

Ephesians 2-4-7
From death to life!

Books- union with Christ and chosen by God...

Prayer for illumination: please join me in prayer...

Sermon introduction:

There has been a lot of bad news recently.... Hasn't there????

Covid-19

Schools closed

Businesses closed

Churches closed

Unemployment was the highest it has been in decades...

People have died.

This really hit home for me when I learned that one of my high school friends died of coronavirus.

Police brutality

Then there was the bad news of George Floyd's death, followed by rioting, looting, and mayhem in the streets.

Supreme court decisions

Last week's supreme court decision was a major blow to religious liberty in America.

Debt/deficit...

Our government owes 23 trillion dollars to its lenders...

No one likes bad news...

Can the news get any worse??? Yes, this brings us to last week's text!

That bad news from last week's text is the underlying cause for all the bad news from the last three months. Let me read it again...

Ephesians 2:1-3 (ESV) — **1** And you were dead in the trespasses and sins **2** in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— **3** among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

We were dead

We were enslaved to the flesh, the world, and the devil...

We were objects of God's wrath.

It does not get much worse than this... does it??? But the story does not end in verse 3. There is incredibly good news in verses 4-7.

Ephesians 2:4-7 (ESV) — **4** But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, **5** even when we were dead in our trespasses, 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 coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

The point of these four verses is clear! When we were spiritually dead, God made us alive!!! This was a miracle.

To help us understand this, I want to look at three things-

God's motive for making us alive.

God's means for making us alive.

God's purpose for making us alive.

First, God's motive for making us alive

What motivated God to make us alive???

God was motivated by mercy.

Ephesians 2:4 (ESV) — 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,

These first two words are amazing!!!

But God, But God, But God....

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote, "These two words, in and of themselves, in a sense contain the whole of the gospel."

How??? In light of verses 1-3 God was under no obligation to spare us. We sinned against his commands, while we followed the world, the flesh, and the devil. God owed us nothing, but justice. Until we understand this reality, we will never be amazed by grace.

Yet Paul writes, "But God!!!!" But God did not do, what he could have done, rather what he should have done! Instead, God made us alive. Why? He is rich in mercy.

God's mercy is the reason for the "But God" of verse 4a.

Which raises the question, what is mercy? Mercy is the alleviation of suffering.

Illustration: Not too long ago, my family went to a Mariner's game in downtown Seattle. We had to walk several blocks from our car to the stadium. Along the way, we saw lots of homeless people living in filth and squalor. They were suffering. A merciful person does not just feel bad, they act. They work to alleviate suffering. They provide food, water, counseling, and drug rehab. When mercy sees someone suffering, they are moved to alleviate suffering.

Our text not only says that God is merciful, it says that he is rich in mercy, rich is the key word. He is the Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos, or Warren Buffet of mercy. He gives boat loads of mercy.

God was motivated by mercy. In addition...

God was motivated by love.

Ephesians 2:4 (ESV) — 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,

What is love? When we say that we love someone, we usually mean that we have feelings for someone. God's love is more than a feeling, God's love acts.

Motivated by love, God acted by sending his only son to earth to suffer, die, and rise from the dead to bring life to dead sinners.

What makes God's love so amazing is that it is love for rebels. Ephesians 2:1-3 makes this very clear. God loved us when we broke his commands and scorned his kindness. This is what makes God's love so great.

Illustration:

Stop and think for a moment about those who have wronged you. Is there someone who has really hurt you, offended you, cheated you, or demeaned you? Maybe a boss, parent, sibling, neighbor, or friend? Can you think of their name? Can you see their face? Are you recalling the pain they caused you? Now imagine, agreeing to be tortured for the next three days to secure their eternal happiness. This is how God acted to love you....

Application:

If you are spiritually alive, it is because God, motivated by mercy and love acted!!!

This is how God has treated you. Have you thanked him recently?

By the way... We treat others the way we believe that God has treated us. If we believe that God has sown us mercy and love, we will show mercy and love to others. If we are having a hard time doing this, we need to refocus our attention on what God has done for us.

God, motivated by love and mercy, made us alive!

But what does this actually look like? This brings us to the next point.

First, God's motive for making us alive.

Second, God's means for making us alive

How did God make us alive? It was a two-step process...

Step one- He united us to Christ!

