

## Ephesians 2:1-10 | Anthropology 101

Tyler Velin | October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013

We are working through the book of Ephesians, and we are starting the second chapter today. I want to remind us of what we have covered so far. Because the first three chapters of this book are a prayer. It is Paul's prayer for the readers of this letter.

In the past year, we at GCF have preached through three Pauline epistles. Three letters written by Paul. Last year we did Colossians and Philippians, and now we are working through Ephesians. And while each book is individual, I have been increasingly convicted of the same thing as I read Paul. My prayers suck.

In Colossians and Philippians you see Paul's passionate prayers for the church and for those to whom he is ministering, and in Ephesians we see Paul's prayer painting such a beautiful picture of God that his prayer is tied up in supplication and worship.

Paul opens this book with a complete and total lecture in theology. For the first chapter all he does is discuss how powerful, mighty and wonderful God is. He stimulates our worship by painting a picture of a God who before the foundations of the world planned the most glorious redemption so that we might come to know the Christ who is the fullness of him who fills all things.

Stephen spoke last week, and he did a great job of showing us how Paul's goal is not simply to describe to us the things of God, he wants us, and this is his prayer, he wants us to know God. To know the hope that we have.

I'm reading a book right now which is talking about some of the influential theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And by influential, it doesn't mean Biblical, simply that they had influence over Christianity. Unfortunately when you step back and look at 20<sup>th</sup> century theologians, the ones who had some of the largest influence were ones who got certain aspects of the Bible very wrong.

For instance I was reading of one Theologian, and the author said "having established the doctrine of humanity, Cobb established a corollary doctrine of God." You see this guy wanted to know things. He wanted to know anthropology, he wanted to know who we are, and he wanted to know philosophy, why are we here, and how should we act while we are here. What he missed in that statement was huge. To understand the fullness of who we are and where we fit, you don't look at humanity. You look at God. Our view of God shapes our understanding of humanity.

That's what Paul is doing today. He has laid out some of the attributes of God, God's eternal plan, the fullness of Christ, and now he is going to show us how that changes us.

### Pray

I want to break this up into two parts here. Part one is: **Man according to Nature**

### Eph 2:1-3

Paul gets personal here. You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked. You see whether you see yourself as an explicit sinner, or whether you see yourself as a pretty good person who just missteps, trespasses, sometimes, you are dead. You are born dead.

How dead? Dead Dead.

In Romans Paul says that through one man's sin, all have died.

By nature, we are all dead. You see we were created to be ruled. In 1 Samuel 8, God's people demanded a King, and God says that this shows their true heart. God was already their king, their sin just blinded them from seeing it. They were dead in their trespasses.

God created us, and God reigned over us. Therefore the chief sin isn't murder or adultery. The chief sin, the root of all sin is unbelief in our true ruler. In unbelief we are born, in unbelief we are dead.

Now I say that the chief sin is unbelief in our true ruler because we are always ruled. It's not that those people who believe in God are submissive to someone, and non-believers are free entities. Look at what Paul said in **2-3**.

In our sin we are followers and slaves to princes and power of the air, the spirit which is at work in disobedience.

We are slaves to sin. We are ruled by our passions, and our passion when we are in sin is death. We are just so brainwashed by our slave masters that we don't realize it.

I see this in my son. My son proves this passage. My little blonde hair, blue eyed cute almost one year old, is an icon of sin.

He is a petri dish of iniquity. Owen has decided that everything in the world is his. Especially food. If he knows of its existence, he wants to eat it. We were on a road trip a few weeks ago and I was eating some pretzel crisps from Costco, and Owen wanted one. Being a dad, I gave it to him. He gnawed on it for a while and then started to choke on it. Full on choke on it. So I'm in the back seat with him, and I tear him out of his car seat and do the baby Heimlich on him and save his life, like a super dad. But then he wants another pretzel crisp. Being a responsible parent, I give him one. Which he chokes on.

Last night I was sitting on the couch eating pretzel crisps (see a theme). And he came up to me, and wants a pretzel crisp. I give him one....he splits in in half, puts it in his mouth, and chokes on it. So now I have learned my lesson. Babies should not eat pretzel crisps but he still wants one...so bad. He longs and reaches for the bag, because he has tasted the fleeting satisfaction of baked and lightly salted pretzel crisps, but he is numb to the result of his decision.

We are all Owen's. In our unbelief we are ruled by the rulers of the air. Anything which can be desired by us will be desired, and we will desire it to the point of death. We are trapped. True freedom doesn't come from gluttony, it comes from restraint. In our sin we can say no to nothing. And the result is that we have become by nature, children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

You are dead, you are a slave, you are a child of wrath. By nature this is what it means to be a human.

For the wages of sin is death...but.

