

EPHESIANS

ENGAGING THE POWER OF GOD'S AMAZING GRACE



ABUNDANTLIFE
FOURSQUARE CHURCH

WE ARE ALIVE BECAUSE OF THE LORD'S GRACE, LOVE, AND FAITH

Week Two

Ephesians 2:1-10

Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else. But God is so rich in mercy, and He loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, He gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) For He raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of His grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all He has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus. God saved you by His grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago. (NLT)

COMMENTS AND THOUGHTS

Ephesians 2:1 *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins (NIV).* Note that this verse is a continuation of 1:19-23. The phrase “as for you” identifies those who were dead in...transgressions and sins before they met Christ. This refers not only to eventual physical death or to the sinners' ultimate eternal state; it also refers to a very real “death” in this life. People who are spiritually dead have no communication with God.

YOU WERE DEAD is powerful: If someone handed you a couple of pills and said, “Swallow these,” would you do it? Not likely. However, if you were in a medical office and the person speaking was a doctor who had just told you that you would die unless you took the pills, you would be more likely to do so. Sometimes you have to know how bad the bad news is before you can appreciate the good news. The bad news is: “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.” What can dead people do to help themselves? Absolutely nothing. That is why God, in His mercy, had to reach out to us in His love: a love that would sacrifice His only Son for us.

Ephesians 2:2

You used to live in sin just like the rest of the world, full of sin, obeying Satan, the mighty prince of the power of the air. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God (TLB).

The Bible describes three marks of unbelievers:

1. They lived like the rest of the world. This refers to the world's accepted, but immoral, lifestyles and godless motives. Jesus warned His followers: “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you” (John 15:18-19 NIV).

2. They followed the mighty prince of the power of the air. This prince is Satan. The passage focuses on Satan’s reality as an evil power with a certain amount of control in the world. The Bible pictures Satan as ruling an evil spiritual kingdom — the demons and those who are against Christ. “Satan” means “the accuser.”

3. They were enslaved to “gratifying the cravings of [the] sinful nature” (2:3). Ephesians 2:3 *All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts (NIV).*

Sin: Those addicted to drugs report that the first encounter with heroin or crack or alcohol is a thrill, a rush. But afterward, it ceases to be fun. From then on, the addict is just killing the pain. Sin is like that. The first time, it — whatever “it” is (lust, greed, lying) — is a thrill. After that, we become slaves to the sin. You don’t use it; it uses you.

Ephesians 2:4 *But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us (NKJV).* **BUT GOD:** We were dead in our sins, but God . . . We were rebels against Him, but God . . . We were enslaved by Satan but God . . . These may be the two most amazing words in this letter to the Ephesians: “but God.” God could have left us spiritually dead, in rebellion against Him and in bondage to our sins. But He didn’t. He did not save us because of, but rather in spite of, what He saw in us. Zephaniah 3:15 The Lord has taken away your punishment, He has turned back your enemy. The Lord, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm (NIV).

Ephesians 2:5 *Made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions (NIV).* This verse finishes the message of 2:1, we were dead; now we are made alive. Each believer has been (1) made alive with Christ, (2) raised up with Christ, and (3) seated with Christ. God made us alive. “Made alive” means that we are “saved.”

Read these passages and discuss them:

Romans 6:8-11 (NIV)

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, He cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over Him. The death He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life He lives, He lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:10-11 (NRSV)

But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through His Spirit that dwells in you.

Galatians 2:20 (NKJV)

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Colossians 2:12-13 (NIV)

[You] having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.

This life is with Christ because He redeemed us, gave us this life, and was the first to be resurrected (Romans 8). God did not require us to be good enough before He reached down to save us; He made us alive when we were dead. Thus, the only basis for salvation is God's grace.

God does not take us out of the world or make us robots — we will still feel like sinning, and sometimes we will sin. The difference is that before we became Christians, we were dead in sin and were slaves to our sinful nature. But now we are alive with Christ (Galatians 2:20). By grace you have been saved. The verb form “have been saved” refers to a past event (accomplished by Christ) with present and ongoing results. Salvation is not something to be waited for, but something that has already been delivered.

Ephesians 2:6 *And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus (NIV).* WOW! Believers are seated . . . with Him in the heavenly realms. Christ has taken His seat at the right hand of the Father, indicating His finished work and His victory over sin. Christ has been exalted by God's great power (1:20). Christians have tended to see this seating with Christ as a future event, based on Jesus' words in Matthew 19:28 and Luke 22:30 as well as other verses that point to our future reign with Christ (such as 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 20:4; 22:5). Yet Ephesians teaches that we are seated with Christ now. We share with Christ in His victory now.

Ephesians 2:8-9 *For by grace you have been saved through faith...not of works, lest anyone should boast (NKJV).* “Grace” refers to the multifaceted gift that God makes available to us despite our unworthiness. Not only does God mercifully withhold the judgment and punishment that we so clearly deserve, He grants instead the almost unbelievable gifts of forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life. God's grace requires faith because the moral and legal case against us leads to an inevitable verdict — guilty. “Grace” means the forgiveness of our sins. It cannot be earned by works or by any goodness in us. It is free and undeserved favor on us by Christ's faithful act of redemption.

Our salvation comes from God's grace alone. "Through faith" refers to people's faith in accepting salvation; the simple acceptance of God's gift of salvation (Romans 3:22,25; Galatians 2:16). *And that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.* Ephesians 2:8 (NKJV). Our salvation has absolutely nothing to do with what we have or have not done. Salvation does not come from our self-reliance or individualism but from God's initiative. It is a gift to be thankfully accepted (Romans 3:24-28; 1 Corinthians 1:29-31; Galatians 2:16).

Ephesians 2:10 *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (NIV).* We are God's workmanship (work of art; new creation). Salvation is something only God can do — it is his powerful, creative work in us. Why would He sacrifice His only Son for sinners like us? Ephesians 2:10 gives one reason: so that we could be living, breathing pictures of His grace and mercy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In which areas of your life are you still in bondage to sin and to the author of sin?
2. Why is it often difficult for people to accept that salvation is a free gift and that we cannot earn our way to heaven?
3. How can we explain to people that our "good works" performance does not contribute in any way to our salvation given the fact we live in a world of works and performance?
4. How would you explain the concept that we are all sinners?
5. Understanding grace is critical to our faith. Why or why not?



**WHAT WILL YOU
DO WITH WHAT
YOU HAVE LEARNED
???**