Ephesians 2:5-6 (ESV) — 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, 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,

The concept of union with Christ is referred to four times in verses 5-6. It is easy to miss...

God made alive with Christ (5b)

God raised us up with Christ (6a)

God seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (6b)

Whenever you see the phrases in Christ or with Christ Paul is alluding to the crucial concept of union with Christ. Paul refers to this concept 216 times in his letters. Unfortunately, most Christians have not given this much thought. This is tragic.

Here are what others have said about union with Christ.

This doctrine is so important that one commentator rightly called it “the heart of Paul’s religion.” (Boice, 59)

John Murray wrote, “Union with Christ is the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation.” (quoted by Boice, 59)

Arthur W. Pink is even more emphatic: “The subject of spiritual union is the most important, the most profound, and yet the most blessed of any that is set forth in sacred Scripture.” (Quoted by Boice, 59)

What is it that makes Christians unique?

It is...

Not simply that they worship Jesus...
Not simply that they believe certain things...
Not simply that they live a certain way...

What makes Christians unique is the fact that they are mystical united to Christ with an unbreakable bond.

According to the scriptures.....

We are chosen in Christ (Eph. 1:4)
We are redeemed in Christ (Eph. 1:7)
We are justified in him (Gal. 2:17)
We are sanctified in him (1 Cor. 1:30)
We persevere through union with Christ (John 10:27-28)
We will be raised in Christ (Col. 3:1)
We shall be glorified in Christ (Col. 3:4)

In light of this, it should not surprise us that we are also made alive in Christ. (Eph. 2:4-5)

Illustration:

Several years ago, my family had the privilege of going to Disney world and the surrounding theme parks in the middle of July. At this point, we only had three boys, ages 3,5,7. On this trip, my wife was roughly seven months pregnant with our fourth son Andrew.

This means that Andrew has been to Disney World. Although if you ask him about it, he will not be able to remember any of it. Why? He was in my wife’s stomach.

Nonetheless, everywhere his mom went, he went.

When his mother went in the pool, he went in the pool....

When his mother went to the crocodile farm....

When his mother went to the Epcot center...

When his mother went to Sea world...

When his mother ate food.....

When his mother went on the rides...

Why? Andrew was united to his mother, by an umbilical cord. Through this union, he experienced all the things that she experienced.

In a similar sense, although, you cannot recollect being with Christ throughout his life, death, and resurrection, you were with him since you were united to him. The unbreakable bond was the HS.

But, Dave, I was not even alive then. True, but God dwells outside of time and he knew all the people who would ever put their hope and confidence in Jesus. He somehow placed all Christians in Christ.

This means, that all that Christ experienced, you experienced.

Union with Christ was the first step in making us alive. There is another step.

How did God make us alive?

Step one- He united us with Christ.

Step two- He raised us with Christ.

Ephesians 2:5 (ESV) — 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

Because of our union with Christ, we were raised with Christ.

Verse 5 says, that we were “made alive together with Christ.” This phrase is a reference to Christ’s resurrection. How do we know? Because verse 6 refers to his ascension and session. More on that in a moment.

Before conversion, we were spiritually dead. Paul reminds us once again of this fact in verse 5a.

Yet, when Christ rose from the grave, because of union with Christ, our “new self” rose spiritually with him.

Paul does not mention the old self here, but in Romans 6, he makes it clear that our old self died with Christ, when Christ died on the cross. Then our “new self” rose to new life with Christ.

Romans 6:3–5 (ESV) — 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

We read something very similar in Colossians 2.

Colossians 2:12–13 (ESV) — 12 having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. 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,

Somehow, mysteriously, our regeneration is the result of Christ's resurrection. Said another way, our new spiritual birth is rooted in Christ's resurrection. All of this is made possible through our union with Christ. When he rose from the grave, we rose to new life with him.

This is how Christ made us alive.

If you don't fully comprehend this, that is ok, I don't think anyone does.

Here is the key takeaway, through our union with Christ we were made alive spiritually, when we rose from the grave in Christ.

Let me quickly say one more thing about our union with Christ!

Our union with Christ not only leads to our regeneration, it also leads to our ascension and session with Christ.

Ephesians 2:5–6 (ESV) — 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, 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,

The first part of 6a refers to Christ's ascension, not his resurrection. How do we know? Because verse 5 already mentioned his resurrection.

