

The Divine Interruption Ephesians 2:1-10

One of the main reasons why sinners struggle to believe the gospel and put their faith in Christ is because often times the spiritual realities taught in the Scriptures do not seem to match what we perceive in the material world. That's the same reason why some born again Christians struggle to except some of the hard teachings of Scripture. Christianity requires faith. Sometimes God expects us to believe things that by all appearances seem to contradict human reason and perception. The author of Hebrews says, "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). It's not only that we believe in things not seen, we're often expected to believe in things that do not even seem to purport in our reality.

Let me give you some examples. The resurrection is perhaps the greatest stumbling block because without question it defies all empirical evidences. The idea that the dead cannot rise is at the heart of the liberal theology that is plaguing our nation today. Creation is a major stumbling block. People struggle to understand how an eternal divine being could have spoken all things into existence. Understandably so. We do not have any thing that we can observe in the material world that can verify the concept of an ex Nilo creation. It's simply stated in the word of God and we believe it by faith.

I want to give another quick example that's a bit more personal and leads us nicely into our text for this morning. Let's turn in our Bibles to John chapter 8 and we will look through verses 31 through 47. Here Jesus is speaking to Jews and he tells them in verse 31 "if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They took offense to this because believing themselves to be the offspring of Abraham they were convinced they were already free people. Listen to what Jesus says to them starting in

verse 34. “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave^[b] to sin. 35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. 37 I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. 38 I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.”

This was very insulting to these Jews. They believed that because they were physical offspring of Abraham that the spiritual benefits were automatic. What's true in the spiritual realm isn't always what appears in the material world. Listen to this exchange. 39 They answered him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, 40 but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. 41 You are doing the works your father did.” They said to him, “We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God.” 42 Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. 43 Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. 44 You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. 45 But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. 46 Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? 47 Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.”

The reason I shared all of that with you is because the text we are going to look at today also speaks of spiritual realities that are often hard to except based on the physical world in which we live and our experience in life. My hope for this morning is that God will speak this text directly to the hearts of every listener. For the lost listener my prayer is that the Spirit of God will remove your heart of stone, give you a heart of flesh and bring you to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that this text becomes your testimony. My prayer for all Christians hearing this text is that your heart will be melted again as it was the moment you came to believe for the first time and that your faith will be strengthened and renewed once again. The application of this message is aimed to send every one of you out of here with a zeal to share the gospel and fulfill the great commission. I pray the Spirit and the Word empowers you this morning and gives you a supernatural courage and ability to share the gospel with the lost with compassion and clarity. The elders have put together a T-shirt and have agreed to give every person a shirt to be used as an evangelistic tool. At the conclusion of the message I will explain how this shirt can be used to share the gospel. But first let's go to our text and hear from our Lord.

Paul is writing to the church in Ephesus around A.D. 62 from a Roman prison. Unlike most of Paul's epistles the letter to the Ephesians doesn't seem to address any specific problems. Some of the subjects the apostle touches on in this letter are the cosmic redemptive work of God in Christ, Church unity, conduct in the church, the home, and in the world. The book of Ephesians is a gospel-saturated letter. It is clear that Paul believes everything in this life that pertains to Christian living and church fellowship centers upon a deep and precise understanding of the gospel. In the third chapter he prays that they may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth of the gospel, and to know the love of

Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that ultimately they would be filled with all the fullness of God (3:18-19).

In the first chapter he teaches the gospel from God's perspective, which originated in eternity past. That is why the truths revealed in chapter 1 are so profound and often difficult to digest. I will not go into the truths taught in chapter 1 because chapter 2 is where we find ourselves today. Here we find Paul's teaching of the gospel from our human perspective, which unfolds in this lifetime.

As we unpack this text it's important that we understand this is the story of every human being. You will hear phrases like "we all want to lived" and "like the rest of mankind" that indicate this teaching encompasses all of humanity. It's not a question of whether we are in this text, it's a matter of who we are in this text. This text essentially divides humanity into two people groups. The first group are those on one side of the "but God" and the other group is on the other side of the "but God". Regardless of our perception in the physical world this is everyone's spiritual testimony.

1. The Spiritual Resurrection

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked,

This text describes the origin of every human being. It describes the condition in which every human is born. Paul explains in Romans chapter 5 that sin entered the world through one man's disobedience and that man was Adam. And through Adam's disobedience death entered this world through sin and death spread to all men because all sin. Both the old and the new

Testaments affirm that all sin and have fallen short of the glory of God.

Whether you are aware of it or not this text describes your condition before you were saved. And, if you are listening now and are not a Christian this describes the current state in which you exist. There are 4 key components that I want to draw our attention to.

