

RUF Bible Study – Ephesians  
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Ephesians 2:1-10<sup>2</sup>

*Ephesians 2:1-10 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience- 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ- by grace you have been saved- 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

In moving to chapter 2 of Ephesians, we need to remember that this letter is to Christians. Remember the context is this circular letter centering on the experience of the Ephesian Christians, those brought out of bondage to temple worship at one of the seven wonders of the world, Temple of Diana. The gospel came to this great city (estimated at a population of 250,000 which was huge for that day), people were converted, and it affected the whole economy of the city.

Paul is writing to these people, yet he is still recounting the gospel to them. If you think you have moved past the gospel, Paul says you must think again. You need the gospel more today than ever, for it is wonderful beyond all measure.

And what I also see here is why I am a Calvinist. It's right there, the nail in the coffin for me, so to speak, with Total Depravity. I'm not a Calvinist because of John Calvin and he's so cool and all, but because sin causes a total inability to do anything good before God. From my understanding, everything else falls from there, both scripturally and logically. But let's remember that this doctrine isn't about predestination or TULIP or anything else. That's not *the* conversation. The conversation is Jesus Christ, who calls the dead forth into life. It's about grace and gospel and love and the kindness of God. It's about being in union with Christ, and being made for good works set out for me to do. It's about knowing and loving Jesus. It's about spending time allowing the Bible to work its way into our lives. Let's have that conversation. It's *the* conversation.

***Terrible Realism (not pessimism, but the darkness of the human condition)***

I'm sure if you're like me, you've been attempting to keep track of the devastation taking place in New Orleans. When Hurricane Katrina moved over the city, no one really expected this result – the levees broke, the city succumbed to the water and chaos ensued. The pictures of the people, the stories of the filth, births, murders, rapes, starvation and the general conditions in the Superdome are staggering. Marshall law declared because of the looters stealing everything – and really, in one sense, why not?

And now we're seeing and hearing stories of faith and survival, of volunteers showing great initiative and spirit to help. But the grim realities remain. At least 10,000 dead. Lives basically ruined. Planning thrown out the window. People saved based on income. Corpses left to rot.

I think Paul would say that we should be the first to jump in and help, and I do pray that that would be our response. But he would also not be surprised at the depth of depravity found in the hearts of men. We are capable of just about anything given the right circumstances. If you do not think that, then you do not know your own heart very well.

“The media enable us to grasp the worldwide extent of contemporary evil, and it is this which makes the modern scene look so dark. It is partly the escalating economic problem (population growth, the spoliation of natural resources, inflation, unemployment, hunger), partly the spread of social conflict (racism, tribalism, the class struggle, disintegrating family life) and partly the absence of accepted moral guidelines (leading to violence, dishonesty and sexual promiscuity). Man seems incapable of managing his own affairs or of creating a just, free, humane and tranquil society. For man himself is askew.”<sup>3</sup>

This passage is a great declaration of the gospel. However, the first main subject and verb are “*God made us alive*” in verse 5, and Paul holds this off because he wants to paint the picture of our condition first. It seems pessimistic, but in fact it is a terribly realistic declaration of the darkness of the human condition.

Paul claims we are *dead*. In one of his first trips over to the U.S. from Scotland, Dr. Sinclair Ferguson says he kept on seeing bumper stickers with The Grateful Dead on them. Dr. Ferguson was puzzled by this and thought it was perhaps some Roman Catholic prayer society. Paul says, if you are not a Christian you have a Walking Dead bumper sticker on your life. We all were there. We look fine on the outside, especially you college students. You do not feel dead, but Paul says that that is what you are without Christ.

Through trespasses and sins, you have died. These two words incorporate both false steps and missing the mark, both positive and negative wrong things and ideas, both sins of commission and omission, claiming we are both rebels and failures.

One popular gospel presentation I've heard many times goes this way: you are drowning and God throws you a life preserver. Just as you're about to go down the last time, you grab it and your life is spared.

