

Eph 2:1–10 (ESV) And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ⁽²⁾ 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— ⁽³⁾ 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. ⁽⁴⁾ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁽⁵⁾ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁽⁶⁾ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁽⁷⁾ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁽⁸⁾ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁽⁹⁾ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ⁽¹⁰⁾ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

1. Review: Saw the horrifying plight of man outside of Christ

- A. Dead to God and held in bondage to sin by their fallen nature
 - 1). Therefore they live to gratify that flesh with the things of the world offered by Satan
 - 2). Because they are dead to God they have no desire to change that situation

2. Fortunately Paul turns to better things – the rescue of the sinner by God

- A. Paul writes two words that are packed with power - “But God...”
 - 1). Here is God’s loving grace in action – reaching out to those who loved sin and didn’t want him
- B. What Paul has done here – he has reduced man and exalted grace
 - 1). He has shown who man was when God reached out and drew them to himself
 - 2). And this was not because God was obligated to do so
 - a). He could have justly and fairly said to each one of us
“You choose sin...fine! The wages of sin is death. The soul that sins shall die. Off to judgment you go!”
 - 1a). He didn’t – he chose to rescue the rebel who only deserved hell
- C. I like the way the Life Application Bible sums up this phrase “But God”
We were dead in our sins, *but God...* We were rebels against him, *but God...* We were enslaved by the devil and our sinful natures, *but God...* These may be the two most welcome words in all of Scripture: "but God." God could have left us spiritually dead, in rebellion against him and in bondage to our sins. *But he didn't.* He did not save us because of, but rather in spite of, what he saw in us.

Transition: Many times the believer wonders why God was gracious to them.

- A. If God didn’t rescue us because of who we are – what we did – what motivated him – v. 4 tells us

I. THE MOTIVATION OF GRACE

Eph 2:4 (ESV) But God, being rich in mercy, *because of the great love with which he loved us,*

Because Of His Great Love

1. We were rescued because God loved us with a great love

- A. Great enough to send his Son to be our substitute
- B. Love so great that Paul stops in the middle of his teaching and prays we would understand this love

Eph 3:14–19 (ESV) For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ⁽¹⁵⁾ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ⁽¹⁶⁾ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ⁽¹⁷⁾ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—*that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ⁽¹⁸⁾ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ⁽¹⁹⁾ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,* that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

- 1). The love God has for you is so great it surpasses knowledge
Therefore unless the Spirit gives you understanding you won’t understand it

Transition: We were rescued by grace because we were loved

- A. Because we were loved we were also shown mercy

But God Being Rich in Mercy

Eph 2:4 (ESV) But God, *being rich in mercy*, because of the great love with which he loved us,

1. We are saved by grace but mercy is also necessary

- A. Grace is getting what you don't deserve
- B. But mercy paves the way for that – Mercy is not getting what you do deserve

2. God is merciful towards us – therefore he deflected that wrath from us to Christ

“Mercy is seen in his willingness to be our lightning conductor, unleashing the billion volts of the holy wrath that we deserve upon himself in Christ on the cross.”

- A. He wasn't merciful to Jesus – if he had been we couldn't be saved
- B. The wrath we deserved we didn't get – Jesus took that in place even though he didn't deserve it
 - 1). That paved the way for grace – to give us the salvation we didn't deserve

Thought: This is the way mercy and grace work together

- A. Mercy held back what we deserved so we could get what we didn't deserve

Transition: Paul goes on to list some of those things we didn't deserve

II. THE EFFECTS OF GRACE

We Were Made Alive

Eph 2:5 (ESV) even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

1. Even when we were dead – not Princess Bride dead (sort of)

- A. We were spiritually dead – really dead - when we had no desire for God at all
 - 1). We were saved when we couldn't respond to God no matter how strong the stimulus
- B. God gave us life – he drew us to Christ and united us to his death and resurrection

2. Illustrated in Ezekiel's vision of dry bones (Ezek. 37)

- A. Ezekiel is given a vision of absolute death – a valley filled with skeletons
 - 1). This was a picture of the spiritual condition of Israel
 - But would also represent the spiritual condition of every unbeliever – utterly dead to God
- B. A skeleton can't do anything to bring itself to life – that took a miracle from God

