

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

Back from the Dead

Ephesians 2:1-10

1998

Introduction

1. Story of man in hospital who was raised to life (doctor prayed for him)
2. In Chapter 1, Paul expounded on the blessings poured out by Jesus Christ. We're not just servants of God; we're of the part of bride of Christ. In the last half of chapter one, Paul prayed for the Ephesians:
 - a. That they might know God - Eph 1:17
 - b. That they might know the hope of His calling - Eph 1:18a
 - c. That they might know the glorious riches of His inheritance in the saints - Eph 1:18
 - d. That they might know His incomparably great power toward believers - Eph 1:19
 - Demonstrated in raising Jesus from the dead
 - Demonstrated in raising spiritually dead people and making us "alive together with Christ" - Eph 2:1-7
3. Chapter 2. In order that we might appreciate more fully the grace and power that was at work in our conversion, Paul now takes us on a journey highlighting our condition BEFORE Christ--we were spiritually dead.

I Our Condition Apart From Christ (2:1-3)

A. Dead (the living dead)

"Dead" in the sense of being "separated" from God

"Physical death" is a separation of body and spirit (James 2:26).

Similarly, "spiritual death" describes our separation from God, due to sin.

Isa 59:1-2 "Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear."

Rom 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Paul doesn't proceed to the topic of grace and salvation until he makes it absolutely clear what our condition is prior to receiving Christ

1. In our transgressions (trespasses)

"Transgressions" = lapses, a false step, a blunder (deviations from the straight and narrow path) "

2. In our sins

"Sins" = inclinations, thoughts, words, and deeds which "miss the mark" of glorifying God (Hendriksen)

B. Living after the pattern of:

1. This world

Rom 12:2 "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will."

"Expresses a whole social value-system which is alien to God" John Stott

a. The moral condition of those still "in the world" is described in Eph 4:17-19

Eph 4:17-19 "So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more."

Sounds pretty much like our own present generation, doesn't it?

1 Jn 2:15-17 "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world-- the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does-- comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever."

2. The devil -- This is none other than Satan himself!

Described as the great "Adversary" (the word "Satan" literally means "adversary")

1 Pet 5:8 "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."

Described as the spirit of the world

1 Cor 2:12 "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us."

a. Ruler of the kingdom of the air

Eph 6:12 "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

b. Spirit at work in the disobedient

Those still under his influence are called the "sons of disobedience", because they serve him rather than obey God!

3. The flesh

Not merely the body but the whole man oriented away from God and towards its own selfish concerns.

a. Gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature

1. The "cravings of our sinful nature" are those "unrighteous desires, that belong to and are spawned by the flesh" (Hendriksen)
The longings and impulses of the self-centered life

Rom 8:5-9 "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."

Gal 5:17-21 "For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."

Apart from the transforming work of Christ, we are dominated by self-centered passions and our desires and thoughts

b. Following its desires and thoughts

1. The "desires and thoughts" would include "all kinds of hostile, self-righteous, and/or immoral plans and thoughts, which finally result in wicked deeds"

Even our ability to intellectually think and reason are clouded by the effects of self-centeredness.

C. Objects of God's wrath

Rom 3:19 "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God."

1. The fruit of our nature

Even religiously devout people before conversion are "children of wrath"

2. All are "children of wrath" (or "sons of disobedience") "by nature"...

a. This "nature" is something we are born with

b. This "nature" is something we cultivate

BUT!

I was hopelessly self-centered, BUT ...

I was destined for eternal punishment for my sin, BUT ...

I was lonely and crippled by sin, BUT ...

I was without hope and purpose for my life, BUT ...

I was powerless to live a godly life, BUT ...

I was ignorant of how to relate to God, BUT ...

I had no peace in my life, BUT ...

I had no capacity or ability to love others unconditionally, BUT ...

I was full of guilt, BUT ...

Set against the desperate condition of fallen mankind we have the gracious initiative and sovereign action of God

II God's Miraculous Intervention (2:4-5)

A. He reveals His motivation

1. His great love for us

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

I Jn 4:9-10 "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."

2. His rich mercy

Mercy = Compassion that one has for those in trouble

2 Pet 3:9 "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

B. He made us, who were dead, alive

1. While we were still sinners

Col 2:13 "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,"

Rom 5:8 "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

a. We are saved by grace

Kindness = Denotes love in action, personal pity and help rendered where it was needed most

Paul consistently emphasizes that salvation is entirely of His grace, his free, undeserved favor to mankind.

III Our New Position In Christ (2:6-7)

A. The place of our exalted position

1. Raised up with Christ

Eph 1:20 "which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,"

Rom 8:11 "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you."

2. Seated with Him in the heavenly realms!

Col 3:1-3 "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God."

B. The purpose of our exalted position

1. To appreciate the incomparable riches of His grace
2. To appreciate His kindness to us in Christ Jesus

Notice: From chapter 1 to this point, Paul has said nothing about man's part in the process of salvation.

- a. God's mercy, love, and grace made our salvation possible
- b. God's working "made us alive...raised us up...made us sit together with Christ"

IV The Value Of Works

A. We are powerless to merit salvation

1. We are not saved by:
 - a. Self effort

2 Tim 1:9 "... who has saved us and called us to a holy life-- not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,"

b. Works of merit

Titus 3:5 "he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy."

2. We are saved by:

a. Grace through faith

Gal 2:16 "know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified."

Faith is best described as a turning to God with a sense of need and weakness and emptiness and a willingness to receive what he offers, to receive the Lord himself.

b. Leading to humility and praise

1 Cor 1:29-31 "so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God-- that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

B. We are the product of God's workmanship

Poïema = poem = God's work of art, His masterpiece

1. He "made us alive"
2. He "raised us up"
3. He "made us sit together in the heavenly places"

We have truly become "a new creation"!

2 Cor 5:17 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

C. We are created to do good works

Though not saved by good works, we are to do good works!

Col 1:10 "And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,

1. Predestined and prepared by God

- a. It is part of His predetermined plan
- b. Not just to save, but to create a people diligent in good works!

Conclusion

We couldn't free ourselves from sin; BUT God intervened through Christ! We're not saved by good works but created to do good works, as God's sons and daughters. You are God's poem--a literary masterpiece that God is writing, day by day. Everyday, another paragraph is written. He has prepared works in advance for you to do. In Acts 17, Paul says that God appointed the exact time and place for you to live--your home, neighbors, job, etc. You're his ambassador; everywhere you go you can influence others for Christ. Everything counts in life!

Even this moment is a divine appointment; it's not a mistake that you came to church today. Our life can be boring or adventurous in Christ. Grab hold of every opportunity to point people to our Savi