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<sup>2</sup> Sources: commentaries by Tom Wright, Peter O'Brien, John Stott, J.M. Boice; sermons by Rev. Tim Keller, Rev. Rob Rayburn, Dr. Sinclair Ferguson and Dr. Bryan Chapell

<sup>3</sup> Stott, 69

Another one goes this way: you're sick to the point of death. You're in the hospital and God comes with a spoon of medicine that will save you if you'll just take it. He opens your mouth, but will not pour it in unless you wish for him to. Will you choose to take the medicine that will save you?

Here's a third: you have terminal cancer. It is all throughout your body and killing you. But Jesus will give you a blood transfusion, a bone marrow transfusion, a skin graft, everything you need. He'll give you his organs if you'll agree to the operation.

Those illustrations paint a partial picture, don't they? Jesus said that he has come to save the sick. But the picture is far more grim than that. Paul says that we aren't dying. We are dead. Can a dead man grab a life preserver? Can a dead woman swallow the medicine? Would doctors perform an operation on someone who is already dead?

Paul uses another image when he says we are *enslaved*.

He actually says, "*in which you once walked*." This walk is not a "promenade in the countryside"<sup>4</sup> but a "fearful bondage to forces over which we have no control."<sup>5</sup> Steve Tyler of Aerosmith sings, "Walk this way, talk this way."

Paul says that we're forced on a death march by the world, the devil and the flesh: "*in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience- 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind.*"

The world is a system that holds us in a secular and cultural bondage, for it is a whole social value system which is alien to God. This is secular (repudiating God), amoral (repudiating absolutes), materialistic (glorifying the consumer market). Most of us don't even realize this is going on, but we're influenced almost every moment of every day by our sources of input, the visuals we see, the images we believe, the voices we listen to.

Paul claims that the devil is behind this, and we should acknowledge his influence and presence. "Since Scripture identifies the devil not only as the source of temptations to sin, but also as a 'lion' and a 'murderer,' we may safely trace all evil, error and violence back to him in the end."<sup>6</sup>

Paul won't let us blame the world or the devil though, because he says that it is our flesh and minds that are willing culprits of this evil. Since God has made us in his image, there is nothing wrong with natural bodily desires. It is when they go awry that it is wrong.

And it might be surprising to realize that the passions of the flesh include the mind as well as the body, "namely such sins as intellectual pride, false ambition, rejection of known truth, and malicious or vengeful thoughts."<sup>7</sup> Belief affects action. "*carrying out the desires of the body and the mind*" Bondage doesn't lie in ignorance, but in the darkness of the human mind. Sinclair Ferguson notes, "The most vile of any graffiti I have ever seen has been found in British universities."<sup>8</sup> As we saw in the previous passage, ignorance is the eye of the heart, a place where Jesus must reside to bring about true freedom.

Paul sums this up by saying that the result of this is that we are by nature *condemned*. Our destiny is wrath; we are fit for wrath; God opposes the insolence; God opposes the affront to his dignity; God opposes the fist that shakes in his face that says I will by my God and I will be the center of my universe.<sup>9</sup> He will not tolerate it for forever.

This reminds us of Romans 1 and its catalog of human sin there. Paul explains that it is appropriate the way God shows his wrath if that is the way you will rebel against me, then my judgment against you is this – go to it and into its dark destiny. So God gave them over to their lusts. Our bondage to these freedoms is itself is a clear signal that God in his wrath has set his face against us.

God's wrath is not a bad temper, "not spite, nor malice, nor animosity, nor revenge. It is never arbitrary, since it is the divine reaction to only one situation, namely evil. Therefore it is entirely predictable, and it is never subject to mood, whim or caprice. Further, it is not the impersonal outworking of retribution in society... It is God's personal, righteous, constant hostility toward evil, his settled refusal to compromise with it, and his resolve instead to condemn it. Further, his wrath is not incompatible with his love.... We need, I think, to be more grateful to God for his wrath, and to worship him that because his righteousness is perfect, he always reacts to evil in the same unchanging, predictable, uncompromising way. Without his moral constancy, we could enjoy no peace."<sup>10</sup>

My wrath and anger stand in direct opposition to God's most of the time. My kids often get confused – some days I will blow up at them for the smallest infraction. Other days they can get away with murder. So much of it depends on my mood. This is not a good thing.

