

Made Alive

Eph. 2:1-10 | May 13th 2018

In chapter 1, Paul talked about God's masterplan to unite all things in Christ, thing in heaven and on earth and in chapter 2, Paul is going to talk about two different elements of that reconciliation. In vss. 1-10, he's going to talk about how we're reconciled to God and in vss. 11-22 he's going to say talk about we are reconciled to one another. And I want to say that texts contains one of the clearest explanations of the Gospel in the Bible. And so we've got a lot to look forward today.

And before Paul gets to his explanation of how we're saved individually, he reminds us why it is that we needed to be redeemed—he reminds us of our condition before we were saved. And the first three verses are a depressing summary of our lives before Christ, but if don't understand our hopeless condition before we were saved, we'll never understand how amazing God's grace is. If we're going to sing "Amazing Grace" we can't just say, "That saaaaaaaved me." We have to talk about the wretch. God's grace isn't seen in his saving people who deserved it, it's seen in his incredible mercy toward those who don't deserve it. And so if we're going to taste the sweetness of grace, we need to taste the bitterness of the sin it saved us from.

And he says that we were dead in our trespasses and sins. Now obviously he doesn't mean physically dead, but spiritually dead. Death was what God promised to Adam in the Garden if he ate from the tree. Physical death and spiritual death. And because of the Fall, that spiritual death now characterizes all of us. In the medical field, they have a term for people who are dead when they get to the hospital—D.O.A. Dead On Arrival. And spiritually speaking that's us. We are sinners by nature and because of that we sin. Our sinful actions don't cause us to have a sinful nature, our sinful nature produces sinful actions—did anyone here ever have to teach their children to sin? And it's that nature that Paul is talking about here.

You see Paul's not making a distinction between good people and bad people—that's how the world evaluates people. Paul is seeing humanity in spiritual categories—and there's only two only two: people who are dead and people who are alive. We were dead. Just as someone who is physically dead isn't capable of doing anything, someone who is spiritually dead isn't capable of doing anything—not taking a step toward God or even do anything that's pleasing to him "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8). David Platt talking about how one of his seminary professors would take them out to the graveyard and ask one of the students to preach the Gospel to one of the graves and see if the dead person would respond. DEAD. Unable to come Jn. 6:44. Unable to see. 2 Cor. 4:4. Slaves to sin rom. 6:20. Enemies of god Rom. 5:20. In fact he'll say in vs. 12 here that we had no hope.

And Paul gives us some more detail about the three things that keep us enslaved to sin and you may have heard the phrase the world, the flesh and the devil, and vss. 2-3 is where that comes from. He says vs. 2 that we were, "following the course of this world." We weren't living for the next world, but this one—not for Christ's kingdom but our own little kingdom—not for Christ's glory, but our own. Not for a risen king but for an American dream. Notice Paul isn't saying that as spiritually dead people we were all living degenerate lives or being thieves or murderers, it means that our orientation was purely horizontal simply living for family, career, fun, success. That's why this is so dangerous because it looks so innocent on the outside even praiseworthy—but it's not because it's a rejection of The Giver for The Gifts. A Rejection of the Creator for the Creation. I used to tell my youth all the time, I'm not worried that any here is going to

grow up and become a bad person. I'm afraid that you're going to grow up to be a fine citizen, who gives to charity, and works hard and has good morals—and wastes your life living for the gifts and never knowing or loving the Gift-Giver. There are a handful of things worth dying for but there is only one thing worth living for and that's Christ. This is one characteristic of the spiritually dead living for this world...

Second he says, "following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience..." "The prince of the power of the air" here is a reference to Satan and his kingdom. This doesn't mean that we were all demon possessed but that as unbelievers we were following and being controlled by Satan's powerful lies and deception. You and I live in a world that is profoundly shaped by Satan's lies. And his lies produce disobedience in the heart and minds of those who believe them. What kind of lies? Lies like "Looking sexy is what makes you valuable, live for that." "Money and power will satisfy your heart's desires." "Being a good moral person is all you really need to be." "God doesn't want your full happiness—that's why he keeps so many good things from you." "Sex and romance are the solution to your brokenness" "You're strong, you don't need other people to help you." And his biggest lie. "You don't really need Jesus..." This is pretty much what our world believes. Donald Barnhouse "...if Satan took over Philadelphia, all of the bars would be closed, pornography banished, and pristine streets would be filled with tidy pedestrians who smiled at each other. There would be no swearing. The children would say, "Yes, sir" and "No, ma'am," and the churches would be full every Sunday . . . where Christ is not preached." Satan's city would look like concentration camp. It would look like Pleasantville without a Jesus. And people would love it. That's why it is so deceptive. These are the lies that so many operate under and because they believe these lies they live as if they're true—and this was all of us...

vs. 3 "among whom we all once lived in the passion of our flesh carrying out the desires of the body and the mind and were by nature children of wrath." So mentions that as spiritually dead people we lived for this world, lived under Satan's deception and third we carried out the desires of the body and mind...

If it feels good, do it. You only live once. Listen to your heart. Don't deny yourself pleasure. Isn't this our culture? Just do what you want! And it's so easy to exempt yourself when it talks about being objects of wrath and following Satan and indulging our flesh...it's easy to think that this is just talking about Adolf Hitler. But Paul says was you! Not someone else. This was all of us. You were dead! You are wrath deserving. And if you don't let that sink in, then you won't appreciate the gravity of the next two words...John Stott said that these next two words are the two most significant words ever uttered...

...I'll back up so you can feel how amazing they are... Read up to vss. 4-5, "But God, you were dead but God, children of wrath, but God, living for this world but God, pursuing your own kingdom, 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—by grace you have been saved—" Yes! Made us alive by grace! This is the best news in the world. That God, by his incredible grace, has come to people who are dead—not people who are searching for him or moving towards him—dead and brought us to life. This is what we need—not some improvement ethical refurbishment! The good news of the gospel is not that Christ has come not make bad people better. The good news of the gospel is that Christ has come to make dead people alive!

