

Resurrected, not Resuscitated

10.16.2022

Ephesians Sermon 7

Ephesians 2:1–10 (CSB)

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins ² in which you previously walked according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient. ³ We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also. ⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace! ⁶ He also raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might display the immeasurable riches of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—⁹ not from works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.

Introduction: Paul has talked about the victory, now he talks about the battle.

A. The first chapter is beautiful.

1. It exalts Jesus and all that He provides for us.
2. Jesus is victorious, seated at the right hand of the Father.
3. Jesus' resurrection and ascension are the reasons for celebrating.

B. Now, Paul shifts to talking about how Christ's victory brings us victory.

1. To talk about victories, we have to confess that we went through battles.

2. I'm afraid that in our desire to have a positive confession, as some call it, we live in denial of the battles that we have endured and that Christ has overcome.

a. Paul never tells us to deny our obstacles or our struggles.

b. By denying what we are going through, we deny the reality of Jesus' power to overcome.

c. If the struggle isn't real, the victory isn't real.

3. **Before we can know our position in Christ, we need to know where our position was in sin.**

1. I was Dead in my sin, not just dying in it.

A. There's a difference between dead and dying.

1. I wasn't dying in my trespasses and sin; I was DEAD in them.

2. I didn't need CPR, resuscitating me. I needed resurrection.

3. Spiritually speaking, without Jesus we are dead in our sins.

a. Physical death is an event, and we can mark it with a gravestone.

b. Spiritual death is a state of existence, and it is the default mode of humanity.

c. The only way out of this mode is to experience a spiritual resurrection.

B. Paul says we were dead in our trespasses and sins.

1. Paul is using these two words almost as synonyms to stress the significance of the distance between us and God.

a. We are just wrong, we are wrong TWICE!

b. We were hopelessly lost, Paul wants us to remember.

2. **The word trespasses or transgressions has a legal tone: to take a false-step.**

- a. In our old life, we are walking falsely against God.
 1. He says "step right", we "step left".
 2. He says "up" we go "down".
 3. He says "here is the boundary, do not pass", we step across the line and violate God and His Word.
 - a. The great theologian, Bugs Bunny, once faced a terrible dilemma to hit someone in the face with a pie: He says "If I doood it, I get a whoopin: I doood it.
 - b. The first sin was the trespassing of a God ordained boundary.
 - c. Sins are taking false-steps against God, often as we take false-steps against each other.
- b. The word used for sins pictures the missing of the mark.
 1. Regardless of what name or title we attach to it, we all were dead in our trespasses (plural) and sins (plural).
 2. It didn't matter if your story was like the Apostle Paul's, or like the Ephesians, we all were dead and need of resurrection.

C. **The longer you are a Christian, the easier it is to forget how sinful you were.**

1. Time and distance has a way of sugar-coating and whitewashing the truth.
 - a. They were not necessarily the "good-old" days.
 - b. We easily forget the depths of the pit that Jesus saved us from.
2. One of my favorite attributes of the Apostle Paul is that he remained clear on how lost and sinful he was.

a. Paul knew who he was in Christ, but he never forgot who he was without Jesus.

b. That's why he could call himself the chief of sinners.

c. That's why Paul consistently pointed to who he used to be, "the wretched man" of Romans 7.

3. Please do not forget what God has brought you out of.

a. Your past tells a glorious story when viewed through the lens of Jesus' saving work.

b. The story of where God has brought you gives glory to God and hope to others.

2. Dead in our sins and walking according to the ways of this world.

A. Paul adds to the analogy a bit: he says we were dead, yet walking according to the ways of this world.

1. Paul is talking about us spiritually.

a. Spiritually we were dead.

b. Nothing in us wanted God.

c. We couldn't save ourselves because we were dead.

2. While we were dead to God and separated from Him, we were still walking around.

a. What we were walking in was according to the ways of this world.

b. Years ago, I watched the movie The Green Mile.

1. In it is a scene where a man is being led to the electric chair.

2. One of the guards leading him kept proclaiming:

a. Dead man; we have a dead man walking here.

b. Even though he was still living physically in that moment, his fate was secured.

3. He WAS going to die, and that was a fact.

a. There was no appeal.

b. There was no hope.

4. And the guards, on the day of his execution, walked the man down the Green Mile, and led him according to that way which led to death.

B. Before Jesus saved us, we were being led down the path of death.

1. We were, in a way, alive but also fully dead.

a. Without a pardon or intervention, we were dead in our walk.

b. We were being led, according to the ways of the world which led to death.

c. Every step was a trespass and transgression against God.