"Paul's diagnosis remains. Outside Christ man is dead, because he trespasses and sins, is enslaved by the world, the flesh and the devil, and is condemned under the wrath of God." Whatever crisis you could imagine, it could never be worse than this assessment of your soul right now.

Do you see yourself in this mirror? Either presently or in the past? Sinclair Ferguson says, "We cannot taste the wonder and sweetness of grace without evermore deeply sensing the profound need of that grace, how disgraceful you are in yourself."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Stott, 72

<sup>5</sup> Stott, 73

<sup>6</sup> Stott, 74

<sup>7</sup> Stott, 75

<sup>8</sup> Sinclair

<sup>9</sup> Sinclair

<sup>10</sup> Stott, 76

<sup>11</sup> Sinclair Ferguson message found at [www.pcp.org](http://www.pcp.org)

What are possible solutions to this problem? Education. If people were only smarter, then they would sin less. Legislation. If we could make people behave, punish crime, and promote good, our society would get better. Medication. People are wonky in the head and need to be fixed. They cannot be blamed.

A radical disease requires a radical remedy. If you have a head cold, you need to take some Nyquil, sleep for 10 hours and drink some orange juice. If you have the flu, it's a little longer process of recovery. But if you have cancer, whoa. You need chemotherapy, which means you're actually killing cells off to stave off further damage.

What is the solution if the disease is death? We need resurrection!

### ***But God (riches of God's mercy)***

"Many people think of God as a benevolent but nevertheless basically weak being. He would like to help us (and does somewhat) but he cannot do much. He is limited by evil and controlled by circumstances. Others think of God as powerful, but as distant and austere. He could help, but he does not care."<sup>12</sup>

How do you think of God? Is he good but not sovereign? Is he sovereign but not good? Or is he both sovereign and good?

God looks down on people and sees our hearts. He knows what we're like. Because of his justice, he is bound to punish our misdeeds, both what we have done wrong and what we haven't done right.

BUT GOD. But God. What grand two words these are.

"These two monosyllables set against the desperate condition of fallen mankind the gracious initiative and sovereign action of God. We were the objects of his wrath *but God out of the great love with which he loved us* had mercy upon us. We were dead, and dead men do not rise, *but God* made us alive in Christ. We were slaves, in a situation of dishonor and powerlessness, *but God* has raised us with Christ and set us at his won right hand, in a position of honor and power. Thus God has taken action to reverse our condition in sin."<sup>13</sup>

Let's move through these verses.

#### *By Grace alone, Sola Gratia*

Paul is saying that salvation is not a transaction between us and God. Most of you would say that you are saved by faith, apart from works, right? But, and we talked about this a few weeks ago, why do you have faith? Where did that faith come from? Does God give you life because of your faith? We see, that under a certain way of thinking, it could be possible to think that faith is a work. But Paul goes to great pains to say that there is *nothing* we can take credit for. There is no room for boasting. Paul even reminds us of this when he re-mentions dead in trespasses. Is there any reason why you were a likely candidate for the gospel? No.

Some of us have been taught to think of Revelation 3:20 when we consider what is happening in coming to Christ: *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.* We think of that famous picture of Jesus with his hand on the knob to your heart, just waiting, waiting, hoping, you'll answer the door and let him in. But, think of this passage, what is wrong with that image? The person behind the door is dead, and that's a problem. She's not answering the door – EVER. Not unless something drastic changes. Not unless she is called forth like Lazarus in John 11.

