

FORMATION AND FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH

Taught by Don Maurer

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Thank you very much. If Sig is humbled, I am doubly humbled to be here this morning in your midst. When Bruce asked me to teach, I realize all analogies break down, but my reaction was, well, kind of similar to the one that John the Baptist had when Jesus came to him and asked to be baptized. He said, "I have need to be baptized of you and you come to me!" It was a great honor to have Bruce ask me to teach.

He asked me to kind of continue with what he was talking about last week. We'll review a little bit and hopefully continue a little more of that beloved passage. I've entitle it Who We Were, Who We Are. I guess handouts are probably being passed out.

I know that Bruce has us do this every once in a while. Why don't we stand for reading of God's Word. I have it on the handout that we kind of break things up a little bit, but I'm going to read the whole passage just for the sake of time.

Ephesians 2:1-10. This is the Word of God. I'm reading from the New King James Version. "¹And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ²in 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, ³among 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. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Last week, of course, Bruce started on this passage of Ephesians, too. It is an amazing passage. It starts out, you, he, that is God, made alive. It's not something that we did. We had as much to do with our spiritual birth as we did with our physical birth, and that is zilch. Nothing.

You'll notice on your handout, I have some Scriptures listed. There will be a couple that I would like read, but most of them are just so that you can look them up later in your studies.

Psalms 100:4 says that it is he, God, who made us and not we, ourselves. We neither created ourselves physically nor spiritually. Our coming to Christ, our Christian life, everything that we have comes from him. Paul went to develop that in these next few verses.

Who were we? The Bible says that we were dead in our trespasses and sins. As Bruce so well put it last week, we were as dead, spiritually, as Lazarus was physically before Christ called him from the tomb. We could go, I don't know if this church has a cemetery, by a lot of them do, and you could go to a cemetery and yell till you're blue in the face, and there's going to be no response; none whatsoever. That's the way it is spiritually with us. Unless, God the Holy Spirit does a work in us, he could post signs, as it were, all over the sky saying, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," and it would not happen unless he does a supernatural work of grace for us.

There are three views of the state of man after the fall. I realize it can get a little bit technical and theological. Just bear with me. People have said that man, after he fell into sin, is either well, sick or dead.

The first option, well, isn't even a Christian option, and yet, of those three views—well, sick or dead—which do you think is the predominant view of our culture and, even sad to say in some churches? Well. Exactly. Yes. How many times have you gone to a person and tried to present the Gospel to him or her and maybe you've used the EE diagnostic questions? Have you come to the place in your spiritual life where if you were to die tonight you would be sure you would go to heaven? In asking that question to people, the overwhelming majority has said to me, "Well because I've lived a good life. I've done the best I can." They have no idea; they have no idea how desperate they are. It goes without saying that in our culture that is the predominant view.

How many times have you heard on TV talk shows or whatever, particularly when you're dealing with people that have just committed a horrible murder or something like that—what kind of murder isn't horrible—but some ghastly crime, "Well it doesn't mean he's a bad person. He was nice and kind and he just snapped. He was born with a clean slate." No. No he was not. We were born dead in trespasses and sins. We need to keep that in mind. The Scripture teaching is not well, as the evolutionists teach. It's not that we're sick, where Bruce talked about last week giving the illustration of the, if you just grab on to that life preserver, or just bring that little bit of medicine to your mouth, "God's done the rest, all we ask you to do is just bring that little bit of medicine to your mouth." No, we're submerged under the ocean. We're dead meat off of the Empire State building. Whatever analogy you want to use. We're dead, folks. Yes we are.

Adam and Eve, before the fall, mankind before he fell into sin, was able to sin and able not to sin. You hear about free will. People want to say, "Well we all have free will." Well, really, the only people that truly had free will in the ultimate sense was Adam and Eve before they sinned. The Bible says now that we are slaves to sin. Anyone knows that, any of you who are parents or have been parents; you don't have to teach a child to be selfish, do you? What are the first two words that a child says? No and mine. Right? {LAUGHTER} We don't have to teach them. So this idea that, "Well, we're just clean slates and neutral, born good, or basically good," that's just hogwash. Even Johnathan Edwards, several centuries ago said, "Well you know, just observe people." Just observe what I just told you about babies, young kids. We're selfish. We want what we want when we want it. We're still that way; at least I am on a lot of different occasions. Yeah, that mean old "I." It's been said that sin has...that sin and pride have that "I" in the middle, and oh how true it is. So keep that and mind. We are born dead in trespasses and sins, and natural man, man apart from the life giving power of the Holy Spirit, after he fell, is not able not to sin.

As Bruce pointed out in Romans 3:9-18 last week, the Bible teaches there is none who does good; no not one. There is none righteous. There is none who seeks after God. There are none who understand. Why is that it's so hard to get through to people, particularly people whose hearts are so hard? Maybe you know people who go to college, some of the secular colleges. Or maybe you have children or grandchildren who go to public school. Some of the professors and teachers are vehement in their opposition to Christianity. Why is that? Because they're dead in trespasses and sins.

I remember several years ago I read Helen Keller's autobiography. I was in a play in high school called the Miracle Worker about Helen Keller. No, I didn't play Helen Keller. {LAUGHTER}

Audience Member: That would have been a miracle.

That's right. That's exactly right. I have a friend at church with the last name of Defenbaugh, and I say,

“Well I prefer Blindenbaugh myself.” {LAUGHTER}

Helen Keller, in her autobiography, the Bible, she couldn't make heads or tails of Scripture. Well, I believe she was a Unitarian in her thinking, that is there's this, she was a Deist. There was this force up in the sky and [UNCLEAR] set the world in motion, and after that, let it go. She said, “I just can't understand all this stuff about dragons and angels with wheels and all that kind of thing.” Well, because she, as far as we know, she never came to Christ and she was dead in her trespasses and sins. I'm not denying that she's an inspiration to us all, but she was dead in her trespasses and sins, as all of us were that way. We need to remember that. We need to remember that.

Paul goes on to say here, “in which you once walked.” Walking, as Bruce has pointed out many times in Scripture, refers to a lifestyle. Paul says that we're not walk in the flesh, but to walk in the spirit, for example. We're all sinners. Everyone in this room is a sinner. Even as Christians, we're sinners. But I submit to you that there is a difference between being a sinner and walking in sin, living in sin. It distresses me very greatly when I hear people say, “Yeah, I'm a Christian,” and they're living lifestyles that are incompatible with being a Christian.

Yes, we do sin. We sin daily. We need to be cleansed. We're not perfect by any means. We won't be until we're in heaven. But if the pattern of our lives, if the pattern of your life is constant sin with a, literally, a devil may care attitude, then I think we need to ask the question whether we are truly born again, if the Lord has truly done a work in our lives.

Paul says, “in which you once walked.” That implies that you no longer walk in that, in the way that you used to walk. Bruce talks about the characteristics of an unbeliever is sin all the time, constant sin with occasional, at least outward, acts of righteousness, which are visible to people.

The direction of the Christian is righteousness with occasional sin. I realize that some people might nitpick at that, because as I said before, we do sin daily. We're not perfect in anything that we do. But there is a difference. The Holy Spirit is active in our lives. In which you once walked.

According to the course of this world. Whoa! That's heavy. What does that mean? [UNCLEAR] telling us here, but according to the course of this world. What was Paul getting at here when he uses those words?

Audience Member: The world is heading toward destruction.

Yeah!

Audience Member: And so once were we.

Yeah, that's right. And don't forget that when the Bible says “world” here, it doesn't mean necessarily the cosmos, the earth, the moon, the stars. It means this world system. You remember that back in Genesis 3:15, after Adam and Eve sinned, what did God say? He said, “I will put enmity,” that is hostility, “between...” He was talking to the serpent, Satan, in the form of the literal snake. He said to the serpent, “I will put enmity between you and the woman,” that is Eve, “and between your seed and her seed, from now on, there's going to be a difference.” There's going to be what John MacArthur calls the saints and the aints. Those on God's side, those on the world's side. There's this constant warfare. We see it more and more, and we see it more and more in our culture, don't we, a lot more than before.

