**So Walk In Him – Gospel Received**

**Ephesians 2:1-10**

**Intro**

BO: As a group create a living thing out of the Play- Dough. Before you open can decide what you want to make. Let everyone have a say. Prioritize ability to make it lifelike and also creativity. Place finished product on plate.

Discuss. How did you do at making it lifelike? Would it fool anyone?

Engage: Fred grew up in the church. His parents knew Christ but he did not. He was desperate for relationships in Jr high and made some with some popular kids. This was where he received his self-worth. In high school he was an advocate for this youth group. He wanted to bridge the gap between some of the cliques in high school. He was successful at this. Fred sure did look like a Christian and even was a very good bible quizzer from Grace. But when college came his faith was challenged and he crumbled. He no longer trusted Christ. I believe this was because he never actually trusted Christ in the first place but put on the face of a Christian but he was never new. He looked pretty similar to someone who had new life but as time went on it’s become obvious that he was always dead.

A short testimony of God’s grace in my life is that God had prepared my heart and led my father to share with my brother and I the good news that Jesus saves from sins when we repent from our sins and put our faith and trust in him alone for our salvation. We prayed in our living room on the couches that Christ would remove our sin from us and it was at age 6-7 that I became a Christian. I went from an enemy of God to a child of God. God has continued to give me grace by growing my faith by loving Christ in a more relational way in Jr High and then in high school seeing the need for personal evangelism, in college as a disciplemaker, and as a pastor as one who loves those wherever they’re at. My need for him and his grace in my life have remained constant. I am not perfect, not even close, but God has cleansed me so that I can know him! I was an enemy but am now a new creation.

THT: The good news of the gospel is that God resurrects dead people and makes them alive.

Bckgnd: Tonight we’ll be in Ephesians 2. This book of Ephesians can be referred to as a little Romans, meaning the gospel is all through it. The first half, chapters 1-3, are about our position as Christians and the second half, chapters 4-6, are about our practice as Christians. My very last sermon with you will be on the corporate-we of following our Head Jesus Christ, which is a focus of the majority of the book. But this week in Ephesians 2:1-10, we find how an individual-me joins the corporate-we of Christians.

Prvw: We’ll see that we were dead in this world but now made alive by God’s grace, through our faith to do good works!

THT: The good news of the gospel is that God resurrects dead people and makes them alive.

**How to Receive the Gospel**

Read: ***As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.***

Ex: You Were Dead – The bible makes the claim here that every single Christian started their life as dead in their transgressions and sins. There are at least 3 results of this dead life that all of us were born into.

1. We followed the ruler of the kingdom of the air, who by the way is still working in disobedient people
2. In case you forgot, we all have done this, but second, we gratified the cravings of our flesh and followed it.
3. Our nature or our identity deserved God’s wrath. Not just what we do but who we are.

Ex: Let me put this another way. All of us from birth have followed Satan and self and deserved hell as a result.

Note: This is actually not an assumed worldview of the world today. In today’s world, the assumption is that we start out as clean and good but this is not a biblical view. The Bible assumes we already know that we were born as objects of wrath. Many of us can get fooled by the world which says that we just need to find the good within us and let it out or if it’s natural for me to do something or feel a certain way then it’s good for me.

App: You will need to make a choice in your life if you will take Jesus at his word in the Bible or you will believe what the world is telling you.

Here’s something I’d like to add. I think that many of us live as Christians thinking that we’re still dead. Even though we certainly still sin and live as dead people at times I want you to hear that your position before Christ doesn’t change back to death. There is nothing that can separate us from the love of Christ. Right thinking here is important because if you’re living your Christian life always nervous that if you mess up one more time then God won’t accept you then it’s an anxious life you’re living. I want you to hear that this passage is clear that the Christians’’ position before God as being dead is completely past tense. This is one of the most freeing truths in Scripture that you can cling to. It has massive implications. God’s love for me isn’t shifting. We make a mockery of the cross and the sufficiency of that payment if we think that we can shipwreck God’s finished work by whatever “bad” sin we commit.

Trans: So we were dead, and born into that dead position before God but how does the Christian become alive?

Read: ***4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.***

Ex: Listen to this in case you didn’t know this. God initiates and completes salvation, we believe by faith in his promises that Jesus is sufficient, and if we indeed have been saved by grace through faith then we are different! Listen anew to the work that God does in salvation.

Read: ***4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 For it is by grace you have been saved***

Ex: It’s absolutely by the grace of God and his love for us that we can be alive in Jesus BUT

Read: ***8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.***

Ex: By Grace, Through Faith! God is the one who initiates salvation/justification/right standing but let us not forget that every single Christian is saved through faith. So what’s actually happening is God changing and shaping our hearts to accept this message about Jesus and it’s only the work of Jesus that can do the saving BUT what we see when we tell our story and when we see someone else come to Christ then it’s accomplished through believing in something. What is that believe? That Jesus came to earth to be the propitiation for our sins. That we have his righteousness imputed to us on the cross. More simply put our trust in Jesus death on the cross as sufficient to cover all of our sins and believe that his rising again from the dead has conquered death so we too can live.

App: Isn’t that a sweet truth. If you no longer are thankful for the cross then maybe you are trusting in the wrong things. Hearing of the mercy and grace of God given to each and every believer should be like getting water on a hot day or eating a feast when you haven’t had food in a while.

There may even be some here that have always thought that if they did good things then God would accept them. That is not the promise that God makes in his word. The only way that God accepts sinners is by his Grace you have faith in the message that Jesus death on the cross is sufficient to cover your sin.

Ex: But listen to this last verse that so often gets left out in the gospel when Protestants share it.

Read: ***10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.***

App: If you’ve been made new that God has created that new life in you to do good works and he already has a plan for you to follow. Now I don’t want to overstate what is God’s will in your life. I generally think that God gives us all the same good works to do, namely making disciples, spreading the gospel, serving the poor and broken, loving others as Christ has loved us. However, I do believe that God has a specific plan for each of us as well. He has given you the opportunity to love someone by caring for their spiritual needs that I have no opportunity. God may even have a plan for you to serve overseas with the unreached people group of the Bell People in China that we’re taking some of our seniors on this month. Maybe God has prepared for you to support frontline missionaries and to be a witness right here in Morton. Maybe God has prepared you to be an accountant making sense of numbers and created order for God’s glory in this broken and chaotic world. No matter what, God does prepare good works for all of his creatures to do.

Con: This is the gospel. You were dead and now by God’s grace, through our faith in Jesus we are new.

THT: The good news of the gospel is that God resurrects dead people and makes them alive.