In Romans 5:8, Paul writes "*but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*"

You didn't clean yourself off one little bit in order to get saved. Even your asking was from him. What do you contribute to your salvation? The sin which makes it necessary. Where is boasting in that? On the converse, some of you think that God cannot love you because of what you've done. You think that you are unloveable, unwanted, unapproachable. If people only knew what you had done, what you were like, then they'd move away, stop loving you. So you avoid being known. But God says that *while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* You can't do anything to earn it, and you can't do anything to unearn it.

It's all of grace. It's *sola gratia*.

#### *Through Faith*

But that grace comes to us through faith. Once our hearts are regenerated, we are able to and we must believe in him, trusting him alone for our salvation. *Sola fide*. By faith alone.

Faith can be a confusing concept, partly because our faith waxes and wanes so easily, and also because we often equate it with belief. Instead, think of faith as the process of dating, getting engaged and getting married.

There is knowledge. This is analogous to dating or courting. You're assembling information about this other person. At first it is pretty general, but then it becomes more specific and particular. You learn what he or she will do in certain situations. You discover his passion. You see what sorts of gifts she likes. You watch how he handles stress. You see her character. You are assembling a knowledge base in which to base decisions and make plans.

At some point then you have to have a heart response. I'll often sit with students and they will ask me, "How do I know if this is the right one?" That is mostly an unanswerable question for me. How do you know? How do I know? We can look over the patterns they've set. We can look for ways of relating. We can see if the other person has helped you walk with God more. We can talk about how you've handled sin in your life, where church and community fits in, how you imagine the future might go. But in the end, it all boils down to the mysterious gut. Down in your innards, what do you think? Do you want to get married, but are afraid to say so? Or do you not want to get married and are afraid to say so? You have to be in love, and I cannot make that happen for you, and I cannot turn it off for you if it's there. It is, in a very real way, it's own thing.

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<sup>12</sup> Boice, 52

<sup>13</sup> Stott, 79-80

Ah, but luckily that's not all there is. You have to have commitment. It's fine to sit and be in love, make out, hold hands, pray together, fight and make up, plan your wedding before you're engaged, and do all the things you want. But if you are really and truly in love, you make a serious, lifelong, binding commitment. If you are actually, fully in love, you will not hesitate to take vows regardless of future circumstances might be. You show your love by your commitment. Your willingness to commit, and your sticking with it over time.

Do you have that kind of faith for Jesus? Or are you still dating him? Do you think he is happy with being stuck with an engagement ring, put off until because you are too busy right now, too consumed with your school and career, still open to other lovers, still willing to entertain other offers? Or have you married Jesus and having second thoughts? Do you think you made a big mistake because he isn't what you thought? Do you wonder if it's possible to divorce Jesus? Or perhaps to just co-habitate without any real relationship.

Have faith. Grace comes through faith. You have to believe, love and commit to him.

#### *Mercy*

One of the reasons you should have faith, is because of his great mercy toward you. You are not a beautiful bride in yourself. You are tattered. Unfaithful. You have wronged your maker and your suitor. You are not ideal. BUT GOD. But God still has mercy on you. "We were dead, and so helpless to save ourselves; only 'mercy' could reach the helpless, for 'mercy' is love for the down and out."<sup>14</sup> Mercy is favor shown to those who deserve the opposite. You deserve wrath, but receive mercy.

#### *Great love*

You deserve wrath but receive mercy because of God's great love for you. "We were under God's wrath; only 'love' could triumph over wrath."<sup>15</sup>

#### *Rich grace*

"And again, all this comes to you because of God's rich grace. "We deserved nothing at God's hand but judgment, on account of our trespasses and sins; only 'grace' could rescue us from our deserts, for grace is undeserved favor."<sup>16</sup>

"Grace means that there is no cause in us why God should have acted as he did. We think the opposite. We think that God owes us something."<sup>17</sup> We keep thinking, well, that's true, but there must be *something* about me.... I assure you, it is all by God's grace. Not because of anything in you, lest man you should be able to boast.

