

## Ephesians 2:4-5

I'm not aware of a more dramatic contrast in all of Scripture than what we find in Ephesians 2:1-5. Verses 1-3 remind us that we are horrifically evil but verses 4-5 demonstrate that God is unfathomably kind. In commenting on this passage years ago, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said that verse 4 starts with the "most beautiful 'but' in all the Bible". The play on words is meant to be both humorous and illustrative of the infinitely beautiful truths that verses 4 and 5 unveil, particularly in light of the natural state of lost man's heart.

### 1. The motivation for salvation

- a. V. 4 is one of the most precious verses in all the Bible
- b. Notice how it begins, "But God..."
  - i. There is a great contrast that is denoted by this little conjunction
  - ii. Whereas we are wicked, depraved and impotent sinners, God is gracious, righteous and powerful
- c. The purpose of v. 1-3 only shine through when we contemplate the glorious truths of v. 4 and following
- d. Why would Paul belabor the condition of lost men? The answer is to demonstrate the glorious love and grace of our great Savior
  - i. This is not conjecture or inference, instead we read that God is "rich in mercy" and He is full of "great love"
- e. We must see that the ENTIRE motivation for our salvation is God's good and undeserved favor
  - i. The Gospel of Christ is not a message of salvation for those who are mildly sick, nor is it a "synergistic" message which teaches that we have a part to play in our salvation and God has a part
  - ii. The Gospel of Christ is a message about God's gracious love which reached into this fallen world in order to seek and to save the lost
- f. If you are a believer today, you are saved because of God's grace and power alone

### 2. The sequence of our salvation

- a. The order of v. 5 is important
- b. Paul says that God "made us alive"
  - i. Notice the only actor here
  - ii. There is no declaration of cooperation
    1. Paul does not mention any volitional act of man at all
    2. Instead, the initiator and life-giver in salvation
- c. The point is driven home when we read that Christ did this "while we were still dead"
  - i. You and I were unable to cooperate with God in salvation because we were spiritually deceased!

- ii. The life that now flows through us did not originate in us, instead it is God who gave us the very vitality we enjoy
  - iii. All of this is meant to demonstrate a clear, if often unacknowledged, truth
    - 1. Salvation is of the Lord
    - 2. He is the One who devised salvation in eternity past, He is the One who accomplished salvation on Calvary and He is the One who applies salvation, according to His eternal and unchangeable decree
- 3. The result of our salvation
  - a. Paul says that we were “made alive together with Christ”
  - b. Charles Hodge points out one interesting truth regarding the phraseology of this particular verse as he illuminates the truth that all of this is addressed in the past tense
  - c. Salvation happened, in the lives of the Ephesians, at a specific moment in time
    - i. This calls our attention to an important point about the way the Bible speaks about being saved
    - ii. There is justification: which is what happens in an instant, resulting in the immediate quickening of our dead souls and uniting us to Christ
    - iii. There is sanctification: which is what happens as a result of the life that Christ gives. This is a process whereby we are conformed, more and more, into the image of Christ through our united efforts (God’s and ours as a product of our new, alive heart)
    - iv. There is also glorification: this the eternal result of salvation when we are ushered into the presence of God for all eternity
  - d. What Paul is talking about here is justification
  - e. How can justification happen? The answer is that it happens “in Christ”
    - i. When the Bible says that we are united to Christ, what it means is that we are reconciled to Christ in His life
    - ii. Jesus took our sin upon Himself, died a death we deserved and atoned for our sins in the process
    - iii. In exchange, Christ offers us His righteousness which results in our reconciliation with the Father
      - 1. This means that our salvation is the result of our being “together with Christ”
    - iv. How are we united to Christ? By grace alone (the point of this passage) through faith alone
      - 1. There is nothing that we earn and nothing we can contribute
      - 2. Instead, we are saved by faith and, as we shall see, even this faith is further reason to glorify God for His goodness to us