

# I Am Rescued

Series: Made for More (Ephesians)

May 8, 2022 - Brad Bailey

Intro

I was **talking to mother expecting her first child**... said don't try to be a perfect mom.... I had the general need for grace in mind... but I **suppose it's because our whole story is one of grace**... of sinners being rescued.

**That is the world that every mother welcomes their child into... a world of grace... a world of divine grace...of divine RESCUE.**

There is **no story that draws us more** than that of a **dramatic rescue**.

It's been this way **through the history** of human story telling.

When **firefighters go into a building** and they come out with children, we cheer.

It's why when some person is ruling over others in a horrendous way and the **soldiers show up to liberate**, we cheer.

**> Someone is in trouble...and their future depends on someone rescuing them from their fate.**

What I hope we will grasp today...is that **these are all just reflections of the ultimate rescue**.

**We are those in need...and we are those who can know ourselves to have been rescued.**

As we continue in our series in which we are engaging the Biblical book of Ephesians... a series entitled Made for More...we are letting God speak into who we are and how we can live accordingly. That is what the Apostle Paul was writing about. We've heard of how we are blessed by God by receiving the blessing which Christ shared with us. **Last week** we heard how in Christ... **We Are Destined**. Today... we must hear where it begins...with being rescued. For our rescue is more powerful and profound than any rescue on earth.

Let's hear of our own rescue...

## Ephesians 2:1-3

**As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup> All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.**

**Paul begins, " As for you, you were dead."** A **rather strong** statement. It may strike you in different ways depending on your personality. **Some** of you may like those who **"tell it like it is"**...aren't afraid of speaking the truth blatantly.... and so you can appreciate this bold description. **Others** might find this **a little harsh**. The truth is that there are times we must deal with the truth.

How we feel about such truth can be **similar to how we feel about doctors**. Some want to go often...know anything that may be going on related to their health. Some of us don't like going to doctors...in part because we just don't want bad news. We may avoid wanting to know what the state of our condition is....**but of course we are just avoiding a truth that we need**.

So Paul tells us the truth.

Here it is: Apart from some outside rescue...**You are dead**.

That may sound a little **surprising or extreme**...but it's far from being a new truth. It's what we read in the very first book of the Scriptures.

**Genesis 2:17**

**...you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."**

This was the **beginning of man's spiritual death**—his disobedience to the will of God. God said, if you seek your own life apart from me... the separation will bring death....the consequences will be a separation from life. And **what did the spiritual enemy say**... depicted as a serpent? Surely you will NOT DIE. (Gen. 3:4)

**That is the choice in which we live. God declares the tragedy of our separation from life...an eternal separation...and an enemy tells us to believe it's not true.**

So to understand who I am... begins with understanding that...

### **1. I am rescued FROM death**

Like many rescue stories...we may not even realize the extent of jeopardy we are in. Many of us may have a sense that we need God to just **fix up** our lives...to **recover** from some tragic losses...to do a **spiritual makeover** perhaps. These all true...likely more than we know. God has restoration beyond what we can imagine. God can revolutionize your life. I can look back at the trajectory of posture and practice...I have seen it.

But there is something much more fundamental at hand.

We are **not just sick**; we are **dead!**

We **don't** just need **rejuvenation**...we need **resurrection**.

Our stories may declare that we were lost...lonely... in trouble.... but we won't really grasp our true story until we can grasp that we were dead...facing eternal separation.

### **This may be hard to accept.**

Because we are thinking of two physical categories... of our earthly physical life... life and death...if we breathe...we have it.... And at some point we don't....and are dead. Do when we are told we are dead... we just can't connect.

But God sees our separation from true and everlasting life.

And Paul **expounds on** where we are when separated from God...on **what we must be saved from**.

Here we hear the **three dimensions of evil... flesh, the world, and the devil**. It begins with our own participation.

First...

**I am rescued from my own defiance ("transgressions and sins")**

He says we face the consequences of our own **"transgressions and sins."** [1]

The word "transgressions"...or as many state **"trespasses"** refers to being **outside where** we are suppose to be. If you've ever **been out in wider land**... you've **seen a sign** that said, **"No Trespassing."** It represents a boundary.... there's a border here, and I'm allowed to be over here, but if I step over this line, I'm trespassing. **I'm in a place** that I am **not supposed to be** and there's consequence for that, negative consequence.

