

Ephesians Ch2v1-10 - Saved By Grace

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. It's great to see you all today. Beautiful sunny day. I hope you had a good day yesterday and that you will enjoy the day today.

Let's open our Bibles then to this passage, Ephesians chapter 2. Thank you. I'm going to pray and ask for God to help us as we look at his word together. Let's pray again.

Father, thank you for this beautiful day. Thank you for the sun that you created.

And we thank you for your spirit that is now present with us. And we pray that his light would shine in our hearts and warm us afresh to the wonder of your amazing grace.

So help us now, we pray in Jesus name. Amen. So we're starting a new series today, asking the question, the big question is, what is a Christian?

[1 : 26] And over the next few weeks, we're going to take some of the main themes that tell us what a Christian is. So you can think of it like this. Think of an orange. OK, the orange is the Christian.

And we're going to take a segment of that piece and we're going to look at it week by week to see what it has to say. And then hopefully we'll have a complete picture of what a Christian is.

So this morning, we're going to see that a Christian is someone who is saved by grace. So look at the end of verse five with me. It is by grace you have been saved.

And in case we forget, it's repeated for us in verse eight. For it is by grace you have been saved. Now, grace is a word we use quite a bit.

And so I've got a definition here. You can see it on screen. You can tell me what you think of it later. Maybe you can come up with something better. But here we go. Grace means God's joyful acceptance of us.

[2 : 40] Not because we have earned it or deserved it. But because he delights to give it to us freely at Christ's expense.

God joyfully accepts us. He delights to give us his grace. You see, grace is what makes us a Christian.

We don't become a Christian by birth or our heritage or our tradition. It's not even my decision that I become a Christian.

It's not by our effort or our performance. So God looks down and says, oh, well, they've read their Bible. They've been going to church. I'll make them a Christian.

It's not by our effort. Do you see what it says in verse nine? Thank you, Daniel. Do you see what it says in verse nine? Not by works so that no one can boast.

[3 : 41] If we're a Christian today, it's because of God's kindness and goodness, which is unearned and undeserved.

So we're going to unpack that this morning by looking at three big themes. And each of them have a number of points, but we're going to go through them quickly. So you can follow along on the screen or write in your notes.

So here's the first big idea this morning. First, we're dead without grace. But you say, no, I'm quite alive today.

I'm speaking. I can hear. No, the writer is describing what life is like before we become a Christian. OK, so look at verse one.

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins. It's like we're spiritual zombies.

[4 : 42] You've seen some of those films or the programs on TV. We are literally the walking dead. Look at what our dead life is like.

We're dead in sin. And it's described in three ways. First, we follow the ways of the world. Let's read verses one and two. As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live when you followed the ways of the world.

The ways of the world is a way, is a path that walks away from God. It's a life that resists and rejects God's rule.

But not only do we follow the ways of the world. Keep with me. We follow the way of the devil. Look at the rest of verse two. We follow the ways of this world and we follow the ruler of the kingdom of the air.

You know who that is, the ruler of the kingdom of the air? It's the devil. And his work is to tell us lies. The kind of lies that he's used from the very beginning of time.

[5 : 58] A lie that says things like, you can be like God. You decide what is right and wrong. And we can't help but listen to him and follow him and live disobedient lives.

So we follow the ways of the world. We follow the way of the devil. And third, we follow the way of our desires. Look at verse three.

All of us also lived among them at one time. So again, he's talking about a life before you become a Christian. This is what it's like.

You are gratifying the cravings of your flesh and following its desires and thoughts.

It's very simply saying that we want, we work, we will pursue for whatever we desire. And the problem is, before we're a Christian, the only thing we desire is what I want for me.

[7 : 10] We don't desire God. Essentially, we live with self at the centre. We remove God from the centre and put ourselves at the centre. We feed and we pursue our selfish desires.

Now this is what it means to be spiritually dead. It's like we've joined humanity's great protest against God.

You've seen protests walking down the streets. Well, we're part of this great big cosmic march. And we're all holding up our placard saying, My way, not God's way.

My will, not God's will. We're like spiritual zombies. We're the walking dead. We don't want or desire to walk any other way.

And without grace, that's me and that's you. What do you think about that? Do you like that diagnosis? Well, there's more to it.

[8 : 20] Because that puts us into a very, very difficult situation. We are deserving of God's wrath. Did you see that?

The end of verse 3? For those who follow the ways of the world, the way of the devil and the way of our desires. Look at the rest of verse 3. We, like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

Well, I know we don't like to talk about wrath and God being anger. Surely God's a God of love. Yes, he is. But he's a loving God. He's not temper-like.

He doesn't lose his control. You can't press God's buttons by living a certain way and he just responds in an outrage. No, God's wrath is fair.

It's just. It's been reasoned. It's God's response to people like us who follow the way of the world, who follow the lies of the devil, and who follow the ways of our own desires.

[9 : 29] By our nature, a nature that we're born with and a nature that we live with, we're all set against God.

And that puts us on a collision course with God. We're under his justice. And God can't overlook our sin. He can't pretend, oh, just live as you want, it's all right.

No, God cannot tolerate our protest forever. In other words, if we follow the world, if we follow the devil, and if we follow our own desires, it means we're taking a path, we're walking a path, that will lead us to hell.

A life separated from God and his goodness. And all that is beautiful forever. Now, it's going to get worse.

Follow with me. Because if we're spiritually dead, that means you and I can't change our predicament, and nor do we actually want to change.

[10 : 46] Just think about this with me for a minute. Just think of a food, a particular food that you really don't like. Okay? Think of a food you don't like.

Mine is sandwich spread. Do you ever eat that stuff? It's a paste with cut up vegetables and horrible things like celery and peppers in a detestable sauce.

It says cream sauce. No, it's not cream sauce. I hate sandwich spread. I have no desire for it. I don't even want to like it.

If there was a course put on and said, come to this course and we will help you like sandwich spread. No, I'm not going to like it. Put it anywhere near me and I'm going to run in the opposite direction.

I don't want sandwich spread. Do you believe that truth about ourselves before we are Christians? Well, if you don't believe what I've tried to say, I'm going to say, I'm going to say, I'm going to say, I have no desire for God.

[11 : 49] I do not even want to desire God. put God anywhere near me and I'm going to run away.

I don't want it. Do you believe that truth about ourselves before we are Christians? Well, if you don't believe what I've tried to illustrate, go back to Romans chapter 3.

Go back a few pages to Romans chapter 3. The whole case at the beginning of Romans is showing that everybody, no matter our background, our religion, our culture, that we're all guilty before God.

We're going to pick it up in verse 10. Romans chapter 3 in verse 10. As it is written, There is no one righteous, not even one.

There is no one who understands. There is no one who seeks God. Do you believe that?

[13 : 11] Before you are a Christian, you do not seek God. You've no desire for him. Let's go back to Ephesians chapter 2.

One writer put it like this. No one prompted by their own decision and acting in their own ability wants to find God.

We say, no, no, no, no. I did. I wanted to find God. Well, no, no, no, no. No, no, no, no. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. More about that later in a minute.

You see, left in our dead state, we do not seek God. Dead people cannot make themselves alive again.

Do you know anybody who made themselves rise from the dead? Just as we can't do that physically, so we can't make ourselves spiritually alive.

[14 : 12] We're dead. Now the question is, will you accept God's diagnosis of your life? I'm dead in my sins, deserving of God's wrath.

Without grace, this is who I am. Well, doesn't sound great, does it?

But we need to hear what God says. Second, saved by grace, dead without grace, saved by grace.

Let's pick it up in verse 4. But, so something's changed. There's an intervention. Something has happened. God has done something.

Verse 4. But, because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive. He is rich rich in mercy.

[15 : 21] God didn't respond because we were pleading for mercy. No, God acted. God took the initiative. God moved towards us because he is rich in mercy.

And look at how God intervened in our life. it's amazing. It's beautiful. Three things. First, he made us alive with Christ.

Let's read those couple of verses again. Verse 4. Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in our transgressions.

We were spiritually dead, but now he says, you can be made alive. Well, how does that happen? Well, when Christ died on the cross, something extraordinary took place.

Christ took my dead in sin kind of life and he made it his own. It was as if Christ, or not as if, it was that Christ was treated as someone who followed the ways of the world, followed the way of the devil, and followed his own desires.

[16 : 46] He took my dead in sin life and the wrath of God, the judgment that I deserve, fell on Christ and was absorbed by him.

