

What Kind of Church? – Part 2 – Ephesians 2

I know some of you know the story of Sarah Winchester. Her husband had acquired a fortune by manufacturing and selling rifles. After he died of influenza in 1918, she moved to San Jose, California. Because of her grief and her long-time interest in spiritism, Sarah sought out a medium to contact her dead husband. The medium told her, *"As long as you keep building your home, you will never face death."*

Sarah believed the spiritist, so she bought an unfinished 17-room mansion and started to expand it. The project continued until she died at the age of 85. It cost 5 million dollars at a time when workmen earned 50 cents a day. The mansion had 150 rooms, 13 bathrooms, 2,000 doors, 47 fireplaces, and 10,000 windows. And Mrs. Winchester left enough materials so that they could have continued building for another 80 years. (*Our Daily Bread*, April 2, 1994.)

Nobody wants to die. We all try to live as long as we can. Even when we know that, as Christians, we will be rewarded with Heaven in the next life, we try to put off that inevitable end. Nobody wants to be dead. But did you know that some people are walking around living their lives, but they are dead? No, I'm not talking about the walking dead or the undead zombies you see in movies. The Apostle Paul describes unsaved people, unbelievers, as dead. And the problem with dead people is that they don't know they are dead. They don't feel dead. They can't see that they are dead. It's sort of like people that are stupid. They don't know they are stupid. And while I can't really back that up with scripture, I invite you to grab your Bibles and turn to the second chapter of Ephesians where I can scripturally back up the idea that unbelieving people are spiritually dead.

Again, this one long paragraph, like the one we read in chapter one, is one long sentence in the original Greek. Yes, Paul is at it again with the long sentences and extended thoughts. But we are continuing our look at what kind of church we should be this year and this passage helps us with that. Let's read it in **Ephesians 2:1-10**.

"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live 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. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who

is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 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. 10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

Like I said before, the problem with dead people is that they don’t know they are dead. I remember when I was a little boy, my dad took me to the funeral home with him to meet with a family who had a loved one to die. We got there early before anyone else and were able to see the man in the casket. I had never seen a dead body before but my dad lifted me up to be able to see him. I think I asked some question about why the guy was just lying there. Why doesn’t he get up? And Pop explained to me that he was dead. He didn’t have the power to get up anymore. You can shout, scream, beg or threaten. That dead person can’t hear you or feel you.

That is how unsaved people are spiritually. Have you ever tried to talk to an unbeliever about spiritual things? They have no interest in any of that. They get bored quick when you start talking about being holy or sanctification or even God’s grace or coming to church. And they are powerless to be interested in that stuff without God’s grace that draws them to Him.

What we see in this passage is a thumbnail sketch of the Gospel. He starts off saying that we are all sinners. Just like it says in **Romans 3:23**. “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” And look at **verse 3** again. He says, “*Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.*” That’s what it means in **Romans 6:23** that the wages of sin is death. What we deserve for our sin is the wrath of God which is Hell. That’s bad news. We are all sinners and we all deserve Hell. But he goes in **verse 4** to say, “*But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead...*” That’s another way to say **John 3:16** that God loved us so much that He sent Jesus to die for us. That’s the good news! That’s the Gospel!

But the unsaved are dead to that until God makes us alive. So, you can preach and teach and scold and explain and talk until you are blue but until God reveals Himself to them, you might as well preach to a corpse. Now, the point of that is not saying, “*Don’t preach to them.*” The point of that is showing the power of God to make people who were born dead

spiritually alive. My friend **Scott Parrish** said that Jesus didn't die to make bad people good. He came to make dead people alive!

How many of you are parents? Now, how many of you had to teach your kids to lie? Did you have to teach them to be selfish? Did you sit them down and explain how to disobey? Of course not. Kids are born knowing that stuff. By nature, God says, we are the children of wrath. We are born that way. We weren't educated that way. We weren't trained that way. We were born that way in iniquity and in sin. W.A. Criswell said there's a black drop in their blood, meaning that we are born sinners. Thanks a lot, Adam and Eve.

One time I read of a flood in India, and the whole country was covered with the boiling, turbulent, rushing waters. On a little island in the path of the flood, there were gathered there a few inhabitants, and among them a hunter. And there came onto the island out of the flood animals as they were able to make their way to the little bit of dry ground. And as the little group was there huddled together on the island with the swirling waters around, a tiger swam out of the stream and climbed up, wet and shivering and afraid, cowed and timid. The tiger swam to the island and at one end crouched down there afraid. The hunter took his gun and walked down to the end of the island and shot it. What a cruel thing to do! That tiger, so cowed, and so cold, and so wet, and so afraid; that hunter go down there and mercilessly and ruthlessly slay the thing. But he was a tiger, and how could you go to sleep on the island and have any peace and any security? Now, he's tame and afraid and cowering, but tomorrow, he's a vicious man-eater and hunter, and the gunman slew it. That's us by nature.

