

Ephesians 2:1-10 From Death To Life

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[0 : 00] Let's turn to Ephesians chapter 2. Ephesians chapter 2, we're going to consider a slightly larger section this evening. Ephesians chapter 2 and verses 1 through 10.

I had toyed with the idea of breaking it up into smaller sections, but I think it all hangs together as one section. It all hangs together as one thought that Paul is giving us here in Ephesians 2.

So we'll look at it together now. Ephesians chapter 2, I'm beginning to read at verse 1. This is the word of God.

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 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, 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.

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.

[1 : 23] By grace you have been saved, and raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, nor a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Amen. This is the reading of God's inspired, inerrant word. Let's turn in our Bibles please, to Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy chapter 7.

It's towards the front of our Bibles, towards the front of the Old Testament. We'll read the whole of the chapter together. What does Paul remind us of in Ephesians 2?

He reminds us that it's all of grace, that we are God's chosen people, sheerly because of God's grace. And as we read Deuteronomy chapter 7, we see the Israelites being reminded, that it wasn't because they were more numerous, that God chose them, and it wasn't because they were more powerful, that God chose them.

[2 : 48] It was simply his sovereign choice. It was simply his will. Deuteronomy chapter 7. I'm beginning to read at verse 1. This is the word of God.

When the Lord your God brings you into the land, that you are entering, to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and mightier than you.

And when the Lord your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction. You shall make no covenant with them, and show no mercy to them.

You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons, or taking their daughters for your sons. For they would turn you away, your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly.

But thus shall you deal with them. You shall break down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and chop down their asherim, and burn their carved images with fire. For you are a people holy to the Lord your God.

[3 : 59] The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you, and chose you.

For you were the fewest of all peoples. But it is because the Lord loves you, and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

Know therefore, that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him, and keep his commandments to a thousand generations, and repays to their face all those who hate him by destroying them.

He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face. You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment, and the statutes, and the rules that I command you today. And because you listen to these rules, and keep and do them, the Lord your God will keep with you the covenant, and the steadfast love that he swore to your fathers.

He will love you, bless you, and multiply you. He will also bless the fruit of your womb, and the fruit of your ground, your grain, and your wine, and your oil, the increase of your herds, and the young of your flock, and the land that he swore to your fathers to give you.

[5 : 21] You shall be blessed above all peoples. There shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your livestock. And the Lord will take away from you all sickness, and none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which you knew, will he inflict on you.

But he will lay them on all who hate you. And you shall consume all the peoples that the Lord your God will give over to you. Your eyes shall not pity them, neither shall you serve their gods, for that would be a snare to you.

If you say in your heart, These nations are greater than I, how can I dispossess them? You shall not be afraid of them, but you shall remember what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt.

The great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, the wonders, the mighty hand, and the outstretched arm by which the Lord your God brought you out. So will the Lord your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid.

Moreover, the Lord your God will send hornets among them, until those who are left and hide themselves from you are destroyed. You shall not be in dread of them, for the Lord your God is in your midst, a great and awesome God.

[6 : 33] The Lord your God will clear away these nations before you, little by little. You may not make an end of them at once, lest the wild beasts grow too numerous for you. But the Lord your God will give them over to you, and throw them into the great confusion, until they are destroyed.

And he will give their kings into your hand, and you shall make their name perish from under heaven. No one shall be able to stand against you, until you have destroyed them. The carved images of their gods, you shall burn with fire.

You shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them, or take it for yourselves, lest you be ensnared by it, for it is an abomination to the Lord your God. And you shall not bring an abominable thing into your house, and become devoted to destruction like it.

You shall utterly detest and abhor it, for it is devoted to destruction. Amen. This is the reading of God's inspired and inerrant word.

Well, let's have Ephesians chapter 2. Ephesians chapter 2 and verses 1 to 10 open in front of us, so that we can see what God is saying to us through his word.

[7 : 45] Ephesians chapter 2 and verses 1 through 10. As a family, we have recently become members of Tully House Museum in Carlisle.

Now that makes us sound quite a bit more cultured than perhaps you might think. But the deal was that it was £10 for membership for the year, or £4 each time you went.

So, you know, if you go three times, you've saved yourself two quid. It's a bit of a no-brainer, really. And the reason we became members was because every once in a while, they'll have special events on, special exhibitions that were on for the kids.

So it's a relatively cheap day out. The most recent one they had was a funfair theme. You could go into the main gallery there, and there were all sorts of funfair games that you could play, little wind-up toys.

But one of the sections they had were those traditional funfair mirrors. You know the ones? You go to the mirror, you look in it, and, you know, you're really fat. You go to the mirror, you look at it, you're really tall. You go to the mirror, you look in it, and you're really skinny.

[8 : 46] All of those sorts of things. It distorts the picture that you have of yourself and makes you seem that you're something other than you actually are. It distorts the picture you have of yourself.