My spiritual dead life was put to death in the death of Jesus. My dead life was put to death.

But more than that, not only were we made alive, we were raised with Christ. Look at verse 6. And God raised us up with Christ.

When Christ died on the cross, physically he died, he was raised from the dead, so he's saying you too had a spiritual resurrection in your life.

We came alive to God. We were drawn to him. we had a desire for him. We began to pursue him. God breathed new life into our spiritual dead lives.

[18 : 02] He resurrected us. We were dead in our sin. Now we've been made alive with Christ. But he also did something more wonderful again.

Do you see it there, the rest of verse 6? We were raised up with Christ. Not just raised with him, but he seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.

When Christ was raised, he ascended into heaven and was seated at the right hand of the Father. That's a position of all power and authority. God and because we have been spiritually raised and given new life, we are seated with him.

In other words, God now treats us as his own son. Because my dead in sin life was dealt with, because I now have the life of Christ, I am now welcomed, I am now accepted, I am now treasured.

That's what happens when God, who is rich in mercy, reaches out and intervenes into our life. God takes us from the path of walking the way of the dead.

[19 : 26] He makes us alive and rises us up, so we now walk a new path. We now have desires for God and loves for God. We seek him, we pursue him.

we wonderfully receive his grace that saves us. We are recipients of God's grace.

Look at verse 7 with me. God did all this. God did us making alive, resurrecting us, seating us with him.

He did all of that work for us, verse 7, 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 did this. God acts in grace towards people like us to show to a watching world how gracious God is.

[20 : 36] God's grace. It's like we become a living display of God's grace. Think of it like this. When an artist, for those of you who can draw and paint and all that sort of thing, when you're finished your work, you hang it up, don't you?

A great artist will be able to hang it up in a gallery. They put their artwork on display for people to be able to see. And as people walk around and stop and sit and look at these beautiful pictures, they marvel at the picture.

But not just at the picture, they marvel at the artist. You see, when you look at the picture, you celebrate the artist.

But when God acts in grace towards us, it's like he puts us on display before a watching world. He hangs us up and says, look!

Not so that people would think how great we are, but people will look at us and see how amazing and how rich God's grace is to people like us.

[21 : 59] That God could change us and save us. that's worth putting on display to the world. You see, the wonder is, God delights in giving grace to dead in sin, deserving of wrath, people like us.

God saves us by grace so that we might praise him. Now, this is all good news. It's great news. Left to ourselves, we're never going to choose God.

We enter the world spiritually dead. As one writer put it, you can see this on screen, just as the physically dead can't communicate with the living, so also those who are spiritually dead cannot communicate with the eternal living God.

God. But when God, who is rich in mercy, takes the initiative and intervenes in your life, he makes you alive to God.

He gives you a new life. He sparks off a new beginning where you begin to pursue, seek, and desire God.

[23 : 14] God, who is rich in mercy, saves us by grace. Now the big question here is, will you accept what God has done for you?

The empty wisdom of the world says, no, no, no, no, I don't need God. I can do it alone. But the words of God to us today is saying, Christ is everything you need, and I give him to you freely.

so dead without grace, saved by grace, and then third, experiencing forever grace.

So the question we want to ask here is, as we look at this last part, is how do we get to experience grace? How can this be amazing grace for me?

Well, look at verse 8. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this is not from yourself, it is the gift of God.

[24 : 31] Experiencing grace is a beautiful gift from God to you. these gifts come in three ways.

We're going to just look at three here. First, the gift of a new faith. Do you see it there in verse 8? It is by grace you've been saved, through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.

God's intervening grace is a gift, and the faith to believe and the faith to trust is also a gift.

Look closely at verse 8. It says, this is not from yourselves. Well, what's not from ourselves? Faith is not from yourself.

Faith is gift from God. It's not something we kind of build up within ourselves or motivate ourselves from within. Faith is a gift from God so that you can respond to him.

[25 : 46] When I was spiritually dead, my faith was in me, and in nobody else but me. I depended on self. Now I've been given a new faith, a faith that enables me to trust only in Christ and his grace to me.

So we've been given a gift of faith. We've also been given a gift of a new status. Look at verse 10.

For we are God's handiwork. Can you consider what that means? Literally, God is saying to you, if you're a Christian, you are a work of art.

