

Date: 2 July 2023

Scripture Passage: Ephesians 2:1-10

Title: Once Dead, Now Alive

Introduction

- The overall theme of the book, which is again “the spiritual blessings that we have been blessed with by God”. Not the physical blessings. That's not what Paul's talking about here, but our spiritual blessings. Our election, our predestination, our salvation, and Christ, our adoption into the family, our future glorification. All of those things are spiritual blessings. And those things are part one of the theme of this book. That is that we have these spiritual blessings in God. And as we look at these spiritual blessings, we also see in chapter one that Paul had the desire for the Saints at Ephesus to really know and to understand how great and wonderful those spiritual blessings are. But he understood that the only way that they would ever understand them is if the Holy Spirit revealed those truths to him. He could talk to him till he was blue in the face. He could write to them many, many words, but until the Holy Spirit took those words, placed them inside them and eliminated their mind, they were not going to understand. So his prayer is that they might truly understand what God has given to them.
- First half of the book, the first 3 chapters are all about these spiritual blessings. And in the last three chapters are the practical application. That is because we are so spiritually blessed. We should be acting out in a certain way in this life. God did not save us with the expectation that we should just do nothing and we should just go on our merry way and someday we die and collect our inheritance. No! When the Lord saved us, he called us into his family. And he expects us to act like a child of the king on this earth. And that's the theme of this book. **Correct understanding of salvation affects the quality of Christian life.**

I. Three facts about the spiritually dead (1-3).

- *They are under the power of Satan (2). Majority not aware (cf Jn 8:44, of your father the devil; Mt 13:38-39, P. of wheat & tares). Control their thoughts (John 8:44). Instigate agents to act for him (Eph. 6:14, 16; Rev. 13:1, 11; 17:3). Angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). Peter used by Satan (Matt. 16:23). Evangelism must be carried out with this in mind.*

Let us consider the facts of the spiritually dead in Chapter 2 verse 1. **Read 2:1.** Paul is building upon his previous point, where he talked about Jesus being raised from the dead. Now he starts here telling us that we're dead now and he's going to raise us up from our death in trespasses and sins.

What is Paul doing here? Paul is comparing us to a dead corpse, a dead corpse. We may not have been physically dead, so to say, but the curse of sin is upon us. Imagine this, when a prisoner is set for the death penalty. And the date has been set for the date of execution. And they move that prisoner to await that that time of his execution, what do they say about that man? They say he is a **dead man walking**. There is no hope for that person. There is no more appeals to be made. The man is going to die. there is only one thing that can save that man. And that is a pardon. A pardon from the governor or pardon from the president. Only they have the authority to stop the execution and set the prisoner free. That's the only hope that they have.

Have you thought about it this way? When we were born, we were born dead men walking. And Adam, all men have fallen, and the curse of sin has passed from the father to the child ever since. **Heb 9:27** says “it is appointed unto man once to die”. So as we walk through this life, we are dead men walking. You see, dead men can do nothing to help themselves, can they? A dead man can do absolutely nothing to revive themselves. Can't do it. They can't ask their buddy to come over and to revive them. When you are pronounced dead. There is no hope of living again. And folks, that is the same kind of spiritual condition that we were born into. We were a dead man walking with no hope of spiritual life whatsoever. That was the condition we were born in.

Now look at verse 2. **Read v2.** As we read this verse here, and we think about the way man is. Man likes to think that they are Born Free, born to choose whatever destiny they will follow. But friends, you were born dead men walking. You were born into this world under the power of Satan, according to the course of this world. Most people are not aware that they are of the devil. **Read John 8:44.** You were set right in the midst of a broad road that leads to destruction following the beat and rhythm of a pied piper of death that we call the devil. What is the result? It is the same for all that follow the broad and easy road. You thought you were free. You thought you had a choice. You didn't even know you were dead inside because you felt so full of this life. Oh, my friends, it is such a great deception. That the Prince of the power of the air has worked in you. You weren't free. I wasn't Born Free. You were born in bondage, and you were walking along just as a dead man without hope, and you never even knew it. You were blinded by your true state. You were a dead man walking and did not know the reality of the death chamber that awaited you.

- *They live in sin (3). Live in disobedience to God's law (2). Lusts of the flesh, of the mind, fulfilling the desires by actions (3). Arises from nature that is sinful, inherited from Adam & Eve (cf. Matt. 12:34).*

And verse three, it says. **Read v3.** You might say that that picture that you presented there of that dead man walking and all that imagery, that wasn't me. I'm saved. I was different from the very beginning. I wasn't born that way. Listen, perhaps you are saved. And indeed, if you're saved, you are one of the elect of God. But listen, you were still born into this world **a dead man walking.** And you went through this life fulfilling the desires of your flesh and mind, and you ate up every desire that you had in this life that you could take. And enjoyed every minute of it. You were living in sin. You were living in disobedience to God's law.

