

My name is Jason Holleman, one of the pastors here at the church. In fact, I'm the spiritual formation pastor here. Spiritual formation is kind of another way of saying education. The way we do things here at the Village is just a little bit different. The spiritual formation pastor helps with the groups, connection and care. That's what I get to do. I work with those teams, and it's a great privilege. Anyhow, let's turn to Ephesians 2 starting in verse 1. "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— 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. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Let's pray. "Father, we thank You today that we have the person of Jesus as a sufficient sacrifice. And I don't pretend for a minute, Lord, that anyone here understands that perfectly. But for the believer, Jesus, it's such an amazing sacrifice. Thank You for His death. Thank You that He went to the cross. Thank You for the Holy Spirit that You've given us. Empower this time with Your Holy Spirit. These Scriptures that I read, may I not mess them up. May I communicate them clearly. May You empower them by Your spirit. And may You do great work here as a result of the reading of this text. Thank You for this time. It's in the name of Christ that we pray. Amen."

There's a couple of things we need to know here about Ephesians before we can get into it. Ephesians is composed of six chapters. The first three are doctrine. They're heavy truth. They're very well crafted. It's just straight-forward doctrine. And the last three chapters basically are application. So we find ourselves in Ephesians 2 right in the middle of the truth passages. So in keeping with Paul's method, we're first going to talk about truth and then we're going to get into application of that truth. So let's go back to Ephesians 2, starting in verse 1. "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked..." At first glance, you might think that "trespasses" and "sins" are two different things because they're separated by "and," but actually they're synonyms. Trespasses are sins, and sins are trespasses. The point here is that we walked in them. The word "walked" here is very important. In fact, it is the word that will continue the narrative of this passage. The term "walked" is a term of position. So if I'm a surgeon, I'm walking as a surgeon. If I'm a carpenter, I'm walking as a carpenter. It is positional. What follows is pretty interesting. "...following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh,..." There's three things that have just been mentioned here as far as the position. The first is "the course of this world." The course of this world, as Paul is writing here, is how we were raised. It's the environment in which we find ourselves. So it's the home you grew up in, it's the people you hung out with as a kid. It is all of that. It is the environment of the world. The second is the prince of the air, who is affecting the sons of disobedience. This is talking about the demonic, the third of the angels that were thrown to the earth and Satan himself. The third is the flesh. And the flesh here is simple disposition. It is the passions that we find ourselves in. It's what we think about. It's our sinful bent. We want sin, and it's almost as if we have an insatiable appetite for it. We just want it. So these three positions can be summed up by the attitudes of, "I'm the way I am because of my family," "the

devil made me do it” and “I’m wretched. I’m awful. Look how horrible I am.” But we ought not to see this as individual points but them moving together in concert. We ought to see ourselves as walking in such a way that they are moving in towards us in concert for, as John 10 would put it, destruction. So the only question now becomes: Who is the text talking about? Who is now the wonderful recipient of this concert that comes after the person? Paul continues his argument. Let’s continue to verse 3. “...among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.” Paul isn’t writing here like he did in 1 Timothy when he’s saying, “Hey, watch out for these guys, this group with a certain theological misconception.” This group of people Paul is talking about here is the entire scope of humanity. In this room, it’s 100%. Everybody’s affected, nobody’s excluded. Paul here says, “Even us were afflicted this way.”

So already you may be sitting here thinking, “Fine, all of us are walking in sinful bent, and all of us have that concert of the three are coming in. And it’s tough, it’s nasty and it’s affecting everyone. So where are we now?” Let me introduce you to the subject of this paragraph. Verse 4 introduces the subject. Paul wrote this text in such a way to make clear what he wanted to say. He’s writing in such a way that we get what his emphasis was for the text. So when he’s writing this, we’re reading it going, “Okay, I get it. This is the basis which we have to understand. We have to have this foundation before we can introduce the subject.” That’s all it is. And the subject is introduced in verse 4. “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us...” God affects the situation. He moves into place in this situation. Now if God is the subject, this subject does three things that are unbelievably important. “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...” Now some of you may be going, “I’m a Christian and I’m not sinning in the heavenly places. What is Paul trying to say here?” At one point we were subject to the world, we were subject to the flesh, we were subject to the enemy. But now no longer, because God comes into place and does three very significant things. They are the three major verbs in the sentence. He makes you alive, He seats you, He places you in the heavenly places. He’s changing the system. He’s saying, “You are no longer subject to these things. You are no longer subject to this system. You are now in a new realm because of the person of Jesus Christ.”

