

1. **Introduction:** Today we will consider Paul’s great introduction to “Union with Christ” as found in Ephesians 2:1-10. In these 10 verses he provides answers to several key questions. [1.] Verses 2:1-3. What was life like for a believer before God’s intervention? [2.] Verses 2:4-7. What motivates God to intervene? What does God’s intervention do to a person and for them. These verses introduce the concept of Union with Christ through the phrase “in Christ.” [3.] Verses 2:8-9. What is the result of God’s intervention? [4.] Verse 2:10. What difference does God’s intervention make in a person’s mortal life?
  
2. **Ephesians 2:1-3:** *“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— <sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”*
  - ◆ Paul says that before God’s intervenes, everyone, though physically alive, is spiritually dead, enslaved to a habitual lifestyle of sin, and condemned by God as a consequence of their rebellion.
  - ◆ Sin is any lack of conformity to God’s character or His moral law. Sin can be deliberate or inadvertent, an act of commission or an act of omission. A trespass is a deliberate sin. A life style of sin and trespass is inequity.
  - ◆ Everyone’s fallen, spiritually-dead, nature, leads them to follow the course of the fallen world along the path established by Satan, the prince of the power of the air.
  - ◆ In their fallen state of spiritual death, people are controlled by the passions of their flesh, the desires of their body and the desires of their mind.
  - ◆ Being controlled by the passions of the flesh signifies emotional depravity. Growing desires, that cannot be fully satisfied, drive the spiritually dead into downward spirals of emotional instability.
  - ◆ Being controlled by the desires of the body signifies physical depravity. The sign of this problem is that choices are usually made based on physical not spiritual priorities. It is a tendency to be attracted to materialism, power, external beauty, etc.
  - ◆ Being controlled by the desires of the mind signifies intellectual depravity which impacts what you think about, how you spend your time, what you are storing in your memory, what motivates you to action, etc.
  - ◆ These three categories are not totally distinct. Addiction to pornography likely involves all three. However, each category is an aspect of being spiritually dead, or as we say in the Reformed Faith, totally depraved.

- ◆ Outwardly all people look alive but in their inner being unbelievers are spiritually dead and will remain so unless God intervenes.
  - ◆ They are totally unable in their own power to do anything to change their situation. Their disobedience and sins cut them off from the Source of life.
  - ◆ What a dreadful situation! Jeremiah 17:9, speaking of fallen people, says the heart (the center of a person's being) is deceitful beyond all things and desperately wicked.
  - ◆ However, Paul has very good news. He begins his description of that good news with the phrase "***But God.***" All human capability and power falls short, but God can and does act to change the woeful plight of disobedient, sinful people.
3. **Ephesians 2:4-7**: "***But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.***"
- ◆ In these verses, Paul answers two questions: What motivates God to intervene? What does God's intervention do "to" a person and "for" them?
  - ◆ God's motivation to act is His great love for His human creatures in spite of their rebellion and disobedience.
  - ◆ God's love is rich in grace and mercy. Mercy is acting to withhold deserved punishment. Grace is acting to give unmerited favor or reward.
  - ◆ What God does to a believer is to make them spiritually alive. Giving new spiritual life is analogous to what He did physically for Jesus in raising Him on the third day.
  - ◆ What He does for believers is to mercifully transfer the punishment due sins to Jesus. Then, in grace, He prepares a place in heaven and enables us to join Him there.
  - ◆ Astoundingly, God came to us when we were dead in sins and trespasses. We were caught up in a situation we could not change, condemned to suffer God's wrath, spiritually dead, willfully pursuing wrong goals, and ignorant of God and His Word.
  - ◆ Paul says it this way, "***But God ... made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.***"
  - ◆ This is called the good news of Christ Jesus. It is truly amazing grace.
  - ◆ But we must realize that this statement by Paul is experiential. It is based on experience. It is not a statement of objective position that will bring these things to pass ultimately. It is a here and now statement of what has happened to us.

- ◆ You see, God is on a rescue mission to save those who believe. The first step is to make us alive, freeing us from spiritual death, and then, in grace, to add the other good things done for us. All salvation is by grace. No one merits salvation.

4. **God's Rescue Mission for Sinners:** How was God's rescue mission to save fallen sinners from their just and deserved end made possible?

