

- A.** <sup>2</sup> And you were **dead in your trespasses and sins** <sup>2</sup> in which you previously **walked** according to the ways of this world,
- B** according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now **working** in the disobedient.
- C** <sup>3</sup> We too all previously lived among them in our **fleshly desires**, carrying out the inclinations of our **flesh and thoughts**,
- D** and we were **by nature** children under **wrath** as the others were also.
- E** <sup>4</sup> But *God*, who is **rich** in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us,
- F** <sup>5</sup> made **us** alive with ~~(together with)~~ **Christ**
- [A]** even though we were **dead in trespasses**.
- You are saved by grace! --
- F** <sup>6</sup> He also raised us up ~~(together)~~ with him and seated us with him in the heavens **in Christ** Jesus,
- E** <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might display the immeasurable **riches** of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.
- D** <sup>8</sup> For you are **saved by grace** through faith,
- C** and this is not from **yourselves**; it is God's gift—
- B** <sup>9</sup> **not from works**, so that no one can boast.
- A.** For we are his workmanship, **created** in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us **to do (walk)**.

Man's Action

God's Action

### Raised to New Life

I don't care for zombie movies, now thankfully we have another 6 months or so before the zombie culture, and zombie walks are a thing again. The entire genre of the brain dead has been overdone. There is only so much one can do with a genre where limited brain function is the major theme. In fact the basic premise of the movie is that those who are zombies don't know that they have died. They don't realize they're dead.

I'd say that's a fairly accurate commentary on our society. We don't know that we're dead or dying. So what about us? Are we dead? Are we those of the enlightened society who have can look down at the brain dead as if they are less than us? Do we have a reason to boast over the dead? Paul makes it clear we have no reason to boast instead he reminds us of our past. Every one of us started at the same point. We were dead. This is far worse than any inanimate being that couldn't do anything to oppose the person who created it. We were the walking dead, however we had a fully functioning pre-frontal cortex, able to act against God, but unable to do good.

No I don't like zombie movies because they celebrate the dead. I don't like them much because I think they accurately portray humanity after the fall into sin. I don't like them because I'd rather celebrate life, which is why Christians gather on October 31st to celebrate All Saint's Day. At that time we grieve, mourn, remember and rejoice over those who have died because we know they're alive. Death hasn't won. We are raised to new life in Christ.

Something Paul understands more than any other apostle. Paul was the dead man walking for so many years of his life. He actively persecuted the church. He hated Christianity with a passion. He tried to rid the Roman world of them. So how could someone so filled of hatred become Christianity's foremost evangelist? He was brought from death to life. Christ appeared to him not because he was a good person but because of his grace and mercy. Paul then went on to travel throughout the Roman world causing an uproar wherever he went. In Ephesus, their claim to fame was the Temple of Artemis the goddess of the Ephesians. It was one of the Seven Wonders of the World. The silversmiths made a significant amount of money making idols. But as people were being brought to life to see idols as dead objects created by human hands, unable to save. A silversmith Demetrius started a riot, drove the apostle

out of Ephesus, and did their best to squash this new religious movement. Paul doesn't want them to return to their former way of life. So he reminds them who they were and how far they've come.

*"You were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you previously lived according to the ways of the world..."* This passage always reminds me of the Princess Bride where Miracle Max says, "There's a big difference between mostly dead and all dead." Some would have us believe that there are different types of dead, mostly dead or dead dead. Many commentators want to soften the blow and make Paul say, "We weren't really that bad. We were only mostly dead. There was some spark of good in us. We're still capable of making a decision for Christ." If only that were true we'd have something to boast about. But this "dead" or "brain dead" because we were the walking dead wasn't merely a flesh wound.

So why soften the blow? Old Adam, our sinful nature wants to take credit for everything when it's responsible only for the problems we bring upon ourselves. Our sinful nature wants to believe that there is something that I've done. Something that I know. Something better or unique about me that led to my salvation. So the sinful nature tries to help be it something as small as "faith" and believing. Faith is not something I do; it is a gift from God. Faith isn't something I must do to accept God's grace. Faith simply receives the gift.

