

Raised Up

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Bible Text: Ephesians 2:6-7

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With the Lord's help I will venture to speak to you this morning from the epistle of Paul to the Ephesians chapter two and verses six and seven.

And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.¹

How precious is the Word of God? And we would say without any contradict: There is no book like the Bible. I feel that the apostle is lifted up by the Spirit of God in these magnificent verses which form the letter to the Ephesians and especially in the first two chapters we have doctrine, experimental doctrine set forth so clearly, so precisely that any honest person could make no mistake with them.

The apostle starts, as it were, at the beginning, born in sin, lost to all eternity, having the spirit of this world entrenched within our hearts. But because of his sovereign grace he calls forth his people that they might leave a pathway of evil to serve the true and living God.

“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”²

Now answer honestly. Could the language be any simpler or any more profound? Here we have a glorious truth that man by birth and by nature is dead, spiritually, utterly dead and that that person can do nothing for themselves and nor can any other creature affect them or touch them to instill life and spirit within them.

God is a God of creation. He created man in the first instance in his own image and likeness. If God had not created man it stands to reason there would be none to populate this earth. But God did create man and man fell wholly into sin and he rendered himself excuseless having disobeyed the commandment of God.

¹ Ephesians 2:6-7.

² Ephesians 2:1.

That moment he died he died spiritually and that means that he is dead to every attempt, every carnal inspiration for him to rise up in life and immortality.

“He hath quickened.”³

This, then, is the sovereign work of almighty God to quicken the soul. Man has no part in the second creation as he had no part in the first creation. He is helpless and hopeless and utterly devoid of any strength. The description of death shows us very graphically that man is not in a state that is capable to alter or to respond to any overtures however sweet and gracious and kind and blessed that they may be.

For man to hear the gospel he has to be awakened and no eloquence or oratory of any preacher can do that for him.

But what a mercy to learn that there were those in the world—and I trust that there are some here who may be among them—who were dead in trespasses and in sins that have been quickened. The word “quicken” is an old fashioned word not used so much today. But its meaning is true just the same. It means to have life, to be given life, to be given sensibility, to be given power. And all this comes from God. And whilst we think upon these precious truths, let us also realize that no man can keep himself alive. He needs to be sustained spiritually day by day in the same sense in which he needs to be maintained bodily.

We cannot live without sustenance on this earth. Our bodies require it. And without it we would soon languish and die. And so we need that spiritual food from heaven continually day by day.

Now the Israelites learned this lesson in the wilderness as the manna came down from heaven. They had to go out day by day and gather that manna. There was an exercise. There was a procedure necessary that they and their families might sustained. And is there not a spiritual exercise with God’s people to gather from the table of the Lord that which is necessary for the sustenance of their never dying souls?

Now look back, look back over your life and you will record a time—and it may be very solemn to your feelings so to do it. Sometimes it is necessary to see how you walked according to the course of this world. You were of the earth, earthy. You conformed the very image of this world. But everything in this world delighted and transfixed you. You were walking in disobedience to God. You were filling the loss of your flesh. You were satisfying the desires of your heart and of your eyes.

And then notice in verse four we have that little word “but.” And what a precious word it is. Except for this word where would we be? We would still be in our sins. We would still be lost. We would still be dead spiritually.

³ Ibid.

But something magnificent took place. Something wonderful happened. The Lord appeared unto his people.

“But God...”⁴

Here is the instigator. Here is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the ending, the all and in all of God. He appeared. He performed. He created anew but only because of the richness of his mercy and the great love that he bore towards us his people.

Do we know anything of these things or isn't it vitally important that we should experience something that there may be some small seed of vital truth planted into our hearts, something that will rise up to glorify God, something that is pure and holy, a perfect that is a solemn work of an almighty God who has done all things well.

“By grace are ye saved.”⁵

And if there are any here this morning that are saved, it is all owing to sovereign grace, nothing of the works of the flesh, nothing of the desires of the natural mind. No, it is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, beloved of God our Father and the operation of the Holy Spirit within that has brought us to cry out like the Philippian jailer, “What must I do to be saved?”⁶

And as we come under the authority of God's Word through the means that he has chosen, the preaching of the gospel, so our hearts have been enlarged, our spirits overwhelmed with the love of the Lord Jesus Christ toward us.

Well, let us come to our text. “And,” which means in addition to.

And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.⁷

It is these opening words which struck my spirit as I thought upon them. “Hath raised us up... hath raised us up.”⁸

So we see our condition by nature. We are in the pit, in the miry clay, our feet stuck fast, helpless, hopeless, lost. We had no strength to deliver ourselves. But as we began to cry everything appeared hopeless to us. We can see ourselves in that miserable condition. What a mercy that we began to see it because there was a time when our eyes were closed in death and we could not observe these things. But began to see our lost estate and the

⁴ Ephesians 2:4.

