

Ephesians 2:1-10
Week 3
EASTER - 4/4/21

Introduction

Ephesians 2. (Bibles on the pews - pg 568)

HVAC. Back around the end of October, beginning of November, you know, right around the time when it starts getting Charlotte cold, like mid 40s, randomly one day our thermostat stopped working. We have one of those NEST smart ones, and it just turned off. Randomly. Boom no power.

Now a broken thermostat or furnace is bad anytime in the winter, but especially adds a new level of freak out when you have a 7 mo old baby at home. Now, being the wonderful control freak that I am, I don't just call a repairman. No, no, no. Too simple. So instead I head to google, do a couple of hours of research, become confident that I know the problem, head to Home Depot at 8pm at night thinking we just need a new thermostat. Replace the thermostat, go to turn it on and....nothing. My wife is very patient with me.

UGH. Fine. I'll call the guy. Call a guy. Pay the extra fee that comes with the late Friday night visit, even though I wouldn't have had to if I just called him right away when it died at 3pm. It's fine. He comes out, is there for about 2 hours, tells us - oh it's just a battery problem. Charge the nest for 24 hours, all good.

Sounds good. So we do that. It works!....for about 2 days. Shuts off again. Call another guy, he has the same thought - just charge it. I tell him - look kind sir. We did that. It's something else. He starts looking at it again.

Finally, he finds that we have a bad wire that is tripping in our system telling the furnace it's flooding and shutting the whole thing down. 4 days, \$150 bucks, and 2 headaches later, we finally have it fixed.

Here's the point → **A misdiagnosed problem always leads to a wrong solution.**

Here's why this matters for us → **We have a misdiagnosed problem in our world today.**

As we think about ourselves, as we think about the world at large. I think we can all agree - things are not okay. Things are not right. Our world is not as it should be, but we misdiagnose the problem - both collectively and individually:

- We wrongly think - the problem is only power structures and systems and inequality, we just need to dismantle those, then the world will be right.
- The problem is these people who don't share the same political beliefs as me so we just need to get them all to finally come to the light and see how foolish they are all being.
- The problem is that my kids are disobedient and rebellious, the problem is that my spouse just isn't giving me what I need, the problem is that my friends just aren't there for me enough...
- The problem is that I'm just not fulfilled in my career, I'm just not making enough money, my house isn't big enough, my car isn't nice enough...

And underlying all of these smaller wrong diagnoses is the **larger false belief** that men and women, at our core, are essentially good people, and it's problems "*out there*" or around us that are just getting in the way of us being good as we are and who we were meant to be. We just need to fix some things out there, maybe fix just a couple of loose screws in here, and we'll be good to go.

We misdiagnose the problem, and we don't understand the solution.

The late pastor Eugene Peterson, in his fantastic book *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, says it this way - **“We have been told the lie ever since we can remember: ‘human beings are basically nice and good.’ Everyone is born equal and innocent and self-sufficient....How we can keep on believing this after so many centuries of evidence to the contrary is difficult to comprehend, but nothing we do and nothing anyone else does to us seems to disenchant us from the spell of the lie. We keep expecting things to get better somehow. And when they don’t, we whine like spoiled children who don’t get their way.”**

(Peterson said it, not me. I would never call us spoiled children. I think you’re all wonderful)

Peterson goes on to say that the first step for any of us towards God is a “painful realization” - that we are not in fact good and the world is not in fact good.

And so what I want to do today with just a few minutes here in **Ephesians 2**, is to help some of us get this painful realization. I want to show you the true diagnosis the Bible gives for you and for our world, and then in light of that diagnosis the hope that is offered on this glorious Easter Sunday.

Pray.

Diagnosis: The Problem

Let’s start with the **diagnosis**.

Ephesians 2:1-10

1 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.

There are three parts to our diagnosis:

1. We are disobedient to God.

Before we even get to how we are disobedient to God, let’s talk about how we can’t even follow our own rules and laws. For instance:

- Most of us would say that it’s wrong to **speak poorly** about someone else, right? Gossiping is not a good thing. AND...we’ve all done it. It’s wrong to speak bad about a friend when they’re not there, and we’ve all spoken poorly about a friend when they’re not there.
- Most of us would say it’s wrong to **steal**. We shouldn’t steal. And yet we do it all the time - we steal movies online through illegal downloads. We steal money and time from our employer by being clocked in but watching netflix from the couch.

We can’t even keep our own laws we make for ourselves or for others. Now, branch that out to the God of the universe. The one who created all things, who designed life and how it should go. Generally if you are the one who created something, you know how it’s supposed to work, right? God in His Word has given us His right and good design for human flourishing, and we rebel against that. We are disobedient towards that.

