

Ephesians 2 (We are Without Excuse to be Joyful!)

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[0 : 00] Greetings to each one. It's been good to be here this morning. My voice isn't the best, but maybe Tristan will bring me a glass of water. I think he's back there anyway.

I would like to continue in Ephesians chapter 2. The thought that kept coming to me this morning was, well, Brother Dan talked about redemption and the redeemed. I don't know if that was really Phil's intent or main theme or not last week, but I know that's what kept ringing in my ears as well, was redeemed, that one message. And this morning as Dan was up here, I just kind of in with the message as far as in Ephesians, I just wrote down that we are without excuse. You know, what's your excuse this morning when it comes to being a Christian or not being a Christian, living the Christian life or not? We are without excuse because we have a great Redeemer. We had looked, when I shared on Ephesians 1, just a reminder a little bit of what we had said then.

According to Acts chapter 20, Paul had pastored the Ephesians for three years earlier. Ephesus was a coastal city in what is now known as Turkey, and that Paul wrote this while he was in prison in Rome, we believe. What do you think was Paul's excuse? What could have been Paul's excuses for his struggles? You know, we don't read anything really about, you know, sometimes he talks about his bonds or his imprisonment or whatever, but even that seemed to be in a positive light. And I've often wondered, you know, how would I respond in that kind of a life or setting? You know, the life that Paul lived, it would probably be poor me, you know, this isn't fair, this isn't right. You guys that aren't in prison, get me out, do something.

[3 : 01] I just have those thoughts, you know. Well, hopefully you would, but you just don't read that about Paul's life.

He was not a selfish person. The first verse in chapter 1 says, Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.

So that would include us, those that are in Christ Jesus. It was not just the church at Ephesus, but those that are Christians.

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. So now on to chapter 2.

Verse 1. And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

[4 : 51] Like to just, can we just pray again? Just feel like we need to pray. Father, we come to you and we just thank you, Lord, for your word. Thank you, God, for who you are.

Thank you for redemption. Thank you for shedding your blood. Thank you for bringing hope to the hopeless, which was us.

Thank you for restoration and for redeeming us, Lord, to yourself. Just pray, God, that you would open your word to us and just help us.

Help me, Lord, to just be a servant. Help me to share your word and pray that our hearts would be stirred because of your word and that it would have life to our hearts.

We pray in Jesus' name. Who were dead in trespasses and sins, trespasses, disobedient.

[5 : 56] That was us. That was you and me. We were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

And yet, there in verse 1, it says that He has quickened, He has made alive us. He has made us alive in spite of what we were.

All of us that have put our faith and trust in Him. He has made us alive. Jesus said in John chapter 10, verse 9 and 10, I want to read those verses.

He says, I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture. The thief cometh not but for to steal and to kill and to destroy.

I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly. Do you and I have it more abundantly?

[7 : 06] Or do we just have, barely have life? Do we have life? If we do, do we have it more abundantly? I actually wonder if there's such a thing as having life but not more abundantly.

I think we either have it or we don't. Sometimes we don't feel like we have it. Sometimes the pressures of life and the things that we face can be discouraging or tiring or whatever, and we don't feel.

But do we go by how we feel? Or do we go by faith? But before we had this life, we were controlled by a different spirit.

The spirit that made us, excuse me, the spirit that made us caused us to live out the desires of our flesh.

And it says here that, I believe in verse 3. Just read that again. Among whom also we have had our conversation, our lifestyle, in times past, in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.

[8 : 35] that spirit caused us to live the desires of our own mind.

Our own mind, our own way of thinking. It was natural for us. That's the spirit of the world.

That's the spirit that controlled us. We were just like the rest of the world. In fact, we were a worldly person because of the nature that we had which made us disobedient to God.

Does this sound like unsaved people? Or does it sound like some people that profess Christianity today?

Just professing Christianity. Children of disobedience. But that life that Jesus came to give us will also change us and make all things new.

[9 : 44] I was earlier this week thinking about that. Behold, all things have become new. The old things have passed away. And what we can do is to turn our hearts to Him in full surrender.

And then we have the power to live this life. But it takes a submissive heart. If we are living for ourselves this morning and we are walking in selfishness rather than serving others, then we need redemption.

I'm not saying you're not saved, but we need to be redeemed. God redeems those blind spots in our lives if we let Him.

I believe God keeps redeeming us. And He keeps on redeeming us in those areas of selfishness. He wants to change our selfishness to be, instead of self-centered, to be others-centered.

