

# Alive Together With Christ

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**Bible Text:** Ephesians 2:1-10

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Tommy, we will have to use this microphone this morning. I left the other one behind. Thank you.

And let's pray as we come to the Word of God.

*Father, we pray that by your Spirit you would bring your Word to us in power, that you would give us ears to hear it, eyes to see it and hearts to submit to it and obey it. And we pray that the Lord Jesus would be highly exalted in it and we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.*

We are considering this morning, this Easter morning, that Christ is risen and as the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 15:

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.<sup>1</sup>

And that is to say—and we will elaborate on that a bit more later—all human beings, without exception are in one of two categories, one of two conditions. There is no third, only these two. Any human being that has ever lived, that is alive, that ever will live is either in Adam or in Christ. And the Bible tells us very plainly in many places that to be in Adam is to exist and live and dwell in the realm of sin, in the realm of death, the realm of condemnation by God. And that is the condition that every human being enters this world in, in Adam, dead in sin.

“Now Christ is risen from the dead.”<sup>2</sup> And, therefore, all who are in him, Paul tells us, have risen with him. All that is his becomes that which belongs to those that are in him. He lives and they live forever. If Christ had not risen we would not be justified. If Christ had not risen, then the Christian would still be dead in their sins.

Again, 1 Corinthians 15:

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:20-22.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:20.

And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!  
Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.<sup>3</sup>

So if Christ is not risen there is no gospel. There is no Christianity apart from the risen Christ, literally, physically, bodily he has risen from the dead and is alive at the right hand of the Father even now.

Now we are not going to be considering Christ's own resurrection properly this morning, but this other aspect of it, another resurrection, and that is, namely, the resurrection of all who are in him, all men, women and children who are joined to Christ. There is going to be a future resurrection of their bodies. You can read about that in 1 Corinthians 15, also in 1 Thessalonians chapter four. But the resurrection that we want to consider this morning is that spiritual resurrection, that resurrection of who you really are in the inner man, the essence of you, your spirit, your mind, this resurrection from death to life that happens the moment that a person by faith is placed into and joined to the Lord Jesus Christ, this resurrection.

Paul speaks of this resurrection in this second chapter of his letter to the Ephesians. Let's read it beginning in verse one.

“And you...”<sup>4</sup> And he is speaking to the Ephesians. They are Christian. These people are Christians. They are in Christ.

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 in 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.<sup>5</sup>

That is probably one of the greatest presentations of the gospel to be found in the Bible.

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:17-18.

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians 2:1.

<sup>5</sup> Ephesians 2:1-10.

Let's consider Paul's opening words. "You...were dead in trespasses and sins."<sup>6</sup>

You can't have a resurrection unless you have got a dead person. Resurrection, necessarily, is the raising of a dead from death to life. Paul reminds these people that at one time, as is true of every human being, at one time—and for the Christian that status has changed—but they were dead. We really are born still born in Adam as we enter this world.

Paul is speaking here of a particular kind of death and it is a particularly frightful death. It is worse than physical death, this death of which he speaks.

"You He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins."<sup>7</sup> And that is the condition of every human being that is in Adam. It is the natural and fallen condition of man, dead in trespasses and sins. It is universal.

You see the universality of it in verse three. "Among whom also we all once conducted ourselves."<sup>8</sup> It is a universal condition of all who are in Adam to be dead in trespasses and sins. What does that mean? What does it mean? It is a curious phrase. "You...were dead in trespasses and sins."<sup>9</sup>

Well, before being raised up in Christ, while still being joined to and represented by that first Adam, a man or a woman or a child is somehow in a realm, a condition, a state of trespass, violations of the law of God, trespasses and sins. And in verses two through three the apostle Paul elaborates on what that condition is.

He says, "Let me... you were dead in trespasses and sins. You once conducted yourselves, lived habitually in that realm. Let me describe your former life to you."

And here it is, beginning in verse two.

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.<sup>10</sup>

If you read John's gospel and John's epistles, 1, 2 and 3 John, you find the apostle John many times referring to this condition of being dead in trespasses and sins, as being in darkness as opposed to being in the light in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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<sup>6</sup> Ephesians 2:1.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ephesians 2:3.

<sup>9</sup> Ephesians 2:1.

<sup>10</sup> Ephesians 2:2-3.

To be in trespasses and sins is to be in that condition in which death reigns, in which God's condemnation is upon the person. It means, as Paul describes it here in verses two through three, it means... To be dead in trespasses and sins, to exist in that condition means to walk in which you once walked. And by that term "walked" Paul means that habitual and normal conversation and course of one's life.

