

We have stated that our mission statement is...

### Investing In Eternity

We use the acronym **A-C-T-S** which stands for the words:

- **A**cquire
- **C**ontinue
- **T**ake
- **S**hare

The second word we use to explain our mission statement is **C**ontinue. We are to invest in eternity beyond acquiring our personal salvation through the blood of Christ. We are to **C**ontinue to invest in eternity during our whole lifetime. We need to always be moving forward, it is called spiritual growth. Our text is found in **Ephesians 2:10**. Keeping to our commitment to understanding verses of Scripture in their context we will start reading in verse one.

#### **Ephesians 2:1-10 (NASB)** *Made Alive in Christ*

[1] And you were dead in your **trespasses** and **sins**, [2] in which you formerly walked according to the **course** of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. (In other words, the power of the air is the spirit that works in those who are disobedient to God.) [3] Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

In these first three verses Paul talks about the former life of the Christians he is writing to. He begins by clarifying the kind relationships that people have in their old life. The life they had before they were converted. The life before one enters into relationship with God. He uses several terms in these three verses and they are important for us to understand.

- He says, you were dead in your **trespasses**
  - **3900.** *Par-aptoma*; noun from *par-apis-to* (3895), to fall by the wayside. Fault, lapse, error, mistake, wrongdoing. Sometimes used in profane Gr. when it is intended to designate a sin not necessarily heinous in nature. Although it represents errors or faults of weakness, it does not necessarily fail to imply culpability (or responsibility). **CWS-NT**

The word is used in the New Testament to indicate wrongdoing in a general way. It can indicate willful rebellion or errors and mistakes because of human weaknesses or poor judgment.

But Paul wants to be clear so He also uses the word **SINS**.
  - **266.** *Ha-mar-tia*; noun from *har-mar-tano* (264), to sin. Sin, missing the true end and scope of our lives, which is God. An offense in relation to God with emphasis on guilt. **CWS-NT**

This word is the word use in **Mt. 1:21** "She will bear a Son; and you will call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their **sins**." What Matthew was trying to get across is that this Child, Jesus, will enable people to live out the true end and scope for their lives, which is God. Remember last week; "God is our place". This is what Paul's letter to the Ephesian Church is all about. Christ makes us alive **so we**
- You were dead in your **sins**

can live out the true end and scope of our lives. This is not done on our own but **IN CHRIST**.

God is our **CRAFTSMAN**. In fact He is the Master Craftsman who works with Christians who are willing to allow Him to mold and shape their daily lives. When these surrendered Christians miss the mark, they go immediately to the Master Craftsman to seek reshaping in this particular area in their lives that they are having trouble with.

- Paul says, you walked according to the **course** of this world
  - **165. *ai-on***; noun. Age, referring to an age or time in contrast to *kosmos* (2889, the order of the universe, the heavens, and the earth), *age here is referring to people or space. Denotes duration or continuance of time, but with great variety.* **CWS-NT**

The words **culture** or **generation** help us to understand this word. *dgb* Paul helps us to further understand this word when he uses it in **Ro 12:2** "[1] Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. [2] And do not be conformed to this **world**, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

Paul wants us to understand that conformity to our culture or generation is to be a thing of the past whenever that conformity stands in opposition to our transformation to the image of Christ.
- There are several other phrases Paul uses in these three verses as he talks about the former life of the Christian.
  - You walked according to the prince of the power of the air in the spirit of disobedience
  - You lived in the lusts of the flesh
  - You indulged in the desires of the flesh
  - You indulged in the desires of the mind
  - You were by nature, children of wrath

Then Paul makes a shift in his letter. He goes from talking about the former life to a discussion about the life changed by God. Keep in mind that in this shift Paul puts a great emphasis on this new life being brought about by being **IN CHRIST**. He is clear that this is not something done in a person's own strength and power so over and over he reminds them of this by using phrases like; **IN CHRIST JESUS** and **WITH HIM**. Verse 4...