> **Many of us** know that we have **found ourselves** where we are **not suppose to be**.

As C.S. Lewis states [2]:

***First . . . human beings, all over the earth, have this curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way, and cannot really get rid of it. Secondly . . . they do not in fact behave in that way. They know the Law of Nature; they break it. These two facts are the foundation of all clear thinking about ourselves and the universe we live in.***

That is exactly how God described our position back in Genesis.

After Adam and Eve choose to defy God... they try hiding in vain.

They are afraid of God... afraid of the One in whom their very existence is rooted. They are naked and afraid... hiding in their shame... and begin blaming the other.

Hiding and hurling... that captures our defiant nature.

**We don't just act... we act out of our nature.** [3] "A dog behaves like a dog because he has a dog's nature." If somehow you could transplant into the dog the nature of the cat, his behavior would change radically. We've behaved as sinner in separation from because that is our nature. (Pss. 51:5; 58:3).

**Do you remember the day you learned to sin?**

**Do you remember the day your parents said it was time to learn how to sin...time for lessons?**

None of us do ...because...we never needed to learn. Along with all of the profound beauty and goodness in our humanity...there is a defiant dynamic. Nobody has to teach you. Nobody has to sit down and say, "Here's how to do it." It's our nature.

Now that's not a popular view. When people hear people speak of being "sinners" and about such a "sinful nature" ...there is a reaction because it seems to decry everything good.

The truth is that we are **born bearing a reflection of God's image**...something amazing...but **also with a posture of rebellion** from the very source of life. We were born not only in state of separation but in a posture that reflects that... that **demands our way**.

How many of you are **parents** and you've **noticed this?** You give birth to a child ... sweetest life you could imagine...and then you begin to see another side to their nature...and some days you wonder if you're housing a **small terrorist**. They declare war...they begin to throw things....and you become very thankful that they're small.

The point is that we are defiant in our nature and choices.

**As C.S. Lewis says [4],**

**"We are not merely imperfect creatures that need improvement: we are rebels that need lay down their arms." – C.S. Lewis**

This is why we must understand that Jesus did not come to simply make us a little more moral...but to save us...to rescue us from ourselves. This is why I **encourage parents** to never **think of the ministry of the church to children** to be simply about teaching to be a little more moral. We gather with Jesus as those who have discovered his grace... the good news that we have been rescued.

Secondly,

**I am rescued from the darkness of the "world" system I follow**

The way the world is now.... in the present world...does not operate in alignment with God's will... and will ultimately be reunited with the will of God. Heaven and earth will be united. As such, the Scriptures speak of the "world"...or "**the ways of this world**" ... recognizing that when the **powers and patterns of evil** are **taken up as a social system**....they become a force in themselves. Just as the nature of God bears power when joined with others...and Jesus encourages us to "agree" in prayer...so such agreement has force in the larger system of this world.

Paul says it like it is: ***We have "followed the ways of this world."*** We are members...and apart from God **we have been active members**. So we are **destined to the fate of this world**.

And thirdly,

**I am rescued from the spiritual powers that rule ("ruler of the kingdom")**

Paul makes it clear that we are also following "**the ruler of the kingdom of the air.**" [5]

Paul tells us what we need to face... our condition is that of being under the influence of "the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient."

**Modern man hates** the idea of **being under anyone**.

**"I'm my own person."** can be **our proudest cry**. Ironically it's the **least novel thing** anyone has ever said. It was the first declaration **made in the Garden of Eden**...and it came from the influence of a serpent then....and still does.

**The truth is, we are rebels from God... at our very core**. So Paul concludes at this point...

**"All of us ... Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath." - Ephesians 2:3**

**We are the objects of wrath.**

**That is a hard word to hear. We find it difficult to reconcile the nature of love...and wrath.**

**When we hear wrath... we project the nature of human anger onto God.**

**Human anger is self-serving.... operates to defend itself... is out of control... and desires harm.**

**But what Paul describes is not about contempt... but consequences.**

How many times have I been told I needed to realize some truth or bear the consequences...and I didn't believe it until I faced it? How many times have I told my kids that the consequences of not doing what we have told them are real...and that they won't go away just because they hadn't been experienced yet?

> The point is that **people feel free from consequences** by simply **denying they exist**...by not believing in them....but that **doesn't actually change what is real**.

