

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2

“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

“The Ages to Come”

This morning our focus is going to be on a small portion of verse seven where we read, “that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

However, I stepped back and read all of the Apostle’s very long sentence that begins chapter two remembering that here he presents a very clear and very precise summary of the Gospel.

- We are taken from a lost state, through salvation by faith alone and on to faithful obedience in the power of the Spirit.

We need to learn that these grand truths apply not only to us as individuals, which they certainly must:

- But they also apply to the Body of Christ as a whole and even to the entire Creation!

We are to understand that we as individual Saints, us collectively as the Body of Christ and even the whole world are moving toward the full redemption that God laid out before the world began, in Christ.

It has been a while since I quoted Pastor Martin Lloyd-Jones who I am leaning heavily on in this series so this is a good place to hear him remind us about what the Apostle revealed in his prayer for those Saints, and by extension all of us, in chapter one: It is important to remember what he shares here if we are to see the practical nature of the applications that should follow these grand truths:

“The apostle is not so much concerned to remind these Ephesians of something that is going to happen to them: his great concern here is to remind them of what has already happened to them, and of their present position. It is important that we should always carry the context with us. What the apostle is concerned about in this whole statement is that we may know ‘the exceeding greatness of his power to us ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead.’ He is praying, in other words, that these Ephesians may have the eyes of their understanding so enlightened that they may know what God is doing for them now, at that very time, not something that He is going to do in the future.”

Pastor Martin continues,

“It is important that we should be clear about death, that we should lose the fear of death, that we should be so certain of the resurrection and our glorification that we can smile in the face of death; that is right, but that is not what the apostle is teaching here. He is concerned that they should appreciate now in the midst of all their difficulties what is actually true of them.”

Now the Apostle's mention of 'ages to come' might at first seem to run contrary to that understanding, but I want to argue that it is even more important to remember the here & now as God moves us through these ages. The word 'ages' is only used seven times in the Scriptures and two of them are right here in Ephesians! The Apostle Paul uses it again in Ephesians 3, which we will study in more detail when we move into the next chapter: But for this morning I will read it so we can understand that Paul uses 'ages' looking both looking forward and looking backward in history...

Ephesians 3: "3 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles— 2 if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, 3 how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, 4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), 5 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: 6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, 7 of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power."

Now when we get to that passage we will have to answer the question, 'what other ages' is Paul referring too?' We will likely look at the time of Noah, Abraham, the Kingdoms of David & Solomon, the exile and the restoration. We often sum all of these up under the Old Covenant! Paul refers to them as other ages, and the writer of the Hebrews clearly teaches and affirms that those ages have come to an end:

Hebrews 9: "24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; 25 not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another— 26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. 27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, 28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation."

When Jesus comes the second time it will begin the glorious future that we should all be looking forward to and that is certainly an age that is to come!

➤ But we must remember that Jesus promised to be with us until the end of this age!

Thus we are brought back to our text where Paul proclaims to the Ephesians:

"4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

Jesus made clear in one of His most famous parables that this age is like a field planted with a rich crop of wheat AND with weeds sown by the enemy. Jesus said the weeds would be left until the end so as not to damage the wheat by trying to rip them out and thus our focus must be on the growth of the harvest. In explaining the parable to His disciples we see clearly the age present before the great age that is to come at His 2nd Coming.

Matthew 13: "36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares [or weeds] of the field." 37 He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. 39 The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. 40 Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. 41 The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, 42 and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

- This is why Paul declares “that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

It is easy to teach how the coming age where we live eternally with God in our glorified and sinless bodies demonstrates the Grace of God and gives Him all the glory, but Paul says that it is “in the AGES to come” so it must also include the here and now.

Something we also saw in chapter one:

Ephesians 1: “what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

- So I trust you can see how the truth of our salvation impacts not only us as individuals, not only as the Body of Christ but even Christ’s dominion over all things!

The Apostle Paul also explained this to Titus with a focus on the good works we should walk in as His Saints:

Titus 2: “11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”

Again, we will learn in depth as we move on in Ephesians how we should be zealous for good works that advance the Kingdom of Jesus and bring glory to God...

- And they will be very practical!

The training of our children is NOT primarily to make our life easy or make us into proud parents.

We are tasked with making disciples who will serve in the ages to come!

- They must grow up to know Jesus as both their Savior & their Lord!

This is why Biblical discipline is so important: They must come to understand that sin is wrong and they are not in charge of their lives nor the world! As Linda and I shared with a young couple this past week, having a child, even a very young child, come to realize who is the parent and who is the child in the relationship lays the foundation for them knowing and understanding the Lordship of Jesus.

- This is why the 5th Commandment is so central and the first commandment with promise!

IF we fail to teach our children to honor their parents then we are inviting them to a lifetime of law-breaking!

When it comes to our marriages we must remember that they are not primarily about our happiness or even because we are “in love!”

- As Pastor Wilkins rightly teaches us, our marriage is for the world!

And we need to remember that it is not simply that we are being a good witness of God’s love through our loving relationship but that through our marriage we are to produce strong families that are what God has used to build strong nations or civilizations.

Knowing that God is working through us in the ages to come reminds us that we are to be very future oriented in our families. We should look forward to future generations and future wealth. That is how God brings dominion!

As an aside this is why we must see property and inheritance taxes as the most destructive types of taxes. At bottom they destroy or at least inhibit the advance of Godly families and businesses.

In our “woke” age it is imperative that we stand ready to show that true freedom and liberty are not produced by government at the top requiring us to be free or forcing us to do the right things.

True freedom and liberty has only been produced where self-government under God’s Law is seen as important and foundational [*remember those obedient children*]. Self governing individuals then form Godly families where the Scriptures govern their actions and join with other Saints in a community to form a local Church where the Body of Christ provides the government needed under church leadership and then and only then should we look to the civil magistrate as a needed government to administer justice with the sword and provide protection.

I know that is a lot to take in and as I mentioned we will spend a great deal of time on the details as we move through Ephesians, but for this morning it is a good reminder that we are not to be so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good as we rejoice with the Apostle Paul “7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

Those following our daily readings would have read a great summary of those truths in Psalm 66...

Truth to ponder as we think about the importance and the impact of our faithful obedience in this age & and age to come:

Psalm 66: “Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth! 2 Sing out the honor of His name; Make His praise glorious. 3 Say to God, “How awesome are Your works! Through the greatness of Your power Your enemies shall submit themselves to You.

4 All the earth shall worship You

And sing praises to You;

They shall sing praises to Your name.”

Communion Meditation: Jeremiah 17

“12 A glorious high throne from the beginning Is the place of our sanctuary.

**13 O Jehovah, the hope of Israel,
All who forsake You shall be ashamed.**

**“Those who depart from Me
Shall be written in the earth,
Because they have forsaken Jehovah,
The fountain of living waters.”**

**14 Heal me, O Jehovah, and I shall be healed;
Save me, and I shall be saved,
For You are my praise.”**