

# Ephesians

## Week Four: Worse than We Think, Greater than We Can Imagine

When the Dead are Made Alive in Christ

### **Problem & Solution: (for leaders)**

*\*We don't believe that we are as bad off as we are nor that we need God to be so graciously good toward us. So, we think that we must and can gain right standing before God on the basis of merit (good behavior, good works, doing the "right" things, etc.) rather than God's grace in Christ. – The gospel is not the ABCs, but the A to Z of the Christian life. The truth that we are worse off than we think we are and more loved than we could ever believe is both essential and central in our daily walking with God in dependence upon Him.*

### **Introduction:**

\*What type of things do you feel like you need on a day-to-day basis? What is it that they provide you that is so essential?

**The Biblical Text:** Ephesians 2:1-10

### **Our Condition: Worse than We Think (v.1.-3):**

\*What terms does Paul use to describe our life prior to Christ? [*We were DEAD. Not sick, broken or injured, but dead.*]

\*Do you think it's possible for spiritually dead people to do good things? Why or why not? (*It's not. See Rom. 3:10-12, 8:7-8*) What defines whether something is "good" in God's eyes? (*Intention. Is it done for his glory?*) \*What influences shaped our life in this condition? [*Be sure they see the three influences Paul identifies: (1) the world, (2) the prince of power of the air—the Devil, and (3) our flesh.*]

\*How do you see yourself being influenced by these things (the world, devil, flesh)?

\*Why do you think Paul offers such a detailed description of their lives prior to Christ? Why was it important that they (and we) understand this?

### **God's Response: Greater than We Can Imagine (v.4-10):**

\*How would you describe in your own words God's response to the problem described in 2:1-3?

\*What does Paul mean when he says that we have been raised and seated with Christ? [*we are spiritually united with Christ and afforded all the blessings thereof*]

\*According to 2:4-7, what motivated God to rescue us from the consequences of our sin? Why did God raise us to new life? What does this reveal about God's character?

\*Is the gospel surprising? Think about other stories with an unexpected twist. Name them. How does a good movie set up the twist? Has the gospel become so assumed in your mind that you miss the twist? The surprise?

\*If we cannot be saved by "good works," what role do "good works" play in the life of a Christian? [*they are evidence of our salvation, not the grounds--they are the effect of our salvation, not the cause*]

### **Conclusion:**

\*Why do we need the gospel on a day-to-day basis? What might it look like to preach the gospel to ourselves daily?

# G o i n g      D e e p e r

## **Additional Discussion Questions:**

\*Describe a time when the lavish mercy and grace of God became real to you.

\*What ways do you try to be good in order to make up for the bad things you have done against God? How might the truths of this passage change that approach?

\*In what areas of your spiritual life do you find yourself becoming proud or thinking of yourself better than someone else? How might the truths of this passage counter pride and such thinking?

\*Why do you suppose that Paul felt compelled to preach the gospel to *Christians*? In what sense do *Christians* need the gospel? What does our life look like when we live as if the gospel is merely for someone else?

## **Quote:**

“The gospel is not just the ‘A-B-C’ but the ‘A-Z’ of the Christian life. The gospel is not just the way to enter the kingdom, but it is the way to address every problem and the way to grow at every step...It tells us that we are more wicked than we ever dared believe, but more loved and accepted than we ever dared hope—at the same time. In fact, if the gospel is true, the more you see your sin, the more certain you are that you were saved by sheer grace and the more precious and electrifying that grace is to you...”

-Tim Keller, Pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City

## **Other Resources:**

\*Here are a few books that explain in more depth what it looks like to preach the gospel to yourself every day:

*Living the Cross-Centered Life*, by C.J. Mahaney

*The Gospel for Real Life*, by Jerry Bridges

*The Prodigal God*, by Tim Keller

*The Great Work of the Gospel*, by John Ensor

## **How do others teach this text?**

\*Check out this sermon transcript from Ligon Duncan on the text:

[http://www.fpcjackson.org/resources/sermons/Ephesians/07b\\_ephesians\\_2.4\\_7.htm](http://www.fpcjackson.org/resources/sermons/Ephesians/07b_ephesians_2.4_7.htm)

or just check the Resource Library at [www.thegospelcoalition.org](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org) and search by passage if you don't want to type in the whole address.

or just check the Resource Library at [www.covlife.org](http://www.covlife.org) and search by passage if you don't want to type in the whole address.