

## I. Introduction

- A. I want to start today by saying a big thank you to every volunteer who made last week's Easter services possible. We went to the Redding Convention Center, and filled that place with the praises of a risen, living Savior.
- B. That took a huge army of volunteers and that was so many of you, and we all want to say thank you. We appreciate you. It is an incredibly beautiful thing to a pastor to see the body come together for a great mission like that.
- C. I also want to welcome you back if last weekend was your first time visiting Neighborhood Church. We are honored that you came last week, and equally honored that you're giving us a chance today—this time, we're on our home field, and probably a lot more relaxed.
- D. What we do here is to worship enthusiastically and joyfully and prayerfully and loudly—yes, I know.
- E. And then we open God's Word, the Bible, and dig in expectantly. In the musical part of our worship, God hears from us. In the preaching part of our worship, we hear from God. That's what we do. We gather to be equipped and we scatter to serve and to live out our faith.
- F. Today, we are looking at Ephesians 2. This part of a series on this great book, called Allies: Creating a life where someone has your back.
- G. Three quick facts and we'll get into the Word:
  - 1. The Ephesians were people. They lived in an ancient city of the Roman Empire called Ephesus. They worried about marriages, children, relationships, babies, teenagers, money, health, life, and death just like us. They were people.
  - 2. The Ephesians were religious and philosophical people. Ephesus was a pluralistic town with over 50 named gods and hundreds of idols. It was home to one of the wonders of the ancient world, the Temple to the Goddess Artemis. That temple was 4 times larger than the Parthenon in Greece. These people saw a spiritual world all around them. They worried about the gods, the spirits, and the stars. They worried about the fates. They lived at the mercy of spiritual forces beyond their control—so they resorted to magic and spells and superstition to deal with it. The Ephesians were the original Harry Potters: people who needed to find their power in a hostile spiritual realm so they could manage all the stuff of everyday life.
  - 3. The Ephesians became Christ-following people. Many of them did. Ephesus became an important center for Christianity shortly after the days of Jesus. This book of Ephesians was a letter written to these Christ followers by the man who introduced them to Christ, the missionary called Paul.
- H. So here's the question on the table today:
- I. Who am I and where do I get my power?
- J. When they became Christians, they laid down their magic wands and took Jesus by the hand. Now what? Now how do they handle the pressures of life and love and relationships and all the stuff of life? Where does the power come from? Who are they to God?
- K. Paul answers with a story. He says here is who you are, by nature. Here is the real you. Here is the PAST YOU, the FUTURE YOU, and the PRESENT YOU.

## II. Three Phases

## A. THE PAST YOU

- 1. *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 (Ephesians 2:1-3, NKJV).*
- 2. When you encounter Jesus Christ, you receive a whole new nature. You become a whole new person with a new nature and a new identity.
- 3. Your old nature was worse than you realize. You didn't have power, Paul says. You were under three powers of darkness.
- 4. The power of the world "You walked according to the course of this world." The word WORLD refers to the philosophies and beliefs of a world that has told God to get lost.
  - a) *We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one (1 John 5:19, NKJV).*
- 5. The world here means people organized in their opposition against God. Religions and philosophies, values and ideologies—every day the world around you provides a SCRIPT for day to day life. The only problem is that the script leaves no room for the God of the Bible. No room for Jesus and the Holy Spirit.
- 6. Every TV commercial, every advertisement, every song and every book is singing from this script: you can do life without God.
- 7. Paul says, before you met Jesus, the world owned you. You were under the power of the world.

