

## Live Out Loud: From Living Dead to Truly Alive

Ephesians 2:1-10

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Today's text is perhaps the single greatest explanation of how we arrive at a "LIVE OUT LOUD" type of Christianity in the Bible. Paul explores the radical transformation we experience because of God's resurrection salvation – from death to life.

Today, once again I want to walk through the text with you. So, if you would bring your Bible's out, and follow along as we step through this text together you will learn that moving from the living dead to being truly alive gives you reason to "LIVE OUT LOUD". We'll look at Ephesians 2 (p. 1242).

### 1. We were the living dead

If someone handed you a couple of pills and said, "Swallow these," would you do it? Not likely. However, if you were in a medical office and the person speaking was a doctor who had just told you that you would die unless you took the pills, you would be more likely to do so.

Sometimes you have to know how bad the bad news is before you can appreciate the good news. Paul tells us how bad the bad news is in **verse 1**: "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins." We were the living dead. Dead. Not sick, not dying, not having an off day—dead. What can dead people do to help themselves? Not much . . . in fact, absolutely nothing. **Let's continue: Read vs. 1-3.** At first glance Paul's description of life without Christ appears too harsh. Is everyone as degraded as he suggests? Does not life also have joy and happiness in it? Are there not many good, ethical people for whom this description does not fit? Is everyone destined for God's wrath?

Paul is not denying the value of creation or of humanity created in the image of God. He is not saying all human beings are worthless, nor is his primary concern what will happen on Judgment Day. His concern is to contrast the plight of humanity without God with the privilege of humanity with God and in Christ.

As Paul looks back on the former life, his first assessment is that it is dead, that is spiritual death, a life lived outside of a relationship with God. A life so lived is a meaningless life not worth living.

TV show, The Walking Dead - Zombies – the soulless living dead... That resembles the picture Paul is painting here - The soulless zombie wandering lifelessly through this world. "These people are physically alive, but their sins have rendered them spiritually unresponsive, alienated from God, and thus incapable of experiencing the full life that God could give them."

So, how does Paul arrive at this assessment? God is the source of life and the only way to truly experience life is in relationship to the one who created it. A life outside of that relationship, a life separated from God, is a life that is dead. Ancient Greeks coined the phrase, "Soma sema," – the body is a tomb.

## 2. We have been restored to life

Because of love, God has taken us from the living dead and breathed life back into us. We have been restored to life. **Notice what Paul says in verses 4-7...**

The New Testament scholar Marcus Barth says that "in the majority of occurrences in the New Testament, the verb 'to make alive' is a synonym of 'to raise' from the dead." Man is radically dead, and he can be saved only by the radicalness of resurrection! The only way spiritually dead people can have a relationship with God is to be made alive. And God is the only person who can accomplish that, which he did through his Son, Jesus Christ. Christ defeated sin and death through his death and resurrection, thus offering spiritual life to those dead in sins.

Interestingly, Paul says nothing here about Christ's death. While the Resurrection is inseparable from the Crucifixion, Paul does not bother to mention Christ's atoning sacrifice. He is more concerned about the ability of the Resurrection to breath life back into souls of those who were spiritually dead.

Paul says that we have been saved by grace. The term 'saved' points to the idea of rescue from danger. The idea expressed is:

- ... the pulling of a drowning child from the water as they begin to go under for the last time.
- ... a fellow pedestrian pushing another out of the way of a careless driver.
- ... dislodging the food from the throat of a choking person.

Salvation is more than forgiveness of our sins. Salvation is being raised from the certainty of death, redeemed from slavery to sin, and rescued from the unleashed wrath of God. Here it carries the particular sense of the resurrection rescue mission to retrieve us from the spiritual death that has come to define our condition outside of Jesus Christ. It is new life and a new reason for living breathed into the soul of those who were once dead.

The threefold repetition of 'with Christ' or 'with him' is significant and underscores Paul's emphasis on **participation with Christ**. To enjoy salvation requires being connected to and identifying with the Savior.

So how did he do it? How did God take us who were once dead, completely lifeless without hope in any spiritual sense, and breathe life into us?

## 3. Here is how it all happened

In the **final three verses of this section**, Paul tells us how Christians have had their souls re-invigorated with the power of the resurrection. **Read vs. 8-10**. Actually, Paul spends nearly

as many words in these verses to define how our spiritual resurrection **didn't happen**. Let's look at three such phrases: "this is not of your own doing; it is a gift of God". Some of us when given a gift may respond, "Thank you very much. What did I do to deserve this?" Nothing–You didn't do a thing, nada; that's why it is called a gift.

"Not a result of works"- 'works' refers to any human accomplishment by which one thinks to gain status or privilege before God. In reality, however, nothing we do grants standing before God. Humans in and of themselves have no claim on God. In fact, we are absolutely incapable of doing anything that would result in God's owing us – salvation or not. "So that no one may boast." Salvation is not about us and our worth, what we have accomplished – it is about God and his free gift of grace ... no strings attached ... no hidden costs.

"**It is by grace**" – Grace means the completely undeserved, loving commitment of God to us. For some reason unknown to us, but which is rooted in his nature, God gives himself to us, attaches himself to us, and acts to rescue us. The initiative always lies only and completely with him.

We become Christians through God's unmerited favor, not as the result of any effort, ability, intelligent choice, or act of service on our part. That is why Paul includes the statement about us still being in our sins. We didn't do anything. The initiative all rested in God. He was the active party, moving before we ever made a move towards him.

And that grace was received "**through faith**." Faith is relational, a covenant word, expressing the commitment and trust that bind two parties together. Faith defines reliance on a reliable God. It doesn't say so much about us, rather it says, "God is trustworthy."

Listen one last time to these verses. This time from the Message:

"Now God has us where he wants us, with all the time in this world and the next to shower grace and kindness upon us in Christ Jesus. Saving is all his idea, and all his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it. It's God's gift from start to finish! We don't play the major role. If we did, we'd probably go around bragging that we'd done the whole thing! No, we neither make nor save ourselves. God does both the making and the saving."

## **Conclusion**

Paul began this section with a faithful portrayal of man as subject to three terrible powers, namely 'sin', 'death' and 'wrath.' Yet, he refused to despair because he trusted in God. The only hope for dead people lies in a resurrection. But then again, the living God **IS** the God of the resurrection! In Jesus. Amen.