And it's here that God begins to reverse the death sentence we've inherited from Adam's sin. The spiritual death in us has been reversed! We are now alive. Theologians call this the already but the not yet. We are new creations spiritually, but we aren't yet new creations physically. That's coming! vs 6 says God, "raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus..." We've been resurrected

with Christ spiritually and it's only a matter of time until we're resurrected physically and when we will spend eternity being showered with the grace and mercy of God... **so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.**" You'll remember Paul in chapter 1 vs. 6 that he has adopted us to the praise of his glorious grace! God wants to get glory for himself and he's doing it by showing kindness to sinner! For the rest of eternity God is going to continue to reveal the depths of his grace to us. Going to continue to show us the depths of his love. The riches of his mercy. And for eternity we will be continually learning but never reaching an exhaustive understanding of how much he loves us!

And as Paul is celebrating this grace he moves into one of the most clear concise explanations of salvation by grace in the Bible. Look at it with me, vs 8-9, **"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."** This lies at the core of the Gospel message. Salvation is by sheer grace. There is nothing—no amount self-improvement or religious devotion—that can make you right with God. We've talked about a variety of things that sets Christianity apart from other world religions but if I could only pick one truth that makes Christianity distinct, this would be it. In other religious systems you work in order to get God. In Christianity God has worked to get to you. In other religions your salvation is based on the life you live—how good you are and what you did. In Christianity your salvation is based on the life that someone else lived for you—and how good he was and what he achieved on your behalf. And we can't afford to miss this! This is what we're talking about when we talk about grace!

And I've talked with many people that here that, and they say they believe in salvation by grace, but they don't mean the same thing by grace that Paul means here... They believe in what's called a "second chance" version of grace... they say something like this: I know I couldn't ever save myself, I believe Jesus died for me to wash away all the sins I committed and give me a second chance to live right." No that would still be a works-based salvation. Even if you did improve, the improved version of you still isn't good enough for God.

And this is so hard for us to accept. In fact, Jesus knows that some people are going to get this wrong, and he tells a little story in Matthew 7 just to warn us about this **21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' 23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'**

These people knew they were sinners. They knew about Jesus they knew they were supposed to live for Jesus but they made a crucial error—they believed living for God put them in right standing with God. Stood before God...slid their resume...because no amount of good works can make up for sin. God's standard is perfection. And if you're less than perfect that your only hope is getting credit before God for the perfect life that Christ lived. He was everything we were supposed to be, and he got everything that we were supposed to get so that when we repent and believe, we can have the forgiveness and relationship with God.

What if you woke up tomorrow and didn't feel like God's love for you depended on how much you pray or how many good deeds you do. You can't keep running on that performance treadmill. If you've tried that and you're exhausted.

Skyping with missionaries in a Muslim context who said that Muslim who convert to Christianity often say their favorite verse is Mt. 11:28, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” If that sounds like something you want, then you need to trust Christ today. You need to repent of your sin and trust Christ—to have faith.

Notice here that how it is that God saves us—he saves us through faith. What is faith? Faith is resting on something. Chair illustration. YOU NEED TO BELIEVE!

This is the kind of posture we need. Not a posture of faith that Jesus gave me a second chance—not he could give you a million chances and you’d still never get it right. It’s resting in Christ to do everything “Upon a death I did not die, upon a life I did not live, I stake my whole eternity.” (Spurgeon). And God has set it up this way so that we can’t take any credit—that’s why Paul says in vs 9 “so that no one may boast.” No one can brag about the fact that they’ve been saved—nothing they did.

You said, “well Hey I’m the one that had the faith! God showed amazing grace but I had confident faith” Well, if you look at the word “this is verse 8, in the original language, it’s referring to both the grace and the faith. Both are the gift of God. You see it doesn’t say that you’re saved by your faith, it says your saved by God’s grace through faith, understood as God’s grace producing your faith. The gift of God isn’t simply the opportunity to believe...the fact that you believe is also grace. Your faith isn’t something you do for God, it’s a picture of something God has done in you. That’s why we don’t sing, “I once was lost but now I found. You weren’t drowning in your sin and God came by in his boat and stuck out his hand and you took him up on it, you were dead in your sin, face down in the water and God came by pulled you out and breath new life into you. It’s by pure grace that you’re saved not by works...Paul wants to be so clear about that here but he also wants to be clear about something else when it comes to works...there is a temptation for us to here salvation isn’t by works and ask, “Well, if we’re not saved by our works, are you saying that we don’t have to do any good works? They don’t matter at all?” No and Paul anticipates that mistake here.

He says, vs 10, “For we are his workmanship. Created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” I love this. I remember one pastor talking about how amazing it is that God would set us up some work to do with him. It’s like the dad who takes his son to work, and gives him some tasks to do and lets him help. Not because he needs him but because he loves him. He let’s his son work alongside him. And so make no mistake about it God doesn’t save us by works but he saves us to work! Saving faith works! God has designed to show His love and patience and kindness and faithfulness to the world in large part through you! And so we want our lives to be adorned with good works and acts of mercy and grace not out of some attempt to earn God’s love but out of the freedom and power we now have as children of God.

Running a race. Trinity runs relay runs passes you the baton after the Spirit crosses the finish line. And in the same way we run the victory lap and work and serve because of the new creations that we are and the victory that’s been won for us.

Some us need to stop working to get to God.

Some of us need to stop seeing grace as an excuse to be lazy and work hard to love others, share the Gospel, love the underprivileged, love your family, speak in a way that’s full of grace.