



# RESURRECTED

God provides salvation by grace through faith apart from our good works.

## EPHESIANS 2:1-10

A case can be made that virtually every advertisement and marketing message comes to us in a form of the “before and after” approach. At the very least it can be said that most cosmetic and fitness ads use this approach in which they show a person prior to using the product and then again with the amazing after effects. A subtle variation on this method is the “shock and awe” model, where shocking information is presented and followed up with an amazing solution to the problem.

***How does a positive change in a person's life motivate others to make that same change?***

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# UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

## EPHESIANS 2:1-10

At the close of the first chapter, Paul elevated the incredible essential truth of the gospel that God has raised Jesus from the dead (Eph. 1:20). The same power that raised Jesus is at work in believers (1:19). What would require such an amazing demonstration of power and might in us? What condition would necessitate it?

Paul painted a stark contrast between what human beings are in their essential nature and what they can become through the grace of God. This is not a cynical view—and certainly not an optimistic one—but rather a realistic picture of the human condition. A hopeful picture will be painted by the apostle, but he first lays the groundwork by clearly delineating our terrible plight created by sin. What we find is a biblical “before and after” picture.

As we have seen previously in Ephesians, this entire passage is one long sentence. We don’t come to the main verb until verse 5, where we read He “made us alive.” This is an incredible statement of the grace of God in salvation. Something had to happen to us in order for us to enjoy the blessed status described in 1:3-14. Our natural condition was anything but blessed.

Paul had prayed that the Ephesians’ eyes would be opened to the greatness of their status in Christ (1:15-23). God answered that prayer by inspiring Paul to write about the grace of God in salvation. Nothing should bring more awe to our hearts and minds than the awareness of what God in His mercy has done to save us.

Eventually, Paul will remind the Ephesians of their oneness in Christ. We find in the second half of the second chapter of this book an incredible vision of a new spiritual oneness where humanity comes together under the lordship of Christ. However, such a unity can never occur without a radical transformation of the individuals who comprise it. The ground of unity in Christ is the truth that through faith we are made alive in Him.

***As you read Ephesians 2:1-10, notice the contrast of life before salvation and after salvation. What do these contrasts reveal about the nature of salvation found through faith in Jesus?***

# EXPLORE THE TEXT

## ONCE DEAD (EPH. 2:1-3)

**<sup>1</sup> And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> 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— <sup>3</sup> 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.**

### VERSES 1-2

Our condition prior to salvation is described as that of being *dead* in *trespasses and sins*. While it is true that Paul was directly addressing the Ephesians with the personal pronoun *you*, it is the whole of humanity that he envisioned. This is clear by his usage of “we” in verse 3. Regardless of how moral and upright a person might appear, he or she cannot escape this indictment of deadness. Apart from Christ, we are dead in our sins and trespasses—not sick, not dying, but dead.

### KEY DOCTRINE: *Man*

Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God and fell from his original innocence, whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin (Rom. 3:23).

Sinful behavior is the norm prior to conversion. Paul asserted that the Ephesians *once lived* this way. At times you will hear people explain their inappropriate behavior by saying, “Well, that’s not really who I am.” More often that not, that behavior represents exactly who they are.

The lifestyle of an unconverted individual follows the pattern of the surrounding culture, described in Scripture as *the course of this world*. Paul did not mean physical creation but rather the human value system and structures that are in opposition to God. This fallen world is in direct contrast with the kingdom of God.

Not only are spiritually dead persons living in conformity to the world, but they are also under the sway of the universe’s most

malevolent creature, Satan. He is depicted as **the prince of the power of the air**. Satan is a spiritual creature, invisible to the physical eyes but not to the eyes of faith in the inspired revelation of God, the Scripture.

Encouraged by the devil himself, the prevailing tendency of a lost person is disobedience. The essence of sin is willfulness, a stubborn resistance to the authority of Christ and to the recognition of His glorious nature. This attitude or **spirit** is at work in the hearts of the lost, prompting their behavior and maintaining their bondage.

**How does our experience support the way Paul described life without Jesus? Why is it important for those without Jesus to understand where they stand without Jesus? Why is it important for believers to remember what life is like without Jesus?**

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### VERSE 3

This spiritual deadness described by Paul does not result in a lack of activity, as would be true of a physical corpse. Rather, those who are spiritually dead are very active, albeit in a sinful and destructive manner. Their lives are marked by **passions** and **desires of the body and the mind**. The New Testament usage of the word *flesh* is varied, but in this context Paul used it in the sense of our sinful nature, that part of us that defies God and exalts self.

Every unconverted sinner is under God's **wrath**. We shouldn't see His wrath as akin to human anger, which can be petty and unpredictable. Instead, the wrath of God is His constant and unyielding opposition to sin.

**The very notion of divine wrath should tender our hearts toward the lost and fuel a desire for their salvation.**

Surely this shocking depiction of the human condition should prompt believers in Christ toward a vigorous communication of the gospel and the way of salvation. The very notion of divine wrath should tender our hearts toward the lost and fuel a desire for their salvation. The stronghold of sin is entrenched in the lives of the lost, reinforced by culture and the enemy, but the power of the gospel is greater. On a



daily basis, let us all be quick to recognize an opportunity for a gospel conversation and courageous enough to seize it.

