

CHAPTER 2:1-10

In chapter 2, Paul reminds his readers (remember, he assumes that they are Christian), who they *once* were, and the implications of that for them both because of their sin and because of their Christ. This chapter can be offensive to modern people because we tend to think that people are generally good. This chapter kills that idea. People are not basically good, people are basically dead. And there is only one way to become alive again.

Paul, even in proclaiming our *deadness*, also gives us hope that there is a way out. He often uses the word *once* to remind believers that we were *once* one way *but now* are another way. *Once* dead, *but now* alive. *Once* lost, *but now* found. *Once* enslaved to sin, *but now* free from bondage to sin.

And there is hope because Jesus holds the keys to life and death, to heaven and hell, and we, if we are “in Him”, He has raised us to life and has broken the chains that enslave us to the sin we hold so dear!

Revelation 1:17–18 (17) When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, “Fear not, I am the first and the last, **(18)** and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. **(ESV)**

1. In verse 1, Paul calls us dead in our trespasses and sins
 - a. What image does this conjure up in your thoughts?
 - b. In Romans 6, Paul describes this death:

Romans 6:23 (23) For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. **(ESV)**

- i. What is a wage? When Paul says “the wages of sin is death”, what do you suppose he means?
 - ii. What kinds of sin does he include as the wages resulting in death?
 - c. Define *trespass*.
 - i. What does Paul’s use of that word here imply about our sin? Who do we *trespass* against in our sin?
 - d. So, we are dead in our sin, what do dead people do? Are people “sort of” dead, “mostly” dead, or “dead dead”? Do you know anyone who is “sort of” or “mostly” dead?
 - i. How can that be if we are still walking, talking, and breathing? What kind of death do you think Paul is describing? (Read Romans 8:5-8; 1 Corinthians 2:14)
 - e. According to Paul, a person is either *alive* or *dead*, there is no middle ground. I have heard people, even Christians say things like “we aren’t *that* dead...” or “we aren’t *so* dead that...”. God would clearly disagree.
2. In verse 2, Paul reminds his readers what they *once* did
 - a. Paul says “in which you *once* walked”. How do we “walk” in our trespasses and sins?
 - b. What road do we walk that leads to this sin?
 - c. Who is the power on that road that leads us into sin? (See John 14:30; 2 Corinthians 4:4)
 - d. Where does he work?
 - e. Paul uses the phrase “sons of disobedience” – to whom are the sons disobedient?
 - f. How does Paul’s use of the word *once* give you hope?
3. In verse 3, Paul reminds his readers where they *once* were
 - a. Where did we all *once* live (with whom did we *once* live)?

- b. When we lived with them, what did we do?
 - c. How did we think?
 - d. Paul lists things describing the depth of our sin. What parts of humans are affected by sin?
4. In verse 3, he uses the phrase “children of wrath”.
- a. Describe *wrath* after reading the following:
 - i. Exodus 22:21-24
 - ii. Isaiah 13:9-13
 - iii. John 3:36
 - iv. Romans 1:18-20
 - b. Who is he referring to with this phrase?
 - c. He says they are children of wrath “by nature”
 - i. What does it mean to be something “by nature”?
 - ii. There is an idea today that if someone is “born that way” that somehow it is OK for them to behave in accordance to that nature – according to this verse, what does God say about that idea?
5. Paul ends verse 3 with the phrase “like the rest of mankind”, do you suppose he really means every single person who has ever lived or who will ever live?
6. Verse 4 begins with a phrase that is often a source of great comfort for His people...“But God...” There are positive and negative uses of this phrase: positive as here, where people are shown to be (justly) guilty of condemnation *but God* does something unexpected and offers grace and mercy instead of wrath and punishment. Negative uses include, for example, places where people falsely believe they are behaving righteously and deserve God’s favor, *but God* again does something they do not expect and withholds grace and mercy and instead (again justly) condemns them for their sin.
- a. What qualities of God does Paul follow the phrase “But God” with?
 - b. What qualities of humans does Paul follow the phrase “but God” with?
 - c. In what ways does this show the difference between God and men?
7. Verses 4-7 show a sort of “chain” of salvation – Paul uses a similar construct in Romans.
- a. Read Romans 8:28-30
 - b. What are the “links” in the chain of salvation in Ephesians 2:4-7 that start with the mercy of God and end with displaying his kindness to the universe?
 - c. Paul speaks with passion here, using qualifiers like “rich”, “great”, “immeasurable”. What do these words tell you about God?
 - d. Write down some things that encourage you about these phrases in verses 4-7:
 - i. “rich in mercy”
 - ii. “great love with which He loved us”
 - iii. “even when we were dead, He made us alive”
 - iv. “together with Christ”
 - v. “by grace you have been saved”
 - vi. “raised us up with Him”
 - vii. “seated us with Him in the heavenly places”
 - viii. “immeasurable grace in kindness”
8. Look back...starting in verse 3, Paul switches from using the word “you” to using the words “we” and “us” instead.
- a. Who is the “you”? Who is the “we”?
 - b. Why do you suppose Paul did this? (What is Paul showing to the church at Ephesus by using “we” instead of “you”?)

