome.

Welcome. So this all conspires against us.

In fact, we're part of the conspiracy to bring us to this death. But, there's more. Okay, I'm giving you the bad news.

We're moving to the good news. Part 2. I'm going to read verses 4 through 7. But God. Now, anytime you see but God in the Bible, it means something important is going to happen.

But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

[9:28] 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 coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Okay, what does all that mean? That's a lot of stuff. In fact, my computer turned sideways when I read that. Okay. And it lost my place for me.

Jesus gets us back on target when we've missed it. As many of you know, I used to drop bombs.

To get from where we took off to where we were going to drop the bombs, we had to have some checkpoints. This computer system we had, which is kind of like this computer system except it was much bigger, it had something called drift.

Your airplane, this computer, would drift your direction. So you had to have checkpoints along the way where you could identify on a radar scope, hit it, and relocate your position.

[10:47] Or otherwise, you would miss your target by a mile. Guess what? what? We have checkpoints from God to help us when we drift to get back on target.

That's why God loves us so much because He wants to be with us. Okay. So, these 4, 5, 6, and 7 give us checkpoints or key words.

In verse 4, the key word is mercy. Mercy me. I learned that down in the South. Mercy me.

Well, mercy means compassion, forgiveness towards someone it is in my power to punish. So, I can have compassion on somebody in death row and forgive them.

It's probably not going to have much effect because I don't have the power to do anything. The government has power. The government sometimes saves someone out of death row.

[12:02] God uses mercy to save us out of hell. That's the first key word. He is a merciful God.

And then verse 5 gives us another word which is a checkpoint. It's called grace. Unmerited favor by someone with the power to give the gift.

God is a grace-giving God. In fact, He gives us over to heaven. So, mercy gets us out of hell. Grace brings us into heaven. And verse 6 tells how it happens. Resurrection. By Jesus being raised, Jesus God in the flesh, by being raised from death, we are able to come into this relationship with God.

God, in Florida, the condo that we lease looks out over a bayou. The bayou is about a half mile wide. And they have tides there.

[13:12] When the tide goes down, in the middle of that bayou, you suddenly see ground. Because that bayou in that section is not very deep.

boat. And so navigation people put buoys along. Not buoys, but boats. So that people running their boats know not to go into the shallow part.

Because if they hit ground, guess what? Have you ever hit ground when you're in a boat? Hard to get off. I mean, you're kind of stuck until the tide raises again.

And so I'm not talking about economics where the tide rises, everybody rises. Yeah, we won't go there. But this rising of the tide is the raising of Jesus.

He raises us when we've become grounded. And then the last word, verse 7, another wonderful word is kindness. Kindness means being generous or considerate.

[14:18] What's one of the neatest things we'd love to have from other people? Kindness. What's one of the selfishest things we often don't give people?

Kindness. God wipes the slate clean for us, the sin slate, and is kind to us eternally through Jesus. So these key words, therefore, give us, okay, sometimes we get to where we're washing cars during the sermon, so. Alright, they're back, Lord.

Okay, gives us hope. Do you know we have what's called COVID hope? We hope life will come back to normal.

Wouldn't it be great as when we pass the peace, we could walk around hugging each other, shaking hands? Yeah. Well, we can't do that yet. Wouldn't it be great when only people in the operating room were these kind of things?

[15:27] Wouldn't that be nice? Wouldn't it be great if we didn't have to tape off pews to conform with New York state law? Wouldn't it be great if we could just live the way we lived last February a year ago?

Well, we have hope. It may come sooner than we think. It's going to be some rough water until we get there, but we're moving in the right direction.

We have hope, and that's what it is with eternal salvation. We have well-founded hope. So we move to the last point.

By the way, one of the things about coronavirus, before I go on, they did a poll, Harris did a poll in December, about how close people feel to God. Two-thirds of Americans claim they feel closer to God as a result of the coronavirus.

Interesting. And the group that said they felt closest, ready for this? Men, aged 35 to 44, 85% of them said they felt closer to God.

[16:41] What in the world is going on here? God's doing something, and He's trying to do it in our lives as well, which brings us to point 3.

Finishing our thoughts, verses 8 through 10. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Jesus Christ for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we might walk in them.

That's good. I like that. It's a nice sound. so we have experienced in this sermon the wonderful intervention of Jesus in our lives.

These verses 8 and 9 are trophy passages for an evangelical, and those of us in this church are evangelicals. So a lot of people have memorized those two verses, and if you had a quiz, what would you like on your tombstone most people would say Ephesians 2, 8, and 9.

[18:06] It tells us who God is and who we are. And so we don't need to get uppity. There's no need for us to brag about I decided to follow Jesus on May 2, 1969.

I mean that's a wonderful thing that happened, but I didn't really have much to do with it. God gave me the faith to turn to Him. That's the gift. That's the gift of eternal life.

And ours is simply to repent of our rebellion and receive God's gift. So, God paid a heavy price for you to give you eternal life.

Would you turn closer to Him this day if you've not received Christ as your personal Lord and Savior? Would you do that? If you feel like you're estranged from God, He just wants to welcome you back and to love you.

And so my thing today is that we will listen carefully to what God says in our hearts in church and then take it out into the world.

[19:21] Let us pray. Lord God, we celebrate your gift to us. We humbly accept your gift. We ask that we might take this gift out into the world for the good works you have prepared for us beforehand.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.