

NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

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Heaven on Earth_ Ephesians 2

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This week I talked to an NCC'er who has been to death valley and back and he would be someone who would be a model of something that you would want to attain to. And he has been a part of one of the more successful restaurant businesses in the area and climbed the ladder, climbed the rungs in this entrepreneurial group. And is somebody who others are attracted to and every success, measurement or metric that you can think of in our society, he would have checked those boxes off. But here's something he said to this effect this week. He said, "The more I attained what I desired, the more I realized, that's not what I desire." Listen to some of his story that he shares. He says this "I lived this life for so long, not truly living but trying to find life in every endeavor and from every source possible. Career didn't get me there. Romance, promotion, alcohol didn't get me there. I worked hard at fulfillment, but I couldn't catch it. It took God using an NCC'er to invite me to Miracle Theater, having my first communion back with my parents and then at a local coffee shop Jesus speaking to me saying, I'm here waiting for you. I had believed in God, but I didn't know God. So I let Jesus begin to heal and fill my life and my heart. I began to live fully when I connected to Christ fully. It's been a trust walk. I've recently been tested in trial and pain. I found myself mad at Christ. Why did he allow me to experience this pain? But I kept hearing an invitation to the garden, a place of solitude, and of prayer. And at 2:25 am He showed up." I don't know God doesn't show up to me at 2:25 am. I'm in his presence at that point. "At 2:25 am he showed up and he wept with me. My old self would have turned to my old crutches in this pain, but I found God as my source of strength and he gave me his presence. I measure everything at work. That's how I've been successful. But what Christ has done and is doing is immeasurable. Christ's love and grace is the only thing sufficient for living fully."

Can we just take a moment of examination right now? In this season are you living fully? Are you flourishing, or are you empty? Are you full of life? Are you dead in your spirit?

Today we go from Ephesians one to Ephesians two and we go from identity to destiny, we go from who we are, to where we're going. And it's the first 10 verses of chapter two in Ephesians and there's a very clear arc in this passage of Scripture. We see in the first three verses, we see our failures, our destruction. And then in verses four through nine, we see God's amazing and his all sufficient grace. And then we see in verse 10, we see God's purposes in and for us. We're essentially doing this we're going from who we were, to who we are, to who we can become.

And so Jesus, we just invite you into these moments today. And we pray that as your word is shared, that your kingdom would come, your will would be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Show up today God for every seeker. In the grace and richness of your mercy, I pray in Jesus name, amen.

Verse one, says this, "And you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you once walked."

The scripture doesn't say that we were hurting in our sin. It doesn't say that we were struggling in our sin that we were sick in our sin. It says that we were dead in our sin. We don't need a resuscitation, right? We need a resurrection. We don't need a new routine. We don't need a self help seminar. We don't need a new way of doing things. No, we need salvation. We needed divine intervention. According to a biblical vision of the human person we are bodies that are animated by God's own Spirit. Our animation comes from the breath of God within us. And so when we're disconnected from God, we are disconnected from the flourishing that can happen in who I was created to be. We saw it in the testimony that I just shared. Our brother said, "I lived this life for so long not truly living." He was physically alive, but he was spiritually dead. This is why Jesus says you are to be born again. You are to be reborn. It's him coming into us and making us who we were intended to be.

The Greek word that's used for sin here is the word hamartia. And we've talked about this before, but it's an archery term and it means to miss the mark. And so here we are, it's not doing what we need to do. And then trespasses come right after this. And this is different, right? This is to intentionally cross a boundary that we shouldn't cross. This is to do what we shouldn't do.

Now, one of my kids really enjoys sharing my food. They really enjoy borrowing my food. And I'll just be honest; I don't like sharing my food. I'm not fully sanctified in that arena of life and I'm still working there. But they will come in and now the first time it happens, okay, maybe you just missed the mark a little bit, right. Your plates over here, but then you came over here, so let's get it back under control. And then the second time it happens though, okay, you have intentionally crossed a boundary that you should not cross. You have trespassed on my French fries. Now, you stay where you need to stay with your English tea and cookies over here. But as for this, this is the French Quarter over here, we will defend our fries. You can't come into this territory over here. You stay where you're supposed to be. But they intentionally cross that boundary. If they weren't so cute, it would be it would be a problem, right? But they intentionally cross this boundary.

What are those areas? What are those places where you are crossing boundaries that you should not cross? Maybe you're emotionally missing the mark with a loved one right now. Maybe you are trespassing on someone else's emotions. Maybe it's you're actually stepping back and you're not giving emotional to where that need is, but you're missing the mark. The apostle Paul is doing something - he's giving us full dimension around our issues in this scripture.

