

## Awaking to Grace, Eph.2:1-10

Awed by God #4

◆Intro: Imagine this. The firemen arrive on the scene as a fellow emerges from the building with his clothes in flame. Quickly the firemen roll him in a blanket and smother the flames but even as they do they see he has stopped breathing. A paramedic instinctively dives to begin CPR but is blocked by one of his partners who says, “No. Wait. It has to be his choice. He has to ask us to save him.” Sounds crazy, doesn’t it? Yet this is exactly how some understand human salvation. It is sometimes taught that God will not save a person without being asked. Somehow this is supposed to be an admirable quality of God, showing him to be a loving being who honors the freedom of the individual.

◆Well friends, I believe at least one of the reasons that you and I are not happier in God’s love, one of the reasons we are not so in awe of God, is that *we are inclined to think that the good that God does or gives to us is in some way dependent on our deserving, our behavior, or at least our wisdom to have asked him for it.* To many, God is our jogging partner, who urges us on, and is always willing to accompany us down the road because we are splendid runners. We think of God as we think of the press: they are interested in us only when we have something that might be newsworthy. And so when we hear of his love for us, either we find it hard to believe, or we subconsciously assume it’s because God has seen the Loreal commercial and knows “we are worth it”.

◆I have bad news and good news to share today. But don’t be afraid to hear the bad news. It is the contrast of the bad news that makes the good news so good. Lets take a look.

# Awaking to Grace, Eph.2:1-10

Awed by God #4

◆1. **Bad news: I have great sin and misery, and cannot know comfort without knowing this.** Sorry folks. Just as you need to know you have cancer before you appreciate or even desire a treatment, so we need to be aware of our spiritual cancers. Isn't that why we come here after all? The church isn't a place for good people who got it all together! It's for dead people who need to live. In the first three verses, Paul reminds his readers, and us, that they were dead. That is, spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. With all the fascination with zombies these days, we might forget that dead people really don't move. They don't talk. They don't drag their bad selves down to the emergency room for help either. They don't fight with others or enjoy chasing the living. They are stiff, and stone cold. [Like the corpses in the morgue where one mortician found a winning lottery ticket in the pocket of a dead man. Know what he muttered to himself when he found it? "Lucky stiff."] A dead person doesn't choose medical attention. A dead person doesn't go looking for God. She is chained down by a number of things that Paul mentions. Paul wants to convince us of our deadness. Maybe you're already quite aware of it. If you're a thinking person, and you've lived beyond your teens, you probably already know what he's talking about. You probably have already battled with doing things you didn't want to do, and not doing the things you thought would be worthwhile. Most all of us here today have felt the pain of human bondage to choosing the wrong thing. There are three descriptive lines in our text that help us feel the weight of the problem.

◆1) "ways of the world" v2: This verse literally says "when you walked around in the world's era/age". By this Paul is referring to the

# Awaking to Grace, Eph.2:1-10

Awed by God #4

views of a sinful human culture. It's not hard to define. What does the world tell us? "Get all you can. Can all you get. Sit on your can!" We call it materialism. Or "Assert yourself. Be yourself. Please yourself. There is no right or wrong; only what's right for you." We call that narcissism and the push for erotic freedom these days is a direct result. Have you noticed?...nobody has to be taught to be selfish or to idolize wealth, sex, fun, power, status, pleasure, or their own family. David Wells put it, "We can recognize the ways of the world wherever sin seems acceptable, and righteousness seems strange." The "ways of the world" is one indication that we humans are spiritually dead. No one can think outside this box, just as no fish can live outside it's water. It is who fallen humans are. There are two more indications of deadness.

◆2) "ways of the ruler of the air" v2 This is a direct reference to Satan and personal evil beings. The "air" in Hebrew cosmology is the realm between heaven and earth; stronger than us; lower than God. It's a strike against us because in this fallen world, we inevitably and willingly agree with the devil's suggestions. That's what Paul means when he says we "followed" the ways of this ruler (v2). Part of human deadness in spirit is that we actually sometimes think evil things are something good.

◆For example, we perceive that it is good and right to dislike someone when they disagree with us. Do we not? It's a natural inclination. Again, sometimes we are impressed with our ability to destroy. You've heard people say it. "Yeah, we trashed the

## Awaking to Grace, Eph.2:1-10

Awed by God #4

place, it was amazing!” or “I really showed him...!” (Just in case these examples don’t make sense to you, I might point out that it is not God’s way to trash a place. Nor is it the heart of God to “really show him”.) But they seem delightful to us at times.