I was appalled. The other night I was watching something on TV. I don't usually watch much TV, but I had the TV on the other night. The commercials that came on for the shows, the shows that was on

TVLand. Disgusting! Absolutely disgusting! They made no bones about it. They were blatant. This is the course of this world. The spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience. That's a Hebrew expression. We'll see that later when we see the children of wrath. It's a Hebrew expression. Those who are characterized by walking in the way of the evil one, of Satan, the prince of the power of the air. He's called in other places the god of this world. We could spend a whole class on Satan and his character and everything like that. He's called the god of this world, and of course, we know that he does hold the world captive. We know, for example, that Paul says that we're to pray and to speak gently to sinners who are in Satan's grip so that perhaps God will grant to them repentance. Repentance as well as faith is a gift from God. So that God will grant to them repentance after being held captive to do his will. Wow!

What we should learn from this passage is that we cannot look down upon other people or think that we're better than them, can we? We can't say, like the Pharisee, in the parable, "Well, Lord, I thank God that I'm not like that adulterer, that homosexual, that abortionist, that New Ager, whatever. We were dead in trespasses and sins, and we were held captive by Satan. It's only God who has given us life.

When people act like that, when people, whatever sin they may be gripped in, it's because they are dead in trespasses and sins. Satan has gotten hold of them and they are children of the devil. There's this common adage, and Bruce talked about it—he talked about it before—that God is the Father of all men. No, he isn't. The song, Let There Be Peace on Earth, might be a very beautiful song and a nice sentiment. I suppose in a Christian context, it's okay, but it's not a good thing to sing, to give people the wrong impression. God is not their father in the sense that he is intimate with them and has a relationship with them. He is not.

I'm know I'm going to ruffle some fathers here, but I remember when we were growing up, in grade school, we used to say the Lord's Prayer in school every morning. Now that is very nice and everything like that, but I submit to you that probably a lot of people ought not to have prayed that prayer because if you're not in relationship with Jesus Christ, God is not your father. I just point that out for your consideration.

No, as a matter of fact, John 8:44—it's on the handout—would someone read that to us, about what Jesus had to say about some of the people of his day.

Audience Member: "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do."

Yes. Exactly. Who was Jesus speaking to there? Was he speaking to rank sinners, pagans, drunkards? No, he was speaking to the religious leaders of his day—the Pharisees who thought they had it all together put together, who thought that they were going to get to heaven because of their righteousness. That's right. But that is true of all who are outside of Christ. They are only doing what their father bids them to do. Does anyone have any questions or comments at this point?

Ian: *This whole theme of being once a frequent sinner and occasionally righteous and changing to frequently righteous and occasionally sinner and that little theme. It just, I know I sometimes fall into this trap. I don't know about other guys. It feels like sometimes the Lord has saved me, and now I'm a better me. Well, for me at least, I don't know about other guys, it's kind of trap. I'm the same old me that I was, but it's only by the grace of God that now I have the Holy Spirit that allows me to occasionally walk in sin only and frequently walk in righteousness and be clothed in his blood, or washed by his blood. But sometimes I fall into the trap of thinking just what you said, which is somehow I'm better than the other guy because of the Lord's, because I have the Holy Spirit. It's just grace. All it is, is grace, and I can't remind myself of that enough.*

Yes. And there's a tension there. There's a tension because the Scripture does say that we are to be

diligent in the means of grace. It says that we are to grow in the grace and knowledge, but all the time realizing, as Philippians 2:12-13 says, we do work out our salvation with fear and trembling, because God works in us to will and to do his good pleasure. I'm glad you brought that up, Ian. That's very important to realize. Yeah, the old pride can get in there in many, many subtle ways, can't it. If you are making progress in sanctification, if you are seeing, which you should see in your life, sin decreasing, it is only by God's grace.

