

Resurrection and Reconciliation

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[0 : 00] chapter 2 and at verse 1. And you he made alive who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as others.

But God, who is rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved. And raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace and his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision, made in the flesh by hands, that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

[2 : 01] But now, in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off, have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For he himself is our peace, who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments, contained in ordinances, so as to create in himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that he might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

And he came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself, being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building is fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Amen, and may God bless to us that reading of his own holy word, and to his name, be all the praise and glory. We sing again to God's praise in Psalm 89, Psalm 89, and we sing from verse 13 to verse 18.

[4 : 01] Psalm 89 at verse 13. Down to verse 18.

For God is our defence, and he to us doth safety bring. The Holy One of Israel is our almighty King. Psalm 89, six stanzas from verse 13.

Thou hast an arm that's full of power, thy hand is great in might. Amen. Thou hast an arm that's full of power, thy hand is great in might.

And thy right hand exceedingly, exaltedness in might.

Justice and judgment of thy throne, are made the dwelling place.

[5 : 44] mercy, blessings be upon thy grace.

May we bless the people of the joyful sun that o'er.

In brightness of thy face, O Lord, may ever launch a load.

Leading thy hymn shall all the day rejoice exceedingly.

And in thy righteousness thou may exult me on high.

[7 : 09] Because the glory of this day doth only stand in thee.

And in thy favor shall the Lord humble and exulteth thee.

For God is our defense and he to us the safety bring.

The Holy One of Israel is our almighty King.

Amen. Now before we turn to God's word, could I just say to you that I never expected to be in this pulpit tonight.

[8 : 35] A week ago, I thought I was going to have this Sunday free from teaching for a wee change. But I was with my wife, I think it was on Wednesday.

And we had just finished looking after two wee grandchildren for the day. And we were making our way home. And I said to her, well, you know this, I left the lawnmower out at the back. I'd better put it in before the night comes. So I went up to the back and I was gathering the lead together. I'm going to take it home.

And I said, hello there. And who was this but your assistant, Minister Kenny I. And he came across the wee fence that we have at the front of the house.

And shook my hand and we started conversation. And then he came around to ask me, do you do much preaching just now? Well, yes, I do quite a lot.

[9 : 43] Well, he said, I'm not feeling all that great, you know, between one thing and another. And I don't know how I'm going to manage this weekend. Could you do the Sunday evening service for me?

Well, I said to him, anything to help a friend. And I agreed. And as he was going away, he was thanking me. And he was saying, well, isn't providence good?

Isn't it amazing? God's providence. Well, it is for some people sometimes. But for others, it can be different.

But of course, God's providence is always good. So that's why I'm here tonight. And I hope that you're not disappointed that it's not him that's in the pulpit.

But that I'm here in his place. But anyway, we look to God for blessing this evening. And therefore, we turn prayerfully to that chapter that we were reading from in Ephesians in the New Testament.

[10 : 52] Praying that God will direct and guide our minds and our hearts in his will and in his ways. The chapter begins, chapter 2 of Ephesians.

And you he made alive who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit, who now works in the sons of disobedience.

Now, as you all know, the church of Ephesus was very dear to the heart of the apostle Paul. He went there with the gospel, the wonderful gospel of God's redeeming love and grace in Jesus Christ.

Not everyone accepted the message he had to bring to them. But some of them did. And they were converted. They were saved.

They became new people altogether. And the church of Jesus Christ was established and set up in this pagan city that was so full of idolatry and all sorts of evil.

[12 : 06] There was Diana, the great queen of the Ephesians, the goddess of the Ephesians.

And some rock came down from heaven, a meteorite, and it hit the ground and they discovered it.

And they claimed that this was to be their god from now on.

And they would worship this god. And they called it Diana. And they were worshipping that god and making little images of that god in silver.

And the silversmiths were getting very rich selling all these little effigies of Diana. And they weren't very happy when the gospel came among the Ephesians.

And they turned against Paul for doing what he was doing in the name of Jesus Christ. But that is how it is with the gospel anyway.

[13 : 07] Some people believe and others refuse to believe. And that's through to this very day. But anyway, Paul stayed there for three years, over three years, teaching them and leading many of them into the kingdom of God.

God used him greatly. But when he left Ephesus, he warned them that dangerous times were ahead of them.

