

Eph. 2:1-10 - Guilty as Charged: The Depth & Delight of God's Grace

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- [0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.
- If you will open your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 2, Ephesians chapter 2 verses 1 through 10. I don't know if you agree with me, but I feel like we have upheld our promise so far.
- We're four weeks into Ephesians and we're in chapter 2. We're making good progress through the book of Ephesians. We are, however, going to stop for two weeks and consider verses 1 through 10. Will and I are. I'm excited to take a first pass and Will will clean up my mess next week, so I'm excited about that as well.
- Let me review, if I could, what we've covered in chapter 1. So far in Ephesians, Paul has given us a thoughtful and thorough doxology. He has been elevating and praising God for who He is, praising God for His power, His love, His character.
- Paul began in chapter 1 by affirming God's will and work in the Ephesian church. He then detailed the work of salvation that God has done in the Ephesian church that He does in our lives.
- [1 : 14] And then in a few long and passionate sentences, Paul expressed his worship and his praise to God who dwells, he says, in all power, all majesty, all authority, all glory, all love, and in divine headship.
- We ended chapter 1 hearing how Paul describes Christ as dwelling in heaven, seated above all authority, and He is the head over the church.
- The church, Paul tells us, is Christ's body, His manifested power of His grace on earth, and that we are the ones who fill the earth as His representatives. So with these things in mind, Paul has been focused on the divine, and now his eyes, his focus, his sight is going to turn towards us as God's people.
- His sight is going to be focused on the condition, the state we were in without God the Father. So with these things in mind, let's look at Ephesians chapter 2, verses 1 through 10.
- Chapter 2, verses 1 through 10, they say this, 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.
- [2 : 46] 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 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, not a result of work, 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, this is Your Word, these are Your truths, this is Your time, this is Your pulpit. So would You allow me to get out of the way?

[3 : 51] May my words be only Your words, may whatever truth comes out of my mouth only be because of You working in my heart, You working in this place.

And Father, as we consider this condition, this state that we live in, it's not good news, Father. It's bad news. It's the bad news of the gospel.

So will You prepare our hearts even now to consider the state that we stand in without a Savior, the state that we stand in when we are separated from You.

Father, be with us, give us Your Spirit. May we be changed by Your Word during this time. I pray these things in Your heavenly Son's name. Amen. Elementary school was a very formative time for me, and I'm sure that it was a formative time for you.

I want you to go back with me and consider one part of elementary school that maybe you want to block out. There was lots of coming-of-age lessons that we learned in elementary school, right? We learned about friendships.

[4 : 52] We learned about enemies. We learned about boys liking girls and girls liking boys. There are all kinds of things that we experience. There's one particular experience, though. Certain memories that I bet are burned into your memory, and those were discipline.

Times when your teacher entered into your world and pointed out ways in which you have sinned, things that you had done wrong. Being a middle child, I knew that my misbehavior would have my teachers and my parents disappointed.

I hated that, and so that was my motivation, for the most part, to stay out of trouble. At least I didn't get caught. There were a few words that you hated to hear when you misbehaved and got caught in elementary school, right?

Go to the principal's office. Those are the words you didn't want to hear. Go to the principal's office. It was the death sentence. It was the place where you were going to go, where you knew that you couldn't escape the penalty for what you had done.

You were going to have to face it. You were going to have to look your wrongdoing in the eye. Some of my first emotions of self-awareness in elementary school came when I saw my classmates in trouble.

[5 : 58] I remember being so thankful that I was not sitting in their shoes. I did not want to be in the hot seat. I did not want to have that criticism focused on me. Well, that all changed.

One sunny day when I was in fourth grade, and the sunny day came after five days of rain. Our teacher was sick of us, and so we had to get outside. We walked outside and decided we were going to take a lap around the school.

Well, since it had rained for five days, that meant there were lots of puddles. And being a competitive fourth grader, me and my buddy decided we would start a competition to see how far we could jump across puddles.

The bigger the puddle, the greater your reputation grew in fourth grade. I remember our teacher seeing what we were doing. She asked us to stop a few times. We did not stop. Eventually, she asked us to come up to the front of the line by her.

