

Title: THE COURSE OF THIS WORLD, EPHESIANS 2:1 – 10
(Chatham, NJ, 03/11/18, AM) [Pt – Topical, Problem/Solution]

Theme: God has made us alive though we followed our impulses and the “course of this world” that lead to death.

Purpose: To teach the truth that only by God himself could we be rescued from our sins.

Introduction:

1. Quote by Rachel Denhollander in World Magazine, March 17, 2018, 30-35.
2. She is the woman who first exposed and testified against Dr. Larry Nassar.
3. She said this at his sentencing.
4. The judge called her the “five-star general” of all of the women who came out against him.
5. Among other things she had to withstand a two-hour testimony at his trial.
6. Her statement at his hearing expressed the great theological truth about our sinfulness.
7. I watched the You Tube video of a French atheist-scientist-turned-Christian describe how his overwhelming sense of guilt turned him to Christ.
8. The teachings of the Gospel awaken such things in people but also provide the solution.
9. You can’t educate, negotiate, or legislate away the sinfulness of the human heart.
10. The worst and best thing we can say to people is that they are guilty before God.
11. The worst because they tend to resent and deny it, but the best because they need to come to grips with the truth that anyone who sins is a slave to sin, John 8:32.

Part 1 – Darkness of the Human Heart: The Worst

- A. Jesus and the darkness of the soul
 1. First, Jesus would not entrust himself to people, John 2:23-25
 2. Despite their belief in him, he was cautious because he “knew what was in man.”
 3. John 3:19 explains further that “people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.”
 4. In part this explains what John says earlier about His own not accepting him, 1:11.
 5. However, remember this: “the darkness has not overcome it,” 1:5
- B. Paul speaks of the “course of this world,” Eph. 2:2-3
 1. Also the “ways of this world” or the “this world-age”
 2. The Ephesians, before Christ, were a part of this: their sinful attitudes and activities aligned with the norms, values, and behaviors of the world separated from the life of God.
 3. James 4:4 warns us not to be friendly with the world, otherwise we become enemies of God.
 4. Characterized by “the prince of the power of the air,” a designation of Satan and his evil brood
- C. A spirit “at work in the sons of disobedience”
 1. The Christian war is against such forces, 6:12
 2. The world is a veritable infestation of such a spirit
 3. It is seen in the “passions of the flesh” and the “desires of the body and the mind”
 4. Jesus recognized such things in Mk. 7:21-23
 5. These things reside in sinful human hearts
 6. Yet this ugly picture has a bright side because of God

Part 2 – Light Shining in the Darkness: Paul’s Solution

- A. God’s mercy, 4
 1. He loved us even in the deadness of our souls, 5
 2. This is what Rachel Denhollander referred to when speaking to Dr. Nassar
 3. There is forgiveness when we admit to sin

4. God made us alive: from being dead in trespasses (1)
 5. Not surprised that death is our condition (the Fall brought it about and the Prodigal is described as dead but now alive)
 6. We have been raised up and seated with Christ in the heavenly places
- B. No human power or plan can relieve us of guilt, deliver us from death, and change our behavior
1. Only God's grace can make this change
 2. Salvation is a gift given by grace
 3. No human can provide sufficient works to atone for sin
 4. Psalm 49:7-9, no human can ransom another
 5. Only God can do that and did that in Christ
 6. Furthermore, no sacrifice is sufficient, Micah 6:7
 7. Yet Christ, the Son of God, the perfect sacrifice, is sufficient
 8. Whatever humanity concocts to change humans can't even come close to dispelling the darkness within your heart
- C. Change your ways from the course of this world to the Kingdom of God
1. Stop carrying out the desires of the flesh, 2:3
 2. No longer live in darkness and hardness of heart, 4:17-18
 3. More than just education or learning something new, it represents a complete overhaul of our thinking, feeling, and decision-making
 4. This is our part, but only with the grace and help of God can we succeed

Conclusions:

1. The Gospel lifts the "crushing weight of guilt."
2. Jesus died so that we might live.
3. The grace and mercy of God is the gift that keeps on giving.
4. Have you discovered the love of God yet?
5. Are you feeling the weight of guilt that you don't know how to get rid of?
6. God offers life; the resurrection of Christ can make you alive.
7. You need only to accept the gift, repent of your sins, and be baptized that your sins can be washed away and you can be raised to walk a new life.
8. Leave your guilt behind today.