

# Ephesians 2:1-10

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Preacher: David Moser

[ 0 : 00 ] So that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.! For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of your own doing, it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

But we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before him, that we should walk in them. Can you pray with me?

Lord, we will shout out, we will cry out, hallelujah, praise God, because you have come into our lives.

You have turned death to life. Yeah. You have raised this up with your Son, Jesus Christ, and seated us with him. We praise you, Father.

Lord, in these next moments, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock. Now we do.

[ 1 : 20 ] Amen. Amen. What looks alive, but isn't? Zombies.

Wax statues of celebrities. That spider you just stepped on with its legs still drifting. And you.

And you're the one. Me. If you're a Christian, you once looked alive, but you really weren't.

If you're not a Christian, if you haven't been born again, then this passage is telling you that you might go to work, you might have relationships, might have a bank account, but you're not truly alive.

In a sense, it's a wax statue showing up at work. There's life missing from those relationships. And that bank account, well, it's in probate court because you're, in that sense, in the morgue.

[ 2 : 35 ] Now, before we explain that, let's kind of revisit how we got to this point. Chapter 1, Paul started this letter with worship. After all, that's what we're for.

That's where our hearts find peace. It's where we have our maximum joy. And it's where God is most glorified in us. We saw how Paul wants us to worship with our lives.

To lead lives that look like faith. And that's what this whole book is about. Worshiping God with our lives. Lives that look like faith. In the second half of chapter 1, last week, Paul wanted to set us up for success in the Christian life.

And so he prayed for us that we would see three truths that liberate us and empower us to obey God. The hope of God's calling.

The riches of God's inheritance. And the surpassing greatness of God's power. Now, that last truth, the surpassing greatness of God's power directed towards us.

[ 3 : 47 ] What power is that? He actually explained. It's the same power that chapter 1, verse 19 says, He worked in Christ when he, one, raised him from the dead, and two, seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one that comes.

That power, Paul said, God is working in us. And today, Paul is telling that exact same story, the story about that power, but there's a change in the cast of characters.

Christ was dead, and God raised him from the dead and seated him in heaven. But today, we're going to see how we were dead, and God raised us from the dead, and seats us with Christ.

What God has accomplished in Christ, he is also accomplishing in us. In this passage, we're going to see how God works his death-defeating power, the death he defeated in Jesus, just the same way in us.

There are four movements, then, in this text. First, we were dead. Second, we are risen. Third, we are seated with Christ in heaven.

[ 5 : 20 ] And fourth, we're going to respond. So first, like Jesus, you and I were dead. Verse one, 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.

What's dead but not dead? How can Paul say that we were dead, and at the same time say we were walking in sin, that we followed the course of this world?

As they say, dead men tell no tales. Dead men certainly don't walk. Dead men certainly don't follow. That sounds suspiciously alive.

What's more, these walking and following, they're not just about movement. That's why the way Paul's using them here, walking in sin, following the course of this world, that indicates a lifestyle, a life style.

How did we walk? How did we follow? How did we have a lifestyle if we were dead? What's dead but not dead? Then.

[ 6 : 50 ] Kind of depends, I guess. For instance, do you know your next door neighbor? Well, maybe you do, maybe you don't. It depends on what I mean when I say no.

If I know you, I mean, do you know that person's name? Do you know what kind of car they drive? Then sure, most of us know our next door neighbors. But if I ask you, do you know your neighbor? And by that I mean, do you know what they're passionate about? Do you know what their challenges and obstacles are? Do you know what they're hoping for?

Then probably a lot fewer of us know our next door. So what's dead but not dead? Well, just like the question, do you know your neighbor? It depends on what Paul means by dead.

So on the outside, we're going to the gym, going dancing, going hang gliding. Very much alive. But on the inside, dead. Like that spider we just stepped on.

[ 7 : 49 ] It's truly dead inside, but its legs are twitching on the outside. There's signs that kind of look like life. We gave signs of life. We went to work. We had relationships. Went shopping.

We had a lifestyle. But real, vibrant, spiritual life, we didn't have that. That's the death Paul's talking about. In chapter 4, he explains what this life apart from Christ, this life with no spiritual life, looks like.

Ephesians 4, 17. Now I say and testify in the Lord that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do. In the futility of their minds, they are darkened in their understanding.

And here's the killer part. Alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to centrality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

Did you catch that in the middle there? They're separated from the life of God. And that's the death that Paul is most concerned with here. Apart from God, we stumble about, spiritually aimless, substituting self for the true riches of being seated with Christ.

