

# Saved by Grace Through Faith



## Ephesians 2:1-10

Good morning, what a privilege it is to stand before you this morning and be able to open up the Word of God to the book of Ephesians, chapter 2, as we continue in our sermon series 20/20 Vision in 2020. We're going to transition to a new topic of salvation. As we think about salvation, I want you to get this picture in your mind. Someone gets ready to start a weight loss program, or a physical transformation of their body, and they take that before picture, they kind of frown. They're not happy with how they look when they take that picture. They do the weight loss program or body transformation workout, and then three months later they take that after picture. Do you see it? Before, and after. Can we switch gears? Do you remember what my hair looked like the coronavirus pandemic? Now look at me! Imagine if I didn't cut my hair until there was a vaccine or cure for the virus. There would be a big contrast between how my hair looked before and how it looks now. This morning, we're going to actually see a before and after picture of a believer. It's a picture of what a believer was like before he met Christ and who he was by nature, and then, we're going to

see his after Christ picture, who he is because of grace. Let's open to Ephesians 2. This picture is so shocking; the transformation that takes place is so amazing, we're going to read the entire passage in verses 1-10.

## Scripture

***"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 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— 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. But God..."***

Did you hear those words? After just describing our life before Christ, after giving us a picture of who we were before Christ by nature, now, we're going to see a different picture, and it starts with God.

***"...being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."*** Now, that classic verse. ***"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."***

I know we really don't want to go back and think about our lives before Christ and who we were by nature, but that's what we've got to do for just a moment. Did you hear what the Apostle Paul said in this first verse? "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked..." I know that's shocking. Many of us struggle with this, but the Bible says there was a time when God took an x-ray of us and showed us our true condition before Him, and we weren't sick, we weren't dying; we were dead. Just imagine you think everything is ok with you, you go to the

doctor for a checkup, the doctor notices something, calls for a CT scan, an x-ray, a blood test, the results come back, and he tells you that you're dying. You thought you were healthy, but now you find out you're dying. You're shocked. Let's look at this as the before Christ picture of ourselves. This also pictures not only you, but everyone before they know Christ, which can mean a family member, neighbor, someone you work with. When God takes His divine x-ray of you, or them, no matter how you look on the outside, on the inside, He doesn't say you're sick, or you're dying, He says you're dead. Can you imagine the shock someone would have if a family member is taken in for a test and the doctor came out and said, "I'm sorry, but they're dead."

That's the picture. I know this goes against what many of us think. I remember being reared in the church and I had this picture that mankind was drowning. It was like mankind was in this big lake called sin, and if we were the church we were like the boat. We had these life preservers in the boat, these gospel tracts, and we're rowing the boat trying to find people who are drowning. When we saw someone drowning, we would toss them the life preserver of the gospel and hoped they grabbed hold of it. Then we pulled them to salvation, pulled them into the church. That is not the picture here. The picture is not lost humanity being sick, not drowning, not dying; the picture is lost humanity is dead, and there was a time when you and I used to be dead too.

Do you remember in Genesis, God tells Adam the day you eat you will die, and the day he ate, he died. Now, he didn't die physically until hundreds of years later, but that day, he died spiritually. At that time, he became separated from God. Scripture is teaching us that by nature, before we meet Christ, we are in a state called spiritual death where we are separated from God. Then he begins to describe what that was like to be spiritually separated from God. He said we walked around in trespasses and sins. Did you catch that? If we were to put a description about ourselves when we look at this before Christ picture, we would understand that we were walking dead men. That's right. We were dead, but didn't know it. Therefore, outwardly, we walked around, but the lifestyle, and this word, walk, literally refers to the lifestyle you live; we lived in trespasses

and sins. In other words, this means when we look at who we were before Christ, we lived a lifestyle of trespassing and missing the mark. Trespassing literally means to be where you're not supposed to be. Have any of you ever trespassed? Sure. It means to step over a boundary, to step over a line; it means you know you're supposed to be over here, but you want to be over there, so you just disregard who owns the other property and you go where you're not supposed to be. All of a sudden, you find yourself where you're not supposed to be. That was your lifestyle, that was my lifestyle; we were always where we weren't supposed to be. This word also means to go astray; you go astray by taking the wrong road.