***How does Paul's description of life without Jesus serve as motivation to share Jesus with others?***

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**NOW ALIVE** (EPH. 2:4-7)

**<sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.**

#### **VERSES 4-7**

There is no better sound bite of the gospel than the first two words of verse 4. ***But God*** summarizes exactly what He has done in salvation as well as the great debt that we as believers owe Him. The adversative *but* highlights the contrast between our plight and God's provision.

There was nothing in us that merited or warranted this divine favor and blessing. While we don't deserve it, we can't deny that God extends to us His ***mercy***, evidenced in the new life bestowed and prompted by ***the great love with which he loved us***. Having waited until verse 5 to write the main verb of the entire passage, Paul exploded with this doxology: God has ***made us alive together with Christ***. If we have been awakened from the blindness created by sin, how could we respond with anything except praise?

The life that God gives to us through Christ provides us with purpose. As a "before and after" testimony to the power of the truth, these renewed lives of ours become the means by which God's redemptive mission is accomplished in this world. If Christ's only purpose in our salvation was to get us into heaven, it stands to reason that upon conversion He would remove us from this life. But He didn't, leaving us here to witness to the mercy and love of God.

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Paul referenced three key moments in Jesus' life: His resurrection, ascension, and seating at the right hand of God. We see this in these three phrases: *made us alive together with Christ*, ***raised us up with him***, and ***seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus***. Although we are still here on earth, believers have a position in heaven based on Christ's exalted status.

The Christian faith is not merely characterized by dogma—by only believing certain truths. While there is an essential doctrinal component to Christianity, there is also an experiential dimension. Believers are one with Christ, in union with Him. It is a dynamic and living relationship, impacting both the mind and the emotions.

For all eternity, the church of Jesus—the company of the redeemed—will be a demonstration of God's kindness and grace in salvation. The riches of God's grace are described as ***immeasurable***, the same word used for the greatness of God's power in Ephesians 1:19. Perhaps it is not off the mark to view everyone who believes in Christ as a trophy of His grace. The verb ***show*** carries a stronger meaning than to simply make something known. All recipients of divine grace will be high-resolution displays of the many-faceted grace of God throughout all eternity.

***How does the changed life of a believer serve as a display of God's grace and character?***

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### **THROUGH GRACE ALONE** (EPH. 2:8-10)

**<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**



## VERSES 8-9

Paul was determined that God receive all the glory for the salvation of sinners. Without this clear understanding of grace as the source of our renewed relationship with God, we run the risk of diminishing His glory. This is why two of the historical watchwords of the Protestant Reformation were the Latin phrases *sola gratia* (by grace alone) and *solī Deo gloria* (glory to God alone).

The salvation that is addressed in verse 8 is more than simply the remission of sins, however wonderful that would be alone. Salvation represents the totality of the new life to be found in Christ—freedom from death and condemnation, possession of an eternal place in heaven, and the Holy Spirit residing within the heart. These blessings stem from God’s grace, and they come to a believer through faith in Christ.

The inclinations of the human mind (v. 3) gravitate toward a man-centered religion. Human pride wants to take its share of the credit in any endeavor. There is no room for pride, however, in salvation.

In Romans 3:20 Paul declared that salvation cannot be accomplished by the works of the law. A person is saved “by faith apart from works of the law” (Rom. 3:28). To the Galatians, Paul wrote that “a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ” (Gal. 2:16), and “if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose” (Gal. 2:21). He reminded Titus that God “saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy” (Titus 3:5).

## Paul is consistently clear that a person cannot earn salvation by being good or doing good.

Paul is consistently clear that a person cannot earn salvation by being good or doing good. We have nothing about which to boast. Our new life in Christ is God’s work, from beginning to end. The only person worthy of praise in the salvation event is God.

## VERSE 10

Believers live lives of **good works** because they have been brought to salvation by grace through faith, not to earn God’s favor. As new creations in Christ, we are saved *for* good works, not *by* them. Previously, Paul set forth the desired outcome of God’s work on our behalf, that we would be “holy” and “blameless” (1:4).

The performance of good works as a result of God's grace can be depicted by those two words.

Primarily, these behaviors should involve making His kindness known to the world. God could accomplish the redemption of others in a variety of ways that don't include us, but this is not His stated purpose. He wants to use us to make His goodness known to all. The motivation for living this type of life is gratitude, a sense of awe and wonder over how much God has done for our redemption.

***How do our reasons for doing good things relate to our understanding of salvation? What do our motives reveal about our beliefs about salvation?***

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### **BIBLE SKILL: *Memorizing Scripture***

Memorize Ephesians 2:8-10 in your preferred Bible translation. Rewrite the verse in your own words, emphasizing the parts of the verse that describe God's role in salvation. How does this passage give you assurance of your salvation? Do you know anyone who is trying to earn salvation in his or her own power? How you can use this verse to help that person understand that salvation is a gift to be received rather than a reward to be achieved?

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# IN MY CONTEXT

- Apart from Christ, all people are separated from God and subject to His judgment.
- Believers find life and purpose through faith in Jesus.
- Salvation is granted through faith alone in Jesus removing all grounds for personal boasting.

***On a scale of 1 to 10 (less to greater), how would you rate your urgency in telling others about Jesus? What actions can you take to help you “move the needle” toward greater urgency and more frequent sharing of your faith?***

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***As a group, discuss how your Bible study group carries out its purpose based on new life in Christ. What is the purpose of your group and how does that purpose reflect insights found in Ephesians 2? Record insights.***

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***Describe the changes believing in Christ makes in your life. How can these changes point others to Jesus?***

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## Prayer Needs

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