

Ephesians 2:1-10

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Dear people in God's Kingdom

Have you ever heard of the phrase, “Dead Man Walking?” If you've watched enough movies, you may know what that means. “Dead Man Walking” is talking about the prisoner who is on his way to his execution. On March 14, 2017 in a prison in Huntsville Texas, James Bigby made his final walk to the execution chamber. He was a “Dead Man Walking”. For 25 years he had had the death sentence hanging over him. Since 1987 his lawyers have been trying to figure out a way to get him off of that death sentence, but appeal after appeal failed. You see, they just couldn't change the fact that he had murdered in cold blood four innocent people. The courts said he deserved to die. So James Bigby was a “Dead Man Walking,” and now, he's just dead.

In our text today, Paul puts it bluntly. James Bigby wasn't the only dead man walking. So were you. So am I. Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that any of us have killed innocent people. It's worse, we've defiled God – again and again. That's what sin does. That is why we need to be clear that:

Theme: We Were Dead

- 1. In sin**
- 2. But have been made alive in Jesus**

Did you catch how Paul describes this fact? As I read the text did you notice how completely filled we were with this death. It was our status, our activity, the power we were under. It's what motivated us and its consequences were what we had coming.

Look at it. Verse 1: **“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.”** God created us to live forever with him, but instead of life, we chose death when we rebelled against God – that's what

sin is – whenever we aren't what God demands, we've got the wages of our sin coming – and here Paul describes that – DEATH. That's our status. And there's nothing a dead man can do about it. A corpse has no ability to fight for its life. A corpse has no power, absolutely none, to change its situation. I mean, we weren't even the dead men walking – we were just dead. It's like the difference between James Bigby on March 13th and then on March 14th. Before March 14th, he could try to make his excuses and appeals even though the death sentence was hanging. But on the 14th it was clear how much power those things had – none.

Now think about this – for 1000's of years, we have been doing what James Bigby was trying to do for the last 25 years - trying to appeal God's judgment, right? We make our excuses and blame everyone else. We even try to blame God for not being fair. "You shouldn't be mad at me, God, because others are worse," right? But the simple truth remains – we're guilty – guilty of greed and pride and lust – as many good things as we may try to do – that doesn't change the fact that the wages of our sin is still death.

Look at how Paul goes on in verse 2. Death wasn't just our status, but our activity: **“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live.”** It was our activity – you know, even when you know better but that sin addiction just takes you away. Then he goes on... **“When you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.”** Do you see whose power we were under? -- The devil's. That's why we sin. And that's the only explanation for some of the things we've done. We've forgotten ourselves and followed him. But Paul is not done: **“all of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts.”** Our motivation was those sinful cravings, those lusts, those desires that we know we shouldn't follow, but they are just so tempting, and Satan's lies sound so good, they look like they'll bring so much pleasure.... But look at their results. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

By nature and by everything we have done – we had nothing coming but wrath. Awesome, huh? Hasn't this been fun? Don't you feel good about yourself right about now? I mean, this is supposed to be a good time at Church, but here we go with all this “Dead Man Walking” talk – talk about a buzzkill.

But you see, here's the thing. There is another key word that we hear and talk about quite often. This other word is grace. You've learned what this means right? Someone help me out here – what is grace? Grace is “God's undeserved love” that love that we didn't have coming – that there was no reason we should have received, that love that loves us in spite of how awful we are. And in order to understand that – in order to be able to appreciate GRACE, we absolutely have to understand where we were so we can appreciate the gift given to us.

We were “Dead men walking” and dead women walking and dead kids walking – on our way to hell. As the Apostle Paul has so clearly pointed out, our sin made death our status, our activity, the power we were under, our motivation and had waiting for us its consequences, the wages of sin. We were objects of wrath. And then we get to the word almost as important as grace. That big “But” in verse 4. Look at our text again. Look at how Paul, having absolutely shot down every one of our appeals and excuses and end runs takes us from death to life. He said you were dead.....BUT

2. But have been made alive in Jesus

⁴ **“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy.”** On account of his great love for us, even when we were corpses... So do you see the line of thought: Just as surely as our status and activity were death because of our sins, God’s status being the rich in mercy one – that’s who he is – he did the rich in mercy thing and loved us when we didn’t have it coming. That’s his activity... He **“made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.** Did you catch that? He made us alive “With Christ.” You could also translate it, “By Christ” “By what he has done” - that’s the power of our being made alive. We were helpless, but Jesus took our place and paid our price, giving his life and dying our death. HE became the dead man walking to Calvary, carrying our cross and our sentence and our sins. All so that - with Christ we are made alive – that’s the power we are now living under – Christ...GRACE! But Paul’s not even done yet. Here comes our new motivation:

⁶ **“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.”** We now have the power and privilege, the position of a relationship with Jesus and all the benefit that brings – our eternity is so certain that it affects our now. We have heaven so right now our lives our powered by the reality of who we are. I know, we don’t always feel like this royalty. We don’t always act like it – but grace upon grace – that’s what we are and when we remember it – talk about motivation! And of course, don’t forget the results. ⁷ **“in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”** All of this so that in eternity, everyone might realize just how amazing God’s grace is when they see me, sinful old “dead man walking” me – in heaven. Talk about Amazing Grace! I can’t sum it up better than Paul does ⁸ **“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.”**

I know, grace is offensive to our logical minds. It doesn’t make sense that God would treat dead men like this. It’s offensive to our sense of justice that says there has to be a reason in me that I deserve something better. It’s offensive to our “Do it Yourself” culture that thinks we can handle everything if we work at it hard enough. But the truth is – we can’t. So grace is offensive to our pride that wants to take some of the credit grace does not allow. But it’s grace. None of it we could do – only God could, and he did. That’s why it could only be **“By grace that you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”** So God gets all the credit and glory and honor, because by grace, we are Dead Men Walking.

But we’re not walking to our execution, Jesus did that for us. We’re walking in the light of life. Let’s celebrate the fact that our appeal has been granted. And actually, it wasn’t even our appeal – ours didn’t work. It’s the appeal the work of Jesus and the grace of God made for us. So to all you dead men and women walking, actually dead men and women jumping and dancing in life – you have been made alive in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen