

Who Needs a Savior?

Ephesians

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It's a blessing to have you all with us as we continue to study God's word a verse at a time, sometimes a half verse at a time but we believe that the teaching of God's word is how he makes himself known; it's how he sanctifies his people; it's how he builds them up; and it is how he leads sinners to saving faith in Jesus Christ. It is important for us to do that. It is important for us to teach God's word. Both on Sundays, it is important for you to read God's word for yourself during the week to somehow teach it to your children and so as we come to the Ephesians chapter 2:1 we have the privilege and the opportunity to continue in that particular mode of study, that particular means by which God expresses his grace and communicates his grace to us. And for today I just wanted to kind of set the context, I guess, and to just acknowledge that there are many confused ideas about Christianity that are in the world today. It's always been thus but generation after generation has to rise up and meet it's own challenges. The watered down Gospel of our world today is quite a serious problem. "Jesus will be your friend," we're told. "Christ will fix your problems." Social justice is the mission of the church. "Come to our church and we will entertain you and give you an upper grade of coffee." You wonder what in the world these people are thinking the point of the church is? Well, we desperately need some clarity. We need to be clear about what the Bible is clear about. We need to honor the Lord Jesus Christ by expressing with clarity and conviction what it is that he came to do. Why was it that he came to earth? What is the purpose of the church? We were just singing "I love thy kingdom, O Lord." Well look: Christ did not come to save us from a difficult life; he did not come to make your job easier and better for you; he did not come necessarily to give you a happy family life. No, Christ came to save you from sin, guilt and damnation and we need to be clear about the spiritual purpose for which Christ came because that has a defining impact on the reason that the very church itself exists.

We've been studying the book of Ephesians and I invite you to turn to the Ephesians chapter 2 if you're not already there which lays this out with such great clarity. Ephesians chapter 2 beginning in verse 1 says,

1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of

disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).

In that opening few verses of the Ephesians chapter 2, you see with crystal clarity the purpose of Christ in coming. It's because you were dead in your trespasses and sins and God in his grace, in his mercy, in his incalculable love for sinners, sent Christ on a rescue mission to deliver you from sin. There is a lot about salvation in this passage and we're only going to begin entreating it here this morning; we'll leave some for the following weeks. But let's throw this question on the table and deal with it earnestly this morning: who needs a Savior? Who needs a Savior? I mean, you could ask that in a mocking way, "Ah, who needs a Savior? Life is going just fine for me, thank you." You could ask it in an earnest way, "Who needs a Savior in that are there some who are okay in their own life and in their own righteousness and then that salvation is for the really bad people: the drunks, the murderers but the rest of us who live in our comfortable suburban life, you know, we're fairly well okay." Well, we need to answer that question and we're going to look at it from two perspectives here this morning.

First of all, we're going to look at it from the universality of sin and then secondly, we'll look at the reality of sin. You can think about it this way: what's just ahead in our study this morning is we're going to see the breadth of the need for a Savior across all of humanity and then we're going to look at your life in particular and see the depth of your need for a Savior. The need for salvation is broad across cultures, across time, across peoples and the need for you to have a Savior is deep and profound just on an individual basis and we're going to see all of this from Ephesians chapter 2. So first of all, if you're taking notes here this morning, the first point here is: the universality of sin. The universal problem of sin and I want you to see that in this passage you see the breadth of the problem of sin. It includes everyone, everywhere, at every time of human existence. The scriptural call to salvation goes out to all of the world that's because the need for salvation is there throughout all of the world and let's look at this and think carefully about what Paul has said. Paul wrote this letter, let me remind you, to people who were already Christians and if you look at chapter 1:1 which we first looked at many months ago, I guess, I just want to remind you who it is that's the immediate audience of what Paul is saying here in this letter that we know as the letter to the Ephesians. Chapter 1:1 he says, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God." We have the author of this letter identified for us and then in keeping with the custom of letter writing in that day, he identifies the audience to whom he is writing. He is not writing this letter to the entire world, he is writing it to the people of God. He says there in verse 1, "To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus." Saints are not super-holy people that are later going to have honors bestowed upon them by a hierarchical church, they're simply the people that God has set apart for his purposes, those who have been actually saved and redeemed by Jesus Christ. That's who he is writing to; he's writing to saints; he's writing to the true Christians who were at Ephesus at that time.

