

Resurrection
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Ephesians 2:1-10

The other night we watched a PBS special celebrating the debut of the new Ken Burns documentary on Country Music. In that show Ricky Skaggs sang one of his big hits, *“Don’t Get Above Your Raisin’.”* If you’ve lived in the south you’ve heard that expression. Basically it means don’t think and act like you are better than you are, and don’t forget where you came from. As we turn to chapter two of Ephesians I would revise that saying slightly for followers of Christ, “Don’t FORGET about your raising (meaning resurrection) because you were “raised with Christ (2:6).” And don’t forget where you came from before Christ.

- In the past two weeks we’ve said Paul was writing this letter to the Christians in Ephesus explaining what Jesus did for them (and us) through His death, burial, and resurrection; and helping them (and us) learn *“how to live in light of the new identity we have in Christ”*ⁱ
- This is one of the most important passages in scripture describing how salvation in Christ is by grace, through faith, and not by our good works.
- It reminds believers that before trusting Christ, we were spiritually DEAD.
- The dividing line for moving from death to life for a follower of Christ is signified by just two words from 2:4, *“but God.”*
- Teacher and author James Montgomery Boice wrote, *“If you understand those two words—‘but God’—they will save your soul. If you recall them daily and live by them, they will transform your life completely.”*ⁱⁱ

Big Idea: The words, “but God” mark the doorway from spiritual death to eternal life. We were dead in sin, but God made us alive with Christ. It’s all His doing because we could not save ourselves.

- Death to life in six words: “We were”, “but God”, and “we are.”

- “We were” (dead in sin)
- “But God” (being rich in mercy and love, saved us and raised us)
- “We are” (alive in Christ with new life and created for good works)
- No follower of Christ should ever forget about our “raising!”
- Let’s begin in verses one through three to see how “we were:”

2 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.

- Some might picture salvation in Christ as being healed from spiritual sickness. They might say, *“I was spiritually sick then God made me well,”* or, *“I was really hurt and God took away my pain.”*
- Before salvation we weren’t just sick, we were spiritually dead.
- **What does it mean for an unbeliever to be “spiritually dead?” How is being spiritually dead similar to being physically dead?**
- Warren Wiersbe describes being spiritually dead as *“...unable to understand and appreciate spiritual things. He possesses no spiritual life, and he can do nothing of himself to please God. Just as a person physically dead does not respond to physical stimuli, so a person spiritually dead is unable to respond to spiritual things.”ⁱⁱⁱ*
- **What does verse two say was the “cause of death?”**
- Though alive physically, an unbeliever is like a “spiritual zombie.”
- Chuck Swindoll writes, *“We were, as it were, buried in our own trespasses and sins (2:1), as a corpse is buried by dirt. We weren’t merely grubby; we were interred! And just like a dead body resting six feet under, we were completely incapable of extricating ourselves from our grave situation.”^{iv}*
- **Who does verse two say is the “ringleader” of the spiritual zombies?**

- **Why is he able to influence us to live in disobedience to God?**
- Verse three: We're all in the same shape, spiritually "six feet under."
- The NLT: *"² You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—...³ All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else."*^v
- **How are those verses be encouraging if we still carry guilt over the sin in our lives before Christ?**
- What's a spiritual zombie to do? There's nothing we can do – we're dead!
- That's why Paul wrote those next two words: *"But God."*

⁴ 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—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,

- Salvation and eternal life were not man's idea (we were covered with six feet of sin and trespasses and powerless) it was God Who intervened.
- **What is it about God's nature that caused Him to intervene?**
- The word "mercy" here means "pity, or compassion." We just saw this in our study of Titus: Titus 3:5 (ESV) ⁵ *he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy...*
- But God didn't just save us out of mercy; it was out of "his great love."
- *"For God so loved the world...(Jn 3:16)"^{vi}* The Apostle John also wrote: ⁹ *God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. ¹⁰ This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. (1 Jn 4:9–10)"^{vii}*

