

This is a Great Mystery

A Study of Ephesians

Week 8 – Ephesians 2:1-5

Prayer

Gracious God, as we move forward into this next chapter of your glorious Word, fill our hearts with contrition over our sin—whether our natural state or the sins we commit. But we know that contrition does not mark the end of our story; so also fill our hearts with joy, amazement, and thankfulness that you have saved us by grace. Bless our study of these beautiful words today. Amen.

From Last Week

Chapter 2 builds off of the predestination that Paul hammered home; now he is going to make it clear that God did not predestine them or give them faith because of anything they had done; it's all by grace.

Verse 1 – Καὶ ὑμᾶς ὄντας νεκροὺς τοῖς παραπτώμασιν καὶ ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν,

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins...

1. Does anyone remember the difference between trespasses and sins?

2. Let's look at what this death "looks like" here on earth:
 - a. **Psalm 14:1-3** – What sorts of things can spiritually dead people NOT do?

 - b. **Psalm 115:16-18** – What one thing from these verses are spiritually dead people unable to do?

 - c. **Proverbs 14:12** – What makes it hard to point out things that lead to death (trespasses and sins)?

 - d. **Ezekiel 18:20** – On whom does the blame rest for their spiritual death?

 - e. **Romans 1:32** – Without God's gracious intervention, what are those who are spiritually dead bound to continue to do?

 - f. **Hebrews 9:27** – What do spiritually dead people receive for being spiritually dead?

 - g. What other things does the Bible say about being dead in trespasses and sins? One that comes to mind is a recent sermon I heard on Ezekiel 37 – the dry bones. Others?

3. Agree or disagree: Sin is both the cause of spiritual death and the evidence of spiritual death.

Verse 2 – ἐν αἷς ποτε περιεπατήσατε κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, κατὰ τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος, τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ νῦν ἐνεργούντος ἐν τοῖς υἱοῖς τῆς ἀπειθείας ·

...in which you once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority (kingdom) of the air, the spirit who is now working in the sons of disobedience...

4. In what ways does it make sense that the Greek verb for “walk” can mean “conduct one’s life” or “behave”?
5. What time frame would “the age of this world” encompass?
6. “Ruler of the domain (or kingdom or authority) of the air” – Twice in John’s Gospel, Jesus uses the term “ruler (prince) of this world” to describe the same person.
 - a. To whom is this referring?
7. “The sons of disobedience” – their main characteristic is that they are disobedient; that’s how others know them and label them accordingly. Other groups, whether real or fictional, who use a similar form of description might come to mind.

Verse 3 – ἐν οἷς καὶ ἡμεῖς πάντες ἀνεστράφημέν ποτε ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῆς σαρκὸς ἡμῶν ποιοῦντες τὰ θελήματα τῆς σαρκὸς καὶ τῶν διανοιῶν, καὶ ἡμεῖθα τέκνα φύσει ὀργῆς ὡς καὶ οἱ λοιποί ·

...among them we also all once behaved in the passions of our flesh, as we did the desires of the flesh and the mind, and we were, by nature, children of wrath, as the others are, too.

8. Notice that in these verses, we find a reference to what Luther would call the “Unholy Trinity:” the devil (ruler of the air in v 2), the world (age of this world in v 2), and the sinful flesh (basically all of v 3).
9. Paul switches from second-person verbs (you) to first-person (we). What effect does that have, especially in a section where the law is pretty heavy?
10. There’s a pretty interesting dictionary entry for ἀνεστράφημέν, the word translated here as “we behaved.” It says, “Live in the passions of the flesh = be a slave to physical passion.” That’s a strong connotation. What from this verse (or elsewhere in Scripture) supports that definition?
11. Look at what Jesus says about the “cravings and desires” of the flesh in **Matthew 15:18-20**.
 - a. Paul gives another list of the “works of the sinful flesh” in **Galatians 5:19-21**.
 - b. Paul uses yet another list of “natural” sins in **1 Timothy 1:8-10**.
 - c. There are certainly other sections that drive home this point: **Genesis 6:5; Genesis 8:21; Psalm 14; Psalm 51; Romans 3; Romans 5; Galatians 3**; among others.

d. According to those verses, is there anyone excluded from being a slave to passions and desires?

