

Grace Alone: Ephesians 2v1-10

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[0 : 00] And the page number is 1174 and Mary is going to come and read for us today. Thanks Mary.

1174, Ephesians chapter 2, verses 1 to 10. As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts.

Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.

It is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

[1 : 35] For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves. It is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast.

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Thanks very much, Mary. Keep your Bibles there at Ephesians. Sam is handing out pens and paper if you'd like to keep notes. You can follow along if you've missed any of the talks.

You'll find them available on the church website. There's talks there available, and you can catch up there. And as I say, I encourage you to come along on Wednesdays as we follow up on these studies that we do Sunday morning, an opportunity to ask questions, to discuss further, to share with each other, and to be enriched by each other's conversations and encouragement.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[2 : 54] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Sam. Well, let's pray. Let's pray.

Father, you are a gracious God who loves to give you the gift of God. Who loves to give good gifts to his children. And so we come with our hands open and empty before you in humility, asking that you would give to us all that we need right now, so that we may understand better your word to us, enabling us, enabling us to live it out in practice.

Thank you. Father, God, we long to understand and be refreshed in your grace. So we ask for your help to be upon us right now.

In Jesus' name we all pray. Amen. Well, God's salvation of people, is it conditional or unconditional?

[4 : 30] By that I mean, does God save us on the basis of what we do, or does God save us on the basis of what Christ has done?

Is it what we do, or is it what Christ has done? Is God's salvation conditional or unconditional? Well, in case we're unsure, have a look at verse 4 that Mary just read.

Let's read verse 4 again. But because of his great love for us, God who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.

It is by grace you have been saved. Grace is God's kindness, his unearned and undeserved favour which he showers, he pours upon us freely.

So it's telling us that salvation is always unconditional. And in case we think it's something we must do, we're reminded again.

[5 : 46] Look at verse 8. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves. It is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one, no one, not even you or I, can boast. Now, you might look at that and go, yeah, I've heard that before, tell me something new. Because we might say, that's what I believe.

But it's not always how we behave. You see, most of the time, we treat God's salvation as something that is conditional.

So we think about it as something like this. If I read my Bible, if I witness to my friend, if I serve at the church, God's going to love me. He'll love me more.

He'll accept me. God will be pleased with me and I will be sure of my salvation. On the other hand, if I don't read my Bible and I find myself repeating some sin and I'm caught up in some habitual behavior, then God's not going to love me.

[7 : 05] God will be disappointed with me. He will be unhappy with how I live and I will be unsure of my salvation. So it's something conditional.

So what we need is some grace. So that is, we go to God. We go to God and pray and say, give me some grace.

Grace that will enable me to be a better person. And then God will accept me and love me. So we see grace as something that God dispenses.

Something which God gives to us, which enables us to earn our acceptance or keep our salvation. It's what one contemporary writer called Red Bull Grace.

And in case you don't know what Red Bull is, Red Bull is a drink you can buy which gives you energy, gives you strength. So imagine that you're out shopping.

[8 : 09] You're out for a walk and suddenly you're overcome with weakness. You're just flummoe. You're just so tired you've got no energy left. So you go to the nearest drink machine.

You put in your couple of euro. You get your can of Red Bull which gives you wings. And your energy is restored and off you go. For a couple of euro you now have a burst of energy to keep you going in life.

Now think about that in terms of our relationship with God. Because I think we come to God in the same way. We put in our money. That is we read our Bible.

We say our prayers. And in return God gives us a can of spiritual Red Bull. A top up of grace. Which gives you a renewed energy or a surge of power.

So that you can now begin to live a better life. A life that will please God. And when we run out of grace or we feel our performance is not up to scratch.

[9 : 15] Well we put in some more money. We say some more prayers or we serve at church. And we do all these different things. And God gives us more grace into our life. And we're empowered.

And off we go again. And I'm doing good things. And look at me God. I'm being a good boy again. And God loves me some more. But the problem is.

We can never ever be sure we are quite accepted or saved. Because on that basis grace keeps running out. And we keep needing more grace.

