

**Sermon Notes of
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on December 9, 2018:**

**"Transforming Life Lessons
for the Church Today from Ephesus:
Part 4 (Ephesians 2:1-10)"**

[In today's sermon, Pastor Craig Kuhlman shows that the first 10 verses of Ephesians 2 answer the questions of the Advent season, "Why and how is Jesus the greatest gift of all?"]

Notes

Introduction:

- Happy Advent season – which means that Jesus is coming, which is Good News.
- The message we will find today in this 2nd chapter of Ephesians is very much related to the Advent season, to the Incarnation, to what the Christmas season is all about.

Door hanger picture shown:

- On the front of it, it says, "Jesus – The Greatest Gift of All."
- On the back, it says, "You're Invited – Please join us (Grace Communion Monrovia) on the mountain at the Y for worship – Christmas celebration – Sunday, December 23rd 10-11 AM."
- Last Sunday we had 7 teams that hung about 170 of these door hangers to the homes just north of us.
- Now the phrases of the season, "Jesus is the greatest gift of all", or "Jesus is the reason for the season" can get deluded in our minds.
- So it's good to focus on and answer the question, "Why and how is Jesus the greatest gift of all?"

Recap Transforming Life Lessons (1:15-23):

1. Believers are to have love for all the saints.
 - We need to remind each other that if we are a little bit sideways with a person then we need to give some time in thoughts and prayers about the situation.
 - Now, if we can't love each other, how can we really love those we don't know yet and who are not yet part of our spiritual family?
2. Believers are given a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.
 - This knowledge is more than just mental or intellectual knowledge.
 - The word "knowledge" in the Greek New Testament means "a personal experience."
 - So, knowledge really means to have an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.
3. Believers' hearts are illuminated by the Holy Spirit to see the hope and inheritance of our calling.

- No matter what might be going on in our lives around us, we always have hope and we always know that there will be a greater time in our lives because of our future glorification.
4. Believers have God-given supernatural power.
 - This is not something to take lightly.
 - It's accomplished because Jesus resides in us through the Holy Spirit.
 - This means we are a different person than what we were before.
 5. Believers are given supernatural power as a result of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - The fact that Jesus rose from the dead means that we, as believers, have participated in that resurrection power, and that we, too, have been risen.
 6. Believers have power over the dominions and rule of darkness.
 - We will see this explained further today.
 7. Believers are yielded to Jesus Christ as head of the Church.
 - We are not here in this alone – because Jesus, the Creator of the universe, is the head of His church – His body of believers.

Belief:

- Belief is a critical aspect of our human experience.
- We can summarize the Bible in two words: belief and response.
- Belief always comes first and we know that belief doesn't come on our own, but rather our belief and faith in Christ comes as a result of God's illumination and His Spirit.
- And we will see this explained in today's text.

Ephesians 2:1-10:

- In these verses, Paul gives us a contrast here between our own physical mankind nature versus mankind by grace.
- Paul starts off with a rather dim and pessimistic view, but quickly changes that to a glorious view.
- And in verse 1, he declared that we were dead.

Ephesians 2:1, And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

- We need to let that sink in a little bit.
 - We need to see that the reason Jesus is the greatest gift of all, is that He pulled us out of death.
 - By having faith, which means total trust and confidence in what Jesus has done for us, we will see that we are no longer dead.
 - But, Paul wants us to realize where our heritage or starting point is from.
 - And there are many more out there in that same state, who we are called to share this message of good news.
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- The Greek word for "sin" means to "miss the mark", which means we fall short of what it means to be truly alive in Christ.
 - And the word "sin" means "to be separated from God."

- So the first gift of Jesus is that He overcame sin and we do, too, through Him.
- And now Paul tells us that we were enslaved in three ways: 1 – the world, meaning society apart from God – it’s a world view of me-centeredness instead of God-centeredness.
- This explains why there is so much heartache, pain and evil in this world.
- Two, there is a force, a mindset out in the world from the devil or Satan, that moves not-yet-believers in a negative way.
- Paul also called him, “the prince of the power of the air” in verse 2.
- And finally our sinful nature – our self, apart from letting God guide and direct us.
- Now, there’s nothing wrong with physical appetites – God designed us that way.
- God designed us to love food, He designed us to enjoy sleep, He designed us to enjoy a sexual relationship in marriage.
- But when those physical appetites get twisted and perverted – then enjoying food can turn to gluttony, sleep can turn to slothfulness, and sex can turn to lust.
- So, Paul is saying that be careful that those appetites that God has blessed us with, don’t turn negative.

