

"How our Eternal Position Affects our Present Practice"

Ephesians 2:1-10

As we've been studying the phrase 'eternal life' this year, we've been emphasizing how often it refers to what we have now as believers, while we're still here on earth. John 3:14-16 was the classic example;

¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

When we believe in Christ we have eternal life, now. Eternal is an adjective describing the kind of life we have now. That which is eternal can only come from God who is eternal. We have God's life in us now. If we have God's life in us now it should change how we live now. Having God's life in us now secures us for all eternity. The Bible clearly teaches that in many ways and we want to look at another place in which we hear about how having eternal security is to change us now in this life. Why? So that the life we live becomes attractive to those who don't have it and they will ask us about the reason for the hope that we have. Not the hope that we hope we'll have. But the hope we have now because we have eternal life now, which will become complete and perfect when this life ends.

Here in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul goes out of his way in Ch. 1 to establish our security in Christ. He says we're blessed now with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies (v.3). We're chosen in Him before the creation of the world (v.4). In God's love we've been predestined to be adopted as His children (v.5). We have redemption and forgiveness now because of the riches of God's grace (v.8). He repeats the way we were chosen and predestined in v.11 *'according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity to His will* so that we will glorify God. Why does he repeat that? What was going on in Paul's life at that moment? Paul was in prison for preaching the gospel. The world he lived in and we live in is opposed to the gospel. Living an eternal life means we'll clash with those who only have temporal life and think this is all there is. To have a rock-solid understanding of our eternal position in Christ, is crucial while we're still here. Reminding ourselves that eternal life starts here and gets better later.

Paul says in vv.13-14 when we believed the gospel the Holy Spirit came into our life sealing our eternal destiny and His presence guarantees we've been saved. He then thanks God for the Ephesian believers and prays for their growth and spiritual maturity specifically that the eyes of their hearts would understand that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is dwelling within them. And not only raised Him from the dead but also,

and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

This phrase 'raised and seated with Him' reappears here in 2:6 to speak of us who,
God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

We are so secure in God that we are already raised and seated with Christ, as if it has already happened. That's what a guarantee means. But does our positional security in Christ mean we can

live anyway we want to? Obviously not. In Ch. 2 Paul reminds us what we were saved from and how we were saved from it and what we were saved for. And God is the subject of all that we have here so let's review what we were without God.

Without God We Were ... **(2:1-3)**

Spiritually dead (vv.1-2a)

How do we know? We can tell by our lifestyle.

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live ...

That word for 'live' means 'where we walk around'. Which is everywhere; our life pattern, our behaviour, our lifestyle. Before we placed our faith in Christ we were '*dead in our transgressions and sins.*' Dead means no relationships; separated from life. Outside of Christ we are separated from God who is sinless. Our sin separates us from God; our sin keeps us from having a relationship with God. Paul uses the words transgressions and sins to describe our complete lack of a connection to God. Transgressions means to step over the line, to disobey. Sin means to miss the mark, to fail to reach a standard. Outside of Christ our life choices reflect we cross God's lines, we rebel against His standards. Our attempts to be good miss the mark. We can't get to God on our own because we ...

Unknowingly were slaves to the devil, world and self (v.2b)

Paul describes those spheres of sinful influence that our walk/lifestyle was influenced by demonstrating we had no relationship to God. "*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.*"

The ways of this world refers to the standards each age and each culture has. They are never perfect. Sometimes they are better than at other times but they are rarely God's ways. The ruler of the kingdom of the air refers to Satan who was kicked out of God's realm and given a limited rule on earth. 'Air' refers to everywhere air is, so is the enemy. He is smart and deceitful and we see the evidence of his influence wherever we go.

