

EPHESIANS WEEK #3 – SJGC

“Alive in Christ”

Ephesians 2:1-10

PATTI

We’re continuing to look at this great letter of Paul to the believers in a city called Ephesus,

Which is, as we’ll see over these next weeks, all about the Church.

And this passage that we just read is one of the richest passages in all the bible, on what it means to be saved.

2 times in these verse, it comes up that we are saved **through faith**.

What does that mean?

How would you explain salvation to your co-worker or school mate?

Or to your neighbor who doesn’t know the Lord?

Paul gives us a very simple explanation here that easily breaks down into 3 parts or sections.

v. 1-3 tell us about the life we’re saved **FROM**

v. 8-10 tell us about the life we’re saved **FOR**, and in the middle,

v. 4-7 tell us **HOW** – what we are saved, or what we are saved **THROUGH**.

The first three verses describe the human condition **APART** from God.

“We are dead in trespasses and sins.”

And to be a sinner is to be enslaved **ENSLAVED**.

v. 2 says, **...you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air.**

And in v. 3, **you followed the desires and thoughts of the flesh,** which is our sinful nature.

The word FOLLOW in English is really weak, and doesn’t accurately convey what Paul is saying here.

But the Greek word, the original word means
to be **MASTERED** or **CONTROLLED** by something.

So the reason it says we're DEAD in trespasses and sins is
is that we are HELPLESS.

We're completely CONTROLLED and **ENSLAVED**.

But enslaved to what?

Paul mentions three things:

1. We're enslaved to the things of this world (the SPIRIT OF THE AGE)
2. We're enslaved to the ruler of the kingdom of the air (that's the DEVIL)

We could spend entire bible studies just on those two phrases.

But the key thought here about what it means to be enslaved by sin
is in v. 3, where it says, we are

3. gratifying the cravings of our **flesh** and following its desires and thoughts.

JEFF

When Paul says the word "flesh" here,
he doesn't mean your physical body, but rather
Self-centered human nature.

That's the thing that drives you or masters you.
Martin Luther, in one of the most brief and profound
definitions of sin, said,

"The human heart is curved in on itself."

Apart from God we are self-absorbed.

Here's how Martin Luther put it in one sentence:

*"Our nature is so deeply curved in on itself
that it wickedly, curvedly, and viciously seeks
to use all things, even God, for its own sake."*

That's sin.

You use things, even God, to serve you.

Your heart is constantly analyzing...

Every object. Every person. Every interchange. Every setting. Every thing.

And it's basically calculating, **"What's in it for me?"**
How it benefits..
YOUR HAPPINESS,
YOUR GLORY,
YOUR POWER,
YOUR REPUTATION,
YOUR CONTROL OF THINGS.

Everything is looked like that.
Now self-centeredness can make you a cruel person,
like the genocidal maniacs and tyrannical kings of history.

Or, more often, self-centeredness can make you incredibly MORAL.
Because if you have a ravenous ego, and
desperately need to feel good about yourself,

if everything's about you,
there's no better way to do that,
than to be a good person.

**Self-centeredness drives most people
to try really hard to be good.**

So you're serving the needy.
And being a good child to your parents,
a good parent to your children, and
a good friend to your neighbors.

But, it's all for you. You're not doing it for their sake.
You're helping them for your sake.
So that you can feel like you've got a meaningful life.

In the first Rocky movie,
Rocky is talking with his girlfriend, Adriene.
And she asks him, "Why do you want to fight this world champion?
You know you can't win..."

And Rocky says, "I just wanna go the distance.
Then I'll know I'm not a bum."
Somewhere down deep inside, all of us feel
like bums, which is to say that we feel

broken or unworthy, like we don't measure up.

And we're doing something constantly to convince the world that we do matter, that we do have worth and value.

PATTI

And not only can self-centeredness make you a MORAL PERSON. It can make you a RELIGIOUS PERSON.... Someone who worships and studies the bible and prays and serves and obeys. But is it possible (this is what Luther says) that you're doing it all for you?

The sinful human heart, uses all things, even God, for its own sake. So when things don't go well in your life, when your prayers aren't answered the way you wanted, when your suffering for extended periods of time,

you wonder, "I've lived so well and tried so hard, why isn't God coming through?"
"I've done all these things for Him, and He's not living up to my expectations,"
And you become skeptical.

Because what you wanted from God after all, was **a transaction, not a relationship.**
You didn't get into Christianity to serve God.
You embraced Christianity to have God serve you.

Is that why our practice and our obedience is so **CONDITONAL**?
Why it makes us so miserable sometimes?

Sin is like a craving. Almost an addiction to ego. And It's never enough. Sin is hell starting in you, and eventually it takes you there.
That's the problem. That's what Jesus came to save us FROM.

Secondly, the end of the passage gives us a sense of the kind of life God wants to save us FOR.

v. 8

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from

yourselves, it is the gift of God.

You are NOT saved by how good you are.
 You're not saved by your effort or your pedigree.
 God's salvation is a gift.