[ 9 : 06 ] We say, follow your passions, not follow Jesus. We don't have the source of vitality, so we look to manufacture it elsewhere.

And like anyone who's bought a handbag at a street corner, we know a knockoff when we see one. Is it any wonder that that the phrases going through the motions, getting by, and bored are so common in our cultural lexicon?

See, if the things of this world really satisfied, if they really gave life, that would have worked by now. After thousands of years, of human civilization, they happen.

So what are the wages of sin? Guilt? Yes. Shame? Sure. Punishment? Yes. But at the foundation, most of all, the wages of sin is death.

And it's kind of two kinds of death that he's alluding to here. First, there's that present spiritual death that we've just been talking about that comes from separating ourselves from the God of life.

[ 10 : 23 ] And the second death, the judgment on the last day. It's talking about both of these, the present-day spiritual desert and the end times judgment here.

On the one hand, we're children of wrath in verse 3. That's the guilt of sin. We're also dead men walking in step with a world full of dead men, a planet of zombies without spiritual life.

You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, verse 2, following the course of this world. By default, we value what our culture values.

We find attractive and admire what this world finds beautiful. You invest your life in what the world kind of expects from you.

Even if you don't like Hollywood, blockbusters, you probably like indie films. Even if you don't like football, you probably like the competition you see on reality TV or in the theater of politics or in video games.

[ 11 : 43 ] You might not like the movie stars in the mansion, but you probably have a good idea of how you build your own. It's not the particular instances, whether you like blockbusters or indie films, whether you like that mansion or that one.

Our culture has set the categories that we value to begin with. And we pursue them. But lost in the entertainment, pleasure, passions industry, lost in the competition industry in all of its various forms, lost in the home security land 401k possessions category is God.

We pursue all these other things, but we don't pursue Him. And there isn't life to be found in any of these other things. There's only life to be found in Him. And we're not victims here.

Sure, culture tells us lies. But look at how Paul describes it. We followed the course of this world.

We are willing participants. Heck, we contribute to culture.

Because what is culture except congregation of the nation? so too, we were following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.

[ 13 : 20 ] Paul, are you saying I'm demon-possessed? No. There are two ways to go off the rails, I think, when we talk about the devil. First, we can give him too little attention.

And second, we can give him too much. Both are dangerous. First, we can give the devil too little attention and it's always dangerous to ignore someone who's trying to kill you. but also, we can give the devil too much attention.

Sometimes we think he's more powerful than he actually is. What's the title given him here? The prince of the power of the air. Compare that with the power at work in you.

Back in chapter 1, verse 20, we see that, well, Satan's power is the power of the air, God's power is situated a little higher in heaven. And in verse 21, we see that the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us is far above all rule and all authority and power and dominion.

Our enemy is strong, but he's not in God's lead. The devil didn't make us do it. He's a piper in what he is. Giving us tantalizing glimpses of pleasure and security and all the things we desire that should be found in God somewhere else.

[ 14 : 45 ] He marches as the drum major in the parade as we all march steadily away from God. He's a wonderful enabler, but he can't make us do anything.

That's why we're guilty. That's why we are by nature children of wrath. And to that we object. I'm pretty good. Why am I by nature a child of wrath?

See, the answer to that question isn't found in how good you and I are. The question is whose side you're on. That's really what this passage is about.

In our former life, verse 2, we were following the course of this world. Verse 3, living in the passions of our flesh. And again in verse 3, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind. Everything is focused on us and on this world, not on God.

That's our former life. What's missing from the picture? God. And it's Jesus who said, whoever is not with me is against me. If you're living for yourself, you aren't on neutral terms with God.

[ 15 : 59 ] You're against God. In contrast to that, here's what Jesus tells us to do with our minds. In Matthew 22, scribes and the Pharisees asked him, Teacher, what is the great commandment in the law?

And he said to them, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment.

The way to not being an object of wrath. is by devotion to Christ, not by devotion to some sort of abstract notion of goodness.

One writer put it this way, Hell will be filled with people who are avidly committed to good values. and that's because heaven will be filled only with people who are avidly committed to Christ.

We were dead because we followed a course apart from the one who says, I am the resurrection and the life. we followed our own desires and passions in verse 3. We also followed the course of this world and the prince who leads the parade marching away from God.