We went up to the front of the line, and my buddy and I was not going to end our competitive spirit, and so we kept jumping over puddles. The last puddle that I jumped over, I didn't actually jump over.

[7 : 02] I landed in the middle, and I splashed water all over my teacher, all over a few of my classmates, and I heard those words, go to the principal's office. That's all I heard, go to the principal's office.

So I started that slow, slow walk to Mrs. Broussik's office, immediately regretting that I had gotten caught, hating that I knew what was coming next.

I was going to have to sit in her office and explain to her what I had done wrong, and so I did that. I detailed my wrongdoing, and I remember her writing me up on a slip of paper, and then I looked out the window.

She had a small window in the door to her office, and the tables had turned. I watched my friends walk by, and now I was the one in the hot seat. I was the one sitting there whose wrongdoing had been pointed out.

I had been caught up in my sin. I could no longer hide from my wrongdoing. I had to face the punishment. Like me, the Ephesians are now being forced to the principal's office.

[8 : 02] Their nature without God is being presented to them. The judge is standing before them. They have given an account of their wrongdoing, and the punishment is now being explained.

And much like the Ephesians, I would imagine that we too don't want to sit in the hot seat. We don't want to have to face the reality of our sin. Paul's going to detail for us in very vivid ways the reality of man's condition without God the Father, without the intervention of the Father in our lives.

Just as I sat that day without excuse, we too sit today with no answer, no rationale, no excuse for our wrongdoing.

Our state before the Father, Paul will tell us, guilty as charged. And it's there. It's there with his sights focused on us that Paul details for us this situation.

He explains to us the depth of our sin. Paul recognizes three ways in which we are indicted in his first few verses. Three ways in which sin has impacted our standing before the Father.

[9 : 08] The first, Paul tells us, is that we are dead in our sins. Paul begins with this grim reality that there's nothing that we could do to save ourselves. A dead man can't rise, right?

That's what we would say. And what were we dead? Well, according to Paul, we were dead in our sins and our transgressions, both the active and the passive disobedience of our hearts.

Paul's intentional here to explain that we were dead in both our trespasses and our sins. Trespasses would be those false steps that we take in our lives. Trespasses involve us crossing a known boundary or deviating from a path.

Our trespasses are those willful acts of disobedience, those ones that violate what we're required to not do. In our household, we have a drawer that is within reach of our three-year-old daughter.

And in this drawer are cups and plates that she can access. And then we also put snacks in the drawer. Well, we are very careful to not put too many fruit snacks because that's her favorite snack.

[10 : 10] And we know if we don't regulate her fruit snack intake, that will be her entire diet, right? So she knows that before she can get fruit snacks out of her drawer, she must ask us. If our daughter goes into the kitchen, pulls fruit snacks out of the drawer, opens them and starts eating them, she has transgressed the rules that we have put in place for her.

In addition to these things, Paul says that we are dead in our sins, not just our trespasses, but also in our sins. Sins, as Paul intends, means those ways in which we miss the mark, the ways in which we fall short of the standard that he has placed in our lives.

This would be the ways in which we fall short in what we don't do, the passive disobedience of our hearts. After Lila has committed the trespass of grabbing the fruit snacks without asking, she may very likely walk in and sit in her favorite chair, start enjoying her fruit snacks, and totally ignore her eight-month-old brother who has pinned himself between three pieces of furniture, which he's known to do.

And he'll get cords all wrapped up in himself because he loves to play with cords. If she sits there and listens to her brother cry and doesn't go to his aid to help him out, she has sinned against her brother.

She's sinned in not offering help. She's missed the mark, the standard that we have set for her, that God has set for her to care for those in need. In the fruit snack and the crying brother incident, Lila has both actively and passively disobeyed.

[11 : 46] She's disobeyed in what she did do, and she's also disobeyed in what she didn't do. Paul's explaining that in our human condition, we are both rebels and failures.

We both rebel against God, and we also fail to uphold the standard that he has for our lives. In these things, Paul tells us we're dead. He'll later refer to us as alienated from the life of God.

