

“From Death to Life”

June 2, 2024

Ephesians 2:1-10

I. Introduction

In the first chapter of Ephesians, Paul wrote about God’s plans and purposes for the universe and mankind. They were carried out by the Godhead in the past, are being carried out in the present, and will be completed in the future with the universal Lordship of Jesus Christ. Beginning in chapter 2, Paul moved from the big picture to a smaller one in which God will bring about all His plans and purposes. In these first 10 verses Paul reminded Christians from where they had come and what it means to receive salvation and to be part of Christ’s body. As he considered the past, present, and future of every Christian, Paul was overwhelmed by the miracle of God’s grace. It is through God’s grace that believers have been redeemed from the death of sin and have been made alive in Christ. Before he wrote about the gift of salvation, Paul reminded Christians of their former way of life.

II. The Former Way of Life

A. The unbeliever is dead. Paul wrote that before salvation, “**You were dead in your transgressions and sins.**” Every unbeliever is dead. Although they may have been alive physically, spiritually they were dead, dead to God and His purposes. Just like a person who is physically dead cannot respond to physical stimuli like light, sound, smell, taste or pain, a person who is spiritually dead cannot respond to spiritual things. Someone has said, “*It is a case of death walking.*” Apart from God, men are spiritual zombies, the walking dead who do not know they are dead. They go through the motions of life although they do not possess it. Before they were saved, every Christian was like every other person who is apart from God—“**dead in ... transgressions and sins.**” **Romans 3:23** says “**all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**”

We were not dead because we committed sins but because we were in sin. Committing sinful acts does not **make** us sinners; rather we commit sinful acts because we **are** sinners. **Turn to Romans 3:10-18.** At birth everyone starts out with a sinner’s heart; everyone is spiritually dead. The only difference between one sinner and another is the state of decay, but one corpse cannot be more dead than another. There is only

one way to be saved from spiritual death, i.e., from an eternity in hell. In [John 14:6](#) Jesus said, “**I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**” The person who is a good parent, a loving spouse, and an honest worker needs Jesus Christ to save him or her from an eternity in hell just as much as a murderer or a heartless terrorist. This means that the world is one vast graveyard, in [Revelation 3:1](#) Jesus said, “**I know your deeds, you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.**”

B. The unbeliever is disobedient. Paul wrote that another characteristic of the unsaved person is that he is disobedient. This was the beginning of man’s spiritual death. This was the sin of Adam and Eve in [Gen. 3](#) when they believed Satan’s lie and disobeyed God. Paul listed 3 powers or influences that encourage man in his disobedience. First is “**the ways of the world**”—the world. The world puts pressure on every person to try to get them to conform. The world encourages, in some cases forces, everyone to walk in step with them, ignoring or disobeying what God wants. You see it all around us. The unsaved person is controlled consciously or subconsciously by the values and attitudes of the world. As Christians, Jesus said in [John 17:14](#) that we “**are no longer of the world.**” This is why [Rom. 12:2](#) says, “**Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.**” Because of the power of God, once one makes Jesus his Lord and Savior, he can successfully resist the world’s pressure, BUT only with God’s power!

The second power that encourages disobedience is “**the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient,**” i.e., the devil. Satan is a created being and unlike God isn’t omnipresent, but he has others to help him in his schemes to infect and influence the whole world. [Turn to Ephesians 6:11-12.](#) Believers and unbelievers are in a spiritual war. The third power is “**our sinful nature.**” i.e., the flesh. This is the fallen nature, the selfish nature that we were born with that wants to control the body and the mind and entices one to disobey God. These are the thoughts and desires and lusts of sinful man. [Turn to Colossians 3:5-10.](#)

C. The unbeliever is doomed. In their former life—a life apart from God as unbelievers, Christians were dead, they were disobedient, and they were doomed. Because of their enslavement to sin through the influence of various powers, because they are dead—separated from God—Paul wrote that every person who

doesn't turn to Christ is doomed; doomed to an eternity in hell. They were "objects of wrath." Or as the first part of **Romans 6:23** says, "The wages of sin is death."

III. God's Work

A. God's work for believers. Man cannot save himself, but God in His love and mercy stepped in to make salvation possible. The NIV translation doesn't show it, but verse 4 of Ephesians 2 begins: "**But God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us.**" Paul's focus changed from sinful man and his works to God and His work. First, there's God's work for those who believe, for believers. The 2nd half of **Romans 6:23** says, "**But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**" God acted in mercy because of His love for His creation. Paul listed 4 things God performed on behalf of sinners to save them from the "wages of sin."

First, He loved us. **1 John 4:8** says, "**God is love.**" Love is part of God's very being. Because of His love, God extends His mercy to sinners and offers forgiveness and reconciliation to every sinner who repents. It is God's mercy and grace, products of His love, which bring salvation. In His mercy, He doesn't give us what we do deserve, but, in His grace, He gives us what we do not deserve. All this is made possible because of God's love which led to the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. At Calvary, God showed His hatred of sin and His love for sinners. As **Romans 5:8** says, "**But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**"

Second, He made us alive with Christ. God loves us; God, also, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our sins. **1 Peter 3:18** says, "**For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.**" As Paul wrote earlier in chapter 1, as members of His body—Christ's body—believers are united with Him (**Ephesians 1:22-23**), so that we now share His resurrection life and His power (**Ephesians 1:19-20**).