You’re fouled under the basket but the ref doesn’t catch it.

Later your rival is driving in and you see an opportunity to let him know you remember and won’t be walked on. So you...you know what I’m talking about. It *feels* good. But it *isn’t* good.

This fits right in with the other strike we humans have, keeping us in deadness. The...

◆3) “cravings of our sin-nature” v3. In case you’re thinking to yourself, “Hey, I’m a pretty good person. It’s almost in God’s best interest to love me.” lets ponder it a little. Have you ever *eaten* more than you needed? Have you ever *given* more than was needed to someone else? Have you ever noticed that the one is easy and the other hard? Have you ever dreamed about the girl next door? Have you ever done something you knew to be wrong, knew you would regret it later, and did it anyway? Illogical, I know! But we do it all the time. We watch stories of unthinkable things and then say, “Ooo, what a cool movie it was.” and “It didn’t bother me so it doesn’t affect me.” We love to have people say nice things about us, our outfit, or hair, or accomplishment. But we don’t lavish any of them with praises about their hair, their clothes, or their acts. We have desperate appetites. We live in self-indulging luxury far beyond our needs. We are sure inside that it is good to make ourselves happy, and we are sure that

# Awaking to Grace, Eph.2:1-10

Awed by God #4

God is wrong about things like it being better to give than to get, or like sex belongs exclusively to committed marriage between a man and a woman. Look at our culture. The homosexual, transgender celebration is our cravings trumping both science, and moral law. [Two females cannot procreate. Even darwinian evolutionism argues against their survival and fitness.]

◆ I knew a young woman who was utterly beautiful. She had a face like a porcelain doll. And she was hooked on cocaine. She was addicted to that which was destroying her. At least part of her wanted it. She kept going back to it. I'm sorry to say she did not survive into adulthood. Paul takes the time in this letter to remind the Ephesian Christians that life without Jesus the Son of God, is addiction to death, it is human bondage.

◆ *"The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God."*  
*Romans 8:6-8, NIV.*

◆ These are marks of deadness. That's what earns us the title of "children of wrath" in verse 3. It means we are all people by nature that are headed for destruction. That our sinfulness is a dead end street.

◆ A word about wrath: many hear the term and think "meanness". God is to them wrathful in the sense that he ticked off and pays us back for our annoyance. That's not biblical wrath. Biblical wrath is ferocious love of righteousness. It is a mother bear, clubbing her cub

## Awaking to Grace, Eph.2:1-10

Awed by God #4

away from a skunk. It is a human father slapping his toddlers hand away from a knife, or spanking his behind for screaming at mom.

God must by nature destroy sin and misery because he is by nature love and goodness. They are two sides of a coin.

◆B. Why mention our deadness? Not trying to be Johnny Raincloud here, but no one loves a rescuer who doesn't know they need rescue. Part of being dead is not being able to see our deadness. Years ago a very young country boy was met by a passing man who asked him what he was doing. He happily replied that he was playing with worms, except these particular worms kept biting him. The adult looked closer and discovered they were not worms at all, but newly hatched baby rattlesnakes. Aside from a few pricks on his fingers the youngster was playfully headed to certain death for baby rattlers are born fully loaded with venom.

◆That's humanity. We play with that which kills the soul and don't mind it that much. Now you have a choice. You can say, "How rude of that church to tell me I have a problem with sin. How arrogant of that Bible to imply that my desires are not fitting for life! After all I was born this way, I'm just doing what is in my nature." You could say that. But would you say the same thing to a doctor who tells you you have melanoma? The other choice you have is to say, "Can anything be done about it, Doc?" Now the good news!

◆2. **I can be set free from my sin and my misery. And I cannot know comfort without knowing this too.** This is Paul's message in everything following verse 4!

