Favorite Chapters - Ephesians 2

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. I'm thankful for the partnership that I'm able to have with Joey and the student!

And I'm very grateful for that. And Michael, thank you for always being on my team with student choir. I'm very grateful. Proud is an understatement. I'm so incredibly proud of these students.
And Kagan, I want you to know, where'd you go, Kagan? He's over there. So when we were at Shepherds Conference, that same thing happened to one of the preachers in the lineup, except it was the opposite. He was using an iPad. His iPad died.
And fortunately, he had notes in the pulpit that he had for just that moment. And so it happens to the best. And you recovered just as good as the best. And so I'm very proud of you in that. And I want to clear up one thing before we get started.
I do not speak Spanish, nor was I given the gift of tongues to speak Spanish. Chat GPT to the rescue. And it was Muybian.
[1:24] Anna Wynn, you would have been so proud of me, at least for doing my best pronunciation. So we made it through. I recognize that we are a little bit later than we would normally be starting for a service like this.

We also don't have any other evening activities other than lead teams for students after this. So yes, we will be going a little bit later. Yes, it is on my mind to try to get you out in a timely manner. But I do want to make sure that we have time to turn to God's word.
Some of you have already found it in Ephesians chapter 2. One question can quickly expose anyone if the recipient is not informed and prepared.
In the 2011 Republican presidential primary debate, then governor of Texas Rick Perry was trying to list three federal agencies that he would eliminate if elected president.
He said, quote, it's three agencies of government when I get there that are gone. Commerce, education, and the, what's the third one there?
[2:33] Is what he said. That's not me forgetting. He is forgetting. After some joking around among the other candidates, John Harwood from CNBC says, you can't name the third one?

He said, I would do away with education, commerce, and let's see. Checks his notes. I can't. The third one, I can't. And then he famously said, oops.
In a later interview, Perry said, one of the errors I made was in not being prepared, obviously. I was a little arrogant. And that moment was later dubbed the oops moment.
It became infamous, highlighting his lack of preparation and damaging his credibility. And though he stayed in the race for just a little while, his campaign never recovered after that. And he dropped out shortly thereafter.
And it remains one of the most memorable debate blunders in U.S. political history. Scripture calls us, 1 Peter 3.15, to always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.
[3:36] And far more important than a political debate and a political candidate being able to name three agencies of government is a believer being able to articulate the gospel to a lost and dying world.

I don't ever want you to have an oops moment when asked to explain the gospel and its effects in the life of the believer. I don't want one question about the gospel to ever expose you as being unprepared.
If anything, I hope after tonight that Ephesians 2 will immediately come to your mind if ever asked to explain the gospel to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

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And as we look at Ephesians 2, we'll consider it in broad terms the accomplishments of the gospel. What does the gospel accomplish for us? That is what I want us to be able to successfully answer without an oops moment.
And specifically, we'll do this under two headings. The gospel makes us one with Christ. And the gospel makes us one in Christ.
[4:49] Beginning with one with Christ. The gospel makes us one with Christ. And as we consider this, I want us to first consider our prior condition before Christ.

One of my favorite movies tells the story of a man named Chris Gardner. Chris Gardner today in 2025 is worth $78 million. He is the founder and owner of his own brokerage firm, Gardner Rich and Company.
While this is impressive, what makes his story as told in the movie, The Pursuit of Happiness, so captivating is how he began. He was scraping by in San Francisco in the 1980s.
He was a sole caregiver for his son. And after a bad investment, lost all of his money. He was forced to live in and out of shelters with his son until he secured an unpaid internship at a prestigious stock brokerage firm.
And through a very intense and competitive internship, he rose to the top of his group, was awarded a paid position with the firm, and the rest is history. So to fully appreciate where Chris is today, you have to know where he came from.
[6:01] And in order to understand by being made one with Christ is so precious, we must first understand and consider who we were before Christ. Our condition before Christ was one in which we were dead and unresponsive in our sin.

Let's begin in chapter 2, the first three verses. And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked. Following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.
We were dead in the trespasses and sins in which we once walked. This should come as no surprise. Scripture says much about sin and its deadly consequences.
Proverbs 14, verse 12 says, There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death. Romans 5, 12 says, Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, listen here, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.
Romans 6, 21 and following, But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. The wages of sin is death.
[7:32] It's why we sing, I once was lost in darkest night and thought that I knew the way. The sin that promised joy and life had led me to the grave.

