

From Death to Life

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[0 : 00] Well, I noticed when I walked in the auditorium this morning that we have a first-time guest who's not going to be a guest, but who couldn't raise her hand this morning.

! It seems like the stay-home-for-six-weeks is out of the window now, and so Maggie, it's so good to see you breaking that, I don't know what you call that, don't know where it came from, but, Shelley says bondage, okay.

Yeah, it was so good to see Maggie and the baby and Bernat. I've never had a child, but what I know about childbearing is, it's not easy and it's unpredictable.

Actually, Maggie mentioned that the night that she delivered, there were two babies that didn't make it. Two mothers who came in hospital expecting to carry home a child and didn't, and so we're reminded of the mercy and grace of God that we take for granted so, so much.

And so we are so happy that Maggie is well and Bernice is well and Bernat is chauffeuring them. So please turn your Bible for a scripture this morning, Ephesians chapter 2.

[1 : 43] Attention is going to be directed to verses 1 through 10. If you're using one of the church Bibles, it's on page 976. For those of you who have come to Christ, you know him as your Savior and Lord.

If you are asked to, in a very short testimony, describe your life before you were saved, how you came to know Christ, and then your life after Christ, I wonder what you would share.

Now I imagine that if we were to go around the room, if we had time, and every person who has put his or her trust in Christ were to share a short testimony, I imagine that our testimonies would differ in so, so many ways.

But we've come to a passage of scripture this morning that will help us to see that despite those differences in our journeys in coming to Christ, there is a universality about all of our testimonies that this particular passage of scripture brings out.

There are aspects of our coming to Christ, and our life before Christ, and our life after Christ.

[3 : 27] It's just common to all of us. And we tend to forget it. And this morning we come to be reminded of it in this passage.

So please follow along as I read Ephesians 2, verses 1 through 10.

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.

By grace you have been saved. And this is not your own doing.

[5 : 15] It is the gift of God, not 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.

Let's pray together. Father, we bow our hearts this morning. Father, we do so, Lord, to ask that you would speak to us collectively and individually from your word.

Father, I ask that you would grant me grace to be faithful to your word, that I might serve these whom I love and whom you love far more.

Lord, would you help us all to hear the truth wherever we are this morning? Lord, there would be some who would hear these words this morning who don't know you.

Lord, use them to speak to their hearts. Lord, for those of us who do know you, I pray that you would open our eyes for the first time or even more to see the amazing grace that you displayed

when you brought us to yourself.

[6 : 51] So, Lord, will you help us in this moment, I pray. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen. But as we consider these verses this morning, the Apostle Paul tells us, without exception, that all believers were formerly dead in sin, but were made alive by God for the glory of God.

And that's the truth I want us to see.

that is the shared testimony of all those who belong to God. And I believe that this truth can be subdivided under three heads.

And the first is before God saved us. The second is how God saved us. And the third is why God saved us.

Let's consider the first one, before God saved us. In verses one to three, Paul describes the life of every believer before God saved him or her.

[8 : 26] But before we consider what Paul says in these three verses, I think it's important for us to connect back to what we have been covering over the past few weeks.

You'd notice last week, or the week before, sorry, in verse 13, we read, Paul is writing to the church at Corinth, and he's telling them that when they heard the gospel, they believed and they were sealed with the Holy Spirit.

And then earlier in verses three to six, which we considered in the second sermon in this series, Paul revealed that God's saving work began before the foundation of the world.

That before the foundation of the world, God chose, he determined those whom he would save. He determined that they would be holy and blameless in his sight.

And he predestined that they would be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, and to the praise of his glorious grace. He did all that before the foundation of the world.

[9 : 54] And the only way that we know that is because, by divine revelation, God gave it to Paul, Paul gave it to us. We have no way of knowing what God did before the foundation of the world.

What we know is this part that Paul addresses in verse 13. When you heard the gospel, you believed. But we didn't know the part before the foundation of the world.

But what we're reading in verses one through 10 of chapter two, we also didn't know. Apart from divine revelation, we did not know our spiritual state before we came to Christ.

