

Alive In Christ
Ephesians 2:1-7

5-17-09

Read vss 1-3

Do you ever long for the good old days
Some years ago there was a popular movie named “The Way We Were”
It was a nostalgic look at the past
Which is the way most people want to remember their earlier years
The sigh of American conservatives is – oh, the good old days
When Reagan was in the White House
The sigh of American Evangelicals is – oh, the good old days
When we could pray in school – before abortion was legalized
Before we were a post-Christian society
In the first few verses of this chapter Paul looks at the past
And he says - remember the old days
But his view is not nostalgic
It is filled with truth and realism
Paul gives one of the most pessimistic pictures of human nature found anywhere
Think back remember the good old days when - you were dead
John Stott writes: Paul first plumbs the depths of pessimism about man. After he has
done this, he also rises to the heights of optimism about God, and how His grace saves
sinners

You see for you to understand the greatness of your salvation

You must first realize the depth of your depravity

If you don't believe you were saved from much
You won't believe you were saved to much
There are three views of mankind
The first and most popular is that we are getting better all the time
Oh we've had a few bumps on the road
But with a little more education wars will cease
Love will blossom and we can give peace a chance
The second is that man is flawed. Some would say sick, some would say real sick
But all is not lost and the situation is not hopeless
Where there is life there is hope
We can make a few changes
Undergo some thought training and everything will be ok – it'll work out
The third view which is the Biblical view of mankind is just a little more severe
The health of unredeemed mankind is this
They are not doing too well
They are not well – but they're not sick – they are dead
Man is not getting better – dead men are not capable of getting better
Man doesn't need education or training or medicine – he needs life

And unless he gets life – he is incapable of solving his problems

The Bible tells us that mankind is dead in their transgressions and sins

They are dead to God

They are dead to the Word of God

But they are very much alive to sin – now that's a problem

Sin enslaves people – it causes them to be unable to choose right

And it causes them to think that all their wrong thoughts are perfectly logical

Instead of turning towards God – sin causes men to run from God

Mankind needs to be born - again

Jonathan Edwards said

Man's problem is not a matter of the will. The will always chooses what it thinks is best in a given situation. But as unredeemed sinners, we always choose wrongly. We think God is undesirable. Hence, men always resist God, and without a work of God, they reject the Gospel.

Now Paul says – that is what we were like

Is that what you were like - I know that it is what I was like

I ran from God and mocked those who gave me the Gospel

I remember when my best friend Gordy witnessed to me

After he left I told Jackie – we won't be seeing Gordy anymore

And would you believe it - after I became a Christian

Some of my old friends said the very same thing about me – imagine

I'm sure many of you have had the same response

You see as a Christians you are the aroma of God

And to those whom God has begun a work in – you are the aroma of life

When you witness there is interest and thanks

But to those whom God has not yet called to His Son

You are the aroma of death

And there is mocking and rejection

That is why witnessing takes love courage and obedience

So humanly speaking nothing can be done – men are doomed

The sinner cannot save himself – you cannot save him

It takes an act of Almighty God to save someone

That is precisely what we just studied in Chapter 1

God chose us – Jesus died for us –

The Holy Spirit opened our hearts so that we could receive the grace

Sealed us forever as children of God

And God adopted us into His eternal family

Salvation is God's work of love in the hearts of men and women

Who are at war with Him

Dead in transgressions - Dead in sins

That is the Biblical diagnosis of the world

That is what you once were

You were not in need of medicine or training – you were in need of a miracle
And that is precisely what God did for you
You see - God performs resurrections – God gives life to dead people
Apart from the power of God there is no hope for anyone – no hope for mankind
But because of it even the worst most resolute sinner can be saved

READ VS 4

Paul begins this section of his letter with a very pessimistic
But realistic view of the human condition
And then in verse 4 the tone changes - he writes - “But God”
It is easy to fall in love with the statement – But God
Every time you read it something neat is going to happen
Life is hard – but God
There is no hope – but God
Martin Lloyd-Jones wrote – These two words, in and of themselves, in a sense, contain
the whole of the Gospel.
They tell of what God has done
How God has intervened in what was otherwise a hopeless situation
Paul began this section by telling us how bad we were
In verses 1-3 Paul tells us – you were dead in your transgressions and sins
Don’t you love it that he is talking about us in the past tense – you were dead
You used to live in sin – you used to follow the ways of this world
You were by nature an object of wrath
But God – God made you alive
If we stopped right here – wouldn’t that be enough to think about for the day
You deserved everlasting death –
But God being rich in mercy gave you life
It is wonderful to know that though we run from God
Preferring wickedness to righteousness
God has not run from us
This is where the beauty of the Gospel lies
We were hopelessly lost in wickedness
But because of His love God sent His Son
And in His mercy He has rescued us from the penalty of sin
Because of His love God saved us from death we deserved and made us alive
We no longer serve sin we have a new Master
Our Lord and Savior
We also have a new standard of righteousness to pursue
And because of God’s work in us we are able to pursue righteousness
John Stott wrote – These two little words. But God. Set against the desperate condition
of mankind, is the gracious initiative and sovereign action of God. We were the objects
of His wrath, but God with the love with which He loved us, had mercy on us. We were

dead, and dead men do not rise, but God made us alive with Christ. We were slaves, powerless, and in a position of dishonor, but God has raised us with Christ and set us at His right hand.