You are my masterpiece. God has taken people like us and created us and worked in us who deserve God's wrath to be recipients of his grace.

And God's assessment, because he's worked in us, when he looks at us and inspects us, he sees no flaws, nothing wrong, because you are his masterpiece.

[27 : 08] You are loved, treasured, accepted, welcomed, saved for other. In other words, you have been given the same status as the Son, Jesus Christ.

That means God treats you as his own dear Son. No matter how much you fail, no matter how much you fall, that status will not change.

What an incredible gift. New faith, new status, what we call the last one, a new purpose.

Read verse 10 with me again. for we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

We do good works. we serve God, not to earn his favour, not to earn his grace, not to get God's attention and say, I'm here, give me your grace, did you see what I did?

[28 : 18] No, we serve because we have received grace. It's a response. When we were spiritually dead, we served self.

Look back at verse three if you need reminded. we lived gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts.

We served self. We didn't serve God, but now we've been given a new purpose. We serve the God who saved us.

Because I am loved, I now love him. Because I've been accepted, I now want to obey him. Because I'm his child, I want to hear his voice and I want to follow his way.

Because I've been saved by grace, I want to live for him. Now, if all this is a gift from God, and it is, what's that going to mean?

[29 : 24] If it's all a gift, what does that mean for us? God's grace? Well, we boast in Christ alone.

We boast in his grace. Let's read verses 8 and 9 and you'll pick it up and you'll get the focus here. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, which is a gift, it's not from yourselves, it's from God, not by works, not by anything we can do, by your performance or anything else, so that no one can boast.

You see, when we experience God's grace, there is no longer any I or me. Think this through with me as we try to capture what it means to boast in grace.

If somebody says to you, why are you a Christian? what would you say? Well, because I was searching or seeking God, because I decided to follow Jesus.

Well, if you say anything like that, you know what, you're boasting in self, you're trusting in self. If you seek God, it's only because God sought you first.

[30 : 53] If you decide to follow Jesus, it's because God has enabled you to follow Jesus. Or put it this way, if someone says, why are you a Christian and they're not a Christian?

And you answer something like this, well, because I had faith or because I chose God. Well, again, we're doing it, we're boasting in self.

We're saying, we're basically saying, if only they had faith like I had faith, if only they did what I did, they would be saved too.

No, if you have faith, it's because God gave you faith. It's all a gift. We can't boast in ourself for anything.

Now, I know that greets with us, we don't like that. And the reason is pride. But pride isn't going to save you.

[32 : 01] It's going to destroy you and crush you. You see, when we experience grace, it humbles you. It changes us from the inside out.

It makes us into beautiful and attractive people. Rather than people who hide their sin and pretend that sin doesn't matter, well, we now begin to admit our sin and we begin to repent.

We run to God who is full of grace and is rich in mercy. If we experience grace, it will make us so humble that we will no longer look down on anybody and say, they're undeserving because God gave us what we don't deserve and could never earn.

It means we'll never ever again write anybody off and say, you know what, their sin and what they did, they're beyond God's mercy. We don't think like that because God didn't write me off and he didn't write you off.

he loved you. And it means we will forgive those no matter what wrong they do to us and we will hold no grudges because God loved you and forgave you and dealt with your sin once and for all.

[33 : 31] it'll make you humble, beautiful and attractive. You will be filled with grace and you will live a life of grace because God has been gracious to you.

Consider this, if you understand grace you will never boast in yourself, you will only boast in Christ who achieved salvation for you.

So what is a Christian? It's someone who is saved by grace. Let's pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Father, your word is so simple and so clear.

[34 : 40] Help us to accept your diagnosis of who we are and what we are like. Help us to accept what God has done for us who is rich in mercy making making us alive, making us to a new way and seating us with Christ.

Thank you for the gift of faith. Thank you for the new status we have, a new purpose to live for you.

and we pray and ask that we would experience your grace more and more, that it would humble us and change us so that we become more beautiful and attractive, a display piece to the world of how good and gracious you are.

Thank you, Jesus. Amen. Well, guess what we're going to sing? Amazing grace, how sweet the sound.

Let's stand together as we're able and let's rejoice and sing and remind ourselves of how beautiful and how great God's grace to us is.

[36 : 05] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.