

EPHESIANS | Alive with Christ

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Introduction

Resources that we're providing for you throughout this series.

1. Ephesians Journals
2. Audio Readings from our Staff (*accessible in our weekly email, and on social media*)
3. MSM, HSM, and YAs are all tracking with us through this series, and we're providing questions for parents, middle and highschoolers. Research shows that if mom and dad will increase conversation with their kids by one standard deviation, the chances of them remaining in the faith into adulthood increases by 66%. That is enormous return on very little investment. So, we want to help you capitalize on that. At the end of every service, you'll notice some questions displayed. Take a picture, write them down, and engage your kids in discussion about the passages we're going through each Sunday throughout the summer.

Ephesians 2:1-10 is one of the richest passages in the entire Bible on what it means to be saved... to enter the Kingdom... to be a follower of Jesus .

In Ephesians 1 Paul describes the fact that those whom God has chosen, adopted — that all believers are brought together under Christ, who is the Head of His Church. In chapter 2 is the process through which God takes those who are under God's wrath upon sin, and ushers us into His unfathomable grace. *How God takes sinners and turns them into saints.*

Ephesians 2:1-10

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² 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— ³ 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. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

One of the biggest problems with human beings is that we don't always see ourselves accurately.

God tells us the truth about the human condition

Ephesians 2:1

...you were dead in the trespasses and sins.

One of the things I've noticed about the world and myself is the tendency in human beings to immediately view all the bad, all the evil in the world — as being “out there.”

PERSONAL: It's so bad my dog even does it. Whenever I sit down to study at home for Sunday mornings, my German shepherd sits by the window and is hypervigilant about protecting me and my time with the Lord — from all the evil squirrels “out there” in our neighborhood. He sits there for hours looking “out there” ... because He doesn't recognize the evil squirreliness in his own canine heart.

We see this everywhere... whatever culture you're in, you look at other cultures as "less than." Whatever your political or religious affiliations, we look at people with different views as THE problem with the world. If THEY would just... fill in the blank... then all our problems would be solved.

- In relationship problems, if both parties say, *"They're the problem, it's all them. I haven't done anything wrong, I'm innocent... it's not me, it's all them,"* — the relationship has no hope. But if both people say, *"No, it's me. I'm contributing to this. I may not even understand all the ways, but I know it's not all on them... it's me."* That relationship has all the hope in the world.

As you look back at broken relationships in your life, if you always see yourself as an innocent victim, but there is a trail of brokenness in your wake — maybe, just maybe, you're the problem.

In the words of my incredibly wise father, *"If one person says you're a donkey you can ignore it. If five people call you one, buy a saddle."*

*"You know that conversation you have when you break up with somebody and you say, 'It's not you, it's me.'
God in Ephesians 2 is saying,
'No, no. It's not Me, it's you. You're the problem.'"¹
~ J.D. Greear*

What's our problem? God says...

Ephesians 2:1

...you were **dead** in the trespasses and sins.

**Sin isn't just the bad things that we do;
sin isn't just our selfish motives for the good things that we do;
sin is actually the condition of our hearts.
It's who we are apart from God's miraculous work in our lives.
We are spiritually dead.**

Ephesians 2:1-3

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² 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— ³ 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.

Paul lists...

- The world, the flesh, and the devil, attack of the enemy
- Our self-absorbed, and self-exalting desires
- By nature, we are children of wrath
 - Not children of confusion... not children of weakness... children of wrath!

Scripture tells us that we are enslaved, our master is the world, the flesh, and the devil — and all three are saturated with conceit, pride, a black hole of selfishness.

*"Remember, we Christians think man lives forever.
Therefore, what really matters is those little marks or twists on the central,
inside part of the soul which are going to turn it, in the long run,
into a heavenly or a hellish creature."²
~ C.S. Lewis "Mere Christianity"*

¹ J.D. Greear. *Above All* (B&H Publishing Group, Jun 1, 2019)

² C.S. Lewis. *Mere Christianity* (Harper Collins, Jun 2, 2009)

He goes on to say that there are basically two ways you can operate in life. On one hand, “It’s *your life for mine, your life to enhance me, your life to build up me, your life for me.*” Or you can operate out of the framework, “My life for you.”

