

Citizens & Saints
Alive in Christ • Message 3
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Prayer Points for Prayer Time:

- Ask God to help you live in a way that reflects His holiness.
- Thank God that His grace is greater than your sin.
- Ask God to help you live differently from the world.

Worship Psalm:

"For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end."

Psalm 48:14 (NIV)

Scripture Reading:

But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)

Ephesians 2:4-5 (NLT)

A. Introduction: We continue our survey of the book of Ephesians.

Today's message, titled *Alive in Christ*, focuses on Ephesians chapter 2.

- Ephesians 2:5; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 Peter 1:16; 1 John 1:8

1. **Ephesians 2:5b (NLT)** - ... *though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life ...*

2. What does it mean that *we are dead*; we are living and breathing? [1 Timothy 5:6]

3. The answer is found at **Romans 6:23a (NLT)** - *For the wages of sin is death ...*

4. *Sin* causes our *death* - spiritual death from birth and ultimately physical death.

5. *Sin* [Gk. *hamartia*, originally carried the idea of missing the mark, (shooting at a target), but came to represent missing or falling short of any goal, standard, or purpose.] [It's the most common term for sin in the New Testament; used 173 times.]

6. Who sins? **Romans 3:23 (NLT)** - *For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.* [What is His standard? Perfection, for He is holy.

Psalm 51:5; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 8:7-8; 1 John 1:8]

7. *Holy* doesn't mean well-behaved, it means "set apart, sanctified, other" and refers to the character of God, His nature and being, not merely His actions.

8. God expects us to be holy: **1 Peter 1:16 (NLT)** - *For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy."* [Leviticus 11:44] [Set apart from this world. 1 John 2:15-17]

9. We admit that we sin, we fall short, but why does that *assassinate* us?

10. We have physical life, but our *spirits* are dead - and have been from birth.
11. ILL.: Inventoried a morgue one summer, aided by high school students. [Tallulah]
12. Dead people are insensitive, unaware, nonresponsive, disconnected.
13. When we are dead spiritually, we are insensitive to God's Spirit, unaware of His Presence, unable to respond to His leading, disconnected from His blessings.
14. *Sinning* or *falling short*, doesn't mean we are as wicked or as evil as we can possibly be; it just means that we don't measure up to God's perfect standard.
15. We are fallen from birth, born with a sin *nature* inherited from Adam, which we sometimes follow in committing sinful *actions*.
16. Our sin nature, our fallen condition infects our existence and taints our entirety, which separates, alienates and disconnects us from God.
17. We accept that all people sin, but we must be careful not to conclude that sin is a minor matter because it is common, pervasive, universal in humanity.
18. Sin includes immoral actions; but also *failing to glorify God* with our lives.
[We sin more by what we fail to do rather than what we do.]
19. APP.: Am I aware of sin in my life? [1 John 1:8] Does my life glorify God?

B. Spiritual life is ...

1. Rejected because of my SIN.

(Ephesians 2:1-3; C/R: Isaiah 64:5-6; John 3:36; 12:31; Ephesians 6:12)

1. Because of our sin, we resist and refuse God's offer of salvation. [John 5:39-40]

2. **Ephesians 2:1 (NLT)** - *Once you were dead because of your disobedience* [NIV: *transgressions*; ESV: *trespasses*, to slip, fall, stumble, deviate, offend or go the wrong direction] *and your many sins* ["miss the mark"].

3. *Disobedience* and *many sins* do not refer to specific sinful acts; rather, they refer to a person with a sin nature apart from God, separated from Him, divergent.

4. Committing sinful acts doesn't make us sinners; we sin because we are sinners, it is our nature.

[ILL.: "This isn't like me!" No, it is you; it reveals the real you!]

5. **Ephesians 2:2 (NLT)** - *You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world* [to believers], *obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world* [ESV: *the prince of the power of the air*; demons exist in the heavenly sphere (Ephesians 6:12)]. *He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God.*

6. Satan rules this world and will continue to until he is cast out by God. [John 12:31]

7. Demonic powers pressure and dominate every person who is not born again.

8. That doesn't mean all unsaved people are possessed, controlled by Satanic forces.

9. It means they are subject to Satan's influence because they share his nature of rebellion against God, even if it is not always apparent.

10. Satan's purpose for people is not merely to motivate them to do evil, but also to doubt God, to deny His sovereignty over them by acting as their own god and reject His invitations to come to Him. [Why would *anyone* resist?]

