

God's Power Changes People
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Allen Power

Ephesians 2: 1-10

Joe Tiralosi got a second lease on life! This NYC chauffeur suffered sudden cardiac arrest. His heart stopped beating for 47 minutes. But a team of doctors at New York-Presbyterian Hospital refused to GIVE UP on him. Aug. 17 of last year, Tiralosi walked into the emergency room feeling sick and disoriented. He collapsed a minute later.

It took 4,500 chest compressions and eight shocks from a defibrillator to get Tiralosi stabilized. Tiralosi's doctors said only one out of four people survive sudden cardiac arrest. Most die within 10 minutes of heart failure. And of those who survive 30 percent suffer serious brain damage.

- Question: How would you live your life differently if you were Joe Tiralosi? How would you feel about the doctors? How would you use your story for good?

Joe Tiralosi is a WALKING MIRACLE...those doctors were determined not to let him die. Though his heart stopped beating, Joe wasn't really dead...those doctors KEPT him alive.

Those of us, who are BELIEVERS IN CHRIST, are also WALKING MIRACLES. As Paul tells us in this second chapter of Ephesians, we were brought FROM DEATH into LIFE (ETERNAL LIFE), through Salvation.

As BELIEVERS we SHOULD feel as GRATEFUL as Joe Tiralosi feels. He says not a moment goes by that he doesn't value "every second because I know it only takes the blink of an eye to lose your life," We BELIEVERS should live every day with that kind of gratitude!

- And if anyone here today is NOT a WALKING MIRACLE, YOU CAN BE TODAY through the POWER of SALVATION in Christ!

Ephesians 2:1-3

1As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature[a] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

- Verse 1: You were DEAD in your transgressions and sins. Wow Paul! Kind of negative don't you think? Do we need to dredge up our SINFUL PAST?

- Question: Why do BELIEVERS share their testimonies about their life BEFORE Christ?
- Testimonies are effective because we can all put ourselves in that person's shoes and either say "that but for the grace of God is ME!" or maybe, "WAS ME".
- If you came into this world breathing air you were PHYSICALLY ALIVE but SPIRITUALLY DEAD. We're not born NATURALLY GOOD but NATURALLY EVIL.

Warren Wiersbe said...

The unbeliever is not sick; he is dead! He does not need resuscitation; he needs resurrection. All lost sinners are dead, and the only difference between one sinner and another is the state of decay. The lost derelict on skid row may be more decayed outwardly than the unsaved society leader, but both are dead in sin—and one corpse cannot be more dead than another! This means that our world is one vast graveyard, filled with people who are dead while they live (1Tim. 5:6).

Romans 3:23 (New International Version)

23for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

- Paul was reminding these members of the church at Ephesus of their past so they could APPRECIATE their life today.
- Verse 2: Paul gives THREE FACTORS involved in a sinful lifestyle. Let's look for them in that verse, do you see them?
 - you followed the ways of this world
 - and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air,
 - the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient
- Question: What does it mean to "follow the ways of this world"?
- Question: Who is "the ruler of the kingdom of the air"? Satan
- Paul talks about "the spirit who is at work in those who are disobedient". Last week in chapter 1 verse 17 we talked about the "spirit of wisdom" the Holy Spirit's POWER.
- Here he CONTRASTS that with an ATTITUDE or MOOD inspired by the Devil to be SINFUL.

The PULL of the WAYS OF THE WORLD and of SATAN is STRONG. "Only God's DIVINE ENERGY is strong enough to rescue us from the grip of THE WORLD and THE DEVIL.

- Verse 3: Paul reinforces that SIN is our NATURAL STATE.
- He says "We all fight with CRAVINGS and DESIRES."
- We're all born with NATURAL CRAVINGS and DESIRES.
- Question: How does Satan PERVERT our NATURAL CRAVINGS and DESIRES?
- At the end of verse 3, what does Paul say we all were "by nature"? Objects of wrath. What does that mean?