Well that's the problem that Martin Luther found himself in. He's the character we've been thinking about 500 years ago. As he got back into the Bible. He rediscovered some great truths.

And before this great reformation. The church was teaching people that God saves by grace. You say well what's the difference?

[10 : 19] Don't I believe the same that God saves by grace? Well here's what the church meant. God gives grace so that we are enabled to earn salvation.

In other words God loves a trier. God loves somebody who puts in the effort. And when he sees you putting in the effort and the hard yards.

He gives you some grace. And grace enables you to keep on going. It's a bit like a spiritual booster. That can of Red Bull. But in practice it was a disaster.

Martin Luther wrote after many years of trying to live like this. He said this. The more I try to remedy an uncertain, weak and troubled conscience with human tradition.

So trying to do all these good things. The more daily I find it more uncertain. Weaker. And more troubled. You see what Martin Luther needed.

[11 : 26] And what we all need. Is not Red Bull grace. But saving grace. Because as Luther and as other people began to read their Bibles and get back to the source of what God had to say.

They discovered afresh that salvation is something that God gives to you. It's a free gift from God.

Rather than enabling you to live a certain kind of life. We've been summarizing it like this. Salvation. That right standing before God is according to scripture alone.

So we find it in God's word. It's in Christ alone. By grace alone. That's the theme we're looking at this morning. Through faith alone.

To the glory of God alone. Grace. Grace according to the Bible. Is not a thing. That we get from God. That enables us to be better people.

[12:28] Grace. Is God in his loving kindness. Giving of himself. So it's not a thing that he imparts to us. Or a power.

But it is God in his loving kindness. Giving himself. A contemporary author. Tim Chester. Explains it like this.

I think this is very helpful. God does not give something other than himself. In his grace. He unites us to his son.

By his spirit. That we might share the life and righteousness of the son. Instead of handing out some enabling blessing. God makes himself ours.

And so totally. That we may plead what is his. As ours. So to receive grace from God.

[13:27] Is to receive the very life of Christ. His life becomes our life. So that we are always loved. Accepted.

Treasured. And assured of salvation. salvation. Now let's see how this is all true. And we go to Ephesians chapter 2.

Which is a great passage. To help us understand. The grace. Of God to us. First. We are dead. Without grace.

Dead without grace. Look at verse 1 of chapter 2. As for you. So it's talking to people who were. Before they were Christians.

He says. As for you. You were dead. In your transgressions. And sins. It's very clear. Isn't it? We're spiritually.

[14:23] Dead. We have no desire. For God. We do not want God. We can't even choose God. We are spiritually. Dead.

Dead. And look what this life is like. Without grace. This is what it is to be dead. In sin. Three things. First.

We follow the ways of the world. So let me read from verse 1 again. As for you. You were dead. In your transgressions and sins. In which you used to live. When you followed the ways.

Of this world. Now when it's talking about the world there. The context is not the physical world. But the people of the world. People like you and me.

People who didn't follow the ways of God. Who didn't love God. They turned away from him. And we followed the same path as everybody else. But we don't just follow the ways of the world.

[15:22] We follow the way of Satan. Let's read from verse 2. In which you used to live. When you followed the ways of this world.

And followed the ways of the ruler of the kingdom of the air. The spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. Now the ruler of the kingdom of the air.

Is Satan. He's a real person. It's not just a fake made up belief. He is a person who has rebelled against God.

And his work is to tell us lies. And to tell us this isn't what God said. And to lead us away from the truth. And without grace. We cannot help but listen to him.

And be influenced by him. And live disobedient lives. So we follow the ways of the world. We follow the ways of Satan. And without grace.

[16:20] We follow our own desires. Verse 3. All of us also lived among them at one time. Gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature.

And following its desires and thoughts. We want what we desire. We know what it is to desire something.

That burning passion inside for someone or something. The problem is. What we want. And what we desire. Is not God.

Instead of desiring God. We desire other people and other things. We just feed our own selfish desires. We are dead in sin.