Back in April, Campaign Life Coalition, (an advocate for legal and cultural change in Canada with respect to protecting human life and the family). Sent a delegation to the United Nations 52nd Session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD). During the weeklong conference, pro-abortion delegations (including our very own Canadian government), UN agencies, and other non-governmental organizations were inundating daily plenary sessions with their battle cries for abortion and contraception on demand, so called 'sexual rights', and radical sex-ed programs in schools. When it was our time to speak, we countered the abortion activists by reminding the United Nations that there is NO universal legal right to abortion. With the current Canadian foreign policy prioritizing abortion and gender issues, the Canadian government's reputation at the UN has significantly gone downhill. When the delegate Emily Price finished delivering their statement, several delegates from various countries approached her to thank her, and expressed their shock that she was representing a Canadian organization. Others were surprised that there are pro-life Canadians.

That's just one example of how ungodliness permeates the air of our country let alone the world. The Word of God counters Satan's strategies but his many blind followers speak loudly and don't treat nicely those who speak for God. And *the spirit who now is at work in those who are disobedient* is the spirit of self. The pursuit of selfish pleasures and the glorification of self. And we

used to unknowingly go along with some of these things, unaware that they did not lead to eternal life. As a result, we were ...

Deserving God's wrath (v.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.

Paul includes himself here, even though he was a very religious person he tells us in Philippians it was all wrapped in self-righteousness, trying to make himself look better than the world. All this is evidence that we were all at one time spiritually dead, separated from God. And all those separated from God are deserving of His end time wrath which is eternal separation from God.

Paul reminds his hearers that all of us were here at one point to show us that it was impossible for us to get us out of it on our own. *"But God"* (v.4) did something for us *'even while we were dead in our transgressions'* meaning, He didn't wait for us to change, he didn't wait for us to get better or to turn toward Him; He acted with mercy. Vv.4-10 tell us now that ...

With God We Are ... **(2:4-10)**

Undeservedly loved through Christ (v.4)

Jesus is the avenue through which all blessings of eternal life are possible. Mercy means we are spared what we actually deserve. While we deserve wrath God's rich mercies and great love sent Jesus to pay the price for our sins, making a relationship with God possible. Undeserved. Through grace. Grace meaning getting something we don't deserve. God's love resulted in sending Jesus to become one of us. He lived a sinless life. He died as a sinless sacrifice offered in our place. God did this in His mercy and grace.

For those of us who placed our faith in Jesus believing He died for our sins we are now ...

Spiritually alive in Christ (v.5)

"made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved"

Again, what Jesus has, we have. When Nicodemus approached Jesus at night in John 3, Jesus declared to him that *'unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God'*. Implied was that Nicodemus was spiritually dead without a spiritual birth. Knowing Christ makes us spiritually alive. Our eyes are now open to understand what we used to live for and do. We now see things differently; with spiritual eyes. We now recognize some of the darkness around us. We see people differently as those in need of spiritual birth or those who have it through faith.

Being spiritually alive makes us ...

Eternally secure with Christ (vv.6-7)

"and raised us up in with Him and seated us in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus".

We are "in Christ". That's one of Paul's favourite statements to describe who we are. It describes our position and our relationship. We are positionally 'with Him' already, even though we're

not there yet. Jesus said it another way in John 14:3 when He said that He was going to His Father's house to prepare a place for us. Reservations where our names are written in the Lamb's book of life. Where God will continue to wow us with the riches of His grace in kindness toward us who believe.

What are the riches of His grace? If we understand Paul in this passage, we are. We will enjoy for all eternity meeting other grace recipients and hearing their stories of how God's grace in kindness towards them was revealed. Everyone's story is similar but different. The multitudes that we read about in Rev. 7 from every language, tribe and nation are all evidence of the riches of His grace in kindness. All this because we are

Graciously saved by faith in Christ (vv.8-9)

Paul laid the depressing foundation of our inability to have a relationship with God on our own (spiritually dead, Crossed the line, missed the mark, followers of the world's ways, Satan's schemes and selfish desires) so that he could clearly declare that our salvation is just as much not of our own doing. *By grace we have been saved through faith.* God graciously makes salvation possible for us. It is a gift. Our ability to place our faith in Christ did not come about in our wisdom but because God graciously opened our hearts to the truth of our sinfulness and the truth of Jesus' sinlessness. Grace, through faith, it's a gift – *"not of yourselves"*. Because if it was, we would boast in our works.

