

## To the Saints at Kossuth Street . . . Be a Remembering Community!

Ephesians 2:1-3 November 7, 2010

**Intro.** A question that has generated significant thought throughout the history of mankind focuses on why people avoid even resist at times, self inspection or evaluation. In general terms, it appears that people have an allergy to finding and knowing the truth about themselves. It is an incredibly touchy subject. How does anyone muster up the courage to take another soul or even our own to task regarding why they do what they do and what they are really like? It is clearly unacceptable to point out to anyone that they live their lives in a fog of self deception. Jesus clearly taught us that there are all kinds of impulses and hostilities squirming around in the depths of our souls.

The Bible teaches us that the first step to knowing God and his great love is to see ourselves as God sees us. Genuine freedom, rather than freedom to be who we are, is being honestly transparent about who we are and accepting the grace of God to transform us into what he made us to be. We resist coming to the light as Jesus said, because we resist giving in to the humbling truth of what we will find, that we need rescuing. Let's take a look at ourselves to be reminded that in fact not only did we need rescuing, but we have been rescued by the God of amazing grace and love.

Let me set the context of our study of ourselves this morning . . . we began a series of studies in Ephesians on the last Sunday of August. Our primary concern is to learn and shape our thinking regarding the church around God's word.

How easy it is for us as the church of the living God to forget who we are and what we are to do. It is so typical for us to speak of the church as a place we go, or an additional responsibility we bear, or as something we have a cautious commitment to embracing.

The church can easily adopt the Home Depot motto . . . you can do it, we can help.

Our objective as we commit ourselves to a verse by verse study of the Bible book of Ephesians is to learn who we are as a church and how we are to behave in a manner that will reflect and communicate the enormous worthiness of our God.

Note the larger landscape of the 1<sup>st</sup> 3 chapters of this letter. It is concentrated truth teaching us the core values and commitments of a biblical church community. A church is a community of believers who do the following because it is what churches that please God do.

- **A Worshipping Community** 1: 3, 6, 14 God is genuinely praiseworthy. Note this extended outburst, this complex eulogy, this repetitive declaration of praise/response to God for his saving our lives in and through Christ Jesus.
- **A Praying Community** 1:15-23 (17-18) Life transformation is dependent on God's power. Continuous grateful prayer is the means by which we help each other know God better v.17b
- **A Remembering Community** 2:1-22 (11) God's grace and love define our new life. Remembering what we were, what God did by grace in Christ and the new life we have now is essential.
- **A Preaching Community** 3:1-21 (7-9) The gospel of Christ must be proclaimed. The gospel, the mystery of Christ, the administration of God's grace, the promise in Christ Jesus becomes the message that we repeatedly and faithfully announce.

A church that honors God is one that is committed to remembering, reflecting and acting out the truth about themselves and God. Ephesians 2 is a remarkable description of the person who has been and is being saved by God's grace. It is a series of contrasts and comparisons to compel growing appreciation for God's loving grace and obedience to him as our owner rescuer.

This description of God's saving work and our hopeless condition is organized around one expected response. We are commanded to remember. Certainly we should learn it, understand it, believe it and defend it, but the faithful saints of God's church are marked by doing more with these amazing truths of redemption and mercy . . . they regularly reflect, evaluate and remember which produces growing appreciation and conformity to Christ.

Let's look this morning at 2:1-3 where we are taught to remember the truth about ourselves. We see in verses 1-3 the first part of a contrast or comparison. This is a description of what a person is before conversion to Christ or saving faith. The contrast which is completed in verses 4-10 essentially teaches that only the person who has been mastered by the depth and greatness of their sinful condition will ever be mastered by the greatness, richness and reality of God's mercy and grace.

**Facing the truth about yourself . . . in order to appreciate the grace of God . . .** Ephesians 2:1-3

Three things were true about you before your conversion to faith in Christ. These things are true about you now if you have not yet turned to Christ and trusted him.

