

Brought From Death to Life

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[0:00] Good morning. We are continuing in our study of Paul's epistles to the Ephesians.

! We're in chapter 2 this morning.! We'll be looking at verses 1-7. Actually, we're not going to get through all of it today. And if you don't have a Bible, there should be one in the pew for your use. If you have one, please open to Ephesians chapter 2, 1-10. Let us pray. O God, our Heavenly Father, we come before you now, Lord, recognizing our deficiency and our inability to understand your Word without the help of your Holy Spirit, our inability to speak and to understand you without those illuminating our minds.

So we pray, Lord, that you will do that, Lord, as your Word comes forth this morning. Give me the words to say to your people. Give us ready ears to hear and to submit to the preaching of your Word.

And through it, Lord, reform our hearts, conform us more to the image of your Son, Jesus Christ. We pray this in the name of our precious Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

[1:28] Amen. Amen. Amen. No one likes to have their faults, their shortcomings, and failure laid bare before them.

In fact, we naturally, I emphasize the word naturally, prefer the company of those who would gloss over it, or we seek the company of those who don't truly see and know us.

And even the wise among us who have come to see the value in it and may even be grateful to receive criticism, even those among us that see that will still admit it's not a pleasant experience. This is why a good sign of true, abiding love is being with people who know our shortcomings and will not ignore them or sweep them under the rug.

Yet they love us, embrace us, care for us, and look for our good and well-being. In our best and honest moments, we value those relationships because such a relationship exemplifies true love.

[2:49] Well, this is the way God loves His children. And God's word to us as revealed in the Holy Scriptures is a light to light our path and a light that uncovers the hidden darkness within us.

It shows the breadth and depth of our misery apart from Christ. God knows the depth of our depravity more than any friend or spouse can know us, even more than we know ourselves.

And He loves to show it to us. Have you ever read God's word? And felt like you've just been assaulted with a two-by-four?

And as we'll see here in Paul's words, He remade us so that we can have eyes to see ourselves as we truly are.

Since in our sins, left to ourselves, we were oblivious to the true depth of our hopeless situation.

That's what Paul is doing here in the first three verses of Ephesians chapter 2.

[4:09] Here is reminding us from whence we came. We shouldn't think that Paul is changing his tune here. Remember chapter 1? He's been glorying in the great salvation that we have.

But we shouldn't think that Paul is changing his tune from declaring to us the goodness of God and saving us from before the foundation of the world. Rather, he's given us grounds to truly appreciate this great salvation that is ours by making us see the unbreachable gulf that was between our former condition and a holy God.

He's just reminded us that the resurrection power in chapter 1, he reminded us that the resurrection power and supremacy of Jesus Christ over all other powers, both spiritual and physical, he reminded us all of God's power is for the sake of the church.

We are one with Paul's original audience in this address since we share in every aspect of this description of verse 1.

You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked. The purpose of this is to compare who we are in Christ, who we are now currently in Christ, saved, redeemed.

[5:36] Remember, we've been blessed with every spiritual blessing. He wants to compare who we are now to who we were, to give us a vivid reminder in the words of the prayer of confession for the daily office that apart from his grace, there is no health in us.

The gospel of salvation must first sober us before it can satisfy us. It is not good news until we first recognize how hopelessly bad our condition is.

And so the description Paul uses, you were dead. That description seems misplaced, you might think.

Maybe too extreme, you might say. One might reason that he should have said we were alienated from God. He's used those analogies in other of his books in other places.

We're alienated from God or corrupted because of our sins. It seems death, to use the word dead, it's so final.

[6:52] But, in truth, there is no better description of life outside of Christ than death. death. So you might ask, does Paul then mean that everyone who is not in Christ is dead?

Yes. Yes, he does. Apart from Christ, there is no health in us. There is no life in us.

Christ is the fountain of life, so therefore, not to be in him is to be separated from the source of life. the world is full of walking dead people.

Spiritually dead. And there is no greater death, I want us to see this, there is no greater death than spiritual death. In our current time, more than any other time in human history, we have succeeded by technology and advancement in science through modern innovation, in making sure that signs of physical death are kept at a distance.

