

THE SOVEREIGN GOD AND
THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL:
A STUDY OF EPHESIANS
(LESSON TWENTY-TWO)
“QUICKENED, EXALTED AND KEPT”

EPHESIANS 2:1-10 (KING JAMES VERSION)

1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

EPHESIANS 2:1-10 (NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION)

1 And although you were dead in your offenses and sins,

2 in which you formerly lived according to this world's present path, according to the ruler of the domain of the air, the ruler of the spirit that is now energizing the sons of disobedience,

3 among whom all of us also formerly lived out our lives in the cravings of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath even as the rest...

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

5 even though we were dead in offenses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you are saved! —

6 and he raised us up together with him and seated us together with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

7 to demonstrate in the coming ages the surpassing wealth of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

8 For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God;

9 it is not from works, so that no one can boast.

10 For we are his creative work, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works that God prepared beforehand so we can do them.

When we began our study of the **second** chapter of the Apostle Paul's letter to the **Ephesians**, we stated that in verses **1-3**, he addresses the spiritual condition of the believers in Ephesus prior to their conversion. In doing so, he describes four characteristics which are true of every unsaved person. He describes them as being **dead, disobedient, depraved, and doomed**.

Brothers and sisters, we must always remember who and what we were before the grace of God intervened in our lives. We must never forget that, prior to our conversion, we too were dead, disobedient, depraved, and doomed.

Against the horrible backdrop of the hopelessness of the unsaved, Paul, in verses **4 -9**, introduces a life transforming, destiny changing message:

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

5 even though we were dead in offenses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you are saved! —

6 and he raised us up together with him and seated us together with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

7 to demonstrate in the coming ages the surpassing wealth of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

8 For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God;

9 it is not from works, so that no one can boast.

(New English Translation)

The words “*But God,*” introduce the intervention of the grace of God that confronts our death, our disobedience, our depravity, and our doom. We are made aware of the wonderful truth that the same God who is angry with sin and with sinners, is also a God of grace! We can do nothing whatsoever to save ourselves, but God in His grace, intervenes to make salvation possible for us. The whole paragraph emphasizes that He acted on our behalf simply because of His own gracious and merciful character.

In verses **4-9**, the apostle Paul highlights **four** activities that God performs on behalf of sinners in order to save them from the consequences of their sins. In **Lesson 21**, we considered the **first** of these activities which is the activity of God **loving us**.

We noted that love is one of God’s intrinsic attributes. When He relates to sinners, His love is manifested as mercy and grace. **Ephesians 2:4**, informs us that God is “*rich in mercy,*” and verse **7** speaks of “*the exceeding riches of his grace.*” The riches of His mercy and grace make it possible for sinners to be saved. In His mercy, God does not give us what we deserve; and in His grace He gives us what we do not deserve. And all of this is made possible because of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. It was at Calvary that God displayed His great hatred for sin and His great love for sinners.

In verse **4**, Paul explains to us that God is rich in mercy because of, or on account of His great love for us. In order to satisfy the great love that He had for us, God showered the richness of His mercy upon us. The richness of His mercy is an expression of the greatness of His love!

The **second activity** that God performed on behalf of us sinners in order to save us from the consequences of our sins, was to **quicken us**, or make us alive. In **verses 4-5** we read, “*But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved.)*”

The **New English Translation** renders the verses as follows: “*But God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, even though we were dead in offenses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you are saved!*”

God quickened us — He made us alive, even when we were dead in sins. He accomplished this spiritual resurrection by the power of the Holy Spirit, using the Word. In the Gospels, it is recorded that Jesus raised three people from the dead: the widow of Nain’s son (**Luke 7:11–17**), the daughter of Jairus (**Luke 8:49–56**), and Lazarus (**John 11:41–46**). In each case, He spoke the Word and the Word gave life. These three physical resurrections are pictures of the spiritual resurrection that comes to the sinner when he or she hears the Word and believes. The passages outlined hereunder, emphasize this truth.

JOHN 5:24-25

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.”

JAMES 1:18

“Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”

1 PETER 1:23

“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”

Brothers and sisters, our spiritual resurrection is remarkable because it unites us with Christ. Paul informs us in verse 5 that we were *“quicken together with Christ.”* God made us alive together with Christ. This takes us to **Romans 6:3-4**, *“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”*

This newness of life is a new life imparted to us through our identification with Christ in His resurrection. Our identification with Christ in His death broke the power of indwelling sin. Our identification with Him in His resurrection resulted in the impartation of divine life. This is what Paul has reference to when he says, *“We were quickened or made alive together with Him.”*

The idea is that we were dead up to the time when Christ was quickened. We were dead, even as Christ was dead in the tomb. In fact, we were dead **with** Christ in the tomb. For it was as our Representative that He was lying there. And we were *“chosen in Him before the foundation of the world!”* When He was quickened, it was as our Representative too. He was quickened, not for himself only, but for us whom He represented. And therefore, it can be said that, when the life-giving power went forth upon him in the grave, we were quickened with him. As members of His body, we share His resurrection life and power because we are united to Him. (**Ephesians 1:19–23**)

After Paul tells us that God quickened us together with Christ, and before he tells us of the third activity that God performed on our behalf in order to save us from the consequences of our sins, he interjects, *“by grace ye are saved.”* Our salvation is the result of a “grace interjection, or a “grace intervention.” In verses **8-9**, Paul will address the matter of our being saved by grace and not by works in some detail. But He appears to be so overwhelmed by the wonder of the amazing grace of God, that he interjects it into his argument before he is quite ready to deal with it!

