

LSB Ephesians 2:1-10

1 And you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom we all also formerly conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. 4 But God, being rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, 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 ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not 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 so that we would walk in them.

Thank you all for graciously allowing Pam and I to spend Christmas with our kids in Sparks. We had a lovely time and Pam got a picture with all of her babies in one place at one time, except for Tina's oldest, Rowan, who is hard at work for our freedoms, with the US Air Force.

We are proud of all of them. Jonah, our oldest grandson will graduate college in a few months and has a heart for full time ministry. It's a joy to see God at work in his life. We are very blessed.

3 Sunday's ago we began Ephesians chapter 2, and we basically looked in depth at the black deep shadows contrast of the brilliant image that will shine forth in that darkness in verses 4 and following.

But since 3 weeks have passed, I think some review will be wise. Read again, with me, verses 1 - 3;

1 And you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom we all also formerly conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Paul launches on a picture of new life in Jesus in chapter 2. In chapter one he briefly tells us how wildly rich we have become as sons of God, in Christ. Seated in the heavens with our Saviour, adopted into God's family as heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ. We are royalty by adoption.

Now in chapter 2 Paul paints this picture of how this adoption actually happened. And the backdrop against which he will paint his picture is the desperate darkness and helpless lostness of our abandonment into sin. Removed from God and waiting helplessly and hopelessly for deserved judgement.

In fact Paul says that is the condition of the entire world. The planet and everyone in it is in open rebellion, open war against God, and ultimate judgement is imminent.

And Satan is the ruler of this world and foments evil continually, entrapping willing dupes in all of his evil rebellions against God. Unseen evil joining forces with evil men who love their sin and hate God.

Only one thing keeps God from utterly destroying all of it. God is calling out a people for His name. A people snatched out of the imminent fires of judgement. Called out of this world to belong to Him and worship Him.

When the final elect person is snatched out of the fire, ultimate wrath will come on this world. Every knee, in heaven, on earth, and under the earth will bow in worship to Jesus, the Lord's messiah. Every rebel will acknowledge that Jesus reigns. Jesus is Lord of all things. The living and the dead, the redeemed and the condemned will all bow the knee to Him.

So the horrors of verses 1 - 3 are the backdrop to the glory of redemption. The entire world is condemned to utter wrathful vengeance, but escape to safety has been purchased and is freely offered to any takers.

Just like Noah's ark was open to anyone who would receive the message and come inside to safety. So Christ has purchased our redemption and safety inside Christ is free for anyone who partakes of the offer.

Verses 1 - 3 are the world lost. Verses 4 - 10 are the offer of free safety, free rescue into unspeakable wealth. Again, let's read 1 - 3 for the full effect of the contrast;

1 And you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom we all also formerly conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

vs. 4; *But God*

The single person who can reach into the abyss of verses 1 - 3 and rescue the condemned and perishing, is God. It was God who set death in motion as the payment for rebellion and sin. And only God can reach in and snatch sinners out of that spiral into eternal separation. Death is irreversible, except for one person. God. vs. 4; *But God*

In Matthew 19, Matthew tells us the story of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus literally asking Him, how do I get to heaven. Jesus offered him a choice of this world with all that's in it, or hold onto nothing and follow Him, and he couldn't give up this world. He went away sad.

And the disciples are astonished. Jesus, you just sent the best candidate we ever saw, packing. If that guy can't be saved, then, my goodness, who in

the world can???!! That guy was begging to come in. He was way out in front of everybody else! If he can't be saved, who can.

And Jesus gives us the impossible answer;

23 And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 25 And when the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?" 26 And looking at them Jesus said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Back to Ephesians. vss 1 - 3. The entire world is dead to God and alive to sin; vs. 4; *But God*

One person can wake you out of the slumber of spiritual death. If I was going to beat you to death with the doctrine of election, this is where we would begin. 1 - 3 You're dead. vs. 4; *But God* It's as simple as that. Dead people are unresponsive. One person can wake the dead. vs. 4; *But God*

4 But God, being rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ

There are no big theological words in there. Nothing hard to comprehend. Very simple words. But what they say is staggering;

In those simple words that shine the brilliant gospel upon the background of utter darkness, look again, and tell me what part I had in my salvation, and what part God accomplished.