8. You were under the power of the devil, too. “To the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience...”
  9. Ancient people believed that the spirits inhabited the air. One pagan magical text tells people to pray, “Protect me from every demon in the air.” Another one says, “I conjure you by the one who is in charge of the air.” [Clinton Arnold, Ephesians, loc cit.]
  10. What a scary predicament to believe that the air around you was full of dark forces that ruled your life.
  11. This is a picture of your old nature, your pre-Christ nature—who you were, the **BEFORE** picture. You were under the power of the world, and under the power of the devil and one more...
  12. You were under the power of the flesh. “Among whom also we all once walked in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of our flesh and of our minds, even as the others.” Your flesh was the part of you. The other two forces were external, but they found an ally inside you—the flesh, the inner mess, the dark side of your personality. The part of you that wants stuff God doesn’t want.
  13. Meet your Inner Pharisee. Inner Gollum. Inner thug. Inner brat. Inner Barney Fife. Inner pervert. Inner con-artist. Inner Darth Vader. Inner bully. Inner vampire. Inner leech. Inner whiner. Inner critic.
  14. Before Jesus, your fleshed **OWNED** you. It defined you. You lived to fulfill the lusts of your flesh.
  15. What were you before you met Jesus? You were in bondage to the world, the flesh and the devil. And when you add it all up, you get the last part of verse 3:
    - a) And we were by nature children of wrath, just like everyone else.
  16. People say human nature is good. It was at one time, but not anymore.
  17. We are by nature children of wrath. People who shake our fists at God, and think we can get away with it.
  18. I read this, and I get depressed. Remember all the baggage I brought on stage last week? Here it is. Here is the icky stuff we don’t want anybody to see. These are the chains that bind the human heart. This is the emotional prison that keeps our spirit from soaring. This is the emergency we faced in the days before we met Jesus.
  19. Look inside. What would you do if you knew you could get away with it? What sin? What evil? What crime if you knew you wouldn’t get caught? We were slaves to that dark force, to the world, the flesh and the devil.
  20. That’s the bad news, but here comes the two best words in the Bible to introduce the future you:
- B. THE FUTURE YOU**
1. *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 (Ephesians 2:4-7, NKJV).*
  2. But God...
  3. We were under the power of the world-system and its hatred of God. **BUT GOD**, who is rich in mercy, because of **HIS GREAT LOVE** with which He loves us, God made us alive together with Christ.
  4. We were under the power of the devil; **BUT GOD** raised us up together with Christ, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ, far above the devil and all his demons.
  5. We were under the power of the flesh, and children of wrath, **BUT GOD** set us up so in the ages to come, He might show the excessive riches of His grace. How? By His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
  6. This is your future life. This is your destiny. This is the **AFTER PICTURE**—when you’ve grown old and shriveled and say your farewells and breathe your last on earth.
  7. This is the amazing promise of God. Ephesians 2:7 is the most astounding verse in the Bible. This whole paragraph is.
  8. And notice who accomplishes these things. God does it all. It is all His power, and none of ours. God Himself does everything it takes to qualify you for the riches of verse seven.
  9. You don’t improve yourself. You don’t cleanse yourself. You don’t qualify yourself. God does it.
  10. How?
  11. By joining you to Jesus Christ.
  12. Look at the words He uses here:
    - a) Made alive together with Christ
    - b) Raise us up together with Christ
    - c) Made us sit together with Christ
  13. What is this? It is the core truth of salvation—something you need to understand if you want to understand your salvation. It is the **DOCTRINE OF UNION WITH CHRIST**.

14. On the day you embraced Jesus, God joined you together with Christ. The Holy Spirit baptized you into Christ. You didn't feel it or smell it or hear it. But it happened. God immersed your identity into Christ's identity.
15. For the first time you became the real you, the best you, the you you've always dreamed of. You went from black and white TV to living color.
16. You were placed in Christ, and now you share His riches.
  - a) You share the possessions of Christ.
  - b) You share the status of Christ.
  - c) You share the nature of Christ.
  - d) You share the history of Christ.
  - e) You share the destiny of Christ.
17. If it's true of Jesus, it's true of you. When God looks at me, He sees me through Jesus-colored lenses. And He does for you too.
18. Let's be technical. There is one person who has ever lived who is worthy of the blessing of God. His name is Jesus. So God poured out on Him the blessing of all the riches of the cosmos, and all the love of the Godhead, and all the glory of the ages.
19. God blessed one man, Jesus.
20. And if you know Jesus, you get in on HIS blessing. You are a partner in all the blessings of Christ, which makes verse 7 extra amazing, because it explains God's motivation. Why? Why did God join you to Christ?
  - a) So that in the ages to come—for all the millions of years of eternity...
  - b) He might show God is interested in showing off.
  - c) The exceeding riches of his grace—can we just pause and be silent for about ten years to begin to contemplate the meaning of this phrase? The immeasurable, the extraordinary, the incomparable riches of God's grace—that is your future, that is your destiny. It's like working in a dark coal mine, cold, damp, depressing and coming in to a hot cup of coffee and a warm shower of riches, and pleasures, and joys, and blessings forever and ever—what does this look like?
  - d) Through kindness toward us in Christ Jesus—it could not get better than this.
21. The gospel of Jesus Christ told the people of Ephesus to turn their back on their false gods, and to turn their back on their mystery religions, and spells and incantations and luck and the fates.
22. That had to feel like telling Luke Skywalker to turn his back on the power of the Force, or like telling Harry Potter to give up his magic wand.
23. What? Was Jesus leaving them powerless?
24. It's like telling you to quit looking at horoscopes, and quit looking for power within, or quit trusting your religion or morality or good works as a basis of God's blessing.
25. So, was Jesus leaving them powerless?
26. No. He was giving them a greater power than they ever could imagine, just like He has given you.
27. He took you from slavery and set you on the throne of the cosmos, right next to Jesus Christ.
28. That is your power. That is your present tense reality which will become your future tense experience.
29. You have the power to make a good marriage, to do right by your kids, to be honest with money, and to contribute to society. You have the power to get past your addiction, to break the cycle of despair and depression in your family tree. You have the power to not be afraid of the future. You have the power you need to live the life you are meant to live.
30. Because you are one with Jesus and He is one with you.
31. So, how does this play out in our everyday life? We move from the past, to the future, and now to the present:

### c. THE PRESENT YOU

1. *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 (Ephesians 2:8-10, NKJV).*
2. Some of the first verses I ever memorized as a kid.
3. Look at verse 8:
  - a) You have been saved.
4. What tense is that? Past.
5. Okay here is the old King James translation.
  - a) Are ye saved (ye are saved) let's modernize it:
  - b) You are saved.

6. What tense is that? It's tricky because "are" is present and "saved" is past. The tense of this verb is called the perfect tense, and it describes an action completed in the past with results that abide in the present.
7. For by grace you are in a condition of having been saved, and you always will be.
8. You are not the source of it.
9. Your good works are not the source of it.
10. God's grace is the source, and faith is how you opted in. And that is why no one can boast.
11. But I really want to camp on verse 10.
  - a) God freed you from your horrible past.
  - b) God promised you your glorious future.
  - c) So God could create in you a beautiful present.
12. We are His workmanship. Do you know what you are? You are a masterpiece in the making. God is the artist. God is the sculptor. He's making you into something amazing.
13. He's recreating you after the image of Jesus. Not the personality of Jesus—not a Step-ford Christian. But the true you, your personality with the character of Jesus added.
14. In verse 2, you walked in darkness.
15. In verse 10, you will walk in good works—in beautiful, life-giving relationships energized by God through Christ. You will finally have the power for the life you've always wanted.
16. I believe in good works. But I believe in good works that flow out of grace. Good works that flow out of you abiding in Christ, you appreciating who you are in Christ.
17. Because when you do your good works right, do you know who gets the credit?
18. God does.
19. When you do well, it's because God unshackled the old you, and created a new you. He energized your good works, He motivated your good works, He set the table for you to do your good works, He worked through you to accomplish your good works and He gets the glory for your good works.
20. That is good works God's way.

### III. Conclusion

- A. The **OLD YOU** was messed up.
- B. The **FUTURE YOU** will be glorious and rich.
- C. So here's my question:
  1. Which one does the **PRESENT YOU** look like most?
- D. Are you more like the old you, or the future you? In your everyday life.
  1. How you speak.
  2. How you treat your spouse or the person you date.
  3. How you raise your kids
  4. And spend your money.
  5. How you think about yourself, and your relationships.
- E. There's an old you that is dark and nasty and evil.
- F. There's a future you that is heavenly and beautiful.
- G. And there's a present you that has all you need to live like your future self now.
- H. There's a big malfunction going on when you receive Jesus, but still act like the old you. Still believe and feel like the old you.
  1. The devil no longer owns you, so quit acting like it.
  2. The world no longer owns you, so quit acting like it.
  3. The flesh no longer owns you, so quit acting like it.
- I. You need to break free from the old scripts that chained you to your old self.
- J. You need to rise up to your new identity in Christ.
- K. The devil hates that. Your flesh resents that. The world persecutes that. It isn't easy.
- L. But it's possible.
- M. **THERE'S A NEW YOU WAITING TO COME OUT.**
- N. My prayer is that your present will be defined, not by your ugly past, but by your glorious future.
- O. That your new nature will shine through, and that the grace of God will flow thru you to a hurt and needy world.