

Rooted in Christ's Grace

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Text: Ephesians 2:1-10

Series: Rooted in Christ

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Living Hope Bible Church of Roselle, IL

Introduction: Open your Bibles to Ephesians. We are continuing our series: "Rooted in Christ". The title of the message is: "Rooted in Christ's Grace".

God's grace is breathtaking.

Our outline today is simple:

- I. **Our Misery requires God's grace** (vs. 1-3).
- II. **The Motive of God's grace is His love** (vs. 4-6).
- III. **We are God's Masterpiece of grace** (vs. 7-10).

Illustration: Have any of you ever seen the Sears Tower? Many people have only seen it from a distance. It's a whole lot different when you get inside it. I can remember going up to the sky deck where people looked like ants on the sidewalk below. There's a big difference between seeing the Sears Tower up close and just seeing it from a distance.

This morning most of us have seen God's love for us from a distance. We know it's there, we understand that God is love—that He loves sinners, but today I want to look up close at it and be awed by it.

In order to see the brightness of God's love, we need to see the darkness and brokenness of the human condition.

- I. **Our Misery requires God's grace**(vs. 1-3).

Verses 1-3, "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 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 — 3 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".

The Shock of Grace

Grace is shocking. Those who were once the “fullness of Him who fills all in all” were once “dead in their trespasses and sins”. Those you see assembled here once lived very far from God. Had you gathered us ten or twenty years ago, or some of you just a year or five ago, we would have gathered for entirely different reasons. We once lived lives that were dead to God. We were unfeeling toward Him. We ignored Him and lived as if He didn’t exist.

There is Hope!

This tells us that there is hope! God came to save those who were in the worst condition. He didn’t come to call the righteous, but *sinner*s to repentance.

Misdiagnosis

Man today is in such a horrible state, and he is in a very unsafe and catastrophic situation. Man has misdiagnosed his problem. A misdiagnosis of a disease would be catastrophic—disastrous! Imagine you go in to the doctor with an illness, and he gives you the wrong medicine. Or you need the right ventricle of your heart operated on, and instead the doctor cuts open the left. Or imagine you go into the doctor for a kidney transplant, and instead he operates on your spinal chord. That would be disastrous! Imagine you enter an emergency room with chest pain. The doctor tells you it’s only a chest cold. You can see that misdiagnosis is FATAL!

Man reaching for life line

Most of us picture us throwing out a lifeline to mankind. We just need to get them to latch on to the life line. Dear friends man cannot latch on to the life line because He is not sick or struggling with the lifeline. He is DEAD on the bottom of the ocean floor.

What about the Religious?

There are many people that would take offense to this. They say they know God. But the Bible describes them...

- “They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge” (**Romans 10:2**).
- They have “a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof” (**2 Timothy 3:5**).
- Listen to Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:21–23 (ESV), “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ 23 And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

Many who think they know God have never known Him, because they are dead in the trespasses and sins in which they walk.

The Reason for All our Problems!

So Paul brings us to verse one, and he gives us that unmistakable diagnosis. He says, here is the cause of all your problems! Here is the reason for all the war, the sadness, and the sickness; all disease and all death have its root in this. Paul says: You were “dead in trespasses and sins”. This is an ugly subject, but we cannot know the greatness of God’s love and grace except on the backdrop of the ugliness of sin.

GRACE IS ONLY AS AMAZING AS SIN IS AWFUL AND VILE.

The apostle Paul gives a breathtaking and controversial description of the human condition. It's controversial because many believe that man is basically good. Paul is clear, as was his Lord Jesus Christ, that man is at his core, fundamentally bad. Paul says, "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked..."

Dead = Senseless

You had no way of coming to God on your own. Romans 3 tells us...

"There is none righteous, no not one"

"none good not even one"

"No one seeks after God"

- A. The misery of **senselessness** – DEAD in his trespasses and sins (vs. 1-2a; 1 Cor. 2:14). How awful it is to be blind or deaf! To not see or hear the obvious! But how much greater it is to be spiritually blind and deaf to God!

By nature, we are born not feeling the degree of shame for transgressing against the glory of God: Paul says in **verses 1-2a**, "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked..."

