

"UNLOCKING OUR SPIRITUAL BANK ACCOUNT"
PART 4: EPHESIANS 2:1-10

The passage we are going to get into this morning is a familiar part of the book of Ephesians. You all know v 8 and 9 of Chapter 2. You hear that quoted a lot -- "For by grace you have been saved through faith." You all remember that verse, right? "This is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." It is a great passage, but like all scripture, there is a context. So, what we will do is get into that this morning in some detail.

In the first part of this letter, Paul is talking about our salvation. He wants us believers to recognize all that is ours in Christ, all of our spiritual blessings; to know what is in our spiritual bank account. We have been blessed "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:3). We have been redeemed, bought with a price. We have forgiveness of sins. We have an inheritance. We were sealed with the Holy Spirit and that same Holy Spirit gives us wisdom and knowledge into the deeper things of God. We have received power to be effective witnesses and to carry out God's will for our lives. As we begin to examine our spiritual bank account, we discover that we have great wealth -- in Christ. When we have Christ, we have everything!

As we come to Chapter 2, Paul begins to describe the whole process of salvation. Most of us view our salvation as something that happened at some point in time. For me personally, I can recall sitting in my parent's bedroom at 6138 Elm Valley Drive, San Antonio, April 1968, and I am listening to my dad as he is presenting the gospel to me. I remember that I recognized that I was a sinner and that I needed to be saved. So, I prayed and asked Jesus to be my Lord and Savior. I can recall all that. I can remember it. And each of you could probably stand up here and offer a similar testimony of how you came to faith in Christ. And some of you have. Some of you have shared your testimony. As we view it, our salvation was a past event.

Paul's view of salvation is a little different. He sees salvation as a process having past, present and future components -- justification, sanctification and glorification. So, we are going to be talking about these in some detail today. Justification is what happened in the past as far as our salvation is concerned. Sanctification is what is happening now. And glorification is what will happen in the future at some point. So, let's go ahead and get started in Ephesians Chapter 2 and v 1...

READ Ephesians 2:1-3

"And you..." This was us, past tense. We "were dead in the trespasses and sins" that we "once walked." You and I were spiritually dead. We were not just sick. We were dead! Now, how did we become dead in our trespasses and sins? Was it something that we did? We were born that way. We were born with a sin nature, with a bent toward sin. Nobody had to teach me to sin. It came naturally for me at a very young age. I was good at it!

We were spiritually DEAD. So then, how can a dead person make themselves come alive? They can't. They cannot do it on their own, can they? No. There is a sobering finality to death. Dead people can't do anything. They do not respond to any kind of stimulus. If a dead person is going to come back to life it will require an outside power source. Agreed? It is going to require divine intervention.

Let's define these terms, "trespasses" and "sins," because they are a little bit different. To "sin" means to miss the mark, to miss the target. Simply put, we fail to meet God's perfect and holy standard. To "trespass" means to go in the wrong direction. We follow the ways of the world rather than God's way. So, you think about what is it that drives our society here in America today? There are three main philosophies that I see out there. The big one is humanism, which is simply "I want to do things my way." You see that in all the commercials, right? You deserve this. "I want to be the captain of my own ship." The second big thing is a major obsession that we Americans with materialism, things, right? And then, a third thing

is something that is beautiful, that God created, designed for our enjoyment, but that has been perverted by us sinners. I am talking about sex. You see that in all the commercials too, don't you? Pornography and sexual misconduct are rampant in America, yes, even among Christians!

The Bible says, basic Bible 101, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). We are all sinners. We are all dead spiritually. That was our condition. Jesus said, "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). That is God's standard. Peter said, "It is written [quoting from Leviticus], 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:16). This is all God's perfect standard. That is God's way. But unfortunately, we have missed the mark. We have all gone in the wrong direction.

Like Adam and Eve, we followed "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience." Of course, that is a reference to Satan. He was in the form of a serpent in the Garden, but it is Satan none the less, the devil. And, like Adam and Eve, we "lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind." We did what WE wanted to do rather than what God wanted us to do. We "were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind." That is where we were. That is who we were. We were spiritually dead. And all of this is past tense because something happened. Praise God! V 4...

READ Ephesians 2:4-6a

I am going to stop right in the middle of v 6. Our great and awesome God, patient and kind, rich in mercy, love and grace – He did something for us dead people. V 5 says He "made us alive." Divine intervention. God made us, spiritually dead people, to live. "Even when we were dead in our trespasses, He made us alive together with Christ." In the same way that Jesus was raised physically from the dead back to life, we (who were spiritually dead) were raised back to life.

What Paul has just described in these first 5-plus verses is the past event of salvation. In theological terms this is referred to as "justification."

In other places [in scripture] Paul will talk about this in some detail. Because of our faith in Jesus Christ, God justified us. He declared us as "righteous." Now, it is NOT that we were declared "Not guilty." The fact is we ARE guilty. I just read that verse. We are all sinners. When we were justified, we were declared "righteous," which is different from being declared "Not guilty." We were declared righteous, not because of anything that we did, but because of what Jesus did. And what Jesus did, that work was applied to our account. We were spiritually dead and God made us alive together with Christ. So, when we think about salvation, this is normally what we think of, what happened in the past. But there is a present, ongoing component of salvation, which we are going to talk about next.