Now, that's important because it helps you understand what the pronoun is signifying as we look at chapter 2, verse 1. Now, look at chapter 2:1, if you will. To those who are now alive in Christ he speaks and he says, "And you," whom I am writing to, you who are the saints, let me remind you of where you came from before you were found by Jesus Christ. "You were dead in your trespasses and sins." Paul here writing to these Christians, is telling them what they used to be, what their lives used to be like, what was their spiritual status before their conversion in Christ. He is stepping back in time, as it were, to remind them of a reality that once existed in their lives. With this point, we talked about this at length last week, he's doing this so that they could see by contrast how great the power is that changed them from death to life. Look at chapter 2:1 again, he says, "You were dead in your trespasses and sins," and so writing to this audience of Christians here in Asia Minor, he says, "You were dead in your trespasses and sins."

Now, watch what happens. We're going to have to look at these verses over a couple of weeks now but watch what happens for now as he expands out the problem of sin. It wasn't just that these Gentiles in Ephesus were dead in their trespasses and sins, he goes on and expands in ever greater circles of reference so that eventually he's including the entirety of humanity in the condition. Look at what he says in verse 2. He says, "in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." Stop right there for just a moment: so there are these Christians who in times past were dead in their trespasses and sins and who walked according to the spirit of the age. He sets them in contrast to those who are now living that way. Now in the sense current and contemporaneous with the time at which Paul was writing, he says, "This spirit is now working in the sons who disobey God. They are known by nature as people of disobedience because they were disobedient and disregarding the Gospel of Christ and walking according to sin and according to Satan." So he says, "There's you and then there's these non-Christians that are around," and then watch here as we go into verse 3 how he continues to expand the circles of reference to include the entire human race. He says in verse 3, "Among them," them who? The sons of disobedience. "Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh." Paul is saying it's not just that you were dead in your trespasses and sins, it's not just that the sons of disobedience are now walking in their trespasses and sins, he expands it out further and says, "We were like that also." Paul is the apostle who was once a persecutor of the church. Paul, a member of the Jewish race. The whole Jewish race was opposed to the true and living God and were involved in the crucifixion of Christ and rejected him as King saying, "We have no king but Caesar." And he goes on and says, we "formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." Even as the rest of all of mankind.

I don't know if you've ever seen or had those collapsible cups that come like they're a disc and then you screw the top of it off and then you pull it up and it expands so that there is more there than what it seems to be. The whole cup can come into a disc but it expands and in ever greater circles, there is an organic connection with the base of it but it expands out bigger and bigger than what you first saw when you were just looking at it as

a little disc. This is a picture. That is the way that it is with the sin of humanity and as Paul is writing here he says, "You were dead in your trespasses and sins," writing to these Christians but as he pulls the cup up, it just gets bigger and bigger and bigger until the entire human race is included in what he has said in these first three verses. "You Gentiles and we Jews were all alike dead in sin," that was our organic connection; that's what we shared together in the fallenness of the human race and together we were all just like the rest of mankind. This is a universal problem. It reminds us of a more familiar text, Romans 3: 23, "that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Old Testament, New Testament, continuing on to today, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We were children of wrath. We were sons of disobedience even as the rest. This is a sad, bleak picture of humanity, isn't it?