As Richard Baxter, the English puritan, summed up Paul's point, so emphatically made, "Let 'deserved,' be written on the door of hell, but on the door of heaven and life, 'The Free Gift.'"<sup>18</sup>

#### *Kindness*

Don't you see that this is God's kindness to you? "In the course of our live we often sin grievously and foolishly. But God does not strike us down when we do. He does not turn on us. Instead, he is astonishingly kind."<sup>19</sup>

#### *Salvation*

What we're talking about is God's salvation for you. This verb, "saved" is what we call in English a perfect participle. Do you English majors remember your grammar? This perfect particle "emphasizes the abiding consequences of God's saving action in the past, as if Paul should say, 'You are people who have been saved and remain for ever saved.'"<sup>20</sup>

Sometime, ask someone if he is saved. If he answers yes, ask him what he has been saved from. You'll probably get an answer like hell or from his sins. And those are true. But what we're saying is that you need to be saved from God. From God's wrath. From his judgment. That's what you need to be saved from, and that is only possible by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

What does all this mean?

Sometimes I hear, and I long to hear more, someone say, "The Bible has come alive to me." But the truth is that you have come alive to the Bible. Now suddenly the hymns seem wonderful. You need to be, regardless of how many years you've been in church, or whether you walked the aisle when you were eight, or were confirmed when you were twelve, set free from the bondage of the mind, and have your eyes opened to the glory of the gospel in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sinclair Ferguson tells a story about a young man who met with the session of his church to become a member. He said, "I don't know what has happened to this church since I started coming to it. The sermons, readings, hymns were dull and irrelevant. Suddenly in the last three months, everything has changed. What have you been doing to your sermons? Why have you started picking better hymns?" They smiled. They hadn't done a thing differently, of course. His heart had come alive.

Do you have a friend, who, as soon as you mention this one thing, she comes alive? It might be boys. Or shopping. Or math. Or history. Or road trips. Or the Tour de France. Or her upcoming marriage. Or anything. She just lights up when you ask about that thing she cares so much about.

But what if, as soon as you mention the Lord Jesus Christ, his communion and the blessedness of fellowship, she goes dead. Her face drops. Worship? Blah? Bible? Ugh. RUF? Don't care.

Many of you think you are pretty good people. Many of you have been raised in church all your lives. You know what to do and what to believe. I'll talk about Jesus and you'll nod your heads. But you're dead. Paul was. He was a gold-star member of

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<sup>14</sup> Stott, 82

<sup>15</sup> Stott, 82

<sup>16</sup> Stott, 82

<sup>17</sup> Boice, 55

<sup>18</sup> Practical Works, pb vol., 15.

<sup>19</sup> Boice, 55

<sup>20</sup> Stott, 80

church. He did everything right down the book, far better than you ever has. He didn't lie, or cuss or fool around, or drink, or miss Bible study or forget to call home. And he was going to hell for punishment of his sins. Because he wasn't yet *alive*.

Can this be said of you? *4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ- by grace you have been saved- 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

### ***Incredible Optimism (transformation of gospel grace)***

Paul doesn't leave us there. He tells us that our salvation isn't *only*, isn't *merely* a forgiveness of our sins so we can go to heaven. Much more accrues to us because we become unified to Christ. So whatever blessings he gets, we get.

Paul doesn't quite know how to say this so he makes us three new words.

