

The Prison Letters...

Ephesians 2:1-10 LIFE LESSON

Today we're in chapter two of Ephesians, and in these first couple of verses, Paul alludes to a connection between sin and death (something the Jews were familiar with), but Paul also alludes to Satan being the one tempting them to sin, or at work in their hearts stirring up rebellion and evil desires. Here's what Paul stated...

📖 **Ephesians 2:1-2 (NLT)** *Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God.*

➡ **When you think of your life prior to being a follower of Christ, would you say you were guilty of many sins, or just some big ones, or both? Please explain...**

We sin when we willfully disobey God or refuse to do what we know is the right thing to do. In fact, James, the brother of Jesus, literally said, "Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it." (James 4:17) Now, the Jews were originally asked to obey the Law of Moses, so in a sense, every violation was considered a sin. In fact, look at what Paul wrote to the churches in Rome about the Law...

📖 **Romans 2:6-16 (NLT)** *He will judge everyone according to what they have done. He will give eternal life to those who keep on doing good, seeking after the glory and honor and immortality that God offers. But he will pour out his anger and wrath on those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth and instead live lives of wickedness. There will be trouble and calamity for everyone who keeps on doing what is evil—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. But there will be glory and honor and peace from God for all who do good—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism. When the Gentiles sin, they will be destroyed, even though they never had God's written law. And the Jews, who do have God's law, will be judged by that law when they fail to obey it. For merely listening to the law doesn't make us right with God. It is obeying the law that makes us right in his sight. Even Gentiles, who do not have God's written law, show that they know his law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it. They demonstrate that God's law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right. And this is the message I proclaim—that the day is coming when God, through Christ Jesus, will judge everyone's secret life.*

➡ **Paul mentioned that God was working in the minds of the Gentiles, or in their conscience. How does God work in your conscience now that you're a follower? And how did God work in your conscience prior to following Him?**

So again, every Jew knew it was a sin to break the law of Moses, and that the Law was the basis for how everyone (including Gentiles) would be judged. However, Paul never taught that keeping the Law of Moses was what saved us as followers, or that sinlessness is what saves us. In fact, here's what Paul wrote to the Galatians...

➔ **Galatians 2:16 (NLT)** *"Yet we know that a person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law. And we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be made right with God because of our faith in Christ, not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law."*

➔ **Even though we're made "right" with God through faith, do you always feel like you're "right" with God? Why, or why not?**

Going back to Paul's statement to the Ephesians concerning sin and death, Paul was reminding them that sinning was something they should no longer embrace, even though they used to. Meaning, to engage in sin is not the behavior God wants from us as followers. In fact, look at what Paul wrote to the churches in Rome specifically about controlling sin...

📖 **Romans 6:12-13, 20-23 (NLT)** *Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right. And what was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

➔ **How do you make sure that sin isn't controlling your life? Or how do you keep yourself from giving into sinful desires?**

Again, Paul was trying to warn everyone, similar to Peter and John, that even though we've been given a new life through Christ's Spirit, the devil is still commanding a war against us to enslave us in sin and make us look no different than those in the world. In fact, look at what Peter and John said about this...

📖 **1 Peter 5:8-9 (NLT)** *Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your family of believers all over the world is going through the same kind of suffering you are.*

📖 **1 John 3:8-10 (NLT)** *But when people keep on sinning, it shows that they belong to the devil, who has been sinning since the beginning. But the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil. Those who have been born into God's family do not make a practice of sinning, because God's life is in them. So they can't keep on sinning, because they are children of*

God. So now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil. Anyone who does not live righteously and does not love other believers does not belong to God.

➔ **What are some ways that you've been able to stand firm against the devil?**

There must be a change in the way we live our lives as followers, in that doing the things we know are wrong should be eliminated. Or at the very least, if we're still struggling with sin, people had better see our efforts towards repentance as well. The reason being, our lives are to be an example for them to follow. For example, look what Paul goes on to say next...