And that many of them would be led astray. He said that those would come into their midst as wolves in sheep's clothing and would lead them away and ravage the flock. And it's a letter that is so full of doctrine and so full of teaching. And at the end of the letter, he urges them as they go out day by day to put on the whole armour of God. And you know the chapter so well. To go against the forces of darkness without the armour of God would be madness. So he said, make sure that you have the armour of God on you every day to fight against the wiles of the devil.

[14 : 31] And now we come here in chapter 2. And in the first chapter, he's been teaching them concerning God's great salvation that had come to them.

And we must remember that he is writing this letter to those who were converted under his ministry there. And he's building them up. He's telling them what to do. And he's telling them what God has done more than anything else. In chapter 1, he taught them, according to the verses that we have there, chapter 1, about God's great salvation. And he said, it was all of God. And it was all of grace. And it's all in Christ Jesus. That salvation that God has planned and is offering in the gospel. It's all of him. For it was God who planned it. In the beginning, he accomplished it in Christ, in this world.

[15 : 37] He chose, as he says in chapter 1, before the foundations of the world were laid. So you remember that, he was saying to those Ephesian converts, starting off on the Christian pathway.

Remember this, that you were chosen by God before the creation of the world. And he says the same thing tonight to us who are Christians here in this church. God chose you before the foundation of the world was laid. And it's all of grace. It's something we could never earn by your own merits, by your own efforts. We could not plan it. We could not accomplish it. And we could not deserve it in any way. He says in verse 7 of chapter 1, it's according to the riches of his grace. It's all in Christ, he says too. For in him we have all the blessings that we need for time and for eternity.

[16 : 46] And if we have Christ, we have everything that we shall ever, ever need. In verse 3 he says, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

Now in chapter 2, Paul begins the chapter by describing the nature of, the experience that the people of God had come across in their souls as they listen to the gospel. He describes to them the nature of God's salvation. He speaks about what salvation does in the life of a man or a woman or a boy or a girl that has come to experience that wonderful blessing that God has prepared for his people in this world.

what happens when a person is converted? What happens when a person is born again of the Spirit of God? What happens when a person becomes a Christian? it's not just that we have decided to follow Jesus. It's far, far deeper than that. And that's a very shallow way of looking at salvation, that we decided to follow Jesus before we ever decided, before we were ever here, before we were ever born, before the world was made.

[18 : 24] He had decided for us and he decided that we should be his people long before time began. Now we hear a lot in these days about the fact the Chancellor and the government have to keep inflation under control.

We speak of money losing its value. We hear about the falling pound. and so on and so forth. Now in the church we are in danger of devaluing the miracle of the new birth, the miracle of conversion, the miracle of being saved by God's grace. And we seem to be losing the sense of awe and wonder regarding what happened to us that day or that night or that hour that we were converted.

a lot of people seem to poo-poo the salvation of God and the conversion of their fellow sinners and in this island itself we have heard it often referred to us that they had the kurum. The kurum came upon them as if it was a disease of some kind. Oh, keep away from that preacher. you might get the kurum listening to him as if it was something that we should be trying to avoid.

[19 : 57] When we should be wanting it and desiring it above everything else in the whole world, we should be desiring the salvation of God for sinners.

We should be crying to God, God save my soul, do to me what you did to that girl down there and that boy that I know of, he became a new person, she became a new person in one night.

I want the same as she's God. I want to be a Christian like him. That's what we should be saying rather than keep away in case you get contaminated in some way or other.

Being converted is the greatest thing that can ever happen to anybody in this world. When the marvellous miracle of God's grace takes place in our lives and God brings us to know himself in Jesus Christ.

In our unconverted state we don't know God, we're not in communion with God in any way. We might be saying our prayers out of habit like a parrot but that's all that is in it because we are not in touch with God.

[21 : 23] We are not spiritual. We are dead in sins and Paul himself here in verses 1 to 10 says that conversion is like a resurrection from the dead.

As if somebody down in the cemetery there who has been lying in the grave for 20, 30, 40 years suddenly burst through the grave and came up out of the grave and began to walk in this world once again.

It's like a resurrection he sees. And he says in the last part of chapter 2 from verse 11 to the end that it is a reconciliation.

We were aliens from God, we were away from God, but he drew us near by the blood of the cross, by the blood of his son Jesus Christ.

We were brought nigh unto God himself. Here in verse 5 he says even when we were dead in trespasses made us alive together with Christ.

[22 : 37] That speaks of being dead before in the spiritual sense. Verse 13 speaking of being reconciled but now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

He's speaking to the converts that he had left behind in Ephesus. Now Paul in verse 1 describes the sinner as he is naturally in this world.

