

A MASTERPIECE FROM THE GRAVEYARD

Ephesians 2:1-10

Mountain climbers for generations have aspired to ascend highest peak in 48 contiguous states, Mt Whitney (14,495 ft.). Contemplating the rare, crystal-clear air, the incredible panorama of the Sierra Nevada range and its lakes, alongside the Mojave Desert, people are reminded that just 80 miles away lies the lowest spot in the U.S. at 80 feet below sea level, Death Valley.

At one you seem to be on top of the world, and at the other, on the bottom. One is perpetually cool, the other relentlessly hot. From Mt Whitney you look down on life; from Death Valley there's no place to look but up!

Eph 2 takes us down to the Death Valley of human life, and then up to "the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus."

Paul begins the story at the very bottom of Death Valley

He reminds us of just how putrid the stench of death really is.

Scripture never paints a pretty picture of death:

Matt 23:27 *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean."*

Luke 11:44 *"Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which men walk over without knowing it."*

John 11:38-39 *"Jesus . . . came to the tomb . . . 'Take away the stone,' He said. 'But Lord,' said Martha, . . . 'by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days!'"*

Rom 3:13 *"Their throats are open graves"*

You can cover it over. You can decorate it and make it look pretty.

But inside, the grave still bears the stench of death!

That's what **WE** were like! **Eph 2:1** *"You were dead . . ."*

We were deep in the heart of *Death Valley*, God took US from the graveyard!

We weren't just *in danger* of death—we were DEAD!

He isn't just talking about decadent, sex-saturated, "druggies;" All people are DEAD apart from Christ.

God found all of us out in the graveyard!

Paul thanks God for the change He has accomplished in our lives.

By His grace we have received life.

OUR FORMER CONDITION: DEAD! 2:1-3 *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in 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. 3 All 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.*

We were formerly **dead** in sins. *B.C. — What did we look like?*

Jeremy Bentham died 160 Years ago. He left instructions that his estate was to be given to the University College Hospital in London, on condition that his body be preserved and

placed in attendance at all hospital board meetings. Every year Bentham is wheeled into the board room. Chairman says, “Jeremy Bentham, present but not voting.” He will never raise his hand to vote, nor submit a motion, because he’s dead!

Dead people can’t do anything — that’s what Paul is saying.

We were dead in sin — we couldn’t do anything.

A life without God, however mentally alert and physically fit, is still dead. Those without Christ are in Death Valley.

It’s too late for *resuscitation*; we need *resurrection*!

Some may appear more *decayed* than others; but we’re all *dead*!

Thus this world is one vast spiritual *graveyard*!

We were dead!

We looked just like all the dead, sinful people around us.

We were marked by disobedience to God:

We followed the ways of the *world*.

We followed the ways of the *devil*

We lived to satisfy our own desires — the desires of the *flesh*

Sermon: Why your dog does what he does. His point: a dog does what he does because he has a dog’s nature.

So it is with us: we do what we do—we sin—because we have a sinful nature!

We are sinners by nature.

We cannot satisfy God’s demands; we cannot save ourselves!

We deserved NOTHING! – except God’s wrath! (anger, punishment)

OUR PRESENT CONDITION: ALIVE! 2:4-6 *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,*

What happened to us?

v. 4 (lit.) **“But God**

God, being rich in mercy

God, on account of His great love

*[though we were STILL DEAD in our sins] **God made us alive!”***

In spite of our condition, GOD did something.

The focus shifts to God and what HE has done for us:

God gave us life.

God raised us (= resurrection)

God gave us a new position, seated together with Christ.

WHY? God did this because of His love and mercy!

—NOT because we deserve it!

GOD'S PURPOSE 2:7-10 *in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

Why did He do this?

He did it in order to show the greatness of His love and grace.

How did He do this?

God did this through faith, because of His grace

All that we are, we are through faith because of God's grace.

2:8–"you have been saved" Now—in the present—you have already been saved.

Right now we are in the state of having been completely saved!

Relationship between grace and faith?

Grace is cause of our salvation => God saved us because HE loved us—NOT because we deserve it.

Faith is the means of our salvation => Trust Him

Blondin carrying a man on his back across Niagara Falls.

Do you believe I can do it? Hop on!

The only way from Death Valley to the heavenlies is to be carried there by Jesus!

Our salvation isn't self-induced—it's God's gift.

It isn't the result of *our works*!

That puts an end to any kind of self-centered boasting!

All who have been made alive in Christ have been taken out of the graveyard and made alive because of God's grace.

The result: [v. 10: "*We are God's workmanship*"]

"Workmanship" is the root word for our modern word "poem"

Lit., refers to anything made, => any work of art, or masterpiece.

We are God's work of art; His masterpiece.

Broad scope of passage combines 2 main ideas to demonstrate that we are a work of art, that God has taken from the graveyard.

"Junk Art." Some people roam the back alleys of town, or a deserted beach, picking up junk.

They put it together in incredibly talented way, and result is beautiful. That's what God has done with us! He has changed us from dead, decaying junk, into a work of art, a masterpiece

Man is such an incredible masterpiece of God's workmanship, made in the image of God

New creation—man made over again—from the graveyard—is even greater work of art!

Though it's a free gift to us, it cost God's Son everything.

God the Father and the Spirit joined in to provide everything we needed in Christ to make us into His masterpiece.

Contrast v. 2 with v. 10

2 in 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. 3 All 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.

10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Spurgeon: You have seen a painter with his palette on his finger. He has ugly little daubs of paint on the palette. What can he do with those spots? Go in and see the picture. What splendid painting! In an even wiser way does Jesus act toward us. He takes us, poor smudges of paint, and he makes the blessed pictures of his grace out of us. It is neither the brush nor the paint he uses, but it is the skill of his own hand which does it all.

God's purpose in creating this new "workmanship" [his masterpiece]:

=> a transformed lifestyle

God desires to show us off as *His masterpiece!*

His purpose in making masterpiece: that we might "*do good works*"

We aren't *saved* by doing good works; but we were *created* to do good works.

Scripture clearly demonstrates the difference between works as a *cause* of salvation, and works as a *result* of salvation.

God's desire is that our lives might demonstrate what a great work He has done in us by a changed life.

What are the implications of this?

This crucial doctrine--the only way God has ever provided salvation--is one of the least understood by Christians.

We could *never* earn our salvation.

It is based on Christ's work.

We receive this salvation **BY FAITH**.

Therefore, **GOD GETS ALL THE GLORY.**

WHAT DIFFERENCE SHOULD THIS MAKE IN OUR LIVES? 2:10

We ought to live a different kind of life – one that reveals *His masterpiece!*

=> **Amazing Grace**