

2-22-26 The Power of Grace: When Dead People Start Breathing

Week 1

Text: Ephesians 2:1-10

Topics: Grace, Holiness, Christian Living

Big Idea of the Message: We are saved by grace and not works. Works, however, are the evidence of God's grace in our lives.

Application Point: God's grace empowers us to live holy lives in our words and actions.

Introduction: "When Dead People Start Breathing"

"You ever notice how every fitness app in the world loves to give you pep talks?

'You can do this!' 'Just 10 more steps!' 'You're crushing it!'

My app once told me, 'Your activity level is inspiring.'

I thought, 'Haha I'm literally walking to the bathroom, or eating a donut.'

Here's the thing, those apps can motivate you... a little.

They can encourage you... some. They can nag you... a lot.

But none of them can raise the dead. None of them can transform the heart.

None of them can rewrite someone's destiny.

In **Ephesians 2**, Paul says our problem wasn't that we needed motivation...

We needed resurrection. We didn't need self-help; we needed salvation.

We didn't need inspiration; we needed intervention.

Grace doesn't just cheer you on... Grace brings you back from the dead."

I. We Weren't Just Bad... We Were Dead!

- **Read verses 1-3.**
- Grace is only amazing when sin is seen honestly.
- Paul starts with a shock: You weren't sick... YOU. WERE. DEAD.

A. Dead in Sin, Not Deficient, Delay or Developing...DEAD

- **Read verse 1.**
- One theologian notes Paul uses contrasts - death vs life, flesh vs Spirit, Satan's influence vs God's purpose.

- Spurgeon: “You cannot make a corpse climb a ladder.”
- Our culture says, “People are basically good.” Paul says, “People are the walking dead.”
- **Matthew 19:16-22.** The rich young ruler called Jesus, “good.”
- Hard truth: Dead people don’t need moral improvement; they need resurrection.

B. Controlled by the World, the Flesh, and the Devil

- **Read verses 2-3.**
- Satan “influences the spirit of the pagan world.”
- Without Christ, you weren’t “making poor choices.” You were spiritually trafficked.
- We weren’t drowning, we were drifting downstream with the current of hell.
- Before Christ, we didn’t break free... we were being carried.

C. Under God’s Wrath... Not His Winking Approval

- **Read verse 3**
- God doesn’t grade sin on a curve.
- If God didn’t respond to sin with wrath, He’d be corrupt.
- Adrian Rogers: “Sin is not just breaking God’s law; it’s breaking God’s heart.”

Application:

Stop underestimating the spiritual forces shaping culture.

Don’t sanitize what God wants to crucify.

II. BUT GOD...The Two Most Glorious Words in Scripture

- **Read verses 4-7.**
- This is where grace kicks the door down.
- The phrase “**but God**” serves as a powerful conjunction in scripture, often introducing a contrast between human limitations and God’s capabilities.

Gen. 50:20: “**You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good...**” Joseph to his brothers that sold him into slavery.

Palms 73:26: “**My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my hear and my portion forever.**” This verse emphasizes reliance on God during times of struggle.

Acts 3:15: “**You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead.**” The resurrection of Jesus, showcasing God’s power over death.

Romans 5:8, “But God demonstrates his love for us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” This verse illustrates God’s unconditional love and grace.

Matthew 19:26: “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

- The phrase **"but God"** is a recurring theme in the Bible that underscores God's sovereignty and faithfulness.
- It serves as a reminder that no matter how bleak a situation may appear, God's plans and purposes can bring about transformation and hope.
- As believers, followers, students, we are encouraged to reflect on these **"but God"** moments in our lives, recognizing the divine interventions that have shaped our journeys.
- If you don't shout here, check your pulse (spiritually and physically).

A. God Loved Us at Our Worst

- **Read verse 4.**
- This section bridges death with resurrection.
- Tozer: “Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines Him to bestow benefits upon the undeserving.”
- God didn't wait for you to get your act together; He acted while you were unfixable and broken.

B. Made Alive WITH Christ, Raised WITH Christ, Seated WITH Christ

- **Read verses 5-6.**
- N. T. Wright: what is true of Christ is now true of us because we are “in Him.”
- Paul stacks verbs like a holy avalanche, made alive, raised, made us sit (seated)... past tense realities.
- This is positional holiness.... what God declares is already true.
- We live on earth, but we operate from heaven's authority.

C. God Showcases Grace Like a Trophy in a Glass Case

- **Read verse 7.**
- Our lives are a display of mercy, not a museum of human achievement.
- God intends for others to look at you and see “Look what God can do!”

Application:

Stop believing the lie that God is disappointed in your struggle.