So who needs a Savior? Let's put it this way: if you're a member of the human race, you do. There are no exceptions. It's one thing to say that in a broad general sense and to see it from the text, it's another thing to be convicted about it in your own soul and that's where I want to take us now, secondly, as we look at the reality of sin and this is where we'll spend the rest of our time here this morning. The reality of sin, the universality of sin, and then the reality of sin. And here's the challenge that I feel almost every time I step into this pulpit: there's just realizing the human impossibility of breaking through the hard, closed minds of those who come here week after week and who have not received Christ, who continue to reject the Gospel. Dane was saying before the service to me, just talking about how impossible it is to get people's minds opened up to the truth of the Gospel and we pray before every Sunday morning service and part of the reason that we have to pray is, there's a couple of things that go on in the minds of the unconverted. First of all, there's a sense that, "I've heard all of this before and therefore I'm not going to hear anything new again today," and then there's that callousness of heart, there's that hardness of heart, that somehow tries to persuade and convince itself that, "I'm really not that bad. That this really isn't that serious. That there's really no reason for me to be interested in this. What does this have to do with my own real life?"

What can we say about the nature of sin from this passage? Go back to chapter 2:1 and what it means to be a sinner. What it means to be lost. What it means to be separated from God. Look at it here in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 1 and I going to try to do my best to put the cookies on the bottom shelf, as it were, here this morning because look, what we're doing week after week for those of you who do not know Christ, we are pleading for the sake of your soul. We're mindful of the fact that there is eternal life after earthly death and we're mindful that there are great eternal consequences that go along with that and we're mindful that if you're not in Christ, that you are not prepared to enter into that state and we've got to do something to ring the fire bell alarm to get you to take this seriously. And yet we acknowledge gladly, humbly, that we're entirely dependent upon God to use his word and the Spirit to work in your hearts because we can't make anyone listen. Only the Spirit of God can change a heart and make it listen to that which it has rejected for so long and this bears upon Christians as well. Paul is writing to Christians here and explaining things about the reality of their salvation.

Look at Ephesians chapter 2, verse 1. He says, "You were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you formerly walked. You were like the sons of disobedience, just like we are even as the rest. This is the totality of it." What does that mean that you were dead in your trespasses and sins? What is the spiritual death of which he speaks? Let's just make a quick observation: it's obvious that he's not talking about someone who is physically dead. Just to be really obvious here, Paul is writing to people who are physically alive because he's assuming that they can read the letter. To read a letter assumes physical life. He's not talking about physical death here. He's using death in a spiritual sense and what he is saying is that, "You were dead in your trespasses and sins." What he means is this, follow me here: he's saying apart from Christ you were separated from God. You did not share in the life of God. Look at Ephesians 4:17 where you can see this stated with clarity. Paul says, "So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind," watch this in verse 18, "being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness." Embedded in that passage there in verse 18 is a really good understanding of what Paul means when he says you were dead in your trespasses and sins. Look at it, right there in the middle of verse 18, he says "you are excluded from the life of God." That word you might see a marginal note indicating that it can also be translated, "you were alienated from the life of God." You were separate from him. You did not belong to him. You did not think godly thoughts. You did not have godly desires. You did not live a godly life. That is a picture of everyone currently who is not a Christian.

Let's think about this for a little bit. To be alienated from the life of God means that you don't share in it, you have no part in it. You are alone in a universe made by your Creator and yet you have no relationship, no affinity with, no love for, nothing to share with him. You are alienated from God and it shows up in the way that you think, in the way that you talk and what your desires are. As a non-Christian, you have no righteous thoughts about God whatsoever. Your spiritual death shows in the fact that you have no desire for his word, the 66 books of the Bible. If you pray, you pray only because you want something, not to give worship, honor and adoration to him. And you are more than content to just go through this life doing your thing, enjoying the things that this world has to offer you with no vertical thought of humble love and dependence upon God; no love for Christ; no desire to proclaim him to others; and no desire or thoughts about eternal life. That's what it means to be dead. Everything that matters to God is something of indifference or hatred to you. Everything that animates the purposes of God in the outworking of human history are something that you could not care less about. That's spiritual death.

