

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for July 15, 2018

Alive With Christ
Ephesians 2:4-7

I. God's character (2:4)

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,

- Considering the context of Ephesians 2, we rejoice at this beautiful transition
 - Ephesians 2:1-3 focused upon the depravity of mankind in detail
 - First, Paul reminded us that all men are following the course of the world
 - Second, Paul added that all men are under the spell of the devil following his leadership in the worldly system
 - Third, Paul clarified that mankind's brainwashing from the world and Satan has led them to fulfilling the desires and cravings of their flesh
 - Simply put, Paul stated the fact that all men are spiritually dead in their sins and trespasses
 - It is a depressing and dark situation that summarizes the bad news for mankind
- However, verse 4 brings the bursting forth of light and hope for mankind
 - In two words, Paul introduces the entire reason man can have any hope in their depraved condition
 - Paul states the two words, "But God"
 - These two words move our attention away from our painfully hopeless situation toward the One who has every means and ability to change our condition
 - While Paul will go on to specify how God acts on our behalf, he first describes the basis for God acting in the first place
 - That is, God acts on the basis of His character, not our worth, value or attempts at trying to live a good life
- Here in verse 4, Paul highlights two aspects of God's character that moved Him to act on our behalf
- First, Paul states that God is "rich in mercy"
 - At its very core, mercy has to do with pity or compassion upon someone due to their misfortune or bad position
 - I'm sure we have all witnessed various displays of mercy toward those less fortunate in life
 - People extend mercy toward the homeless, the parentless, the jobless, the health-less, everyday
 - We see people in these situations and we are moved with pity and compassion as we consider their situation

- In our case, it was not a matter of unfortunate circumstances that led to us being dead in our sins
 - God knew that we were dead in our sins and we wanted it that way!
 - We were not innocent and helpless in our sinful position
 - We were wretched enemies opposed to God and deserving His wrath (2:3 - “by nature children of wrath”)
 - We were not the victims of some misfortune, we were set upon pursuing our sin in rebellion against Him
 - This is why Paul can describe God as “being rich in mercy”
 - This is a profound level of mercy that God has exercised toward us who are now in Christ
- Second, Paul describes God as possessing “great love”
 - Specifically, Paul is saying that God’s rich mercy stems from His great love
 - At its core, the good news is birthed from the love of God
 - While God’s righteous wrath was fairly and necessarily stored up for us, God’s love was also in operation
 - God acted to satisfy both His righteous wrath against the sins of mankind while also displaying His great love toward mankind in the cross of Jesus Christ
 - The cross represents the convergence of both of these attributes of God
 - As we know from Mark’s gospel, the cross was a profound moment
 - On the one hand, there were clear signs of God’s judgment
 - Darkness came upon the land when Jesus was upon the cross
 - Jesus cried out “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”
 - Jesus was abandoned and punished by His Father who considered His Son cursed as He hung upon that tree
 - God’s wrath was poured out upon the cross because Jesus was punished for carrying the sins of mankind upon Himself
 - On the other hand, it is impossible for us to miss the love displayed upon the cross
 - Jesus willingly went to suffer such pain and wrath upon the cross
 - Jesus asked His Father to forgive those who were torturing and mocking Him
 - Most notably, Jesus cried out “It is finished” when He gave up His Spirit and died
 - Jesus finished the work of taking on the punishment for sin in the place of His bride—the Church
 - Jesus displayed the epitome of love in laying down His life for us
 - There can be no question that this is “great love”

- This great love was demonstrated in the way that God loved us enemies in the work of His Son, Jesus Christ, when He went to the cross

