

Christopher Rich – October 6, 2019

ALIVE | The Way Unearned | Part IV

MADE ALIVE | Ephesians 2:1-10

Introduction | The Way Unearned

Good Morning Welcome to Damascus Road where we are **Saved by Jesus Work, Changed by Jesus' Grace**, and **Living on Jesus's Mission**. Today we continue our series walking the through the book of Ephesians called ALIVE: The way Unearned where we see life with God has been given to us. In Christ, we have been made **alive** for a purpose. To live in **the way** God has created us. Both the rewards of and endurance in this life are by His grace alone so they are by nature **unearned**.

There is nothing less alive than being dead. Dead men cannot earn, dead men cannot achieve, and dead men cannot save themselves. Being adopted into the family of God is more than moving from orphan to son or daughter; it is nothing less than moving from death to life. Yet we don't like to think of ourselves as spiritually dead. What is our spiritual condition apart from the work of God? Imagine a shipwreck where we're all in the water needing a rescue. What condition are we in to be rescued?

Well - Are we healthy? Are we able to see our own problems, address them, work on them? Do more of the right things and less of the wrong thing (if we can even agree on what those are) so that God is more and more please with us? That is religion. We act better, God responds and treats us better. More good works equals more grace. We see the life boat, we swim to it, we crawl in, we tell it to take us home. We do it all. God responds with grace to take us where we want to go. This was called the Pelagianism and was condemned as a heresy in the 5th century. It's a way earned by our merit and ability.

Weak - *We cannot do much.* You likely can't get all the way to the boat but you have to choose to want to get into the boat. It won't come and get you. You actively move toward the boat then God will respond with grace. He's just there in the life boat and hoping you can make that first kick, then wham now I'll really be gracious to you! But if you don't God is helpless to help you. *God helps those who help themselves.* You play a part, albeit a small one and God will do the rest. Also rejected by historic orthodox Christians.

Sick – Here is where Bible-believing Christians disagree. In this view sin is a fatal sickness. God's grace comes to heal and as long as you don't actively resist God, He will pick you up and carry you on a rescue plane to glory. We all have slight glimmer of life in us and while God is the one who initiates. He brings the boat to us, throws out the life ring that we catch (in choosing Jesus) and he starts hauling us in. However, while irresistible at first you can actually resist His grace once He starts working and let go of the life ring and God who once extend grace will then leave you to die. At the end of the day your will has the final say on if you make it all the way into the boat. While Christians have distinct views on this; it comes down to is this what scripture teaches. *A more reformed tradition, and the position of our church is, God's word teaches our sin does not make us merely sick and our will is not the final say. Our condition is worse than sick.*

PART I | Walking Dead | Ephesians 2:1-3

Eph 2:1-3 | And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in 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— ³among 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.

Who we are - To appreciate what God has done for us we need to remember who we are without God. Because of our sin, spiritually, our condition is not sick, it is **dead**. The raft comes by, a call for rescue is given and we do not respond, a life ring is thrown out and it bounces off our cold floating corpse. This is who we are, because of sin we are unable to respond positively, move effectively, or even recognize we are dead in the water. **Our plight is hopeless to be rescued because of our condition caused by our sin.** *Your* is possessive, "in which you one walked" this how our life is lived out. This isn't as much about specific individual actions but about a heart orientation as well as actions an attitude. You have *Trespases*, sin of commission (lit. make a false step) and *sin*, omission not living as we're called to (lit miss the mark). In parring these two we see there is a comprehensive sin causing separation from God the source of life. When you are separated from the source of all life the only logical condition is death. Yet we move.

What we do – Spiritually dead is what we are but yet this death is not completely inactive. To be Alive is to know and follow the source of life. To be spiritually dead is to be a follower of that which is opposed to life. We follow what is powerfully guiding us. The best way to describe ourselves spiritually is like lurching zombies, individually and collectively driven towards destruction and insensitive to what is good and right.