Verse one, "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked." "In which you once walked"

I saw an old buddy this week over at Union Market, he was a guy that I used to play ball with. And he had just come off of this 20 mile run or 20 mile bike ride. And that man, this is a tough guy; he grew up in a rough part of town. And he's the kind of guy that you hate playing ball against, but you love playing

ball with - that kind of guy and, he had my back a time or two playing ball. But, you know what, for a number of years of his life, he chose that course that way of the world. And in fact, I saw him a couple times around town, and he was strolling', if you know what I mean, right? He was creeping; he was enjoying the amenities of the areas that he was in at the time. And this is the course that he was going down. He was kind of walking slowly down this and we see in the Scripture, this is the way that in which you once walked. It's the word *para patao*. And it means to order your own behavior; it can mean to meander, or to wander without goal, or purpose. And my friend, for a while he was meandering through life without goal or purpose. He was a dead man walking. And then something snapped in him, something changed and he's on a journey. But listen, he has begun to ascend the hill. He has begun to become something new, a different person, a different creation. And I saw him at 20 miles on the bike, that's impressive. And he said this kind of intentionally. He said, "Joel, you know, I'm going somewhere. Just a small nuance of what God is doing in his heart and he would say this, he would say I should be dead but for the grace of God.

Listen, the apostle Paul is challenging us in this scripture saying, are you just meandering right now? Are you tangled in sin? Are you just wandering through life without goal or purpose?

Verse two, *"You are following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience"*

Commentator Timothy Gambas relates this to *The Matrix*, an old 1999 film, where reality was controlled by machines that used humans to provide energy. And *The Matrix* which was what humans experienced as reality but was anything but reality, it was manipulated by the machines to control humanity. Similarly, God's good creation has been hijacked by Satan and at all levels, there is perversion that destructs. Come on, you can witness to this, can you not? The perversions and destruction that takes place all around us from idolatry, from exploitation, to controlling addictions, to manipulation within relationship, to schemes to try to put yourself ahead at the expense of others, all this destruction happens all around us. There's no breaking out of this by sheer willpower. No, what has to happen just like in *The Matrix*, an outside force has to come in and pull you out or wake you up. This is God coming into us, right? This is the Spirit entering our lives.

Verse three, *"We all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."*

The enemy is at work, was at work, is at work, but it doesn't excuse us from our place from our part in pursuing sin and a sinful life. We were meant to live a life that was full. You know that? You are meant to live a full life pursuing love and care and receiving that in your life and honoring one another and then sin starts and sin begets sin, and we get tangled in sin and we get caught up in sin and Satan and the structures begin to tear us down.

Verse four, *"But God, being rich in mercy..."*

Hey, we are caught up in the structures that we cannot get out of. We cannot escape through willpower but God, rich in mercy. But my sin habits and my routines and my and the addictions and Romans seven I try to do this thing but I can't do it and sin has tangled me up but God in the richness of His goodness and mercy. But I have no hope I don't know where I'm going, I don't have a vision right now in life but God in His richness and grace and mercy comes in and he makes things new. 45 times in Scripture we see this little two word phrase, but God.

Listen what James Montgomery Boice said. He said, "If we understand these two words, they will save your soul." They will save your soul. And it's not just the beauty of this phrase right here. The beauty is what always comes after it.

Did you hear that? We were... Huh, we were dead in our trespasses, but now we are alive in Christ. We are saved, we are sanctified, we are delivered, we are healed. We are risen up into the heavenly realms, and we are made new. How? Because he has, he has made us alive. He has won the victory. He has gone up high and stretched out wide. He has gone down low into the grave. And then he went up even higher ascending to the right hand of the Father in heaven and pulling us up with him into the heavenly realm. He defeated death, and it's sting. He won the victory. It's Jesus Christ over and above all things. We were but now we are. Why? Because he has he has what he has done all things. He went to the grave, and he called Lazarus out. He was dead. He was done, stick a fork in him, but he called out and he called life into death. He called possible into impossible, and he wasn't done. And he woke him up and he wakes us up.

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—"

Ephesians 5:14 you who are sleeping, wake up and arise from the dead? Are you living in who you are now in Christ? Or are you living and who you were yesterday? Are you living in the old self, in the old person? Or are you living and who God has made you to be? Ephesians two goes from who I was, to who I am, to who I shall be. And who I was, is not who I am today. Come on, where's my witness today? And who I am today is not who I shall be. He is making us new at all times. And if you're here today, and you put your faith in Christ, He will make you a new creation in him. And here's what's so awesome. You invite Christ in and you by faith pursue Christ and he sends the gift of his Spirit. And his Spirit fills us. And his Spirit pulls things out of us that we never knew even existed. This is the Spirit of God at work.

