

Ephesians 2:1-10

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[0 : 00] I'm going to be looking at this passage, Ephesians 2, 1-10, entitled in this version of the Bible, By Grace Through Faith.

! I don't know how many of you regularly listen to Radio 4's Thought for the Day on the Today program in the morning. I confess I find it a somewhat frustrating exercise for two main reasons. First of all, the disproportionate amount of time they give to speakers from religions other than the Christian faith, far in excess of the proportions of the followers of those religions in our society. But that isn't the most frustrating thing. I think the most frustrating thing, I think, is that I hear supposedly from Christians with messages that tell us nothing about the good news of the Gospel and the grace of God.

And we often, time to time, hear the humanists say, we want a slot. And I feel like saying to them, you needn't bother. Those who appear supposedly in the name of Christian are doing your job for you.

[1 : 11] Well, I want to do the opposite this afternoon. I want to show you what is unique and life-changing concerning the Christian faith. And the first thing we see in this portion before us is a unique view about mankind.

The Christian faith doesn't treat mankind as somehow not quite up to standard and needing a boost, or seeing men and women as sick and needing some sort of cure.

No, it's much, much more radical than that. The Christian view of mankind, men and women, is that without Christ we are spiritually dead.

Paul is writing to the church at Ephesus, and he starts off here by saying in this portion, and you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked.

What characterises the non-Christian is that they are spiritually dead, and therefore insensitive to God and to what he has to say to them.

[2 : 23] They cannot hear because they have been deadened by sin. In the Garden of Eden, God said, the day that you eat of the fruit of the tree, you will die.

And that wasn't physical death that day, it was spiritual death. And this is what Paul talks about here. Dead in the trespasses and sins.

Trespasses going out of the way of God. Sins, disobedience to God. It said this is what your life as a non-Christian was characterised by.

It's the way you once walked. That is the day-to-day steps that you were taking were ones of spiritual death.

And of course, the dead can't respond. He describes it in other ways. Being conformed to this world. Following the course of this world.

[3 : 22] That's what sin is. It's just doing what all the rest of people are doing around us. And following something more than just the world we see around us. Following spiritual evil.

Following the prince of the power of the air. The spirit that now is at work in the sons of disobedience. Disobedience to God is what characterises the non-Christian.

And it's following the way of that fallen angel Satan. Who was the first one to disobey God. And proudly exalt himself against God.

Spiritual death. Following the way of this world. Following the evil one. Following the passions of our flesh.

Following the passions of our flesh. Carrying out the desires of the body and mind. And were by nature children of wrath. Going our own ways.

[4 : 22] According to our own desires. Perhaps if Paul was writing it today. He would say. Following our own lives.

Of diverse self-affirming choices. According to our human rights. And diverse lifestyles. Perhaps that's the way that he would put it today.

That perhaps rings home closer than the language he's using here. But it's the same sort of thing. Following our own way.

If that's what you want to do. Go for it. That's it. Nobody else can set the standards for you. Sorry. Not true. You are dead in your sins.

You are following this world. Following Satan. Following your own desires. By nature children of wrath.

[5 : 20] Well it's said that we are sons of disobedience. And now it says children of wrath. What does that mean? It means that God's attitude towards us.

Is a settled opposition. To what we are doing. God's wrath is not some fleeting. Flashing up anger. But a steady determined opposition.

To the way that sinful men and women. Have set themselves. Children of wrath. Children of wrath. Like the rest of mankind.

It's an awful description. And I would suggest to you that no other religion. Carries such a pessimistic view.

Of man's spiritual state. This is the bad news. Before the good news. Of the gospel. But now the good news of the gospel.

[6 : 23] At verse 4. Breaks in. With a wonderful two word phrase. But God. I read one commentator who said. That this phrase.

These two words. Were the most significant communication. Ever developed. In human speech. This is what changes everything.

But God. God intervening. In human life. God being so different. From us.

When we wrong. See wrong done. We cry out for justice. Or even perhaps revenge. But God is different. But God. God intervening.

He is rich. In mercy. Rich. In mercy. He doesn't give us. What we deserve. That's what we are going to be seeing.

[7 : 22] It's another way of saying. By grace. The grace of God. God who is rich in mercy. Is a God of great love. You can see how great the love is.

Because we are told. He loved us. Even when we were dead. In our trespasses. I don't know if you've seen a dead body. But it isn't a particularly.

Attractive sight. Even if somebody has died peacefully. The life. The life. Has gone. The dead. Body.

It's not something livable. Because. The spirit of the person. Has gone. From it. But us. Spiritually dead. In our trespasses.

Are going away from God. Even in that condition. God was merciful to us. And showed us. His great love.

[8 : 21] This is amazing. This is life transforming. Because we read in verse 5. He made us alive. Together.

With Christ. He made us alive. Together with Christ. Dead spiritually in our sins. We are given spiritual. New life.

Together with the Lord Jesus Christ. Next time. We are celebrating Easter. On Easter Sunday. You get that glorious message. Of Christ. Risen from the dead.

Rejoice. And thank God. Because you've been raised. To new life. Together with Christ. If you have trusted in him. We who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ.

By faith. United to him. And hidden in him. Have been made alive. Together with him. Christ's new life.

[9 : 16] We share in that. New life. Risen from the dead. That's why Paul tells us in Romans chapter 6. It's unthinkable that we should go on in sin. Because would the risen Christ go on in sin?

No. Therefore we should not. Because we are raised together with him. And Paul sums this up. As in the title of our portion.

The end of verse 5. By grace you have been saved. And he repeats this. And says it in a variety of ways. In the next few verses.

Like all good teachers. He's repeating the lesson. By grace you have been saved. You have been saved. From that spiritual deadness.

By God's unmerited favor. You didn't deserve this life transformation. But God does it for you.
[10:15] When you trust. In the Lord Jesus Christ. By grace you have been saved. He's just said he's made us alive together with Christ. He repeats it in verse 6.

Raised us up with him. But not just to life here. Spiritual life here which we have. But to more than that. Christ has ascended.

And it says we are seated. With him. In the heavenly places. In Christ Jesus. God seated us with him. In the heavenly places.

In Christ Jesus. Yes. We are here. Now. As Christians. Struggling with sin. In our own lives. And a fallen world.

In rebellion against God. And many bad things. Going on. But spiritually. We are with Christ. In the heavenly places. Where Christ is.

[11:11] At the right hand of God. And we cannot see this. It's an unseen thing. But Paul tells us. This is objectively true. So when Satan tempts us to sin.

We can say. No, no. I'm with Christ. In the heavenly places. And all this is by the grace of God. We are raised from spiritual death.

To new spiritual life. And set with Christ. In heavenly places. And that is true for us now. But it doesn't end here.

It is in the words of Matthew Henry's father. All this. And heaven too. For in verse 7 he says. So that in the coming ages.

He might show the immeasurable riches of his grace. In kindness towards us. In Christ Jesus. There is yet more to come.

[12:12] We cannot now. Plumb the depths of the love of God towards us. And the riches of his grace towards us in Christ. And yet there is ages and ages.

More of it to come. When we are with our saviour. In a new heavens. And a new earth. And all this has come about. From.

Those two words. But God. God has changed our situation. And Paul goes on to state it. In a slightly different way.

But he is in a sense repeating what he said. Verse 8. For by grace you have been saved. Through faith. It is God's doing. God has done it.

And all you have had to do. Was to receive it. By faith. To receive the gift of God's salvation. In Christ. Through the open hand of faith.

[13:10] And even that faith. Isn't something you have worked up. Within yourself. It is God's gift to you. Part of his great salvation.

What makes us any different from someone who doesn't believe. It is the grace of God towards us in Christ Jesus. That has given us faith. To have this new life.

In Christ. He repeats it as I say. In different ways here. So that we get the full force of it. He says it isn't your doing. It's the gift of God.

God has given you this great salvation. By his grace. It's grace. You haven't worked for it. It's not as a result of your works.

No. It's the work of your saviour. The Lord Jesus Christ. Who died for you on the cross. Took your sins upon himself. Gave you. His perfect righteousness.

[14:07] You didn't work. No. Christ worked. God worked. The Holy Spirit worked. You can't boast that you are any different. Being a Christian.

Because the difference hasn't been made by you. It's been made by God. And by his grace. We haven't made ourselves any different. God has made us different.

We are his workmanship. We are his workmanship. Created in Christ Jesus. We are nothing outside of Christ. But in Christ we are God's special new creation.

And we haven't got here because we've done good works. We've got here so that we should do good works. We've been created in Christ Jesus for good works.

Which God prepared beforehand. That we should walk in them. Yes God has a wonderful plan for your life. You have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[15:07] You don't know the way ahead. It's to be perceived by faith. But God has prepared the way for you. And he is watching over you.

If he has given you this great salvation. In his only son the Lord Jesus Christ. At the cost of his death upon the cross. Will he not also with us.

With him. Give us all things. So here you are. If thought for the day doesn't tell us what's uniquely Christian. This passage does.

Men and women. Dead in sin. In hopeless condition. Unless God intervenes. But God. God intervenes in the person of his son.

The Lord Jesus Christ. And gives us free salvation in him. By his grace. Which we receive. By faith. By grace you have been saved.

[16:05] Through faith. This is not your own doing. It is the gift of God. Let us pray. Our heavenly father. Father we thank you. That you are a gracious God.

Rich in mercy. Full of love. We are amazed. That your love should extend to us. Sinners. Such a way that your son was prepared. To go to the cross.

Be cut off from you. Suffer. In our stead. And we rejoice. That we have new life. In the Lord Jesus Christ. Help us to live.

As those who are seated with him. In heavenly places. And help us to walk. In the good works. That you have prepared beforehand. That we should do. To honor you. And witness to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Savior. In whose name we pray. Amen. Amen.