I am going to start this conversation out this way -- Do you remember the story about Jesus raising Lazarus out of John Chapter 11? Right after Lazarus walked out of the tomb, what did Jesus tell the people standing around to do? "You can all go home now. The show is over!" Is that what He said? This is from John 11:44: "The man who had died [speaking of Lazarus] came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'" When Jesus brought Lazarus out of the tomb Jesus did not leave Lazarus in his grave clothes to just wander around the cemetery. He did not do that, did He? Jesus had him freed up to be able to function as a normal, living, breathing human being. Likewise, spiritually, God does not leave us the same way we were. Do you see the analogy here? When we are raised to new life, we receive the Holy Spirit who frees us, who gives us the power we need to live the Christian life.

This takes us to the present component [of our salvation] and this term which I introduced earlier, "sanctification." It is the life-long process of growing in our faith and becoming more and more like Christ. Paul talks about in Romans 8:29, "being conformed to the image of His Son [speaking of Jesus]." The whole point of sanctification is to get us ready for our eternal home. This is just me. Maybe you can say the same thing – the

older I get and the more I grow spiritually, the more I long for the things of God. The more my heart desires to be with the Lord. I have a greater desire to be with the Lord at my age now than I did when I was 16. It has been a process. The change happens over years. It takes time. Now, I can function just fine here on this earth, but I realize that my allegiance is not here anymore. It is in heaven.

When I was teenager, I used to listen to nothing but the Top 40 songs that were on the radio, love songs. The 1970s had some good love songs (the Captain and Tennille and the Eagles and others). But the more I become closer to the Lord, the more I want to listen to songs that glorify Him. So now, I listen to a lot of different genres of Christian music (Chris Tomlin and some of the quartets and old-time gospel songs). I have changed over time. That is more where my heart is. I still reminisce about some of the old songs [that I used to listen to] but I prefer Christian music because that is what I relate to now.

So, our allegiance is in heaven. It is “in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” This is what Paul says as he continues on in the rest of v 6. We have been raised up with Him...

READ Ephesians 2:6b

Just as Jesus ascended physically back to heaven, so we also are spiritually raised up positionally in Christ into the heavenly places. When we get saved, we become citizens of heaven. Like an ambassador who is living in a foreign land, we are citizens of heaven, but we are not home yet. We are still living on foreign soil. There was this song that we used to sing when I was younger. You all may remember it. The song was called “This World is Not My Home.” The chorus goes like this –

O Lord, You know I have no friend like You,
If heaven's not my home, then, Lord, what will I do?
The angels beckon me from heaven's open door,
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

Do you remember that song? Great song. So, that is what I am talking about. Heaven is our home. We are just not home yet.

[One class member commented that in the Lord and in His word, there is a richness, a fulfillment, and a security that we do not have here that we do have with Him.]

READ Ephesians 2:7

I want to throw this question out for us to think about -- Why did God save us? Well, unlike what my 10-year-old self once thought (when I first got saved), being saved was NOT primarily to keep me out of hell. This verse here tells us why He saved us and it is not what I thought. Maybe it was not what you thought. It was for another reason. It was so that God could shower His blessings on us. Have you ever thought about that? It says here that "He might show [display to all creation, including the angels Peter says] the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ." None of us deserves God's kindness, do we? And yet, here we are, recipients of all those great benefits. That is called "grace." Which leads us to those verses you all know...

READ Ephesians 2:8-9

Our part of the salvation process was simple faith. "For by grace you have been saved through faith." There it is. We became recipients of God's grace by believing the gospel message when we heard it. By faith. We had a choice. We could believe what we heard or not. Some people choose not to believe or they say, "Well, not now, but maybe later." By faith (past tense) we accepted God's offer. We realized, as we heard the gospel message presented, that Jesus paid our sin debt and we believed that what He did was done for us. Because we are sinners and we need that. We need that debt paid.

So, let's all just pat ourselves on the back for making such a wise decision, right? "Boy, I was so smart!" But before you do that, you have to

read the rest of the verse because it says, "And this is not your own doing..." Someone might say, "I thought I chose." "It is not you own doing," he says... "It is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." It may appear from our perspective (at the time) that God saved us based solely on our faith. But the reality is, while we made the choice by an act of our faith to believe in and to follow Jesus, we never would have done that had God not FIRST worked out the circumstances in our lives and convicted us by the Holy Spirit to do so. Left to our own devices, to our own human reasoning, the truth is that we would NOT have believed. Remember, we were spiritually DEAD. Earlier we noted that dead people cannot do anything. They cannot respond to any stimulus, even good stimulus. So, left to ourselves we would have been left that way, dead spiritually. God had to intervene. The Father made the plan, the Son carried it out, and the Spirit convicted us of our sin and need for a Savior. It was God's gift to us. We did not do anything to earn it, no "works" on our part. Just simple childlike faith. And even THAT was a gift from God. Praise the Lord!