This is what your life was characterized by when you were dead in trespasses and sins. What was it? Well, we walked, we lived in accordance, in agreement with the course of this world. And he is going to identify, then, here, the things that we loved and which characterized us, the world, the flesh and the devil.

We walked according to the course of this world. That is to say we agreed. The person who is in Adam, the person who is dead in trespasses and sins is a person who agrees with and is in accord with the philosophies, thinking patterns of this world. The world's concept about one's self, about life, about God, about death. As the world thinks so we once thought.

To be dead in trespasses and sins is to live in accordance, in agreement with the devil who is the ruler of this age, the God of this world and it is to be in agreement with his kingdom.

Jesus said to the Pharisees, "You are of your father the devil, therefore you do the deeds of your Father."<sup>11</sup> And so to be dead in trespasses and sins is to be living in accordance with the devil, to be a member of Satan's rebel kingdom against God's kingdom, to be a rebel, to be part of that realm that is opposed to Christ.

To be dead in trespasses and sins is to conduct one's self in accordance with our own flesh, with one's own fallen flesh. The flesh is—as Paul means it here—the flesh is human life, humanity—as symbolized by one's body, flesh—lived out apart from and in rebellion against God. It is to be ungodly. All of that which is ungodly the person who is still dead in Adam, dead in trespasses and sins is in agreement with and therefore to indulge life in its simple desires and thinking patterns which are opposed to God, living totally apart from him.

To be dead in trespasses and sins is to conduct one's self in accordance with the fallen sinful mind. And that is why Paul tells us in Romans chapter 12 that we are to be transformed, not conformed to this world, but transformed by what? By the renewing of our minds.<sup>12</sup> The Lord enables the Christian to think more and more and more like him according to truth.

Well, this is what it is. TO be dead in trespasses and sins is to be dead to God. It is to be hostile to God. It is to be unable to obey his law because you don't love his law, because the person doesn't love him. And Paul says that the result of all this, being dead in

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<sup>11</sup> See John 8:44.

<sup>12</sup> See Romans 12:2.

trespasses and sins is to be what? The end of verse three, “[You] were by nature children of wrath,”<sup>13</sup>

What is wrath? Well, it is the condemnation of God.

You see, it is absolutely untrue to say that God is love and he loved everyone. Well, he certainly showed some common grace to everyone. He sends the rain on the just and the unjust. He feeds the wicked as well as the righteous. But there is a vast difference in his attitude toward those who are in Christ and those who are in Adam.

The one company of men in Christ is justified before him. The other is under condemnation. And that, therefore, to be living in Adam, to be living in trespasses and sins is to be a child of wrath, under the condemnation of God.

What is it that defines the sinner’s relationship to God as he is apart from Christ? What is the...what is it that defines it? Wrath. Read Romans chapter one. God’s wrath is set upon him, his holy and just anger.

Well, let’s take a closer look at all of this so that we might see how beautiful Christ really is. If we don’t understand these things we will not really truly and fully see the beauty and the preciousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lloyd-Jones comments upon this. He says, “We can never understand the love of God until we understand this doctrine, that is the wrath of God.”

It is the way in which we measure the love of God. There is a great deal of talk today about the love of God. And yet were we truly to love God we would express it, we would show it. We cannot really understand why it is that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God had to come into this world, unless we understand the doctrine of the wrath of God and the judgment of God.

The death of our Lord upon the cross is not absolutely necessary unless this doctrine is true.

If God is love and he loves everyone the same and everyone... and every human being is his child, there is no need for the cross, no need whatsoever and the cross makes no sense at all apart from understanding that man, in his sin, is under God’s curse and in desperate need of a Savior.

Well, here is this phrase. “[You] were by nature children of wrath.”<sup>14</sup> Kind of a curious phrase also, isn’t it? “[You] were by nature children of wrath.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ephesians 2:3.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

We might expect the phrase to be something like—in speaking of people who are dead in their trespasses and sins and in rebellion against God and so on—to be something like, “And you were under the wrath of God,” and that is true., to be under the wrath of God, under his judgment and condemnation.

But Paul uses this phrase. “By nature children of wrath.”<sup>16</sup> That is the condition that every Christian used to be in before being saved, before being placed into the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is the condition of every man, woman and child today who is not in Christ. They are by nature children of wrath. What does that mean?