Have you ever been going somewhere only to discover you were on the wrong road? Everything felt fine and it wasn't until later on your journey that you suddenly realized you took the wrong road. That is the picture. I'll never forget this. Years ago, Celisa and I went to Atlanta GA to an evangelism conference. We were coming home and we were passing Clarksville, and Celisa was really anxious to get home. I knew there was this shortcut that we called the Cadiz bypass. You could actually go from home to Clarksville without going through Cadiz. When I grew up as a kid, taking that shortcut, we would go to this restaurant called Charlies. Back before seatbelt laws, we would put as many people as we could get in Mom and Dad's car and go to Clarksville. I never had a seat in the car; I always had to lie down in the back window. Do you remember those days? You young kids don't remember that and I don't advice this. I always knew where we had been, but I never knew how we were going because I was laying in the back window. So, I'm not a married man, we took that shortcut, and I know by my direction that Dexter KY is west of Cadiz. I knew what road to take, so when I exit off I24 and can go east or west, I went west instead of east because my house was west of Cadiz...I went on the wrong road, and didn't know it. What I should have done was go east knowing that when I got to the next town, I would have gone west again, coming back over the four lane, but I didn't realize that. Celisa had never been on the Cadiz shortcut before, so now, we're going west thinking we're getting closer to home. After a couple of miles, she starts saying things like, "Are you sure this is right? This don't seem right." I actually started saying, "Honey, I've been on this road hundreds of times!" I started

pointing out barns and tractors, grain bins and all kinds of things thinking I had been by them before, but in all reality, I was on the wrong road. But when you're on the wrong road, sometimes things look right.

Some of you right now are in a state of spiritual death. You're not where you're supposed to be. You're on the wrong road, and you don't even realize it. Why do you not realize it? It is because you're spiritually dead. You're spiritually separated from God. If I look back on my life, there was a time when that's what my life looked like, not an occasional stepping out of bounds, not an occasional taking the wrong road, but a lifestyle of trespassing, and Paul says, missing the mark. This is that Greek word that pictures the bow hunter who draws back his bow and arrow and aims his arrow at the target and when he releases the arrow, it misses the mark. Do you remember before you met Christ how many times you would set a goal, set a mark, strive for that mark, and every time, you failed? That's who we were before Christ. We were walking dead men. He said we were following the course of this world. Did you hear that? We were followers. Who did we follow? We followed the world. The Greek word for world is 'cosmos,' which literally means to arrange and to order. It's where we get our English word, cosmetics, from. You know what happens when a lady applies cosmetics to her face. She orders, arranges, how she looks with those cosmetics. Paul is saying before we met Christ, when we were walking dead men, we actually followed the world. See, there's an order, an arrangement behind what we see. When you're spiritually dead, you don't realize it, but you follow the course, follow the path; follow the way of the world. The world is bombarding us, physically, with allurements. Our lifestyle is not to buck that trend; our lifestyle is to follow the way of the world.

He also goes on to say that before we met Christ, we were, by nature, followers of the prince of the power of the air, and so that we don't miss this, he then gives us a follow up description that says the spirit which is now at work in the sons of disobedience. I think you know who this is. The Bible defines the prince of this world, the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air as Satan. I know this is going to be shocking, I know many of you thought you were a good person and you just had a problem.

No, you were spiritually dead. You lived a lifestyle of trespassing and missing the mark, and you not only followed the world, but you're actually following Satan, the spirit that right now is at work in the sons of disobedience. For see, each one of us is commanded to obey the gospel. What does it mean to obey the gospel? It means to believe the gospel, the good news that God put Jesus on a cross in your place, and that we can be saved and be in a right relationship with Him. But all those who have not believed in Christ are sons of disobedience. They have disobeyed the gospel. Who is at work in their life? The same person, same being that was at work in your life, and that is Satan, the prince of the power of the airways.

