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EPHESIANS 2:1-10

Today's passage of Scripture contains some of the most profound truths in all the word of God. Bro. Bob told us in the services last Sunday that the two most significant statements contained in God's word are:

- 1) With God all things are possible...**Luke 1:37**
- 2) My grace is sufficient for you...**2 Corinthians 12:9**

And today we're going to see another passage that contains profound and significant doctrine, as well.

So...let's get right into our lesson.

Verses 1-10...

This chapter begins with the little conjunction "and" because what we'll see today is actually a continuation of the thought we saw in the first chapter.

Paul has been talking about that tremendous power that raised Jesus from the dead. We will see that this power is the same power that makes us children of God because we were dead in trespasses and sins and now we have been made alive in Christ Jesus.

This takes power...resurrection power!

In these verses Paul presents *the past, the present and the future* of the Christian...what **we were**, what **we were** and what **we will be!**

Warren Wiersbe outlines our lesson today this way...

- 1) **Sins Work Against Us (verses 1-3)**
- 2) **God's Work For Us (verses 4-9)**
- 3) **God's Work In Us (verse 10a)**
- 4) **God's Work Through Us (verses 10b)**

1) **Sin's Work Against Us...**

Verse 1 tells us we were dead in our trespasses and sins.

Man does not become spiritually dead because he sins. Man sins because he is spiritually dead. Man is spiritually dead because by nature he is sinful.

Man doesn't become a liar when he tells lies. He tells lies because he is already a liar.
Man doesn't become a thief when he steals. He steals because he is already a thief.

So, we shouldn't wonder that folks sin before they come to know Jesus...they're just simply doing what comes naturally.

It's hard for us grandmothers to accept, but each little grandbaby that comes into our lives...each little grandbaby that we are so very proud of is a little sinner! ALL OF THEM! EVEN MINE!

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All of us were born in sin. David said, “in sin did my mother conceive me...” And this doesn’t mean David was conceived out of wedlock, it simply means David was a sinner even at the point of conception.

We were all born *spiritually dead*. We possess no spiritual life and we can do nothing to please God.

The word “**trespasses**” here means “**a falling aside when one should have stood upright.**” This word conveys the idea of falling aside from truth and uprightness and is used to describe Adam’s disobedience in **Romans 5:15-18**.

The word “**sins**” means “**to miss the mark, to wander from the right path, to go away, to do wrong.**” This is also used in connection with Adam in **Romans 5:12**.

Sin entered the human race when Adam fell. So, we come by sin naturally. We inherited it from our father, who inherited it from his father, who inherited it from his father...all the way back to Adam!

All men are equally lost without Christ, but not all men are equally evil. Not all men are as evil as they can be. I mean, there are some really fine folks who are lost...fine, moral folks and then of course, there are lost folks who are very, very evil. So, **all lost men are not as evil as they can be, but they are all as dead as they can be.**

For instance, twenty corpses on a battlefield might be in many different stages of decay, but they are all equally dead.

Let me illustrate it this way.

Say you and your little grandbaby are standing on the bank of a river and they’re each going to try to jump to the other side. Now, the river is about a mile wide. Now you are bigger than the baby, and besides, you work out...

So, when you jump, you gets a good way out there.
but, when the baby jumps, he really doesn’t get very far.

Well, along comes an Olympic broad jumper and he decides he’ll have a go at it. He out jumps the baby and he out jumps you by a long margin, but even he can’t jump across a river that’s a mile wide, can he?

See, their degrees of success vary...but they all are equal failures in trying to jump from one side of the river to the other.

Verses 2 and 3 tell us even more about how sin works against us. There are three forces that encourage man to sin...**the world, the devil and the flesh**.

In **verse 2**, we see we formerly walked according to the **world**. The world is the enemy of God...**1 John 2:15-17... “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”**

Now, this world isn’t the world of nature...it’s the world system we live in...the world that has no knowledge or thought of Almighty God.

Not only did we walk according to the course of this world, we also walked according to the **prince of the power of the air**.

Who is this prince? **The devil, of course.**

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The way the devil controlled us before we came to Christ was mainly by deception. He deceived us into thinking we didn't need Christ. We could live a good life without Christ.

What is this **"power of the air?"** These are the devil's demons. Satan cannot be in all places at all times as God can. The Bible clearly teaches there are spirits who are hostile to men and are ruled by the devil.

Well, not only did we walk according to the course of this world
and according to the prince of the power of the air...
we also formerly lived in the **lusts of our flesh.**

Before we accepted Christ, we were controlled by **natural** desire...we were by nature children of wrath.

Our flesh wanted to be fed, and our mind wanted to be fed...

And the things our flesh and mind wanted to be fed were not the things of God!

Now, what we've just talked about doesn't paint a very pretty picture, does it? But, in order to see what God has done for us, we need to be reminded where we were without Him!

But, we know that is not the only hope we have...Let's look at

2) God's Work For Us

Think about this...

