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**SERMON TITLE: From Death to Life: The Best News Ever**

**SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 2:1-10**

**DATE: January 27, 2019**

*Check out the service at [www.fpcd.org](http://www.fpcd.org).*

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

**We** talk about change in the Christian church. We talk about before and after. You've seen before and after pictures?

- ~ Someone loses weight
- ~ A house is renovated
- ~ A piece of furniture is refinished
- ~ Roadways are rebuilt
- ~ Before I was a believer I was \_\_\_\_\_;  
now I am \_\_\_\_\_.

Did you notice in our Scripture the same thing happens as a Christian? There's the before. Then there's the after. Paul defines it this way because he wants us to see the reality and the hope for a new reality. So let's break it down.

Here's the "before" life. It happened as a result of the Fall of Adam and Eve. Their disobedience affected the whole world so that now, it is the "course of this world." Eugene Peterson's *The Message* defines it as "Sin Life" and uses this language. It's not a pretty picture, in fact, it's a catastrophe:

- ✓ We are mired in a stagnant life of sin.
- ✓ We let the world tell us how to live instead of God.
- ✓ We've filled our lungs with polluted unbelief.
- ✓ And then exhaled disobedience.
- ✓ All of us are doing what we felt like doing.

*We are all in the same boat.*

You may not realize it, especially if you were born and raised in the church. You have been born into the shelter of a Christian lifestyle and culture. But, if you honestly look at yourself, you will find that there are times you do the same things as others who are not following God.

Adam and Eve were enticed by the ruler of the air and fell, following him instead of God. Death was set into motion—spiritual death. God, although merciful and gracious, lets people experience the consequences of their choices.

So we live with murder, war, unbelief, hatred of God, infidelity, unfaithfulness, self-indulgence. You get the picture.

This has been going on for a long, long time.

It's very sad news and it makes me think all the way back to Noah. It says in Genesis:

"The LORD observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart." (6:5-7)

Paul further describes the human condition as to be "dead because of sin." Like Adam and Eve, we are still following the prince of the air; following the spirit of disobedience; and all of us are children of wrath by nature.

This state of sin so permeates the world, that humans don't really have a choice to not sin. Yet, we often blame God, "*How can God allow such evil to happen?*"

But it is Satan who tempts—always enticing us to do the wrong thing. Do you remember when Satan tempted Jesus? Those same temptations

- ~ to live spiritually dead;
- ~ to do our own thing without God;
- ~ to follow the desires of our bodies and minds;

those things surround us every day. And we succumb. The Bible says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

There are people who think we can do something about it and they set about trying to right the wrongs of the world. But it's been thousands of years and we have not made much progress. There are still wars, violence, murders, infidelities, thievery, greed, and on and on.

In fact, Paul's list of problems is certainly almost an understatement. But we get so used to living in a fallen world that we cannot imagine things being any other way.

Paul says, "We were **DEAD** in trespasses and sins, **WITHOUT HOPE, UNABLE TO SAVE OURSELVES**". . . That boat we are all on is at the bottom of the sea.

**But** there's good news!

*Someone has had immense mercy.  
Someone acted in incredible love.  
Someone who could do something embraced us.*

The Lord turned his broken heart from regret over our problem to an overriding, extraordinary effort to overcome the problem. The Lord has great hope for us, and so God took our dead lives and made us alive in Christ.

God did all this on his own *with no help from us*.

Did you catch that? It is God's work. God began the long hard road to salvation, preparing his people for it; speaking through prophets; giving us pictures of it; moving his people around in preparation; planning through years, planning across nations, planning in spite of opposition to the birth of His Son Jesus so that . . . *God could pick us up and set us in heavenly places with Jesus, our Messiah*.

What does God do? He showers grace and kindness on us by lifting us up in the same way as God has raised Jesus.

God gives us his very best—that is so stunning.

Do you think that it is your merit or your effort that saves you? We cannot save ourselves and we cannot take credit. This is ALL GOD'S IDEA. It is COMPLETELY GOD'S GIFT.

That's good news! John Newton got it when he wrote: "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!"

God created us and God saves us and makes us alive. *From death to life*; that is a great reversal. God's intention is that we are saved not through works, but through faith. Have you taken the step of receiving Christ through faith? It has to be faith because we must *love*. If your love was based only on merit, then it is no love at all—it is conditional.

That is why Jesus "loved sinners" and forgave their sins. Then he invited them to believe in him, accept him, and follow him.

Thus you do have a part to play in the best news ever. You must believe. You must stop trying to justify yourself before God, which is actually you trying to be in control. Instead, you must let God save you by simply saying yes.

- Yes to God means you bow the knee to him.
- Yes to God means you allow Christ to live in you.
- Yes to God means you let go of "doing it your way," like Frank Sinatra.

Yes to God means you cannot boast. Yes to God is the Best News Ever!

We get a little confused about our spiritual needs. We are sometimes confused about our "before and after," especially if we have grown up in a Christian home. Where do our good works fit in? Paul says understanding that God has, by his own

will, completely saved you, you can understand how great God's love is. You can see God's tremendous goodness.

As you embrace God's love, then, your good works are done from a heart of love and gratitude back to God for what God has done in Christ. Your mission in life or your good works then become what he has made you to be.

Your skills and talents and loves are enhanced by Jesus' presence. Jesus will take those skills, walking with you and because those works are built into who he has made you to be, he himself will help you express them to His Glory.

What is your "before" and "after?" Before is never a pretty picture but in the hands of Jesus, you have the best news ever—ever after.

AMEN