He says we not only followed the world, not only followed the prince, we followed the passions of our flesh and the desires, some versions say body. Before Christ's picture, we are a follower of the world, follower of Satan, but we can't blame the world or Satan for everything we were doing in our life because ultimately we had some passions and desires coming from our unredeemed flesh where the power of sin dwelled and caused us to be enslaved to sin. What we did was follow our own desires. This is why we have different characteristics, different symptoms of being spiritually dead. One of the things that is so perplexing about this coronavirus is not everyone has the same symptoms. There are some people who have the virus and they are asymptomatic and they can still spread it. That is mind boggling. When you read the stories of people who have the virus, they have different symptoms. Well, when you look at dead men walking, when you look at people who do not know Christ, if you look back at your story and compare it with your spouse, or children, or neighbors, or friend's story, yours is different from theirs because the symptoms manifest themselves differently because each of us have a different unredeemed flesh. In other words, your unredeemed flesh has different tendencies than mine, and mine has different ones than yours. Our unredeemed flesh puts ourselves first and thinks about what is best for us. This is why there are some unbelievers who are very moral because it's actually in their best interest to be moral. This is why some people are more immoral because it's actually best for them to be immoral.

See, we were dead. We had a lifestyle of missing the mark and trespassing. We were a follower, and Paul says, by nature we were children of wrath. I'm shocked! I was a child of wrath! Many people understood this to mean I was an object of God's wrath, I was under the wrath of God, and we think about that day when God pours out His full and final fury on lost humanity, and they spend eternity separated from God in a lake of fire forever and God will be just to do that when He unleashes His wrath. I think when you examine the context here it is not totally the context. I think it is that picture of Romans 1:18-32 where Paul is writing about how the wrath of God is being unveiled and manifested, and it is God allowing sinful man, men who are dead, to be as sinful as they want to be. Do you remember those days? Do you remember when you could sin and get by with it? Do you remember when you could sin and enjoy it? Do you remember that wrong road you took? Do you remember when you were where you weren't supposed to be? Do you remember when you were a dead man walking? You were a child of a lifestyle where God was pouring out His wrath upon you and He was actually letting you be as sinful as you wanted to be because you were not His child; you were a child of wrath. Some of you right now think you're getting by with sin. You're really not; it's just evidence of the fact that you are a spiritual dead man, even though you're walking around. You're a follower, and by nature, God is going to let you be as sinful as you want to be. Now you may not be as sinful as the next person, the guy you work with, or your spouse, because you're going to be self-centered and you're going to do what is best for you. Paul says we were just like the rest of mankind, separated spiritually from God. That picture is before Christ. By nature, Adam's sin was imputed to you, and by nature, you were born a sinner separated from God.

Listen to verse 4. The first two words are amazing. Verse 1 starts "and you," and verse 4 says "but God." Before we actually see this after Christ picture that will come to us because of God's grace, before Paul tells us what God did for us in Christ, he says, "But God (There's a dramatic change; this is going to be shocking) being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses." Do you see this? The God of our salvation is identified by Paul

as a rich God, a God who is super rich in mercy. Mercy is that ability to withhold from people what they really deserved. What did dead men walking around living a lifestyle deserve? They deserved the full wrath of God, eternal separation from Him forever and ever in a lake of fire. But God, who was rich in mercy, withheld future judgment from us! Why is He rich in mercy? It is because, not just His love, but His great love. John 3:16 teaches us that God so loved the world, and this verse teaches us that God's love which He loved the world with was a great love. It was a great love that He loved us with, past tense. This is going to refer back to the love of God and what He has done for us in salvation, even when we were dead, spiritually separated from Him; trespassers. I don't know about you, but if I caught a trespasser on my property, I'd probably be ticked. Would you be ticked? If you found someone on your property who wasn't supposed to be on your property, they were somewhere they weren't supposed, what would your reaction be? That's the picture God has of us. We were trespassers; we were where we weren't supposed to be, but God was rich in mercy because of His great love.