We didn't know. And so it is by divine revelation that the apostle Paul is revealing our spiritual state before God actually saved us and brought about what he determined to do before the foundation of the world.

So let's look again at what he says in verses one to three. He writes, Look at the words that Paul uses to describe our spiritual state before salvation.

[11 : 41] Dead and trespasses and sins. Following the course of this world. Following the prince of the power of the air, who's Satan himself.

We were disobedient. We lived in the passions of our flesh. We carried out whatever our bodies and minds desired to do. We were by nature, by our very nature, children of God's wrath.

And what Paul says in the concluding phrase in verse three is that we were like the rest of mankind. That, brothers and sisters, was our spiritual state before we came to Christ.

That is our shared testimony. Despite our varied journeys in coming to Christ, verses one to three describe our spiritual state that we all shared in common.

If you're hearing this sermon this morning as an unbeliever, that's your current spiritual state.

[13 : 00] That is the life that you now live, and that is more true about you than anything else that you might choose to identify yourself with.

You are dead to God and the things of God. Indeed, by your very nature, you are under the wrath of God.

You are under the power of Satan, under his influence. Though you think that you're making decisions and you're doing all sorts of things, no, this is your spiritual state.

You are carrying out the desires of your body and your mind. You are living in hostility to God. You are living under the power and the enslavement of sin and Satan.

Now, I suspect that there would be some who are thinking, I really wasn't that bad before I came to Christ. I was a good moral person.

[14 : 08] I led a good moral life. I tried to do the right thing. And I imagine that for some of us, that is probably true, the way we were raised. It's hard to think that we are being captured in these

verses.

But we are. Paul uses two words in these verses that capture every single one of us.

The first word he uses is the word trespasses. It speaks about an active violation of God's revealed will, his law, his word.

God commands us that we're not to have any other gods before him, but we've all had idols.

Whether it's money or materialism, whether it is accomplishments or people in our lives or jobs or whatever it is, the list goes on.

We have all had other gods before the Lord. God commands us not to commit sexual immorality and not to lie and not to steal.

[15:23] But we have committed sexual immorality. We have lied. We have stealed. We have stolen. We've broken his laws as we pleased. And I think if I were to ask, before you came to Christ, did you break any of God's laws?

I think we would all have to agree in the affirmative because we all did. And you might be thinking or saying, well, I did try to keep them.

I didn't willfully break them. And Paul captures us who would say that in the second word, sins.

Because sins, the word that Paul uses for sins is different from the word for trespasses.

Trespasses, again, is this willful disobedience to what God has revealed.

Sins is even when we try to do it, but we fall short. We can't measure up to what God has called us to do. So even when the Lord calls us to love him with our whole heart and mind and soul and strength, and we try to do that, every single one of us have fallen short.

[16:40] Whatever good we try to do before coming to Christ, we fell short.

And so this condition of being dead, spiritually dead, is relevant and true for all of us.

We were all dead in trespasses. And sins. That was our spiritual state.

And for some, that is still your spiritual state. But perhaps the most convincing language of our lost and sinful and helpless and hopeless condition is seen in the third verse where Paul says that we all, all people without exception were by nature children of wrath.

He's not talking about the sins that we committed or the things we didn't do that we ought to have done. This description, the children of wrath, by nature, gets to the heart of our fundamental problem.

[18:02] This is our problem. This is our problem. Not the things that we do or don't do. Our problem is this general state that is true of all of Adam's fallen race.

It is the root reason that we commit the sins that we commit. we were born with a sinful nature and it is that nature that has made us to be under the wrath of God.

And God's wrath is not some irrational anger that is just blurted out on people. But God's wrath is instead his holy opposition to sin.

the only appropriate response that a holy God can have to sin to any degree to the smallest sin.

And the reason the smallest sin stirs up the wrath of God is because he's a perfectly holy God.

Unlike you and me where we could accept things to certain degrees he can accept no degree of sin. And by our very nature as a part of Adam's fallen race we are objects of the wrath of God.