- ◆ The second Person of the Trinity took to Himself a human nature, becoming incarnate as the one person, Jesus of Nazareth, having both a divine nature and a human nature, both controlled by His divine "I."
- ◆ Born of the Virgin Mary, He grew up and lived a life of perfect obedience under the Law. In His human nature He experienced the same kinds of things we experience but without sin.
- ◆ His life of perfect obedience under the Law, earned righteousness which is imputed to those for whom He was the legal representative, namely all who believe in Him, whether OT believers like Abraham or NT believers like Paul.
- ◆ Jesus died taking upon Himself the sins of all who believe in Him, thereby paying the death penalty due their sins.
- ◆ After three days in the grave He was resurrected and seen and known by many.
- ◆ After forty days on earth in His resurrected form, He ascended to heaven where He continues to have both His eternal divine nature and His acquired human nature. In other words His incarnate form of one Person with two natures persists.
- ◆ Subjectively, salvation is through belief in the incarnate Son of God and Him only. Christ Jesus was and is one Person with both a divine and a human nature.

5. **Ephesians 2:8-9:** *"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast."*

- ◆ What is the result of God's intervention?
- ◆ First, becoming a Christian cannot begin with making a decision. All are spiritually dead and cannot do or decide to do anything to improve their spiritual condition.
- ◆ Becoming a Christian begins, as it must, with being born again, receiving new spiritual life through an act of God in which we are passive recipients of God's grace.
- ◆ To those whom He has given new spiritual life, God, in grace and mercy, gives the gift of justification which has two facets: (1.) Pardon from the death penalty due sins based on Jesus' substitutionary death. (2.) Being declared legally righteous before God based on Jesus life of perfect obedience under the Law.
- ◆ Salvation is "in Christ." Believers are regenerated "in Christ," will ultimately be glorified "in Christ," becoming like Him. Being "in Christ" is also called Union with Christ. Thus we can rightly say, salvation is through Union with Christ.

- ◆ Union with Christ, then, encompasses all of salvation, all of Christian life. Being united with Christ is what makes available all that salvation means.
- ◆ Everything included in salvation is not made manifest initially. Much is latent and will be made manifest gradually as we progress in becoming more like Christ.
- ◆ We see that picture clearly in 2 Peter 1:3 where, speaking a Christian, Peter says, ***“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.”***
- ◆ To every believer, it is obvious that not everything pertaining to life and godliness was manifest in their life immediately upon becoming a Christian.
- ◆ But Peter says everything needed is present initially, though much is latent. Everything needed is latent in the principle of new life given at regeneration.
- ◆ Notice the past tense of the verbs in 2:4-10. Paul is not so much interested in telling what is going to happen to us as in helping to understand what has happened.
- ◆ He wants believers to know, ***“the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might<sup>20</sup> that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places”*** (Ephesians 1:19-20).
- ◆ Paul’s prayer was that the Ephesians (and by extension us) would have their understanding awakened so that they might know what God is doing now, not only what He will do in the future.
- ◆ Paul is concerned that they appreciate in the midst of their difficulties what is *actually* true of them in the here and now. They have been saved by grace through God’s gift of new spiritual life which brings with it, faith, followed by justification.
- ◆ Grace is the objective basis for our salvation, but faith is the subjective means by which we receive that grace. Faith is trust, reliance, dependence on something or someone external to the one who has faith.
- ◆ We do not respond to God’s free offer of salvation through our own initiative. We cannot believe by our own power. Faith is itself God’s gift.
- ◆ Eternal salvation granted by God’s grace is received by the believer by whole heartedly accepting that what God says is true, trusting that God’s gift of salvation will be exactly as He has promised.
- ◆ Biblical truth always includes facts to be known as well as being truth we personally accept (1 Corinthians 15:1-5).

6. **Ephesians 2:10**: ***“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”***

- ◆ In this verse Paul answers the question, What difference does God’s intervention make in a person’s moral life?
  - ◆ We are God’s workmanship designed for action. We have been recreated in “Christ Jesus” for a purpose. God has good works for us to do that were prepared beforehand.
  - ◆ God’s plan for us does not end when we believe the gospel. It is only beginning.
  - ◆ The good works have nothing to do with earning salvation. God’s gift cannot be earned. The good works referred to are works done by believers empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit to determine and carry out things pleasing to God (Phil. 2:13).
7. **What is Next:** Continuing to explore the meaning and importance of Union with Christ.