Well, we acknowledge it is a universal condition. Notice Paul’s phrase here at the end of verse three. We have seen this before. And now he reiterates it. He says at the beginning of verse three, “Among whom also we all once conducted ourselves,”<sup>17</sup> and so on. And then at the end of verse three he says, “[You] were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”<sup>18</sup> Every one else, just as everyone else, all human beings enter this world in this condition, by nature children of wrath.

The Lord Jesus spoke of this, John chapter three. “He who believes in Him,”<sup>19</sup> that is in Jesus Christ, “is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”<sup>20</sup> And there it is: condemnation upon the man who is apart from Christ.

You know, Lloyd-Jones, again, quotes on this aspect. “The apostle Paul’s teaching, then, is that until we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ we are under the wrath of God. The wrath of God is an expression of God’s hatred of sin, an expression of God’s punishment of sin. It is a clear statement to this effect that if we die in our sins we go to eternal punishment. This is the teaching of Scripture.”

So there it is. The condemnation of God because of our sin, by nature children of wrath. Let’s nail this down even more clearly now.

Let’s look at the portion of this and you really see two parts of this statement that we need to look at. “By nature” and “children of wrath.” What is that statement? “Children of wrath.” It is a Semitism, that means it is a Hebrew idiom, a Hebrew figure of speech.

When you come to phrases like this, don’t skip over them. As you are reading your Bible, studying your Bible, a phrase like that, “children of wrath” can be familiar to you. You have been a Christian a long time. You have heard familiar passages and you can think that you understand it. You need to pause. You need to stop. Think about that phrase and then, most importantly, let the Bible interpret itself. It will. That is why one of your most important study tools, Bible study tools, is a concordance.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> John 3:18.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

What happens if you take your concordance or you take your computer Bible and punch in “children of.” Just go to that phrase and “children of.” Do a little search and what do you find?

Well here is what you find. You find 983 references to “children of...” something. And you particularly find this in the Old Testament. For example, you find the Scriptures speaking of the children of Israel, the children of Ephraim, the children of Judah, of Anach, the children of harlotry. There is an interesting one, the children of harlotry. The children of men, speaking of all humanity, children of men, children of God, children of the devil.

And so as you break those phrases down and come up with a definition it would be something like this, “children of...” As the Bible uses this phrase, “children of...” something, what is it talking about? This phrase reflects the head of a particular company of men and those descended from that head and therefore it means the children who share in the nature of their head, or you might say very simply it is a company of people that share something in common, a company of people who share something in common. That commonality could be... well, we are all Jews. We are descended from Jacob, from Israel. Or we might belong to the tribe of Judah so we are descended from Judah. We are the children of Judah. Or another company of men might be people who are particularly the Jews under the Old Testament covenant in covenant standing with God were guilty of spiritual adultery, harlotry because they worshipped idols and they forsake him to whom they were betrothed, you see. And they are, therefore, children of harlotry would be a people who are given in common to idolatry, to forsaking the covenant with God, you see. Children of the devil are children who as a company of people share certain traits and commonalities with the devil. Jesus spoke of this in John eight. He said of the devil, “He was a murderer from the beginning and you are trying to kill me. Whenever the devil speaks he speaks a lie and you are speaking lies.”<sup>21</sup>

So it is a company of men, children of something, is a company, a group of people who have something, some characteristic in common. All right. So what does children of wrath mean? It simply means this. Children of wrath are those people descended from fathers who themselves were objects of God’s wrath. These children now being in the same condition as their fathers, that is, objects of the wrath of God. They are a company of people whose ancestry and present condition is that of being under God’s condemnation, under God’s settled, holy, just wrath against them.

“[You] were by nature children of wrath,”<sup>22</sup> You were under the condemnation of God, headed for hell, dead in trespasses and sins. Such is the condition of every human being relationship then to God if they are not in Christ.

This is why it is really not proper to come up to someone and without qualification say, “You know, God loves you. God loves you and he has a wonderful plan for your life.”

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<sup>21</sup> See John 8:44.

<sup>22</sup> Ephesians 2:3.

Well, the fact of the matter is, the defining relationship of the sinner apart from Christ to God is one of wrath, one of wrath and judgment, you see. And therefore this really is the message that people need to hear. It is the one that Paul is using here in the first three verses of Ephesians two so that he might, against this backdrop show us the rich mercy of God shown us in Christ. And, therefore, this is where the gospel begins. “[You] were by nature children of wrath.”<sup>23</sup> “Dead in trespasses and sins.”<sup>24</sup>

Now, what about this little aspect of that phrase, “by nature”? You might have expected him to say, “and you were children of wrath, you were objects of God’s wrath, dead in trespasses and sins apart from Christ.” But he says... he adds this. “By nature,” by nature we were children of wrath. What does this mean?

