

10,000 Years | Week 5: Life In The In-between

Ephesians 2:1-10

May 18, 2014

Ephesians 2:1-3: And you were dead in the trespasses and sins **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— **3** 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.

- I remember:
 - Being a "Christian," but having a heart that rejected God's ways.
 - Rejected the Sermon on the Mount (anger, sex, peace-making, prayerlessness)
- What distinguishes a person as being a son (or daughter) of disobedience isn't necessarily explicit, scandalous sin. It's devotion to our own passions.
 - Scandalous Sin vs. Refined Sin (Jerry Bridges)
 - I was a refined sinner. (Sometimes I still am.) [Are you a refined sinner, too?]
- *Problem: Cynicism; skepticism muffles my previous point*
 - Cynicism: A person who no longer sees the point of something that used to be considered valuable/sacred or is still considered valuable/sacred by others.
 - What fuels our cynicism is pragmatism? Pragmatism views the world and life through a utilitarian lens. It sees things only as being valuable if those things are apparently useful. We tend to quickly discard things that don't seem immediately useful to us.
 - Pragmatism asks the following kinds of questions:
 1. "Why get water baptized? If I'm saved by faith alone, what's the point? It's not like I'll go to hell if I don't, right? Plus, I don't like the attention."
 2. "Why do the Lord's Supper every week? And what's the point of it anyway?"

3. "Is it really necessary to be committed to a local church? Additionally, is it necessary to have to go to regularly attend church services? Growing up, my family went every week and we were a mess."
 4. "What's the problem with moving in with my fiancé if we're going to get married anyway?" (Illustration: My friend who was living with his fiancé. Their pastor at the time: "If you love her, you won't cause her to sin.")
- These kinds of questions betray a pragmatic, or utilitarian, worldview, not the heart of a worshiper who is a consumer of God's grace. Our lives are being formed by the belief that something is only valuable if it is immediately life-enhancing or useful. And it's this mentality that is giving cynicism a powerful foothold in our lives and churches. Why? Because, at the end of the day, there are a lot of things that God commands us to do that don't give an immediate sensation or emotional return.
 - What many of us fail to realize is that God assigns us commands that are intended to be observed over and over and over again throughout the course of our lives. Obedience to these commands rarely yields immediate, perceivable benefits. But as they are practiced over a lifetime, the worshiper gradually becomes a new kind of person - God's kind of person. A godly person. This is how habits are changed and affections are redirected.
 - And because many of us don't realize this, we are robbing ourselves of a truly transformed life. Because many of God's commands aren't useful, per se, we, in our arrogant so-called wisdom, kick these commands to the curb or we demote them to the level of "spiritual suggestions" because, in our heart of hearts, we believe they are inconsequential, at best. So we say things like, "God knows my heart," in order to absolve ourselves of the guilt of our disobedience.
 - This is how cynicism works. It's the soul with its arms folded that says, "Impress me, I dare you." Cynicism neuters faith and action.
 - *Do you have a growing or shrinking sensitivity to the sting of God's righteous demands?* Do you have a growing ability to see the work of the Spirit in even the most mechanical rituals of our faith? Are you more sensitive to the course of this world? More inclined to follow your body's passions?

- Living according to the course of this world is to be consumed with the passions of our flesh. *Those passions vary from person to person.* Some people are passionate in regards to scandalous sin: sexual promiscuity, for instance. Others might be passionate for their careers, which keeps their worship plateaued and cursory. Socrates said to “Beware the barrenness of a busy life.”
- God has saved us from this lifestyle ("the course of the world") not so we can be subtly deceived back into it! Remember and regain the desperation that drove you to the cross!

Ephesians 2:4-7: But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, **5** even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— **6** and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, **7** so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

- God initiated our salvation. He is the author and the finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2).

- **Heavenly Places:**

1. Seated with Christ in a very real way: We are one with him; his body parts. And what Christ gets, we get.
2. In a position of authority with him - we are no longer losers to our sin! [You are *not* the world's biggest loser anymore!] No more surrendering to the impulses of sin.

- **In the coming ages:**

- God had amazing gifts to give us in the age to come.
- Paul is not telling them to work real hard in order to get these immeasurable riches (see next verse). He's telling them that God is going to give them something beautiful! God's work in our lives points to the future.
- *In what way?* He is preparing to show us off as the crown jewel of the new creation.
- The creation of the new heaven and the new earth has already begun! One day, he will remake the cosmos, beautifully adorning it with purity and holiness,

freeing it from the effects of the fall. That process has begun now in our lives.
[Now matters, people!] We are proof the world will be changed!

Ephesians 2:8-10: For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **9** not a result of works, so that no one may boast. **10** For we are his **workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus for **good works**, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

- **Workmanship**: In the original language, workmanship has an artistic, poetic feel. So if you're waiting for me to tell you what those "good works" are, I can't do that. I don't know what the re-humanized you looks like. That's a journey, not of self-discovery, but of letting go of self in Christ. It's only then that the truly human you will emerge. And you will be a masterpiece, a work of art by the greatest artist, the Holy Spirit.
- These **good works** that God has prepared are you in your most humanized form - not your dullest, most religious form. It's you, but no longer bashed and teased by your sinful cravings and painful past. These good works are *not* what saves you. They are the composite behaviors - the lifestyle - of you, the redeemed.
- Analogy: Invited to a fancy gala; retailer: tuxedo or ball gown; needs no alterations.

The Lord's Supper:

This work of art will be put on display in the gallery of the age to come. God will point to us and say, "This is my greatest work of art." And that all comes down to the way we live right now. It all comes down to the way we live in the in-between. Will we hear the voice of the Spirit and repent, betraying our selfish ways for his? Jesus has already done it for us. We only need to walk in his works.

Prayer [Band ascends stage]