***Ian:** It's even, and not to pick apart your words, but it's even the way we say things like. You said it quite normally. If we're making progress in our sanctification, and for me, even that's a trap. It's I don't make any progress. It's the Lord that progresses me. Maybe it's a subtle difference and maybe it's nitpicking, but to think that I make progress is almost to imply that I make it on my own, and it's just not true. I don't think.*

No, it is not. No. We don't make it on our own. My only, and I know that...

***Ian:** Feel free, Don. That's the spirit of this conversation.*

Right. The only caveat I would have is that there are commands. There are commands all through Scripture. I think a lot of people today, and Ian, I am not saying that you or anyone else here, but there are Christians, people who profess to be Christians, who are very cavalier about that kind of thing and say, "Well, God's doing it. I don't have to worry about anything, therefore, I can live any way I want—eat drink and be merry, etc.," and that's not the spirit either. I think that we are to be alert and watchful. Your point is well taken. It is.

***Audience Member:** In the midst of that, I think the balance possibility is that absolutely everything, anything good in my life certainly comes from the Lord [UNCLEAR]. And as we have those commands, we realize that we can't even keep those commands, therefore, we go to the Lord and say, "God, help me because I'm having a hard time. I can't do this on my own," and the commands show us where we need to be going and it shows us also that we can't get there on our own, that we need to be even seeking the Lord, every day he change us in the areas where we need changed [UNCLEAR] spirit of God, and so we actively need to be seeking God's change in our lives.*

Yes. It's not passive.

***Audience Member:** It's active.*

It's active. Exactly. That's why [UNCLEAR] [OVERLAPPING]...

Audience Member: Acknowledging that we can't do it.

Exactly.

***Audience Member:** To Ian's point, we are the same person, and yet, 2 Timothy 5:17 says that if any person is in Christ, that person is a new creation, the old is gone, the new has come into being. That makes us new as if you're indwelt by God, the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, he indwells us, and that makes us different from what we once were.*

That's right.

***Audience Member:** Apart from him, we are exactly the same. Because he is in us, we are now, with his help, by his guidance, [UNCLEAR], transformed, shaped and molded into the image and likeness of*

Jesus Christ.

Exactly. I have no quarrel with that whatsoever.

Dale: *Mark 9:24 it says, "Lord, I believe. Help thou my unbelief," and I pray that daily.*

Amen. Amen. For sure. Going on. What we were, fulfilling the desires of flesh and mind. I have noted there that sins of the mind, and sinful desires, are just as sinful in God's sight as actions. What did Jesus say in Matthew 5:21ff, "If you're angry with your brother, you're in danger of a [UNCLEAR]." You don't have to kill somebody to be guilty of violating the sixth commandment. If you're angry with your brother, you've also done it. If you lust after someone in your heart, you've already committed adultery, etc. It's a downward spiral, isn't it? It goes from bad to worse, as it were.

Fulfilling the desires of flesh and mind. Of course, I gave the example a couple of minutes ago of those TV commercials, what's on TV today, which you wouldn't have seen 20-30 years ago. Fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Paul was very familiar with that in his day, with the Roman Empire and its coming home to roost today with our culture more and more throws off the idea, the very idea of God.

And then it says that we were by nature children of wrath. What comes to your mind...when you hear the word wrath, what do you think of immediately?

Audience Member: *Destruction.*

Destruction. Right. Uncontrollable anger. Right? How do we define the wrath of God? What would be a good...if you were talking to somebody and they got on the subject, which is very unpopular these days, you know, R. C. Sproull said that in the Puritan time, they always taught man is very bad and God is very mad. Now its man's not so bad and God's not so mad {LAUGHTER} if indeed they even think about the wrath of God, which a lot of people don't. How would you define, biblically, the wrath of God?

Audience Member: *Justified.*

Yes, justified. Okay.

Audience Member: *[UNCLEAR]*

Okay. Those are illustrations. Right. [UNCLEAR] Sodom and Gomorrah. Final judgment.

Audience Member: *Eternal.*

Audience Member: *Passion of Christ.*

Yes, very good. The ultimate expression of God's wrath, isn't it. That's for sure.

Audience Member: *His wrath is eternal.*

Eternal. Yes.

Audience Member: *[UNCLEAR]*

Yeah, and I think you hit it right on the head. It's been defined by one theologian as God's settled indignation for sin. What's the difference between God's wrath and ours?

Yes, it's total and it righteous. As opposed to ours, which is sinful so much of the time.

Ian: Ours is born of emotion. His is born of truth.

Right. Yes, very put, Ian. So many times...I don't care how pure we think our motives are, they're not. We may be justly angry with someone, but there's always that pound of flesh there, isn't there. There's always, "Well look what he did to me." Paul tells us, for example, that we're not to let the sun go down on our anger, etc. We have to realize that God's wrath is totally righteousness. Totally justified. As a matter of fact, he has a reason for being wrathful.

Let's look at Romans 1:18-21.

Dale: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts and their foolish hearts were darkened."

Thank you. That is why God is full of wrath, because of sin. Nobody from the pigmy in Africa [UNCLEAR] innocent native in Africa. The innocent native in Africa doesn't have anything to worry about on the wrath thing, whose never heard of Christ. Why? Because they're not innocent are they? We're all guilty. There's nobody innocent. None good, not one. And God is angry, and nobody will be able to plead ignorance on judgment day. He is angry with [UNCLEAR]. How much more angry is he with people who have heard the Gospel and reject it. Children of wrath, just as the rest of mankind.

Who we are. But God. Little words mean a lot don't they? But God may be the most wonderful word in the whole Bible. Wow! Because after all, isn't that the story of redemption. Man, we, you and I, individually in this room, ruined in sin, but God, who is rich in mercy. He's not stingy, is he? What's mercy? Mercy is not getting what you deserve. Justice is getting what you deserve, mercy is not getting what you deserve, grace is getting what you don't deserve.

When I was little, I had a propensity for throwing stones; not so much at people, but at objects because I liked to hear the sound they made. I was doing that, and I was told repeatedly not to throw stones. I was doing it with my brother one day, leading my little brother in sin, throwing stones. All of a sudden, I hear tinkling glass. The garage door broke. My mom came and said those words that every little kid dreads to hear, "Wait till your father gets home." {LAUGHTER} Whenever my father came home, he said, "What did you do?" "Dad, I broke the garage door." "You broke the garage door! Well I guess I'm going to have to give you a whippin'." "Ah, but daddy, that hurts." "Well, it hurts when your brothers get it, but you laugh when they get it." "Oh daddy, please. Please." "Alright. Alright. I won't do it this time, but next time, you're going to get it." Now, he should have done it. I deserved to get that, but he was merciful to me. I asked him years later why he didn't do it and he said, "Well, because it was nice of you to...I liked it when you did something devilish once in a while instead of sitting in your room. Now that wasn't a very good thing, but anyway, {LAUGHTER} I got mercy. I got mercy.

God is rich in mercy. He's not stingy. Oh my. He made us alive because of his great love for us, rich in mercy. He's rich in grace. He made us alive together with Christ. As I said before, our coming from death to life spiritually, our coming to Christ, is a resurrection. To hear some people say it, it's like a

pill. No, it's a resurrection. It's a miracle, really. It's life from the dead. We are raised spiritually just as Christ was raised physically. We are raised together with him. And then it says by grace you have been saved. What's grace? Grace is getting what you don't deserve. Mercy says no hell. Grace says heaven.

