

“Reversal of Fortune”

Eph 2:19-23

3.05.23

Throughout the Bible we see reversal of fortunes. A reversal of fortune is an act or process of reversing. A reversal of fortune is going from a good to bad situation or from a bad to a good situation.

For examples of going from good to a bad situation we can look at: Pharaoh and Haman. Pharaoh was extremely powerful and had enslaved the Israelites forcing them to build buildings for his kingdom. In a reversal of fortune, the Israelites that were freed and Pharaoh and many of his soldiers drowned in the Red Sea.

We find Haman in the book of Esther. Haman had gallows set up ready to hang his enemy Mordecai in the town square. In a reversal of fortune, Mordecai was honored by the king and Haman was hanged of the very gallows he had erected.

When you follow God, the reversal of fortune always goes from bad to good. For examples of a bad situation turning into good we can look at Joseph and David. Joseph was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers. He was falsely accused by Potiphar’s wife and ended in jail. In a reversal of fortune, he was freed from jail and rose to the 2nd in command in all of Egypt.

David was the youngest of eight sons of Jesse. He was a shepherd, caring for sheep. In a reversal of fortune, God took this shepherd boy and made him king of Israel.

This morning, we are going to see a reversal of fortune in the passage we are studying. This is another bad situation turning into a good, no an amazing reversal of fortune. It is a **reversal of fortune for anyone who would say yes to Jesus.**

Please turn with me to Ephesians 2:19–22 (ESV), Pg 977 in Red Bibles. Ephesians 2:19–22 (ESV), “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”

If we just started reading Ephesians 2:19, without seeing the context of the verses before we would miss so much. We would miss the reversal of fortune.

Paul begins verse 19 with the words, “So then.” These words tell us that something was written earlier that would shed light on the verses to come.

The first half of the story was bad news. Paul describes what life was like for the Gentile readers. He wrote about five situations that separated them from God and from His chosen people. A brief review from two weeks ago. **The Gentiles were separated from Christ.** Literally, “Without” Christ. The Gentiles knew nothing of the promised Messiah of the Jewish faith. That concept was foreign to them.

The Gentiles were “alienated from the commonwealth of Israel.” They were alienated and had no part in the Jewish community that provided God’s Word, His Laws, His plans, His purposes.

The Gentiles were “strangers to the covenants of promise.” The Gentiles were excluded from the covenants God made with His chosen people.

The Gentiles had “no hope.” The Jews’ hope was placed in the promised Messiah who would come and rescue them. The Gentiles knew nothing of the promised Messiah.

And the Gentiles were “without God in the world.”

The Gentiles were without God. They were not connected to Yahweh.

This was the destiny for the Gentiles until Jesus came along. Thanks to Jesus entering our world, living a perfect life by obeying the whole law; His sacrifice on the cross made it possible for a reversal of fortune.

Gentiles went from being separated from God and His people to near to God in faith in Christ. And

Christians become members of God's household.

Verse 19, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God." The five negative consequences for being born a Gentile was completely erased by Jesus. Gentile believers are no longer strangers and aliens to God or His people. Paul writes that believers are fellow citizens with the saints.

Notice Paul writes "fellow citizens with the saints" and not fellow citizens with the Jews. For God made it clear that the way to become a citizen of God was to become a Christian. Gentiles and Jews who trust in Christ are the true citizens of God, true citizens of heaven. That is their future home.

The good news of the reversal of fortune is that we become not just citizens of heaven but we are members of God's household. If you are a Christian. If you have trusted in Jesus, you are part of God's family.

Dustin Bengue in his book, *The Loveliest Place: The Beauty and Glory of the Church* writes, "God places us within his larger family, where we obtain a Father in God, a brother in Christ, a Helper in the Spirit, and brothers and sisters with fellow believers. The church is God's household and our home."

We didn't earn this position. Our efforts could not get us right with God. We received this blessing of being God's forever child by grace through faith- faith in Jesus. "But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12 (NLT)

Timothy Paul Jones tells the following story, "I never dreamed that taking a child to Disney World could be so difficult — or that such a trip could teach me so much about God's grace. Our middle daughter had been previously adopted by another family. I am sure this couple had the best of intentions, but they never quite integrated the adopted child into their family of biological children. After a couple of rough years, they dissolved the adoption, and we ended up welcoming an eight-year-old girl into our home.