[19:22] We are under the wrath of God. And Paul says that was our condition before we came to Christ. We had no interest to please God.

We had no desire to please God. And the reason is we had no ability to please God. God. We had no interest We had no interest to please God. We had no interest to please God.

And so our spiritual state before we came to Christ can be described as spiritually helpless and spiritually hopeless. That was the condition that we were in.

So, woeful condition to be in. And so the legitimate question to ask is then how did we get saved? If that was our condition hopeless and helpless hostile towards God and the issue is not even so much that we were hostile towards God and we were dead in our trespasses and sins.

The bigger issue is that God was hostile towards us. we were in mankind as a part of those who were under his wrath.

[20:47] That was our condition. But Paul tells us in verses 4 to 6 how God saved us. And this is my second point.

Look at what he says in verses 4 to 6. verse 5 to 6. But God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in trespasses made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

For all those who have come to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord Paul tells us in verses 4 to 6 how it happened. That's how it happened.

When we think of typical testimonies if we follow typical testimonies it would read something like and then one day I just got tired of the life I was living and I thought I had enough of sin and I decided I was going to change my life and I was going no it doesn't say that.

[22 : 01] It says but God. It begins with those two words but God. God who was rich in mercy and loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and sins he made us alive in other words he brought us from spiritual death that we were in to spiritual life and this is what Jesus told Nicodemus in John chapter 3 this is what Jesus told Nicodemus needed to happen for a person to be able to enter into the kingdom of God he needed to be born again and that's what's being described in these three verses to be brought from spiritual death to be brought to spiritual life we also refer to it as regeneration salvation it is what God does and it is only what God can do and must do because in our spiritual state we were spiritually helpless and we were hopeless as it pertained to salvation and so this is why

Paul states for us the obvious at the end of verse 5 where he says by grace you have been saved we didn't save ourselves it is by the undeserved mercy and kindness that God gave to helpless and hopeless and undeserving sinners like you and me who have come to Christ notice also in verse 5 that Paul indicates that we were made alive with Christ pointing to his resurrection and pointing to our union with him we are united with him in his resurrection and the new life that we enjoy now is eternal life that comes to us in our salvation and we're told that God seats us in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus and notice this links back to what we saw in verse 3 of chapter 1 where Paul begins and he opens up and he says blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places and so I pray brothers and sisters that we don't miss this morning that the love that God displayed in the moment that he saved us the mercy that came to us when God saved us in our miserable state when he gave us new birth is the outworking of what he determined that he would do before the foundation of the world which he refers to in verse 5 that we looked at in the second sermon where it says in love he predestined us to be sons through Jesus Christ he is bringing to pass what he determined to do before the foundation of the world and he did it despite our hopelessness and helplessness that we found ourselves in because of our sinful condition it's important that we connect what is what Paul is saying to us in verses 1 through 10 to what he's already said in the previous chapter and verses notice the language that Paul uses in verses 5 and 6 to describe our salvation it's the language of resurrection dead and trespasses and sins and we were made alive and this is the nature of God's saving work it is a spiritual resurrection it's not a decision we made to follow Jesus or change our life or to stop doing this or to start doing that no it's a spiritual resurrection that God does because God must do because we could not do and verses 4 to 6 are part of our universal testimony whom God has saved now if us appreciate how God saved us we must connect verses 4 through 6 to verse 13 of chapter 1 and we've touched on it a little bit but I want us to look at it again in verse 13 we're told that when we heard the gospel we believed in Christ and were sealed by the

Holy Spirit notice that there's none of that language here in chapter 2 all that is in chapter 2 is what we were and what God did and so when we think of these two expressions of salvation the first one when we heard the gospel we believed and we look at what is being told was our condition prior to coming to Christ the natural question is well which one of those comes first in time is it our believing the gospel when we heard it that caused God to make us alive and raise us to spiritual life from death is it that or is it that God made us alive and because he made us alive we were able to believe the gospel