[4] But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which **He loved us**, [5] **even when we were dead in our transgressions** (First Paul wants us to understand God's actions toward us when we were yet in our former life of sin – they are the actions of Agape Love.), **made us alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved), (Grace is understood in the Agape love of God. We like to simply say that Agape Love is unconditional love but the meaning of Agape love is much deeper and more complicated than that simple statement leads us to believe.)

**Agape** g25 love (Relational Holiness **RH** page 79 *Agape love is "acting to promote well-being when responding to actions that cause ill-being". For example: love your enemies, or God loved us while we were yet sinners as Eph. 2:4 indicates to us.) "To love fellow humans means to see or discern what their need is and to meet that need, not according to the object's concept of need, but that of the one who loves. It is in this concept that the saying of Christ in Mt 5:44, "love your enemies," can be understood. For a believer, his enemies are his enemies because they are not believers. (Their actions of sin and hate are because of sin in their lives which can only be*

*taken care of by believing in Christ to the point of repentance in their personal life. dgb)* What he sees is their need of faith and he must do everything that he can to meet that need in their lives in whatever manner. " **CWS-NT**

[4] But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which **He loved us, [5] even when we were dead in our transgressions**, made us alive together **with Christ** (by grace you have been saved), [6] and raised us up **with Him**, and seated us **with Him** in the heavenly places **in Christ Jesus**, [7] so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us **in Christ Jesus**. [8] For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; [9] not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. [10] For we are **His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand** so that we would walk in them. (God is our Craftsman. He not only creates physical life for each human being, He also creates our spiritual life.)

That verse; verse 10 is so important, and yet it is usually left out of the context of this passage, especially when this passage is quoted to people with an emphasis on how a life is changed by Christ in our initial salvation. We like to quote verse 9 to emphasize that our salvation is not dependant on our works, and certainly it is not. Our salvation is only dependant on our faith in, and acceptance of, the blood of Christ. But to truly accept that blood we must repent which means that we turn from sin toward Christ. Our life is forever changed; not just in the sense that we now have eternal life, but in the sense that we live a different life after coming to Christ. It is this different life that Paul explains in verse 10. So, as a result of God's grace...

- **"We are His workmanship." (God is our Craftsman.)**
  - He takes all the responsibility to save us. He does all the work. He provides all the payment for the debt we owe. He even speaks to us because we will not come to Him on our own because of our sinfulness.
  - He also works with us for the rest of our lifetime to bring us to Christian maturity. He crafts us to become Christ-like.
- **"We are created in Christ Jesus for good works."** Notice it does not say perfect performance. This is what verse 9 is all about. But verse 9 does not intend to even remotely infer that we have no responsibility to live differently in Christ. Being created in Christ Jesus means that when we were created by God, we were created with a purpose. God created us, both to do good works and to perform a specific function in His Body, the Church.
- **"God prepared these good works in advance."** This being created to do good works is not some new radical idea with Paul. This doing of good works was a well established teaching in the worship of God the Creator by the Jewish nation of Israel. It was God's intention for mankind from the very beginning of creation with Adam and Eve. Look at...  
**[Eccl. 3:11-14] [11] He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end. [12] I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one's lifetime; [13] moreover, that every man who eats and drinks sees good in all his labor—it is the gift of God. [14] I know that everything God does will remain forever; there is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take from it, for God has so worked that men should fear Him.**
- God expects us to walk in these good works. Jesus summed up what was meant by good works. He talked about the law and commandments that were of utmost importance. Again, not something new, this was a well established teaching in the worship of God by Israel. In other words, the keeping of the law and commandments, when properly understood, has always been God's will for all of mankind, in all cultures, and in all ages. A

lawyer has just asked Jesus the question, "What is the greatest commandment?"

[Mt 22:37-40] [37] And He said to him, " 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' (Those words are found in Dt 6:5, 10:12, 30:6.) [38] "This is the great and **foremost commandment**. [39] "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' (These words are found in Lev 19:18) [40] "On these two commandments **depend** the whole Law and the Prophets." (The NIV uses the word *hang* instead of *depend* here.)

