

From Death to Life

August 16, 2002

- *If you were to ask the average person on the street, "How does a person make it to heaven?" or "How can someone know that he or she is right with God?" What varied responses would you get?*

Ephesians 2:1-10

2:1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, 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 ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, [it is] the gift of God; 9 not as 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 so that we would walk in them.

Sin, the Human Condition:

- *How does Paul graphically describe those who are dead in sin?*

- *What does this passage have to say about their power to do right?*

Compare Romans 3:10-18

Note: In Ephesians 2:1, the phrase dead in their trespasses and sins is not speaking of being dead because of committing sin. It is speaking of being dead because the sphere of existence of that person is apart from God. They exist in a sphere of spiritual death. (i.e. He does not become a liar when he tells a lie; he tells a lie because he already is a liar etc. . .) We commit sinful acts because we are sinners (cf. Matthew 12:35). In other words man is totally depraved and completely incapable of doing what is right, good, or holy. Why? because, he was born in sin. He has a sin nature.

- *What is the primary influence on their lives?*

Note: World (Kosmos) here does not represent physical creation, but the world order, the world's system of values and way of doing things—the world's course. The world's course or way of doing things follows the leadership and design of Satan, the prince of the power of the air. They are of one mind under one leader, Satan. The phrase, "power of the air" is a reference to Satan's host of

demons, who exist in the heavenly sphere. Satan and his demon host dominate, pressure, and control everyone who is unsaved.

- *What are their main aims?*

Note: The term for lusts refers to strong inclinations and desires of every sort, not just sexual desires. It is really the idea of craving. The term desires emphasizes strong willfulness, wanting and seeking something with great diligence. By nature sinful man is driven to fulfill the lusts and desires of their sinful flesh and mind. The desires of the sinful flesh is the idea: "If it feels good do it." The incorporation of the term mind indicates deliberate choices that defy the will of God.

- *What is the result of their choices?*

Grace, the Divine Solution:

- *What words does Paul use in this passage to describe God's actions toward the lost?*
- *In verses 4-9, Paul tells us about some tremendous things that God has done for us. List as many as you can find and feel free to put them in your own words.*
- *Whose work is salvation? Is it something that we obtain or achieve or is completely of God?*

Verse 4 speaks of God's initiative in the salvation process. God lavishes compassion and pity on those whom He loves, despite their abject sinfulness. This compassionate love for those who do not deserve it makes salvation possible. [God demonstrated his love and mercy toward us.]

Verse 5 is a reference to the supernatural act of regeneration. When we became Christians we were no longer alienated from the life of God. We became spiritually alive through a union with the death and resurrection of Christ. Paul calls this walking in "newness of life" Romans 6:4. [God made us alive together with Christ.]

Here in verses 6-7 we see our future blessings and rewards spoken of as if they have already taken place. This is common in the Greek language if you want to emphasize that something is so sure to happen. These future blessings are so sure to happen, Paul speaks of them as if they have already taken place. We can take great comfort in knowing that we will be raised up as Christ was raised, that we will be seated with Him in heaven and that God will continue to show the surpassing riches of His grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

- *According to verses 8-9, what is our part in responding to what God has done?*

Note: It would appear that our part in salvation is faith, but even that is not of ourselves, but is the gift of God. Saving faith is nothing that we do in our own power or by our own resources. This is obviously true from the context of verses 1-3 as we are spiritually dead and totally incapable of exercising faith. Neither is saving faith a result of our works. There is absolutely nothing that we

can do to earn or work toward our salvation. It is completely the result of God's grace, His unmerited favor toward sinners. Therefore all boasting is eliminated in salvation.

Good Works, The Expected Result:

- *What is the significance of good works, if they will not earn our salvation?*

Note: Although they have no part in gaining our salvation, good works have a great deal to do with living out salvation. No good works can produce salvation, but many good works are produced by salvation. Paul is emphasizing that once we are saved we are to perform good works. It is a natural result of the salvation process. It is the natural response to what God has done for us. Good works were prepared beforehand for us to walk in.

What do the following verses have to say in support of this?

John 15:8

2 Timothy 3:17

Titus 2:14

James 2:14-26 (vs. 17)

Application:

- Does your life resemble the pattern laid out in verses 1-3 or are you bearing much fruit by walking according to the good works prepared beforehand for you?
- Are you actively involved in ministry and if not, where could you serve in the church?
[Remember that we are to be zealous to do good works]