Chuck Swindoll has a great illustration of that. It was his birthday when he was growing up, I guess from the late 40's or early 50's or whatever. His father asked him to do the chores on the farm. "I'm not going to do that. It's my birthday. I don't want to work!" Well, he rushed that boy right to the shed, got out the switch—they don't use those anymore; now I guess you'd be sued if you did, that's child abuse. He got that switch and he gave him a good lickin'. Then he made him do those chores. That was justice. But then, for his birthday, they went out to dinner and had cake and ice cream. That's grace. That's grace. Obviously, those are human analogies [UNCLEAR], but by grace you have been saved.

As in the case of the downward spiral with who we were, now we have the upward spiral by who we are in Christ. By grace you have been saved. God's riches at Christ's expense. It's a tremendous, tremendous thing. Together we were raised with Christ. Christ has raised us seated together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. This is current, folks. This is reality right now. Eternal life is both present and future. Why is it that we're to set our affections on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father? How are you going to enjoy that reality if you don't? Did you spend all your time watching TV or whatever, or even things in and of themselves that aren't sinful, but you don't spend time in the Word, with other Christians, praying, whatever, or using the means of grace, you're not going to have that joy and realize the only difference between now and then, when we're with Christ whenever, at death or when he comes, could just be a matter of degree. Obviously, we don't see him face to face, but we will. We have that joy. We have that eternal life.

Peter says, "Even though you don't see him now, you love him, and we're filled with an inexpressible joy." Peter wasn't talking about well-off Americans. He was talking the people who every minute was a death sentence potentially because they were going to be persecuted, and were being persecuted. Together, we were raised with Christ, seated together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. It just gets better and better and better. That word "together" is very significant, isn't it? It's not, as Bruce and Ted like to point out so much, it's not me and Jesus, just me and Jesus. Yes it's me and Jesus. Of course it is. But it's the church. The word "together" mentioned four times here in this passage, it's us. It's all of us. The church. Bruce, of course, is doing that series [UNCLEAR]. I'm sure he'll bring that point out very, very much as he goes through the series. It is us together, all of us. That's why we are so precious to one another.

Why did he do it? That he might show the exceeding riches. There it is again. The riches of his grace. What did Jesus say? That the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. Maybe not the majority of mankind. It's hard for me to believe that, but many, many. Many is a lot, folks. A great multitude that no man can number. That's why Jesus hasn't come yet. That's why Jesus hasn't come yet, because he's bringing people every day to himself so that his house will be filled.

Romans 5:12-21—you might want to take a look at that, where sins abounds and grace abounded all the more.

Let me just end here with...I think what really sums it up is what David and Mephibosheth—that's not a hamburger chain, that's Jonathan's son. {LAUGHTER} David, in the Old Testament, after God says...the day he wanted to build God a house, God said, "No, you're not going to build me a house. I'm going to build you a house. I want to send someone to build that house so [UNCLEAR] come from you," talking about Solomon and ultimately Christ, and what does David say, "Who am I? Who am I that you should do this for me?"

Or Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son. He was crippled in his feet. Of course, David and Jonathan were the best of friends and they made a covenant with one another. David said he'd take care of Jonathan's family after Jonathan died. So what does he do? He has Mephibosheth sit at his table all his life. And what does he say, "Who am I that you should look upon a dead dog such as I?" That should be our response to Christ, isn't it? Who am I? We're sinners! Why does he love me? I don't know, but he does. And who are we? We're dead in trespasses and sins, but he raised us up incomparably and eternally, and oh, that should just give us great joy, great glory, great peace.

Rich Clark, would you close us in prayer please? Would you mind doing that?

Rich: Yes sir. Heavenly, Father, what a joy as brothers to gather together in Christ's name. I just thank you for this privilege and opportunity to be here. Thank you for Don and the words that he spoke to us [UNCLEAR]. May they be a blessing to us today and throughout the week. Continue to manifest your spirit through us as we leave here today in our workplace, in our homes and everything we do in our lives, that Christ would be glorified in us and through us today. It's in Jesus' Name we pray.

And all the Brave Men said...Amen!!!