- Our natural inclination from birth is to REBEL AGAINST OUR CREATOR and HAVE OUR OWN WAY.
- Some people might say “Why can’t I have it MY WAY? Is that so bad?”
- Set Christianity aside for a moment, consider our system of laws. If everyone “did their own thing” what would life be like?
- There have to be STANDARDS and RULES and THE RULE OF LAW or we’d all live in CHAOS.
- So it is if we live life based on our NATURAL STATE: SIN.

In these three verses Paul reminded them and us, we were all born with a natural inclination to SIN. We were OBJECTS of God’s WRATH...we deserve His punishment. But we can have a SECOND LEASE ON LIFE through the POWER of SALVATION in Christ.

Ephesians 2:4-7

4But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. 6And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

- Because of their compassion for human life, Joe Tiralosi’s doctors didn’t give up on him. But, our SECOND LEASE ON LIFE is motivated by something stronger than just compassion.
- Verses 4&5 tell us: “...because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5made us alive with Christ.”

David Guzik writes...

Some imagine that God loves us because we are so lovable. Every reason for God’s mercy and love is found in Him. We give Him no reason to love us, yet in the greatness of His love, He loves us with that great love anyway. Therefore, we must stop trying to make ourselves lovable to God, and simply receive His great love while recognizing that we are unworthy of it. This is the “grace secret” of the Christian life.

- God is RICH in mercy! Did you ever notice that John 3:16 DOESN’T SAY “God loved the world, so...He gave his only son.” It says “God SO loved the world.”
- God loved all of us SO MUCH...He is RICH IN MERCY.
- Verse 5 says EVEN WHEN we were dead in our sins...He LOVED US SO MUCH he made us alive with Christ.
- Verses 4 and 5 show us the difference between MERCY and GRACE.
- God not only LET US OFF THE HOOK from what we deserved because of His MERCY; but He then gave us what we do NOT deserve: ETERNAL LIFE because of His GRACE. He made us “alive with Christ”!
- Verse 6 says God “raised us up” with Christ, and seated us with Christ “in the heavenly places.” What does that mean?

John Piper writes...

We are all right here in this room, aren't we. Or are we? What did Tony Bennett mean years ago when he sang, "I left my heart in San Francisco"? Well, he meant that San Francisco still holds his affections. San Francisco is always pulling him back. San Francisco governs his tastes. He may look like he is in Chicago. But Chicago has no claim on his affections. It's a foreign land. He is not interested in being like the natives of the windy city.

That is the way it is with us when we are converted. God takes our heart and puts it in heaven with Christ. Colossians 3:3 says, "For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God." So just like it is with Tony Bennett and San Francisco, so it is with us and heaven. It's heaven that holds our affections. It's heaven that's always pulling us upwards, its heaven that governs our tastes. We may look like we are in the world. But the world has no claim on our affections. It's a foreign land. We are exiles and aliens.

- As believers in Christ we should be **TOTALLY FOCUSED** on Heaven

Hebrews 12:28 (New American Standard Bible)

28Therefore, since we receive a (A)kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may (B)offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;

The Message paraphrase puts it this way:

28-29Do you see what we've got? An unshakable kingdom! And do you see how thankful we must be? Not only thankful, but brimming with worship, deeply reverent before God.

In his book "Heaven" Randy Alcorn says...

"Setting our minds on heaven is a discipline that we need to learn." He says we need to ask ourselves some questions:

- Do I daily reflect my own mortality?
- Do I realize there are only two destinations – Heaven or Hell?
- Do I daily remind myself that this world is not my home
- Do I daily recognize that my choices and actions have a direct influence on the world to come?
- Do I daily realize that my life is being examined by God, the Audience of One...only his appraisal of my life ultimately matters?
- Do I daily reflect on the fact that my ultimate home will be the New Earth, where I will see God and serve him as a resurrected being...(and) overflow with joy and delight in drawing nearer to Him?

Do you and I live our lives like this is the only life we'll have or do we anticipate eternal life? If you're a believer in Christ there's much to be **EXCITED** about. If not, there's great motivation to **MOVE FROM DEATH to LIFE**.

- Now let's move to some of the most **FOUNDATIONAL** verses in the Bible relating to **SALVATION** by Grace through Faith.

Ephesians 2:8-10, Paul writes...

