

## Ephesians 2:1-19

Do you ever wonder what goes on in those huddles before a football game? You know, when the players gather in a circle and all link arms and bow their heads and someone obviously talks? Men do it. Women do it. Kids do it. What are they saying? They certainly aren't talking about what's for dinner. They're not talking about the coming holidays. The captain is saying : "Are you with me?" "Are you with me?"

I want to change the question slightly this morning. Although I could say – "Are you with me?" meaning "are you listening? Am I making sense?" I want to put a slightly different question:

"Are you with Him?" "Are you with Him?"

Are you with Christ?

Because, being with Christ in the terms of our Epistle reading today changes everything. Changes you. Changes me. In the most remarkable way

This second chapter begins with a shocking description of humanity. You know how we often think and hear people say, "humanity is basically good"? or "I have great faith in humanity to do the right thing"?

That's not what God says to us through his apostle Paul. Listen again to Ephesians chapter 2 verses 1-3

*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, 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— <sup>3</sup> among whom 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.*

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This is really serious stuff. It is heavy. Paul uses the picture of walking (“in which you once walked” verse 2) to speak of the life we once lived. Listen again to the words he uses: “dead” “the course of this world”, “the prince of the power of the air”, people marked by “disobedience”, lives driven by “the passions of our flesh.” “the desires of the body and the mind” “children deserving wrath”

What we hear at this point is actually God’s analysis of the human condition. It goes to the heart which we know God sees perfectly.

As far as God is concerned humanity demonstrates death, not life.

We show all the symptoms of corruption and decay. That little lie we excuse? That lustful desire for someone else? That abuse of the environment God has given us custody of? That selfishness, that unfaithfulness, that failure to help, that ruthless pursuit of career? That racist attitude? All are signs of death, not life. Because they are all basically opposed to God.

While we might excuse some or all of them God does not. He does not minimise their seriousness. And he does not hold back from saying there’s hell to pay. Like the Lord Jesus himself says in our gospel reading for today: in John chapter 3 and verse 19: *“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.”* And at the end of John chapter 3: *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him”*

So let me ask you again: “Are you with Him? With Jesus?”

Because friends, if that is the real state of humanity, if that is how God views us, if that what we are really like, no matter who we are, I have the most amazing good news.

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Listen to this: Ephesians chapter 2 verses 4 to 7

*<sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

God knows we, like every other human being are incapable of living his way. Our Key Performance Indicators will always be marked “FAIL”. We are not marked by life like God, but by death in our transgressions.

But he is rich in mercy, he loves us. So that when Christ died and rose again and ascended it's like God attached us to his coattails.

His plan at Easter was that we should be made alive with Christ, be raised up with Christ, be seated with Christ in the heavenly places. As Jesus says this is what it means to be born again.

Here is a picture of welcome, no longer rejection. A picture of mercy, no longer judgment. Of kindness, no longer record-keeping.

Like the old hymn says:

*“Guilty, vile and helpless we*

*Spotless Lamb of God was He*

*Full atonement? Can it be?*

*Hallelujah! What a Saviour!”*

Are you with this Jesus?

And there's nothing to do to earn this being with Jesus.

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Come back to Ephesians chapter 2 verses 8 to 10 and notice how Paul drives the point home. Being with Jesus, belonging to him, knowing God as our gracious Father, has nothing to do with the kind of life we live. It has all to do with God being gracious to us.

*<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

That's what grace is. Giving us what we don't deserve. In a world where we know there's no such thing as a free lunch, this is astounding. Almost unbelievable.

But there's no hope otherwise. We can't work our way into God's good books. It's a gift to be his people. Entirely a gift. Are you with this gift? Are you relying on Jesus?

And notice how this is no superficial thing, but life-transforming.

You were once dead people walking, as he says at the beginning of our passage.

Now, because we have been saved, because we have died to the old way of life, and been brought to new life and been seated with Christ in the heavenlies, there's a whole new world:

*<sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. <sup>1</sup>*

If we are with Christ, our walk, our life, is no longer serving and pleasing ourselves, but God and others.

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<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Eph 2:1–10). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

## **Ephesians 2:1-19**

If we are with Christ, our walk, our life, is no longer in disobedience and rejection of God, but in the often surprising good and God-focussed life God has prepared for us.

Are you with Him? I hope so! Please come and talk with me afterwards, or ring me up for a chat about this. I don't want anyone to miss out on the gracious mercy of God in our Lord Jesus.