I heard a story of an old tent revival. The evangelist had just finished. People had been saved. It had been a good night. Everybody went home. Being the last night of the revival, a group of men was tearing down the tent and loading things up so that can go to the next place. Well, a man ran up to this group of workers and he says, "What do I need to do to get saved?" He was crying. He was desperate. The worker replied, "It's too late. You can't do anything to get saved. It is all over." The man with tears and he said, "No. What do I need to do to get saved? Tell me!" The worker who was actually the evangelist smiled and put his hand on the man's shoulder and said, "There is nothing you can do. It has already been done." And then he led him to the Lord. That is a good picture. We cannot do anything. The work has already been done.

V 10... Now, we like v 8 and 9, but we do not often quote v 10. It goes right along with what Paul is saying.

READ Ephesians 2:10

This is how Jesus put it when He was talking to His disciples in John 15:8: "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples." We have work to do now that we are saved. Do you ever wonder why, when we are saved, why God does not just take us home (to heaven)? That would be convenient, wouldn't it? Just go home to be with the Lord and not have to go through all the other "crud," right? No, He leaves us here for a reason. Because there is work to be done. Everything we do, as saved individuals, as the redeemed of the Lord, while we are still on this old earth, should be done to bring honor and glory to God. We are His masterpiece. We were "created in Christ Jesus for good works." We are ambassadors for our Master, for His kingdom. We represent Him here.

I talked earlier about the sanctification process, about becoming more like Christ. That sounds really good, to become more like Jesus. But, of course, I struggled with this. How can we become like Jesus because the problem is (and Paul addresses this in Romans) is that, when I get saved, I have this new nature but I still have the old nature. It is still there. And Paul talks about these two natures warring against each other. So, how can we possibly be like Christ while we are here on this old earth as long as we have that old nature in our back pocket hounding us? Well, let me explain it in simple terms because that is a really good question. Peter is preaching in Acts Chapter 10 and in v 38 he is summarizing Jesus's life [on earth this way]: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him." That is how Peter describes Jesus's life on earth. That is what we are [to do] as His church. Like Jesus, we are [to do] good. And like Jesus, we are [to bring] spiritual healing through the Gospel message. Our salvation was part of God's plan and the good works that we do after we are saved (as a result of our salvation), are a part of His plan also.

We have talked about the past component of our salvation, "justification." We were dead and God raised us. We talked about the

present component, ["sanctification"], becoming more like Christ. This ongoing process. We have not really addressed the future component. For that you have to go back to v 7. There is that little phrase that I skipped over on purpose... "So that in the coming ages [that is future] He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." So, the rest of that verse has both a present and future component. We talked about the present component of that earlier where He showers us with all these blessings. But there is much, much, much more to come. That is the future [part of our salvation]. When we finally enter God's glorious presence, whenever that it. When we are ushered into heaven after this life ends; when our faith becomes sight, whether that be as a result of our physical death or via the Rapture, we will at some point receive a new, glorified body. That is "glorification." That is the theological term for it. We even sing songs about that. So, we believe that. We believe what the Bible says. But it is a bit mysterious, isn't it?

Paul talks about it in several places. The one place I want to point you to is in 1 Corinthians 15. He does not talk about it in Ephesians but he talks about it here: "Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep [we will not all physically die – 99.99 percent of us will], but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality." (1 Corinthians 15:51-53). He has just described "glorification." It is very mysterious. There is a lot of debate as to when this happens and how this happens. We know it happens, somehow, someway, at some point in time, in the future. It has not happened yet. We are still in our physical bodies. But as I understand it, one day we will all receive a new glorified eternal body. One that does not decay or grow old or need a hip replaced or food. We will someday get a body that is fit for our eternal existence with the Lord. It is "imperishable," he says.

If you want to learn more about this, I invite you to go to our website <https://levelgroundbible.org>. Click on Listen, Other Topics, and there you will find a two-part lesson entitled "The Best is Yet to Come." It is a lesson that I taught [in our class] several years ago. I go into a lot of detail about how I understand what all this means, based on my own study. You will hear other teachers who see it a little bit different. But, whatever. It is open to interpretation, but we Christians should get excited about our future and what the future holds. There is so much more to come than what we have in this life right now.

I want to close with this. I have had this little poster for years. *[The PowerPoint slide I showed in class depicted the poster that contain several rather odd-looking characters and caption reading: "God made all of us perfect. He's just now finished with most of us yet!"]*

It was hanging up in my office for a while. It reminds me of a truth I heard years ago. After we get saved God continues to work on us. He doesn't save us to leave us as we were. Positionally we are perfect because we are in Christ. But God, like the master sculptor, chisels away little by little on all those parts of me that are NOT like Christ. The idea being that through my life experiences (good, bad or indifferent), all that He allows into my life, I will mature in my faith and I become more and more like Christ. This is what God desires. So, this funny, maybe even silly poster reminds me that God is still at work. He is not quite finished with me yet! His masterpiece is still a work in progress! So, be patient with me, alright. Let me encourage you... God is still working on you too!