

Ephesians 2:1-10

Ephesians  
*How Good Is Good Enough?*

From the earliest times people looked at their own reflection. Some did it by looking into still water. Some polished brass and made mirrors.

About 300 years ago somebody figured out how to take glass and add a layer of silver. The silver reflects your image back to you through the glass. When you look into a mirror the light hits you and bounces off into the mirror. The mirror reflects light so it bounces the light back into your eyes so you can see your image.

There's a problem though. The mirror reverses the image. So the True Mirror Company of Brooklyn, NY has a solution. It's called the "True Mirror."

Lest you think the True Mirror isn't a must to have in your home, the True Mirror Company says this in their ad:

"From prehistoric times, people have only seen themselves reflected backwards. As it turns out, the backward images we see and interact with everyday are profoundly different from what is real. No wonder we are so often off in our self-evaluations compared with how others see us!

A True Mirror is surprisingly more than a simple novelty item. We are excited to introduce it as a new source of self-discovery and enlightenment.

The introspective use of the True Mirror can be an important boost towards your own self-acceptance and greater self-esteem. This happens by authenticating your own actual image and expressions as you exist in real life, and as you are seen by everyone else.

In contrast, the incorrect view seen in a traditional mirror can be a major source of self-doubt and self-criticism - simply because it is not the "real you" when your eyes meet in the mirror. How can you understand yourself, your emotions and your expressions when there is such distortion?"

What's intriguing to me about that is they're saying seeing the real you will make you feel better about yourself.

No longer will you need to ask, “Does my complexion really look that bad? Does this dress make me look fat? Does my hair really look that thin? Is my nose really that big?”

You’ll know all the gruesome details!

Seeing yourself as you really are can be a frightening experience because for the most part there’s not much we can do about what we see.

But you know what? There is a place where seeing yourself as you really are can make all the difference in the world. In fact it can make all the difference in this world and the next.

### **Open your Bibles to Ephesians 2 pg 1038**

We are in a study of the New Testament book of Ephesians.

Ephesus was a large commercial center of the Roman province of Asia and was one of the largest cities of it’s day. It boasted wide streets, huge public buildings and squares, and luxurious private homes.

It was the home of one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the temple of Artemis. Artemis was the virgin goddess of the hunt, wild animals, wilderness, moon, and childbirth. She was worshipped as a fertility / childbirth goddess.

The temple served as the bank of Asia and the depository of vast sums of money. It was also an art gallery displaying the masterpieces.

Ephesus was also known for the worship of the god Bacchus, the god of wine. Today you’ll see wine festivals called Bacchian festivals named after this Ephesian god.

What we know as the book of Ephesians was a letter written to a church there in the city. An apostle of Jesus Christ, named Paul, had started a church in the middle of this abject paganism.

A few years had passed and Paul was now in a Roman prison for his faith. Because he’s a Roman citizen he’s allowed to have visitors and write letters.

The Book of Ephesians is his letter back to the church.

Today we have chapter and verse references to help us navigate through the Bible but it wasn't always that way. The system of chapters was introduced in A.D. 1238 and the verse notations were added in 1551.

When the Ephesians read this letter they read it just like we'd read any letter. They just read through.

What we call Ephesians chapter 2 is really a continuation of chapter 1. God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings. We didn't deserve any of those blessings. The blessings weren't earned.

God's blessings come through God's grace, which we appropriate by faith.

Chapter 1 finished up talking about God's power. God works in the life of people who trust Him by faith with the same power that He used to raise Christ from the dead. That's power. No doubt about it.

But there's a perception problem for us when we read about that power.

How can you compare God raising His Son from the grave with God working in my life? I'm still me with all my weaknesses, blind spots, shortcomings, and struggles with sin.

What's going on?

We're going to see three things in our passage today; What we really were before God worked in our life, What we are now, and Why God has worked in our life. We're going to look in the "true mirror" this morning. This is the "true mirror" of God's Word.

*I. What We Are Before God Works In Us*

## **Read vs 1**

The "and" ties us back to the first chapter. This is why we all need God to work in our life.

“And you He made alive who were dead.”

I can't think of a stronger term than “dead.” The Bible doesn't say that without Jesus we're really sick. It doesn't say we're on our death bed, desperately ill, almost dead, half dead, it says we're dead.

Now obviously he's not talking about physical death. These guys in the Ephesian church weren't all in a cemetery and God raised their bodies.

So what kind of death is being talked about here?

**Turn to Genesis 2 pg 4 Read vs 15-17**

If you think God has too many rules sometimes, remember this, originally the human race only needed one rule. Just don't eat from that tree over there.

Man, that would be easy, wouldn't it?

So what did Adam eventually do? He broke the one rule, sin entered the world, and Adam died. He died but he didn't drop over on the spot. Adam died spiritually.

And ever since that day the descendants of Adam have been born into the world in the same condition. Dead in trespasses and sins.

We're born into the world spiritually dead.

Now you say, “Boy, that's strong terminology!” You're absolutely right.

There isn't a stronger term than dead. This is a concept that you won't find in any other religion. It's unique to biblical Christianity.