We have all sorts of ways to mask the fact that we are all decayed. But physical death is actually not the true death.

[8:20] The true death is eternal separation from God. Remember Adam in the garden? He died the moment he took up the forbidden fruit and ate it. But he didn't physically die then and there.

But he was separated from God at the moment of his disobedience and sin and rebellion. Physical death became a reality in the world because of spiritual death.

So I say again, the world is full of the walking dead. Doing all they can to stave off physical death, why blind it to the fact that they're more dire condition of the more dire condition of spiritual death.

And you might ask, how did we come to this state of deadness? Well, we must turn then to God's word to find the answer. The same Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 12.

He says that death came into the world and to us through Adam in his sin. This is what we mean by original sin.

[9:33] All of the human race was in Adam. And since we are all his offspring, our nature was corrupted so that we can say, along with David in Psalm 51, I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me.

The reality of that statement is not strange to anyone who is a parent, at least if they are willing to be honest about their kids.

Most parents don't sit down to teach their kids the complexities of selfishness, this is how you can be selfish, the complexities of greed and the complexities of disobedience.

Yet often, the first word a child learns to say is no and mine. so the worldly notion that kids are innocent and pure, it's art of fiction.

The Bible tells us otherwise. We are by nature, by nature, sinners. It is nature before nurture.

[10:48] But it's also nurture nature. Because not only are we condemned because of our nature, we are also condemned in the sin of our own doing.

We can't just lay it at Adam's feet. This only serves, in fact, to aggravate our guilt before a holy God. We were by nature and by practice children of wrath. So Paul continues, he continues in verse 2 and 3 to show the hopelessness of this condition.

He starts to list the unholy alliance that we were enslaved to. The world, the devil, and the flesh. We followed the course of this world, he says.

The world has always had a set of values. Of course, unlike God's law and God's character, these values change with the times.

[11:59] But there's one thing that's constant about the world's values. They are always opposed to God's and direct rebellion of God's.

There is no time, if we understood, there is no time in human history devoid of its own particular sin and its own particular evil or evils. There is nothing new under the sun.

The sin is only recycled, only to grow in its intensity and rebellion, only to grow, as it were, in decay, greater, greater, and increasingly odious to a holy God.

God, this is why, at the moment, you're giving you life in Christ, you, at the moment, you're giving you life in Christ, you became, you come at war with the world.

Because, in fact, before Christ, you were in total conformity to the world, world, but now in Christ, you're no longer, you're now being conformed by the agency of the Holy Spirit to your Lord Jesus Christ.

[13:22] And there you become a war. I think we can all probably identify with this truth if we were in Christ, that war that wages in us, that feeling of alienation to the world around us, or maybe even to people that were close to us, family members, friends.

Not that we were no longer friends or family members, but there is something changes in those relationships, in those dynamics. Something changes in you. Paul goes on and says, talks about the second element to which we were enslaved to.

He's the prince of this world. Who is the prince of this world? Satan. Now, remember in chapter 1 verse 22, Paul is telling us that Christ is king over all things.

Over all things, even Satan, has been placed, all of these things has been placed under his feet.

But he also refers to Satan as the prince of the power of the head.

Paul doesn't mean by that, that Satan rules the skies, God rules the skies, God is powerful and sovereign over all creation. But the power of the head here refers to the spiritual realm.

[14:43] Just look at the world around you. The open display of rebellion against the holy God, the celebration of sin and our sexual ethics, the celebration of death and the legal availability of abortion, the giving over to an increasingly depraved mind, all of it is energized by the devil and his demons.

Our world may deny their existence, but we as Christians must be knowledgeable of their presence and their tactics.

The power behind the institutions of the world, the power behind the institutions, the governments, the markets, the cultures of the world, the power that's turning them increasingly against God is Satan.

He's at work. This is the great enemy we are at war against. as Paul states in Ephesians 6, 12, we wrestle not against flesh and blood, we wrestle against this enemy.

Furthermore, he goes on, he says, we were characterized as sons of disobedience, children of darkness, destined for destruction because we were children of wrath.

[16:20] it's easy to read these first three verses and to project the description onto the world around us or to those whose sins are more prominent and public.