This command of good works is not given to us in a vague or unclear way. Throughout the Scriptures we are shown the principles and ideas that help us to understand what good works we are created to do. Paul made it clear in his letter to the Galatians, without setting up a list of rules and regulations to follow. He knew that rules and regulations only lead to legalism and judgment of others. So, to the Galatians church Paul tells them about the fruit of the Spirit which they can look at in their own personal lives to gauge where they are in their personal walk with God in Christ. Looking at these things in your personal life will help you to gauge where you are and where the Holy Spirit wants to take you in your spiritual life. Listen to Paul's words...

[Gal. 5:22-23a] [22] ...the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23a] gentleness, self-control;**...

These passages clearly show us that God's plan of Salvation is not a one-time crisis experience where we receive forgiveness and then go on living as we always have. Paul wants us to understand that the crisis moment of Salvation is only a doorway to a lifetime relationship with God that moves us constantly forward in growth and maturity in that relationship with God.

**C**ontinue to invest (Pursue spiritual growth through a personal relationship with God.)

## **SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS ACCOMPLISHED IN THESE THREE THINGS:**

1. The first action for Spiritual Growth is **Improvement of self (by being in relationship with God, and this relationship includes several things...)**
  - Improvement of self includes – **Prayer** (communication with God. Not some memorized prayer that I repeat so I can check the boxes of on my spiritual to-do list every day.)
  - Improvement of self includes – **Studying the Word of God** (We need to get the Word into your head; listen to it at the very least. How much do we spend in the resources of time and money that God has given us on the media we pour into our head every day? Why not invest in recordings of the Word of God and set a time to listen to His Word each day? The entire Bible for under \$30.00 in mp3 format.)
  - Improvement of self includes – **Discovering our talents** (Participate in the strengths finder course, it will help you discover the talents God created in you for use in His Kingdom. You can do that right now if you are 16 or older. Take a blue card, put your name on it, and write something close to these words on the card – "I want to know my God given talents." Then give it to me or one of the staff members today.)
  - Improvement of self includes – **Developing our talents into strengths** (Participate in strengths coaching, it will help you to develop your God given talents for use in your personal life and in the Kingdom of God. This is part of discovering your talents.)
  - Improvement of self includes – **Deploying our strengths** (Participate in service to the King of kings.)
2. The second action for Spiritual Growth is **Involvement in a local congregation (Having one foot in the church)**

- One foot in the church by – **Attendance** (being part of a family)
  - One foot in the church by – **Participation** (deploying our strengths)
  - One foot in the church by – **Stewardship** (use of all the resources God has given you)
3. The third action for Spiritual Growth is **Involvement in the community (Having one foot in the world)**
- One foot in the world by – **Volunteer in the community** (How can God show the world that He loves them except through His Body the Church? This is the way God chooses to save the world.)
  - One foot in the world by – **Relationships and friendships with those in the world** (that they might see the love of Christ in our lives and be drawn by the Holy Spirit to participate in an intimate relationship with Christ themselves.)

Usually early in this process of Spiritual Growth the Holy Spirit will bring us to a point of complete surrender to the Love of Jesus Christ. The need of the world is Christ. The purpose for the creation of every human being is to be loved by God, and to love God. In loving God we fulfill our purpose in life and we show others their need for the Love of God in their personal lives. Will you Continue to invest (Will you pursue spiritual growth through a personal relationship with God.)? You see the bottom line of Spiritual growth is to have more of the Love of God in all areas of my personal life so that this love spills out into the world around me. That is what you and I are created for. If we are not in pursuit of this Love we are headed in the wrong direction.

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**CWS-NT** - Complete Word Study of the New Testament.

**CWS-OT** - Complete Word Study of the Old Testament.

- Both the **CWS-NT** and the **CWS-OT** are parts of the AMG Complete Word Study Dictionary - Based on the lexicon of Edward Robinson (as revised by Alexander Negrin and John Duncan), with constant reference to and citations from the works of John Parkhurst and Hermann Cremer.