Without Christ, Paul says, all are dead. Every one of us is a spiritual corpse before the Father. But not only are we dead in our trespasses and sins, Paul tells us, but we're also enslaved in our allegiance to the enemy.

Verse two tells us that we followed the course of this world and that we followed the prince of the power of the air. Perhaps you remember from our opening sermon on Ephesians that Paul was very concerned about making the distinction between the Ephesian church existing in Ephesus, but also existing with Christ in heaven.

We talked about how God's people had a physical dwelling in Ephesus, but they had a spiritual dwelling with Christ. By recognizing our state without God as walking in the course of the world, Paul is distinguishing how our spiritual state did not always exist with Christ.

[13 : 09] Before God intervened, our allegiances, our desires, our pleasures, our very will was entirely Ephesian. Our wills, our desires, our passions were worldly, and they were secular.

We had no reference or orientation to the truths of God. The influence of the age, the influence of the world was persuasive, and it was prevalent in our lives.

We were enslaved to the kingdom of the world. We did not belong to the kingdom of heaven. Accordingly, we also followed the prince of the power of the air.

Now, this is the one that'll make us squirm a little bit. This one makes us uncomfortable because what Paul's saying is that we had allegiance to the evil one, to Satan himself, we followed the prince of the power of the air.

Paul's language and application gets a little bit close to home because now he reorients our understanding of our condition to be one where we followed the one that we never thought we could follow.

[14 : 11] You see, that's the deceptive nature of our sin is that in our sinful pride and our lack of self-awareness, we would never attribute our sin as being caused by a heart that's been taken over by the enemy.

But that's exactly what Paul was saying. You belonged to the enemy. You followed Satan. We're sure that there's someone more sinful, someone more evil, someone more dangerous than we are.

But Paul says, no, your allegiances, they didn't belong to God. They belonged to the enemy. Paul's message is clear. The indictment of sin is so deep and it's so wide that you Ephesians, you Southwood, without the father, followed the prince of the power of the air, Satan himself.

As you chased after your own personal desires and wills, you were fulfilling the desires of the enemy. Oh, wow. Paul, as if it wasn't enough, you're dead in your trespasses and sins.

You followed Satan. He has more to tell us. He tells the readers of the text, as if they haven't heard enough, one final aspect of their indictment.

[15 : 22] And that is that in your sin, you were condemned. In verse 3, Paul tells us that we lived in the passions of our flesh. We carried out the desires of our bodies and our minds and were by very nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

Paul's actually almost giving us a sense of relief as if to say, don't worry about it. There wasn't much that you could do about those sins and trespasses that you were dead in because you were living the way that you were by your very nature.

You were born into sin. You were born as an enemy of God. Paul's indictment now sweeps throughout all time. And he says that your sin is an indictment based upon Adam, based upon the fall that existed in the Garden of Eden.

Paul makes this idea clear in Romans chapter 5 when he explains how just as sin came into the world through one man, that is through Adam, and death through sin, so death spread to all men because all sinned.

The condemnation of sin is a problem that all of mankind now faces because of Adam's fall. Our transgressions and sins that we were dead in according to Paul are not what caused our death.

[16 : 39] Adam's fall caused our death. We are sinners not because we sinned, but because of our very nature. We sin because we are sinners.

We sin because just like all of mankind, by our very nature, we stood as enemies to the Father. My question to you then is this.

Are you comfortable there? Are you comfortable plumbing the depths of your depravity? It's what Paul wants us to do for a little bit, to consider carefully the depths of our depravity. We could spend entire sermons talking about these verses, about the applications that they have in our lives, how sin so steadily and subtly creeps into all the corners of our lives.

Because of our very nature, sin has made its way into our personal lives. It's made its way into our marriages, into our parenting, into our work.

And with the same subtlety, it's manifested itself in a variety of vices, obsessions, coping mechanisms, insecurities, weaknesses, and flaws that are lived out in our daily lives.

[17 : 49] And Paul details how our nature is lived out as both rebels and failures. He tells us that not only are we guilty, but the charge against our sin is death.