I think the point that Paul is making clearly has to be the latter it has to be that this was our condition he's already told them yeah you heard the gospel and you believe but he's helping them to see that this was your condition before you heard the gospel and logically it would stand to reason that God had to do something in order for those who believe to believe because if it's possible to believe when we hear the gospel while we are in this spiritual state before God has done nothing for us it would mean that dead really is not dead it would mean maybe we were a little sick we were a little handicapped spiritually but we could hobble along and we could bring

ourselves to God no we were dead but you know as graphic as this language is to help us to see our lost condition talking about death talking about resurrection talking about enslavement sin talking about just following the passions of our bodies and our hearts this language is so all encompassing to help us to see that we were just totally incapable of doing anything to bring ourselves to God yet there are those despite this graphic language who would say that that really is not absolute and total and before

[30 : 22] God does anything you could hear the gospel and you can believe the gospel brothers and sisters that flies in the face of scripture that flies in the face of words these words mean something other than totally incapable and totally unable of doing anything to come towards God unless God does the first step of bringing us from that condition of death to life to be able to believe the gospel then these words are misleading but they are not misleading these words are true these words help us to see how hopeless and how lost sinners we were and if you don't know Jesus Christ this morning these words are helping you to see your hopeless condition your helpless condition and if you don't see it is only because your eyes are blinded my prayer for you is that they are open the prayer for you is that you would see your true condition and that you would run to the only one who offers hope and life and that is the

Lord Jesus Christ he promises to receive all who come to him and he abundantly pardons each one of them but that is the witness of scripture our condition was helpless and hopeless and so when we consider the sequence of how things happen for us even when we were unaware the only reason that we responded to the gospel was because God had worked in our hearts and given us life nothing dramatic you know the testimony about Lydia is that as she was listening to Paul God opened her heart brothers and sisters this is an essential and important point for us to see in terms of the sequence of how we have come to Christ you did not believe the gospel before God gave you spiritual life and spiritual birth from the condition of death that you were in and that's the only reason you believe and that's how you were able to believe

God had to take that first step in raising you from death to life and then you believe the gospel but what that unbiblical view does those who hold to it is it undermines the reason the ultimate reason that God has saved us those who hold the view that people first make a step towards God and they believe what they hear and then God saves them they undercut the reason that God saves and why does he say and this brings me to my third and final point and part of our universal testimony which is why God saved us why did he save us

Paul tells us in verses 6 to 10 and he gives us two reasons the first and foremost reason is in verse 7 notice what he says so that here's why God comes to helpless hopeless undeserving sinners and gives them mercy and grace and brings them from death to life brings them to himself and saves them enables them to believe the gospel here's why he does it so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus that's why God saves undeserving and rebellious sinners like you and me because from now and throughout all eternity that's what those words mean in the coming ages for all eternity

God wants to demonstrate his immeasurable grace and his immeasurable kindness towards us in Jesus Christ and how is his immeasurable grace and kindness towards us in Christ seen just as it is seen in the fact that he does not demonstrate this immeasurable grace and kindness to all some will receive justice some will receive the true punishment and payment that their sins deserve and so in eternity to come there are two things on display there's the justice of God on display and there's the mercy and the kindness of God on display and the mercy and kindness of God on display is on display in this way by saying these ones who have received mercy and grace that's what they deserve to receive they deserve to receive the just punishment for their sins and for all eternity there is this display of the amazing grace of God grace that has come to sinners who deserve something completely opposite to what they have received

[36 : 33] I notice again that verse seven this reason that God has saved us so that he might show forth for eternity his amazing grace mercy it goes back to verse four in chapter one which we looked at that God shows even before the foundation of the world he shows us in him that we should be holy and blameless before him even though like the rest of mankind we deserved eternal punishment but God shows before the foundation of the world that we would be holy and blameless in his sight and this is why there's such an emphasis in this passage on the grace of