Pick up the story: Ezek 37:4-6 (NIV) Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! (5) This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. (6) I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'"

- C. Ezekiel starts to prophesy and he hears a sound – the rattling of bones coming together
 - 1). As he watches - tendons and flesh appear on the bones – finally skin covers them
 - 2). The Lord breathes life into them and they become a vast army to serve the Lord

Point: That is what the Lord does with the believer – he miraculously gives life to those who are dead

- A. That great puritan Thomas Watson speaks of this miracle

Thomas Watson: "Greater power is put forth in conversion than in creation. When God made the world, he met with no opposition; as he had nothing to help him, so he had nothing to hinder him; but when he converts a sinner, he meets with opposition. Satan opposes him, and the heart opposes him; a sinner is angry with converting grace."

3. Paul adds something that is obvious. “By grace you are saved”

- A. What could those skeletons do to merit being brought to life
 - 1). They could do as much as the spiritually dead could do - NOTHING

- 2). Since dead men and women can do nothing – it has to be unmerited = Grace

Transition: So we were dead but we have been given life

- A. Now Paul tells us what happens to those who were given life

We Were Raised Up

Eph 2:6 (ESV) and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

Intro: This means at least a couple of things

1. This means we enjoy a foretaste of heaven here

- A. Charles Hodge - great theologian and principal of Princeton Theological Seminary in 1800's

Being in this heavenly realm is the equivalent of being in the kingdom of God. "It is that state of purity, exaltation and favour with God, into which his children are even in this world introduced... Though we occupy the lowest place of this kingdom, the mere suburbs of the heavenly city, still we are in it."

- 1). We enjoy that heavenly – risen life now – not to it's fullest but a foretaste

a). A foretaste of the joy – power – and presence of God

b). I find the truths of heaven sweeten life on earth

1a). The more I think of them the more it helps

Col 3:1–2 (ESV) ⁽¹⁾ If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ⁽²⁾ Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

- B. I live on earth but I'm a heavenly citizen – that is why I'm not comfortable here

Vance Havner: A dog is at home in this world because this is the only one a dog will ever live in. We are not at home in this world because we are made for a better one.

- 1). I am not a citizen of earth trying to somehow get into heaven – that is settled

I am a citizen of heaven making my way through this world

- 2). Because I'm a citizen of heaven – I can't be completely comfortable here

a). My allegiance is to a king who rules in a counter culture way

I have different values and goals – my speech – my hope – my behavior

1a). I am a foreigner passing through – I will be home soon

Transition: First thing. We are already heavenly citizens here on earth

- A. Second thing – that should give us great rest

2. This means we can be sure of our eternity

Eph 2:6 (ESV) and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

- A. This brings great comfort to the believer – you are already accepted into heaven

- 1). Therefore you can look into your future with excitement like Paul did

Php 1:21 (ESV) For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

a). Because I'm already seated with Christ in the heavenlies – done deal

That allows me to look ahead with great excitement

- B. When I wasn't sure I'd make it – this was not the case

"Don't come back now Lord – give me some time to grow more – to be more like you..."

- 1). Now it's – Yes Lord come quickly – my going to heaven is not based on my performance

It is based on Christ's – it is not because I'm good enough – He is good enough

- 2). You can only look forward with eager anticipation when you see the mercy and grace of God that has already accepted you into the heavenlies

a). If heaven is our present dwelling – and it is - certainly it must be our future destination

Thought: Do you see why all this is good news? Why this should excite us!

- A. We were dead to God and in bondage to sin

- 1). Unable to change our situation – even if we could we were unwilling to change it
- 2). We were helplessly and hopelessly lost – rushing towards an eternity of torment
 - a). This is who I was and who you were – BUT God performed a miracle
He reached into our deadness and gave us life
 - b). We were like Lazarus – we stunketh – but that call came – “Come forth”
- B. We rose out of that grave of spiritual death to newness of life
 - 1). Our family was changed from Satan’s to God’s
 - 2). Our residence was changed from hell to heaven
 - 3). Our future is so secure God already sees us seated in the heavenlies

Thought: This is who you are believers – you are linked to Christ as your representative

- A. If he is in heaven you are there too – it’s a settled issue – secured by him

If he rose to newness of life – so did you - If he had victory over sin – so can you

2 Co 5:17 (ESV) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, *he is a new creation*. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Transition: Now Paul goes on to tell us the incredible future we are looking forward too

III. THE FUTURE OF GRACE

Eph 2:7 (ESV) so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

1. Here is the future of every believer

- A. God pouring out the riches of his grace – expressed in kindness
- B. We have been recipients of grace all of our life – just didn’t know it
 - 1). In 1:4-5 Paul spoke of God’s *glorious grace* shown to us in God’s *past* work
 - a). Chosen and predestined to be adopted – that choice goes back into eternity past
 - b). God was keeping us even before we knew it – why we didn’t die doing stupid things
 - 2). 1:7 He reminded us of Christ gracious work in the *present*
 - a). We are redeemed and forgiven
“In accordance with *the riches of God’s grace that he lavished upon us*”
 - 3). Here Paul speaks about our *future* – we will be the recipients of *immeasurable grace*

Point: Past, present and future – the believer is saturated with the riches of grace

2. Here we see the purpose of God’s great plan come into focus

- A. It isn’t just to end the rebellion started by Satan – to bring order back into his creation
It is to bless all who are in Christ with this unrelenting torrent of kindness
 - 1). With gracious kindness so rich it is immeasurable
 - a). So great there is no instrument that could calculate it
- B. Every day, we shall be flooded with fresh blessings of grace

Thought: I can’t think of a greater contrast than what Paul has painted between our past and present

- A. Richard Coekin captures this reality in his commentary on Ephesians

“we were captive to the world, the devil and the flesh), heading inexorably into the flames of the crematorium fires (objects of God’s wrath)! Suddenly, as your coffin is engulfed by flames, someone leaps into the flames, smashes open the coffin, and despite the most horrific burns that scar him for ever, retrieves your corpse, breathes life into your body, washes you and clothes you in his own clothes, tenderly carries you to his chauffeur-driven Bentley and takes you home to his father’s presidential palace, to stay in his rooms and feast at his table, enjoying the abundant hospitality of his father forever. That is every Christian’s personal story, magnified both by the horrors of hell from which we’ve been rescued, and the privileges to which we’ve been exalted.

Transition: This contrast is meant to wake us up to what God has done!

- A. To show us what debtors to grace we are
- B. That's where Paul ends this passage – driving home the point that salvation is by grace alone
 - 1). In this section Paul rips away any ability of man to take any credit

IV. BY GRACE ALONE

Eph 2:8–10 (ESV) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁽⁹⁾ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ⁽¹⁰⁾ For we are his workmanship...

1. You have been saved – again a past act – that will reach into the future

- A. Salvation is a completed action with a present effect that is an eternal effect
We can rest in that because it is accomplished by God not man

2. Saved by grace – you can't earn it – can only receive it as a gift

- A. How do we receive it? By faith
 - 1). Faith in what? What God has done for us in Jesus Christ
 - a). We believe that all who turn from sin and trust him will be forgiven
 - b). We believe that the work of Christ on the cross is sufficient to pay our penalty
 - c). We believe that God will apply what Christ has done for us
 - 1a). He will view us through the perfection of Christ rather than our performance
 - 2). We cast away any dependence upon ourselves – resting in the finished work of Christ

Objection: Yeah but I have to believe – I get some credit for that right?

I mean, I at least had the sense to come to my senses and believe

- A. The only reason you came to your senses was God opened your eyes
Here you are: 2 Co 4:4 (ESV) In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
But God: 2 Co 4:6 (ESV) For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
- B. The only reason you went to Christ for salvation was God drew you
Jn 6:44 (ESV) No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.
- C. The only reason you're still a believer is because God has kept you
 - 1). How many times have you tried to wander off – YET you're still here
 - 2). He is the good shepherd who brings the wandering sheep back
- D. But notice what it says about your faith
Eph 2:8 (ESV) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,
 - 1). What is the gift of God – is it faith? This is a controversial verse
 - a). Some scholars believe the gift is linking to the faith in this verse
By grace God enabled you to believe – even the faith is a gift
 - b). Others believe this is speaking about the whole realm of salvation – the entirety of salvation
 - 1a). Therefore the gift is linking to the word "saved" in that verse
 - 2). I tend to believe it is speaking about the faith – that God gets credit for even that!
 - a). Jon Courson said this – this surprised me
This parenthesis most likely refers to the whole complex of salvation by grace through faith as a gift of God. Others, however, take "this" as referring specifically to "faith." In either case, since faith is included in the whole complex of salvation, faith itself must be understood as a gift of God and not as a human achievement.

