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REMEMBERING WHY

Ephesians 2:1-10

One Main Thing

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Introduction

If you have been a Christian for any length of time, perhaps you've experienced a season where your walk with God lost some of its meaning and became an exercise in going through the motions. It's not uncommon, and when meaning goes missing from our Christian walk, it could mean that we are experiencing burnout. Burnout can lead to a reluctance to dive into new ministry opportunities. Or those times when meaning is missing could mean that we've simply lost sight of our purpose.

Further, as we attempt to please God, sermons we hear and Bible classes we attend keep us constantly reminded of what God expects of us. Here's the thing: Even though we fail from time to time, I would contend that most of that time, we know what we should be doing. It seems to be more about whether we'll be motivated to live out what we know the Bible teaches! That's why this study on grace is not so much about new information as it is re-motivation! We must constantly be thinking about whether our lives are having the impact that they should in a world that desperately needs what Jesus has asked us to offer.

The big idea for this study can be summed up in this way: We preach and teach about what seemingly all the time. But being motivated by why will ensure that we always stay focused on our purpose. God's amazing grace should always serve to motivate us!

As we consider Ephesians 2:1-10, we want to consider three motivational questions based on the text. Three questions that can help us remember our why, prevent us from falling into the trap of simply of going through the motions, and get us back on track any time we lose our way.

Going Deeper

Motivational question #1: Has God done enough?

> And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

> in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Eph 2:1–7)

Paul begins by reminding the Christians at Ephesus, and ultimately us, of our pre-Christian past. He states in v. 1, "You were dead in your trespasses and sins." We were dead spiritually, and it was our fault, not God's. We were buried in our trespasses. God's wrath is what was awaiting us. Verse 4 begins with two amazing words: "But God." God intervened. God made it possible for our eternal ending to be completely different. He made us alive together with Christ. The text states that it wasn't because we were important or deserving. Verse 4 states it was "because of His great love with which He loved us. The idea that God raised Jesus from the dead is amazing. Yet we should also be amazed that God cared enough to raise us too!

And so our question: Has God done enough? I was dead but now I'm alive. I was destined for wrath but now I'm on my way to heaven. We should be thankful for his grace every day. Unfortunately, bad circumstances sometimes kill our motivation and cloud our view. Sometimes valleys cause us to forget about our call to service; the idea that we are still here for a very important reason. Sometimes we are so deeply buried in our own garbage that the last thing we can think about is serving someone else in need. Perhaps it's a sickness we didn't expect. Perhaps we've lost a loved one way too soon. Perhaps we are discouraged, because of the person who mistreated us rather than loving us. And during those times, we prayed fervently. We beg for a better tomorrow, but nothing seems to be changing for the better. It's possible to become concerned that God isn't fixing enough of the things that are going wrong in our lives.

But the truth is, according to Ephesians 2, God has already fixed the only thing that really matters. We were dead and now we are alive. The truth is, God has already done more than enough! The story of the Bible is about all that God has done to fix our sin problem, and that should keep us motivated and ever mindful of our purpose.

Motivational question #2: Has God asked too much?

> For by grace you have been saved through faith;
> and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9

> not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Eph 2:8–9)

Achieving a successful walk with God can be a daunting task; especially in light of all of the commands found in scripture. Think about some of the challenges we face. First, we spend our lives attempting to become more like Jesus, and we should be doing that. However, we also understand that the perfect life that He both lived and taught is actually out of reach for us. Perfection is the goal, but we will always fall short. Second, because we are still human, Christian living often becomes a frustrating process of taking a few steps forward, followed by a failure and a step or two back. Therefore, in one sense, the case could be made that God, has indeed, asked too much! But in those moments of frustration, this text and this motivational question is of great value.

Notice the good news in the text. God hasn't asked too much, because salvation is "not of ourselves." Our obedient faith is necessary, but our obedient faith earns us nothing. Our salvation is God's gift to us. By definition, a gift cannot be earned. So what about all of those commands that we are attempting to obey? We continue to put forth our best effort, because by the grace of God, we are alive spiritually. God could never ask too much of us! We walk in purpose because we are grateful. The next time you are trying to decide whether to dive into a new area of ministry, think about this question and this passage.

Motivational question #3: Is there anyone who isn't worth our best effort?

> For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (Eph 2:10)

God raised us for a reason. We were dead. Now we're alive! And God's purpose is now supposed to be embraced by each of us. Verse 10 reminds us that we are His workmanship. It further teaches that we have been created in Christ Jesus for the purpose of walking in good works that God has prepared for us. But how often do we fall into the trap of living like some people just aren't worth our best effort? What about our families? Sometimes we treat strangers better than the people we love the most. What about our co-workers? We may be spending as many waking hours with co-workers as we do with family? Do the people at work deserve to see our best effort at a faithful walk with God? What about that person that serves us at our favorite diner three times a week? And then what about the irritants in our lives? Few of us would admit to having enemies but most of us have people in our lives who just rub us the wrong way. Do they deserve to see our best effort?

Objectively, we know that everyone is worthy of our best effort. We grew up singing "Jesus loves the little children; all the children of the world." We're constantly mindful of the truth contained in John 3:16, the idea

that God so loved "the world." We think about Genesis 1:26 where we are taught that man is created in the image of God; the only part of the creation to receive that designation.

It's undeniable. The Bible teaches us that every person is worthy of our best effort. But the question is, is our why big enough to cause us to take what we know and put it into action? These things are easy to talk about but difficult to live out, especially in those moments when we are delayed, mistreated or otherwise inconvenienced.

Application

Why is all of this so important? It's because of our purpose. Most of us interact with "dead" people every day—people who, according to Paul, are still dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). The grace of God has provided us with salvation. Woe to us if we neglect to interact with people in a way that would help them want what we have.

Notice one more big idea from Paul, a mindset that will help guarantee better success for us as we attempt to walk in purpose. In Acts 20, Paul is concluding a final face-to-face visit with the elders at Ephesus. They are about to pray, embrace, and shed tears, because they believe they will not see Paul again on this side of eternity (vv. 36–37). It seems that everyone must be leaning in, hanging on every one of Paul's words. And

in that highly emotional moment, notice what he says in verse 24.

> But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

Paul says, "It's not about me!" And that mindset is still our key to success today. Take a moment to imagine with me: What would your church family look like if every family member became a little bit better of living this out? Would it be easier to stay focused on WHY and to walk in purpose? Would your church family be able to make an even bigger difference in your community? Would embracing Paul's mindset result in more souls being added to the population of heaven?

Conclusion

We can picture in our minds what could happen if every member could remember these three motivational questions and Paul's powerful advice. However, the real question is, are we all willing to change enough to allow that picture to become the shared reality?

Comedian Michael Jr. said the following: "When you know your *why*, your *what* has more impact because you are walking in or towards your purpose." As a blessed recipient of the grace of God, are you walking in purpose today?

Discussion

1. What motivates you to serve God?
2. What causes you to lose motivation in your Christian life? What negative consequences do you see at those times?
3. Do you wish that God would be more active in your life? How do you deal with those feelings?
4. What motivates you to serve people whom you do not like?