I had no hope that you would own a rebel to your will, and if I had not loved you first, or if you had not loved me first, that's the most important part, I would refuse you still.
It is these sins that we once loved, we thought they would ultimately satisfy. We thought that they would provide meaning for us. We thought that they would secure our identity. We thought that they would give us lasting joy and peace, but in the end, they all fail.
And while we were spiritually dead, in this metaphor, we're still very much active and fully responsible. We are willful creatures, dead set on and determined to live in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and of the mind.
We know from Scripture that our flesh works in tandem with Satan's design for this world to blind us and to take hold of our hearts' affections.
[8:46] James 1, verse 14 and 15 says it this way, each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire, when it has conceived and gives birth to sin, sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death.

Compare that with 2 Corinthians 4, verse 3 and 4, and even if the gospel, our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case, the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers.
You know how that works? We are lured and enticed by our own desires, but the God of this world has blinded our minds. They work in tandem together. Thomas Brooks, a Puritan author, once said it this way, Oh, how many persons in these days have for a time followed hard after God, till the devil has set before them the world and all its beauty and bravery, which hath so bewitched their

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souls that they have grown to have low thoughts of holy things and then to be cold in their affections to holy things and then to slight them and at last to turn their backs upon them.
The honors, he says, splendor and all the glory of this world are but sweet poisons that will much endanger us if they do not eternally destroy us.
Ah, the multitude of souls that have divulged of these sweet baits and died forever. So consider for just a moment in what ways were you following the course of this world before Christ.
[10:30] What sins of the flesh controlled you? How were you spiritually unresponsive to the things of the Lord, perhaps even hostile to the things of the Lord?

And if you are a younger child in the room and you were fortunate enough to trust Christ at an early age, make sure that you never cease to give thanks for his mercy and grace which prevented you from having the opportunity to fall too deeply in love with the things of this world.
Be mindful that you as a child were also completely spiritually dead and awaiting the wrath of God until he in his mercy and in his grace awakened you to new life.
For all of us, consider where you are still tempted to follow the course of this world. What golden baits have been set out by Satan that you still nibble at and that if consumed will numb and harden your soul?
Nearly 10 years ago, now Aaliyah and I went for our 10-year anniversary to Seattle and part of the time that we were there, we went whitewater rafting. I'd never been before.
[11:47] I haven't been since. I would love to but haven't had the opportunity. However, when I was there, we were rafting. We had some class fives, a lot of class threes and fours and then some milder ones after that but there was one point when we got to a calm place in the river and he said, all right, we're about to go down to class four.

Does anyone want to sit on the very front of the raft? And I said, yes, I do. I want to sit on the very front of the raft. That means you're no longer sitting against the side.
You're no longer pressing your feet in to stay in. You're literally dangling your feet off the front as you go down into this large rapid. Sounded like a great idea.
As we went down that rapid and crash, boom, into the current of water that was splashing, it knocked me from the front of the boat to the very back of the boat.
Amazingly, Alia and I were the only ones that stayed in the boat. Everybody else went out of the boat. I was so impressed with the fact that I stayed in.
[12:55] However, we had been trained for this moment and when you were thrown out of the boat, there is something that you can do very specifically in the rush of that current and it's basically just seek to survive until it gets calmer.

All right, so what that looks like is you cross your arms, you put your face up as much as you can, you bring your legs up as much as you can, point your feet downstream and then just pray. And the whole point that you do that is because if you are going like this, there are so many things underneath the water that can grab your legs, hit your legs, rocks that can strike your feet.
That's the safest thing until you can get to calmer waters and swim to the side but they need you to know it is very difficult to save you in that moment right there. And so we often may not realize it. Young people, you need to hear it. But the world and the culture around you is like that mighty rushing current. It is stronger than you'll ever realize with dangers underneath that could cause you much damage.
That is the course of this world and if you step foot into it thinking that you can swim and survive, you have another thing coming. It will wrap you up and take you down in the strength of its current.
[14:13] We as pastors see it all the time. People who hop in indiscriminately into the current thinking they're strong enough to swim against it. But be warned, this partnership with Satan and the world has immediate and real consequences in the here and now.