Last week, I'm in a prayer pod. Excuse me, I just preached at it a little bit, didn't I? I'm in a prayer pod after our 9 am service. And it's our Capitol Hill prayer pods and I felt the Lord give me a picture into this person who is in our little prayer circle. And I just saw this picture of the Spirit of God working so

beautifully and deeply within them, that he was working something new in them. And I got this picture of a flower opening up and budding that it was the Spirit of God working from the inside out, and this beautiful picture. And here's the thing, Harvard physicists, they study the mechanics of a flowers bloom and they found that blooming and that snapping of opening that occurs. It occurs because plants they build up in instabilities and these instabilities come from cells growing and cells expanding and developing and cells elongating. And so what happens it's almost like, you know, you start to gain this tension. And it's like if you go fishing and you catch a fish and that rod begins to tense, right, it begins to bend. This is what is happening. In other words, the exterior, the outer form cannot contain what is happening on the inside. And people look at the flower and they say nothing's going on there. Nothing's happening. That's the same flower. I don't see anything happening in there. But in reality, that flower is pulling up water and nutrients and development and growth. That whole time all this stuff is stirring and it's happening on the inside, and it's going on and there's tension starting to happen. And the stem and then the pedals begin to flow outwards. And here's what happens in just a moment. In one moment, that flower bursts open and this is the Spirit of God at work within us. He works in us and bursts open all this color that you never knew was in you. And he burst open all this beauty and the smells and the aroma. That's the Spirit of God that does that he works from the inside out.

He wants to work in you today. Do you believe that? It happens through faith in Christ. His work is like no other when the Spirit of God fills us. We are granted a new mind, a new identity, a new ability to live free, we're granted a new destiny. When we find faith in Christ, we go from empty to full. We go from dusk to dawn. We go from a pile of dry bones to an army ready to go. We go from angry to joy. We go from death to life.

Verse six, "*And raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*"

It's not about your performance. Do you know that? It's not about your work. It's about Jesus work. It was Jesus; it wasn't just Jesus who went up to the heavenly realms in this passage, right? No, he brings us up with him into the heavenly realms and sits us down. When we look in the scriptures and somebody sits down, they're sitting down to rest, because the work has been finished. And so they're sitting but here's the thing, Christ, He has finished the work on the cross that work is done in him.

And somebody here is tired of working hard. I know. Somebody here is overwhelmed from the pressures at your job, right? And you're just not making it. Somebody here is ready to throw in the towel on their marriage. Somebody is crushed from the pressures of school and kids and all this stuff. Somebody here had such a brutal week. You don't even know how you're here right now. How did you even show up? Because the week crushed you and the stresses came in and they pressed in. Here's what we're gonna do today. We're simply going to lean into Christ. We're going to lean in and that doesn't mean that we don't work.

Paul says this and Corinthians, I Corinthians 15. He says, *"I labored more abundantly than all."* But what it does mean is that your work is done out of the abundance of Christ within you. He blesses you, and then blesses your work as you go.

Just as it says in verse seven, *"so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."*

In Christ, in Christ, in Christ, 85 times we see this - in Christ. That's how the work is done in Christ. It's a reminder of the new covenant that comes in Christ. Pastor Joseph Prince said it this way says, "Law equals demand. Grace equals supply. Under law, God demands righteousness, but under grace, God supplies righteousness unto you." Are you supply conscious or you demand conscious? In other words, are you going down the road where you're just living with constant stress in your ears? Or are you living in a sense of freedom where you still have to work? But while you work, you have the fullness of grace in your life. And when those problems come, you can say thank God for the hardships because I know you will supply the insight that I need, you will supply the revelation that I need in this season. The Scripture says this it, it says that I will supply unto you. It doesn't say I will supply to you according to your need. It says I will supply unto you according to what? According to the riches in glory. God has immeasurably more ability to show up and to supply the exact thing that you need.

And somebody today is in need of wisdom. You need that great supply. Somebody needs grace today. God pour out your grace today. Somebody needs wisdom and insight and revelation, somebody needs forgiveness. Somebody just needs love today.

Hey, I want to just encourage you hop on live prayer right now. Let us stand with you. Let us pray with you. Let us bless you today.

