

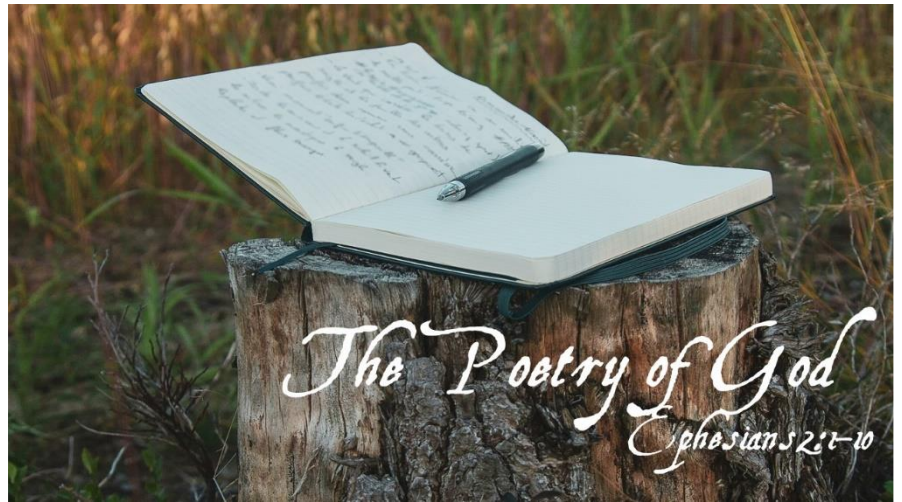
“The Poetry of God”

Ephesians 2:1-10

by Pastor Tim Dodson
at Believers City Church
in Menomonie, Wis
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Ephesians 2:1-10

1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.



NOTE Romans 1:19-32

Paul calls us back in time...back to when we were dead. Do you remember? Can you imagine how God saw you in those days....as you wandered around aimlessly? We were like children in constant ‘trick or treat’ mode...jumping through the worlds hoops so that we can have another piece of its candy. So immediately sweet and enjoyable, but it rots our teeth and never lastingly fills our stomachs. But we dutifully dressed up in costumes as the world told us to do and then marched door to door down the street of life...for one more piece of candy.

Despite our objections, we knew nothing of real freedom. After all, we were living in bondage to sin and to this world. When we were told to jump, we asked ‘how high?’ It’s amazing how little some folks ask out of living! They are satisfied with hallow pursuits that never satisfy them...never bring peace or real joy. They don’t know where they are going, and they have no plan beyond today.

You may snap back... “hey...you always act like faithless life is empty and living in the world is going to leave me so unhappy and incomplete...but it just isn’t true pastor!” Really? How would you know? I have eaten pineapple and banana’s all my life...I always thought they would good...until I went to where they grew them in the Philippines and ate one and realized that what I had been eating was nothing in comparison. Now bananas from the local grocery doesn’t do it for me anymore. Because I have had the real thing.

A preacher was teaching the gospel and of sin when a young teen countered his message saying, “You tell us about the burden of sin. I feel none.” Then he flippantly added, “How much does sin weigh? Eighty pounds? Ten pounds?” The preacher answered, “Tell me, if I put a 400 pound weight on the chest of a dead man, would he feel it?” “No, because he is dead,” answered the youth. The preacher responded, “And the man who feels no load of sin is dead spiritually.” The teen’s remarks only proved what he was indeed dead.

C.S Lewis once said

“It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

The unbeliever is not sick; he’s dead! He does not need resuscitation; he needs resurrection. Christ’s redemption gives us more than the heartbeat of life. You can live a life where even though you are physically here, you are without impact and without meaning. But Christ offers another path...a road of significance. A life where you are truly alive. This is the place where we live in the ‘glory of God.’ Ephesians...and especially here in chapter 2, speaks of the fact that we have available to us the possibility to establish a fellowship with God. A union that not only moves us from death unto life, but from life unto life abundant. Not just a state of life eternal, but a life with purpose, meaning, direction and joy.

2:1-3

God and His written Word refer to these folks as simply “dead.” But how can that be? I’m mean...they’re breathing and moving. How can they be dead? To understand this, one must be able to grasp just what real death is! The Bible knows! The word it uses in the original language (nekros) literally means separation. You see death never means extinction, annihilation, or non-existence. Death simply means that a person is separated, ...from his body or from God or from both.

It’s been said that "Death is the separation of a person from the purpose or use for which he was intended." That’s a good description! For the natural state of man on this earth is separated from God. 1 Timothy 5:6 speaks of this “she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.” “Dead-man-walkin.” So maybe the cheap late night horror films are right...the world *is* full of zombies!

2 Cor 4:3-4 *“But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”*

The point is this: the unconverted man lives to fulfill the desires of his flesh and mind. In reality, he has nothing else for which to live. He knows nothing but this world and its appeals; therefore, he seeks as much of the world as he can possess and enjoy. His life is self-centered, not God-centered; world-centered, not heaven-centered; selfish, not giving; banking and hoarding, not sacrificial—not meeting the needs of a world reeling in desperate need and death. (Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary)

All of this causes us to literally *exist* under the wrath of God. Sadly, while this is indeed our “default” position, we remain in it by choice! We prove this by rebelling against a plan that in unarguably not only a *good* plan, but the only road of escape! Let’s face it! This world is messed up. Who can argue that fact? Even a cursory look around us will acknowledge such a truth. Ironically, we reject God’s plan and redemption because we think we actually have something to defend! When the real truth is...whether we are willing to admit it or not, we really have nothing!

We are not in control of our lives or our world, and no matter how we try, we fail so miserably to fix ourselves or our world. That is because we are not sinners because we sin, but rather we sin because we are sinners. We will always seek first to “fulfill the desires of our flesh and our minds.” It is our nature. Left to ourselves, we are children of God’s wrath. Whether we acknowledge the truth or not, left to ourselves, we are lost, separated from God, blind, enslaved, helpless, and *dead*.

2:4-5

After all the uplifting things we read in the first three verses of this chapter, these words ring out like a bullhorn: “**But God...**” Two words that encompass the gospel in as clear and succinct fashion as possible. The power and salvation of God over and through all things are evidenced in those two words. For many, it is the levee against flagrant sin: “I was tempted...I really wanted to...**but God.**” It is the victory over despair: “I wanted to just give up and throw in the towel...**but God.**” It is the testimony of redemption out of the pit, out of the impossible: “I thought I was finished...that my life was over and I was worth nothing...**but God.**” For some, who are tempted to try to clean themselves up...brush off the dirt and straighten our tie...to work and ‘effort’ our way out of sin and shortcoming, there comes the same response: “**but God.**”

It is His doing...His rescue and Him changing us from the inside out. This world, *it seems*, is desperate and collapsing in on itself...personally, locally, nationally and internationally. It’s a washout! There is no fixing it. **But God.** God *did* and *does it* all. Why? Why would He step in where all seemed to be lost? Because of his mercy! He is “rich” in the stuff. Meaning He has tons of it, and He doesn’t have to have our help. This isn’t merely a case of ‘sweeping our sin under the rug.’ No...the fact and the guilt of our sin is readily acknowledged! He is a God of justice and all that sin had to be paid for, so He paid for it himself.

That is simply something we could never do ourselves! How many more centuries do we need to finally come to that obvious conclusion? He acted out of His “great love.” A love that is powerful and serious enough to make the ultimate sacrifice for us... “while we were yet sinners.” We were dead, and He made us “alive.” He did not demand that we step up to the plate, or earn the right, or clean ourselves up and then He would join us in eternal union. Instead... while we were still dead, He did this! Our rebirth is our agreement to share in His death and therefore our share in His resurrection and life. We participate but we do not *make it* happen! God makes this happen. We did not find Him, **He found us.** If you are a reborn child of God today, you are “alive **together** with Christ” ...alive like Christ is alive!

2:6-7

God “raised us up” from the dead! That is what our redemption and salvation is: resurrection! We’re ‘back from the dead.’ God “raised us up together.” Here he speaks not only of our personal redemption and position, but that of the church. We cannot overstate its importance! Yes He is a personal God, but that does not mean that His actions were meted out just for you and there is no greater corporate purpose.