- We were covered in sin, living by our fallen nature, listening to the lies of Satan, yet God loved every human so much He sent Jesus to die for us.
- **What do verses five and six say about our new status with God? How is that new status exceedingly more than we can imagine?**
- Ever hear of the old bluegrass/gospel song, *“Build me a Cabin in Glory?”*
- It’s a humble request. I don’t need a fancy mansion, just a little cabin in a corner of Heaven. I understand the sentiment of humility, but in Heaven there is no “wrong side of the tracks” or “low rent housing.”
- We are not rescued from hell and sent to live in a “cabin in the corner of glory” we’re made alive WITH CHRIST and seated with Him in heaven.
- His resurrection gives us resurrection - spiritual resurrection in this life and physical, eternal resurrection in the life to come.
- Paul interrupted himself in verse five to be sure we understand that God’s love and mercy are shown to us by His grace. By grace we’re saved.
- **What’s the difference between God’s mercy and God’s grace?**
- *“[M]ercy is God not punishing us as our sins deserve, and grace is God blessing us despite the fact that we do not deserve it. Mercy is deliverance from judgment. Grace is extending kindness to the unworthy.”^{viii}*
- God saves people not only out of mercy and love, but to show off His grace. Look at verse seven.

⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

- Everyone who trusts Christ for salvation is a “trophy” of God’s grace.
- Now we come to two verses that are perfect for us to memorize:

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.

- We don't need to do much interpretation of those verses. They are simple, straightforward, and CRUCIAL to our understanding of salvation.
- Eugene Peterson's MESSAGE paraphrase: *"Saving is all his idea, and all his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it. It's God's gift from start to finish! We don't play the major role. If we did, we'd probably go around bragging that we'd done the whole thing!"*^x
- Remember, we couldn't have earned salvation because we were dead!
- By the way, if our actions can't earn salvation, they also can't make us lose our salvation. Christ's finished work makes us eternally secure.
- We aren't saved BY good works, we are saved FOR good works.

¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

- Yes, we are trophies of God's grace, but He doesn't have us collecting dust in His trophy case. God saves us so we can carry out the "good works" He prepared specifically for each of us before we were born.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Often during baptism we'll hear a pastor paraphrase Romans 6:4 saying, *"Buried with Christ (in baptism) and raised to walk in newness of life."*^x
- The words, "but God" mark the doorway from spiritual death to eternal life. We were dead in sin, but God made us alive with Christ.
- We said we could sum up this transition from death to life in six words: "We were", "but God", and "we are."
 - "We were" (dead in sin)

- “But God” (being rich in mercy and love, saved us and raised us)
- “We are” (alive in Christ with new life and created for good works)
- No follower of Christ should ever forget about our “raising!”
- The bad news: Every baby is born spiritually dead in sin.
- The good news: God is so merciful and loving He has made a way for us to be raised to new life in Christ.
- Here’s the BEST news: It is all God’s doing. You and I don’t have to earn salvation, nor could we because we’re “six feet under in sin.”
- Salvation is a free gift. Sadly many don’t seem to realize you can’t enjoy the gift unless you accept the gift (through confession, repentance, and trusting Jesus as Savior and Lord.)
- If we’ve accepted that free gift, we need to praise God daily that Christ alone on the cross did the work for salvation and “it is finished!”

ⁱ ibid

ⁱⁱ <https://cruciformpress.com/product/but-god/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 17). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{iv} Swindoll, Charles R.. Insights on Galatians, Ephesians (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 8) (p. 185). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

^v Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Eph 2:2–3). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^{vi} *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Jn 3:16). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

^{vii} Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (1 Jn 4:9–10). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^{viii} <https://www.gotquestions.org/mercy-grace.html>

^{ix} Peterson, E. H. (2005). *The Message: the Bible in contemporary language* (Eph 2:8–9). Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.

^x Romans 6:4 (NKJV) ⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.