But here's the thing. How do you know that the picture you see in that distorted mirror is a distortion? How do you know that that isn't really what you look like? Because you know yourself.

You know what you look like. If you're going to see the distortion in the mirror, you have to have an accurate picture of yourself. If you're going to see the distortion in the mirror, you have to know what you look like.

And as we come to Ephesians chapter 2 tonight, as we come to these 10 verses in Ephesians chapter 2, that's what they're calling us to. They're calling us to have an accurate picture of ourselves.

They're reminding us of who we are. They're reminding us of what our life was like before Christ. And what our life is now in Christ.

[9 : 55] Paul here in these 10 verses tells us three things about ourselves. Three things that we need to know if we're going to have an accurate picture of ourselves. Firstly, Paul reminds us that we were dead in sin.

We see that in the first three verses. He reminds us, secondly, that we are alive in Christ. And he reminds us, thirdly, that we are saved by grace.

And it's these three things Paul writes to the Ephesians to remind them of. He writes to us to remind us of so that we'll have an accurate picture of ourselves. So firstly then, we want to think about the fact that we were dead in sin.

Dead in sin. And we see that in verses 1 through 3. Verses 1 through 3 of chapter 2. And as we come to chapter 2 tonight, it's easy to miss the connection that Paul's making between chapter 1 and chapter 2.

We finished last week, chapter 1, with thinking about who Christ is. We saw at the end of chapter 1, Paul reminded the Ephesian Christians where Christ was seated. He was seated at the right hand of God.

[11 : 02] He reminded them of the greatness and the power and the majesty of Christ. He reminded the Ephesian Christians, chapter 1, of who they were in Christ.

And as we come to chapter 2, it's easy to miss the contrast that Paul's making. This is where Christ is, is almost what Paul's saying in chapter 1. And then as we come to chapter 2, he's saying, and this is where we were.

Don't forget that. Don't get ideas above your station. Don't be too proud, too arrogant. This is where Christ is. He's seated at the right hand of God. But you, chapter 2, you were dead in sins and trespasses.

As he comes to chapter 2, he reminds them, first of all, not that they're raised with Christ, not that they reign with Christ. He's going to do that in a few verses time. But what he reminds them of, first of all, is that they were dead in trespass and sin.

He wants to remind the Ephesian Christians of their former way of life. That they were dead in trespasses and sins.

[12 : 14] Notice the phrase that Paul uses there. They were dead. Not injured by trespasses. Not disabled by sins.

But they were dead in trespasses and sins. And as we reach out with the gospel of Jesus Christ today, as we tell people about Jesus Christ today, this is one of the things that we need to keep in mind.

That the people that we're reaching out to are dead in trespasses and sins. That the people that we're speaking to are dead in trespasses and sins.

They aren't sick. They aren't disabled. They aren't infirm. They're dead. They're not able to make themselves come alive. They aren't able to respond to the gospel in and of themselves unless the Holy Spirit awakens them.

Unless the Holy Spirit makes them come alive to the reality of their sin and their need of Christ. Now maybe that sounds a bit discouraging and I can accept that it might.

[13 : 23] But it's actually tremendously liberating. It's tremendously encouraging. Because I can't make anyone come to life on my own. My words and eloquence can't make anyone else come to life.

We can't encourage people to come to life. Only God can. We can't bring people from death to life.

We can't bring people from death to life with evangelism explosion questions. We can't bring people from death to life with the latest gospel presentation. We can't bring people from death to life with the right seals pitch.

Only God can. But we also need to be mindful, don't we? We can't bring people from death to life. We can't bring people from death to life. That before Jesus broke into our lives.

Before the Holy Spirit quickened us and awakened us and made us alive. That Ephesians 2.1 was us. That we were dead in sins and trespasses.

[14 : 29] We might like to think that we were respectable sinners. We might like to think that we never really did anyone any harm. But this was us before Christ.

We were as dead as the serial abuser. We were as dead as the drug user with the needle sticking out of their arm. We were as dead as the lone shark, the money launderer.

We were as dead as the murderer until Christ broke in, until the Holy Spirit awakened us. It's easy to be judgmental and forget what we were before Christ.

But we were dead in sins and trespasses just as the rest of the world is. And we see Paul draw this out in some senses in verse 2 I think.

Verse 1 he says you were dead. Verse 2 he says in which you once walked. Notice the terminology that he's using it's all past tense. You were dead.

[15 : 37] You once walked. He's assuring them that this is what they used to be like. He's assuring them that this is their former way of life. This is how you used to live.

This is how you used to be when you followed the course of this world. When you followed the power of the prince of the air. When you followed the devil. The spirit who is not at work in the sons of disobedience.

That's what life was like. That's what you were. Dead in sin. And what does this life look like?