The word the Bible uses for our disobedience of God’s design is called **sin**.

I'll give you just a few examples:

- God's design is to be content with what we have, but we covet and desire the possessions of our neighbors and our friends all the time. I've never wanted a Tesla so bad in my life since moving to Charlotte.
- God's design is to be honest, but we lie. We stretch the truth in our stories to make them funnier, we hide the truth from our friends even though we promise we're just protecting their feelings.
- God's design is to not murder, but Jesus says if we hate others, we are just as guilty of murder ourselves.

We're disobedient. We choose sin.

Okay, maybe you're tracking with me at this point. Maybe you're willing to agree - sometimes I do some bad things. I will own up to this one - I'm disobedient. But that's not the full diagnosis.

If you stop the diagnosis here, the solution then becomes simply **behavior modification**. If the problem is - I don't do what God wants me to do, then we wrongly think the answer is to just stop doing that stuff and start doing the right stuff. But simply changing some behaviors, cleaning up our act, or following the rules first doesn't work. If you've ever tried to stop a bad habit or start a good habit, you know how impossible it can be to change our behaviors.

But behavior modification is also not the message of Jesus. It's not the Christian Gospel. That's not the good news offered to us on Resurrection Sunday.

In order for us to see that, we have to go deeper into the diagnosis. It gets worse before it gets better.

2. We are dead in sin.

The picture the Bible paints is not that we are morally good and occasionally mess up. It is not that we are morally neutral and sometimes we choose good and sometimes we choose bad.

Ephesians 2:1 says - **And you were dead in the trespasses and sins**. I did my due diligence as a pastor, I looked up the Greek word, it does in fact mean "dead."

We are not neutral. Nothing in us wants God, goes after God, would choose God. We have a total inability to choose God. We do not want Him. Here's the thing about dead people - dead people can't make themselves alive.

Life Preserver.

Maybe you've heard this analogy before - Salvation is like God throwing you a life preserver. You're drowning in the sea, struggling for air, trying to stay afloat. God sees you, He throws you a life preserver, and to become a Christian simply means you need to grab that life preserver, say "yes" to God, He'll pull you safely in. Great picture, completely untrue.

Here's what's actually true - you're not struggling to stay afloat, you're dead. You're not at top gasping for breath. You're laying lifeless at the bottom of the sea. And salvation is God reaching down, pulling you up, pumping oxygen into your lungs, and making you alive.

Behavior modification won't work - you're dead! Trying harder won't work - you're dead! Being a "good person" won't work - you're dead!

In case that isn't enough, I need to add one more layer to our diagnosis:

3. We are doomed to wrath.

3...and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

God is holy. God is perfect. He is righteous and true and good. He is totally separate from all that is evil. He created the world and He sets the standard for what is right and good in the world.

God is also just. He cannot let sin go unpunished. He always acts justly.

Because of His holiness, God cannot dwell in the presence of sinful people. And because of His justice, God cannot let sin go unpunished.

So that means because we are sinful at our core, we are under the righteous wrath of God.

We don't need saving just from ourselves or from our sin, we also need to be saved from the wrath of God.

Now maybe you're thinking - But I thought God was loving? That wrathful stuff was the Old Testament, New Testament God is kind, caring, compassionate. It doesn't seem very loving to judge people like you're saying God does.

But it's incongruent logic to say that because God has righteous judgment, He is not loving. In fact, righteous judgment is a part of God's love.

For example - 2 weeks ago, a gunman in Boulder, CO tragically and horrifically took the lives of 10 people. Motive aside, gun control arguments aside, we know that fact. He's being charged with murder for all 10. Let's say they walk through the trial, the jury finds him guilty. And then at the sentencing the judge says - you're guilty, but I'm going to give you a pass and you can go free.

That might seem loving and gracious to that one man. But you know who it's not loving and gracious to? The families of those 10 individuals. The greater Boulder community where this man would be free to live again.

True love necessitates justice. We have sinned and rebelled against God. We have sinned against each other. Love necessitates justice. It's not an unrighteous revenge God is enacting. It's not an outburst of rage. He will punish sin and sinners justly and rightly.

That's the true diagnosis of our state without God. We are disobedient, dead, and doomed.

"But God...."

If you're new, welcome to church! Don't give a strange look to the person who invited you just yet, I promise this is going somewhere. I need you to feel the weight of this - how broken and messed up you are and our world is to understand the good news of the two words I'm about to read.

Two of the greatest words in the Bible.

We are disobedient, dead, doomed....

Ephesians 2:4

4 But God....

We were down for the count.