**when man sets out to make something, he usually starts with
the best possible materials...the purest clay, the finest marble,
the best fabric, the best wood...**

But God doesn't do that...**God begins His work with dead folks.**

And you know, modern medicine is wonderful. Doctors can remodel disfigured faces and transplant kidneys and hearts and implant lenses in our eyes and bypass our arteries...**they can do all these things as long as their patient is living...**

But, once the patient dies, all the doctor can do is pull the sheet over the body and turn it over to the undertaker.

But, God does His best work with dead folks...folks who are spiritually dead!

So, with that in mind, let's look at

Verses 4-9...

"But God..." The word "but" always introduces us to a contrast and what a sharp contrast this is!

Paul had painted a very bleak picture of human depravity and sin's work against us and now he draws our attention to **God and His mercy and love!**

In these verses we see **four aspects of God's work** for us...

- **He loved us...verse 4**

God is love by His very nature. God would love even if there were no sinners, because love is part of His very being. The love of God is expressed to you and me in His grace and mercy...
verses 4-7...

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God is rich in grace and God is rich in mercy! And these riches make it possible for sinners to be saved.

Now, God so loved the world that He sent His only Son, **but His love isn't what saves us.**

We are saved by grace!

In God's mercy, God doesn't give us what we do deserve.

In God's grace, God does give us what we don't deserve.

I've given you this little illustration before, but I believe it illustrates this so well, so I'm going to use it again...

The story is told about a pastor whose son had misbehaved and had to be punished. The pastor asked his son what he thought his punishment should be...how many "licks" should he get? The son told his father he believed he should get ten licks.

So, the pastor gave his son nine licks and sent him to his room. A couple of hours later the pastor came in and said, "Son, let's go get an ice cream cone."

The young boy said, "Dad, I don't understand. First, you asked me how many licks I thought I should get and I told you I thought I should get ten licks, but you only gave me nine. Now, you want to go get some ice cream. What gives?"

To that the pastor replied, "Son, I thought I would use this opportunity to illustrate to you how God treats His children. If I had given you ten licks, that would have been what you deserved...that would have been **justice**. But, I gave you nine licks...I withheld from you what you really deserved...that is a picture of **mercy**. Son, the ice cream is my giving you something you don't deserve...a picture of **grace**!

God doesn't give His children justice...if He did, we would all go to hell. In God's mercy, He keeps us from hell and in His grace He allows us to go to heaven."

God's love was demonstrated at Calvary...

Paul says in **Romans 5:8...**

"...God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

And God not only loves us,

- **He made us alive...verse 5**

And He did this even while we were dead in sins!!

Above all us...what does a dead person need?

He needs to be made alive!

The Lord Jesus raised three people from the dead...

He raised the widow's son,

He raised Jairus' daughter,

He raised Lazarus...

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In each case, Jesus just spoke the word, and each one of these cases pictures for us the spiritual life that comes to the sinner when he hears the Word and believes.

But I want to tell you, the miracle of *our* spiritual resurrection is much greater than *these* three miracles. These folks weren't resurrected...they were resuscitated. One day, these three people would die again.

But, we know **we** have passed from death unto life...

And even more than this...our spiritual resurrection puts us in union with the Lord Jesus Christ!

And that brings me to the third aspect of God's work for us...

- **He exalted us...verse 5**

Let me ask you...do you know you're exalted?

Well, you are whether you feel like it...whether you even know it or whether you even care!

The Greek verbs "raised" and "seated" are in the past tense...it's already been accomplished!

As far as our Heavenly Father is concerned, we are no longer in Satan's domain, but God's domain...we are no longer in Satan's sphere of spiritual death, but in Christ's sphere of spiritual life.

And some day, we will receive all this and really be consciously aware of it...as Peter says,

"we will receive an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away..."

Not only does God **love us** and **make us alive** and **exalt us**...

- **He keeps us...verse 7**

God's purpose in our salvation is not simply to preserve us from hell, as great a work as that is and as great a blessing as that is to you and me...

However, God's ultimate purpose in our salvation is that in all the ages to come and for all eternity the church might glorify God's grace...

Paul says God will show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus... "***in the ages to come...***"

The word for "show" here means "display." In the same sense an artist might display his canvasses to reveal his skill, so God displays His redeemed children to the universe to reveal His grace...

Isn't that something? That's His purpose!!

So, if God has this eternal purpose for us to fulfill, then this must mean He will keep us for all eternity! Notice, that must mean **He** will keep us! *And we'll see how in the next verses...*

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Verses 8-9...

Since we haven't been saved by good works, we can't be lost by our bad works.

Grace means salvation completely apart from any merit or works on our part. Grace means God does it all for Jesus' sake. Our salvation is God's gift to us!

These two verses make up one of the great summaries of the gospel in the *New Testament*. Some argue over what the gift...**does it refer back to grace? Does it refer back to faith?**

Well, according to the Greek structure of this verse, most theologians agree that it refers to salvation. Salvation was made available to us by God's grace and received by us through faith. Since salvation is a gift...it cannot be earned, merited or otherwise purchased...