Relationships are damaged as we lie, cheat, and steal. Finances are squandered. Our consciences are numb. Our words become harsh. Our gossip abounds. Our hearts covet what is not ours.
We take human sexuality outside of its God-ordained boundaries. We envy the positions of others. We jockey for position and status. We believe lies about God. We question his word.
We believe errant doctrine and the list could go on. Those are very real consequences when we follow the course of this world. But more importantly, there are eternal consequences for those who do not belong to Christ.

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Without even knowing it, they've placed themselves right in the middle of the crosshairs of God's eternal punishment. If they die in that state, their eternal condition in hell is sealed.
[15:22] Romans 1 verse 18 says, for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and righteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

Not only will he pour his wrath out on us in judgment if we are not covered by the blood of Christ, but even now, our trespasses and sins merit our separation from Christ.
Isaiah 59 2, your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God. So whether we are lost and separated from him with an eternal void that we cannot cross or whether we are saved and our fellowship with him is hindered and the filling of his spirit in our lives is quenched, either way, sin separates us.
And according to the Bible, our greatest need is God and therefore, by conclusion, separation from God is mankind's greatest problem. That is our prior condition before Christ, dead in our sins and separated from God.
So we look not only at our prior condition before Christ, but also our current condition because of Christ. Our current condition because of Christ says in verse four, but God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together with Christ.
[16:47] By grace you have been saved and he raised us up with him and he seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not a result of works so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.
But God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us. He loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses.
He loved us when we were in full and open rebellion against him. In fact, he loved us long before that. In Paul's words, opening words of this book of Ephesians, if you want to turn back there in chapter one, just a page probably before, chapter one, verses three through five.
Paul says it this way, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Hear this, even as he chose us in him when, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love.
[18:14] He predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will. Romans 5, 8, but God demonstrates his love for us and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Even when we were dead, he made us alive and we must ask ourselves, how do we know? How do we know that we have been made alive? What are some indications? Primarily, are we bearing fruit in keeping with repentance?
We cannot be repentant if we have not been awakened to new life. We have to remember that repentance, while it is crucial and while it is necessary for salvation, is a symptom and not a cause. repentance. Repentance is not the cause. It's not what generates our salvation. Repentance is the symptom that something has actually changed within us. Repentance is the indication that something has come to life in this cold, dead heart.
Repentance is the result of a heart that has been turned from stone to flesh. It is a newly created heart in Christ Jesus that is able to repent.
[19:27] repentant. Surrendering our lives, surrendering our lives in faith to him is not a noble move that is worthy to be praised and honored.

And I want you to hear me very clearly because I don't want you to take this and run the wrong direction with it. Surrendering in faith is not the thing that should be praised.
And I'll explain. Our response of faith to salvation is more like that sudden rhythmic pulse that breaks up that haunting solid flatline tone of a heart rate monitor as medical professionals stand over us providing life-saving measures or perhaps the first gasp of air after being lifeless for minutes after CPR had been initiated.
It is in those moments we are merely a lifeless body contributing nothing to the rescue of our physical bodies. In that instance, the first action of that person whose life had been saved will not be to turn to his rescuers and say, wow, we did it!

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Teamwork makes the dream work, guys. High five. Didn't you notice how still I was for you while you were operating? Unfortunately, that's how well-intentioned individuals will often recount their testimony.
[20:51] It's subtle, but it may sound like this. It was in that moment that I decided to stop running from God. I decided to lay down my selfish ambitions and do what he wants me to do.

I realized I needed a savior. And listen, that's great. Those things are true. I've said them that way myself. We don't want to undervalue that we have, the fact that we have human wills that are not robotic.
We make very real decisions with very real consequences, but those decisions for God are merely symptoms of something much deeper. A better retelling of the events would be, it was in that moment that God gave me new eyes to see the hell-bound race I was running.
It was in that moment that God gave me a new heart to desire not the things of the flesh but the things of the spirit. It was in that moment that he snatched me from the flames of hell that I had earned as a result of my rebellion against him.
It takes the emphasis off of man and places it where it belongs on the sovereign God of our salvation. Don't we see this in the conversion of Paul?
[22:09] There's nothing about his Damascus road experience that glorifies Paul. He wasn't walking along and said to himself, you know what, I think the next best step for me is to maybe stop persecuting the church and try something different.