- *They are under God's wrath (1b, 3c). God hates sins & sinners. Desires them to repent. Salvation provided in Christ. Failure to repent means under wrath. Wrath hangs over them now, until limit exceeded (Acts 5:5, 10; 1 Cor. 11:30), or on last day. It is a fearful thing to fall into hands of living God (Heb. 10:31).*

And the third fact about the spiritually dead, is that you are under God's wrath. You were born a child of wrath. And headed to a sinner's hell. Just the same as the murderer on death row. That was you. That was me. And what you didn't realize was that your life was just as Jonathan Edwards portrayed "sinners in the hands of an angry God". You were but a spider hanging out, a thread dangling over Hell's fire in the hands of an angry God. That's the danger that you were still in. That was your position. In Heb. 10:31 says "It is a fearful thing to fall into hands of living God". Friends, are you still living in your own world as though you are God over your own life? You get to decide and chose your own destiny? Repent oh friends, and trust in Christ.

II. Three facts about the spiritually alive (4-10).

- *They are saved by God's love in Christ (4-5). Love manifests as mercy in Christ who died for us. Salvation therefore by grace, not works. Spirit works in us upon through preached word giving us new life (5 cf. 1:19-20). Rom. 10:17. As Spirit works in us, ability given to repent & believe.*

Let's read on in verse #4 to consider facts about the spiritually alive. **Read v4.** Following that description of death and condemnation that we have seen in verses 1-3. Then we read two of the loveliest words ever penned in Greek. "Day theos". But God. **But God.** I was dead, and I was walking to the cadence of the Pied Piper of death on my path to hell, and there was no hope for me out of anything I could do. There was no hope for me out of any help from anyone else. Death and destruction and hell were before me, "but God"! But God stepped in. He stepped in, indeed, to the picture of my life. The one who was rich in mercy, the one who is rich in love. But God stepped into my life, and because of the love that he had for me from the foundation of the world. A love that I was not worthy of. A love manifests as mercy in Christ who died for us. **For god so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.** What greater love can there be, that one would give up his only begotten son, to die for underserving sinners like us.

And look in v5. it says **Read v5**. Yes, even when we were in the midst of our darkest hours of sin, sin that God was indeed angry with; when we were in our darkest hour of sin, dead as dead could be with no hope of spiritual life. God stepped in and **made us alive!** In 1:19 it says “what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places”. Just as the spirit raised Christ from the dead, so God has made us alive out of our spiritual death by breathing into us spiritual life. And sealing it with the Holy Spirit, bringing us spiritually alive together with Christ. The same power, the same authority, that took Jesus and raised him from the dead and placed him in his right hand of God. It’s exactly the same power, the same authority, that brought you out of spiritual deadness into life. It is that great power that did so and brings you now into a position of being a son and a daughter. That’s what Paul is saying, “made us alive together with Christ”, where’s Christ? He’s at the right hand of God the father.

And Paul doesn’t leave this verse without reminding us that this was done by what? Grace! We were saved by grace. What is grace? What does that mean? Grace is the unmerited favor of God. BB Warfield says Grace Is free sovereign favor to the ill deserving. John Stott start says Grace is love that cares, and stoops and rescues. Paul Zahl says grace Is unconditional love toward a person who does not deserve it.

Friends, we were dead in our trespasses. We were dead in sin. How can we even choose God if we were dead? How can we choose to be alive when we are dead? There is nothing that we can do. Dead men don’t make choices. But it is purely through grace that is freely given to us who do not deserve it. God chose us from eternity past, before the foundation of the world. Knowing full well that we will always falls short of the holy standard of God. Knowing that we were worthy of the death and destruction. We were worthy for God to let go of the spiders thread, and let us plummet into a sinner’s hell. We were worthy of that. But God stepped in with his marvelous grace and made us alive. I couldn’t have earned it even in the best day of my life.

Do you understand the realness of this situation? I was a dead man walking. I was sitting in the electrocution chair, ready for the switch to be pulled. Guilty and worthy of the fate that awaited me. When God stepped in the room. And said no. I’m pardoning this one. Set him free. Because my beloved son Jesus Christ already took his place. I asked what did I do that you would do this for me? And his answer? Nothing! It was all because of grace. As the hymn says “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling; naked, come to thee for dress; helpless, look to thee for grace; foul, I to the fountain fly; wash me, Savior, or I die”.

