

Made in Heaven

Ephesians 2:4-7

We began our look at Ephesians 2 by seeing what we were all like without Jesus Christ in our lives. As Paul describes it, all of us were like this 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

Paul describes our dead spiritual condition in Ephesians 2:1-3, then in verses 4-5 he tells why God intervenes to save us, because of His nature of love expressed in His mercy and grace. Then last time we began to look at verses 6-7 where Paul describes what God has done to change all that. 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.**

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 exaltation in 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.

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. Last time we covered verse 5 where we learned,

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 was that I needed to be made alive. And the good news is that because of God’s love, mercy and grace He did it. When I put my faith in

Jesus Christ He saved me by grace. And that means I am now IN CHRIST. I have died with Christ and been made alive in Him. Before Christ I was spiritually dead, now I am spiritually alive.

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 the 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.

We know that Jesus died on the cross and was made alive again on the third day. He was raised from the dead and raised to an exalted life. When I believed in Jesus and God saved me, God did not immediately raise me up physically from this earth as He did the Lord Jesus. That resurrection will occur some day, completing our experience of redemption. But for right now, physically, I still live in this body of flesh.

However, 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 came proclaiming the Kingdom of God, which is not of this world. At our conversion 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 verse 2 said that we were dominated by **"the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,"** (Eph. 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 kingdom 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.

John McArthur:

This Kingdom, paradoxically, is made up of exalted people who once were all slaves, righteous people who once were all wicked, honored people who once were all criminals, loyalists who once were all defiant rebels, friends who once were all enemies. It is made up of rulers who are at the same time servants, vanquished who are at the same time super-conquerors, heroes whose glory is their weakness, overcomers whose highest goal is humility.

That's a whole different kind of kingdom and it requires a whole different kind of life. 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. The same thing was true when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead in John 11. Jesus, **He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!"** (John 11:43). And when he came out still bound in the grave clothes Jesus said, **"Loose him, and let him go,"** (John 11:44). Living people don't stay in the tomb. Living people don't wear a death shroud.

What does that picture for us, who have been made alive and raised up with Christ? We are raised up to live a new kind of life, a life of the Kingdom of Heaven. We are not only made alive (Eph. 2:5), but the kind of life we have now is resurrection life! 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 has not yet completely removed us from the influence of the world, Satan, and our flesh, by raising us up together with Christ we now have His resurrection power living in us. And Jesus has the power to defeat any foe; He can withstand any temptation; He has defeated even death. 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.

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. Verse 3 said, we **"were by nature children of wrath, just as the others."** And once again, there was nothing we could do on our own to overcome that fate. We were doomed. But God intervened to meet that need, too. Verse 6 says that God, **"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 favor, 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."** Jesus has authority over everything, now and forever. When Jesus was with His disciples after His resurrection in Matthew 28:18 He told them, **"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."** Notice the word ALL in both those verses, **"All authority," "far above all."**

What does that mean for us? Jesus has authority over anything that would come against us. And we are united with Christ and seated with Him in that place of authority.

Part of the promises made in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah was where the Messiah would sit. David wrote,

(Psa 110:1 NKJV) **The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."**

The idea is that God would one day say to David's Lord (who is the Messiah), "You can sit at my right hand". That meant that the Messiah would have THE place of honor and authority.

When Jesus was on trial before the Jewish authorities, He said,

(Luke 22:69 NKJV) **"Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God."**

The chief priests screamed when Jesus said this because it meant that Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah, the Son of God. Which He was. And still is.

In the book of Revelation Jesus wrote to the church in Laodicea saying,

(Rev 3:21 NKJV) **"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."**

When God saves us, He doesn't just forgive our sins and then send us off to live in the slums of heaven. He has reserved a place at God's table for us. We have a seat with Jesus. And Jesus sits at the head table.

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 physically sit in the heavenly places *with* Christ Jesus (yet) but spiritually 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. We already saw in chapter 1 that our blessings are **"in the heavenly places"** (Eph. 1:3). It is there that 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."

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 a 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).

One preacher illustrated it this way. He wrote,

When I got on the plane on the way home recently, I was looking for an illustration for what I believe Paul is doing in chapters 1 and 2 of Ephesians. I found it in a very unusual way. A man got on the plane, and I noticed him right off. He wasn't as tall as I am, but he was three times as big. He had huge shoulders and a huge barrel chest. He was wearing a blue suede sports jacket. Well, he was taking his jacket off. He pulled it open, and that label stuck out. It was in big red, white and blue letters. The label said, "Made in the U.S.A."

Now that label made a statement to me about the coat. That made a statement about the manufacturer of the coat, and that made a statement about the man wearing that coat. He was an American, and he was proud of it. "Made in the U.S.A." I got to thinking, "Isn't that exactly what Paul is saying?" Isn't he trying to tell the Ephesian believers that they are made in heaven by the grace of God? They ought to be wearing a label wherever they go. They are not man made, they are God made. A label should be on every one of us. We are made in heaven by the grace of God. All who have received the Lord Jesus Christ by faith are made anew in heaven by the grace of God. We are products of God.

Are you humbly and lovingly displaying your "made in heaven" label? Have you set your mind on the things above where Christ is seated at the Father's right hand? If you have trust Christ you are no longer dead in sin, you are made alive with Christ; you are no longer dominated by the world, the devil, and the flesh, you are raised up with Christ's resurrection power; you are no longer a child of wrath, you are a trophy of God's grace. Are you showing it?