Reports say that William Shakespeare was never at a loss for a word, because he would make up one to suit his purposes whenever he wanted. So we have over 1700 words that he changed from nouns to verbs or verbs to nouns, or just made up wholesale like: academe, accused, addiction, advertising, amazement, arouse, assassination, backing, bandit, bedroom, beached, besmirch, birthplace, blanket, bloodstained, barefaced, blushing, bet, bump, buzzer, caked, cater, champion, circumstantial, cold-blooded, compromise, courtship, countless, critic, dauntless, dawn, deafening, discontent, dishearten, drugged, dwindle, epileptic, equivocal, elbow, excitement, exposure, eyeball, fashionable, fixture, flawed, frugal, generous, gloomy, gossip, green-eyed, gust, hint, hobnob, hurried, impede, impartial, invulnerable, jaded, label, lackluster, laughable, lonely, lower, luggage, lustrous, madcap, majestic, marketable, metamorphize, mimic, monumental, moonbeam, mountaineer, negotiate, noiseless, obscene, obsequiously, ode, olympian, outbreak, panders, pedant, premeditated, puking, radiance, rant, remorseless, savagery, scuffle, secure, skim milk, submerge, summit, swagger, torture, tranquil, undress, unreal, varied, vaulting, worthless, and zany.<sup>21</sup>

I have one made up word: I named my book weight a "splooget." I'm sure it will catch on.

#### ***Made Alive with Christ***

Paul makes up these words by adding "with" to the verb. We are "made alive with" Christ.

Again think of Lazarus in John 11 and 12. Jesus called into the dark tomb of death – "Lazarus rise, come forth" – and he set him free from the grave clothes. Then in John 12 in we get a little glimpse of the aftermath. Jesus is at a dinner, and Lazarus was there reclining with him at the table. Isn't that cool?

There are no shackles in heaven. We are made alive from our death and set free from our bondage. We sing this: "My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth and followed thee." This is a resurrection, from death to life.

Again, as we've said, this is a change of the heart, when the eyes of your heart are open, the scales removed from your eyes, of spiritual life to spiritual death. You won't *look* different, but you will be entirely different.

"The difference between the sinner and the Christian, the unbeliever and the believer, is not that the believer, the Christian, has certain faculties which the other man lacks. No, what happens is that this new disposition given to the Christian directs his faculties in an entirely different way. He is not given a new brain; he is not given a new intelligence, or anything else. He has always had these; they are his servants, his instruments, his 'members,' as Paul calls them in the sixth chapter of Romans; what is new is a new bent, a new disposition. He has turned in a different direction; there is a new power working in him and guiding his faculties. This is the thing that makes a man a Christian."<sup>22</sup>

A close acquaintance of Katherine Smith remarked to me after the wedding to Russ Edwards that she was different once she started dating Russ. Her relationship to him *changed* her. She had been made alive in this limited sense.

#### ***Raised Up with Him***

We've been speaking of this, but, after we are made alive, we are raised up with him. This speaks of the ascension, where Jesus was exalted to be with his father once again. So too are we. "We are no longer creatures of this world, bound by what we can see and touch and smell and hear and taste. We are now creatures of the greater, heavenly realm who now, because of our union with Christ, think and work and speak in spiritual categories."<sup>23</sup> Have you realized this about yourself, Christian? Your heart is secured with God for forever if you are in Christ.

#### ***Seated with Him***

Not only are we made alive with him, and raised up with him, but we are seated with him. This speaks of our reign and our victory. "It bears witness to a living experience, that Christ has given us on the one hand a new life (with a sensitive awareness of the reality of God, and a love for him and for his people) and on the other a new victory (with evil increasingly under our feet). We were dead, but have been made spiritually alive and alert. We were in captivity, but have been enthroned."<sup>24</sup>

"The verb is in an aorist past tense. It means that we have already been made to sit with God in Christ. That is our position now. That is where we have arrived, and we are to live accordingly."<sup>25</sup> Your victory is assured. Your reign will happen. You cannot be defeated. And God does all this out of his love, grace, kindness and riches.

<sup>21</sup> <http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa042400a.htm>

<sup>22</sup> Boice, 60, quoting DM Lloyd-Jones

<sup>23</sup> Boice, 61

<sup>24</sup> Stott, 81

<sup>25</sup> Boice, 61

We can summarize this by saying that a new creation is born – *we are God's workmanship, created to do good works*; we are his work of art, his poem; we display his craftsmanship, like a potter in Jeremiah, like a symphony. When you go the see the VanGogh in the museum, or you hear the symphony, or even the Dave Matthews concert, you don't say, "Aren't I marvelous to see this picture and hear these sounds?" Instead, you marvel at the master who made this wonderful thing. The master is everything as you hear and see his creation.