And Paul says, *"You were dead in your trespasses and sins."* Like a corpse we could do nothing to save ourselves. But there was something we were doing, "Trespasses and sins." Trespasses speak to property owners. When people walk over you property or cut across the corner around a neighbor's big fancy gate – you get a little upset about it. How much more God? God gives us the rules as to how this world works. He tells us this is how you should live. Instead of giving thanks that he has given us this world, field and harvest, and more than we can imagine, we turn against him. We walk all over him, his world, his grace, his mercy and love. Paul says elsewhere. *"The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God, it doesn't submit to God's law nor can it do so,"* (Romans 8:7).

That's what dead people do. They assume the worst, that God is not good, which is the very nature of God – that he is good. Our sinful nature assumes that he caused all of the problems in the world. That this is his fault and if evolution were true and death is a good thing and to be celebrated, because progress – and then God owes us.

But death was and remains a punishment for sin. God said, "You will die." and ever since we have been the walking dead. We were dead and we were walking in death. How? Paul expounds using the devil, the world, and our sinful nature as guides that led us astray. We've brainlessly followed after the ways of this world. We've followed the devil as he entices and tempts with something better. But more often than not we've been led astray by our own heart. We walked in it. It was our way of live. We were and in many way still struggle to see our condition. Some people don't even realize sin is sin. So many still don't realize that they're dead. We don't even realize how much we've done against God. We don't even realize our condition.

But our condition is not hopeless. We are not destined to wander like zombies through this world. Verse 4 comes along, *But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love, that he had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace!* Everything was bleak and without hope, we were on our own but that all changed. Everything changes when God acts. This is God's Work alone. Paul emphasizes this is God's Work. You can already see the mess made when humanity starts working. But here God works alone.

God *made us alive together with Christ.* Paul seems to be making up his own word. It only occurs twice in the NT and I didn't find any extra-biblical sources for this word. He takes three Greek word, *syn*, *zw*, *poiew*, and smashes them together. *συνεζωποίησεν* – that means to make alive together with. That's one word in Greek and yet it works out to four in English. It's a unique word occurring only one other time in Paul's letter to the Colossians 2:13. The surrounding context tells us how we have been made alive with Christ.

<sup>11</sup> *You were also circumcised in him with a circumcision not done with hands, by putting off the body of flesh, in the circumcision of Christ,* <sup>12</sup> *when you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.* <sup>13</sup> *And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive with him and forgave us all our trespasses.* <sup>14</sup> *He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross.* <sup>15</sup> *He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly; he triumphed over them in him.*<sup>[5]</sup>

When were you made alive with Christ? When were you buried together with Christ? At your baptism. The one place where you have no say, because it's not a work you do for God. It's God's work for you. It's done to you by another person. No one baptizes him or herself. God places his name on you. Infant baptism most clearly demonstrates God's grace because that child can't do anything. It can't even bring himself to the font. They must be carried. And yet, God is at work bringing life to those born in death, enslaved to sin.

Why would God even consider doing something like that? Paul calls it the foolishness of God. He does so because he is "*rich in mery*," and so that he might "*display the riches of his grace*." God is good. And at the heart and center of this chiasm we find the most important part. *You are saved by grace!* What is grace? I've never heard someone say of a zombie, "Isn't he gracefull!" Nothing like that is ever said. You'll hear it every now and then during the winter Olympics when an ice skater is doing their thing, "Isn't she graceful." God's grace is most clearly seen at the cross. There in all of his glory he saves sinners. Grace is God's undeserved love. Some say it as God's Riches At Christ's Expense.

God doesn't owe us anything but he gave us everything. He sent his Son to save his lost and dead creatures. He didn't give us grace because we are worthy, or because he owed us something but because he is good.

He has given us positions of honor and that is where we are going. There is a goal in sight. We will be with him forever. And this is all his work from beginning to end. We are made alive. Our eyes have been opened and we no longer live for our *fleshy desires* but live with him who made us. We have a new desire, a new will, new thoughts, and new works. This too is God's work. *We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has prepared ahead of time for us to do.*" His work makes us something new, a new creation, a new person.

And good works follow. They aren't the purpose of salvation but they are the result of it. And Christians do good works even if we appear brain dead at times.

We are no longer the walking dead. Though we may die we will live. I doubt any zombie movies will be made about it and it's probably best because there are already too many. Jesus however brings life to the dead and hope to the hopeless. We have no reason to boast but every reason to give thanks. Amen.