Now, there are skeptics that say, “What does that look like?” I vividly remember being a young lad and being in a church camp. And I remember the Wednesday before the Thursday, Thursday being the day I came to Christ. I remember walking in the room just thinking, “Ah, these people are creepy. They’re raising hands and dancing. They’re just creepy. Their music isn’t even any good.” I remember the evil that I was plotting and things I was thinking. I remember walking in just being like, “Whatever, these guys are idiots.” And I remember the speaker that came up to the front. And I just remember that at that time it was popular to have very tight, tight pants. To be part of the crowd that you wanted to be, you had to have them so tight and you had to fold them at the very bottom. You had to roll them twice, really tight. I remember sitting there when the speaker came up thinking, “This guy’s not even funny. And look at his denim. Are there parachute pants under those jeans? Who is this guy?” That was Wednesday. I left there going, “This is silliness. I’m going to find me a cute girl and then I’m out.” Don’t judge me, I was in the eighth grade. For whatever reason, on Thursday I wake up and I’m just emotional. I’m like, “It’s just so pretty outside. I don’t know why. It’s just the breeze, it’s just beautiful.” I remember walking in the room being like, “Man, I kinda like the way this is set up. I don’t know. It kind of feels homey.” And I just remember thinking during the worship, “This kind of has a nice beat.” I found myself wanting to raise my hands. The guy gets on stage and I just remember sitting in the back being like, “I will not like this guy, but he does have some good points.” And when he started talking about the person of Jesus and sin and salvation, I was just broken. I remember just thinking, “That’s me.” So I just ran up to the front crying, “I’ll be a missionary. I’ll do anything. I’ll read the Bible. I’ll do whatever.” What was the change? I think Paul addresses that here. Verse 5, “...even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— 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.” Translation of that sentence: God wants His glory. “Why does God do that?” He does it because He wants to be glorified. He does it because He can and He wants glory for it. God is satisfied because He sees the believer through Jesus Christ. To say that God is not satisfied is to say that Christ’s sacrifice was not enough. So He is satisfied, but He’s doing it for His glory, His immeasurable riches.

Paul continues the statement with verse 8. “For by grace you have been saved through faith.” I know this passage gets a lot of play, but it’s beautiful and it encapsulates the gospel. John 3 says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already.” That’s just what we read in Ephesians, isn’t it? Every single one of us is subject to the flesh, to the environment, to the demonic. Apart from Christ intervening, there is no salvation. And again, see this as story. How many of us have just some heartbreaking stories when we talk about our home, how we were raised, the environment in which we grew up, the desires satisfied? See this as story. For some of us, Christ comes in to that story and that story is changed from that point on.

Let’s continue to verse 10 in Ephesians 2. “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” This doesn’t make sense to me. Because the passage says that salvation is not a human work so that no one will boast. And then God says through the apostle Paul in Ephesians 2 that we are His workmanship. And if you look at that word “workmanship,” it’s the same Greek word *poiema*, which literally means we are the artistry of God. If there is a blank canvas, it is the work of God to put upon the canvas. In fact, I think it is such a powerful word, let me show you its use in Romans 1. Beginning in verse 18, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.” That phrase, “the things that have been made” is *poiema*. You can interchange “the things that have been made” with “workmanship.” It is such a powerful word that there is no excuse. God says in Romans 1 that there is no excuse because of what has been made. So because of God’s masterful work, there is no excuse. I think we can safely say that workmanship is a pretty powerful word. And what does Paul do at the end? Because this is where I think the argument doesn’t make any sense. What he says is it’s, “not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” But then He says, “You are My workmanship, so that you can do good works, so that you will walk in them.” Walk in them? Let’s read. “...not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” So let me ask you. What is “beforehand” with God? For instance I had a triple shot over ice in a venti cup with half-and-half right before the service. That was beforehand. But to God, what is beforehand? You could read the full counsel of Scripture and make a case that “beforehand” was before the foundation of the world. When you put God and “beforehand” together, that’s a very long time ago. “Not of works so that no one may boast,” that’s a man thing. But this is “You are My workmanship because I see you through Jesus Christ and I’m intricately making you so that you can do good works, so that you can walk in them. Because I’ve done the good works beforehand.”