It's pretty simple stuff. Profound, but simple. I was dead. Incapable of anything. And God quickened me to life. The only thing I accomplished was the sin that killed me. And I was born into that. When it came to life, I

was incapable of a response. Dead means dead. Unresponsive. God does it all.

4 But God, being rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ

And then, as if to say, I know this is hard for proud christians to accept, that we were helpless, unresponsive, dead, and He did it all, Paul restates the case. He doubles down;

—by grace you have been saved—

This doctrine is hated. By christians. I can name names in this town of people who get violently offended by this teaching.

They'll tell you, yeah, it says that, but what really happened is, I heard the gospel, and I responded, and that response caused God to wind back the eternal clock and add my name to His book, because of my acceptance, my faith, my response to the gospel.

He chose me because I chose Him. Foreknowledge. He foreknew that I would choose Him, accept Him, and that's the basis of why He chose me. Because He foreknew that I would choose Him. Accept His salvation. But it was my action that started the whole thing. It's all about me. He foreknew of my faith. That's what did it.

The problem is, that just completely dismantles what Paul is saying here. And not only that, it shifts the focus from the grace of God, through love, causing my salvation when I was helpless, dead, unresponsive.

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

I love some of the older translations that use the word quickened. The King James says; *Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)*

Quickened has within it the idea of death being changed miraculously to life. I was deader than dead, but now I am alive because He quickened me from death to life. Dead people have no capacity for response.

Our job is to faithfully take the good news to people who are dead. Unresponsive. Blind. Deaf. Unable to respond to spiritual things. Dead.

Jesus quotes Isaiah when He explains to His disciples why it is that He is speaking to the multitudes in parables;

Mt. 13:13 Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; You will keep on seeing, but will not perceive; 15 For the heart of this people has become dull, And with their ears they scarcely hear, And they have closed their eyes, Lest they would see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, And understand with their heart and return, And I would heal them.'

Jesus draws from the call of Isaiah into ministry. Fascinating stuff. Listen to the Lord's words to Isaiah. Isa. 6:8 - 12

8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!" 9 He said, "Go, and tell this people:

'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not know.'

*10 Render the hearts of this people insensitive,
Their ears dull,
And their eyes dim,
Lest they see with their eyes,
And hear with their ears,
And understand with their hearts,
And return and be healed.”*

*11 Then I said, “**Lord, how long?**” And He said,
“Until cities are devastated and without inhabitant,
Houses are without people,
And the land is devastated to desolation,*

*12 And Yahweh has removed men far away,
And the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.*

Noah. Noah preached for 120 years while he built the ark. Not one person got into the ark with Noah except his sons. 8 people after 120 years of warnings. 1 Pet. 3:20

We speak to the dead. The blind. The deaf. And from time to time, God quickens those dead listeners to life and they respond. Hey! There's 10 of us here! We're doing better than Noah.

Beloved, we are saved by grace. We are chosen before the foundation of the world. Our names written in God's book of life. And at the right time we heard the good news. And God quickened us from death to life, and we believed. Ordo Salutis. (the order of salvation)

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

He made me alive together with Christ.

The order of salvation in this passage goes from eternity past, to eternity present, to eternity future.

God was working in the process of saving me, before the worlds were made, before I was born, before I ever sinned, while I was dead in my sins. I was unaware until the day he quickened me from death to life. I'm one of those christians that can tell you the day. August 26th, 1970. The lights came on.

Eternity present for me at least began. I am in Christ. It's a relationship. A friendship. I know Him. He knows me. Eternity present. But Paul now shifts to eternity future in vss 6, 7.