8For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9not by works, so that no one can boast. 10For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

- Paul summarizes the GOOD NEWS of the Gospel in just a few words
- As we said a few minutes ago, it's God's GRACE...giving us what we DO NOT DESERVE that saves us
- It may be cliché but that ACROSTIC still works: G-R-A-C-E...do you know it?: God's Riches At Christ's Expense

Blaise Pascal wrote...

To make a man a saint, grace is absolutely necessary and whoever doubts it, does not know what a saint is or what a man is.

- Then Paul gives us the METHOD of APPROPRIATING God's GRACE: FAITH in Christ.
- Like the GRACE acrostic, someone coined one for F-A-I-T-H. Do you know it?: Forsaking All I Take Him
- Question: How is Faith in Christ MORE THAN just "believing"? I can "believe" something intellectually but Faith goes further

In his book on Systematic Theology, Wayne Grudem writes...

Wayne Grudem defines faith that saves one's soul...

Saving faith is trust in Jesus Christ as a living person for forgiveness of sins and for eternal life with God. This definition emphasizes that saving faith is not just a belief in facts but personal trust in Jesus to save me... Because saving faith in Scripture involves this personal trust, the word "trust" is a better word to use in contemporary culture than the word "faith" or "belief." The reason is that we can "believe" something to be true with no personal commitment or dependence involved in it...(Grudem, W. A. Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine Zondervan)

- Faith in Christ doesn't mean we believe the facts about Him. It means I TRUST HIM WITH MY ETERNAL LIFE!
- The verses tell us that salvation is a GIFT...not anything we did or can boast about.
- Here's a good word from Warren Wiersbe about this FREE GIFT

He writes...

God's purpose in our redemption is not simply to rescue us from hell, as great a work as that is. His ultimate purpose in our salvation is that for all eternity the church might glorify God's grace (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14).

Since we have not been saved by our good works, we cannot be lost by our bad works. Grace means salvation completely apart from any merit or works on our part. Grace means that God does it all for Jesus' sake! Our salvation is the gift of God.

- God doesn't save us just to put us on his ETERNAL TROPHY CASE
- Look at verse 10: What does it say we are? His creation.
- Created for what? Good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them.
- Remember our last two lessons on Ephesians 1?
 - Before the beginning of time God CHOSE you and has a PLAN for you!
 - You are his PRIZED POSSESSION and have access to HIS POWER AND WISDOM.
- Paul says God CREATED us for GOOD WORKS.
- We aren't saved BY good works; we were saved FOR good works.
- Our teacher's guide gives a good example:
 - Remember last week when I said that to access God's POWER we have to be PLUGGED IN to the outlet?
 - Think of GRACE as the POWER GRID that comes to your house
 - And think of FAITH as FLIPPING THE SWITCH to connect with that power
 - And the GOOD WORKS are like all those HELPFUL appliances in your house that "spring to life" when connected to the POWER SUPPLY with the switch turned on.
- Do you remember General Electric's slogan? "We bring...good things to life."
- FAITH in Christ is what REALLY brings good things to LIFE...a life of service and good works that can only be accomplished if we are connected to the SOURCE...His GRACE and POWER.
- So what was Paul's point in these verses?
- John Newton was transformed from slave trader to minister and used by God to write the most popular song of all time.
- Looking back on a life of SIN motivated John Newton to pen those famous words: "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a WRETCH like me."

To fully appreciate where we are and where we're headed, we sometimes need to look BACK at where we've been and be reminded of the GIFT we've been given in being delivered from that place.

So, What's The Takeaway?

- We're born DEAD in our sin...we need SALVATION because of what SIN has done to us.
- We can receive SALVATION only because of God's amazing grace.
- We have received SALVATION not just to keep us out of hell or to be a trophy on a shelf, we're created to produce GOOD WORKS. Not saved BY good works but FOR good works.

- If you haven't received this FREE GIFT of God's GRACE we'd be thrilled to tell you how you can TODAY.
- If you have, what will YOU do this week to help someone else know how to receive it?
- Remember, we're all just "beggars who found bread telling other beggars where to find it."