This is how he is in his natural state and the picture he draws shows what happens when God's saving grace comes and touches that sinner's life.

Very often Paul describes the riches that we have in Christ by telling us the things that we don't have if we are out of Christ.

And that's why he uses the word remember again and again in this letter. Therefore he says in verse 11 remember that you once Gentiles in the flesh but verse 13 but now in Christ Jesus have been brought near you were far away from God but you are now brought near you were dead but you were made alive.

[24 : 11] That's the miracle of conversion the miracle of saving grace. Now many of the translations fall far short of conveying the actual meaning in the Greek of verse 1.

And the best translation that I've heard of verse 1 translates it as this. He found you dead.

He found you dead. And that's exactly what Paul is saying. Listen he says to the Ephesian believers starting off on the journey to heaven.

Listen he found you dead. that's how you were when he found you. You didn't find him any more than a dead man would get up and go and find anything that he needed.

He would be there he would be lying there for all time. But the power of God came and he rose from the dead.

[25 : 22] There was a resurrection and there's a spiritual resurrection regarding those that have been converted in every age.

It would be useful then if we would all realise afresh that this is how we are by nature in case we go away thinking well I had a good hand in my salvation I had a good hand in my conversion myself you didn't.

the only thing said somebody speaking on this subject the only thing that you contributed towards your own salvation was the need that you had of salvation God did the rest everything else it's not that we were away from God needing to be guided back to him that's true enough and he speaks about that in the second part of the chapter and neither is it that we were in need of forgiveness of course we needed forgiveness because although we were dead spiritually we were doing things physically in the world and thinking things and saying things that were against God's will every one of us so we needed forgiveness we needed cleansing from sin and we admit that but the awful thing about man's natural state is that he is spiritually dead just like a dead man lying in a coffin unable to move unable to hear unable to do anything to save himself imagine if somebody was dead in a

house and the house went on fire and you shouted in through the window you couldn't get near the man because of the flame and shouted hey will you get up the house is on fire will you will you get up and get out of the house as quickly as you can well you can shout as much as you like but the dead man would not respond and people can shout and shout at those who are unconverted it'll do nothing it'll do nothing unless God the Holy

Spirit comes and uses the people who are preaching the gospel and speaking and witnessing to the people who are still converted it's only by God's grace and if God uses us in the pulpit or God uses us as we witness to a person here and a person there that's the only way that that person is going to hear and going to rise up and come to life come to spiritual life otherwise we will remain the way we are forever and we will die in that state now when we grasp these truths properly we will begin to realise that only God is able to save us only God can raise the dead none of us can raise the dead only he can and we can't convert or save anybody only God can others can influence our minds and out thinking we can be brainwashed as we hear it so often said other people can help us in this world and we become better people because of the help they give us think of the

Alcoholics Anonymous for example the good work that they do in our islands here and throughout our land helping people to overcome the urges of strong drink and drugs in these days as well and I take my hat off to them the good work that they do but they can't bring eternal life to those people who are caught in addiction only God can do that and only God using maybe some of these men and women who are engaged in Alcoholics Anonymous and in other spheres of service like that that if God uses them in the meeting then the change will happen but of themselves they may bring a person to sobriety and then that's as far as they are able to go because it's only

[30 : 15] God and God alone that brings life where there is spiritual death reigning only God converts the soul only God brings about the new birth now you can have an upright person who has been careful in his walk all the days of his life and is in everybody's eyes an honourable citizen person of the country but he was not converted he's as spiritually dead as the down and out in the gutter just as dead spiritually speaking we seem to think that it would take more grace to save a poor down and out who has made a mess of his life than the man who has been conducting himself so upright all his life and we forget this that they are both in the same gutter both dead spiritually speaking and I have had in my ministry now which spans the last 40 odd years

I've had more problems with those who are upright and honest and full of their own self-righteousness I have more problems with them than with the drunkard and the man who can hardly stand on his feet and who is right in the gutter as they say it could be that the miracle of God's grace can be seen more clearly in the conversion of the person who is so full of his own self-righteousness and good works than in the conversion of the other poor man what is spiritual life we may ask what is spiritual death as well where spiritual life the answer to that question could be found by reading the words of Jesus in John 17 verse 3

Jesus said and this is eternal life life listen to it he said this is what eternal life means that they may know thee the only through God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent that is eternal life the hallmark of spiritual life is to know God and to go on in the knowledge of knowing him to grow in grace and in further knowledge of him it is not what we do or what others think of us or the intellectual grasp we have of the doctrines of the Christian faith the hallmark of the spiritual life is that we go on to know God better and better and know his will for us in this life and our appetite for the word of

