

Ephesians 2:1-3

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 October 2016

Preacher: Jonathan Lee

[0 : 00] So many people, they were hiding from the militia, and all of them were brutally murdered. And in the basement of this memorial, the guide didn't even go down to the basement.

She just said, you're welcome to go downstairs. So I did. And in this narrow pathway, in either side of me, there were stacks and stacks of human bones, skulls.

I think they said they found 40,000 body parts at that site. So just like, you know, the dry bones cannot come back to life on its own, I wondered, I'm sure, you know, the families, the friends, the siblings of these victims, wouldn't they give anything to see them just once again living?

And with all the advance in modern medicine and science, there's nothing anyone can do to bring these dead bones back to life.

And that is what we are going to look into tonight. We are dead in sin.

[1 : 46] And next week, we're going to look into our life in Christ. Let us pray. Lord Jesus, we thank you for gathering us here tonight, Lord.

Lord, as we worship you and praise you, and now, as we read your words, Lord God.

Open our ears and prepare our hearts to hear your words and be moved, touched by your life-giving words, Lord God.

And Lord, thank you for giving us this life through your son, Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Let's turn to Ephesians. I'm going to actually read the last week's passage as well.

[2 : 51] So we'll start from Ephesians chapter 1, verse 20, and we'll go to chapter 2, verse 6.

If somebody has a page number, just shout it out. 976. Ephesians chapter 1, starting from verse 20. That he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

And you are dead in the trespasses and sins 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.

[4 : 30] 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.

By grace you have been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Jesus Christ.

So last Sunday evening, you know, Dan preached from Ephesians chapter 1 verses 20 to 23.

And it's about God's power raising, you know, Jesus from dead. And in his glory he is seated at the right hand of God.

And in chapter 2 verse 4, God tells us that now we are alive together in Christ.

[5 : 35] Between these two glorious passages, why does Paul talk about a gloomy spiritual assessment?

Of us. We were dead. First one says, And you were dead in the trespasses and sins. Some of you may say, I'm not dead.

I'm breathing. My lungs are exchanging carbon dioxide and oxygen. My heart is pumping. What do you mean I'm dead? I'm alive.

But the death that Apostle Paul is talking about here is our spiritual death. Now, when Adam and Eve, now we're going all the way back to Genesis.

God told Adam and Eve, you can eat from every tree except from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

[6:53] But Satan deceived Eve. Satan said to Eve, did God tell you not to eat from any of these trees?

And Eve said, no, we shouldn't be eating from tree of knowledge and evil. Because God said, if we do, it will surely die.

And Satan said to Eve, no, you're not going to die. Matter of fact, you're going to be like God. You are going to know good and evil.

And you're going to become like God. Through Satan's deception, Eve gives in to the temptation. And Eve eats the fruit of knowledge and evil. And at that moment, the sin enter the world.

[7:56] So in Romans, it says, through one man, sin enter the world. Adam. So through Adam, sin enter the world.

And sin brought death to human race. So, death became a certainty.

And also, we were separated from God because of the sin. And that is the spiritual death.

and this rebellion because God said, do not eat from this tree.

but what our humans are saying is, hey, we don't need to hear that from you. We know what is good and what is evil.

[9:10] evil. And this, as the sin entered, brought death, and look what happens immediately after.

the very next chapter, Adam's son, Cain, murders his brother Abel out of jealousy.

And then, a few chapters later, in chapters, Genesis chapter 6, the earth was just filled with wickedness of man.

It says, the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

And as we read the next verse, verse 2, 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.

[10:34] So, following the course of the world, so, we humans became continually rejecting God.

And the world world that we live in have this ungodly attitude and ungodly practices.

And as you read the Bible, I mean, nobody told them or nobody taught them how to, you know, build idols.

but with our fallen nature, we start, human beings start worshipping idols. Human beings start, stop looking into God and looking for other things, calling these lifeless things, things that's made out of stones and metals and other things, and they start worshipping idols.

and this trend of, you know, ungodly attitude and ungodly practices, it continued and one of the things that we see today in America, I'm going to read an excerpt from David Platt's book called Counterculture.

[12:17] Here it says, noted atheist Richard Dawkins writes, in a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice.

The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is. At the bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, and no other good.

Nothing but blind, pitiless indifference. DNA neither knows nor cares. DNA just is, and we dance to its music.

Godless worldviews thus leave us with a hopeless subjectivity concerning good and evil that is wholly dependent on social constructs.

Whatever a culture deems right is right, and whatever a culture deems wrong is wrong. This is precisely the worldview that prevails in American culture today.

