

God Met My Deepest Needs

Ephesians 2:4-7

Several years ago a movie came out called "Death Becomes Her". I don't recommend it. It was dark humor at best, but the few funny parts weren't worth the cost of the movie rental; much less, a theatre ticket.

But the basic premise of the movie turns out to be a great illustration of the condition of all mankind outside of Christ.

Briefly as I can make it: two very vain women want to stay looking young forever. So they accept a potion from some mysterious voodoo-type woman, and drink it.

What the woman doesn't tell them, is that when they die their bodies will stay animated, although they will then begin to decay.

Obviously, early in the movie both women meet an early 'demise'. After that, no matter what happens to them they stay animated ('alive', if you will), but the damage done to their bodies by falling down stairs, or getting shot, or whatever, stays. As the movie progresses they are using more and more makeup to cover their decay ~ reattaching limbs with glue, or whatever,...not dying, but forever dead.

Like I said, the movie is supposed to be a comedy. But don't laugh.

Because in reality, this is the spiritual condition of mankind in the eyes of God. And if we as Christians would look at the world through the eyes of God, then our hearts should be gripped by a Godly sadness, as we witness a world of people, frantically striving to preserve by artificial means that which is already dead.

Paul describes our dead spiritual condition in Ephesians 2:1-3, then in verses 4-5 he tells why God intervenes to save us, and in verses 6-7 he describes what God has done to meet my deepest needs. Listen to Ephesians 2 as I read it:

**1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,
2 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,
3 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.
4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with
which He loved us,
5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together
with Christ (by grace you have been saved),
6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the
heavenly places in Christ Jesus,
7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of
His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.**

We began our look at chapter 2 by seeing what we were all like without Jesus Christ in our lives. As Paul describes it, all of us were like that at one time:

- We were dead in our transgressions in sins

- We were dominated by the world, Satan and our own flesh
- We were doomed to face the wrath of God

But just when everything looked hopeless, when we were completely helpless to do anything about our desperate condition, God intervened in order to do for us what we couldn't do for ourselves. Last week we looked at why God did this. God saved us because of His nature of love which He expresses toward us in mercy and grace. God responded to our lostness with love; He responded to our misery with mercy; and He responded to our guilt with grace.

So this morning, we're going to focus on what God did to address each of the three deepest needs that I have in my life—how God responded to my lost condition.

Although most of our English translations have provided a verb, an action word, early in this chapter, in the original language, there is actually not a verb at the beginning of Chapter 2 until we get to verse 5. Then beginning in that verse Paul uses three really unusual verbs to describe what God has done for us. He takes some common verbs and adds to them the three letter prefix “*sun*”, which means “with” and this makes the actions reflect an intimate, indissoluble union. So each of these three actions emphasizes that God met my deepest needs in and through and with Jesus Christ:

- I was made alive together with Christ (v.5)
- I was raised up together with Christ (v. 6)
- I was seated together with Christ (v.6)

Paul is describing for us what God has done in saving us, as he says in verse 5 and verse 8, “**by grace you have been saved.**” Everything that God has done in saving us is wrapped up in Jesus Christ, His death on the cross, His resurrection from the dead, and His ascension into heaven. Jesus was made alive, raised up, and seated at the right hand of the Father. And because I am united with Christ through faith in Him, God's grace has enabled me to experience those same three things.

It's interesting that all three of these verbs—*made alive together*, *raised up together*, and *seated together*—are in the past tense. They are a completed action. Paul talks as if all this has already taken place—made alive, raised up, seated in the heavens. My first thought is that doesn't seem right. I haven't yet been resurrected from the dead, or been raised up, or been seated together with Christ in the heavenly realms. I am still living here on earth. I am still in this body of flesh. What does Paul mean by this?

First, I think he's making the point that all this is a “done deal”. God has already done everything necessary to guarantee that I will experience all of this in the future. My resurrection and my place in heaven with Christ is secure because I am united with Christ. And that's a really encouraging thought.

But even more importantly, Paul is saying that there is a present aspect to all this. I get to experience being alive in Christ, being raised with Christ, and being seated with Christ, right here and now as I live out my life on this earth. And that's what I'd like to focus on this morning.

1. I Was Dead, But God Made Me Alive with Christ.

We saw from verse 1 and verse 5 that before God saved us we were dead in trespasses and sins. We were in a spiritual morgue and the cause of death was our sin. We were helpless to do anything about those sins and the spiritual death that resulted.

So my deepest need is to be made alive. You see, Jesus didn't come and die and be raised up in order to make bad people good. He came to make dead people live. We don't just need to be cleaned up, dressed up, and made pretty with morality or ethical living. That would be like trying to take an old, dead corpse out of the cemetery, cleaning it up, dressing it in new clothes, painting it with cosmetics, and trying to pass it off as a living person. You might fool people for a while from a distance, but anyone who gets close will know the truth. That person is dead!

