

Never Forget – Eph 2:1-10 (Part 2)

Let's continue to worship by turning in our Bibles to Eph 2:1-7.

Last week we covered v1-3, and this week we'll cover v4-5. The unfolding story of our salvation. V1.

[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.

[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.

For those who are saved, those *in Christ*, that's our story. A story we ought not forget. Because never forgetting is one of the best preventatives and best cures for self-effort and self-importance. Forget the depths from which you were saved, and all God did to *accomplish* your salvation, and you'll end up elevating yourself while diminishing God. You'll end up leaving the path of gratitude, and omitting worship.

➤ So in **Part 1** last week, we found that we should never forget that . . .

Apart from Christ we were dead (v1a)

Spiritually dead. *Unable* to even perceive God. *Indifferent* to the things of God. *Disinclined* to love God. And *incapable* of helping ourselves.

Second, never forget that . . .

Apart from Christ we were sinful (v1b-3a)

Living like the *world*, following *Satan*, and *indulging* our passions.

Third, never forget that . . .

Apart from Christ we were doomed. (v3b) And 4th . . .

Apart from Christ you still are.

The only solution to which is to repent of your sin and believe in him. Follow him. That was last week. From v1-3.

This week, from v4-5, we find 2 *more* things we should never forget. Starting with this:

In Christ, God gave us life (v4-5a)

That's our *story*. God gave us life. And I'm not talking about *physical* life.

I'm talking about spiritual life. Eternal life. *God made us alive*. That's the point in v4-5. Take all the conjunctions, participles, and prepositional phrases away; all the *supporting* thoughts and background thoughts . . .

And that's what you're left with. 4 words: *God made us alive*. God gave us life.

➤ And he did so, even when we were dead. *Y5. God, even when we were dead . . . made us alive*. The very thought he started with in v1. Even when we were cold, rigid, and repulsive he gave us life. Even then.

The word *even*, conveying the *lengths* to which God went to give us life.

Even when we were so far gone, we just as well have been in the grave. Like Jesus raised Lazarus, even when *he* was in the grave.

When God purposes to give us life, *nothing* stops him.

Not even our *sin*. That's the next part.

Even when we were dead in our trespasses [he] *made us alive*.

Even when we were sinful and rotten. Rebellious and filthy. Wicked and dark.

Even then he gave us life. That's our story. God gave us life, even when.

➤ And it all changed, it all turned, on 2 words. The first two words of *v4. But God*.

We were unable, indifferent, disinclined, incapable, sinful, and dead – *But God*.

The greatest two-word phrase in all the Bible. The greatest two-word phrase in all of *life*. And the most concise expression of our testimony, our story, ever given.

I was dead, *but God*. God intervened.

I was lost, *but God*. I was sinful, *but God*. I was clueless, *but God*. I was naïve, *but God*.

I was hopeless, *but God*. I was helpless, *but God*. I was doomed, *but God*.

I was about anything and everything but God – *but God*. Even when.

I don't know the *first* part of your story, but I definitely know the second.

And of all the things to never forget, that would be foremost.

That in Christ, God gave us life. God, and . . .

• Only God

Look at *v4*. It doesn't say, "But *man*, being rich in mercy made us alive." Or God *and* man. God *and* others. God *and* ourselves.

It doesn't say, "But *government*, being all things to all people gave us hope."

It doesn't say, "But *therapy*, being effective raised us up."

It says *God* did. And only God.

And only God *could*. That's the implication. Because once again, we were dead.

Only God *could* make us alive. Only God *could* save us. Only God *could* help us.

➤ And oh does that fly in the face of the 2 most common views of human nature these days. The two most common views of man.

Influencing almost every thought and decision we make in life. Including our response to the Gospel. These very truths.

Most people say that man is either *well*, or *sick*.

Anything *but* dead. Anything *but* helpless and hopeless.

Those who hold to the first view, that man is *well*, say there's nothing wrong with people *themselves*, just their circumstances.

All we need to do is put them in the right situation, the right school, the right housing, the right community, the right country; and they'll thrive.

Because at the core, man is well. He's good.

That's the worldview of most *liberal*-minded people these days. Without even knowing it often times. Man is well.

Others say, “No, man is sick.” He has some issues. And needs to deal with them.

But he’s not helpless. All he has to do is work harder; read the right book; get the right help; find the right therapy.

Like gender transitioning. Religious deconversion counseling. Hypnotherapy. Psychotherapy. Animal therapy.

Man may be sick they say, but he’s not helpless. A view held by liberals and conservatives alike.

➤ But the Bible says no. Man’s not just sick, he’s dead. He can’t help *himself*, and he can’t be helped by *others*. Only *God* can help him. Only *God* can save him.

Does that mean counseling or therapy has no *place* in our life? No. It does.

But only to the extent it’s biblical. Only to the extent it’s in line with, and in agreement with, God’s Word.

Only to the extent that the *foundation* of the counseling is the *Gospel*. And the power to *change* is the Holy Spirit. And the ultimate *goal* is God’s glory; living for him.

Because apart from that, apart from this (Bible), we’re just dressing a corpse.

Never forget that. Never forget that only *God* gives life, and only God *can*. Even when.

And he does so . . .

- **Because he’s rich in mercy**

V4 – *God, being rich in mercy . . . made us alive together with Christ.*

Mercy, as in compassion instead of punishment.

Compassion when we *deserve* punishment. That’s mercy.

It’s the attribute of God that causes him to *withhold* a penalty when we rightly *deserve* one. Like parents who show mercy to their *kids* on occasion; like when they rebel.

Requiring every ounce of compassion the parents have.

Only God’s *rich* in mercy. He has *endless* “ounces”.

Which is good, for two main reasons: (A) Our sin is *great*; and (B) His justice remains.

Thank God he’s rich in mercy because we’re rich in sin. Especially next to his holiness.

And thank God he’s rich in mercy, because he’s also *just*. God still requires *payment* for the sin for which he shows mercy. He does.

He can no more set his *justice* aside, than he can *ignore* his mercy.

So he doesn’t. And didn’t. He just didn’t require justice from *us*.

Being rich in mercy, he laid the punishment on *Christ*. Satisfying both his mercy *and* his justice, in one act. The cross.

25 years ago **Phillips, Craig and Dean** wrote a song to that affect, called *Mercy Came Running*.

“With justice no longer in the way [it goes], mercy came running, like a prisoner set free, past all my failures, to the point of my need.”

Running. To give us life. Because God’s *rich* in mercy.*****

And he’s rich in mercy . . .

- **Because he loves us greatly**

That’s the flow of thought. God made us *alive* because he’s rich in mercy, and he’s rich in mercy because he loves us so much. V4 again.

[4] But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us . . . made us alive.

God made us alive. And he did so, because he’s rich in mercy. And he’s rich in mercy, because of the great *love* with which he loved us.

That’s the first *cause* of all this: God’s love. His *great love* it says. His deep-seated, other-oriented, sacrificial affection for us. Even when.

God loves you. He *loves* you. Greatly. Undeservedly. Ridiculously. Unfathomably.

Ready to overcome your sin and deadness, and give you life.

He’s ready and he will, if only you’ll love *him*. Only believe in his *Son*. Only repent of your sin and *live* for him.

God made us alive because he’s rich in mercy, and he’s rich in mercy because of his love. Never forget that. Never forget the first cause.

➤ And never forget that it’s all *in Christ*.

The life God gives is only found in *Christ*. In a *relationship* with him. In *union* with him. *Connected* to him.

That’s the idea of all the *with*’s and *in*’s found here.

V5 – [God] *made us alive together with Christ.*

And v6 – [He] *raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* So that, v7 – *he might show . . . his grace . . . toward us in Christ Jesus.*

You think Paul’s trying to tell us something? I think so.

That it’s only in and through a relationship with *Jesus* that we can have life. Only via a personal *connection* with him. A loving rapport. A mutual devotion.

It’s one of the many things that separates Christianity from all the *other* religions of the world. And *biblical* Christianity from dead orthodoxy.

A relationship. With and in, Christ.

Never forget that. Never forget that we were dead, but God. And only God. Even when.

Never forget that because of his love and *mercy* he gave us life, and it’s found only in Christ. Never forget.

Otherwise you’ll make much of yourself, and little of God. That’s the first point.

The second is this. Never forget that . . .

In Christ, God saved us (5b)

V5b – *By grace you have been saved.*

It’s like Paul can’t help himself, and blurts it out in the middle of his sentence.

God [v5] . . . made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—[6] and raised us up with him.

It’s the pinnacle and point of the entire section. That we are saved by grace.

A statement that eliminates self-*worth* as the basis of our salvation, self-*effort*, and certainly self-importance. Because we did *nothing* to *deserve* our salvation.

And *could* do nothing.

God saved us . . .

- **By grace**

Grace, as in unmerited favor. The granting of undeserved blessing. Especially when we deserve the opposite. That's the grace of God toward us.

If mercy is undeserved compassion, grace is undeserved favor. Favor that's *disproportionate* to who we are and what we've done. That's God's grace.

- Some of you are old enough to remember **Patty Hearst**. She's the wealthy heiress of William Randolph Hearst, the 20th century media giant and political contributor. More famously however, or infamously, she's the radical militant who was convicted of a variety of violent crimes, including the 1974 robbery of a San Francisco bank. Crimes for which she was originally sentenced to 35 years in prison. And eventually reduced to 7 years. By grace. All well and good.

Until President Carter *commuted* her sentence in 1979, after serving only 22 months.

Some say, because of the political influence of her *family*.

Whatever the case, she was restricted by probation, but she was *free*.

By *grace*. The extension of underserved favor.

- But *God's* grace takes it a step further. Lavishing us with favor that's *completely* disproportionate to who we are and what we've done. Like when President *Clinton* gave Ms. Hearst a full *pardon* in 2001. Completely *exonerating* her of her crimes, and restoring her full rights as a citizen. Shocking. Unbelievable. And yet that's *exactly* the kind of disproportionate grace God shows us (**Col 2:13-14**). Like the Apostle Paul said in Col 2.

[13] *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh* [the sinfulness of *your* sin nature], *God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, [14] by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.*

That's grace. *God's* grace. The grace that saved *us*. Pardoned us. Exonerated us.*****

Grace that's not only *greater* than all our sin, but disproportionate.

- The question is, what did God's grace save us *from*?
By *grace* you have been saved, Paul says, but from what?

• From the consequences of sin

Consequences like death, hell, futility, fear, and despair.

In Christ, God saved us from those things. And more.

Which is exceedingly important. Because if God saved us from paper cuts, who cares?

Let's eat, drink, and be merry.

If he saved us from disappointment, whatever. Who can't handle a bit of that?

If he saved us from temporal things, things that won't last anyway, big deal.

But if he saved us from the long-term effects of *death*, that's *something*.

If he saved us from the *second* death, being thrown in the Lake of Fire, that's incredible.

If he saved us from futility in life, living a purposeless existence, I'll take it.

If he saved us from fear, let's go. If he saved us from despair, because there's help now and hope later, I'm in.

And he did. He did all of those things. There's no "if" about it.

In Christ, God saved us from *everything* bad. *All* the consequences of sin.

Some things right *away* – like fear, fret, futility, and despair – and other things *later*.

Like suffering, hardship, and death.

That's right. You may suffer *now*, but in eternity you won't. You may *struggle* now, but later you won't.

And you'll certainly die, but you'll also live. Immediately. And forever.

Because in Christ, God saved you, from the consequences of sin.

- Unfortunately, far too many don't really believe it. Christians included. We *say* we do. But we fear the coronavirus just like everybody else. We fear. We fear *suffering* just like everybody else. We fear *death* just like everybody else. And in doing so, we're functional atheists.

It's quite possible that our greatest testimony in the midst of all this, is our quiet confidence that we are safe & secure in the arms of God. Safe/secure from all alarm. A confidence that ought to be reflected in our words, our eyes, our countenance, our steadiness, our reactions, our faith, our calm, our smile. Everything. We should be walking billboards of our hope in God. Our confidence in his salvation. Because *our* future is sealed. And it's awesome.

Don't get me wrong. I don't mean that we should be all glib and flippant about this. As if it's no big deal. Or that we should ignore the guidance of health professionals.

No, I mean that we shouldn't fear. Any of it.

So this might be a good time to *repent*. To repent of your fear. Repent of your insecurity.

Repent of your functional distrust in God.

Asking him to *help* your unbelief. And help you *remember*; never forget.

Because in Christ, God *saved* you from the consequences of sin. All of them. (**Summ**)

Never forget. Never forget that you were dead, but God.

Never forget that he gave you life. Never forget he saved your soul.

Because it's the only cure for fear, the only preventative to self-importance, and one of the best paths to gratitude and worship.

Prayer – Lord, forgive us of our fears. Forgive us of our doubts. Forgive us for thinking like those who aren't saved. Those who have good reason to fear. Quiet us with your love. Reassure us with your truth. We pray, in Jesus' name, amen.