⁵ Ephesians 2:8.

⁶ Acts 16:30.

⁷ Ephesians 2:6-7.

⁸ Ephesians 2:6.

thought and the sight of these things so infected upon us that we were distraught with the very feeling of a lost eternity.

You know, there are so many in the world today and in every age who are content with a form of religion. We have it with the Pharisees and Sadducees and others in the days of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have it with many who opposed the preaching of the apostle Paul and the apostles in their day. We have seen it in the fires of persecution throughout the ages of time up until this present day. We seem to be living in a day of apathy, a day when man is content with a form of religion, denying the power thereof. And so many are content to live as though they were secure without any knowledge of that security. And, therefore, they perish in their sins and they wait for a lost eternity and their solemn end on this earth is but the beginning of that which is worse to come.

Oh, to be stirred up within, to come into the experience of these things that every true child of God has experienced in one way or another, to know that we are lost. A sinner is a sacred thing. The Holy Ghost has made him so.

Now most in the world today wouldn't understand that language. They won't begin to comprehend the truth that lies behind it because they have never died to their sins. They are still living, wallowing in their unbelief and in their carnal situation. But God arrests his people. He brings them to account. He shows them what they are in their natural state. And the sight is a solemn sight indeed. It is awful to witness that some have been led deeper into these things, but others... some have been hung, as it were, over the fires of hell.

But look at the words of our text. "Hath raised us up... hath raised us up..."⁹ Sovereign power was exerted to raise up God's people from the dungeon of their sins and to set their feet upon the eternal Rock of ages, "Raised us up."¹⁰

Ah, do we know anything of the devil, of his tempting power, of his subtle questions concerning the sovereignty of God? Have we not been there? Have we not experienced some of these things? And we believe him. We tend to believe him if put before us in such ways as though it seems highly believable. Of course the devil is right and we are wrong. If we are not worthy to be called God's sons, we are not worthy of the least of all his mercies, our sins have condemned us. They have separated us from our God. And so there is no worthiness within us. Our righteousnesses are before him as filthy rags. We are wretched and undone.

But he hath raised us up. He has raised us up from the dead, carnal, formal condition. He has raised us up out of the pit, that filthy pit that [?] and he has raised us up together and made us fit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Have you come this morning cast down because of sin and unbelief? Do you feel your carnal nature? Do you feel your wretched unworthiness? Do you feel that you have

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

despised the Word of God, you have rejected the truth, you have turned your back upon an holy God? What do you need? You need to be raised up.

Can you raise yourself up? Can you put forth strength to deliver yourselves? Oh, the trying or the exercise only renders you weaker and weaker and you come to despair of ever being delivered.

Hath raised us up, raised us up from that awful condition to be with him. Isn't this the glorious truth that is set before us here?

And then we have this word "together." "And hath raised us up together... together with Christ."¹¹ And the text in these two verses puts forth that precious name of Christ Jesus twice. But I believe that this also means together with God's people.

How can two walk together, except they be agreed?¹² And does not the Holy Spirit teach all men alike? That doesn't mean that all have the same experiences. It doesn't mean that they are all in the same depth of confusion. It doesn't mean that they are all raised up in exactly the same way. But there is something here in common, something here that binds the children of God together. They can relate their experiences one to another.

Now some of you who read our Christian magazines wherein are contained from time to time some of the experience of saints of bygone days, can you read those things and not have some feeling toward the person who experienced them? Isn't there a similarity in their experience in some point to your experience? Do you not in some ways envy the trials of their faith, what they passed through, seeing where it led them?

Together. Birds of a feather flock together. What have we that holds us together here? We come from different backgrounds and, indeed, I can say from different nations, different circumstances entirely in our lives. And yet we have come together this morning. What has brought us together?

I believe, surely, it must be for the preaching of the gospel. This is the part of the service that takes the most time. We come to hear the Word of God expounded. And we have a desire—and some, perhaps, more than others a delight---to hear these glorious truths set over and over again. We want something old and we want something new. We want a consistency in the truth of God's Word. We want something that will feed our souls and satisfy our desires. And we know that these things can only come from God, but God who uses means to convey his truth to our hearts.

Together, then. This is what naturally brings us to the house of God that we might be together in the assembly of God's people to hear the same things.

Now the Word of God does not touch the heart of each one the same. Sometimes we may be so cold and lifeless the Word of God doesn't touch us at all. But another time we

¹¹ Ibid

¹² See Amos 3:3.

may come in warm hearted, desirous, waiting for the truth of God and the Lord speaks through that Word.