It's the same way with spiritual death. A person who is spiritually dead cannot live a godly life for long. Sure, you can follow all the rules of morality and do all the rituals of religion. But none of that will bring life to your dead spirit. You may be able to fool a few people, even to fool yourself, into thinking you are doing okay. But sooner or later it will become clear to you and everyone else—you're not just sick with sin, you're dead. You need a new life. And that new life only comes by being united with Jesus Christ.

Jesus said in John 5:24, **"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."**

What is Jesus talking about here, physical death or spiritual death? Jesus says that as soon as we hear His word and believe in Him we *have* passed from death to life. When I believed in Jesus, God gave to me the gift of everlasting life, my sin was judged with Jesus on the cross, and I passed from spiritual death to spiritual life. It's a done deal. In fact, in the very next verse (John 5:25) Jesus even says that the hour or time that all this happens is NOW: **"Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live."**

You don't have to wait until the end of the world, or until your body dies, to have everlasting life—Jesus gives that life NOW, this very moment. When you trust in Jesus, God unites you with Christ so that you participate together with Jesus in His death, His resurrection, and His exaltation.

Paul put it this way in Galatians 2:20, **"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."**

And in 2 Timothy 2:11 he writes, **"This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him."**

But that is not all, not only have I died with Christ and been made alive with Him but second,

2. I Was Dominated, But God Raised Me Up with Christ.

Because we were dead in sins without God, we were powerless to overcome the powerful forces of this world, Satan and our own flesh, or sinful nature. But once again, God met that need for us. In Jesus, God provided the way for us to overcome those powerful forces which once kept us in bondage. God has **“raised us up together”** with Christ.

When we believed in Jesus and God saved us, we were not immediately physically raised up from this earth. That resurrection will occur some day, but for right now, physically we’re still right here on this earth. But the moment we trust Christ, our citizenship is changed. We are no longer citizens of this earth, but instead we are citizens of the kingdom of God. Later in this letter, Paul calls us **“fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,”** (2:19). Peter and the writer of Hebrews also call us aliens and strangers in this world. Jesus makes us citizens of His Kingdom, the Kingdom of Heaven.

We are citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven because we have a new King. Before we came to Christ we were dominated by **“the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,”** (2:2). But now we no longer serve the world, the flesh or the devil. We have pledged our allegiance to Christ. He is our King. Being citizens of the heavenly realm gives us a whole new outlook on our lives. We begin to live our lives based on the standards of the heavenly realm rather than those of this world.

Think about it this way: When Christ Jesus was made alive in that tomb, He did not stay in the tomb. That’s not where living people stay. He rose up and came out of the tomb. Same way when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, **He cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth!”** (John 11:43). And when came out still bound in the grave clothes Jesus said, **“Loose him, and let him go,”** (John 11:44).

We are raised up to live a different kind of life, a life of the Kingdom of Heaven. We are not only made alive (Eph. 2:5), but we have resurrection life in Christ! Practically this truth means that we now can live in *His* resurrection power with *His* resurrection life. Our new life is a raised-up life. It is the life of the risen Lord Jesus Christ in us.

In Paul’s the letter to the Colossians he explains how we have been, **“buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead,”** (Col. 2:12).

Later in Colossians Paul emphasizes this truth of our co-resurrection as he begins his exhortation to live a new kind of life, a supernatural life enabled by resurrection power...

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (Col 3:1-4)

Although God does not completely remove us from the influence of the world, Satan and our flesh, by being raised up with Christ we have His resurrection

power living in us. And Jesus has the power to defeat any foe; He can withstand any temptation; He has won the victory for us through His death and resurrection. He is exalted over all the spiritual forces of wickedness that would come against us. His name is above every name. His power and dominion is unlimited. United with Christ we CAN live a new life of victory over the world, over the devil and over the flesh. We are citizens of the heavenly Kingdom. Without our union with Christ we wouldn't even be aware that there was a heavenly Kingdom, let alone live as a citizen of it.

So I have been made alive with Christ, raised up with Christ and thirdly,

3. I Was Doomed, But God Seated Me with Christ.

Without Christ we were doomed to face the wrath of a holy God. And once again, there was nothing we could do on our own to overcome that fate. But God intervened to meet that need, too.

“and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” (2:6b)

What does Paul mean that we have been seated together with Christ in the heavenly realms? One aspect of this truth is what Paul says about Jesus' resurrection and exaltation at the end of chapter 1. There in verse 20 we find that Christ was raised from the dead and seated at the Father's right hand in the heavenly places. God's right hand is a place of superiority and authority. As verse 21 shows Jesus is, **“far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.”** So with Christ in us He has dominion over anything that would come against us.