First, we were the walking dead. ***And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked.*** Of course, this is a reference to our spiritual state. Before we unpack what it means to be spiritually dead I want to point out that our physical perspectives do not always appear to agree with spiritual realities. For example, in John chapter 8 Jesus told the Pharisees that their father was the devil and they were working out his wheel on this earth. It goes without saying they were very confused. To them this was preposterous. By all appearances they were very devoted to God and his ministry on the earth. That was no different than what we do when we share the gospel with lost people. When we try to explain to them their spiritual condition unless the Lord opens their eyes they will not agree. Sometimes even we as believers struggle to believe the spiritual truths taught in the Bible because we cannot always see evidence of these truths in the physical realm. But, we have to remind ourselves the Scriptures are true. We must hold fast to the Scriptures as 100% reliable and true even when all empirical evidence is seem to say otherwise. God is not a liar and God is never wrong. Spiritual death is one of these situations. Many people by all appearances are upright, religious, and highly moral even prior to being saved. That doesn't mean that their spiritual death is any different than those whose lives are full of immorality and improprieties.

Spiritual death is the inability to sense and respond to any stimuli that originates from God. When God speaks you do not hear it nor care. When he performs miracles or good works you may be impressed by them but you cannot see him as the author of them and worthy of any honor or praise for them. We see this all throughout the Gospels. A physical death is the best way that we can see this demonstrated. The next time you're at a funeral pretend your God and go up to the deceased and poke them and ask them to rise and see what happens. Though people are physically alive they are dead to spiritual realities that are vastly more important than the physical world in which they were born. Being saved at age 25 I have vivid memories of what this is like. Ultimately, I just didn't care. I was too occupied with the next aspect of our past and that is:

Then came the divine interruption: BUT GOD!

5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ—

Ezekiel describes prophetically the moment the gospel was preached to you and you received it in faith. 4 Then he said to me, "Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. 5 Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath^[b] to enter you, and you shall live. 6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord." 7 So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling,^[c] and the bones came together, bone to its bone. 8 And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them. 9 Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds,

O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.” 10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

We are now alive in Christ and that explains how the rest of what I'm about to share with you is even possible.

2. The New Walk

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world,

I have often said that Christians cannot "go with the flow". Christians must be diligently purposeful in the way that we live because the flow is directed by Satan and flows straight to hell. The word for world in the Greek is cosmos which doesn't refer to a physical world but a system of the world. In God's sovereignty he has chosen to give Satan, the prince of the power of the air, a specific amount of authority on this earth. We know that Satan's rain is limited in scope and time. One day Christ will return and it will end forever. But for now it is the way God has chosen it to be. Every lost human being follows the system of this world and fulfills the will of its current chief commander the devil. There is a demonic spirit at work in this world working in it's lost citizens to accomplish an evil purpose. If you are a Christian you can see it.

Then came the divine interruption: BUT GOD!

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

We no longer walk according to this fallen world system. We are now citizens of God's kingdom and we walk with Jesus fulfilling the good works God has prepared for us.

3. The New Master

following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience

I made reference a minute ago to John chapter 8 where Jesus confronted the Pharisees by telling them that Abraham wasn't their father their father was Satan himself and that they were not working for God on this earth they were working for their father the devil. What's interesting about this is that this wasn't a special truth for an elite group of people called the Pharisees. Jesus actually brought the Pharisees down to the most basic human level here by describing them in the same way he would describe all of humanity apart from his own saving grace. They were sons of disobedience just like everyone else.

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Colossians 1:13-14 **13** He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, **14** in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. The new King is the King of kings, Jesus. Everyone in this story will one day bow the knee and confess with the tongue Jesus as king. It is not a matter of if it is a matter of win. For those who experience the Divine interruption your confession comes in this life. For those who do not it comes in the next life at the judgment.

4. The New Heart and Mind

3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind,

The Greek word for passions here is *epithumia* (lusts) which refers to strong inclinations and desires of every sort. The word for desire is *thelema* which emphasizes a strong willfulness, wanting, and seeking something with great diligence. To live in the flesh is to live in bondage to its desires. What we want we seek and cannot be satisfied until it is attained. The irony of it all is that once it's attained it still does not satisfy.

Paul describes life in the flesh in Romans 8:7-8 saying, for the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, it does not submit to God's law, indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

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Paul also says in that same chapter, There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.^[a] 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you^[b] free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin,^[c] he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel both prophesied that God would one day take out the hearts of stone and replace them with hearts of flesh and his people. That God would put his spirit within them giving them a new heart. When the Spirit of God regenerates a sinner it renews his heart and mind. Ironically we still live by passions and desires. The difference now the Spirit of God is changing our passions and desires toward holy things that

please God. There is still a war that rages within a Christian between the flesh and the spirit. However, the difference between someone who has been divinely interrupted and someone who has not is that battle. The lost sinner is enslaved by the lusts of the flesh and the mind and cannot resist.

5. The New Destination

— and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Let's be very clear the wrath is the judgment of God against sin and all ungodliness. Romans 1:18 tells us that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. When we were lost we had a target on our back's to receive the full justice of God. The wrath of God is a terrible thing but it is not an unjust or unfair thing. In our sin we deserve the full wrath of God. He is our creator. He is holy, pure, righteous and good. He made us to reflect his perfect image. We spat in his face and refused. The most moral and respectable person on the planet apart from trusting Jesus is a disgrace to a holy God.