Explanation of the term "dead"

The word "dead" is being used as a metaphor here, and it means to have no power or ability and to be completely "senseless". A dead person has no ability to do anything concerning this world. He cannot make money. He cannot have a family. He cannot write a book. He is dead. He has no senses. He cannot see, hear, smell, or feel anything. In the same way, the natural man is dead toward God because of his sins.

Something is wrong and we don't see it. You wouldn't imagine Brian Urlacher in a Green Bay uniform. You can't be a Chicago Bear and wear a Green Bay uniform. For Urlacher to wear a Bears uniform he would have to be DEAD to the Chicago Bears and have *no feelings* for them.

We live in a way that is so contrary to our Creator, that we have no feeling for Him. We are not concerned enough to stop what we are doing. Our concern is dead.

Have you ever been to a funeral? A funeral is sad because there has been a loss of life. The person you once knew is not with you on earth any more. You see their body. There's no life in it.

Illustration: How do you know that life has departed? No life means no **perception**. When death comes all sensory perceptions are gone. A strawberry pie with whipped cream will not stir the appetite of one who has no life. They cannot enjoy it. When you're dead you lose all sensory perception.

- The dead can't see.
- The dead cannot hear.
- They cannot talk.

- They cannot taste
- They cannot think or perceive anything!

1 Corinthians 2:14 (ESV) — “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”

He is *senseless* when it comes to sensing the need to please God.

- He does not **feel** the weight of his sin because he does not see the beauty of God. He is not compelled at all to adore Him. He does not see the need to serve Him. He is spiritually dead.
- **Isaiah 6** – Isaiah didn’t realize he was a man of unclean lips until he was awakened to see by God. He said, “mine eyes have seen the king the Lord of hosts”.
- He does not sense the **atrociousness** of his sin. He is blind and dead to the need to live for God. Instead he lives completely for himself, breaking God’s Law, trespassing the purpose for which God created him.

What a sad reality! Man is DEAD to God. He has no sense at all that he should worship Him. Instead He is very content to live His life totally centered around self. This is the reality of who man really is.

B. The misery of **sinfulness** – DEAD in his **trespasses** and **sins** (vs. 1-2a).

Illustration of Trespassing – Louisiana – I got away with it!

- **Trespasses:** We are dead in **trespasses** and sins. What does it mean to trespass? Not only do we miss the mark when we try to do good, but we actually choose to do evil. We trespass. God says about certain things, “Do not enter”, but we enter. He says, “No trespassing”, but we trespass.

Theologically, the word trespass has the idea of **breaking** God’s Law. **1 John 3:4** tells us “sin is the transgression of the law.” God says, “I am all wise, and these are my all wise judgments – live by them.” But we in pride and in smug audacity deviate from the all wise engineering of God, and we break His Law and His instructions.

- **Sins:** The word “sins” here means to “miss the mark”. We all try to reach God’s mark of perfection, but we constantly miss His mark. Paul says in **Romans 3:22–23** (ESV) — “there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”. Paul is saying there is no difference between Jew or Gentile, the religious or pagan person. All have missed God’s mark.

The spiritually dead are **content** to trespass God’s law regularly and continually. They are self-deceived, thinking that breaking God’s law will bring blessing and benefit, when it brings the opposite.

C. The misery of **slavery** (vs. 2-3).

We were created to be servants of God, but we have indentured ourselves to follow other masters. Three are named in this verse: the **world**, the **wicked** one, and our own **whims**.

- Man follows the **WORLD**: “following the course of this world” (vs. 2). This world is the sworn enemy of God. **1 John 2:15** says “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

The **world** is the environment that we live in – which happens to be utterly in opposition to God’s holiness. It says NOW is all that matters – now is all you have. Your life is ultimately eternally inconsequential, so do what you like.

It is a world system that is opposed to God. The whole world is in darkness and opposes God. This is part of encourages human beings to continue in their rebellion against God. It is the “group think” of our communities that oppose God.

- Man follows the **WICKED ONE**: “following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit [atmosphere or outlook] that is now at work in the sons of disobedience” (vs. 2b).