[ 17 : 24 ] We sought life where there is no life but, verse 4, God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses.

I'll pause there. dead men don't tell tales, right? They certainly don't operate a defibrillator. We need someone else to do that.

God. This is the great pivot point in life. You were dead but God, verse 5, made us alive together with Christ.

This is how you know that you're looking for life in the right spot. Here's a test. Where is it that you say, I'm so alive right now? Is it when you get in a drug rush?

Is it when you just had an intense romantic experience? Is it because you just got a new toy? Or do you say, I'm so alive right now when you pray?

[ 18 : 39 ] Are you so alive right now when you sing God's praises? Are you so alive right now when you hear from him in his word? It's not just church stuff, though. I don't want to limit it to that.

Because this, again, is a book about lives that look like faith. Do you feel so alive when you sacrifice for others?

Do you feel so alive when you give away earthly things for kingdom gain? Do you feel so alive when you choose Jesus over your sin? That's what it's like to be made alive together with Christ.

Verse 6, God 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 Jesus Christ.

What does it mean that we're raised up with Jesus and seated with Jesus in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that kindness will be shown to us in Christ Jesus?

[ 19 : 51 ] This again is the union language that Paul used so much in chapter 1. It means that Jesus has drawn near to us and associated himself and his life with us so closely that we share life and lot with him.

It means that what is true of him is also true for us. If Jesus lives, so do we. If he is rich, so are we. If he is kind, he shows it to us. Just like the prodigal son we read about today.

It was a gift and everything the father had was his. We were dead, but God raised us from the dead with Jesus.

Our sin is gone and so is the judgment that goes with us, with it. our search for life everywhere it isn't, God is replaced with Jesus.

[ 21 : 05 ] And Jesus, the creator of the whole world, is the very source of life. For by grace you have been saved through faith, verse 8.

And this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one made most. It's all a gift.

We were dead, remember? Dead men can't even accept help, they can't even ask for it. God came in and did all this on his own. It's not even our faith that saves us, as Matt reminded us earlier.

Look carefully at how Paul words it, by grace you have been saved. Through faith. Faith is the conduit, the pipe through which God's grace flows to set dead hearts beat.

Why does God give us this gift? Interestingly enough it says, so that no one may boast, so that God gets the glory. You're saved from death, both your present spiritual deadness and the wrath to come, so that God gets the glory.

[ 22 : 20 ] You are, you exist for his glory. You are alive for his glory. So we were dead, but God made us alive and seated us with Christ.

How do we respond? What are we to do? Verse 10, for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in that.

It's interesting that he finishes this passage with the word walk, where we once walked in our sins, we now walk in the good works that God prepared for us beforehand.

if the same death defeating power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in us today, we should be eager to start using it in these good works.

But what are these good works that we should be doing in response? Are they acts of personal piety?

[ 23 : 34 ] are they social justice? Are they something else? The answer is yes to all of those, I think.

Death defeating power, at its core, should be used to defeat death in all its manifestations in this world. So, how do we fight death?

I think there are probably three ways. First, in our own hearts. Secondly, against the things that death causes. And third, against the cause of death.

First, where do we apply the death defeating power rule? First, in ourselves. We root out places in ourselves where we seek life, pleasure, and satisfaction outside of Christ, and we turn back to Him.

Secondly, we fight the things that death causes. Wherever people follow their own desires, like we see in verses 1-3, there will always be pain and suffering.

[ 24 : 47 ] Sometimes it's pain and suffering in themselves. The one who serves his pleasure might suffer from his own use of drugs, or the one who serves his own control might suffer the pains of anxiety.

And sometimes the pain will be found in others. The one who serves his own wallet will leave a trail of cheated people behind it.

The one who serves his own gratification will leave a trail of used people behind her. We can fight the things death causes, these results of death, everywhere it exists.

We serve those who are harmed by their own sinful acts, and those who are hurting because of their sins, with the love of Jesus. So we can fight the things that death causes, and we can also fight the cause of death.

We've already talked about what that is. The cause of death is separation from God. Fighting death at its source, hearts that proudly seek life where there is no life.

[ 25 : 57 ] instead of following your passions, we say, follow Jesus. So how do we fight the cause of death? We preach the only person who has life, Jesus.

We shine light where darkness reigns. With an attitude of love and compassion, just like Jesus showed us, we shed light and life however we can. That looks like telling people truth about where to find life.

life. That looks like inviting people to places where they can hear about life. Church, parachurch, Bible study, book club, wherever the gospel is proclaimed, we invite people.

