**Dying to Self to Reach Your God-Given Purpose**

**Scripture Reading:** Ephesians 2:1-10 and Romans 6:1-7

**Theme:** To live a Christian life is to die to yourself so that you can achieve your God-given purpose.

**Introduction**

Good morning, brothers and sisters.

As human beings, we are all born with a deep-seated search for meaning, for a purpose. We chase dreams, build careers, start families, and try to make our mark. But amidst all these pursuits, a nagging question often remains: What is the *ultimate* purpose of my existence? What was *I* truly created for? And more sobering: What if I miss that purpose entirely?

Today, in Ephesians 2, Paul takes us on a journey – a disturbing, but ultimately liberating, journey. He begins with the harsh reality of who we were without God, and then he lifts the veil to show us the immeasurable richness of God's love and grace. Today, we look at the core of Christian life: **To live a Christian life is to die to yourself so that you can achieve your God-given purpose.**

Please open your Bibles with me to Ephesians 2:1-10, and we will also read Romans 6:1-7.

**God's Purpose**

God also has a purpose for His creation. Do you remember what it is?

* He wants to unite everything in heaven and on earth under one Head, namely Jesus Christ.
* He wants to do this so that He can redeem humanity from their sin and so that they can honor Him as the Almighty.

The first chapter of Ephesians teaches us that the Father appointed His Son as the head of the church.

* He declares us to be His body.

And now, Paul continues in chapter 2 to drive the nail even deeper. He wants believers to realize what predicament God saved them from and how He, out of love, turned their situation around.

**What are we without God?**

We are dead.

Paul begins by telling the believers from the Gentile world that they were spiritually dead. In Greek, the word "dead" can also mean that something is useless or worthless.

In the way they lived, these people were therefore not useful to God. Why not? Paul answers, "because of your transgressions and sins."

"Transgressions" means that someone does not stay on course but crosses the boundaries set for him or her—in other words, getting off the path of sin. The Greek word for "sin" is related to someone shooting with a bow and arrow but missing the target.

Someone who sins misses the target; in other words, they miss the purpose for which God created them.

A person who lives in a way that misses God's purpose for their life achieves someone else's goal.

* Yes, according to verse 2, he is led by the prince of the power of the air—Satan.

Paul makes a very important point here. There are many people who, by their nature, do good things for others. They don't necessarily live badly, and you would have to go to great lengths to say something bad about them. Just think of the billions of dollars that Muslims send for disasters.

However, the problem is that these good works are of no value to God, because such a person misses His purpose. He crosses the boundaries that God sets, namely that there is only one God. Therefore, Paul states very clearly that Satan works in everyone who is not obedient to God.

Although Paul has been talking about "you" until now, he includes himself and all Jews in verse 3.

* He says: "among whom we all once lived."

Even though the Jews are the people God chose to show the world how great He is, they, too, allowed themselves to be misled by Satan. But by speaking of "we," Paul identifies himself and his countrymen with the believers from the Gentile peoples.

One is no better than the other; both are spiritually dead and useless on their own.

In the rest of verse 3, he then gives the characteristics of a dead and useless life:

* Sinful or natural desires.
* Led by natural lusts.
* Their own natural thoughts.

Who is the center of such a life? No one but the human being himself.

And the result: "we were by nature deserving of wrath, just as the others."

"Wrath" here does not mean a one-time slap on the wrist; no, Paul means the eternal, tormenting anger of God for all eternity.

It comes naturally for us to think of all those people who have missed God's purpose for their lives. We can see their faces before us, can't we?

Forget about others, brother and sister. See yourself in that position, someone who was actually destined to burn in hell with all the others who do not believe in God.

Do we really realize the precarious position we would be in without God? Do we realize that we deserve to be dead?

Without God in our lives, we are useless—dead!

**What are the characteristics of God?**

In verse 4, we find the turning point of the passage.

* "BUT God is rich in mercy and loved us with a great love."

We have just heard that we all deserve to be dead, and yet... Paul helps us to stand in awe before our God.

It does not say, "but if you go to church on Sundays, if you believe in love, if you do your best to be good people, then God will be rich in mercy and love you with a great love."

No, God's love is abundant; it far surpasses our efforts.

It is unearned love, and that is why verse 5 exclaims, "By grace you have been saved."

What does God do out of this abundant love?

* He makes us alive with Christ.

Verse 6: "and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

"With Him!" Why is that so special?

Listen to Ephesians 1:22: "And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church."

Children of God, through Jesus, also have that position, to be lifted above all things.

* In other words, we now already share in the heavenly glory.

Do you hear how God changes the identity of His children from useless and dead to alive and useful?

Verse 7 teaches us why God is so gracious to us: so that people in the future would also know how great His grace is in Christ Jesus.

What is interesting about the word "love" as it is used here in verse 5 is that it is the same word that believers used when they celebrated Communion.

* They called it a love feast.

As congregations, we also recently had the wonderful privilege of partaking in such a love feast. It is God's love feast through which He also reminds us in the future of His abundant love and grace that He has shown us through His Son.

In verse 8, Paul confirms: "For by grace you have been saved," and then he adds, "through faith."

Faith is the confirmation of God's abundant love and grace; it is how His children respond to it.

But note how much emphasis Paul places in verses 8 and 9 on the fact that faith is a free gift from God.

* He gives it to those He loves, and it cannot be earned in any way.

Any thought that might occur to me that I, as a "churchgoer," am somehow better and more useful than someone else is misplaced; we are no better.

* The only difference is that God makes us aware of His infinite love, and therefore we boast in Him and have a new identity in Him.

**Who are we in God?**

Verse 10: "For we are his workmanship."

Think with me now—who did God make us?

* Who did He make you?

Let's listen to the rest of verse 10: "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

We are now children who are dedicated to God.

* This means we belong to Him—we must show Him that we are grateful.

How do I do this? By reaching the purpose for which God created me.

* The way I live, the enthusiasm with which I tackle every challenge, my reaction to setbacks, how I return to my created identity when I stray—all of this must show that God is achieving His purpose with me.

Are you perhaps unsure whether you have reached God's purpose for your life and whether you will be able to reach it in the future?

Remember that God's intention from the beginning was to gather heaven and earth under Christ. The question you should therefore ask yourself is whether everything you do shows that you are moving closer to Jesus, your head.

If you can know that in your every action you are doing the good works for which God destined you as His child, then you can know that you are an arrow in God's hand that is hitting the target.

* How He feels about you should be enough for you.

**Conclusion**

Brothers and sisters, today we have seen how deep our fall was without God – spiritually dead, lost, targets missed. But we have also experienced the incomprehensible, abundant love and mercy of our God, who, out of pure grace and through faith, made us alive with Christ. He created our new identity; He destined us for good works!

The theme of our sermon was: **To live a Christian life is to die to yourself so that you can achieve your God-given purpose.** This dying to self is not a one-time event, but a daily surrender. It is the choice to stop trying to define and chase our own life's purpose, and instead allow God's Spirit to guide us to do the deeds He has already prepared for us.

May this truth touch us deeply in our hearts today: **You are not here by accident. God has a unique, divine purpose for *your* life.** And even when we feel crooked or skewed, when we think we are missing the target, it is precisely God's grace that straightens us. He uses you, exactly as you are, in His perfect plan.

So let us no longer live as if we are spiritually dead. Let us daily, with joy and gratitude, choose to live in Christ, pursue His plans, and glorify His Name in all that we do. For in Christ, the Father will undoubtedly achieve His purpose with each one of us.

Amen.