Maybe I will walk away from Judaism and try out Christianity. No, Scripture says that he was ravaging the church and he was on his way to kill more of them if he could and he was met by the risen Christ and stopped dead in his tracks with a dramatic encounter with God's saving work.
There's nothing about that story that makes Paul a hero. There is nothing in that story in which Paul can boast. God transformed a cold, dead, hell-bent heart and he still does that today.
But as I ran my hell-bound race, we sing, indifferent to the cost, you looked upon my helpless state and led me to the cross and I beheld God's love displayed.
You suffered in my place. You bore the wrath reserved for me. Now all I know is grace. By grace you have been saved. It's not a result of our works.
[23:21] The result is that we are a new creation. Luke led that tonight. We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus as a new creation for good works. Good works are the result of our salvation.

They are not the cause and origination of it. We now offer works out of the overflow of a newly created heart. They're an indication that we now view Christ and his kingdom as supremely valuable over and above the ways of the world and the desires of our flesh.
That is the striking accomplishment of the gospel. We were dead in our sins but God made us alive in Christ and we are no longer separated from him but united with him.
We are one with Christ. Secondly, I want us to consider that we are one in Christ. We are one in Christ.
As we consider this I first want us to think through our division our division apart from Christ. We see that in verse 11 and 12. Therefore, remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision which is made in the flesh by hands.
[24:36] Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise having no hope and without God in the world.

You got to understand Jews and Gentiles were not friends. A Gentile in Paul's day was anyone who was not Jewish. They typically practiced polytheism, they followed pagan religious customs, they were outsiders, they were avoided by Jews to maintain purity and to adhere to the law.
They were considered unclean. Jews, on the other hand, were God's chosen people, they were set apart from the rest of the world, they were the possessors of the covenantal promises and provisions of God, they were the ones from whom the Messiah would come, the one through whom all nations of the earth would be blessed.
their distinctiveness was meant to be a tool for witness but instead became a source of pride, isolation, and self-righteousness.
We see that typified in the story of Jonah, an unwillingness and disdain for God's grace and mercy to be extended to anyone who was not Jewish. So, to be a Gentile was to be separated not only

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from the Jews physically, but from the Christ who would come from the Jews and the salvation he brings, all of the covenantal promises and as Paul is writing to these new Gentile believers, he mentions that in that verse, you Gentiles in the flesh is how he addresses them.
[26:11] Make note of the negative words in verse 12, you were separated from Christ, alienated, strangers, having no hope without God, they're all negative terms.

So, he says, therefore, remember. Paul doesn't want them to forget their prior condition before Christ and isn't this a reminder for us all?
Remember, oh Christian, what you were like when you were living in darkness. Remember where you came from. Why? Because we're prone to forget.
forget. God's people all throughout the testimony of scripture have been prone to forget. Don't forget how hopeless you were, what a lost cause you were, that you had no true identity, that before you were given a rich inheritance in Christ, your inheritance was an eternity in hell.
Don't forget. Being called to remember is apparently a common refrain among the people of God. Paul reminds us in Titus 3, at one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived, and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures.
[27:28] We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. He's saying, remember that? In 1 Corinthians, he lists a whole host of sins and then throws in this statement, as were some of you, as if to say, remember?

Colossians 1, 21, and you once were alienated, hostile in mind, doing evil deeds. Remember that? In Colossians 3, he lists another host of sins we're to put to death and said, on account of these, the wrath of God is coming.
In these, you too once walked when you were living in them. Do you remember? He calls us to remember because when we are quick to remember, it will cause you to live a life of thankfulness and gratitude.
We should never grow weary of rejoicing in God's undeserved mercy and grace and guess what? You're going to be doing that for a long time. When with the ransomed in glory his face I at last shall see, it will be my joy through the ages to sing of his love for me.
not only will it increase your thankfulness but it will also allow you to see those around you as precious. One thing that I try to tell our students as we were about to go out as one of the very first devotions that I led for them was a call for them to view them with compassion.
[29:00] We see that modeled all throughout Christ's ministry regardless of if the people responded in faith. He viewed them out of compassion. It says over and over he saw the crowds and he had compassion.