- *They share in the spiritual blessing of Christ (6-7). Upon faith, given new life, pictured by raising of the dead. Given new status, “seated together in heavenly places in Christ” (6). Adoption as children. In the ages to come, i.e. in heaven for eternity, kindness by grace shown us, i.e. rewards (7). Distribution of rewards based on works (1 Cor. 3:12, 14). One of the things prayed for by Paul (1:18).*

Look in verse #6. **Read v6**. God has brought us from ashes to glory, that we may share in the spiritual blessing of Christ. When we are saved, we are raised from the dead of our sins and given new life. We are moved from a state of death into glory. You might say “I’m not in heaven”. Oh friends, it is done! It’s a done deal. We are adoption as children of God. We are given new status, “seated together in heavenly places in Christ”. Someday when we leave this earth, we will be in the presence of the Lord. But understand this, God does not see you for who you are right now with all flaws. When God sees you, He sees you for who He knows you to be. He sees you for who you will be. Forgiven and righteous. He sees you in glory. And that is a spiritual blessing, and someday a physical blessing that cannot and will never be taken away.

Look in verse #7. **Read v7**. Let me ask you a question. Has God been good to you? Has God been good to you? You say, well, of course he’s being good to me. Spiritually He’s blessed me with all of these great many riches that you were that you’ve been talking about, but even physically, God has blessed us with

the Lord, has he not? You might not have a lot of money in the bank. But today you all woke up with a roof over your head. Today you woke up with the ability to choose which clothing to put on your back. God has blessed us with a lot. It would have been enough. But God saved us so that he might show us exceeding riches of his grace and kindness, and the ages to come. The fact is, is that death is really just the beginning. In this life, God provides for us. And he blesses us with so many spiritual blessings, so many physical blessings. How often it is that we look back in our life, and we see God's merciful hand upon us. We could have been that person who failed in life. We could have made that decision and fell into temptation. But God showed the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us.

But what he has in store for us is so much more than what we could ever imagine. When we see him in heaven. And when we see what he has prepared for us, the glories that he has prepared for us. In John 14:3 it says "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." And you know what? I believe that this morning. I know that my Jesus is coming again to redeem those who are His and the judge the rest of the world. But I will tell you this. Because I know what he has done for me. In bringing me from the deadness of sins into the life that I have. Because I know that he is returning again and the clock is winding down. I know that there people that still need to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They still need to hear. Folks, the spiritual blessings that we have in store for ought to motivate us to share the good news with others. I don't know who will hear. But I know that the world is full of dead men, and the only hope that they have is for someone to share with them Christ. Because without him there is no pardon.

- *Humbly serve God while on earth (8-10). Not perfect, but made willing (Heb. 8:11; Ps 110:3). Understanding of salvation by grace of such importance (8-9). Many brought to humble themselves before God upon discovery of 5 Pts. Good works the fruit of faith (10). Sanctification meant i.e. works of obedience to the word, including doing good (cf. Tit. 3:8, 14). The mark of conversion is life of willing obedience (Rom. 6:17-18).*

Read v8-9. In verse 8 we find faith and grace. Sola Gratia and Sola Fide. By Grace alone, through faith alone. Two of what have been termed of the of the five SOLAS. You all remember those, Sola Scriptura, the word of God alone. Sola Gratia, by grace alone. Sola Fide, by Faith alone. Sola Christus, by Christ alone. And soli deo Gloria, for the glory of God alone. They were true before the Reformation, and they're true today, and they'll be true in the eternity to come. The point that Paul is driving home here that nothing we could ever do could earn what God has given us. It all comes because of God's grace. It is a gift (v8). It's not because we made the decision to chose God. It's not because we walked down the aisle. Not because we said a sinners prayer. There is nothing we did that we can boast about. It was all of God's doing. It is a gift! And when we understand how our salvation came about by grace, we want to humbly submit to God. We want to Serve him faithfully while on this earth. As we understand that we are totally depraved, there is not one ounce of good in us. And that God unconditionally chose us from the foundation of the world. And he sent his only begotten son to atone for the sins of His chosen people. And as much as we may resist God's calling, we cannot thwart the will of God to save us. And God has promised us His blessing to be upon us. That He will never leave us nor forsake us. He will help us persevere to the day when we will be reunited with Him in glory. When we understand that of our salvation, how can anyone boast. If it were not for God, we will still be a dead men walking.

Read v10. Because we are His workmanship, we want to serve our new master willingly and faithfully. We ought to do good works not because it will contribute to our salvation, but because of the love that Christ has shown to us, we want to love others just as Christ first loved us. Good works is the fruit of faith. And we want to show that we are growing and maturing and bearing fruit. We are a vessel of glory made by God. His workmanship from the beginning to the end. And as a vessel of glory, we need to be walking In the way that is worthy before the one who made us. We ought to behave in a way that is reflective of his adopted children.

Summary

- Spiritually dead or alive? Born again of Spirit? Converted? Salvation is by faith in Christ!

- Show your faith by your works. Not grudgingly, not unwillingly, but out of love & gratitude.