But we need something more than a mere attendance to bind us together. You see, one day this world will end and Christ's kingdom will be complete. Every last elect vessel of mercy will be safely gathered in and Christ will be the King reigning sovereignly and supremely over his people. And all those that are in Christ Jesus will be together and together with him.

It is a precious thought for those that have any good hope through grace that they will be among them together in union, perfect union, sinless union. We cannot begin to imagine what that can be. Our poor, puny minds cannot grasp these glorious truths that sin will no more annoy and that these weak bodies of ours will be transformed into glorious bodies like unto Christ's. We will be together through another ending eternity.

Now, the true child of God wants a foretaste of that before. He wants to know or be assured that he is part of that people. And he knows that if he is one of God's people he will be bound in love to all God's people. For this is the commandment of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Raised up together. I say we come from very different backgrounds. We are our own people, our thoughts differ one from another and we may see certain things in the Scripture differently one from another. But there is something secret that lies within the hearts of all God's people that binds them together.

You take the doctrines of sovereign grace often known as Calvinism. Can we give up these truths? Can we differ upon these points? Indeed, not. These are the foundation truths of our most holy faith. These are the very things that bind us together.

There are some other issues, important issues, doubtless, because they are the issues of God. But we might have a different mind upon these things, a different opinion. But it doesn't separate that friendship and that fellowship in the gospel. Rather, these are willing to look upon one another as brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why does God raise us up together? For this purpose that we might all sit together, that we may come to the same place, to the same glorious truth, that we may come to a little of heaven begun here below.

Sitting is the posture that is taken when labor is at its end. A man goes out in the morning to his daily occupation and he labors through that day and in the evening he comes home from his labor, but what does he want to do? He wants to sit down. He wants to rest. He has been on the go all day. His limbs are feeling somewhat tired. His whole bodily frame needs rest and so he sits. And so it is spiritually to sit together.

Remember the Lord Jesus Christ as a young child 12 years of age? He came into the temple and he sat down with the doctors of divinity, those who were knowledgeable in

the Scriptures in that day. And there he debated with them the words of God. They sat together. They were astonished at this young boy, of his understanding, his perception of the Word of God. Perhaps they didn't understand that he was the very Christ of God sent from heaven, but they saw something in him which made them realize that he had the truth.

And isn't this, when we come together and sit down together to consider not the points of distinction or separation, but rather the points of truth? Now he goes on to say that they sit together in heavenly places. What are these heavenly places which the apostle is speaking of to these Ephesians?

What is heaven to the believer? Isn't it where Christ is? If Christ were to be found in hell, hell would be heaven to us. I believe we can put it this way, that wherever Christ is, is heaven to us. Where we discover him it is a heavenly place.

I believe I mentioned recently about Moses when he came to that burning bush where he was commanded to take his shoes from off his feet. Why? He was there in an open country, there in the wilderness, as it were. What was the place? Just rolling countryside or flat desert or whatever it was.

But, no, the Lord says to him, "The ground upon which thou standest is holy ground or heavenly ground."¹³ And why was that? Because the presence of the almighty was there.

"Made us sit together in heavenly places."¹⁴

Doesn't the house of God, then, become to us a heavenly place when we experience or feel something of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ? And don't we need to be extremely careful as we are reminded from time to time that "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst"?¹⁵ Do we believe these things? Do we believe that Christ comes into the midst of his praying, worshipping people?

Well, Christ himself has said it. And we believe him to be true. And, therefore, where Christ is, heaven is. It is a heavenly place.

For in the exercises of God's people do they not find, at times, heavenly places? As you kneel down to pray sometimes, it may be formal prayer, and you may be tired and not realize even what you are uttering, how fallen we are, what poor creatures we oft times have to confess that we become. But in those times when religion is lively within our souls and our hearts go out toward the Lord Jesus Christ and prayer seems to be indicted by the Holy Spirit and we make confession unto our God, it is a heavenly place for Christ is there. He condescends to meet with his people. Yes, in their personal, individual worshipping of him, in their prayers and meditations the Spirit of the living God at times

¹³ See Exodus 3.

¹⁴ Ephesians 2:6.

¹⁵ Matthew 18:20.

comes upon them and they feel drawn up in their souls to Christ that he becomes everything, all and in all to them.

You see, it is all in Christ Jesus.

“And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”¹⁶

Remember how the Lord Jesus Christ experienced this world in all its fallen condition, all its oppositions, all its troubles and trials. He experienced these things that he might be a sympathetic high priest unto his people. And it shows that he cares for his people because he loves them so much.

Everything, then, is in Christ Jesus, by Christ Jesus, through Christ Jesus. He is the one to whom we are bound, the one to whom we must come like that woman with the infirmity of 12 years. Oh, how afflicted that poor woman was. But she comes to a knowledge of Christ.