And it hurts. And it pains us. And if the Spirit's working in our life, we don't want to hear anymore. We can't stand the side of our sin anymore if our hearts have been changed.

And it's there in our moment of hurt when our hearts are devastated by our sin. In our moment of great hurt, there's healing offered by Paul.

The salve to our wound is offered. The bread to our empty stomach is given in these words, but God. But God.

With these two words, Paul delivers the divine antithesis of Ephesians. His entire gospel presentation hinges upon these two words, but God.

[18 : 51] And we all take a collective sigh because it means that our story doesn't stop with our sin. Our story isn't over after I fail again and again and again.

The story isn't over in our broken relationships. The story isn't over with our struggles with self-image and our desire to lose weight. The story isn't over with my empty friendships that I have with alcohol, with food, or with my material possessions.

The story isn't over with my surprising, hostile anger that I have towards my kids. The story isn't over with my heart and my flesh that so often lead me astray.

But God. But God entered into the sinful, broken state that you are indicted in. And what did he offer you?

Grace. He offered you grace. He meets us with the gospel. Paul illustrates how God reaches into the depths of our depravity and elevates his own glory, his own grace, by going from low into the depths to now high, describing that we are seated with Christ because of God's grace.

[20 : 06] Because of God's justification through his Son, we now have hope. In verses 1 through 3, we were by nature a whole host of things. But now Paul tells us how we've been changed.

Ways in which the old man is gone and now the new man is in place because of his great love, because of his divine intervention. We have three things.

First, we have life in Christ. Verse 4 continues by telling us that God being rich in mercy because of the great love which he loved us, even when we are dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

Do you see the logical process that Paul's explaining? That we who were dead in our trespasses had no way of saving ourselves. The only way that we would be saved or redeemed is if someone came in and took what was dead and made it alive.

Paul anticipates our sinful heart's desire to even make our salvation about ourselves when he tells us in verses 8 and 9 that salvation came from the Father, not from our own doing.

[21 : 15] It was only a gift from God. A runner with an injury to their leg can do the proper stretching, can follow the doctor's orders to be healed. An overweight individual can stick with a weight loss plan, can exercise, and they can lose weight.

A high school student can apply themselves and be excellent undergraduate and graduate students. But Paul understands, and we must understand, that there is nothing that we can do to save ourselves from this situation.

There's nothing we can do to help ourselves. Your salvation, my salvation, was a product of God's great love working in our lives. It was nothing that we did.

It was his mercy and his mercy alone. And it's there, in the midst of our broken situations, the enormous messes of our lives that God comes to us, helpless, indicted in our sin.

He takes what was dead and he makes it alive. There is life, there is hope, there is joy, there is peace because of what God did. He gave us life in Christ.

[22 : 23] He also gives us union with Christ. As God makes us alive, he enlivens our souls, he gives righteousness to us. A part of this process, as well, is our union with Christ.

Look at this language from the second half of our passage. It says this, even when we were dead in our trespasses, that's actually not the right passage. I'm going to read it for us. Even when we were dead in our trespasses, God 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. That was the right passage. What I want you to see is this language of being together with Christ, raised up with him.

He seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. We were created in Christ Jesus for good works, verse 10 tells us. In your salvation, your heart was not just enlivened, your record was not just cleared, but you were joined together in an intimate connection, an intimate relationship with God the Father.

You were united together with Jesus Christ to the Father. This relationship to Jesus is a primary distinctive of our Christian faith.

[23 : 36] We don't just admire or worship Jesus as an honorable teacher, an eminent deity, or that we now live according to a set of standards. Being in Christ means that we actually share in his resurrection.

We have shared in his ascension into heaven and we share in his place in heaven. Through our union with Christ, we are given the credit of an earthly life, ministry, and obedience.

And we have been taken from death to life, united to the Son. Through our relationship with Christ, though we were in captivity, we were now enthroned on high with him in eternity.

So we have life in Christ, we have union with Christ, we're also given security through Christ. By grace you have been saved according to verses 5 and 8.

The use of this word salvation in these verses in the original language is a perfect participle. And what Paul has wanted to communicate is that God's saving action saved you in the past and it will forever keep you in the future.