In that condition, Scripture says that you are separated from him. Psalm 66:18, why don't you turn to Psalm 66:18 and just see what Scripture says about this condition. We'll look at a couple of verses. If you go by Isaiah, stick your finger in Isaiah as you're turning to Psalms because we'll go to Isaiah also. But Psalm 66:18 says, "If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear." Turn over to Isaiah 59:2. This is so sad. This is tragic.

Isaiah 59:2, where the prophet said – I still hear those pages turning so I'll give you a second to turn and catch up with me because I don't want you to miss this, "Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear." What is spiritual death? It's to be so alienated from God that he won't even, in a sense, listen to you when you talk. He has no intentions of listening to you with favor, of answering your prayer, of considering your request because your current state of sin and rebellion separates you. Because of his holy righteous character, you have nothing in common with God. There is no ground for a relationship because of the hardness of your heart and the love that you have for sin and the dis-love and, if I can make up that term, and the ignorance and the rejection that you have of God. Don't think that God doesn't understand and see the fact that you resist what's being said to you even now. I mean, let's just not play games about this. It's far too important. God looks down on every one of your hearts, some of you receiving the word with gratitude and receptivity, some of you just closing your ears and rejecting it. Understand that God sees it all. He knows your heart in intimate detail and everything about you is open and laid bare before him with whom we have to do. For those of you who are not Christians here today, understand that you are so separated from God that you are alone hurtling down on a runaway train toward judgment with no one to stop the train. You are defenseless. You are in great jeopardy and the big problem is, you like it that way. Go figure. Make sense of that kind of insanity.

What does it mean to be dead in sin? One writer says it this way, "As those who are physically dead cannot communicate with the living, so also those who are spiritually dead cannot communicate with the eternal living God and thus are separated from God." I often pause to talk to the young people with good reason. Look, I realize that most of you are here and having come from a Christian family, that doesn't save you. That doesn't help you one bit. Look, as much as your mom or your mom and dad may love you, they cannot plead for you at the final judgment seat of God. You will stand before Christ alone and answer for your sins. Your parents cannot somehow by osmosis communicate saving faith to you. You must repent and receive Christ on your own or you will die in your sins. I realize that everything about your world conditions you to treat everything with superficial thoughts: the music, the video games, the media, all of it. It just conditions you to be a superficial, indifferent person even in the midst of living in a Christian home. Young people, you have got to separate yourself from that. You have got to recognize the danger that that puts you in.

Go back to Ephesians 2. He says, "You were dead in your trespasses and sins." Let's think about those words, those last two words for a moment, trespasses and sins. How does this describe your life? For those of you who are Christians, how does this describe your former manner of living? Well, trespass, just think about a "No trespassing" sign on someone's property. It says that there is a boundary here which you must not cross, right? A trespass has the idea of crossing a boundary; taking a false step; deviating from a path. God has established boundaries of righteousness, of righteous attitudes, of righteous conduct, and to say that you were dead in trespasses means that you were living in a sphere where you lived outside of those boundaries. You crossed those boundaries and you lived there. It's what you knew by nature. It was what you loved. It was what you

embraced. You were outside the boundaries of God, guilty as a trespasser and loving it that way. Sin has the idea of missing a mark or falling short of a standard. God has established criteria for righteousness and none of us meet the bar. None of us can jump over that bar and successfully navigate what he requires.