God becomes sharpened day by day that is the hallmark of being alive spiritually on the other hand the marks of spiritual death is the lack of the knowledge of God verse 12 without Christ having no hope and without God in the world and that's what Jesus meant when he said to the father the night he was betrayed oh righteous father he said the world has not known thee it has not known you but I know you and this should fill our hearts with love and with pity for the unconverted around us in our congregations and in society for they are strangers to grace and to

God they don't know the God that we have come to know they don't know the God that we have come to love I think that was one of the things that I felt the morning after I was converted more than anything else I felt God so near to me something that was never in my experience before in the same way he was so near to me and if I allowed a bad thought to come into my mind I would feel convicted God was so real to me that morning as I made my way down to the Clyde side and across the wee ferry and on to the shipyard where I was working God was so real he was alive I felt him so near to me and I was speaking to him in prayer something

[35 : 57] I wasn't doing before for years and years now this is something that should fill out hearts with pity and with love for those who are converted they can't help the way they are really although they will be accountable before God at the end of life's journey they can't help what they are that's the way they came into the world but the gospel has come to them telling them that God has prepared something special for them and that is what we should present before them not running them down and telling them to stop doing what they're doing but tell them what God has done not speak about what they're doing tell them of Jesus the mighty to save tell them what happened to you in your own experience and how God changed your life and it ought to drive us to live in such a way that others would see more and more of Christ in us so that they would begin to ask how can I get to know the God that you've got to know how can I get what you've got however if we speak in these terms about spiritual death they are in the negative terms only there is a positive side to spiritual death too as it is God's judgment for sin spiritual death the state of the sinner without the saving grace of God is the judgment of God on sin God spoke to Adam you remember in the garden and he said to him in the day that you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil then you shall surely die Adam remember that Eve remember that you'll die die but what happened the eight of the forbidden fruit nothing happened looking at it from the outside why did why did Adam not fall down dead when he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because the death that God was speaking about when he warned them and said in the day you eat of it you shall surely die was not physical death but spiritual death physical death followed as far as Adam was concerned it was some 930 years after this we read that Adam died but that day in the garden when he took of the forbidden fruit he died spiritually and the communion he had with God his creator was broken a barrier had come down between himself and God he lost the communion he had with God God and himself were not the same as they were before and that's the union that is restored by God's saving grace when a person becomes a Christian and he is so conscious of God's presence and he is so full of joy at being reconciled to God in his heart and soul the real death that God spoke about was the separation of Adam and Eve from himself physical death came after that but the real judgment was to be cast out from the presence of God and the communion Adam had with God is now broken in a spiritual sense physical death is the outward sign of inner death spiritual death that has already taken place in the soul that's how it's so different when we gather together at the funeral of a funeral of a Christian that that spiritual death has been vanquished and that that believer died having been reconciled to God having been resurrected from the dead state that they were in precious says the scripture precious in the sight of the Lord is his saints death because he has been resurrected spiritually he has been reconciled spiritually to God now spiritual death also means that we are brought under the dominion of the world and the flesh and the devil the trinity of evil verse 2 says in which you once walked according to the course of the world and according to the prince of the power of the air that's the world and the devil we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind the flesh there the world the devil and the flesh and this is the place to which sin took every single one of us and therefore we are not free to do whatever we like some people believe that they are free when they are not free at all and that's why it doesn't make sense to talk about man's free will we must always speak of it as being a fallen free will which is not free will at all so it's nonsense when you come against people arguing with you and saying that the doctrine of election interferes with man's free will man doesn't have free will as a fallen creature the devil and the flesh and the world are dragging him along this way and that way as their slave and that's what we wear before God saved us we were slaves to the world and to the flesh and to the devil notice for example how we listen to the voice of the world from day to day how we are slaves to fashion how we stop wearing certain clothes and start wearing different clothes in my young days you had to have wide bottom trousers the young people wouldn't be seen dead in those things nowadays in my young days the boys hair was down to their shoulders very few that you see walking the streets are like that today you go the opposite direction and they shave off every bit of hair that's on their heads why do they do that because it's not fashionable and who says it's not fashionable the world says it's not fashionable and so we listen to the world and Paul speaks of being slaves to the flesh and he means more than just the carnal sins that we look upon as the sins of the flesh he thinks of it in that way right enough but it means really living to please ourselves being slaves to the flesh giving self the first place when it comes to doing things in this world and he speaks of being enslaved to the devil the prince

of the power of the eight but he's behind all the riots and all the wars and the rebellions and the anarchy that's in the world those who fight against this and that and the next thing think they're free but they are being led captive by the prince of the power of the air of course there's a place for a righteous righteous war in the world right enough but it's very seldom we see anything like that and Paul's picture of a person who is get a stranger to God's saving grace is a grim picture indeed not only does spiritual death bring us under