You can either say:

“I’m here because I’m trying to see how this situation and you can exalt me and my interests.”

Or you can say:

“I am here because I’m trying to find out how I can serve you, empower you, bless you and your interests.”

Lewis says, every time you live out, “*Your life for mine,*” you put a little mark on the soul. You make yourself a little more self-centered, a little prouder, more self-righteous, angrier, colder, harsher — when life isn’t going right. Over time it becomes a harder for you to control, because more and more you’re a slave to your own pride, you’re a slave to the world, the flesh, and the devil. In the end, it will become hell in you, unless you’re rescued from it.

The cause of salvation is grace

Ephesians 2:4-5

But God, being **rich in mercy**, because of the great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when **we were dead** in our trespasses, **made us alive** together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

- If I’m dead, can I do anything about it? Can I just decide, “I’m tired of being dead, I’m going to get up and live for a few more years.” In the same way, when we were dead in our trespasses, we were utterly hopeless and helpless... and yet God made us alive in Christ!

Jesus in John 3:3 is addressing a very religious person, he wasn’t a rebel, or an addict, or an outsider — which is typically who we think of when we think someone needs to become a “born again believer.” This guy was moral and religious.

John 3:3

Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born again** he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

- **Jesus is saying that it’s not just the broken that need a rebirth... it’s everyone!** Everyone must be born again! The successful people and the needy, the broken people and the moral people, the religious people and rebellious people — ALL need to be born again! Because we’re all dead in our trespasses.

Ephesians 2:6-7

...and **raised us up with Him** and **seated us with Him** in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages He might show the **immeasurable riches of His grace** in **kindness** toward us in Christ Jesus.

- We’ve been raised up with Christ and seated with Him in the heavenly places.

That word kindness in this verse means costly action.

The first three verses tell us that we put ourselves where only God deserved to be. That’s sin. But this is telling us that God put Himself where we deserved to be on the cross. Now as result of His kindness, we’re legally seated with Him where only He deserves to be! Your position with God, is you are seated with Christ in the heavenly places. You can’t get any closer. You can’t get any more accepted, any more loved, welcomed in.

*“For the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God,
while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man.”³
~ John Stott*

**We put ourselves where only God deserves to be.
God puts himself where we deserve to be.**

It's because of **the riches of His immeasurable grace...**

- John Bunyan in the 1600's kept preaching of the immeasurable riches of God's grace. The uptight religious leaders in the church came to him and said, "You've got to stop this! You have to stop preaching grace. If you remove the threat of punishment, they'll do whatever they want!" Bunyan responded and said, "No...it's the opposite!"

*“If people really see that Christ has removed the fear of punishment from them
by taking it into Himself, they won't do whatever they want,
they'll do whatever He wants.”⁴
~ John Bunyan*

The means of salvation is faith

Ephesians 2:8

⁸ For by **grace** you have been saved through **faith**. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

1. The **cause** of salvation is **grace**.
2. The **means** of salvation is **faith**.
3. The **byproduct** of salvation is **works**.

**Faith is putting your trust in and weight upon
what Christ has done for you knowing that it is the gift of God.
You couldn't earn it by self-effort.
You can't keep by self-effort — It's not your doing!**

How much did you contribute to you being born? How much decision-making power did you have?

- Years ago, a guy sued his parents for giving birth to him and not consulting with him first. "I didn't ask to be brought into this world."

What did you have to do with your birth? How much work did you do?
Little to none. Someone else did all the work.

The same is true with being born again. There's nothing to be boastful about... you didn't earn your salvation... it is the work of God. You didn't earn God's approval; it was a gift given to you, and you received it by grace through faith. By simply trusting in, putting weight behind the pain, the agony, the turmoil of someone else on your behalf.

Ephesians 2:10

¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for **good works**, which God **prepared beforehand**, that we should walk in them.