What are the characteristics? What are the hallmarks of this life? Well Paul tells us verse 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.

So what does this life look like? What are the characteristics of this life? Well it's the passions of the flesh isn't it? It's carrying out what we want to do.

[16 : 46] It's living according to what our eyes could see what our hands could touch. It's living this life of sensuality. And we were the Ephesians were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

Now what does that mean? At our core at our very being we were people who disobeyed God.

People who wanted nothing to do with God and his word. That's what we were like Paul says. That's what the Ephesians were like. They were by nature children of wrath.

I have started looking up dog adverts online to try and convince Suzanne that there is a dog out there somewhere that she might like. It's probably a V and Hope I realise but you know you have to try.

And whatever breed of dog it is generally if you look up these adverts online they'll all say one thing they'll all say whatever you know from the biggest kind of great Dane St. Bernard down to the smallest Chihuahua they'll all say one thing that the mother and father are both lovely natured dogs.

[18 : 06] What are they saying? Well the mother and father have lovely natures. The mother and father have lovely placid calm natures so the offspring will have lovely placid calm natures as well.

But that's what Paul says here about us isn't it? Not that we have lovely placid calm natures but that we are by nature children of wrath. That is what we are like.

It's that thing that we have received from Adam that we've taken since Adam's fall into sin. Our parents were children of wrath so we will be children of wrath.

We are those who are our very core in our very being disobey God. those who by nature want nothing to do with God. We are by nature children of wrath.

Now why do we say all this tonight? I mean it's bringing a bit of a downer isn't it? If we're going to reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ then it's important that we know ourselves truly.

[19 : 14] That we know what we were like before Christ. It's important that we know those who we're trying to reach truly. What they're like by nature.

They're children of wrath. Those who oppose God. Those who are dead in sins and trespasses. We are to put it in Calvin's language totally depraved.

Not that we're as bad as we could be. but that every area of our life has been touched by sin. That every area of our life has been touched by trespasses.

People might be respectable sinners. They might be bank managers. They might be policemen, lawyers, doctors. But fundamentally they're children of wrath.

Just as we were. dead in sin. But then wonderfully secondly tonight we see that we're alive in Christ.

[20 : 18] We are alive in Christ. And we see that in verses 4 through 7. I confess to you that I just absolutely love verse 4 of Ephesians chapter 2.

Paul has outlined to the Ephesians their problem. He said to them you were dead in sins and trespasses. You are by nature children of wrath.

They can't save themselves. They can't make themselves spiritually alive. They can't do anything to help themselves. So what's going to happen? Well Ephesians 2 verse 4. But God the Ephesians couldn't do anything about it.

But God could. But God has. And why did he act according to Paul? Why did God do something but God?

Verse 4 being rich in mercy. Because of the great love that God has for his people. Because of the great love that God has for his children.

[21 : 24] Because of the great love with which he's loved us. It's what we've seen time and time again and even in these first couple of chapters of Ephesians isn't it?

What motivated God to act? Why did God predestine us? Why did God act when we can't act to save ourselves simply because he loves us?

Simply because he desires relationship with us. Sometimes as reformed folk we can be danger of forgetting or relegating the love of God and I think we probably do it for the right reasons.

We're so used to kind of rebutting people who say that God is a God of love and we say well no it's part of God's character God is a God of justice God is a God of holiness God is a God of all of these things that actually sometimes we forget that God is a God of love.

That he acted here in verse 4 because he's rich in mercy. He acted here in verse 4 because of the great love with which he loved us. He predestined us because of his great love.

[22 : 35] And what does he do? Well even when we were dead in trespasses verse 5 he made us alive together with Christ.

See the flow of the argument that Paul is making here? It's brilliant in its simplicity almost. Verse 1 we're dead. Verse 1 we can't help ourselves.

Verse 1 there's nothing we can do but God does something verse 4. God acts verse 4 out of his love and mercy and what does he do? Well he makes us alive with Christ.

Verse 5 we're dead. God acts. We're made alive with Christ. And how does it all work? What basis is it all done on?

Well Paul tells us doesn't he that it's by grace verse 5 by grace you have been saved. It's by the sheer unmerited favour of God.

[23 : 39] It's by the sheer undeserved kindness of a loving God. It's by grace and grace alone that we're saved tonight.

And right here Paul cuts away any sense of spiritual pride that the Ephesians might have been tempted to have. That it wasn't that the Ephesians had somehow hauled themselves up by their spiritual bootstraps.

It wasn't somehow that the Ephesians had made themselves acceptable to God. But it was the grace of God. We cannot boast tonight if we're saved.

When we get to heaven there will be none of us who get there and say you know what I've earned this. There will be none of us who get there and say I deserve this.

It's all of grace. But maybe that isn't you tonight. Maybe tonight you're here and you've no problem believing that you won't have earned your salvation.