"Not of works; lest any man should boast."

Think about it...

Suppose God were to take people to Heaven on the basis of their good works. This would mean it would then be possible for those folks to say,

"I am here because I did this" ...or, "I am here because I did that..."

"I'm here because I gave X amount of dollars to the church", or I'm here because I cooked five meals a week for the needy and the sick."

What would this be? **IT WOULD BE BOASTING!!!**

Boasting is an expression of pride and pride was the original sin. Pride was the sin that transformed Lucifer into Satan. What happened to Lucifer because of pride? He was expelled from Heaven, wasn't he?

Boasting in Heaven about one's works would necessitate another expulsion from Heaven.

Listen, every false religion has at its heart the principle that salvation must be **earned, merited, or purchased at a price**. Every false religion requires folks to do something to gain favor with its so called god.

Only Christianity states that folks need simply to believe! All we have to do is have faith! Jesus has done all the rest!

John Phillips: "Salvation can be obtained only by believing, but through all eternity the nail prints in Jesus' hands will remind us of the enormous cost of God's free gift to us."

SALVATION IS FREE TO US, BUT IT COST GOD HIS ONLY SON!!!

Well, not only do we see in **verses 2-10 God's Work For Us**, but we also see

2) God's Work In Us...verse 10a

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The Greek word translated “workmanship is a word from which we get our English word for “poem.” **You and I are God’s poem...we are His masterpiece!**

We said a few minutes ago that God will display us in the ages to come...but He wants to begin now...

I read this week: “Each of our lives is the canvas on which the Master is producing a work of art that will fill the everlasting ages with His praise.”

Many times that canvas is painted with gentle strokes and many more times it is painted with firm strokes and even harsh strokes.

Many times the results God desires in our lives require us to go through hard times. Scripture gives us one example of this after another...**Job, Moses, Joseph, David, Paul, Peter**...all went through hard times.

God cannot work through us until He has worked in us!

I believe the questions we need to ask ourselves are these...

“Am I willing to allow God to work in me?
am I willing to pray and ask how I can be all that He wants me to be?”

One last point and we’ll be through...

3) God’s Work Through Us...verse 10b...

Many folks sort of conveniently forget about this verse. Many people search their whole lives for the meaning of life...they say they’re trying to “find themselves.” They say they’re trying to “find their destiny.” They say they’re trying “to be fulfilled.”

Well, Christians don’t have to do that. All we need to do is seek the will of God. And do what He tells us one step at a time.

The Christian knows beyond a doubt that there is a work for him to do.
And we are to walk in these good works. God has chosen to use you and me to do His work on earth. And we don’t have to manufacture these good works...God has already prepared them for us.

No good works can produce salvation, but many good works are produced by salvation!

Good works do not bring about discipleship, but good works prove our discipleship.

Jesus said: **“By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”**

When God’s people do good deeds, they bear fruit for God’s kingdom and bring glory to God’s name.

James tells us that faith without works is dead.

Before we can do any good work for the Lord, He has to do His good work in us!

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Well, we're almost finished with this lesson today...

Let me just say this...

All of us are "**works in progress**", aren't we?

What's the old saying?

"I know I'm not what I ought to be,
and I know I'm not what I'm going to be,
but praise God, I'm not what I used to be!"

Paul said to the *Philippians*: "**For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.**"

Somehow it's a great comfort to me to know He's not through with me!

All of us are imperfect, uncut diamonds being finished by the Master Craftsman. He's not finished with us yet, and His work won't stop until He has made us into the perfect likeness of His dear Son.

I read this past week about a famous actor who was once the guest of honor at a social gathering where he received many requests to recite favorite excerpts from various literary works.

An old preacher who happened to be there asked the actor to recite the *Twenty-third Psalm*. The actor agreed on one condition...that the preacher would also recite it.

The actor's recitation was **eloquently** done...just the right dramatic emphasis on just the right words. And when he finished, he was given a lengthy applause and a standing ovation.

Then the old preacher rose to recite the psalm. **His** voice was rough and broken from many years of preaching, and his diction was anything but polished. But when he finished there was not a dry eye in the room.

When someone asked the actor what made the difference, he said, "I know the psalm, but **he** knows the Shepherd."

Our salvation doesn't come from knowing **about** the truth of Jesus Christ but from intimately **knowing Him** as Savior. This coming alive can be accomplished by the power of God because of His **love** and His **mercy** and His **grace**.

We might be able to explain God's love and mercy and grace and justice and every other Biblical truth, but unless God's **love** and **mercy** and **grace** have been applied to our own lives, we would be like that famous actor who recited the *Twenty-third Psalm*.

"By grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God...not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

If there is any doubt in your mind that you have received the gift of salvation, why not make certain today? What a shame for God to give us a gift and we haven't reached out to receive it!!