By nature, we are children of wrath [Ephesians 2:3]. We are corpses [Ephesians 2:1]. We are dead. *"Preacher, what an awful way, what a terrible thing God's presentation of the unconverted, the unregenerate human heart."* But that's the Word of God. *"Then, Preacher, how can a man ever be saved?"* He can't – not in himself. But look at the next verse: *"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions..."* How could a dead man believe? How could a dead man ever be saved? He couldn't! There's no such a thing. No dead man ever raised himself to life. No dead man ever rose to believe and to trust in God. (W. A. Criswell Sermon Library | Our Resurrection from the Dead) (wacriswell.com)

I remember going to Mexico on a mission trip with Jody Kennedy years ago and I sat and listened to a very passionate Mexican preacher give his message one Sunday morning. I knew what passage of scripture he was reading. I could tell he was a good speaker and he

was excited and you could tell he loved his people. But I was dead to what he was saying because I don't speak Spanish. It did me no good. I wanted to hear what he was saying but I couldn't understand him.

Paul says in **1 Corinthians 2** that, *"The person without the (Holy) Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit."* And the Holy Spirit only lives in people who are already saved. So, we are saved by God's grace and through faith just like it says in **verse 8**. And do you see that both of those are God's gifts to us? God gives us the grace and the faith. **Romans 12:3** says that God gives us all a measure of faith.

So, what does all this mean for Christ Fellowship today? As we sit here in church, a family of believers saved by grace and through faith. We have nothing to brag about since it was God's idea, His plan, His sacrifice, His grace, His faith. So, what are we supposed to do now? Well, let's look at one more piece of this puzzle that Paul gives us in **verse 6**. *"And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms ..."* I don't know about you but I don't feel like I am sitting in the heavenly realms these days. I look around here in Chico, Texas and I see dirty, dusty and dangerous 18-wheelers. I look around this country that used to be so great and everywhere I look I see perversion and pain and poverty. This doesn't feel anything like what I had hoped the heavenlies were going to be like. Well, obviously this isn't Heaven but Paul is not saying that once we get saved, we go to Heaven right away. He is saying that as redeemed, delivered, quickened (KJV), saved and alive children of the One, True King, this is not our home.

This place where we are is temporary and will soon be destroyed so there is no reason to try to be comfortable here nor to expect to be comfortable here. Nowhere in scripture is there any indication that God is going to bless us with comfort in this life. This life is temporal and temporary. So, while we are here, our jobs are to be holy. We are to live as residents of Heaven not residents of this dirty old world.

I'm sorry but God never promises to heal your disease or pay your bills. Sometimes He does by His incomparable grace, as it says in **verse 7**. But what He does promise is that He has overcome this world (John 16) and so we shouldn't be afraid. And because He has overcome this world and this world is not our home and because we are residents of Heaven, our lives should reflect that.

Do you know what the world does? The world, in their loneliness and heartache, in their greed and selfishness, the world likes to watch movies that we call inappropriate. The world likes to listen to music that glorifies adultery and sex before marriage. The world likes to go to the bar and self-medicate. The world likes to use language that is crude and rude. And why wouldn't they? If this world is all there is, live it up, live it down, live in the gutter. Who cares? But residents of the heavenlies don't look like that or act like that or talk like that. We are nothing close to perfect and we don't act like we are perfect and we sure don't act like we are better than those that do those things. Because, left to ourselves, we would do the same things.

But God, in His great power, has lifted us out of that kind of lifestyle and we have repented or turned away from that lifestyle and the difference should be very obvious to the rest of the world. And if it is not obvious to the rest of the world, then either something is wrong with our relationship with the Lord or we don't have a relationship with Him at all.

Look at **verse 10** really quick. I'm going to close with this. **Verse 10** says, "*For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works...*" God's handiwork WILL look like God. We were all created in His image but true believers are God's special handiwork that looks like Him and acts like Him and loves like Him and forgives like Him. Does that describe you?

Music

Let's bow our heads and close our eyes for just a minute and really listen to that small, still voice of God's that will right now either encourage you to continue what you are doing or convict you of where you need to improve in how you live your life. That doesn't mean that you need to try harder. That means you need to avail yourself of God's power that has raised you from the dead to live in new life according to His will and His word.

If you can't hear that still, small voice then maybe you don't have that relationship I'm talking about. Maybe you're a good person. You go to church. You got baptized years ago. You are nice to people and dogs. Good for you. But if you don't have a relationship with God through His Son Jesus then you can't go to Heaven. You need to repent of all your many sins. Turn away from that old life. Ask God to forgive you of those sins and to cleanse you of all that nasty stuff. Then ask God to be your Lord and Savior, knowing that whatever He says to do, you are His slave and you will do it. Your life won't be perfect. It may get more difficult. But you can have peace and joy in this life plus the assurance of life in the Heavenly realms when you die. Do that right now as the music plays.