Now that puts us all in a dire situation. Look what it says at the end of verse 3. So having followed these different paths.

[17 : 18] These different ways. What's the consequences? Well look at the end of verse 3. Like the rest. Like everybody. We were by nature. Objects.

Of wrath. We are under God's judgment. God's wrath is God's anger. And we mustn't get confused between God's anger. And my anger.

Or your anger. Or it's not a temper. Or something that's uncontrolled. God's wrath is his fair. Just and reasoned response. To sinners who follow the ways of the world.

Follow the lies of Satan. Follow their own desires. And God in his supreme justice. As he looks down upon the world. And all people throughout the history of time.

He can't overlook that. And say it doesn't matter. He can't just ignore the destruction and damage that people have done to each other. It must be dealt with.

[18 : 15] And because we are spiritually dead. We can't change that. That's the predicament we are in. Asking us to fix ourselves.

Or to find a solution to our problem. Is like asking a dead man. To wake up. And perform heart surgery on himself. It's ridiculous. It's a nonsense.

We are dead. We don't want God. We don't even desire God. We can't do anything about our situation. We simply need God's intervention.

We need grace in our lives. We need saving grace. Let's remind ourselves of what that is.

Look at the end of verse 5. It is by grace you have been saved. And in case we forget it.

[19 : 12] He tells us again verse 8. It is by grace you have been saved. So salvation is by grace. Therefore it's all initiated by God.

It comes from God's plan. God's heart. God's desire. It's not something that I have within myself. So God didn't respond to my pleading. Or my crying out for help.

God responded to our hopeless predicament. Look what it says in verse 4. But because of his great love for us.

God who is rich in mercy. It's a wonderful verse. God took the initiative. He saw how hopeless. How powerless. How pathetic we were. Dead in sin. Objects of his wrath. And so motivated and driven by his love and his mercy.

[20 : 14] Not because of who we are. But because of his love. God intervened into our lives. Martin Luther put it like this.

It sums it up very well. The love of God does not find. But creates that which is pleasing to him. Rather than seeking its own good. The love of God flows forth and bestows good. Therefore sinners are attractive because they are loved.

They are not loved because they are attractive. It's quite insightful isn't it? Does God love you because he thinks you're wonderful?

Because you've done good things? No. God loves you simply because he loves you. Because God loves you.

[21 : 18] You are attractive to him. So in love God takes the initiative. And he saves us. And he does that saving.

By uniting us. To Christ. So it's initiated by God. But the means and the ways in which we are saved. Is ultimately he unites us to Christ.

So in grace God unites us to his son. By his spirit. So he joins us to his son by his spirit. So that we get to share in the life of his son.

So look at the language that's used in verse 5. This unity language. This joining up language. So verse 5. Made us alive with Christ.

Verse 6. And God raised us up with Christ. And seated us with Christ.

[22 : 26] In the heavenly realms. Again let me explain what this with language means. Martin Luther explained it like this.

You are so cemented to Christ. That he and you are as one person. Which cannot be separated. But remains attached to him forever.

And declares I am as Christ. Christ. And Christ in turn says. I am as that sinner. Who is attached to me. And I to him.

For we are joined together. Into one flesh. And bone. Isn't that incredible? My life. Is Christ's life. And Christ's life is my life. That's what it means. To be united to Christ. To be with Christ. And let's see how this actually works out in practice.

[23 : 26] Again three things. First we are made alive with Christ. So let's read the end of verse 4. Into verse 5.

God who is rich in mercy. His initiative. Made us alive with Christ. Even when we were dead in transgressions.

So through our union with Christ. When Christ died. We can also say we died. As Christ was condemned on the cross.

Because of my unity with Christ. It was me who was condemned. On the cross. Christ takes my life. So that I can experience his life.

We were dead in sin. That's the language past tense. We were dead in sin. But through grace we are now. Present. Continuous tense.

[24 : 24] Made alive. Not only were we made alive with Christ. We were raised with Christ. So look at verse 6. And God raised us up with Christ.