II. Our co-resurrection (2:5)

5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

- Paul explains the first major way that God’s character led Him to act for our benefit
- Namely, Paul states that God “made us alive together with Christ”
- First, Paul reminds us of our condition before He made us alive
 - Thus, it is no surprise that Paul reminds us of our spiritual death before God acted
 - In order for us to appreciate the magnitude of our spiritual resurrection, Paul reminds us of our spiritual death as he articulated in verses 1-3
 - This was the state of every believer before God intervened in his or her life
- Paul states this intervention detailing that God “made us alive together with Christ”
 - Since we were dead in our sin, we needed someone to act upon us in order for anything to change in our situation
 - Paul stated this truth in a similar fashion in Colossians 2:13 “And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,”
 - Notice also that Paul does not just state that we were “made alive”
 - Paul adds that we were “made alive *together with Christ*”
 - This fits with Paul’s teaching thus far in Ephesians 1
 - When Paul described the glorious truths of our salvation and the spiritual blessings that we possess, he repeatedly stated that these blessings were possible in Christ or in Him
 - The key to our salvation is our association or union with Christ
 - Christ, our Savior, is the founder and author of our faith and we follow after Him
 - As He died physically, so we too were dead spiritually
 - As He raised to new life physically, so we too have been made alive spiritually
 - We have been co-resurrected with Christ
 - In this sense we have been saved because we are with Christ
 - We gain access to God because we are with Christ
 - We are accepted by God because we are with Christ
 - Our salvation is contingent upon our identification with Christ
 - This is why we proclaim that salvation is found in no other name except the name of Jesus Christ
- Finally, Paul states that our spiritual resurrection was based upon the grace of God

- It's as if Paul is doing everything he can for us to see our salvation as God's work and not ours
- First, at the beginning of verse 5, he reminded us that we were spiritually dead
- Second, he described our salvation as being made alive with Christ, which has nothing to do with us in terms of its wording
 - After all, it is hard for someone to make themselves come alive
- Third, he now adds that it is by grace that we have been saved
- According to Paul, salvation is a gift from God that we did not earn or deserve
 - He will elaborate on this very concept in verses 8-9
- However, at this point, it is worth noting that God has graciously given us that which we did not deserve—life in Christ
- It is also worth noting that we have “been saved”
 - We did not save ourselves or perform this action independent of anyone
 - Instead, we were the passive party receiving the action of being saved
- Again, what can this all mean except that God did the work of raising us from death to life based upon the work of Christ and flowing from His grace toward us?

III. Our co-exaltation (2:6)

6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

- The good news does not stop with our co-resurrection with Christ
- The good news includes our co-exaltation with Christ
- Paul states that we have been raised up and seated with Christ in the heavenly places
- This is a continuation of the benefits that we have received as believers based upon our association and union with Christ
 - Our union with Christ meant that we received a spiritual resurrection corresponding with His physical resurrection
 - Additionally, our union with Christ means that God views us as exalted even now with Christ in the heavenly places
 - Scripture describes this as a present reality that we experience while we still await a final and future realization of our salvation
 - Philippians 3:20-21 “But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.”
 - Colossians 3:1-4 “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you

have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

- “We are exalted with Christ spiritually, and while eternal life is a present possession we will not enter eternity until we die. Paul has said that we are citizens of heaven right now, in expectation of the full realization of that status later on (Phil 3:20–21), and the sister passage in Colossians 3:1–2 shows that though we live on earth we can seek and think ‘the things above’ right now. Our final glory has already begun, but is not yet fully realized.”¹

IV. God’s credit (2:7)

7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

- After summarizing the content of the good news that we have experienced due to our association and union with Christ, Paul gives the purpose for such actions on God’s part
- The purpose is signaled in the words “so that” which begin verse 7
- Paul’s point in verse 7 is that God’s rich mercy and great love toward us in Christ is all for the purpose of Him receiving glory for all the time that is to come
- In the coming ages, God will display His immeasurable riches of grace
- We will all be in heaven as trophies of God’s grace that He has earned through His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus
 - “Thus all of us who have been raised out of death to life in Christ are a show-and-tell to all around of God’s gracious mercy.”²
- Revelation 7:9-10 “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’”

¹ Grant R. Osborne, *Ephesians: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 53.

² Grant R. Osborne, *Ephesians: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 54.