I'm saved. Regenerated from the dead. Made alive, in Christ. In a relationship that is constant and growing. After 53 years it's still getting deeper and deeper. Eternity present. But there's a lot more after this. Tons more.

In fact what I have now is what Paul refers to as only the downpayment. The indwelling Holy Spirit is the engagement ring. The promise of a future wedding. The Holy Spirit is a pledge.

Sometimes we make a deal that needs to wait to be completed in the future. You sell a house but the buyer can't pay until he sells his current house. But the deal holds together, why? Because he has given you some good faith money until the day of completion comes. Down payment money.

The Holy Spirit, along with being In Christ, quickened to life with Him from the dead, this relationship, this friendship together with Him means everything. Talk about being defined by something. My relationship with Jesus is who I am. It is what defines me.

I was tickled the other day that our Speaker of the House, Mike Johnson, when asked by reporters about his world view, said something to the effect of, if you want to know my world view, open up your Bible and read it.

Regenerated christians are defined by their relationship with Jesus. But as

good as that is, with all the joy and satisfaction and thriving and inner peace that is mine in Him, that's still just the down payment. I'm rich as croesus, even now, but that's only the earnest money pledge of what will be mine in eternity future.

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

Those words are what we categorically call; Positional truth. Eternity future truths. Practical truth is all the wealth I already enjoy, in eternity present, with my Lord, In Christ, right now. Positional truth is just as solid, just as real, but it's held in account for me to inherit when I enter eternity future.

Peter speaks of our positional inheritance as though held in a trust. Waiting for us to get there. incorruptible. undefiled. unfading. guarded in heaven. The words would be the same as how you might describe a secure bank vault.

*1 Pet. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a **living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 **to obtain an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, having been kept in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.***

The practical truth that I possess right now is more valuable to me than anything else this world can ever offer. By far. But it's only the pledge, only the engagement ring for the future wedding that will be mine in the future.

Positionally, I am already raised up and seated with Christ, in heaven. But the future holds *the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

My little brain isn't even wired for me to comprehend the incomprehensible riches in glory that are mine. Held in trust. Guarded. Waiting for the day when eternity future begins.

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

I want to unpack something in vs 7 that is important. The church, as a whole entity, in eternity future, is forever a showpiece. For all eternity the grace and love and kindness of God will be on display, in us, who deserved wrath, but enjoy an adopted kinship with the Son of God.

We are a trophy for all of eternity. A showpiece that forever displays those attributes of God. Love, mercy, kindness, grace, forgiveness, undeserved, in fact given freely to dead people who only deserved wrath. The church is God's trophy of grace forever.

And the Bible speaks of us as being unveiled. Like a masterpiece painting with a veil over it and a hushed crowd waiting for it's revealing. The sheet is dropped and the crowd breathes out a gasp of awe.

The church is God's masterpiece of grace. We will be on display for His glory for all of eternity. Romans 8:

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

1 John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not been manifested as yet what we will be. We know that when He is manifested, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

That same sense of a future unveiling, a showing, a revealing is in verse 7;

so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Listen to Peter speak of this aspect of the church in completeness;

*9 But you are a chosen family, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 for you once were not a people, but now you are **the** people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 1 Pet 2:9,10*

In eternity present, we proclaim the excellencies of Him, individually, to others. But in eternity future we will proclaim His excellencies forever as a chosen family. A royal priesthood. A holy nation. A people who are the possession of God, for His glory forever.

All of creation will gaze at the church corporate, in heaven, forever, and glorify Him who called us out of waste, out of refuse, out of dung, out of death and putrifying decay and turned us into His shining glory.

I want to finish on that high note this morning and we'll pick it up in vs 8 next week if the Lord allows.

Look with me at the book of revelation, the last book in the Bible, and near the final end at vs. 9 of chapter 21;

9 Then one of the seven angels who have the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like precious stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.

And lastly, the open invitation of chapter 22;

16 “I, Jesus, sent My angel to bear witness to you of these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.” 17 And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come. Let the one who wishes receive the water of life without cost.