Serving each other. Serving others. God wants to redeem that selfish heart and change the self-serving heart into a servant heart.

[11 : 17] That hard heart into a soft heart. I mentioned a little bit ago about being worldly. You know, when we were walking after our selfish desires, our own desires, we were of the world.

We need to get that straight. There was, the way I grew up, you know, we had terms like the outsiders.

We had terms like, you know, growing up, I was always on the inside of the church. In my mind, I was always a good person because I was part of something.

And that made me an insider. people that were not like us were considered outsiders, right, Dan? They were men of the world.

But the Bible tells us that we were of the world. I was of the world. I thought like the world. I thought I was selfish. We were selfish brats.

[12 : 24] Right? We served ourselves. And then we judged everybody else that wasn't like us. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us.

Verse 4. What would we do if God was not rich? If He didn't have a lot of mercy, where would we be? What would we do?

A self-righteous people. Even when we were dead in sins, hath He quickened us together with Christ.

By grace are you saved. And hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

That in the ages to come He might show His exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

[13:35] Has God been kind to us? His kindness to us. These verses, I believe, should bring us great joy.

that in the ages to come He will show us the exceeding, He will show us the exceeding riches of His grace and His kindness through Christ Jesus.

God who is rich in mercy. We serve a rich God. He doesn't have just a little bit, just enough to... No, He's rich.

He has plenty, more than enough. And He has great love. For His great love wherewith He loved us.

He poured that out to us. He poured out His love when He sent His Son. He did it in spite of who we were and how we rejected Him.

[14:57] Are we consumed with thoughts like this? Do our thoughts, do we think, do we meditate on promises like this one?

Do we truly have the joy of the Lord? Are we experiencing what God wants His people to experience? Joy, unspeakable and full of glory.

Or do we just say those terms? I'm talking to myself. I don't always feel joyful. I don't always act joyful.

But, I want to just share, share these challenges because of the Word of God, not because I'm walking it perfectly.

Are we experiencing what God has for His people? Do you remember what Brother Phil shared about the Israelites and how they got only, they only got about 15 or 20% of the land that they were promised to Israel because they were unbelieving and they didn't, they weren't what God wanted them to be.

[16:20] How much do we experience what God has for us? What is your joy level this morning? Born again people, what are we experiencing today?

Is there more? And I think we all agreed last week that yeah, there's more. I don't think anybody raised their hand and said, I have everything God has.

I lack, I have no need for more. Are we due for another fresh dose of joy of the Lord? Where is it? What is your joy tank level? yesterday I, Tony told me that my little tractor is completely out of fuel. I better not run it or plan to do much without getting fuel. but I started up and did something yesterday and I never saw a tractor so empty.

[17:26] I don't know what it was running on but it was empty. Like when I poured fuel into it, it was like that empty sound, you know, no fuel in there. I don't know what it was running on.

But just now thought of that, you know, what's our joy tank? How empty is it? It's pretty empty sometimes, doesn't it?

And I think we just need to be reminded of what we've been redeemed from. He says in one of these verses to remember, I think we'll get to that then, but to remember.

What have we been redeemed from and salvaged and saved from? joy is not dependent on the things around you.

Happiness depends on happenings, but joy is from the Lord and it overrides happenings. How do you think Paul could have joy sitting in prison so much of his life?

[18:33] There's many other examples in the Bible of great joy, even in difficult circumstances.

But we need to have the joy of the Lord because it's our strength. It's what carries us through. Even when times are dark and very difficult, the joy of the Lord is our strength.

May that be our testimony. As we face every battle and as we overcome, it is through the joy of the Lord that He puts in us.

I also want to just, something that really jumped out to me in this passage was how that Paul uses the terms us and we. Over and over.

It's, you know, God who is rich in mercy for His great love, He loved us. He didn't say He loved me. And then it says, even when we were dead in sins, hath He quickened us together with Christ.

[19:47] And He raised us up together and made us to sit in heavenly places. He will show exceeding riches of His grace and His kindness toward us.

Why is that? You know, today so many times it's more just me and my and I and myself. But I believe that there's a point in this.

That God would have it that way. That we are not alone. God never intended us to be independent from each other. And just completely, you know, a hermit Christian.

But He wants us to be together. He wants us to have this together. That's God's plan. As a body of believers, I believe that's why these terms are like that, personally.

that it's a body, God's body, Christ's body, the church, is why that it was us.

[20 : 56] Verse 8, let's go on to verse 8. For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

You ever boast about your Christianity? We're not supposed to. Only boast in Christ. But if you're boasting about your goodness, it's probably just because you have your own works.