[45 : 15] God's judgment and under the vicious power of the world and the flesh and the devil but also brings us to the state that Paul is calling here the wrath of God the children of wrath he says no people don't want to hear much about the wrath of God today it's not very popular how do you speak about a God of love and at the same time speak about the wrath of God well the Bible brings those two truths together very simply and yet with great solemnity in Revelation 6 verse 16 it speaks there of the wrath of the Lamb the wrath of the Lamb you look at the little lambs in the parks around us as we go off home tonight think of this these beautiful little creatures you can't imagine them to be angry and yet it's in the scripture that there is the wrath of the

Lamb he is the most loving but he can also be the most angry the Lamb of God my father was the most patient man I had have ever come across he was a big strapping man over six feet and yet he would be so gentle with us and cuddle us and sit us on his knee and we loved him and he loved us but if we did anything wrong look out his anger was another thing altogether I remember running among the corn one day making a mess of it and thrampling it and he caught me at it and he said come on here and he began to unloosen his belt and my heart was gripped with fear and I was shaking when I came to him he said the next time the next time you're going to get the belt if I catch you doing that his fear was something to be avoided his love was another thing altogether and if earthly parents are like that how much more the God of heaven he is loving but look out his wrath is terrible and the awful thing about being outside of Christ is not the harm that we do to ourselves or to others the awful thing is what it does to God what does it do to God it makes him want to pour out his wrath that's what it makes God do so sin is a terrible thing the awful thing of being unconverted tonight is not that it leaves us unhappy but it leaves us without a shelter from God's wrath without a shelter because the only place of shelter and safety is in Christ that's the only shelter from the wrath of God and if we are without Christ and out of Christ and the children of wrath then we are exposed to the wrath the endless eternal wrath of God now you may be thinking there may be some who are thinking well I don't want to be among God's people I'm not wanting to be one of these holy holy ones I want to be a natural person but if you're not one of God's people then you're not in the place where God is pouring out his blessings and his benefits upon you it's in the family of God that we receive the blessings and the benefits that Christ suffered and died for on the cross so that we could have them so if there's anybody saying well I'm not wanting to be numbered among those holy holies think of it again there's a story told about a minister who they had adopted a little girl and the little girl was badly beaten in her own home and she suffered a lot in her own home and she was fostered out and the minister and his wife took her in for a few months one night he was tucking her into bed and she turned to him with the tears in her eyes and she said if only I could belong to you if only I was part of your family and the day is going to come when we shall all stand before the throne of God and the sheep will be on the right hand side and the goats on the left the unconverted will be on the left and the believers on the right and the unconverted in eternity will be seen to those on the right hand side oh if only we could be among you if only we could be among the people of God but then it will be too late too late the doctrine of salvation it's a resurrection from the dead it's also reconciliation but we have no time to go into that tonight may God give us grace to raise up our hearts in thanksgiving at the one who took us from that fearful pit may we live for his glory let us bow in prayer heavenly father we thank you for the day you stooped down to pick us out of that miry clay amazing grace indeed oh lord our god so bless us now as we sing your praises in the end of this service and as we go home take us there safely and bless bless us in our homes in Jesus name amen and we're going to sing in closing psalm 96 psalm 96 and five verses from verse nine psalm 96 five stanzas from verse nine psalm 96 from verse nine to verse 13 in beauty of his holiness oh do the lord adore like once like my sermon [53 : 33] This holiness O do the Lord adore Likewise Let all be there Through our Remember His days before Among The Even State Or race The world Shall Step Past The He Fakes From Moving He Shall Just Love People Righteous

See Let Heavens Be God Before The Lord And Let The End Rejoice Let Seize His You Eyes for
The Room See Jo Hasissen on everything but stringeth of the air and woods on every tree shall
sing with bloodless and with mercy before the Lord because he comes to judge the air concede he'll
judge the world with righteousness the people faithfully and now may the grace of the Lord Jesus
Christ the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest upon you and remain with you and
with all whom you love and with all God's people here and everywhere both now and forevermore
Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen
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