Many people will excuse themselves from this accountability, responsibility and participation in the local church! We need to bear in mind the language of this whole letter...how it takes in the unity and purpose of the church, the ‘body of Christ.’ When we attempt to stand outside the group, we do so in pride, in self-centeredness and rebellion. We must slash and burn vast segments of the scriptures to get it done, and in such a position we cannot fulfill our purpose or exercise the Spirits gifts to us.

No one remains outside the active participation of the church for very long. He or she will always be rendered spiritual impotent and ultimately finds himself on his face in the dirt. God “raised us up together” and He made US sit TOGETHER in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Not “will sit” but sit **now...**

We must cease to think of ourselves as living fully in this world now and exercising the need to just get through this life so we can go on to heaven. We sit in “heavenly places” right now and we need to live like it! We currently have dual citizenship: we live here in Wisconsin, but we live in the kingdom realm at the same time. This fact is what naturally sets the true believer apart from the rest of those on the streets every day.

1Pe 2:9 “*But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*”

Why is the acknowledgment of and the living in body fellowship so important? The promise is here: So in the ages that would follow...in the days and years that follow our redemption as well as in the eternal realm, God might show us the ‘exceeding riches’ of His grace and kindness toward us.” What a promise! What a state of life! Let me ask you, does this sound like your life? God loves to show great grace to great sinners! It’s been said that we are the “trophies of His grace.”

2:8-9

This is the simplest plan of salvation found in the Bible. Our salvation, *plain and simple*, is a gift from God. He found us, He chose us, and He saved us through His grace. Just like Israel before us...we don’t deserve it...we aren’t special, He just chose us because He is sovereign and did so. So pack up all your works and self-righteous ideals and throw them in the garbage, because you have nothing.

John 6:44 states it for us clearly, where Jesus says: "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him." The Greek perfect tense denotes the certainty of this God-given salvation; we may have been saved in the past, but are just as thoroughly saved in the present. We have a perfect salvation. God gives; man receives. God holds us secure, and we live out our days in the kingdom realm.

Our faith in this fact unleashes that grace to pour through our lives, and yet he even gives us that said faith...we can’t even claim that. That salvation has nothing to do with your righteousness or unrighteousness. It has nothing to do with what you do or don’t do, because you can’t earn it in a million years, nor can you out-sin that power. After all...How can you affect anything if you’re dead? Remember where this passage began? You’re dead! What can you affect? (Note Romans 11:6)

2:10

What will be our answer to all of this then? How will we respond to such a grace...to such a merciful undeserved redemption? The answer to this question tells whether we truly grasp what Paul has been telling us. It shows whether we really understand our salvation...what it means, and the amazing glory behind it. Our good works will never save us, but let us be sure of this fact: we have been saved that we might go out in our transformed state...the trophy of God’s grace, and do for Jesus.

We have been created, in both physical and spiritual truths, to act upon the presence of Christ in our lives! We are called to service...called to set aside all the excuses, the distractions, and the idols of this life and serve Him with a passion.

Of course, this is a real problem for those who are not really born again. And even those who have embraced the personal effect of the cross but not its glory nor its responsibility! Why can we not place Jesus first? Why do we not “seek first the kingdom of God?” Is it because we just do not love God as He loves us? We are saved apart from good works, but saved unto good works. Good works are the aim of our salvation and the evidence of our faith (Jas 2:17–18). Works never produce salvation, but salvation always produces good works. A man is not justified by works, but a justified man works.

We are his workmanship. The word in the Greek is “*poiema*”. It’s where we get our word poem! We are God’s poem! So how will you answer God? Imagine for a moment that you are terminally sick and have but days to live. You wrap things up, say your goodbyes, and come to terms with your imminent departure, But as you get

more sick and near the end, there is suddenly and inexplicably a last minute cure! You were dead, but now you are alive! It's was over...you were dead, but you have been given new life!

Let me ask you, what will Monday hold for you? What will life be like for you now?