

# From Death to Life in Grace

Thomas Robinson, *Ephesians – Growing Up Into Christ 4*, October 2, 2011

## Ephesians 2:1-10

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

## Ephesians 1:18-23

<sup>18</sup> ... that you may know ... <sup>19</sup> what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might <sup>20</sup> that he worked in the Messiah when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup> And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

## Ephesians 3:17

<sup>17</sup> [I pray] that **Christ may dwell in your hearts** through **faith** – that you, being rooted and grounded in **love**, <sup>18</sup> may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup> and **to know the love of Christ** that surpasses knowledge, that you may be **filled with all the fullness of God**.

## Ephesians 4:15

We are to **grow up** in every way into him who is the head, **into Christ**.

## Looking Back at Death and Life

The aim of Ephesians is our full maturity as humans, as God created us to be. Overcoming all limits and distortions, growing into the full beauty and power God intended when he made humans “*in his own image.*” “*Growing up into Christ.*” “*Filled with the fullness of God.*”

Ch. 1: This is God’s great work/delight/story from creation through the present into the age to come. He does it through the Messiah – God and Us – in Him creating a unique place where we can share again in God’s reality, escape alienation, confusion, guilt, brokenness.

Ch. 2: Paul takes us into our own dramatic story, but in a distinctive way. Not as we think we experience it on ground level, but looking at what God has actually done in our lives. Part of our growth is learning to see our present struggles within the great drama of God’s work.

Meditate on this text: marinate/savor/soak/struggle/argue/listen/learn. Paul helps us toward a new way of looking at ourselves, our lives, challenging even for the mature. We grow.

It starts from Jesus. When we see that the very heart of God the creator of everything is revealed in Jesus and his death and resurrection, our old vision of life/world is reversed.

## Deception Outside-in and Inside-out

We were walking, working, doing, but we were dead! We seemed fine at the time. In step with our age, our culture; giving expression to our will, our intellect. Pursuing happiness. But when God’s values appeared in Jesus, the highest expressions of culture killed him.

Paul sees us caught by powerful outside influences: the Age; the deceiving and self-deceived ruler of “*the authority of the air,*” a spirit / breath that creates “*sons of disobedience.*” Once this pervasive reality is present, we can’t see it or escape it, or imagine life outside it.

This outside deception is powerful because it corresponds to the internal “desires of our flesh,” our self-centered nature that wants to make ourselves or our things god of our lives, to push the true God out. This use of “flesh” is not especially about bodily sins or against the physical contrasted with the spiritual. It expresses the pervasive distortion of human life that flows from our limited body-centered vision centering our lives on ourselves rather than God. It applies to religion, politics, business, or family as much as to sexual sins. It is our deep way of thinking, our will, our wishes for ourselves.

The deception becomes so internalized that it becomes our very nature. All that destroys human life – from corrupt power, to greed, to religious pride, to destroyed marriages, to betrayed trust – the patterns of the age that evoke God’s wrath, leave their genetic stamp on us and we become “*children of wrath.*” The world of this distortion seems normal, real, cool, scientific. We’re in charge. God’s not needed. Deception is complete. We’re dead.

## What Happened in Jesus

God intervened. He had to if there was to be any change, any deliverance from deception and death. The Gospel is the story of that strange, wonderful, long-predicted, completely unexpected intervention in the person of Jesus – his life, words, deeds, death, resurrection.

“God made us alive together with the Messiah!” God’s great love could not leave his beloved creatures in the realm of deception and death. His Grace intervened. He created anew.