

Eph 2.4-7 Grace Applied: The Divine Blessing of New Life in Christ

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 March 2024

Preacher: Dan Morley

[0 : 00] Please take your Bible and turn to the book of Ephesians. Look at the book of Ephesians, chapter 2.

Now, chapter 2, the first word that it begins with is and. That and means a continuation of thought of that which precedes it.

So, as a review of chapter 1, if you recall, verses 3 to 14 shows us God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in the work of redemption.

God the Father's purpose in redemption, in choosing and predestining. God the Son in accomplishing redemption. And God the Holy Spirit in applying the work of redemption.

And then we see, as Paul explains, as he prays for the saints. If you look at chapter 17, it says, in explaining his prayer for them, he says, The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation and the knowledge of him.

[1 : 35] So, spirit of wisdom and revelation and knowledge of him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened. And then a further explanation of the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, he says, That you may know.

So, that, those few words there, that you may know. Let those words roll around in your mind as the preceding context of what we further look at.

And when he says that you may know, he lists three particular things. The hope of his calling, the glorious inheritance of the saints, and the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe. So, that you may know. And then the third one being the exceeding greatness of his power. So, that you may know the exceeding greatness of his power according to.

And then we see here a display of the exceeding greatness of God's almighty power and the resurrection and exaltation of Christ. Christ raised from the dead, namely because the second person of the Trinity, being very God, assumed our nature and in the flesh, suffered and died to pay the price of the sins of those whom are given to him by the Father.

[2 : 51] Therefore, suffering and died, being dead and buried, was raised. So, the display of God's exceeding greatness of God's almighty power and the raising of Christ from the dead and his exaltation, being seated at the right hand of God in heaven with all dignity, all honor, all authority, and all power.

So, that you may know the exceeding greatness of God's power, the display of Christ's resurrection and exaltation, and you.

So, that's where we are in chapter 2. Chapter 2, verse 1, and you. So, again, that context is that you may know the exceeding greatness of God's almighty power as it's displayed in Christ's resurrection and exaltation, and you.

So, chapter 2, starting in 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 the 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.

[4 : 49] 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.

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, being 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.

[6 : 42] Almighty God, we praise you that you are almighty, and we pray, Lord, that as we seek to understand the depths of that which is spiritually discerned from your word, we pray that you would enlighten our minds and illuminate your word to us, that we may know the truths about you, that we may know, through spiritual understanding, the exceeding greatness of your power toward us who believe, in making dead sinners alive in Christ.

I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So we are progressing from chapter 1 to chapter 2. As such, chapter 1 examined God's purpose of reconciliation, and as we move into chapter 2, we see God's way of reconciliation.

So from God's purpose of reconciliation, namely redemption, purposed by the Father, accomplished by the Son, and applied by the Spirit, to now chapter 2, God's way of reconciliation, or his glorious covenant of reconciliation, by his almighty power toward us who believe.

As such, in chapter 2, if we narrow it down to verses 1 to 10, we see that 1 to 10 examines deliverance from the old self in death to new life in Christ.

So notice that contrast. The contrast is made from the old life in death to new life in Christ. Now in those 10 verses of chapter 2, there are three particular conjunctions which break up into three sections.

[8 : 22] The first conjunction is an and in verse 1, the second one is a but in verse 4, and the third one is a for in verse 8. The and is a continuation of the thought, a continuation of the thought of God, the greatness of God's almighty power, and the raising, and the exaltation of Christ, and you.

And then there's a picture of the old self. There's a picture of and you in what is the background, in the former state, the setting of human failure.

You were dead in sin. And in that setting, and in that background, we then have in verse 4, but God. And that's our second conjunction. And that but shows us divine intervention, which is a further illustration of God's almighty power that the and connects to us in the previous chapter.

So these conjunctions are indicative of the saving grace of God. The saving grace of God towards those who have been purposed, purchased, and claimed by God.

Now a quick refresher of the covenant of redemption, the covenant of grace. So we see what is reflective of the covenant of redemption in chapter 1, and in chapter 2, we see what is reflective of the covenant of grace.