Well, it points to this fact that we have already mentioned that man, by his nature and his being he is in Adam. He is... what is the fundamental reason that he is a child of wrath, that he is an object of God’s wrath? What is the fundamental reason for it? It is because of who he is in Adam by nature. What is he? What is he apart from Christ? Well, he is a rebel. He is of his father the devil. He is set against God. He is in antichrist’s kingdom. He is a rebel against God, hostile to the law of God. And though a little baby then born into this world might look cute and innocent, the fact of the matter is, he is, as all of us were, on our birthday by nature a child of wrath. And left apart from Christ headed for hell, you see.

And this is what it is, then, to be dead in trespasses and sins. “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”<sup>25</sup> It is to be living a living death. It is to be living under the judgment and condemnation of God. It is to be living on death row. The sentence has already been passed and it only waits for the hammer... well, the hammer has already fallen. It only waits for the guards to come and take us and we die and we head for hell.

It is a hopeless condition. To be dead in trespasses and sins, to be a part from Christ is a hopeless condition. It is a condition in which we are powerless to save ourselves, powerless. It is a condition in which there is utter inability, no power to repair ourself, no more power to fix this problem than a corpse has because, after all, the man who is apart from Christ is dead in trespasses and sins.

Dr. Kent Hughes comments on this. His commentaries are excellent, by the way, R. Kent Hughes. And they are all published. He has one on many of the New Testament epistles including Ephesians.

And he tells this story. “A pastor friend of mine once told me that when he was working in a mortuary one night he walked into the darkened chapel and saw an eerie sight, an open casket at the front of the chapel with a body lying in it. He crept slowly to the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ephesians 2:1.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.



casket and then slowly elevated himself. He could just see the tip of the corpse's noses and then shouted, 'Boo!'"

This guy is strange.

And it didn't move an eyelash and the point is dead men can't hear. They can't see. They can't even be frightened of their condition. He goes on to say, "The uniqueness of the biblical position can be seen when we note that in the long history of the human race there have been and are three basic views of human nature: Man is well, man is sick, man is dead.

"Supporters of the first view—man is well—argue that all man needs is a good diet, exercise and some vitamins. 'I am all right. You are all right.' That is their motto."

"Proponents of the second view—man is sick—maybe even agree that he is mortally sick, but his situation is certainly not hopeless.

"The biblical view is that man is not well, he is not sick, he is dead, dead in his transgressions and sins. All man's self help will avail nothing. You can play reveille in the Arlington National Cemetery for a whole year, but you will get no response from the dead soldiers there. Every soul outside of Christ is in the death valley of the soul. This is a desolate image. Everyone without Christ dead. Most people do not want to hear this today and many pulpits are silent about this doctrine, but it is a crucial truth because Christ's atoning death did not make any sense without it."

What condition is the sinner in? What condition were we in? Dead. Utter inability. Even when we were dead in our trespasses and sins, this is when God goes to work to save us. The sinner has no more ability to save himself than dead Lazarus did in the tomb before Jesus came and said, "Lazarus come forth."<sup>26</sup> And those great words, "And he who was dead came forth."<sup>27</sup>

And he had been dead until he stunk, you see.

Well, man fancies himself able to bring himself out of a tomb, to do things even religious things and especially moral things, to make himself right with God. But he remains a child of wrath. The Bible says this over and over and over.

Romans three. "Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh,"<sup>28</sup> that is to say no man, "will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."<sup>29</sup>

And, again, Romans three.

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<sup>26</sup> John 11:43.

<sup>27</sup> See John 11:44.

<sup>28</sup> Romans 3:20.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.<sup>30</sup>

And that is good news because a dead man is dead towards God. That is to say he has no ability to make things right with God. He has no ability to appease God, no ability to earn merit with God, none. He is dead toward God, dead in trespasses and sins.

Well, there is where the gospel begins. This is the kind of message that the law of God does to show us. That is why we should study the 10 Commandments. They, as Paul says in Romans seven, they kill us. They show us that we are dead to God, utterly unable to save ourselves and headed for hell under his judgment and condemnation.