**1. You were dead toward God. 2:1**

Note the term dead is used figuratively to describe a state or condition of alienation from God. 'In the trespasses and sins' describes the cause and the characterization of the condition of being 'dead.' You were separated from God.

**Your deadness toward God was comprehensive.**

- Your sins were many and of all varieties. Plural multiple terms/synonyms for sin
- You were unresponsive, unable and disinclined toward pleasing God. 2:12; 4:18
- Your freedom to choose God was limited by your nature that opposed him.

**Your deadness toward God was universal.**

- You were dead toward God regardless of religion or ethnicity. You, we, the rest of mankind
- You were dead toward God like all others, not in degree, but extent.

Facing the truth about yourself . . . in order to appreciate the grace of God . . .  
1. You were dead toward God. 2:1

Ephesians 2:1-3

**2. You were enslaved to compelling forces. 2:2-3**

As a 'dead toward God' person you are alive toward other things. Note the contrast established with the terms 'you once walked.' This describes the compelling forces behind the way you use to live or behave before God rescued you from your deadness in sin. You lived your life enslaved, in the sphere of or influenced by 3 forces.

Three enslaving forces are described . . .

- The world. You were compelled and shaped by a social value system that opposes God.

1:21 two ages or worlds . . . now and then

Gal.1:4 society attitudes, habits and preferences that are opposed to God

- The Devil. You were inspired and influenced by personal evil forces.

Prince of the power of the air . . . a powerful enemy

The spirit that is now at work . . . an active enemy

In the sons of disobedience . . . a productive enemy

Col. 1:13 Eph. 3:10; 6:12

- The flesh. You were controlled by your selfish desires.

'passions of our flesh' defined by next phrase . . . desires of the body and mind

Cmp. Gal. 5:19-21

Desires of the flesh are powerful . . . only defeated/replaced by the power of the Spirit. Gal5:16

In one way or another and to various degrees, these are what satisfied you, made you feel safe, energized you, and in reality defined for you what life was. You had a committed and willing connection to these forces. Your partnership with these forces was so strong that at times you even today are easily seduced toward missing them, reconnecting with them and longing for the good feeling they produced in your life.

**3. You were condemned by God. 2:3**

Facing the truth about yourself

1. You were dead toward God. 2:1
2. You were enslaved to compelling forces. 2:2-3

**3. You were condemned by God. 2:3**

Note the clear reality of God's holy anger against sin.

- You were deserving of God's wrath because of your willful disobedience. 5:6; Col. 3:5-6
- God's wrath is not an impersonal process, vindictive or an uncontrolled outburst.
- God's wrath is the action of his holiness, mercy and love. Sin produces death and must be destroyed.

Cmp. John 3:16-18

**Remember . . . facing the truth about yourself . . .**

1. Only then can you see and appreciate God as he really is . . . the lover and rescuer of your soul.
2. Only then can you point others to Christ and his grace . . . as a learner and worshipper of his mercies.
3. Only then can you experience freedom . . . transformed and released by God's powerful love in Christ.
4. Only then can you cry out to God to rescue you from your deadness . . . to make you alive with Christ.

**Study Questions**

1. Read Ephesians 2:1-10 together. These verses seem to break down into three sections of 1-3, 4-7, and 8-10. Come up with a title or descriptive phrase for the content of each section.
2. Review the introductory comments about self examination in the first 2 paragraphs of the notes. What observations, comments or corrections do you have? Compare Luke 7:41-50 or 18:9-14.
3. Review each of the three compelling forces taught in these verses. What observations, questions or applications do you have for each one? How do James 3:15; 1John 2:15-17 and 1John 3:7-10 add to your understanding of the truth about yourself before you were saved?
4. How can these truths about you before God saved you be used to . . . appreciate and love God more? Tell others about Christ and his power to save? Be faithful and content in challenging times?
5. What is the purpose of contrast in these verses 2:1-10? What automatically happens when one side or aspect of a contrast is not well defined? When you share your testimony of God's saving grace, do you describe yourself as weak, sick or dead? Why? How?