We are united to Christ in his life, death, resurrection, ascension, and current session.

When Christ lived, we lived with him.

When Christ died, we died with him.

When Christ rose from the grave, we rose with him.

When Christ ascended to the Father's side, we ascended with him.

When Christ was seated at the Father's right hand, we sat with him.

Ephesians 2:5-6 specifically says that we were made alive, then we were raised up, and then we were seated with Christ.

All three verbs are in the past tense. In other words, Paul says that if you are a Christian you have been made alive, you have been raised up, and you have been seated at the Father's right hand in Christ.

This is mysterious and amazing. What is the application???

Philippians 3:20–21 (ESV) — 20 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.

We belong to another world, since we are currently seated in another world, a much better world. In light of our culture's current problems, aren't you glad!!!

Colossians 3:1–2 (ESV) — 1 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.

We need to fix our gaze on eternal things... Why? Our citizenship is in heaven, where we are currently seated with Christ.

Back to the main point of Ephesians 2:5-6.

We were dead, but we have been made alive through our union with Christ in his resurrection!!!

Illustration:

How do we know if we have been made alive?

John Newton was born in 1725 in England.

He drank, smoke, and cursed like a sailor. In his own words, “he pursued every lust to the fullest.”

He was proud of the fact that he persuaded others to abandon Christianity...

Furthermore, he was intimately involved in the slave trade... I can't tell you about his other indiscretions because there are children present.

Even the pagan sailors were shocked by his immorality and blasphemy!

Eventually God ripped out his heart of stone and gave him a heart of flesh and he was converted to Christ. In other words, God made him alive.

Slowly over time, his desires changed!!!

He lost his desire to drink, smoke, and curse.

He lost his desire to buy slaves and transport them across the Atlantic.

He was given a desire to tell others about Jesus.

Why? God made him alive!

Application:

When someone has been made spiritually alive several dramatic things happen.

Their desires change, their attitudes change, their interests change, they want to forgive, they want to serve, and they want to read their Bibles, pray, and be with God's people.

When the miracle of regeneration happens-

Greedy people give their money away

Addicts quit their drugs

Spouses forgive each other

Thieves stop stealing

Gossips stop gossiping

Adulterers repent of their adultery

Racists repent of their racism

People change... they don't stop sinning because they have to, they stop sinning because they want to. They realize that Joy is found in relationship with God.

All humanity is divided into two camps. Those who are spiritually alive and those who are dead. There is no in between, which camp are you in this morning?

God has made us alive, but why? This brings us to the last point.

First, God's motive for making us alive.

Second, God's means for making us alive.

Third, God's purpose for making us alive

Why did God make us alive? To display his grace for all eternity!

Ephesians 2:7 (ESV) — 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

God's ultimate purpose in saving a people for himself was to display his grace for all to see for all eternity (this is what is meant by the phrase the coming ages).

In Ephesians 1:5-6 we learn that God predestined us for adoption "to the praise of his glorious grace."

In Ephesians 1:11-12 we learn that God gave us an inheritance "to the praise of his glorious grace."

He we learn that God made us alive "to show the immeasurable riches of his grace" for all eternity...

It is immeasurable, which means it can't be measured. Why? God is too gracious, there is too much of it...

Salvation is all of grace!!!

We were dead, and then God made us alive. This was all his doing. Salvation is a supernatural work of Grace.

Salvation is 100% God and 0% man. In other words, it is monergistic... which means that God alone acts. How involved was Lazarus in his resurrection? What did Lazarus contribute to the salvation equation? Nothing... he was dead. God, motivated by love, made him alive.

Spiritually speaking, you were in the same boat as Lazarus.

God did all of this to display his grace for all eternity!

This means that it is not about you.... nothing is about you; it is all about God. He made you alive by his grace to display the glory of his grace for all eternity!!!

Conclusion:

There has been lots of really bad news recently. Covid-19, racial violence, rioting, looting, our religious liberty is evaporating.

But the worst news of all is that outside of Christ all of humanity is dead, enslaved, and condemned.

After this incredibly dark news, Paul announces the best news we could ever hear.

Ephesians 2:4-7 (ESV) — 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, 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 coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

He made us alive, he has taken care of our greatest problem. If he has taken care of our greatest problem, we can trust him for all the other problems we face. Let's pray...