

Sermon Notes, June 4, 2017 The Christian Lifestyle: Alive in Christ (Part 2), Ephesians 2:1-10, 4:20-24

In week five of our *Christian Lifestyle* series we're dropping a stake in the ground. The stake we need to drive into the ground is that the Christian life is first of all a life made alive in Christ, then it is a life that is ongoing in its ethics of renouncing what is old, rerooting in what is new, and perpetually asking God for help, relying on the Holy Spirit. That is our ongoing ethic.

Ephesians 2, starting in verse 1. "As for you, *you were* dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live... " We spent significant time on this verse last week. It is speaking to what we were, not what we are. It's past tense. I'm talking to Christians here. *We were*. It says that every one of us was dead in our trespasses and sins and we followed in the ways of the world.

You need to get the sermon notes from last week to see how you can be "dead" in these ways. But let me just say, the problem was we were dead "in sin," and because of that we have roots that go deep, and those roots are the roots of guilt and shame, of fear and anxiety, anger and bitterness, stubbornness, wanting my own way, and then the fruit of those roots bear in all sorts of different ways: anger, abuse, self-hate, hate of others. All of that stems from the failure to be connected to our Creator, therefore, giving fertile soil in our hearts and souls for roots that lead to destructive behavior. It's not the behavior that needs to be modified, or as Dallas Willard would say, that needs "sin management," it's the uprooting of not being reconciled unto the Father.

So, then we get to "but God." That's the essence of the gospel. The essence of the gospel is God has done something that can undo everything else. *But God*. He has done *what*? He has made us alive. He has done it *why*? Out of his great love and rich mercy. "*By grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*"

We are made alive with Christ, which means those roots are being pulled up. This is imperative. This is the stake we're trying to drive. We're talking about ongoing ethic. God so loves you that he will ruthlessly garden in the depths of your heart. God is tugging on the roots. The Holy Spirit of God has his hands around the base of that fear and anxiety, that guilt and shame, anger and bitterness, that self-centeredness and with all his power that exists is uprooting those things that derail and destroy you. Confess it. Walk with others. Do business with it, but don't despise it. It is God at work for you. Reroot in the new things that God is doing in you. Don't despise it; learn to enter into it and thank God for it.

Then comes this verse. "And God raised us up with him." That's what God has done. He has not only made you alive but empowered the strength of your legs (and your heart!) to head in a new direction. We have been raised with Christ, seated up with him in the heavenly places. We are buried with Christ in his death and raised to walk in the newness of life. This is a rerooting of who I am, because that used to be my identity, but that's not my identity anymore.

Paul tells us that in the coming ages, God will reveal to us the immeasurable nature of his grace. The point here is not that in the coming ages, you'll finally come to the end of God's goodness. Rather, throughout the ages, you'll see that he's inexhaustible, that there is never a moment where there is not more of him to know, more of him to be experienced, more joy to be had.

So, we renounce our former ways ("I don't live there. That's not who I am.") while simultaneously rerouting who I am. My sorrows are almost all tied to my sinfulness or the falseness of the world, and in both of those God will show himself to be sufficient.

Then this spectacular verse. Ephesians 2:10. It's the foundational verse for our series. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

The Word of God just says we renounce the old ways, redroot in the new, are constantly laying ourselves bare before God, and he has good works he prepared in advance for us to do. You don't have to be an expert. That's the beauty of the gospel. Look. Get over yourself. It's God who does the good work.

Then Ephesians 4:20-24. This becomes imperative. This ongoing ethic of renouncing and rerouting and continually going to God to ask him to help us and move in us and strengthen us. What has happened in being made alive is not that we take off and then we put on, but that we take off by the power of God, and then we put on the clothes *he* has given us. He created. We didn't create. He creates what we wear now.

Day by day, alive in Christ, being renewed in the inner man, renouncing the old ways, rerouting in the new, we ask and plead with God to strengthen us for the day, to give us victory over our sin in the moment. And win the day. Go to God. Renounce. Redroot. Believe. Trust. Pray. Cling.