[24 : 46] The life and the union that you have are sealed in the perfect atoning sacrifice of Jesus. Nothing can change your standing with the Father. You are secured in Jesus.

It's also important that we remember how Paul frames our state when he begins in verses 1 and 2, saying that you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked.

Paul's reference is not to an impending judgment, but to a way of life and allegiance to the enemy and a hardened heart that you used to be connected with. An identity that you used to have.

You don't have it anymore. You are now forever made alive and united by God's grace to Jesus, his son.

It's all been changed. The story didn't stop with your sin. It extended into God's extension of grace to you. His kindness, his mercy shown to you, not of your works, but only because of God's great love.

[25 : 53] An illustration of this would be as simple as this. Imagine that day in the principal's office. Imagine with me again the anxiety, the guilt that I was facing. And then imagine if my classmate Peter walked in.

Peter was one of the kindest, most thoughtful, most well-behaved fourth graders you've ever met. He had perfect grades. He had a perfect little life. All the teachers loved him.

Imagine if Peter walked in and he said, I'll take the punishment. I'll assume the guilt of puddle jumping. Mrs. Brusik, I will stand in Chad's place. Now any normal fourth grader would have taken that, right?

They would have taken that opportunity. They would have darted out of the office as soon as possible. But Peter, imagine him grabbing me and saying no. No, Chad, you and I are best friends now. All the obedience, all the good grades, all the good graces that I'm in, you can have them all.

All the puddles you jump into, all the rude things you say, all the tests that you cheat on, you can have my perfect record and claim it as your own. It's yours.

[26 : 57] Paul tells us that the verdict was cast, that we were guilty as charged and we deserved death. Through Christ, by grace though, we have been saved.

All these things are a gift of God. You did nothing to save yourself. Christ did it all. He paid it all. And why did God do it?

Verse 7 tells us, so that we might see the immeasurable riches of His grace and kindness towards us. He did it so that we could see His love, so that we could see His kindness, this great affection that He has for us.

I'll conclude with a few questions of application. Do you live as someone who's been saved? Do you live as someone whose life has been changed by verses 4 through 10?

Do you live as someone who's been freed from the ways in which you once walked? Have you felt the freedom from shame from your poor decisions? Have you felt the freedom the gospel offers people like you and people like me who have hurt lots of people, who have broken relationships and messy lives?

[28 : 09] And have you looked death in the face and proclaimed victory over it because you are no longer dead in your trespasses and sins? Do you live there?

Do you believe it? And lastly, do you see what God has designed you for now? What does verse 10 tell us? It says that we are now to be His workmanship created for good works.

We'll discuss next week the implications of this verse. We'll consider the fundamental understanding of our good works as it relates to how our standing has now been changed by the Father.

We must first see how we've been justified. We are now made right. Now that you've been made right, go. Go and be God's workmanship in the world. You were created for good works.

You've done nothing to earn your salvation. Don't worry about that. Now go. Go and be my people. We'll consider what it means to be a new creation, to be God's people in the world.

[29 : 09] He has ordained and prepared for you and for me to go and to be His ambassadors again. Take up your new identity. Take it up. Go and be God's people.

Has the gospel moved your heart in such a way that you would want to respond? Not as a merit of your salvation but because of your salvation. By grace you have been saved, Paul tells us.

Death to life, slave to free, from the depth of your indictment to the delight of Christ's heavenly salvation, it has all been offered to you.

Let's pray. Father, these are powerful truths. They are truths that will only make sense in our lives if you first come and change who we are.

You must take this heart of stone and make it a heart of flesh. You must show us not only our sin but also offer us the good news of Jesus.

[30 : 12] Our hearts can't take it. If we're left just with our sin to wrestle just with our sin our hearts wouldn't be able to handle it. So Father, just as Paul tells us, you intervened but God, but God intervened into our lives and into our stories and offered us grace.

Thank you that we have a life that's now changed, that we live with Christ, that we are united with Christ, that we dwell as your church forever sealed in your son.

Help us to apply these truths to our lives, to believe them more and more every day. Pray these things in your heavenly son's name. Amen. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org.

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