It's one thing to talk about this in general terms like this. It's easy for you at that level to say, "I'm not as bad as everyone else. Maybe this isn't so bad after all." But it's not difficult to show you your utter guilt before God in individual, particular ways. God's law says, "Do not murder." Jesus said, "That means don't even get angry." God's law says, "Do not commit adultery." Jesus says, "That means don't even lust in your heart," which would certainly more than include the places where some of you go on the Internet when you think no one is watching. God's law says, "Do not steal." God's law says, "Do not lie." God's law says, "Do not even covet or be jealous of what other people have." God says, "That is my standard of righteousness." It goes on. I mean, that's just on the human level. Have you ever used the Lord's name in vain? Have you ever happily texted OMG to somebody else, trifling with the name of God over some kind of...please. The guilt of that is great. Have you ever been angry? Have you ever lusted? Have you ever stolen something that wasn't yours? Have you ever gotten into your parent's purse or wallet and taken money because of something you wanted? Have you ever told a lie? Have you ever coveted that which was not yours?

On a greater level, Jesus said that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul and with all of your mind. Have you always done that? Have you always loved God with your entire being? Have you always joyfully worshiped him and just had a spirit of gratitude toward him? You know, your spirit of complaining about your circumstances in life are kind of contrary to that. "Why do I have to do this?" You young people, when you are bickering with your siblings and yelling and fighting with them over silly stuff, understand that what that is expressing is not just a momentary irritation, that is the overflow of the sewage that is in your heart. You respond in anger and fighting because that's what's in your heart. You are unrighteous in your innermost being.

Beloved, you've got to understand something: God brings this kind of teaching into your life because he loves you, because he is trying to help you understand, that he is trying to get you to see the reality of your life and your temptation is to say, "I'm not that bad or I'm not as bad as that person over there." Look, if you think about righteousness from that perspective, if you try to evaluate whether you're okay with God by looking at how you compare with other human beings, you are completely missing the point. We measure ourselves by God's standard, by his righteousness, by the perfection of Christ and if you fall short of that perfection, Jesus said, "You are to be perfect even as your heavenly Father is perfect," Matthew 5:48. If you fall short of that standard, you're a sinner dead in trespasses and sins and you can't get off by saying, "I haven't done that much," or "I'm not as bad as someone else."

Look over at the book of James, if you would. James 2, beginning in verse 10, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.

For He who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not commit murder.' Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law." Think of those big pane windows that are in a storefront and a rock goes through and shatters it, it only took one rock to shatter the whole window. That's what one sin does to your soul, it shatters the whole thing. It's not that you're innocent of eight commandments and only guilty of two, if you're guilty of one, you have transgressed against the holy God of the universe and you are a transgressor of him, a transgressor of his law. Everything else is just details in one sense, in that you can't balance off your sin by so-called good works. The thing we have to come to grips with, look over at James 3:2. One sin makes you guilty and the problem for all of us is that we haven't just committed one, we've committed many. James 3:2, repeating the universality of sin and showing it in its complete reality, "For we all stumble in many ways." You're in trouble. My unsaved friend, you're in trouble with God, not with me. I don't matter. You're in trouble with God. Do you know what? Your conscience right now agrees with everything that I'm saying. Your conscience says, "Yes, that's true, you are guilty." Your conscience is telling you that you are not outside of the realm of things here. You have no spiritual merit before God and you are unable to do any spiritual good to change your condition or to earn his favor. Who needs a Savior? You do. You need a Savior and the good news is that that's why Christ came to earth.

Turn over another book back to 1 Peter. You're in James, turn over to 1 Peter 3, if you would, verse 18. This is why we preach Christ crucified. This is why the Gospel is so important. This is why entertainment and politics and things don't matter inside the walls of the church. We deal with eternal realities and the certainty of eternal judgment and offer the forgiveness of sins to anyone who would turn to Christ. Look at 1 Peter 2:24 where it says that, "He Himself," referring to Christ, "bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." Christ, the sin bearing sacrifice on the cross, Christ receiving the punishment that the sins of his people deserved, standing in their place as their substitute, receiving the stroke of God on his innocent soul, bearing the punishment that was to go to you. He bore our sins in his body on the cross. Look at chapter 3, verse 18. It's all so very clear that Christ also died for sins. 1 Peter 3:18, "Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust," the innocent Savior in the place of guilty sinners. The righteous Son of God in place of the guilty sons of men. "The just for the unjust so that," watch how this fits with the idea of separation, "so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit." The whole point of the sacrifice of Christ was to bridge this gap of separation between you and your God. So that your sins having been paid for at the cross would no longer be a hindrance or a barrier to God receiving you into his kingdom.