And then the good news really comes, doesn't it? Ephesians two verse four. "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us."<sup>31</sup> When did he love 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.<sup>32</sup>

Men and women, if you are a Christian these truths should just drive you to say, "Thank you, thank you, thank you for saving my soul."

Look at the hopelessness. You are dead in the tomb, in the darkness, under God's wrath. But God in his rich mercy and his great love made us alive.<sup>33</sup> It is all his doing.

Salvation is of the Lord. And God determined that he would say, and plug your name in where Lazarus was in John chapter 11, "Come forth, come forth."<sup>34</sup> And the dead man came forth.

This is the sovereignty of God in the salvation of man. It is him affecting his resurrecting power by placing us into Christ.

Ephesians two at verse seven says... and he tells us his motive. Here is his motive. Here is why he does this and why salvation must be all of the Lord. There can't be any boasting on our part. There is no place for boasting in salvation in Christ Jesus because God says, Ephesians 2:7, "That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Romans 3:27-28.

<sup>31</sup> Ephesians 2:4.

<sup>32</sup> Ephesians 2:4-5.

<sup>33</sup> See Ephesians 2:4.

<sup>34</sup> See John 11:43.

<sup>35</sup> Ephesians 2:7.

He was obligated in no way to say, “Come forth,”<sup>36</sup> but he did. He did.

Now notice very, very carefully here, first of all, if any man dead in his sins is ever going to be made alive in Christ the only basis of this great resurrection from death to life is God’s rich mercy, his great love and his grace. It is the gift of God.

There is no place here for meritorious works, none. The dead man can’t do them anyway. No place for meritorious works designed to earn God’s saving favor. There is only one reason that Paul points to that anyone can be saved—by grace, *sola gratia*, by grace, by God’s rich mercy and his love. If any sinner is ever saved from the wrath of God and from hell and judgment it is only because of God’s mercy and not giving us what we deserve. Because of his love he loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and sins. He loved us when we were unlovable. And it is only going to be due to his grace, that is, giving us what we don’t deserve.

And, second, we see that this resurrection here is, this salvation, this resurrection from death to life is accomplished how? How is it accomplished? In Christ.

Now, let’s examine things this way. Every human being sinned in Adam and is born into this world joined to Adam. And all that is Adam’s is imputed to all who are in him, sin, death, judgment.

To be justified before God somehow we must be moved from this state of being in Adam to this state of being in Christ. And that is why over and over again in the New Testament you will see that little phrase, “in the beloved,”<sup>37</sup> “in him,” “in whom,” “in Christ,” over and over and over. And if anyone would still hang on to the notion that they have some ability to make themselves right with God by their own doing, let me ask you this. How are you going to move yourself from this condition to this condition? How are you going to sever yourself your Adam and join yourself to Christ?

That is a work of God’s power and God alone. It is only by his Spirit that he joins us to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let’s examine this concept even more closely. There are many, many references in the New Testament to it. In Ephesians itself it is repeated over and over again. Ephesians one verse one, “in Christ Jesus.”<sup>38</sup>

Verse three, “In Christ.”<sup>39</sup>

Verse four, “In Him.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> John 11:43

<sup>37</sup> Ephesians 1:6.

<sup>38</sup> Ephesians 1:1.

<sup>39</sup> Ephesians 1:3.

<sup>40</sup> Ephesians 1:4.

Verse seven, "In Him."<sup>41</sup>

Verse 11, verse 13, "In him, in him, in whom also..."<sup>42</sup>

What is the significance of this? We see it right here in chapter two. He made us made us alive together with Christ,<sup>43</sup> somehow joined to Christ. "in the heavenly places,"<sup>44</sup> he said. He has seated us in the heavenly places. How did we get there? In Christ Jesus. His kindness... why... how is God's mercy and grace and kindness shown to us? How we who are rebels and...? Well, it is because he places us in Christ Jesus. We are new creations. The Christian is created in Christ Jesus.

How does God save us? He joins us to Christ. He joins us to Christ.

The Lord Jesus spoke of this many, many times. You will see it given in imagery. He speaks of it in his high priestly prayer in John 17. For example, John six verse 53 and following, "Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.'"<sup>45</sup>

This is strange imagery, eating his flesh and drinking his blood. But it is speaking of union with Christ, being joined to Christ. And that is why he says, "If you don't eat my flesh and drink my blood, if you are not joined to me intimately, made one with me, you cannot be saved, you have no life in you."<sup>46</sup>

John 15. "Abide in me, abide in the vine."<sup>47</sup> Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches."<sup>48</sup> That is joining to Christ.

John 17, Jesus' high priestly prayer, "That they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe."<sup>49</sup>

Being joined to Christ, being taken out of the first Adam and placed into the last Adam. If you get hold of this your Bible will begin to make sense. It will begin to come to life.

Read 1 Corinthians 15, for example, Romans chapter four, Romans chapter five, understanding these things. And you will begin to see exactly how God really saves us.

What is the most vital question that anyone here today could ask themselves? It is this. Who is my head? Who am I in? The first Adam or the last Adam? Am I joined to this

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<sup>41</sup> Ephesians 1:7.

<sup>42</sup> Ephesians 1:11, 13.

<sup>43</sup> See Ephesians 2:5.

<sup>44</sup> Ephesians 2:6.

<sup>45</sup> John 6:53.

<sup>46</sup> See John 6:53.

<sup>47</sup> See John 15:4.

<sup>48</sup> John 15:5.

<sup>49</sup> John 17:21.

realm of sin and judgment and darkness? Or have I been joined by God to the Lord Jesus Christ?

Romans six verse three:

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.<sup>50</sup>

Paul is not talking fundamentally about water baptism in Romans chapter six. βαπτίζω (bap-tid'-zo) means to be immersed in. He is speaking of us being joined to the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is established in 1 Corinthians 12 verse 13 as the work of the Spirit of God. "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit."<sup>51</sup> Joined to the body of Christ and, therefore, as Paul elaborates on in Romans six, when a person is joined to the Lord Jesus Christ the old sinner is put to death with Christ on the cross because Christ's death becomes our death. We are joined to him. We are buried with Christ and then raised up as a brand new creation, raised with him.

Easter morning should remind us not only that Jesus is alive, but we have been made alive together with him. Jesus is risen, therefore all who are in him are risen. "Because I live,"<sup>52</sup> he said, "you shall live."<sup>53</sup>

Christ's perfect obedience to the law becomes ours. He perfectly obeyed the law of God. He established that righteousness and it becomes ours when we are joined to him.

This righteousness is complete. There is nothing to be added to it. And "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are,"<sup>54</sup> Romans 8:1, "in Christ Jesus."<sup>55</sup>

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God."<sup>56</sup>

God's wrath can no more abide upon the Christian than it could abide upon his Son. That wrath has all been poured out. It has all been laid upon him on the cross. It is paid for. It is finished. It is over.

You see, this concept of being in Christ come up in some of the old hymns we sing:

Rock of Ages cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in thee.

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<sup>50</sup> Romans 6:3-4.

<sup>51</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:13.

<sup>52</sup> John 14:19.

<sup>53</sup> See John 14:19.

<sup>54</sup> Romans 8:1.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Romans 5:1.

To be joined to Christ is to be hidden in Christ and clothed with his righteousness so that there is no condemnation and the wrath of God does not come against us.

Now, we have seen why this great salvation came about, the mercy and love and grace of God. We have seen how God does it. He joins us to Christ.

But what is the means of it? What is the coupler that connects us to this great salvation so that the channel through which this salvation comes to us, what is it?

Well, we have it here in the text right in front of us, Ephesians two verse eight. “For by grace you have been saved through faith.”<sup>57</sup> There it is. “And that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works.”<sup>58</sup> Works is not the channel. Faith is.

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.<sup>59</sup>

How does salvation come to us? The Philippian jailer asked that question. “What must I do to be saved?”<sup>60</sup>

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.”<sup>61</sup>

That is a command, by the way. The gospel is god news, but it is a command. Everyone here today is being commanded by God to repent of trusting in their own works, their own deeds, their own so called righteousness and turn and in that repentance to Christ, to believe Christ, to believe this, to believe the Word of God. It is a command, not so much an invitation. It is a command. Repent and believe in Christ and don’t delay.

Faith is the direct opposite of works. Why? Because by faith we trust in Christ’s work, Christ being the object of our faith. We trust in his work rather than ours. And, therefore, it is by faith not by works. Salvation in Christ is entirely through faith apart from works.

John 1:12. “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.”<sup>62</sup>

Whoever believes in him, Jesus said, “should not perish, but have eternal life.”<sup>63</sup>

“He who hears my word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ephesians 2:8.

<sup>58</sup> Ephesians 2:8-9.

<sup>59</sup> Ephesians 2:9-10.

<sup>60</sup> Acts 16:30.

<sup>61</sup> Acts 16:31.

<sup>62</sup> John 1:12.

<sup>63</sup> John 3:15.

<sup>64</sup> John 5:24.

“This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.”<sup>65</sup>

That is Christ. That is him, the Son of God commanding us. And it is a gracious command, but it is a command from the king. Nevertheless, it needs to be immediately obeyed.

Christ is the object of this saving faith.

Well, what can a dead man do? You might say, “Well, I am dead in my trespasses. You just said that I have no ability to make myself right with God, so I may as well just... this must mean I... you know, how can God condemn me because I am dead. I can’t do anything about it.”

Actually, God’s response to that kind of reasoning is, “Who are you to answer back to God?”

Will you condemn God? Would you accuse God of some unrighteousness?

No, here is his command. His command is, “Repent and believe.”

And you say, “Well, what can I do? I am dead in my sins?”

In this country you can read your Bible.

“Well, I can’t understand it.”

But it is in reading and hearing the Word of God that the Spirit of God begins to work in us. You can humble yourself. You can acknowledge that you are a sinner. You can acknowledge that his Word is right and you are not. You can pray.

Can a person dead in their sins say this? “God, be merciful to me the sinner.”<sup>66</sup>

Of course he can. And if any man won’t do it, it is only because he won’t. And he would end in hell because he would not.

There is nothing that we can do to merit God’s mercy in salvation in Christ, but there is much we can do to put ourselves in a position. For example, Luke 18, two men went up to the temple to pray and one of them went home justified because he was humbling himself before God, “God be merciful to me the sinner.”<sup>67</sup> But he went up to the temple to pray.

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<sup>65</sup> John 6:29.

<sup>66</sup> See Luke 18:13.

<sup>67</sup> See Luke 18: 10-13.

Don't accuse God of being unjust towards you. If any man chooses to go play golf on the Lord's Day rather than coming and hearing the Word of God, you see, he can do that. Can a sinner walk into a church on Sunday morning and hear the Word of God? Hear it and place himself in that position?

Where is God more likely to save you? Well, one of the highest and most likely places is in his house on the Lord's Day among his people hearing his Word. So if you came here today it is a good thing. It is a good thing to do so.

You may have a copy—if you don't you can just listen—of a handout that was written in the 1800s, actually the late 1700s by a Baptist pastor and theologian named Abraham Booth. It is the first chapter of a book that he wrote called *The Reign of Grace*. And really it is a book about just exactly what we have been talking about, that God sustains us by grace in Christ. And he defined grace in this chapter.

What is grace? It is wrongly used many times. Many times grace is used by people to describe something and mean something exactly opposite of what it is, grace being thought of as something that God gives us to enable us to please him and save ourselves and so on.

Listen to what pastor Abraham Booth had to say. He says, "It is necessary to consider what is implied in the term grace," as it is used in the Bible he means. "The primary and principle sense of the word is free favor, unmerited—that is unearned and undeserved—kindness. Grace in the writings of Paul stands in direct opposition to works and worthiness. All works and worthiness of every kind and of every degree."

"God saved me because I believed in him and that guy didn't."

Don't turn faith into a work.

Did you decide one day to believe in Christ? And that obligated God to save you? Paul says in Ephesians two that even our faith is a gift of God.

This appears in the following passages. "Now to him that works the reward is not reckoned, or imputed, "or grace, but of debt. Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace."<sup>68</sup>

"For by grace are you saved, not of works lest any man should boast."<sup>69</sup>

"Who has saved us not according to our works, but according to his own purpose in grace."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> See Romans 4:4, 16.

<sup>69</sup> See Ephesians 2:8-9.

<sup>70</sup> See 2 Timothy 1:9.



So grace in its proper and strict sense always presupposes unworthiness in its object. Are you beginning to see that you are unworthy? Then you are a prime candidate for the grace of God in Christ.

So far as any degree of worth appears in us the province, the realm of grace ceases.

“If by grace then it is no more of works. Otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.”<sup>71</sup>

From the apostle’s reasoning here, Romans 11:6, It is evident that whatever is of works is not of grace at all and that whatever is of grace is not of works in any degree. In the apostle’s view of things works and grace are essentially opposite and equally irreconcilable as light and darkness. Besides when Paul represents the capital blessings of salvation as flowing from divine grace we are led to consider the persons on whom they are bestowed, not only as having no claim to those benefits, but as deserving quite the reverse, as having incurred a tremendous curse and as justly exposed to eternal ruin.

