

SUCH A GREAT CONTRAST

(Sermon Summary)

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Sunday Evening – 20th November 2022

Reading: Ephesians 2:1-10.

The Bible contains all kinds of literature and expressions of truth. There are warnings, rebukes and exhortations. There is also encouragement. As the Lord's people we need all the different kinds of teaching. Certainly we are not spoiled by having great encouragements given to us. This passage is a lesson in the love of God (v4), in His mercy (v4), of His grace (v7, v8) and of His kindness (v7). These truths are the backdrop to everything we now are and do.

1. Once upon a time.

Once we had not experienced mercy. We were children of wrath, both Gentiles and Jews. We cannot over-estimate just how bad our situation was. Conversion is not a small thing but results in a great contrast.

It is important and valuable to recollect the past. We should look back and shudder! We are not seeing how bad we were simply out of morbid fascination. Paul does not dwell long on the details but gives us a quick outline of our prevailing condition before conversion. We were dead (v1) and God had to act upon us (v4). Despite our being dead, God's power brought us to life. It needed strong love on His part to be willing to do this for us. In our state of deadness, we were an offence to God. We were guilty of trespasses which were specific ways in which we broke the laws of God. 'Sin' implies that we have missed the mark of God's perfections and fallen short of them. We were dead at heart and despite all the energy and activity we were part of, we were not able to please God or glorify Him. We were drowning and suffocating in our sins and needed a spiritual 'kiss of life'. We were unresponsive to God and could not see what was in our best interest. We could not make ourselves alive and needed divine input.

In our living, we were the 'walking dead'. Our general way of life and how we lived, and for what we lived, was informed by the world and by the devil. There was 'airborne grief' where the devil works invisibly, putting ideas out into the ether. There was the world with its culture, again putting out attitudes and aims that it approved of and which we were expected to conform to. The world, the flesh and the devil have ensured that we would be disobedient. We were overpowered and undone. The 'lusts of the flesh' are the baser desires of our fallen nature. All the unclean and adulterous thoughts live there. The 'desires of the mind' are more intellectual sins. These are thoughts that create false gods, heresies, and errors. The result is that we are the objects of God's wrath.

2. But now...

In the first three verses there is no mention of God. In the next seven verses it is all about God and His name appears in just about every verse. It is all about what God has done, making us alive, raising us up, making us sit together, saving us and re-creating us. It is all in the past tense speaking of something which God has already accomplished.

He made us alive (See 2 Corinthians 4:6). This is the quickening and re-generating work of God. He raises us up to new life which is life that is very full and not something pale and powerless. We can see this as well in Romans 6:4-9 where Christ's resurrection is our hope of new life too that we can walk in now. It is a present experience as well as a future hope. We are seated with Christ which is a position we have because of our union with Him. It speaks about something present and future. It is looked upon as if already done as well as something still to come (Revelation 2:26-27 and Revelation 3:21). We reign with Christ and will reign with Him in the future when we shall judge alongside Him.

Our salvation now will affect people in the future (v7). People in the ages to come will remark at the great things that the Lord has done for us. They will see the exceeding riches of His kindness. The words are the same as we find in Ephesians 1:19. People are supposed to be able to read these things from our attitudes, our prayers, our preaching and our witness.

3. Living by the new nature.

What we are, compared to what we once were, is all of God. It is the result of His action upon us (vv8-9). No longer do we do works according to our old nature, but we now work according to our new nature. No longer do our actions arise from the world, the flesh and the devil. Now the works we do arise from God in our new nature.

Some of the actions may not look too differently from the kinds of things we used to do. But now we have new aims, attitudes, and motives. We do things now with a new

patience, love and forgiving attitude. We do things with the Lord in view. We do things which are promoted by His love in us and, in our new nature, we now look to please Him.