[24 : 48] Maybe the problem for you tonight is that you don't think you're worthy of salvation. That you don't think you're worth saving tonight. We'll even hear Paul cuts across that.

Because he assures people that it's by grace they've been saved. If you're dead in sin tonight and trespasses then you're a candidate for salvation. Whatever pit of sin you might be in.

If you know that you're not worthy tonight then you're a candidate for salvation. But it's not only that God has saved us.

It's not only that God has made us alive with Christ. But notice that there are other benefits that Paul lists here. It's by grace you've been saved. Verse 5 verse 6 He has raised us up with him.

He has seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Now obviously tonight we're in Dumfries Free Church which for all of its greatness isn't the same as being in the heavenly places.

[25 : 49] So how does Paul speak this way? How does Paul say to us tonight that we are seated with Christ in the heavenly places? How does he speak about that with such surety?

Well it's something that's been guaranteed. It's something that will happen. Something that is yet to happen but something that will happen. So sure is Paul of the future that awaits Christians that he speaks of it as if it has already happened.

I was trying to think of a sort of modern day example of this. If you like this was the best I could come up with. It's imperfect I realise but it's what it is.

Every year in October the Free Church of Scotland appoints the moderator designate. This is the person, this is the man who's been chosen to be the next moderator of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland.

Now he isn't the moderator in October, he's the moderator designate. He's the moderator in the General Assembly at May but he still bears that title, he still bears that respect.

[26 : 56] The moderator is to be his future but it's spoken of in the here and now. And so too Paul says to us tonight that this is the future that awaits Christians, that we will be seated with Christ in the heavenly places.

But he speaks to us as if it's already happened. they're not things that we possess yet but they'll be things that are ours one day.

So that verse 7, God might show how immeasurable his love and kindness is towards us in Christ. We were dead in sin but we've been made alive in Christ and then thirdly, finally tonight we want to see how we are saved by grace, we're saved by grace.

We see that in verses 8 through 10. Lest we be tempted to boast, lest we be tempted to think that it was us who saved ourselves, lest we be tempted to think that we contributed anything to salvation.

Paul reminds us verse 8 as he's just done in verse 5, for by grace you have been saved through faith. Now some people take this verse and what they'll say is that we're saved by grace, yes, that's kind of God's part of salvation if you like.

[28 : 21] But then that we're also saved by faith, by laying hold of Christ ourselves, that's our part of salvation if you like. And there's kind of varying degrees, you know that it might be 60% God, 40% us, it might be 50-50, there's kind of varying degrees of people out there.

God gives the grace, we give the faith. Therefore we have a central role to play in our salvation. That was essentially what the Arminians taught. But notice what Paul says next, by grace you have been saved through faith, yes.

And this isn't your own doing. It is the gift of God. This faith that we have isn't even our own works, it's the gift of God, it's the grace of God.

Our faith wasn't the result of us being really nice people, our faith wasn't the result of all of our hard work, our faith was a gift of God. There's no room for boasting, there's no room for pride in the Christian life.

Because everything we have we've received from the grace of God. God has the faith that saves us is a gift of God. We haven't decided for God, God has decided for us.

[29 : 45] God has given us that faith, that trust in him as a free gift. But what are we to do with these redeemed lives?

We've been brought from death to life, we've been saved in Christ. Christ. How are we to live then? What are the implications of that? Well, Paul says verse 10, we've been created, recreated in Christ for good works.

But notice again what Paul says, we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

How do we live redeemed lives? Well, we do the good works that God has prepared for us. We live lives that are honouring to God and honouring to Christ.

But even that is all of grace, all of mercy tonight. So we thought tonight then about how we need to know ourselves and know the people that we're reaching out to.

[30 : 52] We reminded ourselves and Paul reminded us here in verses 1 through 3, that natural man is dead in sins and trespasses, unable to make themselves alive, unable to respond to any stimulus.

That is, until verse 4, they're made alive in Christ. Until the Holy Spirit so works in their lives, so opens their eyes to their true condition. And then lest we be tempted to boast, we're reminded that that we are saved by grace, that all is the gift of God.

When we see this tonight and when we see the mercy and grace of God tonight, we can't boast, can we?

really. All of us tonight were dead in sins and trespasses. All of us tonight follow the essential way of living described in verse 3.

And those of us in Christ were made alive by the Holy Spirit. it. See, I think when we grasp this, when we see this truly, when we see who we really are, we realize that the sheer depth of the mercy and grace of God, God's grace found me when I was dead in sin and trespass.

[32 : 41] That God's grace found me when I was a rebel, when I did what I wanted and lived how I pleased. So can God's grace not find the people in the drop-in, what they choose to do with their lives may be slightly different.

Can God's grace not find those in our town, even those respectable sinners?

What we need most of all for our town is the mercy and grace of God to be poured out. Is the Holy Spirit making us and making men and women in our town alive?

Amen.