Are you ready for this? We've had all these verses, and now for the first time, we're going to see the action of God. "But God..." then we have this description, and then this next phrase is the action of God, "...made us alive together with Christ—" I need an amen right here! We were dead in trespasses and sin, but God made us alive together with Christ! Then, to make sure we don't misunderstand that salvation is not of us, he just stops and says, "—by grace you have been saved —." When he starts talking about being made alive together with Christ, he is talking about salvation. In salvation, God takes a sinner, who is spiritually dead, a spiritual corpse who cannot respond to Him, and God makes him alive. The very fact that God makes a sinner alive who was dead is a testimony to the grace of God. It can't happen outside of the grace of God, so Paul just stops here and says "by grace you have been saved." This word, saved, in the Greek language literally means to be rescued, to be delivered. But the tense here is the perfect tense. I want you to capture this. The perfect tense means the result of this action was completed in the past. The action has taken place in the past, but the results of that action is in the present and continues into the future. Do you get that? Here would be a better

translation. I've always kidded if there was ever a Bro. Ricky translation of the Bible, I would translate this verse like this, "By grace you have been saved, and still are saved, and always will be saved." Glory hallelujah! Did you catch that? Paul is saying there was a time in your past when you were saved, a time in your past when you were made alive with Christ, and if He made you alive spiritually, you're still alive spiritually, and you will always be alive spiritually. The reason is because this is not an act of man; it's an act of God who was rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us.

When I discovered grace and I think about grace, one of the best thoughts I have is that grace is God's enabling power. Grace is God's ability to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves so that we can now do what He did. That's what grace is. It is God's enabling power. Only God can take someone who is dead and breathe life back into them. That's the story of the gospel; Jesus Christ laid His life down on a cross, faced the fury, the wrath, of God, paid our sin debt, and He died. What did God do? God made Him alive. In Ephesians chapter 1, in that great prayer Paul prays for the Ephesian church, there were three things he wanted them to know. In verse 9, he wanted them to know the immeasurable greatness of God's power toward us who believe, and then he talks about that great power that God worked in Christ. The Bible is getting ready to teach this about salvation. Our salvation is in Christ Jesus, and what God did for Christ physically, He did for us spiritually. What did God do when Christ died? He made Him alive. What did God do for you while you were dead? He made you alive with Christ.

Now, when God made Christ alive, Christ got up. The stone was rolled away and He walked out of that tomb. I don't really believe the stone was rolled away to let Him out as much as it was to let the disciples look in and know that He wasn't in the tomb anymore because He was alive. The second thing this teaches us about our salvation is God not only made us alive with Christ, but the Bible God raised us up with Christ. Christ was dead, He's alive, He's raised up, He gets up, and He walks out of the tomb. Dead people don't live in graveyards. The Bible is teaching that God didn't just make you alive. For some of you, this is going to be the first time

you've heard this, but when God made you alive, He didn't leave you as you were. He didn't just save you and leave you the same as you were. He gave you a new nature, which we will talk about later in this series. When He made you alive, He raised you up with Christ. He raised you up out of the tomb of sin. He raised you up out of a lifestyle where you trespass and miss the mark. He raised you up out of a life where you no longer follow the world, no longer follow the prince, no longer follow your unredeemed flesh; you are no longer a child of wrath where you're allowed to be as sinful as you want to be. You are a child of God!