But what? The world tells us that wrong may exists, that we may sin against each other, but look at man. Look at how we have progressed. We may have our flaws but the last two centuries have been marked by human flourishing, the great wheel of progress has spun. We are technologically advanced, globally aware, medically prepared. This is the dawn of the new enlightenment. Human rights are thriving, people are free, humanity is shaking off the dust. We point to ourselves to justify ourselves? How does that work. You look at the atrocities of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and you scream progress. Two World wars, the attempted extermination of a whole people group, 13 million people killed by Stalin's purges, mass graves in Eastern Europe, a nuclear armed world, the drug cartels in South America, the apartheid in South Africa. It is estimated that over 160 million people were killed via war, uprising or conflict in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In our so young 21<sup>st</sup> century, in 13 years we have seen the rise of terrorism, the Darfur

slaughter, earthquakes and tsunamis, we have seen Kony and Bin Laden, civil wars in Sri Lanka, Egypt, Afghanistan, Nepal, Chad and the Ivory Coast. We have discovered no cure for cancer, no solution for AIDS. We have seen Boston Bombings and biological weapons in Syria. And over 15 million babies killed in the U.S. alone through abortion since 2000. But man nothing. We need a greater solution to our death.

I love the book of Ezekiel. In it the prophet Ezekiel is prophesying to Israel and Judah and he is speaking of the coming destruction against their sins. Their sin, will kill them. But God gives them a new hope. In Chapter 36 God says that a day will come when he will give his people new hearts, and a new spirit and they will have a new life, death will no longer be the norm for the people. And in the very next chapter God takes Ezekiel out to a valley. In the valley there are bones scattered all over the place. Dry bones. It is filled with death and is empty of life. But God says to Ezekiel, prophesy to the Bones. Prophesy to the dry bones. And so Ezekiel prophesied to the bones. And he hear a great clattering and saw the bones come together, and then sinews grew from the bones, and then muscles, and then flesh, and these bones became bodies.

Then God said to Ezekiel, prophesy to the breath, he says **“Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath and breathe on these slain, that they may live.”** So he prophesied and the breath came to the bodies and they stood and Ezekiel said that they made an exceedingly great army.

God then says to Ezekiel, this is what I am going to do with my people. A day will come when the new breath, the new spirit will come and it will bring the dead to life. We need that life. Israel needed that life. God has brought that solution.

The very next verse begins with this phrases....**“But God....”**

See this is why we start with God and look back to man. Because we have seen that God is a blessed God, a God who gives blessings, a God who orchestrates salvation, a God who works all things according to the counsel of his will, a God who desires for us to know the hope to which he has called his own before the foundations of the world.

That God has something to say about humanity. **Eph 2:4-7**

This is **Man according to Grace**

You see man according to grace is altogether different than man according to nature. Man according to nature is defined by himself, man according to grace is defined by the nature of God. God so acted in mercy out of the great love that he had for sinners.

Did you see that? While we were sinners, God loved us and sent Christ to us. How can God love sinners? God hates sinners, sinners stand in the wrath of God. So what has happened here?

This is why Ephesians 1 is so important. This is the beauty of “Before the foundations of the world God predestined us for adoption as sons through Christ Jesus.” God loves sinners because in his sovereignty he looks through the sinful man, to see the sinless Christ who died in his place. God loves sinners because it is in his delight to love them through Christ.

By grace we have been saved. We were dead, but God made us alive through Christ. **1 Peter 2:23-25**

Jesus is the bringer of the breath. Jesus has brought our dry bones to life and he has made us into an anxious army. You were in sin, but God raised *us*. God’s salvation is for a people. It is fundamentally communal. Salvation produces the church, not simply the Christian.

An anxious army. Did you see that purpose statement in verse **6-7**? In Philippians 3:8 Paul himself says that he counts everything as loss for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus.

In Philippians Paul is talking in the present, we have a surpassing worth in the present reality

of our salvation through Christ. But in Ephesians Paul is saying that the surpassing worth we have now, is a glimpse of the immeasurable riches that are still yet to come in Christ. More is yet to come. We are held in a tension for greater things. Peter talks about our salvation and he says that the prophets inquired anxiously about the things that were yet to come, but they were not writing for themselves, they were writing for us. Because we have experienced the things of which the prophets long to look. And will experience greater things yet to come.

It is in this tension that we find our purpose. Because God saved us out of his overflow of love, for a purpose. We see this purpose in **Eph 2:8-10**

Do you see the inversion here? We were once slaves to the work of the sons of disobedience. But now we are slaves to the work of the son of God. Works don't save us. Grace saves us. No amount of good deeds, community service, bible reading, social justice, rotary clubs, Bible belts, or gold stars will save us. Grace has saved us. Pure, unworthy, dangerous, scandalous, glorious grace.

And that grace gives us over to work. We were created to be saved before the foundations of the world, through Christ so that we may work for Christ. We the church, must labor in the path that God has prepared for us to labor.

Your life as a human is ultimately about your life in Christ. In Christ we are most human, in his plan we are most purposed.

You may well be a student, a spouse someday, a parent, a business analyst, a lawyer, an athlete, a diplomat, a store clerk or a bus boy, by what you are is Christ's workmanship, this is the root of your existence.

God has given us over to the ministry of preaching this message. What path has Christ given you to walk with that burden? This is the result of God's anthropology. We have a purpose, and that purpose is that we grow to be the person, employee, husband, mother, friend that Christ has prepared us to be, while full heartedly realizing we are first and foremost his workmanship on his mission.

This is what it means to be a body in motion. On our own we are dead. But through Christ we are an anxious army. Stunned by the worth at hand, amazed at the treasure yet to come, zealous for the work to be done.

Won't you believe that call. Cherish that task. Worship that savior.