

# Alive with Christ, Now and More

Thomas Robinson, *Ephesians – Growing Up Into Christ* 5, October 9, 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 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 1:7-8

<sup>7</sup> In him we have **redemption through his blood**, the **forgiveness of our trespasses**, according to  
the **riches of his grace**, <sup>8</sup> which he lavished upon us.

## 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 4:15

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

## Romans 5:1-8

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus  
Christ. <sup>2</sup> Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we  
rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ... <sup>5</sup> ... because **God's love** has been poured into our hearts through the  
**Holy Spirit** who has been given to us. <sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak, at the right time **Christ died for the**

**ungodly.** <sup>7</sup> For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— <sup>8</sup> but **God shows his love for us** in that **while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

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## **Growth that Flows from God**

Paul writes to a church that he and his co-workers established, but nothing here is about Paul's work. Paul knows life in Christ must be God's work like creation and resurrection. He receives that work as much as his converts: "*We were dead*" – his blood redeemed us.

What Paul does is give us the lens of language to help us see more clearly the meaning of what God has already done. As we hear / see what God has done we open our hearts and wills to the ongoing work of God's Spirit giving us God's life and empowering us to live fully.

## **The Heart of God Breaks Out**

"**But God...**" – the turning point. We could do nothing, deserved nothing – guilty and weak.

The entire Good News flows from the character of God's heart – not wrath but mercy and great love. Paul echoes God's revelation to Moses (Ex 34:6): merciful, gracious, with great love (*agape, hesed*). God knew our guilt, sin, weakness, rebellion, corrupt desire, death.

God refused to let our little self-centered delusions, our blind alienation from his life be the final reality. We had no permanent life in us, no access to God's life. Trapped in death.

## **"Were You There When They Crucified My Lord..."**

God intervened through the long difficult story of Israel, showing sin, creating hope, preparing for a Messiah. But then God came in that Messiah, Jesus, so that God with his creative life could uniquely enter into human brokenness, alienation, and death and create new life to overcome our death. Hard to imagine. No one anticipated such a thing before it happened.

We were there! Paul says. He entered our death so that we could die to that lifeless life (Gal 2:20).

God made us alive, raised us, seated us – all with Jesus. All that happened to Jesus also happened to those "in him." In Jesus we receive the Spirit, God's life of the age to come, now.

All is a challenge to our imagination, thus the call to realize this is God's work, not ours. Our growth takes on an unexpected quality. We learn to live into a reality that is already fully accomplished by God. We are in Christ together. His body. We share already in his life.

Together we learn what that means in this broken world, but with confidence he gives.

## **Grace – "Sometimes It Causes Me to Tremble..."**

"*By Grace you have been saved!*" Paul exclaims. No dictionary definition of grace is adequate. We only begin to grasp it by living in the reality created by God's astonishing self-giving love.

Religion is a path of morality, rites, asceticism in which a person climbs the path to God.

Faith in Jesus is nearly opposite. Everything is already accomplished by God's grace.

We receive the gift by faith, trusting in Jesus, opening our hearts to his Spirit, opening our wills to his Lordship, allowing him to do his work in us. And he does, renewing our minds.

Now and More – Past, Present and Future are all bound up in his work. His work in us now is only the beginning. He intends for his grace to continue into the age to come to lead us into experiences of beauty, creativity, fulfillment, excitement, delight we can't yet imagine.