For one reason or another, whenever our daughter's previous family vacationed at Disney World, they took their biological children with them, but they left their adopted daughter with a family friend. Usually — at least in the child's mind — this happened because she did something wrong that precluded her presence on the trip.

And so, by the time we adopted our daughter, she had seen many pictures of Disney World and she had heard about the rides and the characters and the parades. But when it came to passing through the gates of the Magic Kingdom, she had always been the one left on the outside. Once I found out about this history, I made plans to take her to Disney World the next time a speaking engagement took our family to the southeastern United States.

I thought I had mastered the Disney World drill. I knew from previous experiences that the prospect of seeing cast members in freakishly oversized mouse and duck costumes somehow turns children into squirming bundles of emotional instability. What I *didn't* expect was that the prospect of visiting this dreamworld would produce a stream of downright devilish behavior in our newest daughter.

In the month leading up to our trip to the Magic Kingdom, she stole food when a simple request would have gained her a snack. She lied when it would have been easier to tell the truth. She whispered insults that were carefully crafted to hurt her older sister as deeply as possible — and, as the days on the calendar moved closer to the trip, her mutinies multiplied.

A couple of days before our family headed to Florida, I pulled our daughter into my lap to talk through her latest escapade. “I know what you’re going to do,” she stated flatly. “You’re not going to take me to Disney World, are you?” The thought hadn’t actually crossed my mind, but her downward spiral suddenly started to make some sense. She knew she couldn’t earn her way into the Magic Kingdom — she had tried and failed that test several times before — so she was living in a way that placed her as far as possible from the most magical place on earth.

In retrospect, I’m embarrassed to admit that, in that moment, I was tempted to turn her fear to my own advantage. The easiest response would have been, “If you don’t start behaving better, you’re right, we won’t take you” — but, by God’s grace, I didn’t. Instead, I asked her, “Is this trip something we’re doing as a family?” She nodded, brown eyes wide and tear-rimmed.

“Are you part of this family?” She nodded again. “Then you’re going with us. Sure, there may be some consequences to help you remember what’s right and what’s wrong — but you’re part of our family, and we’re not leaving you behind.”

I’d like to say that her behaviors grew better after that moment. They didn’t. Her choices pretty much spiraled out of control at every hotel and rest stop all the way to Lake Buena Vista. Still, we headed to Disney World on the day we had promised, and it was a typical Disney day. Overpriced tickets, overpriced meals, and lots of lines, mingled with just enough manufactured magic to consider maybe going again someday.

In our hotel room that evening, a very different child emerged. She was exhausted, pensive, and a little weepy at times, but her month-long facade of rebellion had faded. When bedtime rolled around, I prayed with her, held her, and asked, “So how was your first day at Disney World?”

She closed her eyes and snuggled down into her stuffed unicorn. After a few moments, she opened her eyes ever so slightly. “Daddy,” she said, “I finally got to go to Disney World. But it wasn’t because I was good; it’s because I’m yours.”

We have failed God. We have done things my own way. We have been rebellious. And yet by God’s Son, we have been completely forgiven. We get to go and stay forever in a place far better than Disney World one day- heaven. We have all these wonderful benefits but it “wasn’t because I was good; it’s because I’m yours.”

Because you belong to God you are part of His family. But there is more.

Christians become God’s holy temple.

Verse 20, “Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.” Ephesians 2:20–21 (ESV)

Last Sunday, we saw that the Jewish and Gentile believers became one body- Christ’s body. Here Paul describes the saints, the church as a holy temple.

This temple has a foundation. That foundation is the apostles and prophets with Christ as the cornerstone. Verse 20, is where Cornerstone got its name more than 47 years ago. The church plant launched from Grand View Baptist Church in Davenport in 1956 with the name Ridgeview Baptist church. In 1976, Ridgeview moved to Eldridge and changed its name to Cornerstone Baptist Church.