[13:35] Where rapid shifts in the moral landscape clearly communicate that we no longer believe certain things are inherently right or wrong. Instead, rightness and wrongness is determined by social developments around us.

And isn't this true? When we look at our culture today, whether it's in entertainment, in education, they're trying to get rid of the notion of absolute truth.

God is absolute truth. But what the society, the culture, is telling us is there is no absolute truth.

Whatever culture decides, that's what it is. And this kind of ungodly attitude and ungodly practice is also one of the components that makes us spiritually dead.

in 1994, in Rwanda, 800,000 people were killed in a three-month time.

[15 : 02] So if you do the math, the rate of killing is just unthinkable. General Romeo Dallaire, who was in charge of the UN peacekeeping force during that time, he wrote in his book called Shake Hands with the Devil.

Now, this man, in his book, he says, he was not particularly a religious man, but when he met the leaders of this militia group who started this genocide, died, and when he shook their hands, and then when he saw in their eyes, he said, I saw the devil.

This cannot come from a human being. so, the devil stirs things in human hearts to do violence, commit atrocities, and we see this all over the world, whether in human trafficking, child soldiers get forced to, you know, commit these atrocities, you see, the prince of air, which is the devil, that spirit is now at work in the sons of disobedience.

So, first, we saw the world trend. Ever since Adam and Eve disobeyed God and we became a fallen world, the world, it starts to reject God, start to stop recognizing God as the creator.

And then Satan, who deceived Eve and attempting people to fall, continues to work in the sons of disobedience.

[17 : 24] And then verse 3, it says, 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.

time. So, what is passion of our flesh? Passion of our flesh is described in Galatians chapter 5, verse 19.

Here it says, now the works of the flesh are evident. Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

So, when you put all these three forces together, that is the dominion of sin. Ungodly attitudes and practices of this world, the social force, the Satan's deception, Satan's spiritual force that keep unbelievers in bondage to sin.

And then, our fleshly nature to pursue after such things. All these three things work together and keep unbelievers in the state of spiritual death.

[19 : 10] death. And in that state, we are by nature children of wrath. We deserve God's holy anger and his judgment.

Now, some of you may say, I am by no means like that. I mean, how insulting. Orgies, sexual immorality, fits of anger.

I'm a good person. How dare you to put me in the same category as these people? I don't do that. I'm a good person.

I give money to charity. I meditate. Then, well, the question to you is this. Have you put your faith in Jesus?

Jesus? Do you believe Jesus died for your sins? And is Jesus your only hope and savior? If you did not put your faith in Jesus or have been and still rejecting him, then the Bible tells us that you are spiritually dead.

[20 : 24] Let me give you an analogy of these two teenagers. So, there's this teenager who gets into trouble. Doesn't like to study, cut classes, sometimes you get a phone call from the principal, sometimes you get a phone call from the police officer saying, come and get your son.

But, his heart towards his parents, he loves his parents. Even though he does these stupid things, gets him in trouble, he still at the bottom of his heart, he loves his parents.

He enjoys spending time with his parents. Let's look at another teenager. Straight A student, never gets into any kind of trouble, and he has a bright future, but deep inside in his heart, he just cannot wait until he becomes independent.

Why? Because he does not want to do anything with his parents anymore. He doesn't want to see them anymore. He just cannot wait until he doesn't have to associate with his parents anymore.

Now, if you think you are a good person, righteous, righteous, but if you don't have Jesus as your savior, you are rejecting God.

[22 : 01] You are rejecting his gift. So, you are still under the wrath of God. God. So, why does Paul gives us this, you know, we talked about the valley of the dry bone, and I told you about the genocide memorial.

Why does Paul give us this dark and gloomy assessment of our, you know, spiritual status? first, I think he wants us to remain humble.

Nobody is holier than, you know, anyone. Holier than thou, that kind of attitude. We were all, we are all sinners, and we were once all dead because of our sin and trespasses.

So, Paul wants us to have this gratitude. Be thankful to God. Like I said to you, what good is defibrillator to the dry bone?

You know, when you watch the hospital shows, you know, and clear, and then zap, and then person comes back to life. What good is it? What good is it if I bring 200 defibrillator to the stacks of dry bone?

[23 : 34] can dry bones come back to life on its own? So, what Apostle Paul is telling us is, you were all like that before Christ.

So, don't feel that, oh, I am much better than that person. It is because what I did, I am alive, and I'm a Christian today. He does not want you to have that kind of attitude.

He wants you to be grateful to God and remain humble and remind ourselves that we were once dead like these dry bones.

And then also, Apostle Paul reminds us that in that dry bone condition, we were utterly hopeless and helpless.

and he wants us to know that until Jesus died for us and he came for our rescue, we had no hope.