Thought: It really doesn't matter – because Paul goes on to say

A. That there is nothing in our salvation that we can boast in

Eph 2:8–9 (ESV) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁽⁹⁾ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

1). So whatever your theological thoughts you have about your salvation OR your faith

a). You **MUST** come to this place in your thinking – there is **NOTHING** I can boast in

b). It was given to me as a gift even though I didn't deserve it – Unmerited favor

2). The minute you think it is a result of any works – you have ruined grace

Ro 11:6 (NIV) And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

B. Paul strengthens this thought in v. 10

Eph 2:10 (ESV) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus...

1). From the beginning when God chose you to the end – you are his workmanship

a). Word is poem – from poem – you are his handiwork – his masterpiece

1a). He has taken you out of the ugliness of death – 2:1-3

He is sculpting you into a beautiful work of art

b). What is he turning you into

Ro 8:29 (ESV) For those whom he foreknew he also *predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...*

2). Why you suffer trials at times – the chisel is knocking off the areas that don't look like Christ

a). Artisan training apprentice how to sculpt

Just chisel away everything from that marble that doesn't look like your subject

1a). That is what God is doing with us – chiseling away the vestiges of the flesh

So that the beauty of Christ is seen in an ever increasing way

Transition: One more thing – we've spoken of before – just a reminder

V. GRACE THAT CAUSES US TO WORK

Eph 2:8–10 (ESV) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁽⁹⁾ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ⁽¹⁰⁾ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

1. Not saved by works – we are saved to work

A. That beautiful poem God is making of us – will be involved in works for him

1). He has chosen us to be his – he has put us on a path – works are already put on that path

a). We do those works he has placed before us – that he calls us and enables us to do

Then rewards us for doing them

1. Here we see the importance of works

A. Not to be saved – but they become evidence that we are saved

1). That we have become that new creation in Christ

B. Because this is true James can say

Jas 2:17–18 (ESV) So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (18) But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

1). Not saying as some accuse him of – you are saved by works

He is saying - when you are saved there will be works – that is the norm – why?

a). Because that is who you become – that new nature is wired for that

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- b). That masterpiece God is creating will have works involved
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CONCLUSION

1. Paul has painted a picture of great contrast

- A. The sinner helplessly hopelessly lost and bound up by the ways of the world, the flesh and the devil
 1). The result is they live for sin – that keeps adding to their record of guilt they will be judged for

2. But God because of his great love has been gracious and merciful

- A. He has miraculously given life as a free gift to all who place their faith in Christ
 1). They are rescued from an eternity in hell to enjoy the pleasures of heaven forever

3. The only question is – have you believed?

- A. Have you turned from your sin to embrace Christ – trusting in him alone for your rescue?
 1). If you will you will come alive to God and his ways
 He will begin to fashion you into that beautiful new creation in Christ
 a). Paul says – part of that work in you will cause you to do good works
 Those works he has already placed on your path
 b). James says this becomes evidence that you have been given life

For we are God's workmanship

Not trusting in what you are doing for God

But in what God has done for you

- 3). Therefore since it is by grace – not by works

And since it is given as a gift not to be earned but to simply be received

- a). Man can't find anything to boast in

- b). God has designed salvation in such a way he gets all the glory and you get none

1a). Salvation is not a reward for your service, giving, church attendance

2a). It is not merited by your cleaning up your act first

- c). You were saved by Christ's performance and kept by grace even though your performance is so spotty!

Question: Does that mean church attendance, service, giving and good works aren't important

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- A. Of course not! There just not salvific – they don't earn salvation but they are a result of being saved
- 1). They are a result of the grace that saved you. The grace that changes you
And the grace that moves you.- isn't that what Paul says

Grace Empowered Service