It is the eternal and absolutely free favor of God manifested in the promise of spiritual and eternal blessings to the guilty and unworthy.

Entirely detached from every supposition of human worth and operating independently of all conditions performed by man, grace rises superior to human guilt and superabounds over human unworthiness. Such is the eternal origin, such is the glorious basis of our salvation. And it is all to the praise of the glory of his grace.

Therefore we may learn that if grace in its own nature and as it is exercised in our salvation be directly opposite to all works and worthiness then those persons are awfully deceived who seek to join grace and works together in the same work and for the same end.

However high such a person’s pretense may be to holiness it is plain from the Word of God—and may, in some degree appear, from the nature of the thing—that such people take an effectual way to ruin their souls forever. For divine grace disdains to be assisted in the performance of that work which peculiarly belongs to itself by the poor imperfect performances of men.

Attempts by man to complete what grace begins betray our pride and offend the Lord. Let the reader therefore carefully remember that grace is either absolutely free or it is not grace at all. And it is by grace alone and only by grace alone that God’s salvation in Christ will come to man, a sinner. And, thus, the hymn:

Not the labor of my hands  
Can fulfill thy law’s demands.  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears forever flow,

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<sup>71</sup> See Romans 11:6.

All, all for sin could not atone,  
You, you, Lord, must save and you alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to thy cross I cling.  
Naked, come to you for dress,  
Helpless, I look to you for grace.  
Foul, I to the fountain fly,  
Wash me, Savior, or I die.

When you call on God's mercy to save you, you can't say, "And here, let me help you," or grace is no longer grace.

Let me end by reading an account, a little story that Kent Hughes records in his commentary on Ephesians chapter two to illustrate a man that understood grace.

"A large prestigious church had three mission churches under its care. On the first Sunday of the new year all the members of the mission churches came to the big city church for a combined communion service. In those mission churches which were located in the slums of the city, were some outstanding cases of conversion, thieves, burglars and so on. But all knelt side by side at the communion rail of the Church of England.

"On one such occasion the pastor saw a former burglar kneeling beside a judge of the supreme court of England, the very judge who had sent him to jail where he had served seven years. After his release this burglar had been converted and become a Christian worker. Yet as he knelt there the judge and former convict—neither one seemed to be aware of the other.

"After the service the judge was walking out of with the pastor and said to him, 'Did you notice who was kneeling beside me at the communion rail this morning?'

"The pastor replied, 'Yes, but I didn't know that you noticed.'

"The two walked along in silence for a few more moments and then the judge said, 'What a miracle of grace.'

"The pastor nodded in agreement. 'Yes, what a marvelous miracle of grace.'

"Then the judge said, 'But to whom do you refer?'

"The pastor said, 'Why to the conversion of that convict.'

"The judge said, 'I was not referring to him. I was thinking of myself.'

"The pastor, surprised, replied, 'You were thinking of yourself? I don't understand.'

“‘Yes,’ the judge replied, ‘It was natural for the burglar to receive God’s grace when he came out of jail.’”

He means humanly speaking.

“‘He has nothing but a history of crime behind him and when he saw Jesus as his Savior he knew there was salvation and hope and joy for him and he knew how much he needed that help. But look at me. I was taught from earliest infancy to live as a gentleman, that my word was to be my bond, that I was to say my prayers, to go to church, take communion and so on. I went through Oxford and took my degrees. I was called to the bar and eventually became a judge. Pastor, it was God’s grace that drew me. It was God’s grace that opened my heart to receive him and I am a greater miracle of his grace.’”

That man understood that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. And if any of us would be saved, we must understand that, too.

Let’s pray.

*Father, as we grow more and more in sanctification, as you renew our minds and teach us and show us more and more of yourself the thoughts of our former lives lived in the realm of death and trespasses and sins come back sometimes and we look back and we see those things with disgust.*

*And I suppose you allow this that we might remember that when we were dead in trespasses and sins, that is when you made us alive together in Christ. We pray, Father, that you would increase that holy disgust and hatred of sin and who we were, that we might remember how great a salvation this is and how beautiful the Lord Jesus Christ is and how rich in mercy that you are.*

*And we pray, particularly today, Father, that if there be anyone here still in that condition, still in Adam, dead in trespasses and sins, that you might show them their fearful condition and then that you might give them a glimpse of the beauty of Christ that they might run to him and cast their entire self and trust upon him and ask you, Lord, for your mercy. And we pray this in Christ’s name. Amen.*