Do we understand this clearly? That it is not of works that justify us before God? We can't boast or be proud of our good works because they don't save us.

Only through faith in the works of Christ and His blood can we have redemption and salvation.

And those that are, and this is something that should grip us, but those that are counting on their good works for their salvation will be dreadfully shocked someday.

[22 : 16] And it will be a fearful thing to fall in the hands of an angry God. This God will not accept anything that is not redeemed by the blood of His Son.

Remember the blood of the Israelites on the doorpost. If that blood was there, the death angel would pass over.

That's where the term Passover, the Passover feast. But God will only accept what has been covered, what has been, where the blood of Jesus has redeemed.

And the Bible also says that anything that is not of faith is sin. So what are good works for then? Are we not supposed to have works?

Aren't we judged by our works? Let's read verse 10. For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

[23 : 35] So it's God's plan that we have good works. But we're not saved by good works. I think that's something that we need to be very clear on.

We're not saved by them. I believe our works are a gauge to our salvation. They are a gauge. In other words, if we don't have the works of God in our lives, then we don't have that life.

Jesus came to give us that life. And if we don't have those works, it's just a gauge to say, well, you don't have that life. But we are to have good works.

And they show whether we are in Christ or not. Verse 11, Wherefore remember, there's that word, remember, that ye being in times past, Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision, by that which is called the circumcision of the flesh, made with hands.

That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope without God in the world.

[25 : 05] But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, far away, made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Christ. Again, just, when I read this, I just think of the body of Christ realizing this, realizing that we were a far off, and Paul calls us to remember, wherefore remember, who we were.

And I know he was talking to Gentiles, but that's us too, right? we were afar off, but because of the blood of Jesus, we are made near.

We are brought in, became part of the body of Christ. Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, all the promises that God made to his people, applied to you and I today because of the blood.

God would not have had to do that. He could have just kept his people. He wouldn't have had to include us.

[26 : 32] And here I grew up thinking we were something special. Wow, we were the most good people on earth. never realized that I was an alien.

I didn't belong until I found Christ and the blood was applied. What a blessing to remember that we were not part of God's kingdom, but we were Gentiles and aliens of Israel.

The Ephesians were strangers from the covenants of promise and had no hope and were without God. But that's where we have been as a people.

No hope. What is more hopeless than having no hope? no hope.

Have you ever met somebody that believed that they had no hope? That there was no hope for them? That is very hopeless. I used to think that being raised Amish or being an Anabaptist must be very pleasing to God.

[27 : 58] And that we were a special people, the plain people. We were the ones that were the closest thing to right on the earth. Anybody identify with me on that?

We must have been. And I'm not blaming people necessarily for that, but it's something that happens. Yeah, I'll just leave that.

But it's something I had to be redeemed from. My mind had to be renewed and understand that no, I was as much going to hell as anybody else. But without hope.

Are we free from that thought that we are somehow a special person? Maybe you're a young person here this morning and because you're raised in a godly family or mom and dad are Christians and godly and grandma and grandpa were good people and so somehow God's just going to accept me too.

Because I'm raised pretty good. You know that if the blood has not been applied to your life, you're an alien.

[29 : 18] You're not part of the family. I'm not talking about little children, but those that are accountable. Those that you know that you're accountable to God.

God has no grandchildren. We've heard that many times I'm sure. But He only has children. So you can't, we're not going to slide into heaven on the strings of your parents.

No matter how good our upbringing was, we need the blood of Jesus applied to our life. Do we realize how ungood we really are without Christ?

That's not a word probably, but ungood. How lost we are without Christ. How undone. Yes, we were far off, but now you are made nigh by the blood of Christ, our Christ.

Is there a reason to have joy? joy? If being bought into the family of God and being redeemed by the blood of God's own Son doesn't bring you joy, hear this, if this doesn't bring you joy, then nothing will.

[31 : 03] There is nothing else that can bring us joy. We can be happy about things. your team might win on the ball field or whatever and you'll be real happy.

But boy, that doesn't last long and sure doesn't go very deep, does it? Might be a good feeling, but that's just based on happenings.

You just happen to win. But joy can't be taken away even if you lose every time. Joy, that comes from God can't be taken.

Nobody can take it from you. Verse 14, For He is our peace, who hath made both one and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.

He is our peace. Is He our peace? having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances.

[32 : 17] For to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace, and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby, and came and preached peace to you, which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

He's talking about, I believe, the Jews and the Gentiles. The Gentiles being afar off, the Jews being nigh. He came and preached the same gospel, the same gospel to both.