He didn't just make us alive, He didn't just raise us up, but Paul goes on to say in this passage that He seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Did you see this? We've been made alive with Him, we've been raised up with Him, and we're seated with Him. I want to make sure you understand what's going on here. This same thing God did for Christ, revealing His immeasurable power, He did for you. The reason you have an after Christ picture, an after Christ life, the reason you're no longer like you were is because of what God did for you. He did the same thing for you spiritually that He did for Christ. He, while you were dead, made you alive, He raised you up, and He seated you in the heavenlies with Christ. We are with Christ because we are in Christ. Glory! Please tell me you get that. Let that statement linger just for a moment. See, in our before Christ picture, we were not with Christ; we were spiritually separated from God. But now, God has put us in Christ, and we've experience His being made alive, His resurrection from the dead, and His ascension to the right hand throne of God. Which means, since we're in Christ and Christ is at the right hand of God sitting on a throne, then spiritually, we are not sitting where we are right now, we are in Christ and already at the right hand throne of God sitting on a throne with Him. We've been transformed!

Verse 7 gives us the very purpose of our salvation. If you remember the before Christ picture and you're now looking at the after picture of salvation, you now in Christ, salvation is not about dying and going to Heaven and not going to Hell. I mean, that's a pretty good part of salvation, but that's not the picture here. The picture of salvation here is you and I have been rescued from a lifestyle of sinfulness, and we've been

placed in Christ. We no longer live in the subdivision of the sinners; we live in the subdivision of the saints. We are in Christ. What's happened is, spiritually, it's real. It's not metaphorically; it's real. We are alive in Christ, therefore, there's a change in our life. We've got the new life of Jesus in us. Why did God do this? Verse 7 teaches us why, "...so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." In other words, God is taking you and breathing new life into you, raising you up out of a lifestyle of sin, giving you a new desires, a new nature, and letting you reign in His Kingdom so that, ultimately, in the ages to come, in the time to come, we might come to understand the immeasurable greatness of His grace and kindness toward us in Christ. See, right now, you and I have experienced the immeasurable greatness of God's power; now this is spoken of as grace. The more we walk with Him, even when this life ends and we spend eternity with Him forever, we're just going to learn more and more about the grace of God, and how His grace was kind toward all of us who are in Christ Jesus. If I can say this, it kind of sounds to me like you and I are trophies of God's grace. God is doing what He's doing so He might show off His grace! But He's not just making us a trophy of grace so that others will see what God has done with us. He does do that, but this is teaching that as a trophy of grace, God wants us to continue to know Him and His grace more and more. He's a God who is rich in mercy. He's a God whose love toward us is great. When it comes to His grace, you can't even measure God's grace that exhibited in Christ for us.

Now, Paul is going to make sure we don't walk away from this without understanding not just what's happened to us spiritually, but what is happening in us right now. You can't really understand Ephesians 2:8-10 unless you have understood the first seven verses. But now in verses 8-9, he's going to say, "For by grace you have been saved through faith." For the first time now, Paul is going to bring in our response. What is our response? What's the response of a person who's dead in sin and God begins to quicken by His Holy Spirit, He opens up his eyes, and grants him new life? His response is he believes, he trusts, and he puts his faith in. Paul wants to make sure we understand salvation being by grace through faith. In other words, he wants us to understand that being rescued from a

lifestyle of sinfulness is not based on anything we do, but it is based on what God has done for us because of His grace. Yes, there is a human side of salvation, and that is we must hear the gospel, believe the gospel, and commit to the gospel. Paul wants to make sure that when it comes to salvation by grace through faith, we understand this is a gift from God. It's not of ourselves. Man didn't bargain with God, didn't mediate with God, didn't work out a compromise; no, it's all of God and it's a gift, a gift that we received by faith. He also wants to make sure we know it's not of works. He doesn't want any of us thinking that salvation in any way is about works. How can a man who's dead work for something? He can't. So what we're seeing here is salvation, your transformation from a life a sin to who you are right now, is a miracle of God. Then he wants us to make sure we understand this; there is no boasting on our part. Our only boast is in God in Christ.