**When we understand our position... what must be faced.**

Continue....

## Ephesians 2:4-9

**But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup> And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- <sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast.**

**If we understood** where we truly stand....what we truly face...because of what WE have done and become....our entire lives would **stop here and consider the two most important words** that will ever change our lives: "**But God.**" [6]

As this translation states it: "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ.... even when we were dead in transgressions."

**"But God" - faced with the sentence of death...with nothing we could do...those words change everything.**

**He "made us alive together with Christ."**

You have been given **the life** that exists **in Christ** and **with Christ**.

How? "...by grace.

### **2. I am rescued BY grace**

Here we are reminded that the most powerful force in the universe is love ... divine love... that which suffers to by taking upon itself the shame we deserve. It is not simply some cheap grace... but God's grace...in Christ... in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. It was at Calvary that God displayed His hatred for sin and His love for sinners (Rom. 5:8; John 3:16).

As Ephesians 2:8-9 .....considered one of the most central truths of Scripture... declares ...

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast.

We have **nothing to boast about**. There is a **humility involved with grace**. A part of us may want to refuse it. It's that part of us that is so drawn to calling for justice....fairness... not thinking for a moment that it could imply **getting what we really deserve**.

> We have to **choose between** the **scales of justice** and the **grace of the cross**.

**It's described how we receive grace "through faith."**

When the Scriptures speak of being saved by "faith"....we **might think of some other quality we must have** called "**faith**"...and we must have enough...and we become focused on this spiritual quality. But the **focus in not on the nature of faith.... but the object of faith...** on WHAT we are trusting.

It's the object of faith that saves you, and you may be trusting in a false religious system, a false moral system, or a false spiritual system. You're not saved just by having faith in someone or something, that object needs to actually be a Savior who can save. Jesus' very name means "God is our Savior. God is our salvation." That's exactly what Jesus means, so his name indicates his life mission.

It is **HIS WORK**... already accomplished that is extended to those who will receive it...who will enter the way of Christ.

When Jesus died, the veil of the temple was torn in two, from the top to the bottom, signifying that **the way to God was now open**. As Jesus said upon the cross. "It is finished." The sacrifice was made. Sin worked against us and God worked for us.

> DO you understand...your rescuer is not one who bears some type of obligation. He is not simply following the law of the universe...but rather is acting in love. What a love. He is the one you and I have denounced and dismissed most of our lives.

So our text concludes....

**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.**

**God's rescue** of us is **not the end of the story**...it is **just the beginning** of what can now unfold. So Paul tells us that we are rescued for a purpose.

### **3. I am rescued FOR good works**

Notice...**not BY works... but FOR works.**

You're saved by his works. He works in you, he works on you, he works through you.

> As a result, we are **restored to our purpose... in the good works of God.**

Redemption has only begun...it is unfolding as the creation of a new humanity and a new world, which has previously existed only in the mind and purpose of God. This is "His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus."

**"Good works" doesn't refer to just being a more moral person  
...but to becoming God oriented and God partnered.**

**When you are rescued from death...by a love so amazing** that one would **take all the suffering** you had coming...the shame, the separation, the judgment... what can one do but be changed.

Here lies the **great divide** - we try to be good people through rules...whether religious rules or secular "moral" rules...and keep pretending we are better than we are...or we stand before the **face of grace**...and are changed by it.

Human nature will be drawn to the former. But the power of God is love bearing love...His mercy changing us. [7]

**When a local prostitute came to a dinner party at a religious leaders home** and began to wash Jesus' feet... they scoffed...but Jesus explained how it works...saying essentially,

**"Who Is Forgiven Much, Loves Much"** - Luke 7:36-50

If such love...such grace...such a rescue does not change us...we likely haven't really received it.

What she saw...was the face of grace.

Will you look into the face of grace?

## CLOSING PRAYER

**Resources:** Dunnam, M. D., & Ogilvie, L. J. (1982). Vol. 31: Galatians / Ephesians / Philippians / Colossians / Philemon. The Preacher's Commentary Series; Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Eph 2:1–10b). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books; Darryl Dash reference to "But God";

## Notes

1. The Bible Knowledge Commentary - "Transgressions" (paraptōmasin, "false steps"; cf. Eph. 1:7; 2:5) and "sins" (hamartia is, "acts of missing the mark"), though slightly different in their root meanings, are basically synonymous. Both suggest deliberate acts against God and His righteousness and thus failure to live as one should. The plural of these two nouns signifies people's repetitious involvement in sin and hence their state of unregeneration.