Satan is called “the god of this world” – he is a prince or a governor in this world. He controls the atmosphere of evil thought, the spiritually evil philosophies that are now at work in the children of disobedience. Satan is only at one place at one time, but he is crafty and intelligent, and he controls the spirit or outlook of the sons of disobedience. *In other words, Satan setss the tone for what is in fashion.*

Satan controls the spirit of False Religion

Satan controls both the sinful world system and the false religious system. All religious systems that do not hold Christ as being the exclusive way to the Father, “the Way, the Truth, and the Life”, are controlled not by God, but by the wicked one.

Jesus said to the Pharisees who were far more religious than most people: “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires” (**John 8:44**).

This dark ruler who roams the unseen spiritual realm is Satan. He is the one who brings evil influences to bear upon the world of men.

- Man follows his own **WHIMS**: “among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires [cravings] of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind” (vs. 3).
- Man without Christ is destined for God’s **WRATH**... “and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind” (vs. 3).

The word for wrath is ORGAY and has the idea “to grow ripe for something”. It is God’s growing, intensifying opposition to sin. One day, God who is pure, holy, and

just will send His some to come “with flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who know not God” (1 Thess. 1:8).

Let me say, it does not get worse than this! Oh, dear sinner, wake up to your misery!

II. **The Motive of grace is love** (vs. 4-6).

There was nothing in any of us that would cause God to love us. He does not love us because we are good. He loves us because He is good.

Here we find the two most important words in the Bible, “But God”! Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, “These two words in and of themselves contain the whole Gospel”.

Ephesians 2:4-6 (ESV) — “But 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— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...”

First, in order to see God’s love, we must first realize:

A. God’s love is **engaging**. God meets us where we are.

While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us!

Like Jesus coming to the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus comes to us. And just as in John 11, as He groaned for Lazarus’s family and wept, even knowing that He would raise them from the dead, He weeps for us today. He comes with compassion and power.

Verse 3 paints a terrifying picture of where we all are by nature and by choice. If the chapter ended with **verse 3**, *we would all be in trouble*, “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.”

If God dealt with us according to even just one of our sins, we would be lost forever. We say with David in **Psalm 130:3**, If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?” God has not dealt with us the way we deserve. He meets us right where we are. Never would we have sought after God—ungrateful people. We were lost, but we thought we were ok. We were self-sufficient. We thought we didn’t need God! We went right on sinning day after day. How many sins did we commit in even *one* day? God has not dealt with us after our sins! He engages us where we are! Where were we?

- We were “dead in trespasses and sins”
- We were influenced and controlled by Satan “the prince of the power of the air”
Not all lost people are indwelt by Satan or by demons, but they are all subject to his influence through the corrupt world system.

- We were the “children of disobedience”
- And where was our life, day in and day out? Verse 3: “we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind.” This was our life day in and day out.
- And what is Paul’s conclusion in verse 3? Because of our very nature—because of our inborn guilt and sinful tendencies, we were worthy of nothing else but God’s wrath. We “were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.” We were objects of God’s condemning judgment. God is holy. He is beautiful in His holiness. He holds back all wickedness from Himself. He cannot have it in His presence. He must punish it. If God did not do this, He would not be good. If we did not punish murderers and thieves and immoral people, our society would quickly dissolve into something that was also not good. God is good, righteous, and holy, and sin must be met with His most fierce wrath. To love good is to hate evil. God is supreme good, and so He must be supremely opposed to evil. We are caught up in trespasses and sins, and therefore “children of wrath”.

So we have seen how God’s love is engaging. He meets us right where we are. He loves us because He wants to.

B. God’s love secondly is **extravagant**. Our text in **Ephesians 2:4-5** says, “But 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.” What is it that caused God to bring us back from the dead? His rich mercy, or in other words, His extravagant love.

Romans 8:32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

Martin Luther

Martin Luther said we all carry in our pocket Christ’s nails. Who crucified Christ? You did! I did! Christ died “for us”. Are you aware that you have Christ’s nails in your possession? Look at the love God has for us!