## Awaking to Grace, Eph.2:1-10

Awed by God #4

◆ Now we are back to the awe of God that the letter of Ephesians is all about! The good news is God loves us! God saved us. We were on the edge of the cliff and he grabbed our hands. Picture this:

- ◆ a run away car runs out of gas and rolls to a stop just before it get to you, stuck on the side of the road.
  - ◆ a brick falls on the sidewalk at your heels from 5 floors up and is pulverized into dust.
  - ◆ a bullet grazes your neck
  - ◆ a doberman gets to the end of his chain just inches before he gets to you! (That happened on my paper route in Kailua HA when I was in 7th grade.)
  - ◆ someone pulls you back to the curb just as a bus roars past.
  - ◆ you're about to cross a railroad and as you foot nears the gas pedal, a man steps out waving, and the Amtrak thunders past from the direction you weren't looking
  - ◆ You're tied to a log and just before your log gets to the giant lumber mill saw, Batman shuts off the power!
  - ◆ You wake up in the hospital feeling fine and someone conveys that you passed out from fear, in one of these situation I just mentioned.
- ◆ A. Every one of those scenarios is one of fantastic relief! Salvation is a free gift of God to unaware, incapable, and spiritually dead people. This is why Christians are so happy about knowing Christ! It's like Christ returned a kickoff in the last seconds of the Superbowl for a 98 yard touchdown run, and you and I, 2nd string, benched people –all get a Superbowl ring too. We didn't save the day, but we're on his team!

## Awaking to Grace, Eph.2:1-10

Awed by God #4

◆ *“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,” Ephesians 2:6, NIV.*

◆ Sometimes people get biblically confused and they think that grace is something you collect like rainwater. If you have enough when you die, you get heaven. If you don't, you have to earn some more somewhere else. If we do wrong, God sucks out some of our grace. We do something right and God is obligated to give us another barrel of grace. This is not the nature of grace! Grace implies that God is under no obligation to love us. He is under no obligation to resuscitate us from our bondage to dead living. You might think, “I went on a mission trip. That's gotta please God.” Well sure, God smiles at such things. But it makes no difference for your salvation. Any sin at all makes us spiritually dead. Every good thing is grace. Even the good things that you or I might end up doing are God's doings.

◆ *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10, NAS95.*

◆ The greek language always puts first in the sentence what is most important. Here's how the greek puts it. “His doings (workmanship) we are.” The word for workmanship is poiema, from which comes our word “poem”. Hence, artwork, or workmanship. Add to that that the good works we “poems of God” do were all planned for us long ago. Remember chapter one and our adoption before the creation of the world? Only God creates goodness. There is nothing in a fallen human that can create true good works. The good we do is thankfulness and cooperation with the plan God has already written. Virtues

## Awaking to Grace, Eph.2:1-10

Awed by God #4

like purity, or humility around bragging friends, or tenderness with a resistant child, or holiness in the video store –these are all things God put into the works because he is so full of grace, mercy, love, and kindness.

◆Is this not a stunning perspective? No other love is like God's. Everywhere we have to impress, measure up, make the grade to be wanted and liked, and loved. Not so with God. He loves first. Let me show you one final contrast Paul makes.

◆In verse 2 he literally tells us that we were dead in the sins “we used to walk around in (περιπατεο).” But in verse 10 he shows us that God wanted better for us. We were created to do good things which God prepared in advance “for us to walk around in (περιπατεο).”

◆**Conclusion:** Remember the fireman we talked about at the beginning, the one waiting for the dead, burned man to ask for CPR? That kind of rescuer does not impress us. And God is not that kind of rescuer. No. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus is more like the parent who drags his addicted child kicking and screaming to a treatment center where she is detoxified. His love, and her life, is more important than celebrating her freedom ask for it. That's what Paul is talking about in Ephesians 2. We can be in awe of a God whose good love is so strong that he gives it even to dead people who didn't want it in the first place.

◆CS Lewis in describing his own conversion said, “I never had the experience of looking for God. It was the other way around: He was the hunter, or so it seemed to me, and I was the deer. He stalked me

## Awaking to Grace, Eph.2:1-10

Awed by God #4

like a redskin, took unerring aim, and fired. I am thankful that this is how the first meeting occurred. It forearms one against subsequent fears that the whole thing was only wish fulfillment. Something one didn't wish for can hardly be that!

◆ Listen friends, the reality of grace assures us, we didn't make it up, and we can't blow it up. Oh, you may trip a bit, even a lot, but Dad is bigger. He'll catch us. Hardships come, and hardships go. But in Jesus, your destiny is secure. We serve Christ not to get saved, but to celebrate so great a salvation!