Again it's this union language. Through our union with Christ. When Christ was raised from the dead. After his death on the cross. Placed in the tomb.

Three days later he rose from the grave. Because of our union with Christ. We are also raised with Christ. And although that is a future reality to come.

Our resurrection is yet to come. We are so bound up with Christ. It's as if it has already happened. So as Christ rose victorious from death.

I too have victory over death. Christ takes my life. So that I can experience his life. We were once without hope.

[25 : 24] Under judgment. But now raised to live with Christ. So made alive.

Raised. And the third one. We were seated with Christ. Let me read verse 6 again. God raised us up with Christ. And seated us with him.

In the heavenly realms. In Christ Jesus. So when Christ was raised. He was given the seat. Or the position of all power.

And all authority. That's what it means when he was seated. In the heavenly realms. It's the highest position of all authority. So Christ ruling over all things.

And all people. Ruling over all the powers of sin. And Satan. But look at what it says. Because we were raised with Christ.

[26 : 23] We have been seated with Christ. So that means. Just as Christ is in that position of authority and power. We are seated with him.

We also have a position of authority and power. And that power enables us today as Christians. To fight the rule of sin. And resist the dominion of Satan.

Where once we were unable to choose God. Once we were unable to follow the ways of God. We now have the will to love him. And follow him.

Have a look back at chapter 1. And verse 18 and 19. Sorry.

It's the middle of verse 19. So here he's talking. He's praying that we would experience. And know the power of God at work in our lives.

[27 : 22] The power that raised Christ from the dead. Would be at work within us. So let me pick it up there. The middle of verse 19. That power is like the working of his mighty strength.

Which he exerted in Christ. When he raised him from the dead. And seated him at the right hand in the heavenly realms. Far above all rule and authority.

Power and dominion. And every title that can be given. Not only in the present age. But also in the one to come. So that very power that raised Christ.

And gave him that position of power. Is a power that is at work within God's people today. To love him. And follow him.

So all this that we have received by grace. Alive with Christ. Raised with Christ. Seated with Christ.

[28 : 19] Is all the work of grace. We are... I can't get the word so I'll forget that. So let's look at verse 7.

God did this work of grace in our lives. Verse 7. Chapter 2. Verse 7. This grace in our lives. In order that in the coming ages.

He might show the incomparable riches of his grace. Expressed in his kindness to us. In Christ Jesus. God worked his grace in our lives.

So that we would become a display piece to the world. It's like we are in God's gallery. On show to the world.

So you think of a famous artist. When they finish their work. They hang it up in the gallery. All their artwork is presented. And it's all on display for people to come in and see.

[29 : 16] And as people walk around the gallery. They stand back and they marvel. It's a great picture. But really it's a marvel and a wonder at the artist. For the amazing work that they've done.

You celebrate the artist. Well when God acts in grace towards us. Out of his love and out of his mercy. It's like he puts us on display.

In his gallery towards the watching world. So as people walk around. As people see us. They think. Not how great we are. But how great the artist is.

Look at what a great kind and loving and gracious God is. God our creator. Is a God of grace. And we are a visible demonstration of that saving grace alone in our lives.

So if you've experienced God's grace. As you walk to work. As you look after your children. As you meet people. You are that visible demonstration.

[30 : 18] That you are saved by grace. On display for the world to see. Now when we receive this grace.

We do not turn back to our own efforts. Rather. We continue to live under grace. And this is probably one of the most hardest things to do.

To continue day by day to live under. This grace of God. Living under his grace. Will mean two things for us.

First. It means we have a new status. So look at verse 10. For we are God's workmanship. Created in Christ Jesus. To do good works. Do you see what it says there? We are God's workmanship. Literally.

[31 : 19] We are his work of art. We are his masterpiece. As God shapes us. And changes us. And saves us. By his grace.

He is shaping us. And creating us. To be like his very own son. So look what it says. At the beginning of verse 10. We are created. In Christ Jesus.

We are a new creation. A brand new person. By his grace. In other words. We have been given the very status. Of his own son.