12. Interestingly, the word τέκνα (children) gets skimmed over in some translations. They simply say that we are “deserving of wrath,” which is true, but is a little less literal. Jump inside the translators’ minds; what are some possible explanations for using “deserving of wrath”?

a. What might be communicated through “children of wrath” that isn’t communicated through “deserving of wrath”?

b. In the end, this is another case where both can be right; but one is more literal, the other is more of what we would call a “dynamic equivalent.”

What comments and questions do you have?

Verses 4-5 – ὁ δὲ θεὸς πλούσιος ὢν ἐν ἐλέει, διὰ τὴν πολλὴν ἀγάπην αὐτοῦ ἣν ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, **5** καὶ ὄντας ἡμᾶς νεκροὺς τοῖς παραπτώμασιν συνεζωοποίησεν τῷ Χριστῷ, — χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loves us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, he made us alive with Christ—it is by grace you have been saved.

13. A few notes on the Greek word order: where a word or phrase is placed matters, especially when it comes to where the emphasis is directed.

a. Here, the emphasis is placed on God (θεός) by putting him at the front of the sentence.

b. Then, everything that describes him (rich in mercy; he has great love, even though we were dead in trespasses) comes before the verb, which isn’t until the sixth-to-last word (συνεζωοποίησεν).

c. Simply put: God is the focal point, just by looking at the word order; the content of these verses will also focus on God as the doer and show that we merely receive the benefits of his action.

d. Another feature of the Greek is that God and the “made alive” verb are actually the main subject and verb of the sentence that runs from verse 1 to verse 7.

i. So, verses 1-3 build up the pressure of guilt in a poetic way; verse 4, beginning with “But God, who is rich in mercy,” serves as a relief to the reader.

14. Why didn’t Paul simply say that God is merciful? What changes when you hear “rich in mercy”?

15. We see three words that can be used interchangeably to speak about how God treats us with an undeserved kindness—mercy, grace, and love. I mentioned this in a sermon back in March on this text; and I think I’ve brought it up at other times. Let’s see if anyone can recall what the differences between each of these characteristics is:

a. Mercy –

b. Grace –

c. Love –

16. We've already talked about how we were dead in trespasses; let's talk about being made alive with Christ (συνεζωοποίησεν).
- a. By the way, this συν- root means "with." Last week, I briefly touched on a series of verbs that use this prefix and also link us to Christ; here's the start of that list.
 - b. Turn to **Romans 6:4-14**, where Paul gives a little more detail as to what being alive with (or in) Christ means.
 - i. What has to die in order for us to be made alive with Christ (v. 6)?
 - ii. By what means does this death take place (v. 4)?
 - iii. What does it mean to be dead to sin, as opposed to dead in sin (v. 11)?
 - iv. What happens, then, as we live our lives as those who have been made alive (v. 12-14)?
 - c. So, why aren't we perfect and sinless, if we've been made alive from the dead?
 - i. This is where a lot of "holiness" churches go wrong. They tend to forget that saints are still sinners. We still struggle. In fact, one of the ways we can tell we are alive because we struggle! We don't just blindly run into sin; we have guilt and shame, which does its work on our hearts so that we can be reminded of God's grace, as Paul does here in Ephesians 2.

17. It's almost as though Paul is so excited to write about grace that he slips in the phrase at the end of this verse; we will talk more about the "by grace you have been saved" phrase in v. 8.

What comments and questions do you have?

SCHEDULE REMINDER

No class next week due to Church in the Park. Come back on 6/20 for our study of Ephesians 2:6-10!

Closing Prayer – Lord, We Confess Our Numerous Faults v. 1 and 4

**Lord, we confess our num'rous faults,
How great our guilt has been,
How vain and foolish all our thoughts,
How deeply stained with sin.**

**'Tis from the mercy of our God
That all our hopes begin;
'Tis by the water and the blood
Our souls are saved from sin. Amen.**