[9 : 44] So a quick review. The covenant of redemption is the pre-temporal, or eternal, agreement in the unity of the Godhead concerning the work of the Son as mediator between God and humanity, guaranteeing payment of the debt of sin of those elected by the Father.

There's a covenant of grace as defined by Richard Muller as the pact made by God, fulfilled in Christ. There's a glorious promise of salvation given to fallen humanity apart from any consideration of their ability to respond to it or fulfill it and apart from any human initiative.

Human beings are drawn into covenant by God's grace alone. So this gracious covenant of reconciliation is based on the eternal covenant transaction between the Father and the Son concerning the redemption of the elect.

our text today is Ephesians 2, 4-7, where we see from that covenant of grace, we see grace applied.

The divine blessing of new life in Christ. The exceeding greatness of God's almighty power is here further made known by divine intervention making dead sinners alive in Christ.

[11:09] So in the application of Christ in making dead sinners, sorry, in the application of grace in making dead sinners alive in Christ, we will examine from this text the crux, the cause, and the effect.

So first of all, the crux. The crux of the application of grace, divine intervention. Divine intervention is necessitated as we see from the setting of human failure in verses 1-3.

1-3 starts with and you, that goes on to say were, and you who were dead in trespasses and sin were made alive.

now, that were in reference to our former state, our former condition, is the misery of sin. It speaks to the misery of sin and human failure in the setting or the backdrop to the necessity of divine intervention.

Dead in sin, in opposition to God, at enmity with God, no spiritual life. So you might be asking then, well, what is fallen man to do?

[12:27] How can man do what only God can do? What, how is this even possible for a man to acquire? And that is exactly the point.

With men, this is impossible, but with God, all things are possible. Remember that you may know the exceeding greatness of God's almighty power.

Everyone appreciates before and after pictures, whether it be a restoration project of a piece of furniture or remodeling of a house to have pictures of the finished project, not alone.

You might look at that and say, that looks great. But when you see the before pictures in contrast and comparison, it gives you a much greater appreciation for what's behind the finished project. So people have that appreciation for before and after photos of a transformation that takes place.

And that's what we have going on here. We have before and after pictures of transformation that has taken place. It's a before and after picture of God's work of grace in believers.

[13:39] Before grace compared to after grace. Old life and death compared to new life in Christ. Christ. Now, by what method does this change occur?

By how does the transformation take place? And what, essentially, the question is, is what constitutes a Christian? Is it because somebody raised a hand at a youth conference?

Or is it because somebody prayed the sinner's prayer? Is it because a parent or maybe a Sunday school teacher told you that you were a Christian, so you took their word for it?

The question is, what is God's standard? By what method does the change occur? How does the transformation take place? What constitutes a Christian? The most important question is, what is God's standard?

What does God require? What does God require for us to enter the kingdom of heaven?

[14:46] John 3:3 says, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. So what is God's standard? Unless one is born again.

By what method does this change occur? How does the transformation take place? Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That is a new creation. God dividing chaos and bringing forth order.

Now when we think of new creation, we think of creation, don't we? And a creation work is the work of God's almighty power. God brought all time, space, and matter into being by his speaking, at his word, as an expression of his will, by his almighty power, without any external compulsion.

That is God's work in creation. And dead sinners being made alive is God's work in new creation.

New creation is the redeemed, are predestined, purchased, and claimed by God at his word, as an expression of his will, by his almighty power, without any external compulsion.

New creation is a creation work. New creation being, the text says, and you he made alive. This is the transformation.

[16:05] This is regeneration. So remembering that in chapter 2 verse 1 starts with and you, that and being the conjunction that signifies the connection, the furtherance of the explanation before it,

namely the context of God's almighty power, raising and exalting Christ, and you he made alive.

Who were dead in trespasses and sin. Were dead. So if you remember the misery of sin from that text, the misery of sin being the state of sin, the nature of sin, original sin, inherited sin by Adam, sinning because we are sinners, dead in sin.