📖 **Ephesians 2:3-10 (NLT)** *All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else. But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus. God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*

➔ **God has created all of us anew, so we can do the "good things" He planned for us long ago. What are some examples of the "good things" God planned for you to do for Him long ago? Or what do you think God is preparing you for to do?**

Our salvation as followers is not based on our ability to eliminate sin from our lives, but is based on our faith in Christ. Meaning, of the many rewards we're going to receive for the good things we've done here on earth, salvation is not one of them. Salvation is simply a gift from God, and its given to anyone who truly believes and trusts in Jesus. But nonetheless, the elimination of sin from our lives is important to God. The reason being, we are the trophy God is most proud of, and the creation He's most excited about to use in His plan to redeem the world. So let God use you, and remember, our righteousness is based on faith...

MEMORY PASSAGE FOR THE WEEK

I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith.

Philippians 3:9 (NLT)

EPHESIANS 2:1-10

LESSON GOAL: Kids will understand Paul's teaching that our salvation is a gift from God, but that we still need to work to stop sinning and obey God's commands

MEMORY VERSE:

'But God loves us deeply. He is full of mercy.' | **EPHESIANS 2:4 NIRV**

PAUL REMINDS THE EPHESIANS THAT WE ARE ALL SINNERS

In the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he started out by explaining that he was writing from prison, then by praising the Ephesians for their faith and love toward other. He reminded them that they need to continue to study God's word to grow in their knowledge and understanding so they can have the hope that God gives and experience God's great power by working together with the body, or church.

Now, Paul reminds them that they used to be people who were controlled by their selfishness and sin. He wants them to remember that it's God's love and mercy, through Jesus, that saves us from his anger over our sin and allows us to live forever with him. There's nothing we can do to earn it - it's truly a gift from God.

'You were living in your sins and lawless ways. But in fact you were dead. You used to live as sinners when you followed the ways of this world. You served the one who rules over the spiritual forces of evil. He is the spirit who is now at work in those who don't obey God. At one time we all lived among them. Our desires were controlled by sin. We tried to satisfy what they wanted us to do. We followed our desires and thoughts. God was angry with us like he was with everyone else. That's because of the kind of people we all were.' | **EPHESIANS 2:1-3 NIRV**

So obeying God is not what "saves" us, but we do still need to work hard at obeying God's commands because we will still be judged for our choices and actions. Once we accept God's gift of salvation from our past sins, we should be working to understand and follow all of God's commands for his people. Sin leads us away from God, obedience leads us toward God and shows others that we belong to him. Our obedience and faithfulness and how we show love toward others, is one way we thank God for his mercy toward us.

'The person who does what is sinful belongs to the devil. That's because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. But the Son of God came to destroy the devil's work. Those who are God's children will not keep on sinning. God's very nature remains in them. They can't go on sinning. That's because they are God's children. Here is how you can tell the difference between God's children and the devil's children. Anyone who doesn't do what is right isn't God's child. And anyone who doesn't love their brother or sister isn't God's child either.' | **1 JOHN 3:8-10 NIRV**

God's kindness is what saves us, our obedience is how others see that we are saved and how we honor God's kindness. We have to work at it because the world, and satan, will keep trying to convince us to do whatever we want and ignore God. But, like Paul says, God is kind and loving and has created us to do good works for him, not to be selfish and sinful like satan.

'At one time we all lived among them. Our desires were controlled by sin. We tried to satisfy what they wanted us to do. We followed our desires and thoughts. God was angry with us like he was with everyone else. That's because of the kind of people we all were. But God loves us deeply. He is full of mercy. So he gave us new life because of what Christ has done. He gave us life even when we were dead in sin. God's grace has saved you. God raised us up with Christ. He has seated us with him in his heavenly kingdom. That's because we belong to Christ Jesus. He has done it to show the riches of his grace for all time to come. His grace can't be compared with anything else. He has shown it by being kind to us. He was kind to us because of what Christ Jesus has done. God's grace has saved you because of your faith in Christ. Your salvation doesn't come from anything you do. It is God's gift. It is not based on anything you have done. No one can brag about earning it. We are God's creation. He created us to belong to Christ Jesus. Now we can do good works. Long ago God prepared these works for us to do.' | **EPHESIANS 2:3-10 NIRV**

DISCUSSION | REVIEW

- Every one of us sins sometimes. Describe what it means to sin, in your own words.
- What are some ways we can help ourselves to remember to obey God when we're tempted to sin?
- What is one thing you learned today that you can share with a friend?