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# Made Alive in Christ

## Ephesians 2:1-10

*Russ Kennedy*

**Introduction** In the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam hangs one of Rembrandt's greatest paintings, the Night Watch. Years ago, Esther and I stood before this amazing creation...

Why are we taking up these three sermons in Ephesians in the midst of this series?

- We need to explore the connection between the resurrection of Jesus and the unfolding of His Kingdom in this world.
- We are studying God's purposes and plans in redemptive history. Ephesians 2-3 give great insight and clarity into what God's eternal purpose and plans are.
- I want to establish firmly in your minds that God has only one redemptive-historical purpose. There are those that teach that there are two: one for Israel and one for the church. Over the next three sermons, I want to listen to Paul the Apostle's argument that God has only one redemptive purpose that central purpose is to glorify Christ through the church.

Where are we in book?

The Glory of God's Plan and Purposes in Christ (Ephesians 1:1-14)

Prayer: What we need to see (Ephesians 1:15-23)

The fullness of God's hope for us

The richness of God's inheritance in us

The greatness of God's resurrection power through us

How do we see this? By what God has done to make us into the people of God. These three messages are designed to help you see what God has purposed in redemptive history.

**Problem - Our Spiritual Ruin****(v.1-3)**

From the Scripture, we have our terrible plight. Here is the horribly stark reality of our sinful estate.

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.

**Its Condition - Deadness****(v.1)**

*Separated from His life.*

The unbeliever is not sick: he is dead! He is dead in sin and trespasses. All people are born into this condition. They come into physical life, spiritually dead. They are alive physically but are separated from the life of God. The dead sinner needs life. The Bible does not gloss over the desperate condition people are in. But it also does not abstract it. People are not just separated from the life of God, they are dead in the realm of sin. Because they are born in sin and because they do acts of sin, they are dead.

Now, it is popular today to either minimize this or to deny it outright. People will redefine it so that it is devoid of the real meaning the Bible attributes to it. They replace this idea with other ideas that are more acceptable. To them, we are not dead but are sick. We are psychologically marred and scarred. We have a need for a relationship that we do not yet have.

The only problem is that this is not how the Bible describes the condition of the lost. It uses the word “dead”. Now if I sat to you that my mother is “dead” or that this mic is “dead” or that that flower is “dead” we all understand that the energizing power or life or electricity is not present. It is still a body, a mic, a flower. But it is dead. There is the absence of life and the separation from God.

Why is this avoided? Because It is manifestly clear that if I am dead, I myself cannot do anything about it. No amount of my character, goodness, works, standing with others, wealth, poverty – nothing at that point matters. Physically, if I am dead I cannot will myself back to life. I cannot cause life to come back into my body. I am wholly and totally at the mercy of another to revive me, to bring me back to life. But we want to be able to do something to effect, to cause, to bring about our own relationship with God. But if we are dead, we are utterly helpless until life is given by God. So, we were dead. "The only difference from one sinner to another is the state of their decay." (Wiersbe)

**Its Course - Disobedience****(v.2)**

*Separated from His Spirit and mind.*

All the members of a symphony are following a score written by a composer and led by the conductor. So all men dead in sin live lives of disobedience shaped by the world, the sinful lies, lusts and values of cultures around them. The world system mediates the evil purposes of Satan. O, how the *zeitgeist*, the spirit of the

age, paves the way for sinning disobedience. O, how Satan destroys his subjects (sons) by his lies.

This marks their walk, in Biblical language. In contemporary speech, this is their lifestyle, their way of living. The way they live is shaped by, inspired by and energized by the wicked one, the devil. Culture is not neutral. The world system around us, yes, even our western and American cultures are so affected. They are infused with beliefs and values that are the music their disobedience sings to.

### **Its Conduct - Depraved**

**(v.3a)**

*Separated from His holiness*

All sinners are driven by the depravity of their lusts. God given desires are turned into God dishonoring satisfactions. Men will feed from the slop of sin while God is the manna of heaven for hungry souls. The sense here is that of wallowing and indulging in the thoughts and acts of sin. Note here the partnered roles of the flesh and the mind: here the body and the thoughts join together to pursue pleasure instead of God.

