

EPHESIANS

WHO I AM AND WHY IT MATTERS

Today, we continue our series in the book of Ephesians. Our passage today paints a vivid picture of what the Gospel looks like in a person's life from A to Z. These verses teach us who we were before we met Christ, how we met Jesus, and what happens to us after we come to faith in Christ.

Scripture: Ephesians 2:1-10

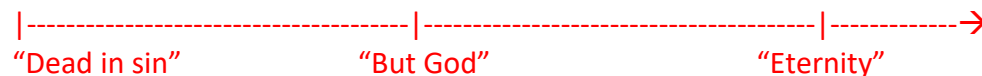
Discussion Questions:

1. Looking back at your notes, what encouraged or challenged you the most?
2. How could we turn today's passage into a "timeline of spiritual transformation"? How would you describe the process and pace of moving from verse 1 to verse 10? Why is it important to take the long view when looking for progress?

Has anyone ever looked at you and said, "You're a piece of work!" Although they may have meant it differently, that statement couldn't be more accurate about you biblically. In 2 Corinthians 3:18, Paul writes, "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." In another place, Paul writes, "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. (Romans 7:18-20)."

If you were turning this passage into a timeline, you could look at it like this:

"For we are His workmanship..."



When considering who we're becoming as followers of Christ, C.S. Lewis helps us to remember: "It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship... There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal."

3. Paul doesn't mince words when describing our pre-Christian state. How does he describe our lives before salvation? Why is it important to remember who we were before salvation? How would most nonbelievers respond to reading this description of their lives?

Before we were made alive by the Spirit, we lived in sin, just like the rest of the world. We used to obey the devil, the Spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God, and we followed our sinful nature's desires and inclinations. We were subject to God's anger.

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, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

4. All of humanity is spiritually dead until the Spirit awakens the soul to the life of God. Until this happens, our coworkers and neighbors are only physically alive but spiritually dead. Reflect on what we've already discussed in Ephesians and note what is ours in Christ and what nonbelievers do not have.

Until the Spirit awakens those spiritually dead, they only look like those of us who are spiritually alive to God. They work down the hall from us. They sit in the classroom with us. They wave to us as we drive past their house and pull into our driveways. They sit next to us on the sidelines at Little League games. They have jobs, hobbies, and a 401k. They look like those of us who are alive to God, but they are spiritually dead.

The spiritually dead among us have never experienced the power of the Gospel. They have never felt resurrection hope while watching a loved one laid to rest. They have never experienced the peace of God that surpasses understanding. They walk through the valley of the shadow of death – alone. They are not redeemed. They are not adopted. And, if you're a Christ follower, this was true of you once upon a time too.

5. When you see people in your workplace or neighborhood, do you see them as spiritually alive or dead? Why or why not? How can we begin to see people through this lens more often?

We live most of our lives with our eyes on the tasks of the day – the tyranny of the urgent – and the responsibilities of life as a spouse, parent, and employee. As Christians, we must work to keep our hearts sensitive to the purposes and priorities of God in a world that's busy doing what we need/must do each day/week/year as part of our lives on earth. One of the best things we can do to help keep our eyes open to the right things is to cultivate a daily time with God. When we neglect our relationship with the Lord, we're much more likely to be distracted and driven by the priorities of this world. When walking with the Lord, we're more likely to see people as lost and needing a Savior. Among the "good works," the Lord has for us is being a light for the Gospel in our neighborhoods, workplaces, etc.

6. Why is it that the longer we walk with the Lord, the more likely we are to forget the dire condition of our souls before we were made alive to God? How does Luke 18:9-14 serve as a warning for us regarding spiritual comparison? When are you most tempted to compare yourself to others spiritually?

We know we are not perfect, but the trap we face now is spiritual comparison. There is a likelihood

that the farther we get from the day of our salvation, the less dark the picture seems – especially when we compare ourselves to others.

In his book *Accidental Pharisees*, Larry Osborn writes, "Our spiritual comparisons are also incredibly biased. We have an amazing ability to compare things in a way that causes us to come out on top. And when we come out on top, it's hard not to look down on people who don't measure up."

If we ever lose sight of God's wonder-working grace on behalf of us who were dead in our sin, we risk becoming more like a Pharisee and less like a humbly forgiven Saint.

7. Read Ephesians 2:4-7. Why should these verses stagger us (especially when we read them against the backdrop of our pre-Christian reality)? Why can we sometimes find ourselves unmoved by these truths? What can we do to keep our hearts from becoming indifferent toward them?

These verses should stagger us. When you read these verses against the backdrop of our pre-Christian reality (spiritually dead, led by our passions and inclinations, subject to God's wrath) and then read, "But God is so rich in mercy, and he loves us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead." – you should be left bewildered. After all, this is quite the plot twist, wouldn't you say?

8. What's one personal takeaway from today's study you can focus on applying in your life this week?