But this is part of the craftiness of the devil. Part of his craftiness to make you feel superior in your own righteousness. I want to tell you, hell will be filled with many respectable people who put confidence in their own flesh.

The kingdom of Satan is full of many respectable people who have put confidence in their own self-righteousness. So, as we read these three verses, the reality is that the problem of our condition as described in them, it's really not a cognitive educational one.

It's not a matter of educating ourselves about what is good and what is right. No amount of human reform, whether personal or corporate, will fix our condition.

God is saying our entire way of life without Christ is a declaration of war against the God of the universe.

[17:52] We are in outward rebellion, opposed to God, alienated from God, dead in our sins, sons of wrath, children of wrath.

God is important for us not to fall into the trap of the elder brother. Remember the story of the partible son? The elder brother thinks his good standing in this father's house is due to his own goodness, rather than the father's love.

Paul kneeled a thing too about this. He was a Pharisee committed to righteous living. he described himself as the Pharisee of the Pharisees.

By human standard, Paul was successful. He was a righteous man. By human standard, Paul was a holy man.

But then, upon his encounter with the righteous one, he saw his sin laid before him. And he saw that only Christ can purge him of his guilt and sin and give him new life.

[19 : 12] The same is true for us. We cannot minimize the seriousness of the condition described in these first three verses.

To do so is to show that we haven't truly realized the seriousness of sin. Especially our sins. And without fully realizing it, we cannot really appreciate the magnitude of God's mercy in love towards us.

Paul goes on in verse 4 to 7. And these verses stand in contrast to the last verses we just saw. notice the preposition and the noun that starts verse 4.

But God. These two words set against the description of our condition in verse 1 to 3. These two words, but God, offers a short summary of the whole scope of salvation.

but God. Deliverance from the rule of the world, from the rule of the devil, and the rule of the flesh could only come by God's divine intervention.

[20 : 43] And this is in keeping with Paul's argument in chapter 1, when he said that we've been chosen from before the foundation of the world. We've been predestined in Christ to sonship.

This is the constant refrain of the New Testament. And in fact, it's the constant refrain of the Old Testament too. There is nothing good in anyone that merits salvation.

Remember Paul's words, we were dead in trespasses and sin. He repeats it here, just to remind us. Paul wants us to know this well.

When I look at the main verb in verse 6, God made us alive together with Christ. This is where Paul is going really.

The previous verses were just prepositional phrases to set up this great act of salvation that God has done. God made us alive together with Christ.

[21 : 48] God. Before we get there, he wants to show us the reason for God's intervention. Paul is quite clear that the reason is entirely in God's character.

Being a God that is rich in mercy. A God rich in mercy. This is God's own self-disclosure of himself. Remember Moses?

In Exodus 33 and 34, Moses asked to see God's glory. God told him. In response to that question, God tells Moses, I will show mercy and when I will show mercy.

This is God's response to Moses asking to see God's glory. That doesn't seem like an answer at first glance to mercy's question, does it?

God's gracious answer to Moses, to Moses' question is that no one can see him face to face and live. He is far too glorious for human eyes.

[22 : 56] Even the seraphim that are before him cover their face with their wings as they cry, holy, holy, holy. glory. glory. But God said to Moses, I will show you an aspect of my glory.

I will put you in the cleft of a rock and cover you up so that you will not be consumed by my holiness and my glory as I pass by.

And as I pass by, I will reveal to you my name. the Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

This is God's self-disclosure of himself. And Paul says, in paraphrasing this, Paul says to us, because of the great love with which he loved us, there you have it.

it is because of his love that he was merciful to us. This is the cause, the root cause of our salvation. Because he loved us in the beloved Jesus Christ, we are saved.

[24 : 16] This fact, this reality is vitally important to our understanding of salvation. And I think Paul is insistent that we get it.

because he again reminds us, this love was shown to us, to you and me, even when we were dead in our trespasses.

Almost as an aside, but an important aside. He says, by grace, you've been saved. And what is God's main action here?

Again, it's that he made us, he made us alive. We who were spiritually dead, he called us out by his word of life, the gospel.