11. **Ephesians 2:3 (NLT)** - *All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger [NIV: objects of wrath], just like everyone else. [Under God's judgment and eternal condemnation. John 3:36]*
12. All people are children of God creatively, but not relationally, so those who have not received salvation through Jesus Christ are by nature children of wrath.
13. APP.: Do you recognize rebellion against God within you?

Spiritual life is ...

2. Received by God's GRACE.

(Ephesians 2:4-9; C/R: Isaiah 64:5-6; Romans 8:6-8; 11:6; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Titus 3:4-7)

1. Our spiritual sounds hopeless, doesn't it? It would be except for verse 4.
2. **Ephesians 2:4-5 (NLT)** - *But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)*
3. **Grace = *charis* (in Greek) = unmerited favor**

divine influence upon the heart
God's Riches at Christ's Expense

[Titus 3:6-7]
4. God intervened when we were spiritually lifeless—unwilling and incapable to change, to repent, to turn toward God—so He turned toward us in mercy and love.
5. A dead person needs to be made alive; salvation (regeneration) gives spiritual life!
6. When a person drowns and stops breathing, there is nothing he can do to start again; someone alive has to give him life by starting him breathing. (CPR)
7. Our relationship with God is broken, we cannot repair it through our own efforts.
8. The good deeds we do can't satisfy the standard of never doing or having done evil which is God's standard; even our best actions are not perfect. [Isaiah 64:5-6]
9. APP.: Do I think I earn acceptance by God by doing more good than bad? [scale]
10. **Romans 8:7-8 (NLT)** - *For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. ... That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God. [We are tainted by sin so we cannot be holy, perfection is impossible.]*
11. We don't deserve God's mercy. We deserve His justice. [Justice is getting what we deserve; mercy is not getting what we deserve, it's getting what we need.]
12. We deserve punishment, but receive forgiveness, because of God's merciful love!
13. Only the offended can offer forgiveness - and only forgiveness can reconcile.
14. Our sins put His Son to death, yet in His mercy, God allows us to benefit from the cruel act that we caused. That's mercy! That's kindness! That's love!
15. **Ephesians 2:6 (NLT)** - *For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. [We are seated in heaven with Jesus though we still reside on earth!]*

16. Jesus took our sins into His body, His flesh, was punished for them, but left them in the tomb when He was raised - so sin cannot control us any longer!
17. **2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)** - *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* [Our substitution.]
18. Being *raised from the dead* means that we were born again (regenerated) in spiritual rebirth, and we were removed from the control of death-dealing sin.
19. **Ephesians 2:7 (NLT)** - *So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.* [Our salvation brings Him glory!]
20. We display God's miraculous goodness and power through our lives. [trophies]
21. How did this occur? **Ephesians 2:8 (NLT)** - *God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God.* [Romans 11:6]
22. Our *belief* (or *faith*, same Greek word, *pistis*) is in Jesus' atonement for us; my preferred translation is *reliance* [same word] *upon Christ for salvation.*
23. **Ephesians 2:9 (NLT)** - *Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.* [A decision to believe is a work!]
24. Believing the truth that *Jesus'* death is sufficient for *our* forgiveness is a *gift* of God's grace, revealed to us by the Holy Spirit; it's not humanly possible, not a product of your logic or rationality, so we *can't take credit* for it!
25. A person who is spiritually dead cannot decide to believe until God graciously breathes into him the breath of spiritual life.
26. We are enabled to believe by God's Spirit who calls us, convicts us of our sins and convinces us of truth including confidence that we inherit eternal life. [Titus 3:7]
27. APP.: Have you experienced God's grace? Been born again by God's Spirit?

Spiritual life is ...

3. Reflected in our BEHAVIOR.

(Ephesians 2:10; C/R: John 15:8; Romans 8:29; ; James 2:17)

1. **Ephesians 2:10 (NLT)** - *For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*
2. We have all been misshapen by sin, so God has *created us anew!*
3. We are master works by God—molded, shaped, fashioned, into the persons He designed us to be as reflections of His Son. [Romans 8:29]
4. We are saved **from** sin. We are saved **to** service!
5. Good works are not a condition of salvation, but they *are* evidence of it! [James 2:17]
6. APP.: What is the evidence in your life that you have been born again?