Verse eight, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith."*

Now, we tend to translate it this way. God supplies the grace I supply the faith. Alright, it's a fair deal equal, right? When in reality, God's hands of grace are pouring out, and our hands of faith are receiving it right. In fact, it goes even further in the Scripture, and this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God not a result of works, so that no one may boast. So God actually supplies the grace and God supplies the faith. It's God giving grace, hands of grace and that it's him grabbing our hands, pulling them up so that we can receive by faith. It's God doing both sides of the equation, so that we will not take the credit so that we will not steal the glory. Listen, I can't take credit for what God has done in me, for what he has done through me, for what he has done around me, for what he has done over me. I can't take credit for how God has used me, God take all glory, for anything that has been done or accomplished through me. Every one of us are called through the Scripture is to bring glory unto the Father.

Verse 10, *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."*

And the first part of Ephesians two, its God working in us. Now we transition to God working through us. You are created for good works. Can I just say that again? Just speaking the word you are created for good works. We find a beautiful fulfillment when we get to this point in our faith. You say I've got very few things together. I got very little to offer. I don't know I just I need to grow to that point. Well, it's good news. God says what you are weak, I am strong. I am rough around the edges. I'm not there. Well, good news. God says I have chosen to use the foolish of the world to confound the wise. And God chooses the timid, and he chooses the overzealous, and he chooses the over bold and he chooses every sort of individual and he uses them in Scripture. We are God's workmanship he desires to co-mission with us; he desires to work through us. Don't sell yourself short. More don't sell God short because he wants to use you. You are created for good works. We are God's handiwork. The Greek word is poema. We get the word poem from it. We are God. We are a poem of the Lord. We are a masterpiece. We are a work of art. We are God's handiwork. You say I'm not a work of art. I'm a mess.

The renowned artist and sculptor Michelangelo was asked one day what he was doing when he was chipping away at this rock. And he answered just the perfect answer. I'm liberating an angel from this stone. You know, that God can set that destined you free. He desires to liberate that color and that beauty and those giftings and the purpose that is. It's surrounded; it's closed up right now. He desires to liberate that, to bring it to bloom, to bring it to life. Let the Spirit of the Lord liberate you today through Christ.

Right before COVID we had our last baptism weekend. And I just like to take three minutes today to look at just a couple of quick stories of God just unveiling and brush striking a new masterpiece. Let's take a couple of minutes check this out.

Female Speaker: Thank you so much for witnessing this. It means a lot to me. I'm being completely transformed from a life drown with feelings of abandonment, loneliness, distress, anger, and deep, deep pain. God has poured into me after a few traumatic moments, a few years ago and I realized that I can't do this on my own. He poured his word, his love, grace, healing and strength into me. Today I'm being baptized as a commitment to God that I will wholly surrender to him and his plans for my life. I will choose to intentionally walk with him every day and there's no more suffering and silence and alone.

Male speaker: Hey guys. So, growing up in a broken home, I've been searching for unconditional love my entire life. I didn't think I was worthy of it. Through God I have found the love that my soul was craving. And now, I've been I've been given the blueprint on how to be the father to my children that I've always needed. I love you guys.

Male speaker: Hello, my name is Joshua. For most of my life I've lived in sin and I thank Jesus Christ for bringing me up out of that life. I'm so thankful to have a family here at National Community Church. And I'm so thankful that God is going to use me so I can help lead others to Christ.

Song

In Christ, all things are made new. In Christ, we have salvation, In Christ we are made whole. In Christ, we are resurrected, In Christ, we are regenerated. In Christ, we become who we have been destined to be. This is our calling. This is our moment. This is our time.

I want to make an invitation to you today. If you want to express your faith in Christ, today is your moment. Let's step into that. You can do it very simply today because we're about to sing, the band's about to sing a song called in Christ Alone. This song is a declaration of faith. So if you're ready to take a step of faith today, I just want you to sing this song, wherever you are, it doesn't matter. This is your altar right now that you're walking; you can sing this song as a prayer. And I want you to declare it as your first declaration of faith, alright.

Then second, we'd love to invite you to click that raise hand button if you're watching online with us. If you're watching on demand on Vimeo or YouTube, you can click the follow Jesus and fill out that form. And we'd love to chat; we'd love to pray with you today.

And then third, we've got a link right here that shows you we'd love for you to be a part of getting baptized. Baptism is an outward expression of an inward decision. We just talked about that, didn't we? It's a blooming of what God is doing in you. It's allowing your colors to show to the world around you and its blessing through who God has made you to be. And so I want to make that invitation to you today.

And secondly, if you're here, all of us need the grace of God. Maybe you're convicted today; you need to step back into faith. You're living in that old self of who you were. You need God's strength in your heart. You need him to fill you in the Scriptures; we see we are refilled consistently with the Spirit of God. This song is your declaration. Let's step in declare faith in Christ. It's him who fills us who reminds us, who resurrects us. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.