³ John Stott. *Stott on the Christian Life* (Crossway, May 7, 2020)

⁴ John Bunyan. *The Heavenly Footman*. (Christian Focus Publications, May 20, 2012)

The byproduct of salvation is works

Salvation is by God's grace and it is only received through faith. But the effect, the **byproduct of genuine of salvation** *is always good works*.

**We're not saved by good works,
but good works affirm the validity of our salvation.**

God prepared good works for you and me to complete ahead of time. *We get to wake up tomorrow morning and go into each day looking for and discovering the good works He's prepared for us in advance!*

- We get to train our children to begin to look for the opportunities that God has set before them — to cooperate, to commission with Him in good works — looking out for opportunities to serve and bless others.
- Anyone that thinks following Jesus is boring has no idea what it's like to live in the adventure that He's designed for us to walk in every day.

Dreams for this church body

I have some dreams for this church body:

- That we would be an unstoppable force of generosity to our community and around the world.
- That people in poverty in our own back yard, would experience the love of Jesus through us meeting some of the most basic practical human needs all around us.
 - food, transportation, medical care, literacy, education
- Caring for the orphans and widows, which is the measure of true religion.
- To plant churches that serve as community centers and missional outposts for the gospel in the most impoverished areas in the state of TN and in our nation.
- To see thousands of people brought in, raised up, and sent out to serve the kingdom of God.
 - planting new churches,
 - revitalizing dying churches,
 - linking arms with other churches
 - sent out as missionaries.

Don't offend God with small vision

I'm too old.

- That's what Abraham and Sarah said.
 - If you still have breath in your lungs, God still has a purpose for you being here.
- **Let's not offend God with small vision, little faith. *Don't waste the time He's given you with low expectations of an infinite God.***

Some of you have desires to really change your life — that takes big faith in an infinite God. You want to be more disciplined, a more intentional mom. A more involved father. You want to be more generous. You want to pray more consistently. God has “pre-ordained” that you should walk in good works. Sometimes it takes more faith to believe that God will help us do those things than even the seemingly big things.

Whatever season of life you're in right now, here is what Paul says:

Ephesians 2:10

For we are His **workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus for good works,

That word workmanship is the word poema, we are His poem, His masterpiece, His tapestry, created for good works. That's who He is, and that's who we are, and that's what we're here to do.

**To follow Jesus,
be changed by Jesus,
and live on mission with Jesus.**

How do I walk in the good works?

- How do I walk in the good works?
- How do I trust God to meet me in the big things and the seemingly small things of life?
- You have to know Him. Really know Him.
- You have to see Him for who He is.
- As you see Him more clearly, your trust in Him will grow.

You have to know that you know that God looked at us in our helpless and hopeless condition — and even though He had every right to — He does not say, “Your life for mine,” but instead, in the person of Jesus, God says, “My life for yours.”

No other religion, no other belief system, no other philosophy, no other God does something so upside down, so radical, so profound. Every other religion says, it's about you, your effort, your righteousness, your morality, your effort, your work — which if you do it, makes you proud! You'll boast in yourself! It's about you!

Only in Jesus do we have a God who says, not your life for mine, but mine for yours.

That is a God worth following.

That is God worth giving your life for.

That is a God worth trusting for big things — until He returns or calls you home.

Have you given your life to Him? Have you surrendered it all to Him? Salvation is a gift of God, it's by His grace, and you receive it through faith, by simply believing in your heart, and confessing with your mouth that Jesus is Lord.

**Let's walk in the good works that He's prepared for us beforehand —
that the glory of God would be taken to the ends of the earth, starting right here.
Let's not offend God with little faith and small vision.**

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss: One of the biggest problems with human beings is that we don't always see ourselves accurately.
2. What truth did God tell us about the human condition — the condition of the human heart?
3. How are the words, “But God” two of the most powerful words in the Bible?
4. What did *you have to do* with being saved?
5. Give some examples of the Good Works that God prepared for you to do.
6. What's one thing you'd like to see God do in your life this summer?
7. What might it require of you to see that happen?

NOTES