Okay, I get the point, but how does that work? How does that play out? I love to build stuff. In fact, one of my favorite quotes is, “A guy who works with his mind Sabbaths with his hands.” I just like the way that sounds, and it’s true. I’ll go into Home Depot and lumber cries out to be built for me. It’s a little odd, but it happens quite often. I’ll finish this weekend and put on a piece of paper what I plan to build. And I’ll just start putting something together, and I’ll make it happen. I love building. It’s just part of who I am. I was my garage building a shelf when a guy pulls up in the driveway. He’s a very elderly gentleman, and he walks up to me and says, “Hey, I really need some help. I have a son who’s coming

into town, and he is severely crippled. He's in a wheelchair, he weighs 90 lbs as an adult." He basically has just a couple of days to live, and this man is flying him in to die at his house with him.

He says, "I don't have any resources, and all my house has steps. There's no way to get him in. His wheelchair is very large and very heavy. I have contacted dozens of carpenters and it is hundreds of dollars to build these ramps, and I don't have any money. I always see you working in your yard, and I always see you building things. Would you please, please help me?" And I listened to this man and took his number. It was as if the Lord Himself was like, "Go." Initially I wanted to make a fancy collapsible ramp out of oak, but it would be very dense and impractical. So truth be known, I built it and put my heart in it. I put little handles on it and painted it. I put my soul into this thing. And listen, he was a neighbor. I wasn't driving by looking for an open door in my neighborhood so I could sling a tract in there. I wasn't looking for that kind of opportunity. I wasn't trying to make a work happen. I was walking in what I enjoyed. I was walking in the way that the Lord had made me. I'm minding my own business, enjoying myself in the garage. I remember just sitting there thinking about the Lord and just thanking Him for life and marriage and my son. And then the work landed in my driveway, created before the foundations of the earth. I was just walking in truth. I received him in love. I didn't have to knock on the doors and go, "Would you like to come into my house so that we can talk about the Scriptures?" That doesn't go well. Try it and you'll have empirical evidence. No, the Lord took care of that. I built it and gave it to him. And it worked out great. The Lord used it, it cost me nothing. I built it in a couple of hours. It was nothing. But I tell you that story because for whatever reason, we just get wrapped up in this stuff of doing. And I'm saying if you are a Christian, if you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, it isn't about doing; you are. You are to walk in that. Notice the full argument. Paul says you once walked in this way, Jesus affects the life and then you walk this way. How hard was it to sin before? How hard was it to walk in the darkness? How hard was it to transgress holiness before? You can be listening to Christian radio driving down I-35 and be wicked. We are to be positionally walking as Christ affected us.

So let me bring this back just a bit. There's three different types of folks in this room. One of the types is the non-believers, those who don't know the Lord. You can also add the skeptics in there. You're here because you love Matt's teaching and it's wonderful. You're here because this place is odd and you can't figure it out. You're here because something's drawing you and you don't know why. We love you. Keep coming. We are praying the Lord affects you deeply and profoundly and that this place would be a safe place, that it would be a gracious place where you would find healing. We want that for you, so continue to come here. We're just begging the Lord for you. And then there are two other sets of people. There is the Christian who is walking in community, who walks in love, who walks in light, who walks in wisdom. And then there's the Christian in here who's just a liar, who doesn't walk in the light, who takes their stuff and brings it close because they don't want anybody to know about it. There's the Christian in here who says, "I don't have to walk in community. I can show up and leave." There's the Christian in here who says, "All the environment of the past, it's not worth talking about. I'll keep it close." And we think that we can just live that way.