Course of this World – This is the cultures and systems at work that are opposed to God's rule. Here we are, we're dead in the water, but were still swimming but we're not swimming towards shore, or a life raft, we are swimming along with the current of the river of the world that ultimately leads to a waterfall of destruction. We look at whatever fad or idea seems to be captivated with at any given time and we swim in the same direction everyone else does. The world we live in has a powerful influence on us. What

Devil – Prince of the power of the Air is another name for Satan. While there are external influences we experience there are spiritual forces at work. They are active in us (apart from God) as son's and daughters (not of God) but of disobedience. The enemy has been at work in humanity since the beginning working to separate us from God by pursuing what is false. He is the author of lies We drink deeply of every lie that says God doesn't love you and there are no consequences for our sin. Because we want to.

Flesh- As much as there are external influences and spiritual forces we follow we are driven by our own internal desires and passions Ultimately you cannot blame the wicked culture around you or the evil devil made me do it, because each of these only fed what we truly want. Because of our sin we do whatever we desire (Examples, of sexual sin, gluttony, drinking too much, pride, etc) regardless of what God's desire and will is for us. We disobey God because it is our deepest desire. We always do what we want. Bottom line when we are spiritually dead, our deepest desires are always what is our own agenda in all things. *What does our flesh want, what am I passionate about, what impacts me the most?* Desire and passion are not inherently wrong but we are easily directed by them. We are slaves to what we think and feel, we take even the good things God gives us and miss uses them through abuse, addiction, greed.

What we have earned - Because of this unholy trinity of the world, devil, and our flesh we follow, we are on a path that does not lead to "rest in peace" but earned wrath. This is because our nature who we are at our core because of sin is not selfless but selfish. Is not directed towards following God but rather opposing him. We may have temptations and an environment that is threatening us but each of us is responsible for our own sin. All of this is tied to who we are apart from God. This is where we get the idea of being deprived corrupt. It doesn't mean we always do the worst thing but it does mean we are born in the water of the shipwreck. We are incapable of rescuing or resuscitating ourselves. *Be humble, this is all of us without hope.*

PART II | But God... | Ephesians 2:4-7

Eph 2:4-7 | 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, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

BUT GOD!!! Not *but you*, seeing you were in a bad spot in life started looking for the best spiritual options. Not but you, weighing to difference between following the prince of the power of the air and the almighty high King of Heaven decided it would be best to be on the winning team. Not you looking at the course of the world from a sociological perspective and saying I don't think this is the proper direction decided to jump out of the river leading to destruction. God finally says "whew I am so glad you finally came to a fuller understanding of your condition and made the right choice to turn from sin and follow me. I was worried you'd never come around and one of my people who I desired to spare from wrath would unfortunately fall into eternal torment." NO! *Dead people are not capable of earning or even choosing life.* But God, the author of all life, initiates and intervenes for us in our state of spiritual death to make us truly alive. Why? This is driven by His great love and mercy towards us and Christ's great work for us.

Mercy and Love – With all the 'you's (really ya'lls) we might get the wrong idea that this text is all about us but THE central focus and figure of this text (and really the whole Bible) is about God and His character. God's nature is one that is "rich in mercy" Mercy is when we do not get the consequences we deserve. We've earned wrath, our nature is children of wrath, but God's nature is different than ours! We don't think we deserve mercy, and we're right we don't. We are hopeless in need of rescue. God see us floating the wake of the shipwreck, knows our condition, knows our actions and heart, knows our destination and He answers and engages us according to His nature and character not our own. *Do you know what I have more than you have sin? Do you know what I can give you more than what you've earned? Do you know what I am capable of in the face of death? I am richer in mercy than the account of wrath you've earned. My love for you is greater than your sin towards me. My life given is overpowering what death can take.*

When is this? When we finally got our act together? No! God's great love is directed towards us not because we are so lovable but despite being unlovable. When we were spiritually dead God's love for us led to dramatic and effective action for us to make us Alive together with Christ. We are not capable of the radical miraculous transformation necessary to take a spiritually dead person and bringing new life. Especially when that person is us! Dead people cannot save themselves because they are dead. Humanity as a whole has been highly effective at taking life and turning it into death, but not the other way around. Only God can take death and turn it into life. God intervenes, we are not condemned, we are made alive!

