

What We Are In Christ

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INI – SDG

Ephesians 2:1-10 And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³ among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. ⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised *us up together*, and made *us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus*, ⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His 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 of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Imagine driving through the Arizona desert. On your way through the desert, you see a pile of dry bones. Imagine someone in the car stepped out and started preaching to the dry bones. What would you think? You would probably think him a complete nut.

This is exactly what God told Ezekiel the prophet to do. He showed him a valley of dry bones and told him to preach to the dry bones. As Ezekiel preached to those bones, they came together, and the breath of life entered them, and they stood, and they lived.

Paul makes it clear in our text that you are those dead bones which came to life in Christ Jesus. Therefore, since you have been given life what will you do? Will you return and lie down on the sand like you did when you were dry bones? Or since you are now alive will you therefore live to Christ?

You were dead but now you are alive, therefore live in Christ.

There is nothing like a good before and after picture for selling products. It doesn't matter if you are selling diet pills or a vacuum cleaner or weed killer. Customers love to see proof of efficacy.

It can also be a source of encouragement. If you are working on a project like exercising to lose weight. If you can see the difference before and after it can help you to keep exercising.

Similarly in our Christian life it can be encouraging to be shown the before and after pictures. This is what Paul does in our text. He reveals the difference between our previously life in sin and our current life in Christ.

V2. Then you walked in trespasses and sins, v10 now you walk in grace.

Paul reminds us that previously we walked in sin but now we walk in grace. In both cases Paul uses the term peripateo, which means to walk about or walk around. We have an English word peripatetic which comes from this Greek word and means someone who moves around a lot, often because of their job. Military life is peripatetic. Thus, the image here isn't simply the normal biblical image of walking in the path of God or walking along the path of sin. Rather Paul says that previously you were walking around showing off your sin. Imagine covering yourself in sin and walking about showing it off. Remember Lamech, the descendant of Cain who bragged about murdering me. He was wearing his sin and walking about showing it off.

On the other hand, you have Paul who reminds us that if he boasts he will boast only in Christ

Galatians 6:14 God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ

The difference here isn't the path you are walking, although that is a difference, the difference is what you are proud of and showing off your sin or are you boasting in Christ.

Remember the purpose of clothing. Clothing was given to Adam and Eve to hide their nakedness. But clothing can also be made which does not hide the body but rather shows it off. In Christ our sin is covered. Without Christ our sin is exposed we walk around in our shame. Those who are in Christ walking about with their sin covered.

As David reminds us, **“blessed are those whose sin is covered.”**

Before our sin and our shame were clearly exposed, but now we are covered in the grace of God.

We are embarrassed when we mess up. We get angry and yell. We say something stupid. When we sin, we are embarrassed, and we are worried that this is all that others will think about us. We are afraid that people will remember our mistakes and that this is the way they think about us. Because we are covered in the grace of Jesus, God does not think of us this way. We do not have to walk about wearing this sin. We walk instead in the grace of God.

What we are in Christ is no longer walking about covered with sin but rather walking about covered with Grace.

Previously we were v3 living in the desires of our flesh but now we are v6 raised up with Christ.

The picture there is someone living in filth and squalor. Like the Gogan family from Pete's Dragon who complain that they had their bath for the year back in May. Without Christ we were covered in our own filth.

King Ahab was a whiny little baby. He didn't get what he wanted so he threw a temper tantrum. Eventually he murdered Naboth to get his vineyard. It's sad that Naboth was murdered but it is pathetic that Ahab was sulking in his bed because he couldn't buy a vineyard.

We know that our sin is pathetic and filthy. Before we were like King Ahab whinny and spoiled. By nature, we can't help ourselves. We know that we are pathetic and covered with our own filth. But we keep playing in the mud anyway.

But now Christ has raised us up out of the mud. What we are in Christ is washed and cleansed.

Previously we were v2 sons of wrath and disobedience but now we are sitting with Christ in the heavenly places.

The phrase sons of disobedience which is mentioned in verse two refers both to the fact that we are by nature rebellious and to the fact that because of that rebellion we are under the wrath of God.

Paul reminds us that our nature is to refuse the word of God and rebel against it.

Romans 8:7 ⁷ Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

I remember years ago one lady telling me, "I don't know what God's will is." I told her it was perfectly clear what God's will is, the problem is only that you don't want to do it.

People often say I don't know what God's will is. Should I be a cop or a baker? Should I go to school in California or Colorado? Should I marry Tim or Jim? These are not things that God has revealed to us. It is not God's will that you do either. God does not dictate the exact path of your life. You are generally free to choose.

Where God has spoken his will is not hard to understand. It is written in your heart. It was written on stone. It is written in plain words in scripture. God's will is that you do not lie, and that you do not cheat, and that you do not steal and that you do not gossip, and that you do not lust after women or men other than your spouse.

And yet we do not listen. We do not want to listen, and then we complain I don't know what God's will is. You know perfectly well what God's will is, but you don't want to acknowledge it. Why? Because we are or were as our text says, "**Children of disobedience.**" That is, we do not want to listen to God's word.

We were sons of disobedience but now we are "sitting with Christ."

Children who are disobedient don't sit at the table they go to their rooms. People who are disobedient don't sit on thrones with the king, they are down in the dungeon.

We who were rebellious against God are sitting with him in the heavenly thrones. This is not because we have suddenly become perfect children. But because by his grace he forgives our rebellious hearts and calls us to sit with him instead of sending us to the dungeons.

What we are in Christ is no longer under wrath but children of God, sitting with Christ.

Ephesians 2:8 ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

All this was accomplished Paul reminds us as the gift of God, not even an ounce of it was our own doing. It is important to remember that we began in God's grace. Since this is how we began we need to continue in the same way. We you start a project or an exercise routine you have to follow it through. In the same way we have to continue in God's grace.

Paul warns the Galatians.

Galatians 1:6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,

There is a temptation having begun in God's grace to think that we can continue on our own.

Since we have begun in God's grace let us continue also in God's grace

Our gospel reading reminds us that as the serpent was lifted up so also Christ was lifted up for us. By his grace we have been saved. We were dead but now we are alive by his grace, therefore live by his grace. We were walking around showing off our sins, but now we are clothed in his grace therefore glory in the grace of God. We were slaves to the desires of our flesh but now we have been washed of those desires. We were sons of disobedience but now we are sitting with Christ.

God's grace has done all this for us and will continue to keep us steadfast in his promises even until the very end. As you have begun in the grace of God so end in the grace of God. Amen