Remember for hours the crushing darkness of God’s wrath was upon Christ. He was hanging between heaven and earth. His mouth was not complaining about the wicked sinners like you and me who put Him there. As **Isaiah 53:7** says, “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.” But Christ did open His mouth. He was not completely silent. Listen to His words to His Father on your behalf. They are recorded in **Luke 23:34**. Listen to what comes from the Saviour’s mouth, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do”.

What Kept Jesus Christ on the Cross?

What kept Christ on that cross? What was it that held Him there? As He bore every ounce of the wrath of God for you, He became your eternal shield. As felt every ounce of agony, there

was one thing that made it all worth it to Him. He loved you. He loved me. He loved you long before you came into this world. He will love you when ten thousand ages have passed. Christ's love for you held Him there on the cross.

It was an **engaging** love, and **extravagant** love, and ...

C. God's love thirdly is an **empowering** love (vs. 5). Our text in **Ephesians 2:4-5** says, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ." God's love brings life.

Jesus said when we come to know Him, "we pass from death to life." He said in **John 11:25-26** (ESV) — "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

Romans 8:10-11, "But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you."

III. **We are God's Masterpiece of grace** (vs. 7-10).

Verses 7-10, "so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

A. The **Focus** of our salvation (vs. 7).

Verse 7, "so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus". Salvation is not about you, it's all about God.

B. The **Failure** of a works salvation (vs. 8-9).

Verses 8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

Salvation by works has already failed. One sin is all it takes. How many sins did it take for Lucifer to be cast out of heaven? One!

You might say, "I'll live a good life to make up for it!" You can't live a good enough life. One sin separates you forever from a holy God. You committed that first sin a long time ago. You were conceived in sin, and born in it. It's too late.

Is there anyone here who can claim that he is already saved by works, so far in life? Has anyone here been without sin? Look at your lives; examine your conscience; observe your words, your thoughts, your imaginations, your motives; for all these things will be brought to account on the Last Day. Is there a man here that "doeth good, and sinneth not"? Scripture declares that "there is none that doeth good, no, not one." "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way."

C. The **Fountain** of true salvation (vs. 10a).

Verse 10a, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus".

In the same way, God forms us by the Word of God! As **James 1:18**, "Of his own will begat he us with the Word of truth..." Salvation is a miracle. It is a new birth! John 3:3 Jesus tells us, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." As **Ezekiel 36:26** says, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." That's an act of creation. That's a sovereign act of God!

Think of the creation of man. God breathed into man the breath of life, and man became a living soul. In the same way, when we are saved, God breaths into us the breath of His Holy Spirit, and we become alive. He breathes into us and fills us with the Spirit, and for the rest of our lives we are possessed of His Spirit doing His very bidding.

We read in **Genesis 1:1**, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." And what does verse 3 say? "And God said..." God spoke and he created. **Hebrews 11:3**, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God."

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As **2 Corinthians 5:17** says, "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Listen to the Lord! He says, "And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." (**Revelation 21:5**)

D. The **Fruit** of true salvation (vs. 10b).

Verse 10b, "...created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."."

Conclusion: Martin Luther tried everything to try to gain God's favor. He slept on hard floors. Going without food, even climbing a staircase to Rome on his hands and knees—but it was to no avail. His teachers in the monastery told him that he was doing enough to have peace with God, but he had no peace. His sense of sin was too great.

Luther one day turned to Romans 1:16, "the just shall live by faith". God's grace opened up His heart to understand it. God gives to the needy sinner the righteousness which he needs by faith. Luther no longer felt the wrath of God, but the love of God. The love of God entered his heart and life and changed the world.

Dear friend, are you feeling God's wrath today? Look again at Romans 5:8–9 (ESV) — "but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God."

One day we will stand before God to give a moral accounting to Him for all our actions. Do you feel God's condemnation instead of His love? Listen to **Romans 8:1**, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." You are the apple of God's eye. You are His beloved, the precious jewels in the crown of His mercy and love. He has loved you with an everlasting love. Yes you were born condemned, dead in sins, But! 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved:) You are saved not because you are good, but why? Because God is gracious!!!