We also examined the multitude of sin, sons of disobedience following after the course of the world, after the prince of the power of the air, and the gravity of sin, by nature children of wrath, death, judgment, condemnation, and wrath.

The misery of sin, you were dead in trespasses and sin. That is the before picture, before the transformation, the before picture, before the transformation, but God.

This is divine intervention. The before picture, but God. God as the efficient cause of the transformation. God is the efficient cause of the regeneration.

[17:39] Notice how it does not say, but you. It is but God. We are not the efficient cause. God is the efficient cause. And it's not to our glory, to God's glory, that you may know the exceeding greatness of God's almighty power.

You were dead, but God. Divine intervention. 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 in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

has there been divine intervention in your life? Has there been a but God conjunction that has called you out of darkness into marvelous light?

Has there been no conjunction at all? Has there not even been a but? Has there been no divine intervention? Are you continuing and being dead in trespasses and sin?

Or has there been a but you, thinking that you have saved yourself? Or has there been a but God conjunction, divine intervention calling you out of darkness into marvelous light?

[19:07] Has God made you alive together with Christ? Has the spirit applied the work of redemption and given you life where there is no life?

But God, God being the efficient cause. grace. So again, the efficient cause is God. The second point is the cause of grace, namely the divine essence and attributes.

So in the application of grace to dead sinners being made alive in Christ, the cause, divine essence and attributes. Just consider the cause of grace.

what is grace? Grace is God's unmerited favor. You think about unmerited, it means it's not earned, it's not deserved, it's not warranted, it's not demanded.

That's what makes grace unmerited, is that there is no merit. It is not deserved. That's what makes grace grace. Now in verses 3 to 7, we see three things being said about God.

[20:16] One is that God is rich in mercy, second is that because of his great love, and the third is the exceeding riches of his grace.

So his mercy, his love, and his grace. Now in order to understand the depth of the riches of God's mercy, love, and grace, it is prudent that we understand and apply what can be known about the essence of God.

Take for example, divine mercy. It says, rich in mercy. Now God's essence, God's very essence, is the root of his mercy.

If you remember from the last sermon, all that is in God is God. So God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable.

Therefore, God's perfection of mercy is infinite, eternal, unchangeable, uncaused, impassable, unfailing, boundless, limitless, inexhaustible, mercy.

[21:26] Just as God by his very essence is self-existent and independent, so his attributes, namely in this case, mercy, grace, and love are independent and undivided.

We do not move God to favor us. We are not the cause of God. God's purpose in election is to make his power known and to make known the riches of his glory to vessels of mercy.

Do you apprehend the magnitude of this? God's mercy and grace communicated to dead sinners in opposition and at enmity with him is absolutely entirely undeservedly undeserved and unmerited.

It is truly the deepest sense of unmerited favor. It is not reactionary mercy and grace. It is not communicated by constraint. It is covenantal mercy and grace.

And it is according to his eternal purpose, his sovereign will, God's way, according to God's purpose, the covenant of grace, according to the covenant of redemption.

[22 : 50] We tie this all together and what do we see? We see Trinitarian covenantal mercy and the eternal covenant of redemption, the father decreeing, the son purchasing and the son applying, the architect, the treasury, and the power of divine covenantal mercy and making dead sinners alive together with Christ.

Further, we see because of his great love, that is the fountain head of love, uncaused love, inexhaustible love, an eternal love which is displayed by his mercy to us in time.

To say that God's love for us is reactionary, that God loves us because we loved him first, or to say that God is acted upon by us, that we cause him to love us, is to take the glory of God from him, to rob him the praise of the glory of his grace, and to ungod God, who is the first and chiefest being, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable.

1 John 4 10 says, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his love to be the propitiation for our sins. God, because of his great love, made us alive together in Christ. But you were dead in trespasses and sin, but God, because of his great love, made us alive together in Christ. John Owen wrote that Christ is the treasury wherein the Father disposes all the riches of his grace.

[24 : 29] Taken from the bottomless mind of his eternal love, it is exceedingly acceptable unto God, even our Father, that we should thus hold communion with him in his love, that he may be received into our souls as one full of love, tenderness, and kindness toward us.