"Salvation is creation, re-creation, new creation. And creation language is nonsense unless there is a Creator; self-creation is a patent contradiction. 'You see then,' writes Calvin, 'that this word 'create' is enough to stop the mouths and put away the cackling of such as boast of having any merit. For when they say so, the presuppose that they were their own creators."<sup>26</sup> *so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

What is our response to all of this wonderful news? Do we sit back and revel in our passiveness? Do we delight in our inactivity? Do we presume that God doesn't need us any more, that we are pawns in his play? No. "Because our hearts have been remade we now give food to the hungry, water to the thirsty, homes to the strangers, clothes to the naked, care to the sick, and comfort to those who are in prison – as Jesus said we must do, if we are to sit with him in glory."<sup>27</sup>

Just think – Paul began by speaking of us as walking dead and how all of our works were evil. Now here at the end of this passage we are most decidedly alive, and he says we should walk in the good works he has prepared for us.

What this means is that you should wake up and say, "This day is another day of life; he has prepared good works today, some of them very surprising, for me to walk in today. What are the good works that you have prepared for me today that I may walk in them? What are the things that you have in store for me that God might say, Look at him!, Look at her! – do you see what I've done?!"

Salvation is God's doing from beginning to end. It was God's plan, as Paul said in chapter 1 verses 4-5, and no one is ever saved unless he or she was included in that divine plan before the world was made. It was Christ's achievement and no one is ever saved unless he or she was in Christ when he went to the cross and when he came out of the grave. It is the Holy Spirit's doing and no one ever comes to Christ and obtains salvation unless the Holy Spirit comes and conquers a rebellious human heart and makes it submit to Jesus Christ. "Ministers knock at the door of men's hearts," a Puritan said, "but the Spirit comes with the key and opens the door."<sup>28</sup>

Do you remember the commercial for the device to buy and where around your neck, so if you're frail and you fall, it will cry out for you, "I've fallen and I can't get up!" Friends, you've fallen and you can't get up. Only God's mercy and grace can help you today. May we be able to pray this prayer, entitled "A Christian's First Prayer"

"I could never have sought my happiness in your love, unless you had first loved me. Your Spirit has encouraged me by grace to seek you, has made known to me your reconciliation in Jesus, has taught me to believe it, has helped me to take you for my God and portion. May he grant me to grow in the knowledge and experience of you love, and walk in it all the way to glory. Blessed forever be your fatherly affection, which chose me to be one of your children by faith in Jesus: I thank you for giving me the desire to live as such. In Jesus, my brother, I have my new birth, every restraining power, every renewing grace. It is by your Spirit I call you Father, believe in you, love you; strengthen me inwardly for every purpose of my Christian life; let the Spirit continually reveal to me my interest in Christ, and open to me the riches of your love in him; may he abide in me that I may know my union with Jesus, and enter into constant fellowship with him; by the Spirit may I daily live to you, rejoice in your love, find it the same to me as to your Son, and become rooted and grounded in it as a house on a rock; I know but little - increase my knowledge of your love in Jesus, keep me pressing forward for clearer discoveries of it so that I may find its eternal fullness; magnify your love to me according to its greatness, and not according to my deserts...., and whatever increase you give, let it draw out [of me] greater love to you."<sup>29</sup>

Nothing in my hands I bring  
Simply to thy cross I cling  
Naked, come to thee for dress  
Helpless, look to thee for grace  
Foul, I to the Fountain fly  
Wash me, Savior or I die

Be of sin the double cure  
Save me from its guilt and power

Rock of Ages, cleft for me  
Let me hide myself in thee

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<sup>26</sup> Stott, 84

<sup>27</sup> Boice, 74

<sup>28</sup> Packer, *Quest*, 295

<sup>29</sup> The Valley of Vision, 53