

Open the Eyes of My Heart (Part 9)

Ephesians 2:4-10

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Recall that in Ephesians 1, Paul described all the blessings we have in Jesus Christ. After learning about everything God has given to us, we might start to think we deserve it all. We humans tend to think more highly of ourselves than we ought. So to counteract this pride, Paul reminds us where we came from in 2:1-3. We didn't deserve any grace from God. We were dead in our transgressions, following the ways of the world, the ways of Satan. It sounds harsh, but anyone who doesn't follow Jesus is following Satan. The one thing Satan wants to prevent is for you to come to Jesus, who is the only path to salvation. We were dead in sin, but God, out of His great love for us, saved us. To appreciate what Jesus did for us, we must constantly be reminded of where we came from.

This idea is present also in the Old Testament when we look at how God refers to Himself. He calls Himself the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and/or Jacob" 19 times in the Old Testament, reminding the Israelites that they should remain faithfully His, since He is the God of their forefathers. God calls Himself the "God of heaven" 20 times, reminding us that unlike the gods of other nations, made from created earthly things, He is the transcendent invisible God who operates in a realm separated from earth. However, in comparison God calls Himself the "God who brought Israel out of Egypt" more than 80 times in the Old Testament. This tells us how important it is to God that Israel be reminded of where they came from and how God saved them. And likewise for us it is important to be reminded that God rescued us from slavery to sin. Often we can't reliably see how God works in our lives in the present, but when we look back it is clearer how His salvation has worked in us. So we must not forget where we came from.

And all of this was done out of His great love for us. In 2:4-8 Paul mentions God's love, kindness, grace, or mercy seven times. This passage is a rich statement of the core of the gospel message. We were dead, but God saved us out of love. How can any of us be so forgetful and question His love for us after He gave His only Son for us?

Paul goes on to describe three things Jesus' sacrifice does for us. First, though we were dead, we are made alive in Christ (v. 5). Just as God breathed life into Adam in Genesis 2:7, and just as He breathed life back into Jesus at the resurrection, He breathes new life into all of us, who were dead in sin. This is what baptism symbolizes. We are lowered face up into the water,

as one is lowered into the grave. And we rise out of the water as one being resurrected from the dead. We are made alive, born again, in Jesus.

Second, we are raised with Christ (v. 6). This sounds a lot like being made alive in Christ, and it is related, but not quite the same. When we are born again, our spirits are made alive. But our bodies have not been changed yet. When Jesus returns our transformation will be complete, and we will be resurrected bodily, just as He was. If we just focus on this life, it always ends in tragedy. Our bodies slowly decay throughout our lifetimes until we die. This is why those without Jesus have no hope. But we have an eternal hope that extends forever after death. For us death is not the end, just a transition to something better. The temporal becomes eternal at the moment of glorification, and we will meet those in Christ who came before us. Nothing in this world, whether it be work, school, money, achievement, or success, can compare to this. So we should keep our eyes on eternal hope we have in Jesus.

Finally, in v. 6 Paul says that God seated us with Jesus. Just as Jesus ascended into heaven to be seated at the right hand of God, we will ascend after our resurrection to sit by Jesus' side at the place of honor. We don't deserve this honor, but God gives it to us out of His love. God is the God who takes our horrible circumstance and flips it around. He brings us from death to life and gives us a position we don't deserve.

Verse 7 explains that God did this to show the incomparable riches of His grace expressed in His kindness to us in Jesus. He is showing the universe how loving He is. It's not enough to just say it, He must demonstrate it. We are merely the beneficiaries of this demonstration of love. But in the end, all people, whether they accepted Jesus or not, will not be able to deny that He is a loving and gracious God. Those who rejected Him will realize how foolish they were. So let us not forget how loving God is. Don't base your view of God on your current circumstances, but rather on Scripture, which tells us all that God has already given everything to us in Jesus Christ out of His great love for us.