He saw the crowds. He had compassion. We need to see those souls around us for what they are. We sang it this morning as unnumbered souls who are dying and passing into the night.
Not only were we separated from the Lord but because of sin we are set at odds with all of humanity. Brother turns against brother. Daughter turns against mother.
Friend turns against friend. Husband turns against wife. Tribe turns against tribe. Race against race. Nation against nation. Conflict pervades and compromises every relationship because of sin. And left to our own devices we are inclined towards factions, divisions all of which lead to a spirit of group superiority and ultimately the resentment and oppression of those who are not like us.
[30:07] but now verse 13 I love these transitions verse 4 but God verse 13 but now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

They are no longer regarded as the flesh as they were mentioned in verse 11 but you have been brought near. You who were separated have been brought in as Romans 11 describes it we have been grafted in.
So I want us to consider not only our division apart from Christ but our unity in Christ. Our unity in Christ.
Verses 14 to 15 says for he himself is our peace who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility. by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances that he might create in himself one new man in the place of two so making peace.
We see that idea in Galatians 3 verse 26 and following for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God. He goes on to say for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
[31:28] Make note as I read verses 14 through 18 how many times it says one. For he himself is our peace who has made us both one and has broken down his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by

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abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two so making peace and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross thereby killing the hostility and he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near for through him we both have access in one spirit to the father.

Jesus prayed it in his high priestly prayer do not ask for these only but also for those who will believe in me through their word that they may all be one just as you father are in me and I in you. God is redeeming for himself a bride that is made up of every people nation tribe and tongue he's breaking down all dividing walls of hostility between man and uniting them in himself for his namesake and for his glory.
We saw that in the great commission we read it this morning go make disciples of all nations Revelation 5 you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation verse 19 to 22 so then you are no longer strangers and aliens but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord in him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the spirit.
John Lennon's favorite famous song Imagine is an example of how someone can be so close yet miss the point by an eternity.
[33:34] His song calls the listener to imagine a world in perfect peace and harmony with no divisions with no conflict with no distinctions between people groups just humankind living in total harmony and peace.

What he longs for is pure. Ironically the means through which he hopes to achieve it is by the removal of God entirely and in so doing he removes all hope for his dream to come to fruition. God promises the reality that Lennon longs for but he says it will only be found in him. Just six months after the conflict between Ukraine and Russia broke out I was at the conference Sing in Nashville.
I'll never forget this moment these two nations are at war and they were prepared to sing He Will Hold Me Fast and to lead and start us off singing in their native tongues was two women one Russian one Ukrainian the Russians started the Ukrainians sang next we all followed singing in English what can do that but the gospel of Christ what can take Jew and Gentile male and female rich and poor educated uneducated healthy and disabled strong and weak Ukrainian and Russian Middle Eastern and American or any other man made dividing wall of hostility and tear it down and unite them into one glorious bride and the answer is the precious blood of the Savior who created them all he made all things by the word of his power and he is making a global church against whom the depths of hell will never be able to overcome that is why the church is so important that is why gathering is so important that's why when we come into this place we do not divide over preferential things because our unity is so important it represents a gospel that was purchased a unity that was purchased by the death and resurrection of his son and so we join together young and old rich and poor married and unmarried those with children and without multiple ethnicities we sing we read the word we pray we hear God's word preached we observe the ordinances of baptism and the
Lord's supper why because we have been made alive we've been made one with Christ and he is worthy of our praise and because every dividing wall of hostility that we could carry into this room has been put to death on the cross of Christ that is what the gospel accomplishes that is the answer to the question we must be prepared to give for the watching world we are one with Christ and we are one together in Christ let's pray Lord this is my favorite passage of scripture because it puts me in my place every single time I read it it reminds me Lord that apart from you I am dead unresponsive unable to save myself but you being rich in mercy because of the great love with which you loved me made me alive together again with Christ and you raised me up and you seated me in the heavenly places in Christ
[37:04] Jesus by grace I have been saved and this is through faith it's not a result of my work so I cannot boast it's a work entirely in and of you and I thank you for it and it reminds me Lord that I am just one of a whole host of people you are calling to yourself knitting together as one into a unified bride of Christ who you will call home one day to spend an eternity worshiping it you and we will never get over the fact that you did so for us we thank you for this glorious passage Lord may it be

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reflected in the way that we live even this week we pray these things in Jesus name amen God bless you you're dismissed and we'll see you next man so you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you

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