[24 : 46] And we certainly couldn't help ourselves. Some other religions, you know, aren't they basically teaching you, well, if you do this much, if you do this much, if you pray this much, if you meditate this much, if you give this much, then you will earn favor of God.

Right? But Jesus is not like that. Coming to life in Christ, we have no contribution whatsoever. It is what Jesus did on the cross, that is it. So, Apostle Paul doesn't want us to boast, oh yeah, I read this many books, I pray this much, and you know, I do this, I give this much, I think that's how I got my salvation.

No, Apostle Paul doesn't want you to ever have that kind of attitude in you. It is purely through God's grace. It is purely through what Jesus did on the cross.

So, if you're going to boast, boast about Jesus. That's why before he goes into the next verses where, you know, we are now alive in Christ, he reminds us, telling us our former condition, that we were once all dead.

[26 : 26] Don't think the Ephesians were a lot worse sinners than us. It's not because of that. This message that we were once dead in sin applies to everybody, every region.

It transcends time and place. Whether, you know, you were believers 500 years ago, whether this message continues to the next four or five generations, it's the message is the same.

Ephesians were not particularly bad people. Apostle Paul wants us to know that you were, we were all dead once.

Until Christ came into your life, then we were all made alive together with Christ. And third, the reason why Apostle Paul brings this gloomy assessment, I think it's because of the urgency.

Urgency. Now, if you're a believer, knowing that people are spiritually dead, it gives you a sense of urgency.

[27 : 44] And what do we do with that urgency? The Great Commission. in chapter 1, verse 20, it says, 21, far over all rule and authority and power and dominion and above all every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the age to come.

So, Jesus was given authority in this age and also age to come. So, when you look at the Great Commission, it's in Matthew 28, verse 18, it says, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. So, there is a sense of urgency for the believers.

Jesus is telling us, go. I have the authority and I'm going to give you power to break the power of sin.

[29 : 20] The gospel has power to break the power of sin, power of death, and it will set people free and it will bring people back to life.

So, we are agents bringing that life-giving news to the people who are still spiritually dead.

So, there is a sense of urgency. And also for the non-believers, there is also a sense of urgency. Spiritual death, because we can't see it with our human eyes.

When I went to Rwanda, someone told me there are 15 species of poisonous snakes. I said, great, including black mamba. If you are bitten by poisonous snakes, the signs are very obvious.

Either you stop breathing, either you start to bleed through every pore of your body, or the site where it is bitten, it swells up.

[30 : 34] So, when something is that obvious, what do you do? You rush to the hospital, right?

You're fighting time, you're hoping the hospital will have antivenom and start putting antivenom into your body so you don't die.

But spiritual death, because we don't really see it with our human eyes, we kind of, you know, relax about it.

You're like, well, I'll give you another picture. one of the sounds that people don't like to hear in the hospital is the sound of the flat line.

You know the monitor that monitors your heart? It goes usually beep, beep, beep, beep, but when somebody is about to die, it goes beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, that's the flat line.

If you haven't put your faith in Jesus yet, do you hear the sound of the flat line of your spirit? Do you hear the voice of Jesus inviting you?

[31 : 54] Come. can you hear these two things? Jesus calling your name. I came and I die for you.

Come and live. Do you hear your spirit saying, don't you hear that flat line sound?

Going beep. What are you waiting for? If you have not put your faith in Jesus yet, what are you waiting for?

Now, next week, we're going to continue Ephesians chapter 2. And I promise you, it's not going to be gloomy.

The passage will not talk about dead bones, dry bones, or dead, you know, we will actually celebrate. Because we are made alive in Christ.

[33 : 05] Not because of what we did, not because how hard we worked towards it, but because God loved us.

So, let me just read, I'm just kind of like giving you a preview. verse, chapter 2, verse 4.

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.

by grace you have been saved and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Jesus Christ.

How amazing is this? Last week, we learned that Jesus in His glory is seated at the right hand of God and He will do the same for us.

[34 : 15] when you put your faith in Jesus, when you receive Jesus as your only Savior, that we are made alive together with Him and seated in heavenly places with Jesus Christ.

So, I do hope you come back for the sequel next week and let me close in prayer. Lord Jesus, we are humbled by what You did for us, Lord God.

And we are grateful that You gave us life, that we humans did everything we can to reject God, to reject Your gift, pursuing our passions, living, blinded in sin, not even knowing that we were dead. But Lord, because of Your love, Your mercy, and Your grace, now we are no longer dead, but we are alive in Christ.

So, Lord Jesus, we thank You, and we praise You for what You did. And in Your holy name we pray, Amen.

[35 : 53] Amen. Please stand with us.ingen