“By grace ye are saved.” The words are in a construction in the Greek which speaks of an action that took place in past time and was completed also in past time, but which has results that exist in the present time. The perfect tense speaks of the existence of finished results in the present time. But Paul is not satisfied with showing the **existence** of finished results **in** present time. He wants to show the **persistence** of finished results **through** present time. So, he uses the Greek verb “to be” in the present tense which gives the sense of an action that continues until the result is finalized. We could translate the phrase in the following way: “By grace you have been completely saved in time past, with the result that you are in a state of salvation which persists through present time.”

Paul desires for those to whom he is writing to understand that believing sinners have been saved in the past, **by an outside agent**, with abiding results. They have been saved and they continue to be saved by an outside agent — God.

It is not possible for Paul to have used stronger or clearer language to emphasize the secure state of the believer in salvation. The finished results of the past act of salvation are always present with the believer. The present state of our salvation is dependent upon one thing and one thing only, and that is the fact that we are “in Christ.” Our initial act of faith brought us salvation in its three aspects, **justification, sanctification, and glorification.**

Justification is the removal of the guilt and penalty of sin and the impartation of a positive righteousness. This positive righteousness is Jesus Christ Himself. The believing sinner is taken out of the first Adam with his (Adam’s) sin and death, and placed in the Last Adam (Jesus Christ) with His righteousness and life. Justification is an act which occurs at the moment of our conversion, and it is a position that remains fixed and unchangeable for time and eternity.

Sanctification is the process by which the Holy Spirit eliminates sin from the experience of the believer and produces His fruit, gradually conforming him or her into the image of the Lord Jesus. Thus, sanctification is a process that goes on all through the life of a Christian.

Glorification is the act of the Holy Spirit, transforming the mortal bodies of believers into glorified, perfect bodies at the time of our Lord’s return. This of course, is a future event, but Paul speaks of it in **Romans 8:30** in the past tense, so sure is he that the One who had begun a good work in the lives of the believers will bring it to a successful conclusion! The earnest of the Spirit guarantees the believer’s glorification.

The **third activity** that God performed on our behalf in order to save us from the consequences of our sins, was to **exalt** us. In verse **6** Paul writes, *“and he raised us up together with him and seated us together with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” (New English Translation).*

God does not raise us from the dead and leave us in the cemetery. Because we are *“in Christ,”* we have been exalted with Him and we are seated together with Him in the heavenly realms. We are sitting there in him as our Head. Our physical position may be on earth, but our spiritual position is *“in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”*

In **John 12:1-2**, we read the following: *“Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom he had raised from the dead. So they prepared a dinner for Jesus there. Martha was serving, and Lazarus was among those present at the table with him.”* Like Lazarus, we have been called from the grave to sit with Christ and enjoy His fellowship. We share in His dignity and dominion. What a glorious privilege our God has conferred on us!

Brothers and sisters, as we live our lives, let us rise to the height of our position. Let us not live as those who are creeping on the earth, but as those who sit with Christ in the heavenly places.

The **fourth activity** that God performs on our behalf in order to save them from the consequences of our sins is to **keep us**. In verses **6-7** we read, “*And he raised us up together with him and seated us together with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, to demonstrate in the coming ages the surpassing wealth of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus*” (**New English Translation**).

Here, Paul informs us of the ultimate purpose for which God saved us. God’s purpose in our redemption is not simply to rescue us from hell, as great a work as that is. His ultimate purpose in our salvation is that, not only for the present time, but for all eternity, the church might glorify His grace!

Throughout eternity, God’s grace which was lavished upon those who once were dead in trespasses and sins will be manifested and clearly understood in all the grandeur and majesty of its exceeding riches. God will exhibit His kindness to the saints for His own glory, in order that He may be glorified. And the spectators will be the angels. We saints will be the objects of this kindness. We will be on display before the angelic world, basking in the sunshine of God’s smile, enjoying the riches of His blessings, all, in order that He might be glorified by the angelic hosts.

God’s purpose in saving his people reaches beyond man. His own glory is His own chief aim. Throughout the ages of eternity, we will be His sparkling jewels. The redeemed will be exhibited as the monuments of the matchless grace of the One who brought us up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set our feet upon a rock, and established our goings, and put a new song in our mouths, a song of praise unto our God. He raised us to heights of heavenly bliss, and did all this at such a cost to Himself that He spared not His own Son.

Paul is telling us that God has an eternal purpose for us to fulfil, and if He has an eternal purpose for us to fulfill, He will keep us for all eternity. If we are not actually present with God “*in the coming ages,*” then “*in the coming ages,*” He will not be able to demonstrate the surpassing wealth of His grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus! For His own glory, God will keep us secure throughout all of time and eternity!