And isn't this, in type, what every one who is the Lord's people come to? They come to see their affliction, to see how long standing it has been and what it has done for them and how it has bowed them down with the feelings of this world. But then they come to Jesus, drawn by the influence of the Holy Spirit, come because there is a divine compulsion that they must come and they come and touch the hem of his garment and then they [?] and they confess, “It was I.”

“Daughter, go in faith. Go in peace, thy faith hath made the whole.”

Yes, together in Christ Jesus.

And, I believe every child of God can speak something along these terms of what the Lord has done for them, how they became attracted to Christ and how they saw that their salvation was in him and in him alone that he was the object of their chief desire: Jesus crucified for me.

“That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”¹⁷

“In the ages to come.”¹⁸ That could, of course, mean in eternity when we have laid down this body and we become new creatures in heaven. But I believe it has a meaning also for this life. He that hath begun a good work in you shall perform it to the day of Jesus Christ.¹⁹

¹⁶ Ephesians 2:6.

¹⁷ Ephesians 2:7.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ See Philippians 1:6.

We don't begin and then it all comes to nothing. No. Where the Spirit of God begins within us, there is a continuance. But in the ages to come whatever those ages may be, it may mean the course of our lives from that day of grace to the end and then through a never ending eternity. It may mean that God's people now and in the ages to come, in a latter age. And I believe this is one of the meanings that the apostle speaks of here. He felt that the world was not immediately coming to an end. There would be a period when God would display his sovereign grace for sin abounding. But in the ages to come. Whatever interpretation we may like to put upon it, and it would include all time in the experience of God's chosen people, "he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace."²⁰

And how is this to be done? "In his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."²¹

Everything that flows to us from heaven, from God, flows through Jesus Christ.

We were considering recently that, "No man hath seen God at any time."²² God ever operates through the person of his only beloved Son. It is through Jesus Christ that all the blessings of his grace are revealed.

Now that doesn't mean that the Father has a lesser interest in us than the Son or the Spirit. No, there is an equality in heaven. The Father loved his people and sent his Son to deliver them and the Spirit was given the work to reveal the truth to them.

It seems to me that there are times when the apostle cannot fully express himself because there are not words sufficient thus to do. But how great is this language, "the exceeding riches of his grace"?²³ It exceeds or excels everything, his grace.

"I...will be gracious to whom I will be gracious..."²⁴

How rich is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ toward us? Who can enumerate the greatness of it? So great, so glorious, so marvellous are his riches, the riches of Christ's grace? How can we even consider these things is beyond all earthly wisdom and understanding. Only as we experience something of them.

What do we know of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? Well, daily in our lives we realize and recognize that we come short in every way. There are those sins of commission and sins of omission, great sins and small sins if there can be descriptions put in that way, but sin that needs to be put away.

Can we remit one sin? Can we do sufficiently to hide the smallest sin that we have ever committed, again, if we can describe it thus?

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² John 1:18; 1 John 4:12.

²³ Ephesians 2:7.

²⁴ Exodus 33:19.

Man is not able to do anything, not the minutest thing towards his own deliverance. What if he could render unto God sufficient to pay for the tiniest sin? What about all the rest? What about that mountain of sin that wells up before him? No, man cannot deliver himself even from the smallest. So how can we think of that which is the greatest?

But God says, “Sin shall not have dominion over you,”²⁵ because Christ has paid that price of sin and brought in an everlasting righteousness for his people. And when we can kneel down and fall down before God and confess our sins to him and feel something of the riches of his grace, we cannot plunge into the depths of that grace. We cannot reach to the heights of that grace, so rich, so full, so free. Such is the goodness of God. And it is displayed, wonderfully, graphically displayed in his kindness.

Oh, who is sufficient to speak of the loving kindness of our God, so kind in his dealings toward us? It leaves us expressionless. It leaves us breathless, the kindness of God toward us.

Oh, to meditate, then, upon these things, to consider something of that kindness.

And will it not take all eternity and then that will not be sufficient to recount the kindness that God has shown toward us, so kind, so tender, so merciful and all through Christ Jesus. He is the Christ of God. He is the Savior of sinners. He is that great Mediator that stands between God and man, the only Mediator who through his own work has opened the door to heaven that every child of God may freely enter in.

Everything now and in the future and through eternity will be through Christ Jesus. There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.²⁶ There was no other good enough, no other man to pay the price of sin. He only, Christ only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in.

Ah, we leave the subject, but I hope it won't leave us. We come lamentably short in trying to open it up. But I say it is language that is far beyond the wisdom of all humanity to be able to express nor to have a touch, a glimpse, a taste of these things again will be a little heaven begun here below. Amen.

²⁵ Romans 6:14.

²⁶ See 1 Timothy 2:5.