God loves us without a cause, and we have all cause in the world to love him. Third, the effect of grace applied, resurrection of dead souls.

So in the application of grace in the making alive of dead sinners in Christ, the effect is the resurrection of dead souls.

It says made us alive together, raised, us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Note those three verbs. Made us alive, raised us up, made us sit together in Christ Jesus. So first of all, made us alive, what does this mean?

[25 : 40] Made alive, he quickened us, his regeneration, a new creation. This is the transformation from old to new. Made us alive together with Christ, being made alive together with Christ, is union with Christ.

Union in Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and exaltation. So what happened physically with Christ, Christ's physical death, Christ's physical burial, resurrection, and exaltation, is what is spiritual with saints, being united in Christ's physical death, burial, resurrection, and exaltation. Now the effect of grace to dead sinners being made alive in Christ is the exceeding greatness of God's almighty power with Christ as the exemplary cause.

Christ received life after death and you he made alive and raised us up together with Christ.

Now our resurrection and ascension being in Christ's resurrection and ascension, the present is through hope and the future is in reality.

[26 : 56] Now if you notice it's raised, raised being past tense, raised us up together with Christ. The use of past tense is in certitude of our living hope.

God is eternally pure actuality. We, his creatures, are experiencing his work of redemption as it unfolds in time.

We are raised up with Christ because we are united to Christ who has been raised and exalted by the exceeding greatness of God's almighty power. Inheritance is future by the guarantee which is present, by the sealing of the spirit in our undissolvable union with Christ by the certain and sure purpose of the Father.

Sound familiar? The covenant of grace according to the covenant of redemption. Redemption purposed, accomplished, and applied by an eternal, unchangeable God. Therefore, it can be spoken of as though having already taken place.

Raised us up together with Christ. Christ. We are united to Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. That's what baptism is a symbol of.

[28 : 17] It is what baptism is a sign of. Being united to Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. The further effect of grace is being united to Christ.

Being made alive, being raised up together with Christ, seated with Christ, being united to Christ. The resurrection of our bodies and our sitting in heaven is secured in Christ who is our head. This is the significance of union with Christ. Christ who is our head. Union with Christ is the single link that affixes us to all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places.

The merits and the mediation of Christ. Remove Christ and remove all. The merits and mediation of Christ are ours exclusively by union with him.

It is by Christ and through Christ that God conveys all saving benefits to us. as sin and death through Adam, now righteousness and life through Christ to those who are united to him.

[29 : 31] We have died with Christ, died to the old existence, the old self, the old nature, the sin nature, and come alive to a new existence, that is, a new creation, now in Christ.

United to Christ means or equals being co-made alive. So because we are united to Christ in his resurrection and ascension, it can be said that when it says we are made alive, raised up, and seated, being united to Christ means that we are co-made alive, co-raised up, and co-seated with Christ.

Christ. That, as verse 7 says, that in the ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Romans 9.23 also says that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he had prepared beforehand for glory that he might make known.

This is personal, intimate, experiential knowledge of God's greatness. Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Now, through nature, reason, and God's covenant of works with Adam, God's attributes of wisdom, power, goodness, bounty, and justice are made clearly known.

[31 : 14] However, only through the covenant of grace are God's attributes, such as mercy, grace, and love, revealed to the greater glory of God, and to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory.

I'll read verse 7 again. That in the ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Now, the objection at times is raised questioning if God is gracious and kind.

Remember, verse 7 says that in the ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace and his kindness. So, some might object and say, if God is indeed gracious and kind, then why does he allow sin?

Why does he allow calamity? Where is God in trials, afflictions, tribulations, and adversity? Where is God's mercy, grace, and love, and why is he not acting?

Why, God? In essence, the question is really asking, why are you being God? Why are you not doing what I want or what I think I deserve? Now, it is that objection is sufficiently responded to with, for example, Romans 9 20, O man, who are you to reply against God?