See yourself as raised - so you can walk as resurrected.

III. Grace Save Us... BUT Grace Also Shapes Us

- **Read verses 8-10.**
- Grace is not permission to coast; it is power to be transformed.

A. Saved by Grace Alone, Not Grace + Sweat

- **Read verses 8-9.**
- Grace is the root; works are the fruit. Don't mix them up.
- Grace is the cause, His works through you are the consequence.
- Adrian Rogers: "Your works are the shout, not the cause, of salvation."
- Works, godly actions, are results of salvation... they do not cause it.

B. God's Workmanship - Not Self-Made Projects

- **Read verse 10.**
- God "renovates a people" to do His will.
- The Greek word poiēma = poetry, masterpiece.
- God isn't doing DIY patchwork; He's writing a masterpiece with your life.
- You're not a spiritual accident, you're intentional art.

C. Good Works Are Not Slave Labor, They Are Spirit-Fueled Overflow

- Grace is intrinsic motivation—it works inside outward.
- The Spirit doesn't force us; He fuels us.
- If grace hasn't changed your behavior, you haven't understood grace.

Application:

Replace "try harder" prayers with "transform me" prayers. Striving after!

IV. WALK WORTHY OF THE GRACE THAT SAVED YOU

- **Read verse 10.**
- Grace changes your walk. If your walk didn't change, your heart might not have either.

A. Grace Produces Holiness, Not Excuses

- Cheap grace forgives but never transforms.
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer warned of "cheap grace"- forgiveness without transformation.
- True grace kills the old man, not keeps him on life-support.

B. Grace Produces Visible Evidence

- Words, habits, relationships, purity, integrity, grace leaves fingerprints.
- Charles Stanley: “Grace gives us the desire and the power to do God’s will.”
- God is patient, but He is also unstoppable.
- If grace gets inside you, Christ comes out of you.

C. Grace Doesn’t Just Save Your Soul... It Rewrites Your Story

- Grace brought you out of the grave...and now grace brings you into a new life.
- Your past may explain you.... but it doesn’t define you.
- Your failures become testimonies.
- Your wounds become wisdom.

Application

Take inventory of your spiritual “walk”—where is grace visible?

Invite the Spirit to confront the attitudes still shaped by the world.

Let grace push you into obedience you used to resist.

Conclusion:

Don’t waste grace. Walk in it. Live in it. Display it.

1. Stop Rewriting Your Past - Let Grace Redeem It

- You were dead. That’s not exaggeration, that’s diagnosis.
- Could we be minimizing what God saved us from?
- Have we grown casual about sin because grace feels familiar?
- Grace forgives sin, but it never blesses it.

2. Stop Living Like a Spiritual Orphan

- **Ephesians 2:6** says you are seated with Christ.
- That’s authority. That’s access. That’s identity.
- You’re not visiting heaven. You belong to it.

3. Examine the Evidence

- Paul is clear: Works don’t save you, but grace produces them.
- If someone followed you for 30 days, would they see evidence of resurrection power?
- Is your speech different? Is your integrity different? Is your generosity different?

- If grace hasn't changed your behavior, you may have admired grace without receiving it.

4. Identify One "Prepared Work"

- **Ephesians 2:10** says God prepared good works beforehand.
- That means: There is something specific God has assigned you.
- Ask God this week: "Show me one work You prepared for me."
- It might be: Forgiving someone. Serving someone. Sharing Christ with someone.

5. Stop Trying Harder - Start Depending Deeper

- Self-effort produces burnout.
- Spirit-dependence produces transformation.
- Ask Yourself: Where am I relying on willpower instead of the Holy Spirit?
- Grace doesn't just pardon our weakness, it empowers obedience.
- Replace: "God, I'll try harder." With: "Spirit of God, transform my desires. Help me to strive through."

6. Take Off the Graveclothes

- When Lazarus came out, Jesus said, "Loose him."
- Resurrection happened instantly.
- Freedom happened progressively.
- What grave clothes are you still wearing? Bitterness? Lust? Pride? Fear? Shame?
- Grace raised you, now cooperate with grace.

7. Make Grace Visible

- You are God's workmanship, His poem.
- So, ask: Does my life make grace look powerful?
- This week: Show unexpected kindness. Extend forgiveness. Speak truth with gentleness. Choose holiness when it costs you. Let someone look at your life and say: "That's not personality... That's grace."

When Lazarus came out of the tomb, Jesus didn't say,

"Welcome back- now go lay down again." He said, "Loose him and let him go!"

Grace didn't just open your grave. It opened your future.

Grace didn't just save you. It set you in motion

Grace isn't weak, soft, permissive, or sentimental. Grace is power.

Prayer