

March 12, 2017
Great Love
Ephesians 2:1-10

¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,

²in which you used to live when you followed 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.

³All 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.

⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,

⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

⁶And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

⁷in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—

⁹not by works, so that no one can boast.

¹⁰For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Good Morning My Sisters and Brothers in Christ. I am glad to see each of you here in the house of the Lord this morning. It is good and pleasant when sisters and brothers come together in unity. This morning we begin our second sermon in our series on **learning how God loves us** and **what God expects from us in return.**

The passage for consideration is from Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus. Ephesus was a leading city in the Roman Empire and Paul visited them twice, the second time staying for three years. These visits and the activities during the visits are documented in Acts 18 – Acts 20. Generally, Paul's letters to the churches addresses a specific problem that was the result of **outside forces**, but this one does not. The church at Ephesus had been able to keep out the false teachers with alternate facts and had not allowed their neighbors to turn them around from following Jesus the Christ. But they did have an issue that concerned Paul, and it was **coming from within. They were losing their excitement for Christ and each other.**

Have you been in a relationship that has grown stale? You have heard all the stories three times and you already know the punch line. Have you ever reread a book so much that when you pick it up again you just flip to the good parts? Have you ever gotten in your car intending to go to one place but when you look up you are headed in another direction?

We not might wish to admit it but sometimes church grows stale. We sit in the same pew so our perspective does not change. We speak to the same people and say "how are you?" but we don't hear the answer. We pray the prayers; sing the songs; even say AMEN at the right place and time. But we don't feel it, we don't think about it, because it has become the same old stuff, just a different day. We are serving God on automatic pilot.

It seems that the church at Ephesus was having the same problem. The church had grown stagnant, the gospel was stale, they were tired of themselves

and each other, so their praise was stuck inside the walls and not able to reach heaven.

Paul believes that the solution for this problem is for him to remind them of who they were, whose they were and their purpose for being. Paul restates for them in Chapter One **who they are and whose they are:**

⁴For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

Then Paul restates **what they are called to do** because of who they are

¹²in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

Paul could have stopped there, but Paul wished to be sure that they understood, that we understand, we had not done anything to earn God's favor and we could not work to keep it.

Paul ends Chapter One by sharing with them how he has prayed for them and thanked God for them.

Stay with me! I am really trying to take you somewhere!

Listen to beginning of Chapter Two from The Message:

¹⁻⁶It wasn't so long ago that you were mired in that old stagnant life of sin. You let the world, which doesn't know the first thing about living, tell you how to live. You filled your lungs with polluted unbelief, and then exhaled disobedience. We all did it, all of us doing what we felt like doing, when we felt like doing it, all of us in the same boat. It's a wonder God didn't lose his temper and do away with the whole lot of us. Instead, immense in mercy and with an incredible love, he embraced us. He took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ. He did all this on his own, with no help from us! Then he picked us up and set us down in highest heaven in company with Jesus, our Messiah.

With that as background would you pray with me as I talk about

LIVING AND WORKING FOR GOD

SHALL WE PRAY!

Father God we are seeking an understanding of your Words so that we might make use of them in our walk with you. We ask now that you open our heads, hearts and minds so that we might hear from the throne room of grace. Father, please help us to see and hear where these words apply directly to us. We do not wish to be found lukewarm when you return, we wish to be found pleasing to you. Abba, please give me the knowledge, strength and wisdom to teach your Word both in season and out of season. In the name of your Son, Jesus the Christ we pray. Amen and Amen.

LIVING AND WORKING FOR GOD

Veronica: What would it be like to work for God full time

Left a good job to prepare for another

Returned to school

Working for God full time

Downsize living situation

Explain to her children why the change

Kent: Support himself with his music

As a young man picky about who he played for

Demanded a salary that exceeded what the church could afford

His praise was for himself – not for God

Went from place to place looking for money/status

Saw others get accolades that he thought belonged to him

Got it one day – came home – worked for the Lord

Could see the difference in his walk, talk

Me: When I woke up and knew my name I was in church

I bragged about who I was, what church I belonged to, my pastor

I had great success in higher education, corporate American

But my soul was not content

My soul became content when I was able to get all my life in line
with who I was, whose I was and what I was called to do.

Just as Ms. Patrice said this morning there is work for each of us.

But maybe you need to be reminded of what God's grace has done for you

- Grace has given us all spiritual blessings through Jesus – Eph. 1:3
- Grace chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world – Eph. 1:4
- Grace has determined that we will be like Jesus, and with Jesus, one day – Eph. 1:5; 11-12
- Grace has made us accepted in Jesus – Eph. 1:6
- Grace provided the blood of Christ that washed us from our sins – Eph. 1:7
- Grace reached out to us when we were dead in our sins and headed to Hell – Eph. 2:1-4
- Grace loved us – Eph. 2:4
- Grace gave us life – Eph. 2:5
- Grace has secured our future – Eph. 2:6-7
- Grace has secured our salvation – Eph. 2:8-9

There are many who claim to be saved. They prayed a prayer in an altar. They made a profession. They joined a church. They laid down a few sins. They did what they thought was necessary, but they missed the most important thing of all: they missed Jesus! Because they missed Him, their lives never changed, and they never produced those “**good works**” that are the evidence of genuine salvation!

Call to Discipleship

1. ***Have you been saved and changed by God's grace?*** If not, you need to come to Jesus today. If you will come to Him, He will save your soul.
 2. ***Is your life marked, not by perfection, but by a profound change and by works that glorify God?*** If it is, you should thank God for that is evidence of your conversion, if it is not, then you should come to Jesus because your lack of works is evidence of your lost condition.
 3. ***Are you doing everything God has called you to do?*** If you are not, let me invite you to fully surrender to His will and allow Him to take the reins of your life for His glory.
 4. ***Are you grateful to Him for His work of grace in your life?*** If you are, come to Him today and thank Him for His life-changing work on your behalf.
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