[32 : 37] Or, Isaiah 29 16, surely you have things turned around. Shall the thing formed say to him who formed it, he has no understanding? Or, Job 15 8, have you heard the counsel of God?

Do you limit wisdom to yourself? Or, Romans 11 34, who has known the mind of the Lord? Or, who has become his counselor? nonetheless, God has graciously given us a glimpse of what he is doing.

So, keep your finger here on Ephesians 2 and flip over with me to Revelation chapter 7. Starting in verse 9.

So, where is God? What is God doing? Here we have a glimpse of it. Revelation 7, chapter 9.

After these things, I looked and behold a great multitude which no one could number of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice saying, Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.

[34 : 06] All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures and fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God saying, Amen. Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God forever and ever.

Amen. Now, have you ever had it where you're somewhere and you see a group of people and maybe there's some sort of unity or uniformity to them whether it's in performance or apparel but you can tell that there's something about them, they're there together, they're unified in some sort of way and you think, what's going on here?

Who are they? Who are these people? So something important, something's about to happen and it grabs your attention and what's happening? What's going on here? Who are these people? Who are they? Back to 13, then one of the elders answered saying to me, who are these arrayed in white robes and where did they come from? And I said to him, sir, you know, and he said to me, these are the ones who come out of the great tribulation and wash their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb.

Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple and he who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore. [35 : 31] The sun shall not strike them nor any heat for the lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

This is God's covenantal grace. This is God's covenantal love and mercy. God will vindicate his own name.

As we see in the last three chapters of the Bible, that is the culmination of redemption, the consummation of Christ's kingdom and the saints inheritance, collected, restored, renewed, recapitulated, summed up, gathered up, united, reduced to a head, brought under one head to present as a whole, brought back into order out of chaos, gathered together under one head, Christ, by virtue of redemption.

Better than the beginning, better than the garden, better than the tabernacle, better than Canaan, better than the temple, better than the church on earth. What is God doing?

That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. It is God dividing waters of chaos and leading his people into a new land to inherit where he will dwell with them in a particular tabernacling presence where his glory rests and dwells and he supplies all their needs and blesses them.

[37 : 15] A new creation paradise kingdom of glory. A stable state of glory in God's tabernacling presence knowing God not just as infinite eternal omnipotent creator but also merciful gracious loving redeemer.

That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. So how do we answer challenges of God's power and goodness and tragic circumstances?

The second person of the triune Godhead who is true God of true God assumed our nature by incarnation and bore Our sin our misery and our shame that we might receive all the benefits of Christ becoming co-heirs with Christ in his eternal blessed kingdom of glory without pain suffering injustice sin death all glory be to the father all glory be to the son all glory be to the spirit blessed three in one if you remember from chapter one of Ephesians in verse six it says to the praise of the glory of his grace and again in 1.14 it said to the praise of his glory to make known the riches of God's glory to vessels of mercy the goal or the chief end if you will of redemptive history is the glory of God and it's being made known through the salvation of the elect living blessedly in this life and that which is to come God's glorious tabernacling presence dwelling in a new creation with his purchased possession called out of darkness into marvelous light to the praise of his glory what is the chief end of man to glorify

God and enjoy him forever God's goal in everything is to glorify himself therefore it should be ours also if you recall from psalm 145 verse 3 great is the Lord and greatly to be praised let's pray our great God our almighty God infinite and eternal God Lord we praise you for your almighty power for your covenant keeping love and graciousness and mercy and making dead sinners alive in Christ we thank you for the glorious inheritance of the saints we thank you that as we dwell on redemptive history and your unfolding of your eternal purposes that it causes us to further know the exceeding greatness of your almighty power help us I pray Lord to revere you to praise you to love you and to speak of your good works and to declare your excellencies pray again

Lord that you would bless all who are here by giving a greater spiritual understanding of your greatness great are you Lord and greatly to be praised I pray that you would help us to continue to think on these things to meditate on these things to contemplate and dwell on these things throughout the week I pray that you would bless those meditations and draw us to you in closer communion I pray this in Jesus name Amen Stand and sing the Doxology through