We were running around trying to fix ourselves.
We were looking for anyone or anything to satisfy us and give us life.
We were looking for anything that offered rest for our weary souls. **But God....**

We were running life on our own trying to be our own god.
We were losing hope at the brokenness around us.
We were beat up by false promises of salvation by politicians, by friends, by boyfriends and girlfriends, by our spouse, by our parents. **But God....**

We were running away from God.
We were dead in our sin.
We were without hope.
We were without grace.
We were without a promise of eternity with God.
We were under His righteous judgment and wrath.
We were disobedient, dead, and doomed....

BUT GOD.

This is the message of Easter! Jesus is dead in the grave - BUT GOD.

Look at what God has done for us:

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.

BUT GOD, being rich in mercy, full of great love:

- Sent Jesus to live the perfect, holy, righteous life we could not live.
- Put Jesus in our place on the cross, who took the full punishment we deserved, took on the full wrath of God, took our sin, and yet gave us His righteousness.
- So that we could be forgiven of our sins and made alive forever with Christ Jesus.

Paul says this is so crazy, so beautiful it's hard to describe - He says God is showing **"the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."**

Transition → You want to know why Easter Sunday is a big deal to Christians?

It's not because we like wearing pastels. It's not because we love a good Reese's easter egg (although I very much do).
It's not because we are big fans of the easter bunny (trust me - people dressed up freak me out).

It's because if we don't have today, we have nothing.

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, the Bible says the world should pity Christians more than anyone else. 1 Corinthians 15 says if Christ is still dead - our preaching is in vain, our faith is in vain, we're still disobedient, dead, and doomed in our sins.

But here's the truth church → **Jesus is not dead!** The tomb is not full. Death has not won. Satan has not gotten the last word. Sin has met its match. The story doesn't end with Good Friday!

THE GRAVE IS EMPTY.

And we believe that our only hope - as dead, disobedient, and doomed sinners is that death wasn't the end of Jesus' story, so it doesn't have to be the end of our story.

- That we are disobedient, but there's an offer of forgiveness, or being washed clean and made white as snow.
- That we are dead, but there's an offer of life now and forever. An offer of resurrection with Christ.
- That we are doomed, but there's an offer to have the debt of our sin paid for. To be not only no longer under the wrath of God, but to be welcomed into His forever family as His sons and daughters!

CHRIST IS NOT DEAD! HE'S ALIVE. HE IS RISEN!

The gospel, the good news we celebrate today - is that you're dead in your sins but Christ has come and he rose again, and we can now be forgiven and raised to new life with Him forever.

How? Ephesians 2:8-9:

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.

Faith. Faith. That's it. Faith.

The way to salvation is not:

- Make yourself better or clean yourself up.
- Do some right things or follow some rules.
- Attend church, serve the poor, and be in a small group.

Heaven is not full of good people, it's full of saved people.

GOSPEL: And the only way to be saved is through faith in Jesus Christ. Acknowledging I'm a sinner in need of a Savior. God is good. I am not. I need a Savior. Jesus Christ came, lived a perfect life that I cannot and have not lived, yet died the death I and my sins deserved, He took God's wrath reserved for me upon Himself. Went to the grave. Yet did not stay dead. Three days later He rose from the grave defeating satan, sin, and death. I want His forgiveness, I want Him to be Lord and King over my life. I want my sins forgiven, a life of following God, and eternity with Jesus.

And some of you need to believe that good news and surrender to King Jesus today. You need to give up trying to save yourself, fix yourself, clean yourself up. You need to give up trying to run your own life. You need to turn from your sin and throw yourself on the mercy of Christ.

If that's you. If you feel the Spirit moving in your heart and you've never surrendered your life to Christ, we're going to have some folks in the back who would love to talk with you about what it means to be a Christian, pray with you.

If you are a Christian, let today be a reminder - be refreshed in and remember the good news that the grave is empty and Jesus is alive. Your sins have been forgiven and you're a part of His family forever!

Pray (banner comes down, band comes up).

Baptisms Intro

We're going to move now into a time of response through worship and celebrating some baptisms.

What you're about to hear is two real life stories of people who have experienced the saving grace of Jesus. Two tangible representations of what we just talked about. People who searched high and low to find what only Christ could give. Who, by the power of the Holy Spirit, came to the realization - I cannot save myself, I need a Savior and a Redeemer. Who trusted in Christ for forgiveness of sins and life forever with God.

So we're going to sing some, then you'll hear their stories through video, and then we'll baptize them. This doesn't save them. This act of baptism does not save them. They are saved by faith in Jesus. This is a physical representation of the reality that they are now forgiven and washed clean by the blood of Jesus.

They are declaring publicly before their church family and all of you - Jesus is Savior and Lord.

And when they come up out of the water, I want you to hoop and holler like you never have before - If this isn't worth celebrating, nothing is.

So let's stand, worship, and get ready to celebrate Jesus together!