Jesus Christ. That means. When God looks at us. His view of us. Will not change. According to our performance.

Or behavior. So remember. What we were thinking. At the beginning. If I have had a good day. I have read my Bible. I have witnessed to somebody at work. I have been good to my children.

[32 : 15] I haven't lost my temper. Everything's gone really well. But God's going to love me. And if I don't do those things. God's going to be unhappy with me.

That's wrong. God's view of us. Will not change. According to our performance. Or behavior. We are his work of art.

There are no flaws. We are loved. And treasured. Accepted. And welcomed. And saved. Forever. God's masterpiece.

The status. Of his own son. That's what it means. To live under his grace. Reminding ourselves daily. That this is my position.

Before God. And that will dramatically change. How you live your life. Day to day. Because not only is it a new status.

[33 : 11] But it now gives us a freedom. A liberty. To serve. In ways that we never knew before. So look at the rest of verse 10.

For we are God's workmanship. His masterpiece. That created work. Created in Christ Jesus. To do good works.

Which God prepared in advance. For us to do. Well we are getting back into works. And service. And we are saying. What is the purpose of our works?

What is the purpose of our service? Well it is not to earn God's grace. It is not to earn his favour. It is not to get his attention. But we simply serve.

Because God has given us this wonderful work to do. Because we have received his grace.

Because I am his child. I am his son. Or I am his daughter.

[34 : 07] God has now given me a new way to live. To serve him. And live for him. So because I am God's workmanship. Because I have the status of his son.

Because I am loved. I now love him. Because I am accepted. I will obey him.

Because I am his child. I will follow him. Because I am saved. I want to live for him.

God has given us work to do. As a way of saying thank you to him. For his amazing grace. In our lives.

So God gives me a new status. So that I can serve God freely. Now it is not easy to accept God's grace.

[35 : 07] And to live under his grace. Because. Well let's face it. Our natural desire. Is continually to think. There must be something I must do.

I must earn it. I must deserve it. Because that is how life works. If you want to get something. You have got to earn it. If you want somebody to do something for you. You have got to deserve it. But not with God. We have got to resist such thinking. What we have to do. Is to teach ourselves. We have got to speak. Literally speak the truth.

Of God's grace into our life. Every day. Reminding ourselves of our status. Reminding ourselves of what God has called us to do. I want to finish with a quote.

Martin Luther. Was a pastor. And he wrote a letter to a friend of his. Who was struggling. To live under God's grace. His friend kept slipping back into thinking.

[36 : 07] I must earn favour before God. I must prove myself before God. So he writes this letter. And here is a quote. From the letter. Let me read it to you.

Follow along. They try to do good of themselves. In order that they might stand before God. Clothed in their own virtues and merits. But this is impossible. Among us. You were one who held this opinion. Or rather.

Error. So was I. And I am still fighting against the error. Without having conquered it as yet. So you see. It's an ongoing struggle for all of us.

To think that we have to prove ourselves before God. How do we deal with it? Well. Read on. Therefore. My dear brother. Learn Christ.

[37 : 03] And him crucified. Learn to pray to him. And despairing of yourself. Say. Thou Lord Jesus. Are my righteousness. But I am thy sin.

Thou hast taken upon thyself what is mine. And hast given to me what is thine. Thou hast taken upon thyself what thou wast not.

And hast given to me what I was not. We are to teach. Remind ourselves. Actually. Physically. Verbally. Read. Chapter 2. Verse 8. And speak it to yourself. Every day. Remind yourself. It is by grace I have been saved.

Through faith. This is not from myself. It is the gift of God. Not by works. So that no one. Can boast.

[38 : 03] Our status will never change. Depending on our performance or behaviour. God loves us. Because he loves us.

It is a work of grace. And we are free to live for him. And to serve him. Let's pray together. Stop. Here. Just leave. Sometimes. That doesn't matter. Okay. Exactly. Jesus. etc. So that's right. So that's right. This, Father XO I have been there. During Yay.