It's not a coincidence that Satan has deceived many people into thinking that their good works will earn them eternal life. That system is basically based on comparison to others. People feel better about their goodness when they compare themselves with others and they wrongly think God does some-thing similar. But God levels the playing field by saying, no one can enter on their own so don't try. And I'll make a way for you. Will you have faith that I want to do this by grace alone? That He wants to save us in spite of our rebellion and failures?

But I like how he doesn't end at v.9 but goes to v,10 to explain that our position has practical implications. That our security isn't something we just rest in and wait to die but our security is something we invest in by wanting to really live for God. With God we are ...

Equipped to reveal Christ as observed by our lifestyle (v.10)

"Created" means God did something new. We are a new creation in Christ. How do we know God made something new? Look at how it functions. We are *"His workmanship created in Christ Jesus"*. So, if we're created new in Christ it would make sense that we would look like Jesus. That's what Paul means in 2 Cor. 5:17

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

A believer should be gradually growing in newness. The old sinful habits we had should overtime be replaced with new Jesus-looking ones. Our speech should gradually change because our attitude should be becoming a little newer each day. We should eventually do new things by faith; things we've never tried before. That could be being available to serve in something we've never done before. What if we're not gifted for it? It will become obvious but spiritual gifts are best discerned by desire (what do we want to do) and service (am I willing to try) not by quizzes and surveys. The latter can be helpful but too many people don't find their gifts because they don't serve and discover how God has wired them. I like the apostle Peter's summary of spiritual gifts in 1 Pet. 4:10-11,

¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks

the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Peter defines gifts into speaking and non-speaking basic categories. And whatever you do, do it for glorifying God. Which is what Paul would agree with here back in Eph. 2:10. If we are His workmanship, we should reflect His power and character through serving. And somehow God already prepared us for them so that we would *walk in them.* Where did we hear that? Back in 2:1. You see how Paul has wrapped up this section from 2:1-10? The NIV doesn't do the best job of showing us this connection. All other main translations pick up the repeated word for "walk". The NASB says in v.1-2,

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world,

¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Same words in the Greek meaning walking around, wherever we go, our lifestyle. So, by connecting the two in v.1 and 10 Paul is saying the way we used to walk should no longer happen now that we are secure in Christ. If we're already positionally seated saints with reserved rooms in the Father's house, lets walk around on earth showing we belong to our Father. Why doesn't Paul give us some illustrations here? Here he's making sure we understand our position and the need to live a new life in the new body of believers (Jew and Gentile 2:12-22) but he will elaborate on all this in length in Ch. 4-6.

Watch how he does this in 4:22-5:3,

²² to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. ²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹ Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Put off the old, put on the new. Put this away, do this instead. The question then for us as eternally secure believers is, when people observe the way we walk/live do they see spiritually dead people walking (who speak and act the same as the world system) or do they see living new creations of God? Is our speech becoming newer? Is our attitude reflecting faith in Christ? Are we working on getting rid of bitterness, anger, slander and imitating God more in kindness, compassion and forgiveness?

I believe the Spirit is working in our lives this morning and He has spoken to us about an area in our life that we need to show we're more spiritually alive than dead. Let's begin our days thanking God for who He has made us to be, by His grace and ask forgiveness for the ways we've shown

spiritual deadness more than eternal living. Let's take a verse or two that we're familiar with (or a new one that speaks to our hearts) that reminds us of our need to change our speech, attitude or actions. Let's memorize it and repeat it daily and ask God to help us live it out today. And then do it again tomorrow. Jesus only expects us to live one day at a time so let's just focus on being more spiritually alive one day at a time. His mercies and grace arrive fresh daily. He is always with us. His love for us doesn't change. Our security in Him doesn't change. Let's pray that the only thing that changes is our growing love for Him and our desire to reflect Him in a world that desperately needs God.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us
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