So let's use the apostle Paul's life as an example. He was born into a strictly Jewish, Pharisaical family - the tribe of Benjamin, which means pure blood. Pure blood, no problems, the most religious, fervent family, the perfect line. For whatever reason, the apostle Paul's father was a freed person. We don't know why but he was Jewish and he was a Roman citizen. Now did he get Roman citizenship because he bought it or had meritorious favor with them? Did he do some act of estate that was generous or noble? We don't know. All we know is that was the environment in which the apostle Paul lived. Not only that, but Paul grew up in Tarsus. He grew up with the best education the world knew. Better than Alexandria, better than Athens. He was educated in the most wealthy city you could have had. He has yet to become a Christian at this point. He has yet to see the person of Christ. Not only that, but Paul chooses to be a rabbi even though his education affords him the right to be a merchant. So he pick the most normal, run of the mill profession of tent making in order to get into the equivalent of seminary. And not only does he become a rabbi, a teacher of the law, but he becomes part of the Sanhedrin, an enforcer of the law. He has yet to meet the Lord at this point. So not only

is he of the tribe of Benjamin, a Pharisee, with the best education from the most well-known area, he's in the Sanhedrin as a teacher of the law, but he studies under the most celebrated rabbi they had at the time. For years he had the best education, the best mentorship. He had everything. And then out of nowhere, he moves into Jerusalem because Christianity begins to spread. And because of his zealous nature he says, "I will kill these Christians because they are destroying the faith." So he is literally going out and killing people, and religiously he's doing it in a justified way. He sees Stephen stoned, he authenticates that, he's walking down Damascus road and the Lord stops him and says, "Why are you persecuting Me?" He freaks out, has an experience with the Lord. Ananias comes in and says, "Lord, I am not going to go and talk to that guy Paul. He kills people like me." And the Lord says, "No, you go and talk to him." He talks to Paul, baptizes Paul and Paul becomes a believer, he comes to faith. So let me ask you this. All that Paul needed to be Paul was before he ever encountered the Holy Spirit. See the story here, his environment, his flesh nature, the demonic natural opposition in his life. And the Lord's plan for us is not that we would find His Son and that be the end of it. His plan is that from the moment we're born He knows and His workmanship is in our lives. And He affects the life of the believer so that we will do good works. But the confusion there is that He's already done them. We're just to walk. The Scriptures say that we're to walk.

So what does that mean to walk? Paul finishes his argument. If you look at chapters 4-6, these are the chapter headings: "Walk in Unity," "Walk in Holiness," "Walk in Love," "Walk in Light," and "Watch Out and Stand in Warfare." So I'm not talking about the skeptic. I'm not talking to the person who's here checking things out. We love you and we want you to keep coming. We want you to be affected by Jesus. But I'm talking right now to the Christian, not the Christian walking in community, not the Christian who keeps a short list of sin who confesses and receives forgiveness. I'm not talking to the Christian who is clear about their junk or who walks upright in love. I'm talking to the Christian who hides that stuff, who doesn't walk in that freedom. Here at the church I think we have one of the best programs anywhere called Recovery. It's every Tuesday night in Denton 7:00 and every Thursday night in Highland Village 7:00. And honestly the full thrust of the program is confession and getting the stuff out into the light. To not hold that in any longer but to push that into the light. To walk in love. And honestly, you're not walking in unity or love by yourself. That doesn't work. To walk in love, to walk in unity requires. Likewise, at the church one of our main conduits of biblical community is home groups. And listen, home groups are run by sinners, by people struggling in the faith as well. But biblical community is more important. Paul says, "You've got to walk in these things. Quit trying to do, just walk. Walk positionally as you should. So for the Christian who's hiding, the person who knows that they have faith in Christ, where are you? Are you walking in love? Are you walking in relationship? Are you confessing? Are you pushing that junk to the light?"

Let's pray, "Father, thank You today that we are Your children. Thank You for those here who are just interested. Thank You Jesus for them. Father, we just ask that You would descend up on them and that You would affect them. We ask that they would be transformed, that it would not be about the show but that it would be about Your power. Father, thank You today that we have such a great book and such a great illustration of who You are and who You will be. So Lord, for those that are in here now, we just ask that You would mold and convict and that You would bring to light that which is disgusting and hidden. We ask that You would push and propel people into community where they can walk in love and wisdom. Father, thank You for those who are here who are older and have given up their junk and whose junk is in the light. Thank You for those who are wisdom in this place to those of us who are younger. And for those of us who are younger, thank You that You say to walk in wisdom. Thank You for the book of Titus where You say so clearly to walk in wisdom. We love You. It's in the name of Christ that we pray. Amen."