

Living UP TO OUR Heavenly Calling

A study in the book of Ephesians

February 4, 2025
Led by Mary Lowman
Ephesians 2:1-10

Introduction

One of the striking features of Ephesians 2 is the number of vivid contrasts between believers' previous condition outside of Christ and their current privileged experience of being "in Christ."

Quote from A. W. Tozer:

"The only sure defense against self-righteousness is to cultivate a quiet state of continual penitence. A sweet but sobering memory of our past guilt and a knowledge of our present imperfections are not incompatible with the joy of the Lord; and they are of inestimable aid in resisting the enemy."

Ephesians 2:1- 10

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in 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. ³All 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. ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Verses 1-3 describe the former condition of these believers and of us today:

1. We were dead in sin.

We were dead spiritually before Christ changed us, and we had no way to revive ourselves.

2. We walked according to the ways of the world.

Every person begins their life on earth in a state of spiritual deadness, and apart from a work of God to revive our spirit, this state will continue uninterrupted until our physical death.

3. We had—and still have—a supernaturally powerful opponent.

Satan is called "the prince of the power of the air." Today, he rules the hearts of those bound in spiritual deadness, and he exerts his controlling influence through the fear of death.

Hebrews 2:14-15 (ESV): *Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself (Jesus) likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.*

The "power of the air" represents the invisible realm where spiritual battles occur, and Christians are called to fight against Satan's influence through prayer and reliance on God's power.

Ephesians 6:12: *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

In Romans Paul gives us the complete description of what we were before Christ—what anyone is like without being “in Christ.”

Romans 1:21 – 32

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²²Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. . .

²⁸Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. ²⁹They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, ³⁰slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; ³¹they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. ³²Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

How important is it for you and me to fill our minds with truth and not trash?

Ephesians 2:4 - 7

⁴*But God*, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Verses 4-7 go from “you were once” to “but now you are”!! Verse 4 begins with those wonderful, life-giving words: “But God.”

How can you ever doubt his love for you? He loved you when you were dead! Before you could make the slightest move toward him, he loved you with great love.

The Bible is utterly clear on the sequence of events that lead to our salvation: God must act first, because people do not naturally seek God.

Romans 3:10-11: “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God.”

In verse 6 Paul adds that our new spiritual life resulted in us being raised with Christ to be seated in heavenly places. Salvation is a change of spiritual position before God. By the work of Christ, we have been moved, spiritually speaking, from our prior position as sons of the devil dead in sin to our new state as sons of God alive in Christ.



In verse 7 Paul explains why God saved us: *so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

Because you are “in Christ,” and you have become a new creation, God uses you to show the abundant riches of his grace for everyone to see. You are evidence of God’s amazing grace, that he chose you and raised you and keeps you. You are saved in order to bring glory to God.

Ephesians 2:8 - 10

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.

Our faith was not the means by which we received grace. Instead, grace was the means by which we received faith. We did not leave our state of spiritual deadness and come to believe God’s word by our own efforts. Dead corpses cannot raise themselves. Instead, the faith we received was a gift of God.

God’s work presupposes a purpose, and the purpose for his acting is so that we might do good works. As Jesus himself said:

“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

Think about verse 10 as a one-sentence mission statement for us who are believers. Are you doing the good works God planned for you to do or doing your own thing?

What is the difference in being dead *in* sin and being dead to sin?

Ephesians 2:1: *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins*

Romans 6:11 – 14:

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³ Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

Colossians 2:13: *When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins...*

What is our part as believers in making sure that we do not let sin reign in our body?

- Do not offer any part of yourself to sin. Like what parts? Your mind, your hands, your feet, your eyes, your ears, your heart.
- Offer every part of yourself to God to do what is right—to be instruments of righteousness.

We have to continually deny our bodies what they want when they want something that is not good—we have to learn to deny its evil desires.

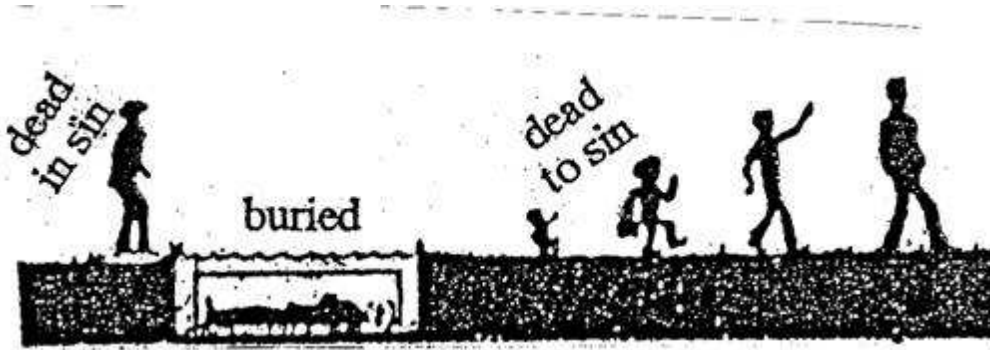
Romans 12:1: *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.*

1 Corinthians 9:26 – 27 (ESV): *So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. ²⁷ But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.*

How often do you say “no” to your body? Have you learned to carefully screen what you see; what you hear; where you go; what you read; who you allow to influence you? This is how you become more and more dead to sin. It is a process.

Remember: The road to holiness is a journey of long obedience.

In conclusion, think of what you were before you were “in Christ,” and what you are now.



You were once...

But now you are...

Memory Verse:

*For we are his workmanship,
created in Christ Jesus for good works,
which God prepared beforehand,
that we should walk in them.*

Ephesians 2:10