So then, what does it mean to say that everyone who hasn't trusted Jesus Christ as Savior is spiritually dead?

Obviously death is the exact opposite of life. So first we need to define life from the Bible.

Jesus said in John 17, *And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.* John 17:3

I Timothy 6:15 says God, *is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality...*

God is life. He's the author of life and only He has immortality. Apart from God there is no life.

Life is to know God, to be in a relationship with God, to share the life of God.

Death in the Bible isn't extinction or inactivity. It's always separation. Physical death is the separation of a person from their body. Spiritual death is a separation of a person from their God.

**Go back to Ephesians but this time turn to chapter 4 pg 1040**

**Read vs 17-18**

God says we're born into this world spiritually alienated, separated from His life.

**Back to Eph 2:1** *Dead in trespasses and sins...*

Not dead because of sins, but dead in sins. Only Adam and Eve died as a result of sin. We sin as a result of being spiritually dead.

It's interesting, but those two words "trespasses" and "sins," give a comprehensive account of all human evil.

A trespass (*paraptoma* from *para* "beside" and *pipto* "to fall") means a false step. It can be a crossing of a boundary or leaving the right path.

A sin (*hamartia*) means a missing of the mark or falling short of a standard.

Before God, all of us are both rebels and failures. We willingly cross the line and constantly fall short of God's perfect standards.

It's our nature. We're born this way. We just don't want to admit it. That's why we need to true mirror of God's Word to show us what we're really like.

So we're separated from God.

Death also implies impotence.

In Romans 4:19 we read about Abraham. *And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb.*

Abraham and Sarah were way past the point of having children. But God had promised them a natural born son. Abraham believed God even though his body and Sarah's womb were described as dead.

They weren't in the grave. They just weren't physically able to have kids without a miracle from God. Deadness is inability.

From a spiritual perspective that means that there's nothing any of us are capable of doing to do to reach God.

In fact, God goes so far as to give this evaluation of the world of humanity.

*There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one. Romans 3:10-12*

Those are more strong words, aren't they. In fact, there so strong we think, "Wait a minute. There are lots of people who don't believe in Jesus who are still moral people. What's this about?"

Here's where the rub comes in. We might not be religious but we don't rob banks or assault little old ladies in the street. We pay our bills, cut our grass, coach the kid's soccer team.

We have a hard time seeing ourselves the way God sees us.

Here's where we really need the True Mirror. Here's where we really need something to help us see ourselves from God's vantage point.

God says to us, "If you don't have Jesus as you Savior then you're dead., You're separated from me and you can't do anything to change that.

“From an eternal perspective, nothing you do is eternally good. Nothing you do is going to last beyond this life. Nothing you do is good is because it’s just human goodness flowing out of someone who’s spiritually dead and isn’t motivated by the glory or worship of God.”

We evaluate people by all kinds of measures of morality and goodness.  
*God looks down from heaven on the children of men and says, “there’s none righteous, there’s none that does good.”*

This is so striking. But wait, there’s more. **Read vs 2-3**

There’s what really drives us. This is how we really operate. We’re controlled by 3 things; the world, Satan, and our own desires.

Now there’s something that’s absolutely crucial to understand here. The Bible’s not saying that every person who has not received Christ is as disobedient as he or she could be.

A moral person may be more obedient to God than an immoral one in certain areas but every person starts out disobedient at the most important point of all.

In Acts 16 a terrified man asks Paul, *“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”* So they said, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved,*

The word “believe” there is in the imperative mood in the Greek text. In other words it’s a command. We’re ordered by God to believe in His Son.

Romans 10:16 says, *But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?”*

To obey the gospel means to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is what we are without Jesus. Dead, disobedient in the most crucial area of all, and influenced by the philosophy of this world system, Satan, it’s ruler, and our own sin nature.

And notice in verse 3 God says we fulfill the desires of the flesh *and the mind.*

Sins like intellectual pride, false ambition, rejection of truth, pride in your heritage or religion don't always show outwardly but they're part of our lives and that's why without Christ, God says we're lost.

We may be down in the gutter or up singing in the church choir but God says without Christ we're by nature children of wrath.

The wrath of God is a lot different from the wrath of other people. God's wrath isn't like a bad temper where He flies off the handle. It's not spite or malice or acrimony or revenge. it's never arbitrary or impersonal.

The wrath of God is this: It's God's personal, righteous, constant, hostility to evil. It's His settled refusal to compromise with evil and His resolve to condemn it. God's wrath is rooted in His holiness.

See, God must punish all sin. From what seems inconsequential to us, to the worst, God must punish it all.

That's why He sent His Son. On the cross, Jesus Christ became the object of God's wrath. Without Christ, we're the object of God's wrath. It's what we are by nature. Somehow, in our typical distorted view of spiritual things, we've gotten the idea that if you do enough stuff wrong you get wrath and if you do enough stuff right you get blessings.

The Bible says it's by nature that we're in the crosshairs of God's wrath.

Looking in the true mirror might not be a pleasant experience, but unless we see ourselves as we really are, we'll never understand why we need a Savior.