We say it many times in so many ways just like Jesus said, the sower goes out to sow and he throws the seed and a lot of that seed will never take root. It falls on rocky ground. It falls on weedy ground. A bird comes and eats it and a lot of the seed just goes unused. Unsaved person, non-Christian friend in the audience today, are you going to squander more seed that's been thrown on your soul today? Are you going to say, "I've heard this all before and this is just one more time"? Or are you going to humble yourself under the

word of God and say, "I've heard this all before but now for the first time this comes alive. For the first time, this is water to my soul. Now I see that this is what I needed. This is now open and alive to me." Would you respond that way?

You see, this church preaches these things, first of all, in obedience to Christ because he sent us to go and make disciples of all the nations. That's why we do this. In one sense, the humanity of it is secondary to the vertical responsibility. Christ said, "Go and make disciples." It doesn't matter if anyone likes what we say or not. That's totally irrelevant. But there is also this dimension of love and care for your souls that cause us corporately to do what we do. We want you to go to heaven with us. We don't want you to be left behind. We don't want you to suffer eternally for the sins that you've been warned about here on earth. The thought of that is just too staggering for us and so we continue to speak. Jesus was crucified as a sin bearing sacrifice to secure spiritual life for everyone who believes in him. Christ died to save sinners.

Turn over to the Gospel of Luke chapter 5. If the conviction of sin grabs hold of you and you have the sense, "I am one who is unclean. I am in big trouble. I'm going to hell! Someone help me!" then understand that the words of Jesus are speaking to you here in Luke chapter 5, verse 31. See the grace. See the mercy. See the love with which he speaks in this passage. Jesus did not come to congratulate anyone on their righteousness, a point which he makes clear here in verse 31. He says, "It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." If you are convicted of sin this morning, understand that that doesn't disqualify you from eternal life, that's the whole reason that Jesus came. Look at it again there in verse 32. Cling to this one hope. Abandon any sense, abandon any hope of your self-righteousness. Abandon any hope that you're good enough because you're not. Abandon any self-justification. Stop making excuses and narrow your hope, narrow your focus to this one great perfect plea, "Jesus in chapter 5:32 of the Gospel of Luke, in your own words you said you have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. Christ, here I am. Have mercy on me unto eternal life." Christ says, "That's why I came." Christ calls you out of your sin where you're at right now, "Come to me for eternal life." Why would you turn away? Why would you roll your eyes in impatience at the one message that can save your eternal soul? The very impatience that sinners have with the Gospel, the very resistance that they have, illustrates how ripe they are for judgment. God comes and speaks and delivers the Gospel in love, grace and mercy. He says, "I will receive you. I will give you eternal life, just come to me," and sinners, as it were, figuratively speaking, sometimes literally, fold their arms across their chest and say, "I don't want this. When will this be over?" It would not be unrighteous of God on that great final day before you are cast into hell, it would not be unrighteous of God to remind you of the times that you sat under the preaching of the Gospel with your figurative fingers in your ears and your arms folded across your chest and your resistant heart being displayed in your very body language against the Gospel. That would not be unrighteous for God to remind you that eternal life was offered to you and you would not have it. What an awful destiny that would be. So I ask you again: won't you leave your life behind and come in repentance and saving faith to Christ? Nothing else matters but that your soul would be saved. Those who love you, those who have prayed for you, those who have spoken the

Gospel to you, would gladly lay down their own lives if it would only mean that you would come to faith in Christ. They would gladly do that. Paul said, "My prayer for them is for their salvation. I could almost wish myself accursed if it would result in the salvation of my kinsman, those who are Jews according to the flesh."

You see, turn back to Ephesians 2 and, like I say, we'll look at these verses at a little more in the future. But see, the whole context of salvation is the grace and mercy and the love of God on your soul. Look at verse 4 where it says, "God, being rich in mercy, God being great in love with which He loved us, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)." Verse 8, "by grace you have been saved through faith; it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." Verse 10, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." In love he predestined us. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have in him redemption according to the riches of his grace, chapter 1, which he lavished on us. Oh beloved, the whole outpouring of the Gospel presentation to you is God taking, as it were, a great shell of blessing and cracking it open so that it would pour out and spread over your soul like sweet perfume.

God brings sinners under the sound of the Gospel with the intention to bless them and those who walk away refusing it have no one to blame for their ultimate destruction except themselves. No one will point an accusing finger at God in this room and say, "I never heard. You didn't show your love to me. No one ever told me." You've been told. God loves you. God has mercy on sinners who come to Christ. God is gracious. Why would you turn away and lock the door to your own prison cell and throw away the key that alone could have you escape the bonds of eternal judgment? Why would you do that? On what righteous ground would you do that? There is none. You cannot righteously reject the Gospel. You cannot righteously reject Christ. You cannot righteously reject the claims of one who poured out his life blood for your soul. You can't righteously do that. In the name of your own self interests, why would you do that? Why would you act as a judge on your own soul and send it to hell by refusing the Gospel? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why would you do that?

Well, those of you who are Christians, let's gather around God's word now. We can only talk so long to those who reject. Those of us who are the saved, those of us who are the saints, those of us who are the objects of the redeeming love of Christ, come back to Ephesians 2. I want you to see it from your perspective, from our perspective. You can say this is from my perspective if you're a Christian and see the sweetness of what is embedded in this text. I told you last time that Paul is talking about the fact that you were dead in your trespasses and sins to achieve a greater aim, to show you that there was a great power that saved you because you could not save yourself. Because you could not even communicate with God in your own sin and unrighteousness, God reached into time, as it were, and saved you by his great power and that which you had no ability to effectuate on your own, God did on your behalf. God did it for you. God worked in your heart. God delivered a gift. God granted you a gift beyond compare. Look at it here in verse 2 with me, "You were dead in your trespasses and sins," and skip up to verse 4, now realizing that these are the words of God to his chosen people, to his church. This is

what God has done for us, brother and sister in Christ. This is the greatness of the goodness of God expressed to you and me, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)." God pierced through your own rebellion. God pierced through the fog of ignorance. God for some of you, pierced through decades of conditioning in false religion, pierced through it all by a power that no human being has. He pierced through it all and brought you to saving faith. Brought you to repentance. Exercised his love and power on you in such a great persuasive way that you came to Christ and received the gift of eternal life from him.

Fellow brother and sister in Christ, there you were dead in trespasses and sins, separated from God and utterly unable to change your condition. There you were in the filth and squalor of your own sin. And speaking from personal autobiographical experience, right there, God met you in grace. Right there, God brought you to saving faith in Christ. Right there, in your drunkenness. Right there, in your immorality. Right there, in all of your ignorance. Right there, God made you alive together with Christ, by grace you have been saved. It was then that God exercised his power to save you. It was then that he showed grace and mercy to you. Oh beloved, it was then in your guilt, it was then in your sin, it was then in your spiritual condition of death and separation that God said, "I will bless you." That God said, "Now is the time for my mercy to come to this soul. Now is the time for new life to come to that one," and God exercised his spiritual power in mercy, grace and love upon your soul and redeemed you and brought you out of certain judgment, brought you out of sin into the family of God where he intends to bless you with grace and mercy now and for the remainder of eternity. It was then that he did that.

