

Transforming Grace: Grace That Saves

Part 1 of 5 - Ephesians 2:1-9

Discussion Questions

1. Paul describes us as being "dead in trespasses and sins" prior to Christ, even while living active physical lives. How does recognizing this *distinction between physical vitality and spiritual death* shift how you view loved ones or co-workers who seem completely fine without God?
2. The message distinguishes between "sin" (missing the target) and "transgression" (crossing a boundary). Which of these two tendencies do you notice pulling at your heart most frequently in daily life?
3. We face subtle pressures from the world (making sin look normal), the devil (creating fog and confusion), and the flesh (internal self-centered desires). Which of these three influences feels like the biggest practical battle in your current season?
4. Ephesians 2:4 pivots dramatically with the phrase "But God." Looking back over your own life, what stands out as your personal "But God" moment where His rich mercy stepped into a hopeless situation?
5. Paul uses past-tense language to state that believers are *already* raised and seated with Christ in heavenly places. How does knowing your spiritual security rests on God holding onto you—rather than you holding onto Him—change how you handle moments of personal failure or doubt?
6. The sermon compares God's immeasurable grace to a bottomless spring-fed pool that we will explore for all eternity. What is one aspect of God's character or grace that you have come to appreciate much more deeply recently than when you first believed?
7. Faith is presented in three dimensions: belief in Jesus's person, trust in His work, and reliance on His finished sacrifice. Is there a specific area in your life right now where you intellectually *believe* the truth, but struggle to practically *rely* on Him?
8. Human nature often defaults to a "cosmic scale" mentality—hoping our good deeds outweigh our bad. Why do even long-time Christians fall back into trying to earn God's favor, and how can we actively catch ourselves doing this?
9. Because we are saved *by grace* and not *by works*, good works are meant to flow out

of our security in Christ rather than a need for approval. What is one practical good work or act of service you feel prompted to carry out this week purely out of gratitude?

10. When answering a friend or neighbor who asks, "Saved from what?", how can you share the candid reality of God's justice alongside the warmth of His great love without sounding self-righteous?

Summary

While the word "grace" is widely used across church culture, it often raises a fundamental question: "Saved from what?" In Ephesians 2:1–9, the Apostle Paul directly addresses this question by unfolding our human condition, the character of the God who rescues us, and how salvation is received.

Our Need to be Saved

Before experiencing the good news, we must first confront our true starting condition. Paul begins by declaring that apart from Jesus, humanity is spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. This spiritual death means being completely separated from God—lacking a natural desire for Him, pushing Him away, and seeking to live life on our own terms.

To describe this condition, Paul uses two key terms:

- **Sin:** Originating as an archery term for missing the target, sin illustrates how God has given His good and righteous standard, yet we fall short.
- **Trespass:** This refers to crossing a boundary or stepping past a "No Trespassing" line established by God for human flourishing.

In this state of spiritual death, humanity is actively dominated by three pervasive forces:

- **The World:** Cultural pressures that subtly redefine morality, making sin look normal and righteousness look strange.

- **The Devil:** Described as "the ruler of the power of the air," Satan works like a thick fog to bring spiritual confusion, enticing people to doubt God's goodness and word—much like his strategy of asking "Did God really say?" in the Garden of Eden.
- **The Flesh:** Internal, self-centered desires that push us toward works such as anger, strife, impurity, and division.

Because God is holy and just, He cannot simply sweep sin under the rug. As a result, apart from grace, human beings stand guilty as "children under wrath," doomed under divine judgment.

The God Who Saves

The narrative undergoes a dramatic shift with the words "But God". Rather than leaving humanity under deserved judgment, God steps into our hopeless situation. He acts out of His rich mercy—withholding the judgment we deserve—and His great, self-sacrificial love. As Romans 5:8 reveals, God demonstrated this love by sending Jesus Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

God makes believers spiritually alive with Christ, raising them up and seating them with Him in the heavenly places. Notably, Paul writes these actions in the past tense, signaling that a believer's security is already fully accomplished and held fast by God's power rather than human effort.

The Endless Riches of Eternity

In Ephesians 2:7, Paul explains that God saves us "so that in the coming ages he might display the immeasurable riches of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus". The longer a Christian walks with Christ, the deeper their understanding of sin becomes, which in turn deepens their gratitude and worship.

This discovery of grace does not end when earthly life finishes. Throughout eternity in the new heaven and new earth, God will continue displaying the infinite depth of His favor. This infinite nature is like a bottomless spring-fed pool; no matter how deeply one explores it, the bottom is never reached. God's grace has no bottom, meaning believers will never run out of reasons to praise Him. As the classic hymn *Amazing Grace* echoes, after ten thousand years in His presence, we will have no less days to sing His praise than when we first began.

How We Are Saved: Understanding Grace and Faith

Paul summarizes the doorway to life in verses 8 and 9: "For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast". Salvation is an undeserved gift that cannot be earned through human moral effort.

Faith: Belief, Trust, and Reliance

To truly grasp how salvation is received, we must understand that biblical faith consists of three essential dimensions:

- **Belief:** Conviction in the *person* of Jesus Christ—acknowledging that He is truly the Son of God.
- **Trust:** Confidence in the *work* of Jesus, recognizing that He lived the perfect, sinless life we failed to live and fulfilled God's righteous standard.
- **Reliance:** Resting entirely upon His accomplished sacrifice on the cross and resurrection, rather than on our own abilities or achievements.

Human nature naturally attempts to treat salvation like a scale, hoping good deeds will outweigh bad deeds. But the gospel announces that the work is already done. When Jesus declared on the cross, "It is finished," He accomplished what humanity could never achieve. Through a divine exchange, Jesus took the penalty for our sin and gave us His perfect righteousness. Now, when God looks at a believer, He does not see their transgressions; He sees them clothed in the righteousness of His Son. Because salvation relies entirely on Christ's work, all human boasting is eliminated, leaving believers secure in His eternal kindness.