

Series: Ephesians: *The Christian Mystery and Mission*

Week 6

CDOBC – beginning on 2/6/11

Title: “Taking a Hard Look in the Mirror”

Ephesians 2:1-3 ~ March 13, 2011

OBJECTIVE: To help us understand our helpless condition before Christ.

Announcements

- Welcome / guests – communication cards
- Men’s Golf Outing – March 19th @ The Views Golf Club
- First Taste Luncheon – Today after 2nd service
- Become a member of CDOBC – New Members welcomed on April 10th

Opening prayer...

Like you, every morning I wake up and get out of bed and start the process of getting ready for the day. Just like you – part of that process involves looking in the mirror. Now when we look into the mirror early in the morning, we see things that need fixing. Many of you can remember the T.V. show “Happy Days” – and the character Fonzie was the exception to this rule. Whenever he looked into the mirror, he would bring his comb up to his hair to improve his appearance...but he never combed his hair because every time it was perfect...and you can’t improve upon perfection.

Many in our culture – many throughout human history – are just like the Fonz when they look in humanities mirror. They don’t see anything inherently wrong with it. Sure, they see problems with some, but they deny that humanity has any universal problems that we need to be saved from.

History tells a different story...from the inquisitions, to the great injustices of the Dark Ages, the African slave trade, to the great loss of life in WWI, the evil dictatorships of Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler – the pure evil of the concentration camps that almost exterminated an entire Jewish race – evil that shocked the world when it was discovered,

and some today are trying to deny it ever existed whether out of pure political aspirations, or because they refuse to believe mankind is capable of such evil...the record of history is clear.

And human history confirms what the Bible tells us.

The Biblical account – from the very beginning – clearly points out that we have a major problem – SIN – and our sin has brought pain into the human existence and has separated us from the relationship with God we were created to have and enjoy. Ever since that day in the Garden, humanity has been polluted with sinfulness, and we have become experts at practicing all forms of sin.

Turn to Ephesians 2:1-3

In our passage today, Paul will hold up a mirror to us and show us what we truly look like spiritually. Today's message is to help the Christian understand what they have been saved from...and for the non-Christian to understand where they currently are – unless they put their faith in Jesus Christ.

The livingdead vs. 1-2a

“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,² in which you used to live...”

Paul is speaking to the believers in Ephesus here – and to you if you are a believer in Christ.

He is showing us the great contrast between who Christ has always been since before the foundation of the world and who we were before Christ.

“And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”Ephesians 1:22-23

“As for you” is the hinge-point for the comparison.

After seeing Christ, Paul now grabs a mirror and holds it up in front of us; “As for you...”

He says that we were “dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live...”

“dead” is used here in reference to our spirit – not our physical body. Spiritually speaking, before coming to faith in Jesus Christ – we are spiritually dead.

Romans 6:23

“The wages of sin is death...”

Ephesians 4:17-18a

“So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God.”

Colossians 2:13

“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins...”

Titus 3:5

“...He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit...”

This is why it's extremely important not to teach that salvation – faith in Christ – is not about having your best life now – or the way to a ‘better you’ – or some sort of self-help formula. It may bring you all those things, but salvation saves you from your sins and the death grip it holds on you.

Because of sin, we are spiritually dead to the things of God. We are unable to know God or have a relationship with God.

“Transgressions and sins” would be synonymous terms here – and they are descriptive of our state before salvation. No matter where we go or what we do – we are spiritually dead.

This is the way these Ephesian believers used to live – they “were dead” – past tense – but something has changed – something has brought them back to life!

The world promotes spiritual death. vs. 2

“...when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

One of the great dangers of sin is not only that it kills, but that it appears so tame...so innocent.

When we look at the world, we recognize that there are evil aspects to this world, but there are a number of things in the world that look good and safe to us. So, when we hear this verse, we may think it’s a bit over the top. But the reality of sin and evil is hidden under the visible facade. Common grace means that God gives good things to both the righteous and the wicked. He gives blessings to all. **It rains** on the crops of the Christian farmer as well as the non-Christian farmer. **Charity** exists in the secular realm, not just Christian circles. **Cancer** goes into remission in believers and unbelievers. But don’t think that the Common Grace of God negates the biblical teaching that this world is currently under Satan’s rule. Don’t let the good things we see in the world trick you into believing that Satan doesn’t exist or that his control of the world is not pervasive.

Let’s break this verse down into two sections / two thoughts for us to know and understand.

First, let’s look at “...the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work...”

We know from many other passages that Paul is speaking of Satan.
Matthew 12:24

“This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons.”

2 Cor. 4:4

“...the god of this world...”

John 12:31

“...the ruler of this world...”

Luke 4:6

“And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory ; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.”

“kingdom of the air” is a synonym for “world” – and simply points to the sphere of mankind’s existence.

Christ is in control (1:20-21) – He is sovereign over all things, but it is undeniable that part of His plan is that He has given Satan temporary rule over the earth. The Devil’s rule is indeed temporary, and he is on a leash that God controls, but the earth is certainly under the Devil’s rule.

It’s clear in the Greek that the spirit – which is a synonym for “ruler” – is actively working right now. This isn’t looking back on ancient history but is revealing for us the spiritual activity that the powers of evil are busy with each day.

So, we see that Satan is the active ruler of this world.

Second, let’s look at:

“...when you followed the ways of this world...those who are disobedient.

“world” speaks not to the planet, but to the systems, beliefs, and philosophies that exist in the world. Paul tells the Ephesians that before Christ, they followed the ways of the world, and this would apply to us also.

“...those who are disobedient.”(“...sons of disobedience.” NASB) – this includes all unbelievers. As Paul points out in vs. 3, they were all

counted in this group prior to placing their faith in Christ. This is a disturbing thought to many. We have a tendency to think that evil and sin is a visible thing – something I can point out from across the room! And sometimes that’s true...but the true residence of evil and of sin is in the heart of men and women. There are some men and women who are not believers in Christ, but they are very moral, very good people. They are thoughtful, helpful, generous and loving. But the Bible tells us that they are still sinful – they are “...those who are disobedient” and the spirit of Satan is at work in their life. This does not mean that they are possessed by Satan or any demon, it simply means that the general attitudes of the world are the driving force and motivation in their life. They are completely comfortable in this world – and they fit right in with the worlds systems and its values.

So, we not only see that Satan is the active ruler of this world, but that non-believers follow Satan and are disobedient toward God.

We see this same truth all throughout the N.T. – the truth that Satan is in control of the world and non-believers follow his lead! Paul says in Galatians 1:4 that Jesus “...gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age...”

We see in Colossians 1:13 that if you’re a believer in Christ, that you have been rescued “...from the dominion of darkness”

The Apostle John says in 1 John 5:19 that “...the whole world is under the control of the evil one.”

These verses pull back the curtain of Satan’s deception and reveal the reality of his existence and his work in this world. As believers, we need to understand that Satan is active in this place, and that this world is not our home. This shouldn’t cause us to live in fear, but to alert and aware (1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 4:4). If you are comfortable in this world – if you don’t feel like an alien when you

observe the culture and the appetites and desires of the culture – then there is a problem with your spiritual life...you are still in love with death instead of clinging to life.

Our pre-Christ autopsy vs. 3

3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.”

The final look in the mirror that Paul gives us once again emphasizes what all of us were before Christ. We were disobedient, we were content with our sin, we followed its desires and our thoughts were monopolized by our sin. Then he closes with the shocking truth – that we were the objects of God’s wrath. Our very nature...not our actions alone, but our very nature was sinful and evil, which brought us into the wrath of God.

Ephesians 5:6

“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient.” (same term as 2:2).

Let’s connect all the dots that we’ve seen here this morning.

Application

If you are a Christian, give thanks for your salvation.

You were dead...spiritually dead. A corpse cannot do anything – they are dead. Of course, you weren’t physically dead, you were spiritually dead...unable to do anything that was spiritually pleasing to God in any way.

But, God chose you in eternity past (1:4) and adopted you to be one of His own. Your faith is not your own

accomplishment...it is because God infused His own life into your soul – He awoke your spirit and enabled you to put your faith in Jesus’s sacrifice for your sins. Christian...give thanks.

If you are not a Christian, you need the life of Christ.

Many in our culture don’t realize – have never even heard what we have talked about this morning. They think Christianity is all about rules and rituals. However, the big point of Christianity is about our sin and our need for a Savior.