

“Introduction to Ephesians 2”

Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity – Oct 4, 2020

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The big picture: Chapter 2

1. In Chapter one, we were given this glowing account of God’s triune action in drawing us into his divine embrace:
 - Father: chooses us and adopts us
 - Son: redeems us, sins forgiven
 - Holy Spirit: seals us, guarantees our final salvation
2. The second half of the chapter is devoted to Paul’s thanksgiving and prayer for the church: prays for hope of our calling, riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and God’s incomparably great power for those who believe.
3. Chapter 2 then explores the wonder of our salvation in more detail.
 - In verses 1-10: transformation of our lives on the vertical plane
 - In verses 11-22: transformation on the horizontal plane
4. Next week, get into the details of the first few verses. Today, overview of three themes.

Three themes

1. **“Children of” or “sons of” (v.2, 3)**
 - v.2 (“disobedience”); v.3 (“wrath”); cf. 1:5 (Father). “Sons of disobedience” again in Eph 5:6.
 - “Son” is *hios*; “child” is *teknon*. Semitic (Hebrew/Jewish) way of referring to people whose behavior is characterized by a certain quality or relationship.
 - Ezek 30:5 – “sons of the covenant”
 - Lk 16:8 – “sons of the light”
 - Lk 20:34 – “sons of this age”
 - 1 Thess 5:5 – “children of the day”

- The idea is that you are a child of whatever/whomever you look like or resemble reveals who you are by nature.
- This creates a major problem for us, because God calls each of us to live godly, righteous, loving lives, and yet we are born into this world with our moral compass default set to sin. We are “children of disobedience” and we act like it.

Jeremiah 12:23

“Can an Ethiopian change his skin or a leopard its spots? (Obvious answer is?) Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.”

- We can’t do it. Our sin is rooted deep in our hearts. And that’s the bad news that makes the good news so necessary and so good!

Ezekiel 36:26-27

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”

- God goes to the root of our disobedience. He takes the heart that wants to live autonomously, independent of God and others and He changes it back to what it was originally intended to be. He does this through the Holy Spirit, whom He transplants inside of us. God changes the root of our nature, which, in turn, changes the fruit of our behavior. Jesus said in Mt 12:33: “Make a tree good and its fruit will be good”.
- This is what the NT calls the “new birth”: being born again, regenerated, made a new creation in Christ, receiving the sperm of God in us, made His child (John 3, Titus 3:5-6, 2 Cor 5:17; 1 John 3:8-9).
- So, back to Eph 2: God takes “children of disobedience” like you and me and miraculously transforms us into “children of God”, “children of obedience”, characterized by holiness, righteousness and love.
- Who does this work? God. Who gets all the credit? Not us, but God. Eph 2:8-9: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.”

- In you, God has turned a child of sin, shame and disobedience into a child of love, holiness and obedience. Two things to underscore here: 1. As a follower of Jesus, you are not the person you were before becoming a follower of Jesus (the main message of Eph 1-3). 2. You now have the power through the Holy Spirit to live like the new person you are, so use that power continually! (the message of Eph 4-6).

2. “Walk” (v.2)

- “Walk” is *peripateo*. The idea of life being a “walk” is another Semitic concept. It’s used to describe a person’s general conduct or lifestyle. Lev 18:3: “you shall not walk as they walk in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you.”
- “Walk” is an interesting metaphor. Can you think of some ways in which walking is an apt metaphor for living?
- The word is used 7x in the letter to the Ephesians. If want to pull out your bible and follow along, we will briefly look at each occurrence. The first one you know already, v.2:

2:2 – “trespasses and sins” 2:10 – “good works” (*inclusio*)

4:17 – “as Gentiles walk” 4:1 – in a manner “worthy of your calling”

5:2 – “in love”

5:15 – “as unwise” 5:8 – “as children of light”
5:15 – “as wise”

- Two observations:
 1. Whose child you are will determine which path you walk
 - This doesn’t mean that Christ followers don’t sometimes stray off the path. They do. But they come back.

- It does mean that, generally speaking, the path we take gives a good indication of whose child we are.

1 John 3:8-9

“The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.”

2. Whom you walk with will determine which path you take

- “The only difference between who you are today and who you will be five years from now are the books you read and the people you hang out with.”
- Brain researchers are only now discovering how our brains are hardwired for attaching to those who are close to us. We become like those we surround ourselves with.

Proverbs 13:30

“Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.”

- Sometimes we think we are the exception to this general rule. We rationalize: “I’m strong in my faith; I can change these guys.”
- Your closest friends, those you spend intentional time with: that’s where you need to be selective. You’re going to become like them.
- Ultimately, our walking partner is the triune God. We are able to walk with God because He has sent His Son to walk the path before us and put His Spirit inside of us, so we can walk in step with Him continuously.

3. **“Once...now” (v.1, 4)**

- A common literary device used by Paul to contrast what we were like before we knew Christ and what we are like now that God has drawn us into

relationship with Himself: Einst und Jetzt; “once, formerly and presently, now.”

Col 1:21-22

And you, who **once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has **now** reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.”**

- There are two “once and now” formulas used in this chapter. The first is found in vv.1-10 and the second in vv.11-19.

Eph 2:1-10

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. ⁴ 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. ⁸ 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.

- The second “once...now” passage in Eph 2 is to work on at home.

Eph 2:11-19

¹¹ Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹² remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making

peace,¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

- The interconnectedness of these three themes:
 - We are born into this world with the default of our moral compass set to sin; in the language of Eph 2, we are “children of disobedience”. That is who we once were. And because of that, we walked according to the values, norms of our ambient culture, the base inclinations of our fallen nature and subject to the spiritual powers at work around us. Three things: world, flesh and devil shaped us into certain types of persons.
 - But now we are different! God mercifully wooed us to himself through the preaching of the Gospel. He put His Spirit in us to restore the family image, changing our hearts, transforming our fundamental character from “children of disobedience” into “children of God” who walk in righteousness, love and truth.
 - The metamorphosis of a butterfly beautifully captures this spiritual metamorphosis.

Take away

- Ephesians 2 is going to help you answer some foundational questions:
 - First, Who are you? The question of _____. Ephesians tells us: You were a child of disobedience, distorted by power influences to become something other than what God intended you to be. Now, you are a child of God, loved by Him, sealed with His Spirit, redeemed in Christ.
 - Second, Which path are you walking? Question of direction. Are you on the path Jesus charted for us? Or have strayed some and need to come back? If so, don't wait; turn around.

- Third, What has God done in your life? Question of _____.
Are you celebrating His work in you continuously, leaning into your new self, spending time in prayer and in God's word so you can become increasingly like the One whose image you bear?
- God loves us with such a vast, immeasurable ocean of affection and love. He has done everything necessary to catch up into the divine embrace to share the intimate fellowship of the holy Trinity: Father, Son and Spirit.