Third, He raised us up. Our physical position may be on earth, but our spiritual position is "**with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus**"—God has raised us up. Just like Lazarus in **John 11:43**, we have been called from the grave to sit with Christ and enjoy His fellowship, kindness, and love.

Fourth, He saved us through faith. Our response in salvation is faith. Faith is the only means by which God's mercy and grace can be received. Salvation is totally apart from any merit or works on our part. God saves us for Jesus' sake. Jesus did the only "work"—He died on the cross and rose from the dead 3 days later. **Hebrews 7:27** says, "He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself." Jesus' sacrifice finished the great work of salvation. God did it all, and He did it by His grace. We just have to have faith in God and then we are saved. Paul said it best: "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works so that no one can boast."

B. God is at work in us. God's purpose in our redemption is not simply to rescue us from hell. His ultimate purpose in our salvation is that for all eternity the church might glorify God. Sin worked against us; God worked for us, but the great work of redemption is only the beginning of salvation. God is at work in us—Paul wrote that we are His "workmanship." As **Romans 12:2** says, we are being "transformed by the renewing of your mind." The Bible says that God's Word (**1 Thessalonians 2:13**), prayer (**Ep. 3:20-21**) and suffering (**1 Peter 4:11-14**) are "at work within us" to make us into something useful. The Bible is full of examples of God working in people and changing them, people like Moses, Joseph, David, and John Mark.

C. God is at work through us. After God works in us, then He can work through us. "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." No amount of good works can produce salvation, but many good works are produced by salvation or following salvation. These are the fruits of salvation or proof of true salvation. Righteous acts and righteous attitudes proceed from a transformed life—a life changed by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

IV. The New or Christian Way of Life

In these verses, Paul had several thoughts or messages for Christians. **First**, he reminded all believers that they are saved through the grace and power of God; there was nothing any one of them could do to save themselves. In **Romans 3:10** Paul wrote, "As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one.'" **Second**, Christians are a work in progress. The same power that saved them is the same power that is changing them. **Isaiah 64:8** says, "Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we

are all the work of your hand.” **Philippians 1:6** says, “Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Third, good works must be part of every Christian’s identity. Every Christian has been given everything necessary for faithfully living the saved life. Righteous attitudes and righteous acts come from a transformed life. These good works are expected because God prepared them in advance for each one of us to do. This is why James says that faith is dead—nonexistent—if works are not present. **Turn to**

James 2:20-26. A Christian’s life must be filled with good works.

Finally, because God has prepared good works for the believer to do, Paul’s message is that God has a plan for our lives. As His children, we should walk in His will and fulfill His plan. Paul wasn’t talking about “fate” but about the gracious plan of a loving Heavenly Father, who wills the very best for His children. But if we, in our free will, are going to follow God’s plan for our lives, we need to listen to the Holy Spirit as we read and study God’s Word. In **John 14:26** Jesus said, “**The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.**”

V. Conclusion

If you have made Jesus your Lord and Savior, you are no longer trapped in the old nature or as the KJV says, the “**old man.**” You have been given a new nature, you have been raised and seated on a throne. Let God work in you and through you and watch the exciting, creative life He will give you as you bring glory to God. Let me close with Paul’s testimony in Philippians—**turn to Philippians 3:7-14.**

Communion Devotion – June 2, 2024

Philippians 2:5-11

This familiar passage reminds us of what Jesus did for us. But there is one word that isn't particularly familiar. In our society and culture, we don't really have a working knowledge of the word "Lord." In Paul's day, "Lord" was more than just a title like "Mr." A "Lord" had responsibilities and expectations. It was his responsibility to care for his followers. He was expected to feed them, to clothe them, shelter them; protect them from outsiders as well as from themselves—basically, he was to give them everything they needed to live.

If you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, as we come to the Lord's Table, we remember what the Lord Jesus did for us. Because of love, He left His throne in heaven to live with those He created. He experienced life as we know it. Then, He gave His life for you. He suffered physically, emotionally, and spiritually because of your sins. He bled and died on a cross in your place. Finally, He rose from the dead. He gave all He had for your salvation. Then on top of that, as Paul has reminded us in the Book of Ephesians, as Lord, He has held nothing back from His followers.

There were also expectations of those who had a "Lord." Their allegiance was to him only; they were to trust only him. They were to serve him with all they had—they were to be his servants, totally and completely; nothing was to be held back.

If you have made Jesus Lord of your life; if you are going to experience all God has for you, you need to seek the power of the Holy Spirit. You need to grow in Christ as you are filled with the Spirit and allow Him to transform you **"by the renewing of your mind."** God has done and is doing His part, what about you?

This morning as the elements are being passed, take time to look at your heart-- Is Jesus really your Lord? Have you given yourself completely to Him—holding nothing back? If not, make today a new beginning for your discipleship. After getting your priorities right, then thank the Lord for His love, for His gift of eternal life, and all the benefits you have as one of His disciples.