We live lives that show them what it means to find our life in heaven and not in this world. And we pray that God would intervene in people's lives, just like he did in ours, and have compassion.

I think there's one last thing we can do with this death defeating power.

[ 27 : 04 ] I think it's for those who are suffering today. What if you're a Christian, you still feel dead inside? This week, trouble has visited me in a very real way.

I feel the sorrow and brokenness of this world acutely today. I've been numb, I've been confused, I've been not focusing, I've been in a fog and depressed, and it's really hard sometimes to see past grief.

And to find joy in the life we have in Christ. To have joy in the wonders that Paul describes in this passage. Maybe you feel that way too.

Listless, lifeless. You almost certainly know someone who feels that way. Maybe you're so weighed down that even though you're a Christian, you feel like you're stuck back in verses 1 through 3.

You feel like you look alive, but you're really not. You're going through the motions, look alive on the outside, but you feel like the walking dead. I hear you.

[ 28 : 34 ] If you're with me in them, I want you to hear these next words. even when you and I feel dead, Jesus is risen, and we are risen with him.

So it doesn't come down to how you feel today. It doesn't come down to what you've got to offer today. It doesn't come down to what you think today.

It doesn't come down to whether you're making it or not today. It doesn't come down to whether you're excited or numb today. It doesn't come down to whether you count yourself among the walking dead or not today.

It doesn't come down to those things because Jesus is alive today. And verse 4 tells us it doesn't have anything to do with our strength, with our vitality, with our ability.

No. There's a giant but God interviewed at the beginning of verse 4. He acted and because of that, not because of us, not because of how we feel, not because of what we do, but because of him, because he acted, we are alive.

[ 30 : 02 ] You were wounded, you were guilty, you were lost, you were dead.

But God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead and our trespasses made us alive together with Christ.

we started today asking what looks alive but isn't. And we can conclude today saying that we might feel dead, but we aren't.

We flipped it on its head. Nothing in the universe can kill us now. Now that God has made us alive together with Jesus' beloved son. God be praised.

In our hearts, and in the hearts of everyone he has called us to share this message with. You pray with me? Christ our King, we admit there is no life apart from you.

[ 31 : 23 ] but I pray that you would uncover in our lives all the places that we seek life and love and satisfaction away from you.

Father, we are so grateful that you intervened when we were completely incapable, that you have risen us up with your son and seated us with him.

So in the coming ages we might know the glory, of what it is to be your children. Father, I pray that today and tomorrow and every day of our lives, we would seek ways to turn the death defeating power that you worked in Jesus and you are now working in us towards this world.

death. That we do it in our own hearts, that we would fight the things that death causes, and that we would fight the cause of death.

And Father, I pray that even when we feel dead inside, that we would know Christ is risen for us.

[ 32 : 51 ] We can bank on the fact that we are alive with him. I pray these things in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Sing with me, Christ's victory.

An old, old story of sin came from glory. I knew life on Calvary to save a rich like me.

I heard about His groaning, those precious love's groaning. And I repented of my sins and won the victory.

To win Jesus, my Savior forever. He sought me and brought me with His redeeming blood.

He loved the year I knew Him, and all I love is to Him. He plunged me to victory beneath the planting flood.

[ 34 : 25 ] I heard about His healing, of His cleansing power revealing. Now He made a lane to walk again, and caused the blind to see.

Then I cried, dear Jesus, to love me, Heal a broken spirit. And somehow Jesus came and brought me the victory.

Oh, victory! He is Jesus, my Savior forever. He sought me and brought me with His redeeming blood.

He loved me, I knew Him, and all my love is to Him. He brought me to victory beneath the cleansing flood.

I heard about a mansion, He filled for me in glory. And I heard about the streets of gold beyond the crystal sea.

[ 35 : 41 ] About the angels singing, and the old redemption story. And some sweet day I'll sing out there, the song of victory.

The old victory! The old victory! The old victory in Jesus, my Savior forever. He sought me and brought me with His redeeming blood.

He loved me, I knew Him, and all my love is to Him. He climbed me to victory beneath the cleansing flood.

He loved me, and all my love is to Him. He loved me, and all my love is to Him.

That Him was able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or imagine according to His death-defeating power at work within us.

[ 36 : 49 ] To Him be glory in the church, and in Christ Jesus, throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.