A cornerstone is the most important stone in a foundation. It is the first stone that is set in place. The cornerstone sets the parameters for the building. If a cornerstone is not set right, the whole structure will be off.

Jesus is the most important foundational stone of God's temple. From this stone is the rest of the foundation comprised of apostles and prophets. The apostles and prophets brought God's Word to the people verbally as it was being written down.

Paul writes, "When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ,⁵ which was **not made known** to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been **revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.**⁶ This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." Ephesians 3:4–6 (ESV)

Now that we have God's Word collected and complete, it is the foundation that we can base our lives on. When we base our lives on God's Word we are building on a sure foundation.

What is being built on the foundation is so important. Paul writes, "According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation (he was an apostle), and someone else is **building upon it.** Let each one take care how **he builds upon it.**¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 3:10–15 (ESV)

What is being built on the foundation? Living stones. These living stones are spiritual not physical. Peter writes, "You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house..." 1 Peter 2:5 (ESV)

These living stones are the framework for the holy temple. God takes unholy people, who were far from Him and transforms them into pure people who are made to be His temple- where He resides.

Spiritual brick by brick, God is building up His temple- the Church. Wilhelmus à Brakel defines The church as: “This one church is made up of all the elect who have been called from the beginning of the world and are yet to be called until the end of the world.”

We get to participate with God in building up the Church. When we reach out to people with the gospel and they trust in Christ; they become bricks in God’s holy temple. What a privilege that God would invite us to join Him in His work. And what a responsibility; every family member is commanded to build up God’s temple.

And the reversal of fortune continues. Once Gentiles were far off from God. But thanks to a relationship with Jesus,

God dwells with us.

Verse 22, “In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.” Ephesians 2:22 (ESV)

“...For we are the temple of the living God. As God said: “I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people.” 2 Corinthians 6:16 (NLT)

Dustin Bengé writes, “We don’t often think of God having a home, and if we do, our first thoughts turn to heaven. But Scripture repeatedly reminds us that God always dwells among his people. The Old Testament is full of illustrations of God residing in the center of his people—walking with Adam in the cool of the garden, appearing to Moses in the bush that wasn’t consumed, guiding his people through the wilderness by the pillars of cloud by day and of fire by night, filling the tabernacle and temple with his shekinah glory. It’s impossible to read the history of Israel and not recognize God dwelling in the midst of his people.

When we come to the New Testament, there's no more extraordinary demonstration of God's desire to make his home at the very center of his people than in the incarnation of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. John reminds us that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." ...In Christ, God completely bridged the gap between his infinite holiness and man's sinfulness by coming all the way to us. In Christ, God set up his eternal home among his redeemed people." (*The Loveliest Place: The Beauty and Glory of the Church.*)

God is not far. He is near. He dwells with us individually by His Spirit residing in us. And He dwells among us here at Cornerstone. I hope you experience His presence frequently.

I have heard from several guest speakers that come into this church. They have said that they felt the Lord's presence in this place. He is here in our midst. And as we leave here, He goes with us. Never will He leave us. He is always with us.

At the end of time, nothing will ever hinder and blind us from experiencing His presence. "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God." Revelation 21:3 (ESV)

A practical application is to join God in what He is doing. The foundation of God's temple has already been laid by Christ and the apostles and prophets. But the building is not complete. There is still a lot of work to do. A lot of spiritual bricks to go from dead to living.

God is building up His temple and He invites and commands us to do the same. Please take advantage of the Love Does Project. Please take the envelope with your name on it and use it to draw others to Christ.

I want to hear from Jesus one day, “Well done good and faithful servant. Enter into your rest.” I will not hear that if I am living for myself. I will not hear that if I am going by my own agenda. I will not hear that if I don’t join God in what He is doing -building up His holy temple.

How ‘bout you? Do you want to hear “Well done good and faithful servant?” Then join God in building up His temple. Take steps of action to see others come to Christ. Remember, you are never alone. God is with you and He will empower you and He has been preparing good works for you to do before you were ever born. Works that He wants you to do with Him and in His power.

Let’s pray

o.b.g.

God sees you the way He sees Jesus. God the Father treats you the way He treats His Son. He see you and loves you.