A doctrine that is being threatened today is the doctrine of hell. We cannot ignore the fact that hell is real. Hell is intrinsically tied to the wrath of God. Hell is just. Hell is the destination for the sinner.

Then came the divine interruption: BUT GOD!

6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Because God is just no sin will go unpunished. Every sin ever committed will receive full retribution. We sometimes think that forgiveness is God forgetting about sin that has been repented of. Every human being will be held accountable for their sin, even Christians. It's not a matter of whether or not your sin will be punished it is a question of when will it be punished and by whom. *Hebrews 9:27-28 27 And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, 28 so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.* For those who have experienced the divine interruption your sin was punished in full on Calvary. The full punishment for your sin - past present and future- was absorbed by God's only Son on the cross. You are now among those who are eagerly waiting for him to appear a second time.

6. The New Purpose

following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience

Remember in John 13:44 Jesus told the Jews you are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. Satan is a good liar. He is a master deceiver. He has a massive army who are extremely obedient to fulfill his commands and yet they have no idea it's even happening. There are evil spirits at work in the lost. Even though they are unaware their purpose in life is to fulfill the desires of Satan. And we know the desires of Satan are to destroy people and attack the church. I am convinced every day that passes by we are going to see this come to light more and more in our country.

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10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Brothers and sisters we have a new purpose for living. We are now laborers in God's vineyard. Peter says we are being built up as a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:5). Paul says we are living sacrifices laboring to fulfill the will of God. God prepared good works specifically for us to perform that he may receive glory. Jesus told us in Matthew 5:16 that we let our light shine before others so that people may see your good works and give glory to our father who is in heaven.

Conclusion:

Let's talk a little bit about what's behind the scenes of this divine interruption.

Who is behind it all? GOD!

What motivated his decision to interrupt your life?

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,

God is mercy and God is love. God desires to put this mercy and love on display for all to see. He chose a people to pour his mercy on so that everyone would see the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward his people in Christ Jesus. The world can only know what love is because God poured his love out on us.

If your life has never experienced a divine interruption I want you to look around and see the love that God has had for his people. Raise your hand if God has interrupted your life and

rescued your soul. The people raising their hands are all sinners. God didn't use them because they are better than you.

How does the divine in eruption become part of your story?

—by grace you have been saved— 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

No one who has ever been saved or saved because they deserved it. No one has ever earned salvation. It is a free gift of God to be received by faith.

Application:

The elders have decided to purchase these new shirts. The purpose for these shirts are to give us opportunities to share the gospel with the lost. We are offering the shirts for free to everyone. We are going to encourage everyone to memorize Ephesians 2:1-10 over the next few weeks. Our elders will lead us in reciting this text during our welcome. We are encouraging everyone to be prepared to share the gospel when people ask what our shirt says or means. Here is a brief summary of how we can use our text to share the gospel. When I asked what our shirt means we can reply:

- I was once dead to God because of my sin but he made me alive through believing Jesus died for me.
- when I was dead in my sin I followed the ways of this world but now I am a follower of Jesus.
- I didn't realize it at the time but I was actually being controlled by Satan. God delivered me from that and now Jesus is my Lord.

- The whole time I lived the way I wanted to live doing whatever my sinful flesh wanted to do. Now I live according to God's Spirit I no longer have to do the simple things my flesh wants me to do.
- Because of my sin I was going to hell, but now I know Jesus paid the penalty for my sin and I will spend eternity with God in heaven.

CG Discussion Questions

1. The sermon talked about spiritual realities that do not purport to the physical reality. Can you think of some other examples of biblical realities that we cannot see in the physical realm?
2. As you think about your own testimony can you reflect on some of these spiritual truths about your lost condition?
 - Being dead to God spiritual things
 - Following the course of the world
 - Serving the Prince of the power of the air
 - Living according to the desires of the flesh and mind
3. Encourage people to take a brief moment to share when God interrupted their lives and saved their souls.
4. Challenge everyone to participate in memorizing the Ephesians 2:1-10. Perhaps you could lead a recitation each week.
5. Recite and discuss the summary below that we can use for sharing the gospel when asked about our shirt. You could even encourage people to practice with the group.

Summary of Ephesians 2:1-10

- I was once dead to God because of my sin but he made me alive through believing Jesus died for me.
- when I was dead in my sin I followed the ways of this world but now I am a follower of Jesus.
- I didn't realize it at the time but I was actually being controlled by Satan. God delivered me from that and now Jesus is my Lord.
- The whole time I lived the way I wanted to live doing whatever my sinful flesh wanted to do. Now I live according to God's Spirit I no longer have to do the simple things my flesh wants me to do.
- Because of my sin I was going to hell, but now I know Jesus paid the penalty for my sin and I will spend eternity with God in heaven.