

But God

Ephesians 2:1-5

Introduction

Open your Bibles to the book of Ephesians.

Read Ephesians 2:1-5.

Pray.

How many of you have ever watched the popular TV show, Fixer Upper with Chip and Joanna Gaines? They take run down houses and fix them up and give them to their new owners with spectacular flair.

Everyone loves a good fixer upper story right? And the worse the house looks before, the better the show will be.

This morning, we are going to look at what God has to say about who we were outside of Christ, about who those who are not saved are right now, and we are going to see what He did about it.

Here at Clements, we are passionate about seeing lives transformed by the gospel.

We don't transform houses, but we do point people to Jesus and through His blood and by the power of the resurrection, we see people become "brand new".

The book of Ephesians is packed with golden nuggets of truth but before Paul gets to those things, he wants us to remember who we were before Christ.

Before he gets to **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- not by works, so that no one can boast.", he wants us to remember.

Before he gets to **3:10**, "His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms"

Before he gets to **3:17-20**, "And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen." Before he gets to this, he wants us to remember who we were outside of Christ.

Before he gets to **4:1**, "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.", he wants us to remember.

Before he gets to **5:2**, "walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.", he wants us to remember.

Before he gets to **6:10-11**, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.”, he wants us to remember our state when we were separated from God.

Caution: This message will be uncomfortable for some. This is not a popular message.

Bro. Fred taught me to, “preach the word and love the people”.

If we are going to lead people to Christ and see their lives transformed by the gospel and raise them up to be disciples, then we have to tell the truth **in love!**

Think about doctors today: If they misdiagnose the disease, then they will mis-prescribe the cure.

If you are here today and you have never placed your faith in Jesus, then I’m here to tell you that you have a terminal disease called sin. The only cure for your sin is the Cross of Christ.

Here’s a truth: You cannot accept the good news of salvation until you accept the bad news of sin.

Our life outside of Christ is the black velvet to the diamond of the gospel.

4 Truths of Who We Were Before Christ.

I. We Were Dead.

Ephesians 2:1

Paul is very pointed here as he begins this verse, “As for you... YOU”

Every person on earth has this deadness in their story. Either you were dead before Jesus saved you or you are still dead this morning.

We were not physically dead but we were spiritually dead.

The problem of humanity is not that we are mostly good people who occasionally do bad things, no, we are born spiritually dead, and we need a resurrection! We need to be born again!

It has been well said that Jesus didn’t come to make bad people good but to make dead people alive.

Read Ephesians 2:1a, “Dead in your transgressions and sins”

Transgressions: this Greek word means a willful disobedience or to cross a known boundary.

Sins: this Greek word means to miss the mark. It is an archery term. You either miss the target or you don’t have the power to get it there.

Romans 3:10 says, “As it is written:

“There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”

We were dead.

II. We Were Followers of Satan

Ephesians 2:2

Read Ephesians 2:2a, “in which you used to live” Remember, Paul is writing to the church; he is writing to saved people. He is reminding them of who they were (past tense) outside of Christ.

As believers, may we never forget that we were just like the lost world before we got saved. We must keep this before us if we are going to be effective in reaching the lost.

I heard a story of a lady that took a mission trip to Rwanda, where an unspeakable genocide was carried out by one people group on another. She said, “We drove into the mountains to a Tutsi village that had been wiped out during the 1994 genocide. One Rwandan man stood at the very spot where his family and hundreds of people had been slaughtered. Through a translator, he described the horror of what he had experienced that day. I felt sick. Afterward, we held hands on that spot and prayed. I’ll never forget when our team leader began her prayer: ‘God, forgive me. The wickedness that drove men to commit these crimes is the same sin in my heart. I am no better, no closer to salvation, **but for your grace.**’”

An old song said it best, “Where would I be, you only know. I’m glad you see through eyes of love. A hopeless case, an empty place, if not for grace.”

As we take the gospel to those who are far from Jesus, let’s remember that we would be there if not for His grace. Let’s see them through the eyes of Jesus.

Read Ephesians 2:2b, “when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.”

We were followers of Satan.

1 John 5:19 says, “We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

This is Satan’s domain and those who are outside of Christ follow his leading.

H.B. Charles Jr. said, “The sinner cannot say yes to God. But he cannot say no to sin.”

Every person is born with a sin nature and they are enslaved to sin.

Parents understand this! You do not have to teach your child to sin.

Have you ever had to sit your child down and say: “Son, come here. You are being too kind and sharing your toys too much. Now, the next time a child tries to take your toy, don’t share it, but pop him between the eyes and say ‘That’s mine!’”

No, you haven't! They learn that on their own.

Romans 5:12, "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned"

Takeaway: You're not a sinner because you sin. You sin because you're a sinner.

III. We Were Followers of the Flesh

Read Ephesians 2:3a

Apart from Christ, we are enslaved to self.

In our world today, it says take care of yourself, give yourself a break, pamper yourself, you deserve what your heart desires.

All the while, the Scripture is shouting, "Crucify yourself".

Outside of Christ, we were enslaved to the lustful desires of our flesh. We followed its desires and thoughts.

When you look into the lost world, you see abuse of sex, money, and power. And at the root of it all is this one thing: self. The flesh is selfish!

Those outside of Christ have no power to overcome the cravings of the flesh.

IV. We Were Deserving of Wrath

Read Ephesians 2:3b

Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death"

Our sin that we are absolutely guilty of has condemned us. **We stand guilty as charged, and we stand condemned.**

BUT GOD...

Ephesians 2:4-5

John Stott calls the greatest two syllables ever spoken in the English language: But God...

The problem for the sinner became the solution.

We were hopelessly lost and there was nothing we could do.

Isaiah 64:6 says, "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and **all our righteous acts are like filthy rags**; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away."

Read Ephesians 2:4 (ESV)

Titus 3:5 says, "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy."

Charles Spurgeon said, "Too many think lightly of sin, and therefore think lightly of the Savior. He who has

stood before his God, convicted and condemned, with the rope about his neck, is the man to weep for joy when he is pardoned, to hate the evil which has been forgiven him, and to live to the honor of the Redeemer by whose blood he has been cleansed.”

We were dead. BUT GOD!
We were followers of Satan. BUT GOD!
We were followers of the flesh. BUT GOD!
We were deserving of wrath. BUT GOD!

Romans 5:6-8, “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

In the world, we love IF the object of our love is lovely. But if it is not, we do not love it.

Simple example: how many of you love a good steak? Now, how many of you love a steak that sat in the back of the fridge too long and when you open it up, it smacks you in the face?

God loves us even when our life reeks of death.

Invitation

If you are here today, and your life is not in line with the Lord, there is hope in Jesus. If you find yourself

fighting an uphill battle trying to earn the Lord’s favor, there is rest here.

If you are here and you would be honest enough to say “I’m trapped in a prison of sin and I need help.” Jesus will meet you here.