Hoehner, H. W. (1985). Ephesians. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Eph 2:1–10). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

2. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Bk 1, Ch 1, p 21

3. Tim Keller - What Jesus call forth reveals we don't just sin...our nature bears sin (the bent, opposition, etc) -

When you read what Jesus really wants from us, he tells us he wants loving hearts, and he defines love in unbelievable ways. You know the place in Luke 14 where he says, "If you really love your neighbor as yourself, you wouldn't invite people into your home who could invite you into *their* home. You'd only invite the poor and the needy. You'd only invite the homeless in." He says, "Never give a banquet and invite people who can invite you back. Always invite the poor and the needy."

He says, "Love your neighbor as yourself." He says, "Don't only not hate people, but love people perfectly and never have a grudge." He says, "Don't only not envy people, but be unbelievably generous and give your money away all over the place, and when somebody asks for something give him two, and when somebody asks for this much give him double that."

Whenever you read what Jesus says about the kind of love we ought to have and the kind of generosity we ought to have and the kind of unselfishness we ought to have, no matter what you believe about Jesus or Christianity, nobody can read what he's saying and fail to admit, "This is what people should be like. This is what society should be like. This is what *I* should be like."

As soon as you admire his teaching, you're immediately cut down, because he doesn't just give you little rules. He doesn't just say, "Don't lie, don't cheat, don't steal." What he shows you is the kind of motives you ought to have and the kind of nature you ought to have, and you immediately know you don't have that kind of nature at all.

I say this to you: You cannot actually be a Christian, and you cannot have even *seen* who Jesus Christ is, and you haven't even *begun* to grasp his teaching, if you only believe you are guilty of *sins*. If you really understand what his teaching is, if you really have seen what he demands of you, if you've really seen the glorious nature of his ethical standards, you immediately feel, "I don't just break the rules; my very *nature* is sinful. My very *nature* is depraved. My very *nature* makes it impossible for me to do this."

#### 4. C.S. Lewis - The Problem of Pain

##### 5. Regarding the phrase the "kingdom of the air."

Paul was obviously familiar with the Jewish concept of the heavens of his day. According to that model, there were three levels of heaven:

- The air – the atmosphere in which human life takes place here on the earth
- The universe beyond the earth where the other stars and planets are located
- The third heaven, which is beyond our human vision, is the place where God resides.

So the "kingdom of the air" is just another word for the earth where mankind makes his abode. And according to this verse, there is a ruler who has power over this "first heaven". (Drawn from Pat Damiani)

6. "But...God." - Many note that the great Welsh preacher Martyn Lloyd-Jones preached one of the most powerful messages on these two words and said, "These two words ["But God"], in and of themselves, in a sense contain the whole of the gospel."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer says:

"It is the grace of the gospel, which is so hard for the pious to understand, that confronts us with the truth and says: You are a sinner, a great, desperate sinner; now come, as the sinner that you are, to God who loves you. You can hide nothing from God. The mask you wear before men will do you no good before Him. He wants to see you as you are, He wants to be gracious to you. You do not have to go on lying to yourself and your brothers, as if you were without sin; you can dare to be a sinner." (From "Life Together")

##### 7. The uniqueness of grace within religious ideas

More found at - <http://www.christianity.co.nz/grace-13.htm>

"During a British conference on comparative religions, experts from around the world were discussing whether any one belief was unique to the Christian faith. They began eliminating possibilities. Incarnation? Other religions had different versions of gods appearing in human form. Resurrection? Again, other religions had accounts of return from death. The debate went on for some time, until C. S. Lewis wandered into the room. "What's the rumpus about?" he asked, and heard in reply that his colleagues were discussing Christianity's unique contribution among world religions. In his forthright manner, Lewis responded, "Oh, that's easy. It's grace." As Phillip Yancey puts it, "Calvary broke the logjam between justice and forgiveness. By accepting onto his innocent self all the severe demands of justice, Jesus broke forever the chain of ungrace."

[Philip Yancey, What's So Amazing About Grace?, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 45.]