Being seated with Christ also reminds us that we will one day be seated with Christ in order to reign with Him as 2 Timothy 2:12 says, **“If we endure, We shall also reign with Him...”** And Revelation 20:6 says, **“Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”**

We don't sit in the heavenly places *with* Christ Jesus (yet) but we do sit in the heavenly places *in* Christ Jesus. Since our life and identity is in Christ, as He sits in the heavenly places, so do we. **“In the heavenly places”** is where our blessings are (Eph. 1:3) and where we have fellowship with the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and with all the saints who have gone before us and will come after us. **“In the heavenly places”** is where all our commands come from and where all our praise and petitions go.

But, given the rest of what Paul writes here, he seems to have something else in mind also. Look at verse 7. What is the purpose for which God has seated us in the heavenly realms together with Christ?

“that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus,” (2:7).

The purpose of seating us with Christ in the heavenly realms is so that God might demonstrate His kindness to us. This is in sharp contrast to the wrath of God that

we face without Jesus in our lives. We *were* children of wrath, now we *are* a demonstration of His kindness. We are trophies of His grace.

The Life Application Bible Commentary writes...

There is an expression: "When you see a turtle on a fence post, you know he didn't get there by himself." It's obvious that someone had to put the turtle up there. In a very real sense, Christians are turtles sitting atop fence posts, put there by the grace of God. It's as if someone asked God, "How can I be sure you're as loving and gracious as you say you are?" His response is simply to display the church—flawed, sinful, capable of stupidity and faithlessness—as Exhibit A, demonstrating his infinite patience and mercy. How else would a group of such obviously fallen men and women get together and do anything for the glory of God? Who else but God could use people like us? You are a display case for the grace of God. Demonstrate his great kindness to you by sharing it with others. Use his patience with you to witness to others.

F B Meyer writes, "That He could love us when we were dead like Lazarus, in trespasses and sins; that He has linked us in the bonds of indissoluble union with His Son; that He had made it possible for us to share His Resurrection, His Triumph, and His Throne; that we, the poor children of earth and sin, should be admitted into the inner circle of Deity--this will be, to all eternity, the mightiest proof of the exceeding riches of his grace."

When we put all this together, we get a picture of a God who desires to reveal Himself to us and have an intimate personal relationship with us. And that is only possible through our union with Jesus Christ.

I'm not sure that we're even capable of fully understanding the implications of what God has done for us in meeting our deepest needs. In Jesus, He accomplished what we could never do on our own. God has made us alive with Christ, raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him. We are changed people, brand new. **"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new,"** (2 Cor. 5:17).

What Paul describes here in these verses is genuine Christianity – lives that have been completely transformed through our identification and union with Jesus. But unfortunately many of us have settled for something that is far inferior to a life where all of our greatest needs have been met by God.

Many of you probably remember when Coca Cola introduced their "New Coke" on April 23, 1985. The change in their formula was primarily designed to address the marketing campaign of their rival Pepsi which claimed that more people preferred the slightly sweeter taste of Pepsi. Less than three months after they introduced New Coke, they gave in to outside pressure and brought back the original Coke, and renamed it Coke Classic. Although it continued to sell the "new Coke", which it later named Coca Cola II, the sales of the "new Coke" had dwindled to only 3% of the market six months later.

When it came to their cola, people weren't willing to settle for anything less than the real thing. But unfortunately, many of those same people have settled for a

counterfeit of the real thing when it comes to their Christianity. Rather than living a life that has been completely transformed by God, they are satisfied with something far less:

- Some have settled for what I call “fire insurance” Christianity – the kind that says I’ll just pray this prayer to make sure I go to heaven when I die, but I’ll just keep living my life the way I want while I’m here on this earth.
- Some have settled for “works” Christianity – one where they are constantly trying to do enough good things to earn their way into God’s favor. Many of the cults that claim to be Christian fit into this category. We will deal with this topic two weeks from today.
- Some have settled for “religious” Christianity – the kind of Christianity that figures if I go to church regularly, get baptized, and tithe, then I’ll be OK with God.

But none of those counterfeits are capable of meeting our deepest needs. None of them deal with the fact that I was dead, dominated and doomed. Only the life-transforming work of Christ Jesus can do that.

Some of you have never experienced that kind of genuine Christianity. Maybe, like me, you’ve tried all the counterfeits, but they just didn’t meet those deepest needs in your life. This morning, is God speaking to your heart and asking you to trust in Jesus so that He comes to live His life through you? He can meet those needs that you will never be able to satisfy on your own. In a moment, we’re going to give you the opportunity to make that commitment.

But I’m also convinced that there are some of you here this morning who made that commitment at one time, but you’ve been deceived into trying the counterfeits rather than sticking to the real thing. I want to encourage you this morning to return to the real thing. Come back to Jesus by faith. Receive the grace of God. Let Jesus live through you. God meets your deepest needs in Christ by making you alive in Him. God enables you overcome the domination of this world by raising you up with Christ’s resurrection power. God lives in an intimate relationship of kindness toward you as He seats you with Him in His presence. That kind of genuine Christianity always satisfies.