For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners.

This is a wonderful, wonderful verse. Therefore, because of this, we are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.

We are now part of God's household, God's family. again, having redeemed and transformed, He translated us from darkness to marvelous light, the Bible says.

[33 : 47] Marvelous light. That should make us the most joyful people on earth, that we are no more strangers. sinners. We now have the same access to God as His chosen people do, His children.

We are His chosen. Through the seed of Abraham shall all nations be blessed, because that seed, Jesus, came.

And through Jesus, we have the same access, through His cross. no more strangers, no more aliens. That wall has been broken, and He has reconciled us to one body through His cross.

The law and ordinances that were against us was slain, it says. In Colossians chapter 2, I'll just read a few verses there.

Colossians 2 verse 13, And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, blotting out the handwriting of

ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross, and having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

[35 : 34] Wonderful words to the Colossian church. Let's go to verse 20.

We'll just coming to the end here. And verse 20, And our buildup, I'm sorry, are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself, being the chief cornerstone, in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto a new and holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together for inhabitation of God through the Spirit.

You know, what Paul wrote, I just think what Paul wrote to the Ephesians is so right for us today. It's for us today. It is written for us.

It's applicable to us today. Do we live with the realization that God desires to live in this body, in His church, all over the world, but specifically in this body?

Do we believe that? But He can only do that as we individually walk with Him, as individuals walk in this newness of life.

[37 : 08] If you and I don't walk in the Spirit, then how will God through the Spirit walk? I mean, how will He be in our midst? How will He live in the church body if individuals don't walk with Him?

do we live in the church? It's not just coming together and having a good time. That doesn't make us a church.

Anybody can do that. Any organization can come together and have a meal together and sing some songs together.

It doesn't make it a church. church. It's when Christ is in you and Christ is in all of us and we come together to worship.

That Christ is the head of the church. He's with us. Do we need each other? What do we need each other for?

[38 : 14] These are just some thoughts that I want to end with. appreciate what Dan shared about what was that about quality check?

I forget the illustration you used. What was that? The cabinet shop. Right. Work. Healthy criticism. Not just criticism but godly criticism.

Right. Yeah. Criticism. A critical person can become very domineering or old or you know we don't like how that feels but sometimes we turn from all criticism.

I do. I don't like it. I'll just admit it. I don't really like criticism. But there is such a thing as like you put it quality control.

where we speak into each other's lives in a positive way. Do we accept that or don't we need that? You know I just wrote down what you know.

[39 : 31] We always say we're all free to say oh we need each other. Right. We really need each other. But my question is for what? could you please make me feel good about myself?

Sure we do need encouragement. I'm not throwing that out. We need encouragement. But we also need to speak into each other's lives. What about correction sometimes?

What about challenges? The Bible even uses strong terms like rebuke. That one for sure we don't want too much. I don't like getting it and I don't like giving it.

But according to the Bible we need these things in a godly way in humility when the grace of God is on us to do that.

To be that for each other. For our own good and for the kingdom of God's sake. through the new birth and by the blood of the Lamb we have been made part of God's family.

[40 : 50] Let this always be very precious to us and not forget. We're called to remember. Let it never grow old but rather let it give us joy and increase the level of joy in our life.

Because the joy of the Lord is our strength. Will we have a little more joy this week? You know that joy will rub off on each other.

If you're around joyful people I become more joyful every time. That's why when we have meetings and there's a lot of joy we become joyful. But when I'm around a whole bunch of grumpy people I just want to get out of there.

Right? That rubs off too. But let us rejoice. We have been called to rejoice and I appreciate what you said this morning.

To let the redeemed of the Lord say so but to rejoice is actually a commandment. And again I say unto you rejoice. Right?

[41 : 59] It's actually a commandment to rejoice in the Bible over and over. the majority of people maybe the majority of us.

I'll include myself. We make excuses. It's just too hard. It's too much going on.

Things haven't gone right. Not feeling well about a situation. Whatever. Somebody mistreated me again. Again. You want me to be joyful.

God wants you to be joyful. It doesn't matter what I think. Are we making excuses or do we have joy? I believe Paul's life was full of joy.

Remember him and Silas in prison? The jailer got converted instead of committing suicide. He gave his heart to the Lord. Why?

[43 : 02] Because two of the prisoners were joyful. And when everything shook and everything fell apart for the jailer, he's like, I know where I can go for help because I heard them praising God.

Joyful. In the midst of trials. In the midst of terrible things, we can have joy.

May God help us.