2. Apart from Christ, there is no life.

a. That's Paul's point.

b. In the next sentences, he celebrates what Christ has done for us.

c. But before we can appreciate what Christ has done, we have to remember where we were.

3. One of the most dangerous beliefs we have today is the belief that good people go to heaven.

a. Jesus said that No one is good, except God.

b. There is no good in us.

c. We are dead apart from Jesus: and dead things stink.

4. The right question is not: Are you a good person?

- a. Because, without Jesus, we are dead in our sins.
- b. The right question is, "Have you given your old, dead life to Jesus and experienced resurrection with Him?"
- c. **If we are not walking with Jesus, then we are walking with the Devil.**

3. Paul then shows the spiritual forces that were walking with us in death.

Verse 2b:...walked according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient. 3 We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also.

A. Those who are not with Jesus walk, "according to the ruler of the power of the air".

1. This reference is to Satan in Scripture.
2. Even though we may not realize it, there is always spiritual activity happening in the background.
 - a. And it isn't as far away as we think.
 - b. In fact, it is working in the disobedient.
 - c. Other versions say, "sons of disobedience".
3. Who are the disobedient?
 - a. It refers to all who do not serve God.
 - b. **If you are not walking with Jesus, then you are walking with Satan, who is the ruler of the power of the air.**
 - c. There is no middle-ground in Ephesus.
 - d. Either you are walking with Jesus or you are walking according to the ways of this world.

e. Either you are being led down the “green mile” to your eternal death or you are walking toward eternal life with Jesus.

B. Most Americans would never admit or agree that they are walking with the Devil.

1. They may describe themselves as not religious, or they may not believe in Jesus, or they may confess that they aren’t right with God.

a. But very few people would say they are being led by Satan.

b. Sam Storms writes: The fact is, all people, young and old, male and female, belong to one of two kingdoms: the kingdom of light or the kingdom of darkness. If people are not “in Christ,” they are “in the power of the devil”—even if they have no visible, sensible awareness of being in the devil’s grip. Thus, not to serve God is to serve Satan, whether you are conscious of it or not.¹

2. Scripture talks often about the prevalence of the devil’s influence on our thinking:

a. Paul told the believers in 1 Cor. 2:16 that they have the mind of Christ.

b. Phil. 2:5, Paul said we are to adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus.

c. Romans 12 tells us not be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

C. Before Christ, we carried out the “inclinations of our flesh and thoughts”.

1. Have you ever wondered why people can’t see how sinful some ideas are?

¹ Storms, Sam. *Understanding Spiritual Warfare* (p. 10). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

2. One church member this week texted: "Why can't simple logic bring the educated yet clouded minds to sensible conclusions?"

3. Then he asked, "how can so many opinion leaders be perfectly possessed" referring to all of them having such bad and sinful ideas.

a. The answer is ancient:

b. Without Jesus, we are pulling from the same thought database.

c. Without Jesus, our thoughts are sinful, wicked, and place us under wrath.

4. The Solution? But God who is *rich in mercy*...

A. I have a love/hate relationship with the conjunction "But".

1. But connects two opposing ideas.

2. But inserts a change in direction.

a. You are a hard worker, but we are going to have to let you go.

b. You're a nice guy, but I'm not interested.

c. Your hair looks beautiful, but your face is a wreck.

B. Yet, when Scripture says "But God..." I like what comes next.

1. Paul describes how sinful and hopeless we were.

2. BUT GOD, who is rich in mercy...

3. This has been a common theme already: inheritance, possession, down-payment.

4. And now, mercy.

C. And God is rich in it.

1. And because of God's great love for us, we receive mercy.

2. Mercy means we do not receive what we deserve.

- a. Mercy is a gift you do not deserve.
 - b. Mercy is a gift you did not earn.
 - c. Mercy is initiated by God and from God through Jesus.
3. Even though we deserve death, God makes mercy available for all who will receive it.

Close: Let us Pause this morning to reflect on God's Word to us.

A. Many of us are dealing with spiritual warfare but didn't realize it.

1. Then enemy had a hold and claim on you for so long, he is not relinquishing that easily.
2. Perhaps the people you love are undergoing terrible attacks and you don't know how to help.
3. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.
4. Through believing the Word, prayer, worship, and other spiritual disciplines we endure and overcome the enemy.

B. This morning is a time for us to pray for ourselves and each other.