

Title: ONCE YOU WERE DEAD, EPHESIANS 2:1-10
(Chatham, NJ; 03/15/15, AM) [E – Exegesis]

Theme: Paul's exhortation to the Ephesians provides a past, present, and future for all Christians: once you were dead; now you are alive; live to do good works for God.

Purpose: To convince any nonbeliever in the audience that he must be resurrected from his old life of sin and death, and to encourage believers to trust in the grace of God while living to do works that glorify him.

Introduction:

1. Paul writes to people who already know these truths about their former way of life.
2. He speaks of their past, present, and future.
3. This reflects the narrative of salvation that fits or can fit everyone's life.

I. Past: Once You Were Dead (Ephesians 2:1-3)

A. Dead or Alive; Lost or Found

1. You were dead in your trespasses and sins (1)
2. Also the Prodigal's condition
3. In despair he recognizes what he is, Luke 15:16-18
4. Upon his return: Luke 15:24
5. He is the image of all humanity which is dead and lost

B. The darkness in us tries to hide this truth, John 3:19-21

1. People fear exposure because their deeds are evil
2. Those who do what is true come to the light: Ephesians have done this
3. They and we once lived the same condition: darkness and death
4. Colossians 1:21 says that by our evil behavior we were hostile towards God
5. We do well not to forget our previous life: remembering it makes grace that much more valuable

C. They followed the "prince of the power of the air"

1. "The course of this world" (2) represents the norms and values hostile to God
2. The prince is obviously the devil also mentioned in 4:27 and 6:11, and in 6:16 called the evil one
3. Air probably suggests that Satan is a spiritual presence of evil influence
4. Even before Christ came, the world was under judgment because it followed him
5. The world is dead; the world is lost!
6. Though past for Christians, it is still present for much of the world

II. Present: You Are Alive and Raised Up (4-8)

A. God's Activity

1. Like the father in the Story of the Prodigal, God welcomes us
2. He is rich in mercy (4): he "lavished" his grace upon us, 1:7-8
3. He offers us a gift that transcends what we earn (8)

B. What we are now

1. "Even when we were dead" (5), he made us alive (Romans 5:8)
2. "By grace . . . through faith" – because we are unworthy to be called our Father's children, we can only accept, not earn, his generosity
3. Seated with him in the heavenly places (6): a spiritual, if not physical, reality
4. Raised with Christ, Colossians 3:1-2
5. This is the present condition of all Christians

III. Future: Created for Good Works, 10

- A. Grace produces a new life
 - 1. We are created anew that we might glorify God by good works
 - 2. Paul says this also to others: Titus 3:8 follows an assertion of salvation by grace
 - 3. No longer do we live as others do, Ephesians 4:17ff.
 - 4. A changed life is mandatory, not optional

- B. Some people struggle with confidence
 - 1. These are the people who think they have never done enough
 - 2. They believe that they must be perfect
 - 3. Or just as likely there are people who demand that others be perfect
 - 4. There are still others who won't come to Christ because they aren't good enough
 - 5. Yet we are not accepted by God because we are good enough
 - 6. Forgiveness is a gift, not something earned

- C. Other people become overconfident
 - 1. We live in a society more and more given to entitlement mentality
 - 2. Grace may not produce entitlement, but it may make people too comfortable (Amos says "Woe to you who are at ease in Zion" and Paul says, "Let him who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" 1 Corinthians 10:12.)
 - 3. These people forget that they have been called to carry a cross
 - 4. Or that they must no longer follow the ways of the sinful desires
 - 5. Dietrich Bonhoeffer called it "cheap grace"
 - 6. Though free, we tend to forget that we've been called to a life of doing good, not merely sitting comfortably

Conclusions:

- 1. We accept and celebrate the free gift of God's forgiveness.
- 2. If you've never come to full acceptance, you must see the dead and dark condition of the human race.
- 3. Being raised up thus becomes a present reality that can also be accepted and celebrated.
- 4. The future is a state in which we live for God: to change our evil ways, to seek to do good works, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.
- 5. This is a response of faith inspired by the grace that lavished mercy and forgiveness on us.
- 6. Let us put our past behind us, live within the present state of grace, and continue to forge a future filled with obedience to the works that God has prepared for us.