9. In verses 8-9, in no uncertain terms, Paul tells us how salvation is accomplished.
 - a. The first part of verse 8 tells us how it all starts. What initiates salvation?
 - b. What is the vehicle through which God uses to bring salvation?
 - c. Who is responsible for salvation? How is it given?
 - d. Can we earn salvation? Can we be good enough? Smart enough? Strong enough?
 - e. Why did God design salvation in such a way that we can't earn it?
 - f. Have you ever thought "I'm a pretty good person, I'll be fine"? What does God say to that idea in these verses?
10. Verse 10 tells us that when God saves a person, He also has expectations for that person.
 - a. Look up the word *workmanship*. How does it make you feel that, if you are a believer, you are God's workmanship?
 - b. Read Romans 9:19-26. If you are a Christian, if you are "in Christ", verses 23-26 describe the kind of *workmanship* you are.
 - c. When God brings you from death to life, you become a new creation. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. Who are you a new creation in?
 - d. God doesn't save you so you can sit on the couch and eat ice cream all day – He saves you for a purpose, to work.
 - i. When did He create the works you are to do?
 - ii. What does that tell you about God's plan and knowledge of you?
 - iii. What does he expect us to do with the work He has created for us?
11. Finally, see how often Paul uses phrases like "in Him/Christ" or "with Him/Christ".
 - a. What does this tell you about your need of Him?
 - b. What does this tell you about God's desire for you? (reread Romans 8:29)
 - c. How are you comforted by Paul's emphasis on your position before God?
 - d. How does this help you live your life, knowing how secure you are "in Christ"?

The first half of Ephesians 2 covers some weighty, sometimes hard, truths – truths like "you aren't good enough to deserve salvation", "you can't work hard enough to receive salvation", "you are dead in your sin", "because you are dead, you are enslaved to sin, you love it, and God's wrath is on you."

And we must approach the text with the mindset of, as John Piper wisely said, "I don't get it, but there it is, and I've got to bow." We must approach God's word as if God Himself is before us, telling us what we are reading – we must accept it, *all* of it, as true.

Because we can't take the good from God without taking the bad...

Job 2:7–10 (7) So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. **(8)** And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes. **(9)** Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die." **(10)** But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips. **(ESV)**

And because we receive the hard truth, we can also receive the hopeful truth!

Because there is so much hope...

But God...

But God...being rich in mercy

But God...loving us with a great love, even when we were dead

But God...made us alive together with Christ

But God...saved us by grace

But God...raised us up with Him

But God...seated us with Him in the heavenly places

But God...will show the universe the immeasurable riches of His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

As if we need further reason to hope in God's work in us to bring us from the kingdom of death to the kingdom of life, read this:

Romans 8:31–39 (31) What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? **(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? **(33)** Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. **(34)** Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. **(35)** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? **(36)** As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." **(37)** No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. **(38)** For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, **(39)** nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. **(ESV)**

Are you "in Christ"?

Are you secure "in Him"?

Can you claim this promise, not because you think you worked hard enough for it, not because you think you have earned it, but simply and only because God has loved you with a great love?

Faith is an evidence of this, how's your faith?