2) in which you (people of Ephesus) formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

- So, Paul makes a contrast here. There’s a contrast between those who have their hope and trust in Jesus versus those who don’t yet have a relationship with Jesus.
- Now, the church at Ephesus was composed almost all of Gentiles.
- While the Gentile nations were not included in the covenant of Israel, but now God, through Christ, has brought everyone into inclusion with Him.
- Now, if there is any light going to be shined in the midst of the painful darkness of the world, it has to start with us, as the called out ones.
- It starts by letting others know, who don’t have that saving relationship with Jesus, what life can be like when we come to Jesus.

3) Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

- Here, Paul points out that humanity was condemned because of how we lived our lives – “indulging in the desires of the flesh.”
- Now, many have questions about God’s love versus God’s wrath.
- How can God have wrath toward His children if God is love?
- God’s wrath isn’t like our human wrath.
- God does not lose His temper; He does not act out in a malicious way.
- God’s wrath is based out of His love – so there’s no distinction, no contrast.
- God’s wrath is focused on the sin that hurts His children.

- And God will do everything in His power, move heaven and earth, to separate that sin and disobedience out of His children, because he knows that sin hurts us.
- God's wrath is going after the very enemy we face.
- Now, if we don't have knowledge or an understanding of God's love, then we see and experience wrath in a different way.
- But, as believers, wrath takes on a whole different meaning.
- So, if we still have this thought that God's wrath is punitive, it's wrong.
- Yes, God is always disciplining us, but He's doing this in a positive way to help us grow spiritually, because we are now going through a transformational process.
- And transformation takes discipline and it takes change.
- And for us to be changed and to have our hearts conformed to the very heart of Christ, there has to be some dynamics going on where God is working with us, but He always does it in love – never in a wrathful way.
- God's wrath is always pointed at the object of sin and disobedience because that hurts us, His children.
- As we get close to God through the disciplines of prayer, study, meditation, fellowship and worship, we feel His love for us.
- So we've seen the negative – mankind apart from God, but now Paul makes a contrast in two words – “But, God.”
- Paul will show us what God has done for us and why He did it.
- In spite of all of the pain and suffering we go through, do not think that God's plan is not being carried out to save humanity.
- In the next verses, we're going to see four characteristics and attributes of God that changes the negative scenario.

**4) But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,
5) even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ
(by grace you have been saved),**

- The four attributes of God that changes everything are: mercy, love, grace and kindness (in verse 7).
- To answer the question, “Why did God bring me to saving faith?” we can answer it in four words, mercy, love, grace and kindness.
- Those attributes are all from God – it has nothing to do with us.
- It's not a matter of how good we lived or how bad we lived, because what we've done is not part of the equation.
- It's all about God's mercy, love, grace and kindness – but we do have to accept God's reaching out to us through Jesus Christ, who is the greatest gift of all.
- Now many haven't yet accepted God's loving outreach to them.
- Now, what's interesting is that God calls us “dead” if we are living apart from having a relationship with Jesus Christ.

- That's the primary reason why Jesus is the greatest gift of all – because He made us alive in Him.
- Apart from a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, it's as though we are dead, not truly alive.
- From God's point of view, we can be alive and not really be alive.
- Pastor Craig can truly say that there are times when he could say he was not truly alive because he hadn't stayed in a close relationship with God through prayer, study and meditation.
- Scripture tells us that we are renewed daily – so it takes that ongoing daily relationship to live a life filled with God's love. For Him and for others.
- We need to challenge ourselves to stay in that living life filled abundance that Jesus brought to us.

6) and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7) so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

- So, why is Jesus the greatest gift of all? – because it's through Him, right now, that we are also seated in the heavenly places next to Jesus Christ.
- That is the objective view, as God sees us.
- And this is the result of what Jesus has done for us.
- So, let's not think of our physical address in terms of southern California as to where we truly reside.
- Where we reside, right now, as Paul tells us, we're seated in the heavenly places next to Jesus.
- Can we believe that? Can we just let that sink in and acknowledge it as being true?
- Paul wrote this under inspiration to the church at Ephesus and it applies to all saints everywhere down through the ages.
- This tells us that we are insured of our inheritance and that nothing will ever take us out of this role, even though we might stumble occasionally.
- But the more we draw closer to Jesus in that relationship, the more we start to experience being seated with Jesus in heavenly places.
- Now Jesus didn't just save us from a bad hair day, because we will go through life's trials and challenges, but, through Jesus, we go through life with a different outlook.

8) For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9) not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10) For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

- So last week, we answered the question, "Why are we saved?" What does God want us to do?
- And we concluded that we are saved so we can share God's love with others.
- We share in good works.
- Now the argument that Jesus did it all, therefore there is nothing left for us to do, is not true!

- Now, it's not our good works that lead us to faith.
- It's the horse of faith in front of the cart of good works so that we can share them with others without fear, shame, guilt or doubt because of God's love in and through us.
- These are the spiritual works that God wants to do through us and as we yield ourselves to Him in that loving relationship, His love just naturally flows out of us.
- And that's how we become a light and an example to those who aren't there yet.

Closing prayer