And for that reason, the kind of life God wants you to live is the kind of life where you **see everything as a gift that you don't deserve and can't earn**. Even faith!

If fact, faith is trust. It is resting. There's a peace about you.
 And Paul says, this is the gift of God, **so that no one may boast**.

The reason you can experience a life of grace and peace is that there is no need to boast anymore.

JEFF

When we think of boasting, we probably equate that with bragging.
 But in literature, before soldiers went into battle, the thing that got soldiers beyond their fear of battle and that enabled them to face death, was this...

The night before, they would sit around the fire and boast...
 "We have iron chariots and they don't".
 "We have 10,000 soldiers and they only have 5,000."
 "We have the greatest warrior king. He has the longest sword and the longest spear."

This is boasting, which is giving yourself the confidence to face something really hard.

Paul says the Christian life **ends boasting**.
 Everyone is looking for something to boast in,
 to rest in, to give ourselves confidence.

It may be wisdom or success or possessions or looks.
 But we are all looking for something to boast in
 that will give us a sense of value and self-worth.

Some of us are looking to grades, because you're really smart. Others are looking to bank accounts or morality or religion.

But it's exhausting. These are things that are hard to get and keep and how do you know when you have enough?

A life of looking for things to boast in is **a life of scrambling for identity**. Scrambling to perform. It's exhausting.

So what would a life of faith, a life of grace look like without boasting?

PATTI

There are at least 3 marks of a restful, grace-filled life that counter a boasting life.

1. Anger vs. Contentment –

When you are content, no matter how life goes, you can say, "I'm thankful for what I have because I don't deserve what I've got." But if you don't think you have what you deserve and you're always scrambling for more, you'll become angry and grumpy because "life's not fair." If you're a sinner saved by grace, you'll be content.

2. Disdain vs. Acceptance – It's okay to be glad about being a hard worker. To be proud of that. But if it's an identity marker, if it's the thing you boast in, that earns you confidence to face the world, then you will disdain anybody that you think of as lazy.

And your life becomes about looking down your nose at people. People of different cultures or races, people of different politics or religions or whatever. If you knew you were a sinner saved by grace, you would accept people for who they are.

3. Bitterness vs. Forgiveness – If you know you are a sinner saved by grace, you can forgive. The only way you can keep a grudge or stay angry is if you are sure you're superior to them.

If somebody has done something to you, and you know you could do that too, or have done that, too, then it's hard to keep the grudge. But if you look at somebody and say, "I would never do that," then it's easy to keep the grudge. Because your proud.

A sinner saved by grace isn't always wrestling at night because somebody snubbed you.

A sinner saved by grace isn't always feeling like they are always falling short and failing.

If your confidence is in Jesus, you won't need to strive anymore.

But how do we get from the old life of sin to the new life of faith?

JEFF

In the middle – **v. 6 - God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.**

Ancient people understood this metaphor perfectly.

If you were a war hero who conquered on the battle field, and you had achieved glory for your people, then when you arrived back home, you were given the greatest seat of honor at the right hand of the throne.

This is the place to which Jesus has been raised.

To the right hand of the Father.

And we are seated there already, too, with him in glory, Paul says.

Not literally of course, because we're here.

But **legally, we are seated there.**

When you believe in Jesus, your sins are covered, and you are treated as though Jesus' accomplishments are yours. and the Father delights and honors and accepts you as he does his own Son.

This comes, Paul says, because of God's kindness.

So let's put this all together.

The first three verses of our text tell us that the essence of sin is putting ourselves where only God deserves to be... at the center of our lives. On the throne of our lives.

And salvation is God putting himself where we deserve to be - on the cross. And because Jesus took our place, and the punishment we deserve,

now we can sit in his victory seat with the Father.

PATTI

Yes. Jesus said, "My life for yours."
When I am seated at the right hand of the father,
I don't have to be self-centered because I have
all the honor could possibly want.
I don't have to scramble anymore.

But how does that work?
There is one boast that will stop all boasting.
There is one boast that will give you confidence that you can face things.

Galatians 6:14 says,
"May I never boast **except** in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which^(a) the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

Boasting in Jesus keeps us from being controlled by the addictive cravings of our hearts.

The ancient soldiers boasted that their king had the longest sword and the longest spear, but we have a King who didn't come bearing a spear, he came and took the spear in his side.

He's like warrior who goes out on the battlefield while we're all dying. And he binds up our wounds and puts his armor on us. And then he takes the arrow. He takes the spear. He takes the thorns.

By His selflessness, He loves you out of your self-centeredness. When you look to him, He will take you all the way from verse 1 to verse 10, and all the way from death to life.

Prayer: God we are grateful that you've given us this tremendous salvation. That even though we have time and again tried to take your place, you took our place and the consequence of our sin on the cross. Thank you that

because we are seated with Christ, we need not strive. We boast in your victory, Lord. And claim your peace today, in Jesus' name.
Amen.