God look again in verses eight and nine Paul says that he repeats what he said earlier for by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing it is the gift of God imagine that

you're saying it is by grace you have been saved and then he says the obvious he said it is not your own doing it is the gift of God and what is his reason for saying that and what is God's reason for doing this so that no one may boast any degree of boasting undermines and undercuts this reason that God saved us so that he might in the coming ages for all eternity show the immeasurable! riches of his grace and kindness towards us in Jesus Christ when you think about it when you think of this description of sinners in verses 1 through 3 if sinners are able if some sinners are able in that condition compared to other sinners they're able without God doing anything they're able to believe the gospel they're able to repent and have faith when these other people don't do it then there's reason for them to boast but when you understand that you were hopeless and helpless like the rest of mankind and because God in his mercy before the foundation of the world chose to demonstrate his mercy and grace through you by electing you that you would be on display for all eternity as one who doesn't deserve grace didn't deserve grace but received grace rather than receiving the just punishment that you deserve there's no room to boast in your heart there's no room to boast in your heart the only thing that you desire to do when you really understand that is to worship and thank the

Lord it brings humility not pride pride will cause us to if we believe that we did something then God did something that's where our pride will rile up but when we realized I was hopeless and helpless and God had mercy on me mercy that he determined to have before I was even born brothers and sisters that brings humility and if it doesn't it should God alone will receive all the glory throughout all eternity for all those whom he saves the second reason is in verse 10 it says for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them this is why God saved us

God saved us so that we will no longer walk in sins and trespasses notice notice the contrast between what we were we were the walking dead spiritually dead but alive physically in our sins and Paul says God has saved us he has created us we are his workmanship and here again this goes at the heart of the gracious work of God because Paul is now talking about a creation something that God did you don't create yourself this new life that we have is something that God brings about unilaterally he brings it about solely without any hint or taint of our involvement in it in a meritorious way but he did this so that we will no longer walk in the sins that we used to walk in but he says so that we might walk in these good works that he has prepared beforehand that we should walk in no more in the evil enslaving lifestyle that we all had but now it's in these good works that he has before ordained and this term good works it refers to the general godly conduct the life that is becoming of one who belongs to Christ it is the lifestyle that gives evidence that particular people belong to God

[43 : 00] Paul says God beforehand determined that this is the way that these whom I save will live notice that this is not an idea this is not just God suggesting to us to live a particular way no these are this is tangible God prepared them beforehand that we should walk in them and the idea is very similar the language is very similar to the predestination that God did that we looked at earlier in in chapter one God has predestined he has predetermined that those whom he says will walk differently and live differently and this too is by the grace of God the enabling grace of God yes we we know what God has revealed in his word we're going to be looking at that when we get into chapter 4 in particular we'll see these things that God has called us to do he has ordained that we should live this way but we don't live that way on our own strength we live that way by the same grace of

God that has come to us and friends those of us who belong to God will have that grace to live in this new way this new life in these good works no longer the evil works of darkness but now the good works of the light that God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them and so brothers and sisters this is our shared testimony this is our testimony before we came to Christ this is our testimony of how we came to Christ and this is our testimony of why we came to Christ and this is all the Lord's doing it's all the Lord's doing we who were formerly enslaved are set free to live for the one who saved us if God's aim in salvation is that no one should boast then his aim must also be that those who receive his grace will bow in humility and rather than boast and rather than be in pride they would bow their hearts and humble themselves and I pray that's all about response and I pray that if you are hearing this sermon this morning and you've not trusted in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord my prayer for you is that you like the rest of us will come to know this merciful God and as we close this morning I want to in particular lift you up in prayer so let's pray

Father thank you for the amazing display of grace and mercy that you have given to sinners who deserve judgment and wrath thank you Lord that when you were without strength and helpless you saved us you came to us and raised us from spiritual death to spiritual life and Lord I pray this morning that you would show the same mercy that you've shown to us to any and all who do not know the Savior this morning present or watching online
God have mercy open blind eyes bring from spiritual death to spiritual life and then Lord we pray that they will walk in newness of life they will walk in the good works that you have ordained that they should walk in we pray and ask all these things in Jesus name amen let's stand for our closing song