*I. What We Are Before God Works In Us*

*II. What We Are After God Works In Us*

**Look at verse 4 *But God...***

We could get really depressed if all we had was the first three verses. But here's two beautiful words, "But God." **continue verse 4-6**

Here's what happens by faith. We're objects of wrath, but God shows His love.



We're dead, but God gives us life. We're slaves of sin and our own desires, but God raises us up and sets us in the heavenlies.

We're in hopeless shape, but God takes the initiative. God takes us from being objects of His wrath to being objects of His grace.

God in His great love with which He loved us does a miracle.

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16*

This is so awesome! This is huge!

One day 2000 years ago, on a lonely hillside outside Jerusalem, Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, took the wrath of the Father. He took the blast of God's wrath that we deserve.

All of our sins were poured out on Him. And then all of His perfection becomes ours when we trust Him for it.

Why would God do this for us? Is it because we're so irresistible the God couldn't help Himself? We've already seen that's not it.

*I. What We Are Before God Works In Us*

*II. What We Are After God Works In Us*

*III. Why God Works In Us*

## **Read vs 7**

Follow this: God forgives guilty sinners who place their faith in Christ and raises them up so that He can shower the abundant riches of His grace on them.

Then He takes this body of believers, the trophy of His grace, and He holds them up before Satan and all the angelic beings to show His true character and nature for all eternity.

We'll get to this more in depth in chapter three but the Bible tells us that in the past, Lucifer was an angelic leader who rebelled against God and convinced a third of the angels to join up with him.

God defeated that rebellion with no problem because God is really big and no one's ultimately going to stand against Him.

Now that might make you think, "Wait a minute, Ed, why would Lucifer take on God in the first place? That story sounds a little shaky. He'd know he can't win. Why would he even try?"

That was a question I used to wrestle with until I really thought it through. You know what I realized? We all do the same thing in our own way, don't we?

Why is it so hard to imagine Lucifer trying to dethrone God when we struggle with it most every day.

I mean. let me ask you this, is God the absolute ruler of your life 24/7 365? He isn't is He?

There's always the struggle where we want control. We want to call the shots. We think we know better than God.

Lucifer just tried to take that mindset to it's logical, ultimate end.

Well, of course Lucifer (which means the shinning one) was defeated and judged by God and now we call him Satan (which means "adversary").  
The judgment was eternity in the Lake of Fire.

The interesting thing about the sentence is, it hasn't been carried out yet.

I believe at his sentencing hearing Satan made this accusation: "If God is really loving, how could He condemn me as one of His creatures?"

God is using believers to demonstrate His character once for all to all the angelic beings.

He is holy. He is just. He is righteous. He is also loving and gracious.

The cross proves it once for all.

So here's the \$64,000 question. How is this grace and kindness shown to us?

How good do you have to be to get in on what God is doing? How good is good enough?

### **Read vs 8-9**

Ephesians 2:8-9 are the foundational verses for Faith Community Church.

These verse just fly in the face of thousands of conflicting opinions that people have dreamt up to try to explain how to get into God's family, how to be forgiven, how to have an assurance of heaven.

You ever hear people say, "You can make the Bible say anything you want"?

Listen, the Bible speaks clearly and definitively if we just read it in its context.

Listen to the clarity of the Bible:

*For by grace:* the unearned and unearnable favor of God

*You have been saved:* delivered from eternal punishment and made God's child

*Through faith:* faith has no merit to it. Faith is the opposite of works. Faith is believing that Christ died and rose again for you.

*And that not of yourselves:* we can't save ourselves

*It is the gift of God:* a gift can't be earned or it isn't a gift

*Not of works:* not by keeping the 10 commandments, not turning from sin, not by joining, working, or paying

*Lest anyone should boast:* Man, if this doesn't nail it down, nothing else will!

In heaven there's only worshipping, there's no boasting. No one's saying "I'm here because I was better than other people."

Listen to this snapshot of heaven we get from Isaiah, one of God's prophets. He's given a vision of the throne room of God:

*Isaiah 6: 1-4 I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.*

*And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.*

This is awesome folks. Could you imagine being there before Almighty God, angels are crying out and the place is shaking and filled with some and somebody getting up off their face and saying, "Hey everybody, I just want to tell you about me and why I deserve to be here?"

It aint going to happen!

Ultimately it's not about us. It's all about God.

But then, what about right now? If we've trusted Jesus Christ as Savior do we just kind of hang out in our Barco Lounger, watching our plasma TV, sipping tea until we're in heaven?

### **Read vs 10**

Stuff we could do can't make dead, disobedient, children of wrath into children of God.

A Christian is God's workmanship.

But here's the second reason God does all this on our behalf; so that we would do the good works God has called us to do.

Here's where the good works part comes in. Good works don't get us to heaven but they come as result of knowing we're going to heaven.

When we stand back and realize all that God has done for us the Barco Lounger thing is totally out. We want to make our lives a living thank you letter to our gracious and merciful God.

Where are you in all this, this morning? Are you dead or alive? Are you a child of wrath or a child of God? Are you lost or are you saved by grace through faith?

*Bow heads and close eyes.*

If you've taken a look in the true mirror and you've seen yourself as God sees you, remember it's by grace that you're saved through faith...