

Eph 2.1-10 – How do we get life?

Clint Le Page

Main Point – Once Dead now Alive by Grace, so Depend on Christ and do good.

How do you get to finish school and pass VCE?----

It's by doing all your work, & working hard, isn't it?-----

Especially if you want to get top marks at school or uni?-----

How does your house stay clean?---- By working.

How do you earn money in your job?----- By working.----

So much of what we gain or achieve in this life we get by working.-----

Yet one thing this corona crisis has taught us, is that even when you're wanting to work and able to work, sometimes that's not enough.

Sometimes your ability to work can't get you a job, or bring in the dollars.

And I know for some of you that's been really hard.-----

But one thing that teaches us is, just like that person then relies on the grace of the government, the grace of a charity or generous friend, we need to rely on God's grace.

For as Ephesians ch2 tells us, we can't earn our way to relationship with God, we can only accept it as a gift of grace.-----

And may God's grace which gives us life, strike you in a new way today.-----

In Ephesians ch1 we heard the apostle Paul tell these Christians that they've received every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Then how he's been praying they'd know God better, God's hope and Christ's power.---

Now he brings them back to earth with a thud.

Reminding them of who they were before becoming Christians.-----

Before sharing the good news he leads them into a dark valley; death valley.-----

Our first of 3 points is, Dead.(SLIDE)-----

'As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins'.

This is a description of all people everywhere, before they are Christians.-----

Like grimy miners down in a dark pit,(**SLIDE**) we like comparing ourselves with each other.

And imagining we're relatively clean, and better than others.-----

So we find it hard to accept we've done wrong, and that we need a Saviour.-----

In the mirror of the Bible our human nature is painfully exposed; and accurately diagnosed.—

'**Transgressions**' refers to us unintentionally or purposely deviating from the right path n' doing wrong.-----

'Sins' is missing the mark, the target.

All the times we've fallen short of doing what God has asked of us – loving him firstly, n' loving others perfectly.-----

So those two words together cover all our disobedience – the things we do wrong, and fail to do right.-----

And we were **DEAD** because of this.-----

We wonder what this means, for people can move and run, think and act, and make choices. Some things make us feel so alive!

But by dead, it doesn't mean dead physically, or destined to die, but spiritually dead.----

Spiritual death is the separation from God, which sin brings.

Like **Ch4 v18** puts it: 'we were separated from the life of God.'-----

This describes the state of every non-Christian person; who isn't in relationship with God through Jesus.-----

Because true life, full life, eternal life is experienced in relationship with God.-----

Writer **John Stott says**, All non-Christian people are blind to the glory of Jesus, deaf to the voice of the HS. They have no love for God, no relationship with God, no eternal life. Life without God (however physically fit and mentally alert a person may be) is a living death.-----

This may be confronting I know, but please don't give-up listening.-----

In **vv2-3** Paul describes what we all were before coming to Christ.

He says we **followed three things**.

Firstly, followed the ways of this **world**.

That means we once (or still do) live life without reference to God.

We live by our own rules, live to please ourselves.-----

That was just like the lost son did in Luke 15.-----

Secondly, we **followed 'the ruler of the kingdom of the air'**.-----

In John 12, Jesus calls him, 'the prince of this world'.

It's a reference to Satan, the devil.-----

Not that all people are possessed by Satan, but they're persuaded by his lies.

Everyone who doesn't submit to Christ is doing what Satan wants.

Ignoring God, and his rule over their lives.-----

There was a little girl who was disciplined by her mother for kicking her brother and pulling his hair.

"Sally", her mother said, 'Why did you let the Devil make you kick your brother and pull his hair?'

She answered, "The Devil made me kick him, but pulling his hair was my idea."

People are under the Devil's influence, but they also sin on their own.-----

We can't just say, "the Devil made me do it"; and blame him for our choices.-----

Because we all also followed, thirdly, 'the **cravings of our flesh**'.

Flesh describes our nature apart from God's influence.-----

It describes our fallen nature, which is prone to sin.-----

It describes the desires that come from within us.-----

When the desire for food becomes gluttony, the desire for sleep becomes laziness, and the desire for sex leads to lust, porn or sex outside marriage, they've been perverted into sinful desires.-----

And we can't blame our genes, our upbringing, or circumstances.

We're responsible.-----

Everyone sins by nature, and by choice.-----

I have, you have, sinned by nature and by choice.-----

So to sum up, three things we're born following, and which influence every one of us are: the world, the flesh and the devil.-----

And we need delivering, we need saving, because as **v3** says, **wrath** is coming.-----

God's anger isn't a vindictive rage or irrational flying off the handle.

It's God's consistently holy anger towards evil, which means he will justly punish sin.-----

Everyone without Christ is dead, and facing judgement.-----

Imagine three patients with heart disease being asked into the doctor's surgery after their scans.

"Well," the Doctor said, "I do have some good news for you, but you won't realise it's good news until you hear the bad news... All of you have serious heart disease because you've been heavy smokers for over 30 years; and unless each of you has major surgery you will all be dead in a year."

The first patient shrieked, "Outrageous, How could you criticise me like this! I came in here for some reassuring encouragement and you've made me feel terrible. It's a disgrace", and he stormed out.-----

The second patient responded with menacing fury, "How dare you! Who do you think you are telling me my heart needs surgery! I'll find many other doctors who'll tell me I'm fine, and a lot healthier than some other smokers I know. And I feel fine! You're the most arrogant doctor I've ever met." And he stomped out.-----

The third patient sat quietly for a moment. "Doctor, it's a terrible shock to hear I need surgery. But thank you for telling me the truth. I'm so relieved there's good news of an operation to save me – please tell me about it."

Let me tell you about the good news, as we come to **point 2, Alive.(SLIDE)**-----

In **v5**, God 'made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions'.

We were dead, but God made us alive spiritually.-----

I don't know if you've seen the TV show, **Bondi Rescue** on channel 10?

It's about lifeguards rescuing people at Bondi beach in Sydney.

I was watching it recently, and a young 2 year old girl was seen by a life guard, struggling and going under.**(SLIDE)**

When he was 5 meters away she was upside down in the water.

By the time he got to her she was under water.

He dragged her up, put her on his board and gave her CPR.

He brought the little girl back to life before they reached the beach.-----

The girl was saved, and it was amazing, and wonderful – I got choked up.-----

But could that drowned girl save herself?----- No way!

That little girl needed some to rescue her and give her life.-----

And it's just like us.

We need someone to rescue us from death.-----

And in God's great love for us, **v4**, he came to us in Jesus Christ and made us alive.

Jesus is the life-saver; the rescuer.-----

2000 years ago he lived a life without sin.

And to save us from spiritual and eternal death, Jesus died for us.

Taking the wrath of God for our sin when he died on the cross.-----

Then he rose from the dead, he rose to new life.

And we can get new life, with him---- and because of him.-----

Imagine yourself as a decaying corpse (we were spiritually dead),

locked inside a coffin (captive to the world, the flesh and the devil);

and heading into the flames of the crematorium (objects of God's wrath).

Suddenly, as your coffin is engulfed in flames someone leaps into the flames, smashes open the coffin, and despite receiving the most horrific burns that scar him forever, he retrieves your corpse, and breathes life into your body.-----

He washes you and clothes you in his clothes; tenderly carries you to his chauffeur-driven limo, and takes you home to his father's royal palace, to stay in his rooms and feast at his table, enjoying his abundant hospitality forever.-----

That is every Christian's personal story.-----☺

And doesn't it make you truly thankful, even when life's hard?-----

When God gives us life through Jesus it's about full life, abundant life, purpose in life, and eternal life.**(SLIDE)**

It's about relationship with God that starts now, goes on forever, and only gets better in the next life.-----

And **v6**, Since Jesus is in heaven and heaven is our present dwelling spiritually; heaven must be our future destination.-----

God makes us alive, with Christ.-----

And we're not given life because we earned it, or deserved it, or worked hard enough for it.

But **v4** again, 'because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ'.

And also in **v5**, 'it is by grace you have been saved'-----

This is our third point,(SLIDE) Saved By Grace, through Faith.-----

Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve – wrath.

Grace is God giving us what we don't deserve – life, peace with God, a place in heaven.-----

v7 repeats it. We are made alive n' saved, to show the incomparable riches of God's grace.--

Verse 8 repeats it again, so we don't miss the point:

'it is by grace you have been saved', 'it is the gift of God'.

It is a gift, a free gift.-----

A free gift offered to utterly undeserving people – to you, to me.-----
 Just like the father showed grace to his lost son who returned in Luke 15.
 Remember how the father accepted him saying, 'This son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found'.-----

If you want life, how do you receive it?-----

Through Faith, v8.

That word 'faith' speaks of a belief in something, and conviction about something.
 It's describes what or who you trust in, and depend on.-----
 And as we think about how to respond to God's grace, Depend is our first of **three words starting with D.(SLIDE)**

To respond to God's grace we need to **Depend on Jesus.**-----
 We cannot be saved from death and judgement by our own works and efforts.
 Not by being good enough, being at church enough, or reading your bible enough.
 The great protestant doctrine is that Salvation comes by grace alone through faith alone.
 Trusting in and Depending on Jesus Christ.-----
 Even if you're watching for the first time, today is a great opportunity to rely on Jesus in your heart and mind.
 Don't wait to make this decision.
 Tomorrow may be too late.-----
 Choose to Depend on Jesus totally.
 And tell us, Click the Contact Button near the livestream, so I can get in touch, and we'd love you to join the Christianity Explored course.-----

Many people even non-Christians are familiar with the hymn **Amazing Grace**, which we'll sing shortly.

Yet most people still think if you just do your best you'll make it to Heaven.-----

But No, we cannot be saved by our works.-----

You might work hard and do well in VCE.

Or work hard and make lots of money.

Or work hard at being a good person.

But you cannot work to earn salvation.-----

Salvation is Not by works so that no one can boast, **v9.**

Next D is Don't Boast.-----

This point is for those of us who have trusted in Jesus.

And maybe you've followed him for many years, even decades.-----

Please don't think "I trusted in Jesus cos I made the right decision."

Or I put my faith in Jesus cos I'm smarter than the next person.

Or I'm a Christian cos I'm better than them.

Or I'm still a Christian, because I'm strong in my faith, or so good.-----

No, we can't boast in anything.----- So Don't Boast!-----

To know I am completely saved by God's grace

liberates me from the pride of thinking I can save myself;

and from the terror of realising I can't!-----

And keeps me from looking down on others.-----

One day a large church had a combined Communion service with a smaller nearby church. And that smaller church had many people who were criminals who'd been converted.

One day the pastor saw a former burglar kneeling beside a judge of the Supreme Court of England – the very Judge who'd sent him to jail for 7 years.

After his release the burglar had been converted and become a Christian worker.

Yet as they knelt there, the judge & former convict, neither seemed aware of the other.-----

After the service the Judge said to the pastor, "Did you notice who was kneeling beside me at the Communion rail this morning?" The pastor replied, "I did, but I didn't know you noticed."

After a moment of silence the judge said, "What a miracle of grace."-----

The pastor nodded in agreement, "Yes, what a marvelous miracle of grace."

(The pastor thought he was talking about the convict)

And the Judge said, "But I was not referring to him. I was thinking of myself."

The pastor was a little confused and surprised, and the judge continued,

"It was natural for the burglar to receive God's grace when he came out of jail.

He had nothing but a history of crime behind him, and when he saw Jesus as his Saviour he knew there was salvation and hope and joy for him.

And he knew how much he needed help.

But look at me. I was taught from earliest infancy to live as a gentleman; that my word was to be my bond; that I was to say my prayers and go to church, and take communion, and so on. I went through Oxford, took my degrees, was called to the bar and eventually became a judge.

Pastor it was God's grace that drew me; it was God's grace that opened my heart to receive it. I am a greater miracle of his grace."

Maybe that connects to you?

Maybe that challenges you to not boast?-----

Or maybe if you're suffering or struggling at the moment, you're encouraged to rejoice, knowing you've been saved by God's grace.-----

The final brief way to respond if we're Christians is, 'Do good works'.

We're not saved by good works, but we're saved to do good works.-----

V10, as a result of God's work, we've been made alive in Christ 'to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do'.-----

Knowing we've been saved for good works prepared by God frees us.

It frees you and I from lazy and loveless disengagement from the needs of others.

It frees you and I from feeling insignificant or useless.-----

So delight in serving Jesus, not to be saved, but because you have been saved.-----

What good work does God want you to do this week?

What person does God want you to build up and encourage with a call or text?-----

How can you serve someone in your family instead of putting yourself first?

Will you, honour him in the way you study or work?-----

Keep trusting him in your pain?-----

Or speak of him as you reach out in love and build a relationship.-----

And because God has prepared good things such as these for us to do, don't boast, let's get on and do them.

Let's spend our life living for the one who Gave us LIFE.-----

We were dead. We're now alive.

We've been saved by grace through faith.

So always depend on Jesus, and let God's grace inspire you to do good.-----

Let's pray.