Union with Christ- How does God do this? It is through the work of Christ alone! We have been Made Alive (with Christ) Raised up this is resurrection (with him) Seated us in the heavenly places (with Him) Our spiritual death is replaced by life with God through Jesus. By Grace (unearned) you have been saved. Purpose of all of this is to show us the immeasurable riches of His grace towards us in Christ. We cannot measure God's grace and kindness towards us. All we can do to wrap our heads around is look at the depth of contrast from who we were what we've earned to who we now and what will receive. More than just paying for our sin he is also gracious (giving us more than we ever deserve) restoring our relationship with Him now and promising us an eternity spent with Him in Heaven. He doesn't merely make us alive so we can then decide to swim to the rescue boat or hold on to the life ring. He does so much more!

He says He will raise us up with Christ “in the heavenly places”. This is more than just plucking us out of the icy water of a shipwreck he’s taking us all the way to the tropical island so that he can show us “the immeasurable riches of his grace to us.” *More than saved from tormented tombs, we are called to be in the presence of the King.* God moves us from wrath to riches. From tomb to throne. Think about that for a moment, does that seem domineering and controlling of God to step in and overrule our desire for ourselves that He knows is leading to our destruction and call us effectively to him? *God’s gracious call has power to save, God’s grace has power to bring life.* God’s grace is what unites us with Christ. So we are now spiritually alive, we are raised with Christ to overcome our guilt, shame, and slavery to sin over us, AND we are now children of God (not of disobedience) who are no longer destined for wrath but instead destined for heaven in eternity (with status as heaven’s citizen now), all so God can show us more kindness in Christ!

PART III | Gifted to Walk the Way Unearned | Ephesians 2:8-10

Eph 2:8-10 | 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.

Saved by Grace and Faith alone – This new life comes from faith in Jesus alone. But this faith is not an earned status we have worked to *achieved*, it’s the gracious gift (unearned) we have *received* from God. We cannot earn life but there is a response required. Grace is not earned, it is not deserved, it is given. There is part of us that wants to earn it, that wants to be “good enough” to deserve it so we can say “we did it!” This would only lead to pride if we could do it, and the reality is we’re not able to. To make sure there is no doubt about who the hero is or about our inability to save ourselves Paul is crystal clear as to how much credit we can take. ZERO. Grace was from God our saving faith is from God, union with Christ is because God made us alive with Him. So it’s not our own doing, we didn’t work it out, we didn’t achieve it, and we don’t deserve it. The contrast at the end is between our inability (we were dead, we earned wrath, we didn’t save ourselves, we cannot work or boast about our ability) and God’s character and nature.

The result is humility. The result is not boasting in yourself but point and boasting in the work of Christ. We are saved by grace through faith not by right thinking or pure theology. *We remember we’re reliant.*

Who are we now? You are not dead, you are alive. You are not an accident you are *His workmanship*. Consider now your identity “in Christ” is “God’s workmanship created for good works. God doesn’t make thinks that suck! What a difference in identity and destiny that leads to our current capably. *What would it mean for you to see yourself not as a spiritually dead slave to sin but a loved work of God made for good?*

Who do you follow? How do we walk? We are both forgiven of our sin and empowered to not be slaves to the world, the devil or our selfish flesh. Instead we follow and serve Jesus. Because we’re united with Christ it means we are empowered to engage people (especially with those who are spiritually dead) not with condemnation but with compassion praying and pleading they would be made alive by God. We long for them to see the immeasurable riches of His Good character shown in Christ. We now walk with Mercy, grace, love and kindness towards other.

What are you made to do? The product of us being made alive as new creations is to do new (good works) so we’re not saved by our good works, but we are saved FOR good works. In humility, we are walking again, this time made truly alive, down a way of good works prepared for us by God as we **Trust Jesus!**