He made us alive by the same power with which Christ was raised from the dead. By the power and agency of the Holy Spirit, we who were dead are given you life.

[25 : 19] So now, so that we can now see, we can hear, and we can respond to the good news of the gospel in faith. But not only are we made alive, but we are raised up with him.

But not only are we raised up with him, we are seated with him in the heavenly places. This is magnificent news.

Made alive, raised, seated, all past tense. Note that. Paul is showing us that it is already done and accomplished.

Although Christ is the preeminent one, he's the exalted and victorious one, not us. Read chapter 1 verse 19 to the end of that chapter.

He's the one who has all things placed under his feet. But the reminder here is that since we are united with him, by grace, we enjoy the spoils of his victory.

[26 : 38] We have been given victory over the world. We have been given victory over the devil. We have been given victory over even our flesh.

having been made new creatures, given new life, recreated in Christ as it were. You might wonder what's the reason for all of it.

Paul tells us that it's so that in the coming ages, the coming age here refers to our future with God, so that for eternity, for all eternity, God's immeasurable richness of his grace and kindness might be displayed, that we may see him for eternity and worship this gracious and merciful God.

God, isn't it wonderful to know, dear saints, that not only have you been given life, but it is life in Christ, that you and I are united with the risen, ascended, and enthroned Christ.

And if united with him, then you share in his triumph. Remember Moses? Moses in the cleft of the rock in Exodus 33?

[28 : 08] Well, brothers and sisters, that rock is Jesus. It is the same rock we are hidden in. As Paul says in Colossians 3, for you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. It gets better. We await the future glory when our salvation will be complete, and we will be arraigned in a new glorious incorruptible body.

Then we shall behold our God in his glory, as John said. We will see our God as he is. There will be no fear of being consumed by his holiness then, for we will be arraigned in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer.

Until then, we contend against this flesh, and we are at war against the forces of darkness. If you are here this morning, and you have entrusted your life to Jesus, you've been made alive in him, I encourage you to hold on, hold fast to Jesus.

[29 : 33] Remember Paul's word, you're already raised and seated with God in the heavenly places. That is your place. That is where you are in Christ. Therefore, look onward to that certain future that's already secured for you and I.

Don't look back at the world. Don't look back at the world. There is only death and decay on offer there.

And if you're here this morning, you don't have that freedom in Christ, that new life of which we're talking about, you recognize that you're still in bondage to the flesh, to the devil, and to the world. You're in conformity with it. It doesn't matter if you've just started attending church today or just a few months, or you've been a churchman or churchwoman all your life.

God's call for you, God's call for you is to look outside yourself to Jesus. It is only by coming to an end of yourself, acknowledging your inability, and then relying on the merit of Jesus Christ alone that you can be saved.

[30 : 57] Come. Christ beckons you. He's secured your salvation. Come. There will be people at the end of worship today.

You'll be here to my right. God's prayer. We will be happy to pray for you if you want. You'll be happy to answer your questions.

Come to Jesus. Christ invites you even today. Come. Hide yourself in him. Let us pray.

We'll continue next week in verse 8 to 10. let us pray. Lord, we thank you for this great salvation. But we recognize the magnitude of it because we recognize the magnitude of our separation and sin, of alienation from you.

thank you.

[32 : 06] Thank you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for securing our redemption, for delivering us from the bondage to the world, the devil, and to our flesh, for giving us life, faith, and faith to respond to your call.

We rest in this great work of salvation. It is our only hope. It is our only security. Help us, Lord, to continually know this.

Draw us continually to yourself. Help us, Lord, to proclaim this good news, this great salvation to the world around us. Humble us, O God, to recognize that we are, we were, like the world around us, dead in our trespasses.

And give us the boldness to proclaim the news of the salvation, that Christ, who has done this great miracle in us, is still at work by his Holy Spirit to draw men and women, boys and girls, to himself.

Let us be a people that freely, willingly, boldly, proclaim this good news. Let us be a people that live according to this great news and good news of salvation.

[33 : 32] We pray all of this in the mighty name of our Savior and Redeemer Jesus Christ. Amen.
Thank you.