Here is the full picture of sin: inner drives of depravity shaped by the outward spirit of the age all to disobey and dishonor the Lord Jesus Christ. Though outward sin may look different in different ages, the essence of sin is still the same. Soon we are slaves to self and sins. There is no freedom in sin, only a deep dark abyss of ever growing but less and less satisfied cravings.

### **Its Condemnation - Doomed**

**(v.3b)**

*Separated from His family*

If we are by deed, sons of disobedience (v.2) then we are by nature, children of wrath. Even the infancy of sin in our nature grows up into adulthood of sinful thoughts and actions. And so we are doomed to the just and eternal wrath of God. The wrath of God is not only shaped by His holiness but it is exactly suited to our sinfulness.

The word "children" use here for "objects of wrath" shows the close relationship between sinners and the wrath of God. It is important to remember that "sonship" and "being children" in the Bible is not primarily about genes or generation. It is about whose you are, who you take your identity from and who do you act like.

Have you ever so discovered your sinfulness that you were in dread of God's wrath?

**Provision - Its Saving Riches****(v.4-6)**

In light of our terrible plight, God's transforming resurrection power intervenes. What sweet words these are in the sinner's ear: *But God...*

<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,

We were dead, depraved, disobedient and doomed: *But God made us alive, raised us up and seated us in the heavenlies with Him so that He might show the surpassing riches of His grace.* This is the core sentence

**Its Source****(v.4)**

What would move God to do this? Well, there are ultimate ends in God's saving purposes: the glory of Christ and the delight God has in Him. But here it is the relational ends that are in view.

- **Character** - We have a rich in mercy kind of God. The holiness and mercy of God come together in our God in a powerful moving of God to save and make sinners holy in His sight.
- **Cause** - God's love for us is a great kind of love. It is a full and overflowing and deep and wide and sinner redeeming kind of love. It is not only great in its size, but great in its outreach and great in its expression.

Thank God for all the ways in which He is rich according to Ephesians: He is rich in grace (1:7), in mercy (2:4), in kindness (2:7) and in glory (3:16).

**Its Specifics****(v.5-6a)**

What does the mercy and love of God do for those who are dead in sin and transgression? How does what Christ did in his death and resurrection change us?

- **Regeneration** - made alive - This is Paul's term for the new birth. It is God's solution for our deadness. He makes us alive by joining His Spirit (John 3:5-8) and His Word (1 Peter 1:23) and thus imparts to us the life of God in the soul so that we are born spiritually and come to life.
- **Resurrection** - moved us from the sphere of the flesh into the sphere of the spirit. The resurrection brought up Christ out of the earth and out of the body of the first creation and moved Him into the body of the new creation. This is why the resurrection of Christ is different from, say, that of Lazarus. Lazarus soul was rejoined with a body that would die. Jesus' soul was clothed in a body of glory that will never see death.
- **Exaltation** - shifted the focus of our existence from the earthly to the heavenly. Now many Christians today are not well taught in this. But saints of old had greater and clearer light. Today we are so surrounded by the New Age and oriental mysticism that we are hesitant to move with freedom among the garden of this truth. As a result, the necessary strengthening vitamins and spiritual antidotes to worldliness and materialism simply aren't a regular part of a Christian's diet. Suffice it to say this now: if you are a Christian, the

source of your life and the focus of your soul is in heaven and on Christ. Now we live in both worlds: we are yet earthly until we put off this tabernacle. So there is an already (seated in the heavenlies in our spirits, and a not yet (walking here in earth). But there will come a day when Jesus comes and brings the greatness and glory of the not yet and we will be in all ways made new. Maranatha, Lord Jesus.

### **Its Scope**

**(v.6b)**

I want you to notice two very important phrases: (v.5) together with Christ and (v.6,7) in Christ. Nothing that God has done for us is done apart from Christ. These phrases point to both our position and our present experience of it.

Secondly, notice that by grace we are saved, explains the dynamic, not the motivation. The powerful life of God in the resurrection and ascension is the enabling grace that is moving for us and in us. Again, I say to you that "God's riches at Christ's expense" is not only an inadequate explanation of grace, but may actually trivialize the super-amazing power that is grace to us and in us.

### **Purpose - Its Surpassing Reasons**

**(v.7-10)**

How simple the truths of Scripture can be in their connections: we were (v.1-3) but God (v.4-6) so that (v.7-10). Now then, we have God's gracious purposes. We were dead, but God raised us *so that He might put on lavish display the wondrous wealth of His glory in grace.*

<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. <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.

### **Its God Exalting Declaration**

**(v.7)**

Salvation is God centered. God saved us in order to bring Him glory. It is amazingly and sadly easy to fall into a man-centered orientation. But what God has done for us is ultimately for the praise of His own worth and grace and glory. So the plan that provided salvation has as its objective the magnifying of God. So though out all the rolling ages of eternity - not just the centuries to come, but also in all the unfolding eons of glory - God might put on exhibit the splendor of the fabulous wealth of His grace. This grace for us is His kindness and tenderness and covenant faithfulness in Christ (the Messiah).

### **Its Grace Centered Description**

**(v.8-9)**

Here is the first reason God is exalted in His salvation: it is by grace.

- By grace - It is God's initiative: His free favor that gives the sinner the right and power to believe; that is, it is all grace.
- Through the gift of faith - That we believe is not of ourselves it is the gift of God. So a saving belief in God is not natural in man nor is within the ability of man nor is it like man's belief in other things. It is a God given trust and rest in God.

- Not of works - the faith that grace gives is not a work that merits salvation. There is no work that merits salvation. It cannot be earned because it has already been bought; it cannot be earned, because we have not the currency; it cannot be earned because it is not for sale. What currency of works we might offer are mere menstrual rags in God's sight. Why would we bring that when we have in salvation the wonder of the worth of Jesus' righteous merit and sin bearing work.

Now hear this and hear it well: a right and spiritual understanding of these truths produces humility and a deep sense of the great supremacy and worth of God. Yet, I hear believers professing sovereign grace with pride and boasting and self-exaltation. May God have mercy on us when we take the grace centered, God exalting, man humbling purpose of grace and turn it into a ground for boasting. That grace saves is so that no man may boast. God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of Christ Jesus our Lord!

### **Its Holiness Producing Design (v.10)**

Here is the second reason God is exalted in His salvation: it is for good works.

Three words shape this design:

- **Workmanship** - God's fashioning of believers is a work of art: it is a poima a fine and skilled craftsmanship. Mediate on that for a while...
- **Works** - God has created us in Christ Jesus for good works. Grace saves for sanctification. Usefulness and holiness are why God has formed you in Christ and is fashioning you to be like Christ. We therefore do not work to be saved, but work because we are saved. All who are truly saved know they have not worked for it and are working because of it.
- **Walk** - Each individual work is woven together into a walk. Each act of obedient faith is forming the conduct and character of a godly lifestyle. And it is not just the individual acts, but the whole of all that it means to be godly in a dark world in the light of the glory of heaven that God has prepared beforehand.

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## Reflect and Respond

- Have you ever really seen with your spiritual eyes your deadness, depravity, disobedience and doom in God's sight? I don't mean in a disconnected, academic way: in a soul and self shattering reality?
- Too often, people who are claiming to be after the “but God” in this text are still living like before the “but God”. Does your life now really still look an awful lot like the life described in (v.1-2)? Has your profession of faith in Christ resulted in a radical, Godward change in your living? Does who you have become in Christ express itself in what you do as a Christian?
- If we have a rich in mercy kind of God, should not Christians also be rich in mercy? Being merciful always has sin in view. So let us view the mercies of God for sinners in such a way that we are merciful to repentant sinners. Let us be slow to believe and accept the worst. And when faced with a believer who is repentant of sin, let us be rich in mercy.
- God's saving grace comes to undeserving sinners in such a way as to magnify the glorious character of God. The glory of God is seen to be large, bright and weighty through the lens of God's saving works. Does it come as a shock to you that salvation is God centered? May God open our eyes so that we see ever more clearly the glory of Christ in the salvation of His people.
- We are God's work of art, the product of His skilled craftsmanship. But we are not merely a painting on a wall hung there for its beauty and the admiration of its painter. We are like a wonderfully designed and intricately beautiful piece of furniture or tool or computer. One of the ways it glorifies its designer, creator and owner is that it is put to use and does its work. We are God's workmanship created to do good works.
- Through the wonderful description of God's saving work for poor, miserable sinners comes an invitation. The saving, transforming grace of God is through faith, through believing what God has said, trusting in Him and His saving work through Christ. And it brings you to bow to Him, to acknowledge and accept His kingship and rule over your life. Will you, now?

