

Pastoral Prayer

O heavenly Father with the Apostle Paul we want to pray today that we might know the Lord Jesus Christ and the power of His resurrection.

Give us the wisdom and strength to stop looking in the wrong places for what we need.

In Christ is our wisdom, our sanctification, our hope and peace, and our immortality.

Father forgive us for looking within ourselves and to ourselves for hope and answers.

... we belong to Jesus, and it is to Him, our glorious bridegroom, that we should always look.

As the hymnwriter has written, the bride eyes not her garment, but her dear bridegroom's face; we will not gaze at glory, but on the King of Grace, not at the crown He giveth but on his pierced hand, the lamb is all the glory in Immanuel's land.

Lord help us to always look only to you.

One day the crowds abandoned Jesus and so he asked his disciples, "will you also go away."

May we say like those disciples, "Lord to whom else could we go, you and you alone have the words of life."

In Jesus we have a perfect righteousness. We have a sure and steadfast hope. We have an immovable foundation.

... So, why should we, why do we, look beyond you? ... Forgive us and make us stronger.

Lord today we have gathered to worship you as one body and one family. ... would you reveal yourself to us?

Give us renewed freshness, teach us a little more of your goodness, show us a bit more of your glory,

... help us to go deeper and see even more of the mysteries of your grace ... because without you we can do nothing!

If we have sinned forgive our sins, cast away our sins, and give us the courage to live godly and passionate lives.

Take away from us those things that bring you shame and cause us harm.

If we are depressed give us stronger faith and increase our joy.

If we are bitter show us who we need to forgive so that we might be free from the sour poison of unforgiveness and live with laughter and joy.

Give us strength for every trial and endurance for every race.

Oh Lord, our concern, our hope is that with the passing of time we will grow in Christlikeness, but the truth is that too often our progress seems small ...

... we desire to be more mature; we wish to be stronger, we long to be a champion for You ... in life and in prayer.

Father have mercy on those who are unsaved, in this church, in our families, and in this community.

Like Saul of Tarsus stop them on the road of life and reveal yourself to them... cause the scales of spiritual blindness to fall from their eyes so that they might see you and the power of your resurrection.

... O Lord save them before it is too late!

Our Father who art in heaven, Bless Mt Zion Baptist.

... Help us to hear the call of Christ our Captain,

... Help us to be a place where love and mercy and meet

... a church where and hope and grace are lived out and visible.

As we have prayed before, please be good to us and give us a bountiful harvest, ... but also give us many laborers for the work.

Bless our Sunday School and life group

... bless our leaders and give us more.

... We thank you for the increase of students and yet we ask for more.

... Fill this place with your glory and your people.

We thank you for all our committees and we pray that this new year will be the most effective and productive year we have had in many years.

We thank you for every deacon and for all they do to minister to this flock ... and raise up more deacons to help in the work.

We thank you for our musicians and choir ... lord give us more ... and when the congregation praises you in song may the hearts of everyone be filled with joy and gladness.

God bless our nation, save our leaders, awaken your people, and revive your churches across this land.

We've tried politics but it did not help us. ... We've had wealth and we were worse off for it.

... We've studied and learned but for all our learning we are a more ignorant nation than we have ever been.

Lord, we need you glory! Show us your goodness! God bless America one more time!

Now Lord, may what we do here today make a difference forever in the lives of your people.

Give us faith to believe and strength to act accordingly, “For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.”

We Are Alive

Ephesians 2:1-10

These 10 verses are only three sentences which make up a single paragraph. I want us to read through this paragraph and make note of the key elements.

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. (Eph. 2:1-3)

vv. 1-3 is a sentence—the topic of this sentence is “you were dead” ... Paul gives us three characteristics of what it looks like to be dead in sin.

- following the course of this **world**
- following the prince and power of the air-**devil**
- carrying out the desires of the **flesh**

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. (Eph. 2:4-7)

vv. 4-7 is another sentence—the topic of this sentence is “God has made us alive.”

- God has **made us** alive with Christ
- God has **raised us up** with Christ
- God has **seated us** with Christ

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. (Eph. 2:8-10)

vv. 8-10 is the 3rd sentence and the topic of this sentence is “we are His workmanship.”

- You are saved by grace
- Not of your doing it is through faith which is also a gift
- Therefore, we are HIS workmanship
- For the purpose of good works which God prepared

We were Dead and Enslaved (1-3)

We are Alive and Raised (4-7)

We are now Saved and Walking (8-10)

These are our points of consideration today.

1. We were Dead and Enslaved (v. 1-3)

There is a big difference between being “sick” and being “dead.”

... Paul doesn't say we are “sin-sick” he says we are “Dead in trespasses and sins.”

Here is why this is important to note: If you are sick you need healing, and there are degrees of sickness.

... someone with a **cold** is not as sick as someone with **malaria**.

... someone with **food poisoning** is not as sick as someone with **Legionaries disease**.

... there are different degrees of sickness and different degrees of cure that are needed for those sicknesses.

Additionally, if you are sick you will probably need to contribute in your recovery take your medicine, eat right, don't go out in the cold ...

But if you are dead, although there are different ways to die ... dead is dead ... there are no degrees of death.

This is Paul's point ...

...if you are sick you need healing ... but if you are dead ... you **need a resurrection**.

Paul wants us to know that sin is not sickness, sin is death ... we are "dead in our trespasses and sins."

That is very different from what some people believe.

... "I'm a pretty good person, I'm not as bad as those people ... I'm almost a Christian" ... I don't need as much grace as those other people.

Paul says, "**no, you are not sick you are dead! You don't need healing you need a resurrection!**"

And look how Paul describes what it looks like to be "dead in trespasses and sins."

- **following** the course of this world
- **following** the prince and power of the air
- **carrying out** the desires of the flesh

These words "following" and "carrying out" ... these are the same Greek word and it means to be mastered or controlled ... to be enslaved.

This is the reality that everyone is born into ... we are all born in sin.

This means that without Christ we are enslaved to the world and our own flesh.

... And **what is the nature of this world?** Ego, pride, arrogance, rebellion

... What is the **default nature of the flesh** ... selfishness and self-destruction

Martin Luther, in his lectures on Romans writes:

“Our sinful nature is so deeply curved in on itself that it wickedly curvedly and viciously seeks to use all things, even God, for its own self.”

To be “dead in trespasses and sins” means that everything in your life is self-centered and self-serving ... even the good things.

... the sinful human heart looks at everything, analyzes everything, and asks, “what’s in it for me?”

Paul says that this self-centric life is ENSLAVING DEADNESS.

Why do we look down on people who we think aren’t doing as well as we are?

... because we believe we are doing better than them ... because we ARE better than them.

- They are poor because they haven’t worked as hard as I have.
- Their marriage fell apart because they weren’t as good a spouse as we are.

The life of the unbeliever is a life of self-deception ...

... it is a life where people who are spiritually dead are trying to convince themselves and others that they are alive.

Paul says this is enslaving ... we are dead in the trespasses and sins

... Paul says that we are (before Christ) by birth and by nature the children of wrath because we are dead and enslaved.

However, the good news is that Paul is writing to Christians and after telling them what they were before Christ, he now tells us what we are after Christ.

2. We Are Now Alive and Raised (v.4-7)

Salvation is resurrection!

... God, being rich in mercy, made us alive together with Christ

... God raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus

... Paul says by grace you have been saved through faith

But WHY? Why has God done this for us?

... so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace

This is a glorious statement.

Grace is both free and costly ...

To God Grace is **Costly (His son's life)** and to us Grace is **free** ... but is also **indispensable!**

Let me see if I can illustrate what I mean:

Today I am going to a football game between the Panthers and the Saints ... the tickets were free, hopefully the game will be fun ...

*... and although this is a **good** gift, it is **not a necessary** gift, it is not **indispensable**, it will **not be life changing!***

But what if I lived in South America and I was suffering with a terminal (but curable) disease ... but too poor to purchase the cure ... I am doomed to die.

... BUT what if someone who had some possessions liquidated all their assets, sold everything, and raised the money to pay for my cure ... and gave it to me.

*This is also a gift, but unlike the football tickets this gift is **indispensable** ... without it I would die.*

... this would be a costly, life changing, indispensable gift.

Hear met today: the cost of the gift matters!!

It's not the cost of the gift, it's the thought that matters ... that's what we say isn't it?

Perhaps you run into a friend in town and he says, "I was by your house the other day but you weren't home.

I was on your porch and I saw attached to your front door an opened envelope and it was a bill.

.. I don't want to offend you, but I took it upon myself and went ahead and paid the whole bill off.

How would that make you feel? ... Well, it really depends on how big the bill was.

If it was your light bill, you might say OK or you might be offended. Your pride might be hurt. (What's wrong with you don't you think I can pay my own bills?)

But [consider] what if that bill they completely paid off was your 30-year house mortgage ... Well, alrighty then!!!

... that will put juice in your joy machine.

... that will turn sorrow into gladness.

You see the cost of the gift does matter.

God's grace has come to us at cost of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ!

We were so dead in trespasses and sins that it took the death of God's holy son to save us ...
that's how big a sinner every one of us was!

If the grace of God does not thrill, you ... then you don't realize how big a sinner you were.

... Truly knowing and understanding the cost of God's grace should saturate your life with joy!

Do you want to know why there are so many sour, grouchy, complaining, bitter Christians ...

... because although they are alive in Christ ... they do not live in the reality of that life.

I once heard the story of a man who was nominated to become one of the elders in his church.

However, when his name came up in the meeting to decide whether or not to present his name to congregation an older lay elder in the church opposed it.

The lay elder said, "This nominated man is a fine man and I love him so much, but I don't think he is ready to be an elder."

When asked by the others why he opposed this nominee the lay elder paused and then said,

"Because he is not a happy enough person, he is often moody and angry therefore I don't believe he knows how big a sinner he was because if he did he would be much happier at the knowledge that because of God's grace he is no longer one."

Paul says that God, in order to show us **the immeasurable riches of his grace in Christ Jesus** has:

- **made us** alive with Christ
- **raised us up** with Christ
- **seated us** with Christ in heavenly places

Each of these verbs begin with the prefix (**συνεζωποίησεν, συνήγειρεν, συνεκάθισεν**) which is translated "together with" or "synonymously"

... and all these three verbs are in **the past tense**.

Paul is saying, that the moment you believe in the Lord Christ you become united with Christ in every way—past, present, future

Everything that Jesus has done and will do, and everything the Jesus deserves becomes yours.

... You are as honored and loved, and accepted by God the Father as Jesus Himself is.

... What Jesus deserves, now belongs to you and I!

On the flip side:

If we are so united with Christ that we get everything He deserves ... then He is so united with us that he got everything we deserved.

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor. 5:21)

Think for a moment about Christ on the cross of Calvary ...

... Did Jesus cry out, “My hands, my feet, my head, my side?” ... **NO!!!**

... Jesus cried out, “My God, my God why have you forsaken me.”

Listen to me ... Jesus (there on Calvary bearing our sins) not only experienced physical death ...

... Jesus also experienced the eternal death of being separated from God.

Knowing and understanding how big a sinner you are ... and knowing the cost of God’s grace to save you from your sins should flood your life with joy!

... it should pull you toward Jesus Christ and His commands ...

This idea that God's sovereign grace erases the incentive to obey God and love Jesus, simply isn't true!

That may be how it works for a lost religious person ...

... but if you are truly saved then knowledge of God's grace and love should thrill you and compel you to **live for Jesus!**

Because of God's loving grace we have been:

- **made us** alive with Christ
- **raised us up** with Christ
- **seated us** with Christ in heavenly places

3. You are now Saved and Walking (v.8-10)

Paul wants us to understand what it means to be saved and to live in the power of that reality!

- You are saved by grace ... not of your doing it is the gift of God.
- WE are HIS workmanship—not our own
- We have been created for the purpose of good works which God has prepared

Paul says God has done it this way so that nobody would be able to boast.

This word "boasting" in the Greek is a little bit different from what our word "boasting" means

For us boasting means the same thing as bragging ... this is different.

In the ancient world, before the soldiers would go to off to war, they would say something like:

... we have iron chariots and they don't so we will crush them.

... they have 5000 soldiers, but we have 15000 and we will be like a swarm of locusts before them.

In other words, they would say these things to each other to encourage themselves and to give them confidence to go off into battle.

Paul says that when you are alive with Christ you don't need to boast ... **this ends all boasting.**

In other words, ... and I hope you get this ... our hope of victory in the battle is not tied to what we can do or what we have ...

... the victory has nothing to do with us and everything to do with King Jesus!

... in fact, the victory of the battle has already been won by our King Jesus!

- I don't have to scramble around to try to make an identity for myself
- I don't have to hope that in my achievements in life will be enough to validate my existence.
- My identity in in Christ Jesus Alone
- I am validated by the precious blood of Jesus Christ
- I don't have to win the victory ... Jesus has already won it for me!

Paul says that when grace comes, we stop looking at ourselves and we stop down on others and we start looking up to Jesus!

But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Gal 6:14)

We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus ...

The word "workmanship" is the Greek word ποίημα, and it means "work of art" we get our word "poem" from this word.

Here is what Paul is saying ...

All of God's work in your life is to prepare you and make it possible for you, to do certain good works that only you can do.

God grace in your life is because God has a plan for your life that is designed specifically for you!

Isn't that awesome!

Don't you want the chains of death, and self-centeredness to finally be broken off so that you can be free?

Don't you want to finally be free from scrambling around trying to prove to yourself to everyone?

Don't you want to be alive truly alive with Christ?

Were you dead in trespasses and sins when you came into the church this morning?

During this sermon has God given you faith to believe that you are loved by God and wanted by Christ?

... If so, I want to plead with you now come to Christ today and be saved!

Accept the indispensable, life changing gift of grace that God freely offers you.

Come to Jesus and experience the fullness of life, liberty, and peace!