Beloved, if it feels like your soul has grown a little bit cold, let me tell you ultimately what the root of that is if you have grown cold and indifferent in your walk with God. Yes, you have forgotten about the grace of God but the surest ground to maintain a fresh, vibrant walk with God is to remember what you came from, to remember that you were thoroughly dead and thoroughly in rebellion. God had mercy on you when you did not deserve it and those who shave off the corners of human depravity are ultimately strangling the very air hose that gives life and oxygen to a healthy soul. Recognize the guilt from which you were delivered. Recognize the grace that delivered you and you become a thankful, joyful, confident Christian. God has cleansed your past so that you don't have to dwell on it anymore. His love never changes and so fear is gone in the present. His mercy endures forever so that your future is secure in him. This is wonderful! It is so great to be a Christian! It is so magnificent to be a child of the living God and to recognize that you did not contribute to it but that it was all blessing brought down from God above on your undeserving soul. You live because he loves. You received a gift of eternal life because he is the great giver of goodness.

Beloved, let your heart take root there. Right there is your source of joy and confidence in the midst of your uncertain life; in the midst of changes; in the midst of things good and bad. Right there. You were dead, God made you alive together in Christ, by grace you have been saved.

Let's praise him together as we pray.

Our Father, we honor you and we thank you for your grace this morning and all I can do, Lord, is just cast all of this onto the power of your Spirit, to apply it to the lost with conviction that would lead them to saving faith, to clarify, Father, and affirm with assurance in the hearts of those who believe that they belong to you and that they would rejoice in the greatness of your love and mercy and grace. You're not a harsh, vindictive deity. You are a saving God. You're not remote and inaccessible to your children. Christ came to save us. You came to us and you're not hiding from us now. O Father, take these things from your word and apply them with power to each and every heart. Father, I pray that every Christian in this room would go out rejoicing, reminded, refreshed by the greatness of your work on our behalf. You gave us what we did not deserve and we are grateful.

Father, for those that you know who are in here and still outside of eternal life, may the brief review of the convicting law of God be the tutor which leads them to faith in Christ. Father, there is so much at stake. The consequences of the things that we have discussed from your word today echo throughout all of eternity. Lord, we would not have any in the position of that rich man suffering in Hades. "Oh, father Abraham, send Lazarus over and have him dip his finger in water and put it on my tongue because I'm in agony in this flame." Father, we don't want anyone in this room, anyone who would hear this message in the future, to be in that awful position knowing that there was no hope, that there was no more possibility of deliverance, that the gates were sealed and there would be no relief. Father, puncture the stubborn resistance that some bring against the Gospel. Puncture the pride. Puncture the self-sufficiency. Puncture the calloused heart. Puncture the indifference.

God, we are pleading for eternal souls here this morning. We are pleading for the converting, convicting power of your Spirit to be brought upon the lives of people that we know and love. We are freely confessing and acknowledging that we can't make that happen on our own and we realize that the feeble expression of human words is inadequate for the task at hand and yet, Father, your word says that our adequacy is from God, that that which is impossible with men is possible with you. Father, we know that you've converted sinners after decades of resistance, well, do it again, would you? Save some here today by the exertion of that power and that grace that you have. You haven't exhausted it. You're a saving God. Your resources are illimitable. Lord, as if wrestling with powers and principalities as we pray, we ask you to prevail upon hearts for their eternal salvation. We don't want to leave anyone behind, Lord, but if they are to be gathered up, it must come from you.

Lord Jesus, we thank you for your death, your resurrection, which is sufficient to save everyone who believes. We thank you for your love and mercy and your boundless lovingkindness. We thank you for your self-sacrifice. We thank you that you boldly, courageously, humbly went to the cross on our behalf. We are your debtors, as it were, debtors to the one who satisfied the demands of the law on our behalf. We honor you. We love you. We worship you. Father, as believers in Christ, ultimately our final allegiance

is to you and if there are sinners that won't have you, we will. We will love you. We will worship you. We will honor you. We will give you our complete allegiance and we offer it to you now as we close in Jesus' name. Amen.

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