You see sitting on the host's right hand is a position of honor

Paul's purpose here is not to show how unbelievers live

But to remind us what we were like

We were dead in our sins - now we are alive

We were living in wickedness – we have been declared righteous

We were living in dishonor

We now have a place of honor in the throne room of God

We were on the highway to hell – now we are on the highway of holiness The road to heaven - That is salvation

That is the greatness of your salvation

Does that describe you – it sure describes me

Who here wants to relive the good old days

I want us to consider three points

The first point is this – Your salvation came by God's love (READ VERSE 4)

Isn't that great – God saved you because He loves you

Salvation is from sin and by love

Don't ever think that nobody loves you – it just isn't true

God loves you – He will always love you

And because of that you can reach out in love and risk rejection

Bill Gaither sang – I am loved, I am loved, I can risk loving you

For the One who knows me best loves me most

Turn to the person next to you and say – you are loved – You are loved

Now Paul uses the word rich to describe God's mercy

That means it is abounding - without measure - unlimited – infinite

But God - having infinite mercy - loves you

Your salvation is from God's mercy and is motivated by God's great love for you

God is merciful kind and loving

He doesn't have love – He is love

And in His love

He reached out to sinful rebellious depraved human beings – like you and me

When John Newton wrote – Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me

He wasn't just describing his own life

He was giving an honest appraisal of the condition of all mankind

Rom 3 – There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands;

there is none who seeks for God; there is none who does good; there is not even one

And until men and women understand their desperate need

They will never turn to God

God created us for His glory

Living a life of sin at war with Him wasn't glorifying Him

Now He had options – He could start over

Wipe out His creation and create a new race of men and women

He could just condemn us all – give us what we deserve – send us all to hell

Or - He could send His Son

But God - being rich in mercy with the great love with which He loved us

Gave us His only begotten Son

How many here like love stories –

God's love of you is a love story without equal

Your salvation which is for God's glory is motivated and powered by God's love

Imagine that while driving your car you ran over a child

You would pay a penalty - you might be fined or even sent to prison

After you paid the fine or served your time

You would be considered guiltless before the law – a free man

But what about the child's parents

Paying penalties or serving time does nothing to reconcile you to the parents

They are immeasurably more grieved than the law

No matter how much you might do – you can not reconcile to the parents

Now listen – only the one offended can offer forgiveness

And only forgiveness can bring reconciliation

Though greatly offended and sinned against

God in His rich mercy and great love offers reconciliation

He gives us complete forgiveness

Regardless of the greatness of your sin - or the number of your sins

God's hand has reached out to you – in love and forgiveness

And He said to you – you are forgiven – you are Mine

Come be with Me

God's compassionate love for those who do not deserve it is what makes salvation possible

Salvation is by love – Salvation is into life (READ VS 5)

Above everything else a dead person needs to be made alive

Nothing else will do

Your salvation gave you spiritual life

You were **dead** in sin – past tense

You are **alive** in Christ – present tense

Now listen

The power that made us alive together with Christ is the same power

That is available to energize every aspect of the Christian life

When you became a Christian

You were no longer alienated from the life of God

God has come to dwell in you
And your new birth has made you sensitive to the will of God
For the first time you are able to understand spiritual truth
For the first time you desire spiritual things
You now have God's nature within you
You can now seek the things above not just the things of the earth
That comes from being alive together with Christ
In Romans Paul says if we are alive with Him
Then we shall also live with Him
And when you live by the Spirit in Christ
You will live a life pleasing to God

Salvation is by love – salvation is into life
And Salvation is with a purpose (READ VSS 6-7)
Salvation has a purpose in regards to us and in regards to God
The most immediate and direct result of salvation
Is to be raised up with Him and seated in the heavenly places
Not only are we dead to sin and alive to righteousness
We enjoy the same exaltation as Christ and we share in His glory
Remember when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead
His first instruction was – **Unbind him and let him go**
It is the same with you
When you became a Christian you were given life unbound and set free
A living person cannot function while still in the trappings of death
You have been unbound and set free
Then you were lifted up and seated with Christ
You no longer belong to this present world
You are a kingdom person – a heavenly citizen
You are not trapped in this world's thinking and its sinful practices
You have been set free
You have been seated – past tense – already done – accomplished
You are seated with Christ who is seated with the Father
You have fellowship with the Father and with the Son and with the Holy Spirit
That is where the power is
That is where the blessings are
You have unlimited access to Almighty God
This is where all your commands come from
This is where all your praise and worship go
This is where all your petitions go
The Greek word used here for seated means – done deal
Even though you have not inherited all that God has for you
It has been settled in heaven