Look at this last verse 10, "For we are." It doesn't say we will become; it says we are. We've been made alive, we've been raised up, and we've been seated. Spiritually, we are already in Christ in the heavenlies, right hand throne of God. But that transformation that took place in our inner being begins to work itself out in this body that we have. Paul wants us to understand our life, we, "are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus." This word, workmanship, is a word that is literally used in Greek society to talk about a work of art. It was a word that was used to talk about a masterpiece. In the days of the Roman Empire and the Greek Empire, they valued art. They had a lot of artistic people, so they knew what a work of art was. They knew what a masterpiece was. So Paul is taking that image of an artist. Like taking a block of wood or stone and chipping it and it becoming a work of art, a masterpiece, to the point that the artist would put his name on it. The artist would want to be known as the creator of the piece. I hope you get this. God took you, who were dead in trespasses and sins, following the world, Satan, and your unredeemed flesh, allowed you to be as sinful as you wanted to be, until that day when He stepped into your life with the gospel, made you alive, raised you up, and seated you in Christ, and right now, He's at work in your life. Do you know what you are to Him? You're a masterpiece. Maybe you don't feel like a masterpiece. I understand. The reason is because He's not finished with you yet, and He's

not finished with me. Let's just go back and think about who we were in our past, what God has redeemed us from, and who we are now. The change in our life testifies to His work of grace in our life. He created us, we are the label... 'Made in Christ.' We're a work of art. He's created us, Paul says, for good works. I want you to remember this; he's just told us when it comes to our salvation, it is not of works. What would you and I do? We would boast about it, brag about it. So, salvation is by grace through faith, faith just being the hand that accepts what God says is true about Him, the hand that accepts the gift of God, which is salvation in Christ. Now that we have been made new by grace, He's working in us, He has planned good works.

See, you're not saved 'by' good works; you're saved 'for' good works. The good works that we do, which God has ordained beforehand that we should walk in; in other words, God has already ordained the path that we should walk in! Before, we were following the path of the world, and now we're following the path of God. As we follow God's path and display these works that He's ordained to be the evidence, not the basis of salvation, the fruit of salvation, the evidence of salvation, the evidence of a changed life, we testify that we are God's. Listen to me. I don't want anyone to take this the wrong way. I'm really careful when I say this, but God wants people around us who knew us before to so see our life, to look into us, the only adjective that describes the change in your life is 'he is a God.' Whoa! I'm not using that phrase to mean we as believers are individual gods. No, stick with me.

Last year when Celisa and I went to Malawi, the route we went took us to London England. We stayed a few days and got to do two things. We got to go to the British museum and to Buckingham Palace. Let me tell you what was really cool for me. I'm not artsy at all, but I love the British museum and I loved standing in front of some of those masterful paintings, those works of art. In Buckingham Palace, we got to see the queen's own personal collection. I couldn't help this, but Celisa would be a few feet from me, and I would grab her, bring her around, and say, "Celisa, it's a Rembrandt! Look, it's a Picasso!" I saw some Michelangelo's. I saw some da Vinci's. It was absolutely amazing to stand in front of a

painting and to know that everything on that canvas was a work of that artist. In the bottom corner, you could see the artist's name.

Did you catch it? That's why God has you where He has you, at work, at home, in the places you recreate. He's got you hanging in the world so that when people look at you and see the transformation of your life, from a sinner to a child of God, the only thing that can explain who we now are in Christ is this...we are a God, meaning we are a work of God, a work of art. The artist of our life is God, and if God is the artist of your life, it changes the way you live. It changes the way you think. It changes the way you feel. Why? Because you are no longer who you were because of your old nature that you received by being in Adam, you are who you are by God's grace.

I want you to think about this. In the before picture, you were dead. In the after picture, you're alive. In the before picture, you lived a lifestyle of sin. In the before picture, you've been raised up out of sin and set free. In the old picture, you were a follower. You followed the world, Satan, and your undreamed flesh. Now, you're seated in Heaven with God reigning over His Kingdom. The old you was just like everybody else, just ordinary. If I can say this, you were a piece of junk! But now, you're a masterpiece, a unique, one of a kind, kind of creation, and you bear the name of your artist, Christ Jesus.