



Now to Live the Life : You are saved. Ephesians 2:1-10

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Ephesians 2

¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- ⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

My son Ethan has an iPhone, but earlier in the summer he went on a little after-school adventure with his friend which involved jumping over a river. Somehow his school bag managed to drop into the water. It was only for a few seconds, but that was it for the iPhone. It is now dead. Caput. It has ceased to be! It has several red marker dots inside which prove it has been water damaged beyond repair. Most of the components are probably fine but apparently what it needs is a new battery and logic board to make it work properly again.

Paul starts this second chapter of his letter to the Ephesian church by reminding them that they were once dead too: Spiritually caput - in need of new internals because of the inevitable damage from the muck and mire of life in a sinful world. But God is the master repair specialist, who mercifully comes and renews us from the inside out if and when we ask him for help. And the amazing thing is, he does it for free. Paul emphasises over and over again that you cannot resurrect your own dead soul, just as a dead iPhone cannot fix itself. We need help from a specialist – in fact we need help from the original manufacturer.

Earlier in the service I gave a couple of gifts out to people I have never met before which is just like the way God works. It's not the way the world works to get something for nothing. For the past couple of years in the Autumn we have given out fresh coffee in the morning to commuters on their way to work. We were often asked 'Why are you doing this?' and they were surprised when we said we were from the Church and just wanted to share God's love and with them.

Grace is one of the most beautiful words in the English language. It is the unmerited favour and empowerment of God and in this passage in Ephesians Paul mentions twice that it is by Grace that you are saved. It is hugely tempting to think that Christianity is simply about being good. Wrong. It is about receiving grace. And I'm so thankful for that because in that case we have something truly unique, beautiful and counter-cultural to offer the world.

When I worked in Engineering I worked on assembly line machines for making batteries. The designs were good and the robust quality of the machinery meant they were renowned throughout the

industry. When I queried why the advertising budget for the company was so minimal, the sales director said to me: 'You don't need a huge advertising budget if the product sells itself.'

Grace sells itself. It is the USP, the unique selling point of our faith, and it is the most wonderful thing to see when someone truly encounters the grace of God. When they acknowledge their need and hand themselves over to God for repair and renewal they suddenly become so grateful for God's presence in the everyday and grateful to have hope for the future. Their past is forgiven, their future is secure.

John 1 says that Jesus came full of grace *and* truth. They are both needed because the truth without grace kills. Sadly many people hear the church only proclaiming truth without grace. I come across people who are surprised to learn they are allowed to come to church! But Grace is not just a cheap commodity that God wafts around like room freshener. Grace is his deliberate choice to repair instead of reject – to repurpose instead of renounce those he has created for himself. God did not suddenly turn round and say 'I'll just let them off when they choose the destructive path. To do so would have denied the justice and righteous order that is so important for maintaining the equilibrium of the universe. No instead God chose to create a way for our souls to be permanently fixed but it cost him everything. Jesus died for grace to be unleashed.

John 3v16 says 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.' When Jesus came he not only taught us how to live life but he also saved us in his death. On the cross every sin, selfish thought, action and behaviour was placed on his head, so that in the end he cried out 'My God My God why have you forsaken me?' At that moment the perfect harmony of the Trinity relationship was shattered and darkness covered the land. Instead of us being forsaken, Jesus was in our place. But the good news is Jesus was so full of life and light that death and darkness could not hold him. He went down to the grave instead of us, but came back risen and exalted. He took all the sins of the whole world, buried them in death and came back to life as conquering saviour. Verse 6 says 'God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.' So now he offers us spiritual new life, physical healing and emotional wholeness as we simply say thank you, and take hold of the gift of Salvation that is offered to us.

Salvation is a gift, rather like I offered gifts to those I don't know well this morning, we need to receive the gift and thank the giver. I hope that those who got the gifts will remember this morning as a day they made new friends here at LCC. God wants to be your friend and he wants to offer you the gift of salvation. Will you take it?