God considers it accomplished

1Pet – Blessed be God, the Father or our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled, and will not fade away, (now listen) already reserved in heaven for you

You have a place reserved for you in heaven

Ever go to a nice restaurant and the line was out the door

Then they asked that dreaded question – do you have a reservation

If you answered - No I was just hoping to get in

You ate somewhere else

One Valentines Day a group of 8 of us decided to go out together

We had a restaurant in Parma in mind – at least that's where we started

We went from Parma to Westlake

Then we began working our way back to North Olmsted

It got so that we would pull into the parking lot and send in a scout

One place there were two restaurants together – we sent in two scouts

I don't know for sure but it seems to me that scouted 10 restaurants before we were able to eat

You see we didn't have a reservation

That is the way it is with heaven – it is either reserved for you

Meaning that God is waiting for you

Or you will not get in at all

And when you arrive you will experience something so wonderful

Something so unimaginable that words are not able to describe it

For all eternity you will experience the grace and the kindness of God

You will never stop singing praises to your Lord and your God

That is what is in it for you

Righteousness today – haven tomorrow

But I also said that God gets something from your salvation

You see God gets glory by His kindness towards us

Your praise – your worship are precious to God

We are going to close this service by singing Amazing Grace

Know that while you are singing your words are precious to God

John Piper wrote - God performs salvation for His own sake. He justifies the people called by His name in order that He may be - glorified.

Why did God predestine us as His saints

Eph 1:6, 1:12 & 1:14 all tell us the same thing – to the praise of His glory

Why did God create a people for Himself

He tells us in Isa 43 – I created them for My glory

Jesus said – this is the reason I come to this hour, Father, glorify Your name

John Piper again – God's chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy His glory forever

God is jealous about His glory

He won't share it

He actively does those things that bring Him glory

And God is glorified in this world by those whom He has redeemed

And nobody else

And He will be glorified throughout eternity by you and me – God's adopted children

God has saved you so that you might bring Him glory

So as Paul told the Corinthians - **Whether then, you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God**

That is what your life is meant to do – bring glory to God

God has done marvelous things for you

But in return He asks that your life glorify Him

So do you do all to the glory of God

Do you raise your children to the glory of God

Do you work to the glory of God

Do you do your homework to the glory of God

Your life right now should be lived to glorify God

And if it is not – you are not fulfilling the prime purpose of your salvation

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For you to understand the greatness of your salvation, you must first realize the depth of your _____

Mankind is _____ in their transgressions and sins

Instead of turning towards God – sin causes men to _____ from God

As a Christian, you are the _____ of God

Witnessing takes _____, courage and obedience

It takes an act of Almighty God to _____ someone

Salvation is God's work of love in the hearts of men and women, who are at _____ with Him

God performs _____ – God gives life to dead people

It is wonderful to know that though we _____ from God, preferring wickedness to righteousness, God has _____ from us

God saved us from death we deserved and made us _____

Because of God's work in us, we are able to _____ righteousness

We were dead in our sins - now we are _____; we were living in wickedness – we have been declared _____; we were living in dishonor - we now have a place of _____

_____ in the throne room of God; we were on the highway to hell – now we are on the highway of holiness, the road to _____; that is _____

Salvation Is By Love

Salvation is from _____ and by love

Salvation is from God's _____, and is motivated by God's great love

Your salvation, which is for God's _____, is motivated and powered by God's love

God's compassionate love for those who do not deserve it makes _____ possible

Salvation Is Into Life

Your salvation gave you _____ life

The _____ that made us alive together with Christ, is the same power that is available to energize every aspect to the Christian life

You now have God's _____ within you

When you live by the _____, in Christ, you will live a life pleasing to God

Salvation Is With A Purpose

We enjoy the same exaltation as Christ and we _____ in His glory

When you became a Christian you were given life, unbound and set _____

You no longer belong to this present _____

You are _____ with Christ who is seated with the Father

You have unlimited _____ to Almighty God

You have a place _____ for you in heaven

For all eternity, you will experience the grace and the _____ of God
God gets _____, by His kindness towards us
John Piper – God’s chief end is to glorify _____, and enjoy His glory forever
God is glorified in this world by those whom He has _____

My Commitment: