

Mercy's Resurrection Miracle
Ephesians 2:4-7

May 25, 2008

A. Introduction : Scripture Reading, Ephesians 2:1-7

B. The Great Contrast ^A

1. how do the first verses of the chapter leave us?

2. what important words change the picture?

3. what prophetic fulfilment makes this change?

C. The Source of the Miracle

1. The Mercy of God ^B 2:4a

2. The Love of God 2:4b

3. The Grace of God 2:5b

^A Ephesians 2:1-3, Isaiah 9:2
^B Exodus 34:6-7, Psalm 86:15, Micah 7:18

D. The Character of the Miracle

1. The implications of 'with' ^C

2. Made Alive Together With Christ ^D 2:5a

3. Raised Up With Christ ^E 2:6a

4. Seated With Christ ^F 2:6b

E. The Purpose of the Miracle is to ...

1. Its Degree in Time ^G 2:7a

2. Its Degree in Extent ^H 2:7b

F. Conclusion ^I - that we can know these truths and apply them in ...

^C Galatians 2:20, Philippians 3:10
^D Romans 6:4, 1 Corinthians 15:20, John 14:19, Romans 5:8, 1 John 4:10
^E Philippians 2:9, Hebrews 9:11-12, Romans 4:25, Philippians 3:20
^F Revelation 3:21, Hebrews 10:19, John 1:12, Colossians 2:13-15, Romans 6:14
^G Jude 1:25
^H 2 Corinthians 9:15, Ephesians 3:10
^I Romans 11:33, 36

A. Introduction

1. Mankind: Dead on Arrival

- a. that was the title of our message 3 weeks ago
- b. it was based on Ephesians 2: 1-3 which we just reread
- c. in it we were all reminded of mankind's lost condition

2. The more elderly among us may remember a popular song

- a. it was entitled, 'Three Little Words' and went like this,

Three little words,
Eight little letters
Which simply mean
I love you! —^{2}.

- b. Between husband and wife, between parents and children, between God and mankind — these are, indeed, three very important little words — how we love to hear them!
- c. However, our text this morning begins with two little words, six little letters, which are equally important:
- d. 'But God' – 'But God, being rich in mercy, ...'
- e. this has been called the great adversative
 - (A) the great difference maker
 - (B) the great result when God steps in

B. The Great Contrast

1. Ephesians 2: 1-3 leaves the reader, indeed, leaves all mankind

- a. in a dreadful and powerless, in a grievous and helpless, in a forlorn and useless state: that state is the state of death
- b. it shows all mankind to be dead in trespasses and sins
- c. what a sorrowful condition, having no hope in this world
- d. being, by nature, the children or recipients, of God's wrath

- e. facing judgement; facing his punishing us eternally
 - f. to summarize, here is what our natural, human condition is before we come to Jesus Christ as our Saviour
 - (A) we are dead
 - (B) we are enslaved
 - (1) by this world's manner of life
 - (2) by Satan's deceptions
 - (3) by our passions
 - (C) we are condemned.
2. Have you ever looked out upon a storm ...
- a. ... where the rain has been pouring down in sheets,
 - b. the clouds are black
 - c. and though it is the middle of the day
 - d. it is as dark as at dusk, as nearly night?
 - e. Then suddenly a rift in the clouds appears
 - f. and a beam of sunlight breaks through
 - g. pouring a golden splendour upon all that it touches.
 - h. That is what we find here: following the darkest gloom painted in verses 1 to 3, come these words, 'But God', and the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ springs forth so that the prophetic words are fulfilled that are found in Isaiah 9: 2, "The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them."
 - i. mercy performs a resurrection miracle among mankind
 - j. it's an amazing thought, but the first qualification to gain eternal life is the recognition that one is dead in sin
3. John R. Stott^{3}. expresses this contrast in these terms: Paul first plumbs the depths of pessimism about man, and then rises to the heights of optimism about God. It is this combination of pessimism and optimism, of despair and faith, which constitutes the refreshing realism of the Bible. For what Paul does in this passage is to paint a vivid contrast between what man is by nature and what he can become by grace.

4. let us look at this passage, this miracle of transformation of the dead, of resurrection, with the following outline
 - a. the Source of the Miracle
 - b. the Character of the Miracle
 - c. the Purpose of the Miracle

C. The Source of the Miracle

1. the Mercy of God

- a. 'But God, being rich in mercy ...' 2:4a
- b. there are two words in Hebrew – also in Greek – used to describe God's mercy; a single one would be inadequate – here are a few of the verses portraying God's mercy
 - (A) Exodus 34:6–7: Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate {AV: merciful} and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in loving-kindness and truth; 7 who keeps loving-kindness {AV: mercy} for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; ...'
 - (B) Psalm 86:15: But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, Slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness {AV: mercy} and truth.
 - (C) Micah 7:18: Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love {AV: mercy}.
- c. this is the mercy that is an inherent part of God's nature
- d. it is mercy that looks upon misery and responds
 - (A) mercy is not based upon the merit of man
 - (B) mercy is based on the compassion of God
- e. this is the mercy performing the miracle of resurrecting those dead in trespasses and sins unto eternal life

2. the Love of God

- a. '(But God, being rich in mercy,) because of His great love with which He loved us,' 2:4b
- b. but why does God choose to show mercy?
- (A) though mankind has churlishly rejected God, why does God choose to have mercy upon him?
 - (B) it would be a righteous act if God destroyed mankind
 - (C) yet He does not; why?
- c. the answer, we find, is in His great love
- d. Rev. J. Davies,^{4} a preacher living many years ago tells the story of a man whose son was rebellious and his conduct so outrageous as to prematurely aged his father. The son was indifferent at the funeral and unmoved at the grave side. Then he heard the reading of the father's will. When he heard the bequest to himself, he cried and said, 'I did not think my father would think of me so kindly.' When we look at our own sinfulness and unworthiness we can find no explanation for our salvation except that of God's unconditional love.
- e. God's love was the reason for mercy's resurrecting us

3. the Grace of God

- a. '... (by grace you have been saved),' 2:5c
- b. love is often misunderstood.
- (A) A boy and girl were talking on the 'phone – He: 'I love you. I'd climb the highest mountain, I'd swim a raging river, I'd cross the burning sands for you!' She: 'Are you coming over?' He: 'No, I don't think so; it's raining out.'
 - (B) the husband who seeks to earn the love of his spouse by sacrifice, or by gifts, misunderstands love
 - (C) the parent who seeks to do the same with a child
 - (D) so, some may think that the love of God needs earning
 - (1) this was certainly the pagan idea of their gods, that their favour could be gained by temple gifts
 - (2) some think that God's love can be gained by good works, kind deeds, or following the golden rule
- c. but this love of God is not a love that you can earn; it is the result solely of His grace; and so is His salvation
- d. this is why salvation comes through faith – faith that abandons all hope in oneself, in one's good deeds,

crying out with the publican in the temple, 'Lord have mercy on me the sinner,' accepting God's gracious invitation in Jesus Christ to come to Him for salvation

D. The Character of the Miracle

1. in verse 4 and 5 there are three verbs

- a. each is prefixed by the Greek preposition 'sun' which is found in the English words: sym-pathy (feel with), sym-phony (make sound with), syn-onym (same meaning with)
- b. as you see, that preposition means 'with'; the 3 verbs are
 - (A) made alive with
 - (B) raised up with
 - (C) seated with
- c. now, these are not mystical truths – a mere experience gained by meditation, love or intuition – but factual reality
- d. in each case, the 'with' binds us together with the Lord Jesus Christ in His experience; each of these take place in the fellowship which the believer has with Jesus Christ
- e. just as it is true for the believer that in Jesus Christ he or she died, so it is true that in Jesus Christ we are made alive
- f. we can say with Paul, 'I have been crucified with Christ; and 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 up for me.' (Galatians 2:20)

2. Miracle Feature #1: Made Alive Together With Christ

- a. 'made us alive together with Christ' 2:5b
- b. the resurrection is the first of three key events following the cross in the saving life of Jesus of Nazareth
 - (A) it is profitable to study the implication of each
 - (B) for example the resurrection means the believer's life is a new, changed life, "... as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4b)
 - (C) it means also that our dead bodies will be resurrected: "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep." (1 Corinthians 15:20)

c. and this truth fulfills Jesus promise to His disciples in John 14:19, '[... because I live, you will live also](#)'

d. now, at what point were we made spiritually alive? It was

(A) '[even when we were dead in our transgressions](#)' 2:5a

(B) it wasn't before we were saved; it wasn't after we were saved; no, it was an integral part of being saved

(C) just as Christ's death for the sins of each one of us has totally predated our own realization of His salvation

(D) '[But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.](#)' (Rom. 5:8)

(E) "[In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.](#)" (1 John 4:10)

3. Miracle Feature #2: Raised Up With Christ

a. '[and raised us up with Him,](#)' 2:6a

b. let us note here that '[raised up](#)' in this context differs in emphasis from '[being raised from the dead,](#)' which denotes the resurrection; that was covered in verse 5

c. but now we speak of the ascension, the second event of the saving Jesus Christ after the cross

d. for Jesus, the Christ, was not only raised from the dead – there were others that had been so raised from the dead – but, He was raised from the earth into the heavenly places

(A) '[God highly exalted Him](#)' – Philippians 2:9

(B) in this event we read: "[... when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.](#)" (Hebrews 9:11-12)

(C) so it is for this reason that we read, "[He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.](#)" (Romans 4:25) – the exaltation of Jesus is proof positive that God accepted His death for our sins and has justified us

e. in this is the second event we also participate with Jesus: accompanying our risen Lord into the heavenly places

f. '[For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ;](#)' (Philippians 3:20)

4. Miracle Feature #3: Seated With Christ

- a. **'... and seated us with Him in the heavenly places ...'** 2:6b
- b. this is the third event of the saving Jesus: resurrection, ascension, and, as it is termed, His session or being seated
- c. this a truth that we have trouble getting our minds around
- d. yes, we accept it as a future fact: **'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.'** (Revelation 3:21)
- e. but the tense here is the past tense; this has already taken place; He has enthroned us ... how can that be true?
- f. first: we participate with Jesus of Nazareth in intimate, direct communion with the God, **'... we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus'** (Hebrews 10:19)
- g. second: we participate with Jesus of Nazareth in rights of our sonship, **'But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name'** (John 1:12)
- h. third: we participate with Jesus of Nazareth in His victory over evil, **'When you were dead in your transgressions ... He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, ... having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them ...'** (Colossians 2:13-15) **'For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.'** (Romans 6:14)
- i. what a transition in Christ! ... from dead slaves to being enthroned in the heavenlies! Mercy's resurrection miracle!

E. The Purpose of the Miracle ... consider ...

1. ... Its Degree in Time

- a. **'so that in the ages to come he might show...'** 2:7a
 - (A) this is **'God's publicity program for the whole of history – and beyond. He planned a continuing exhibition of his favour toward man to cover all the centuries between the ascension and the return of Christ, and after that through all eternity'** ⁻⁽⁵⁾; that God might have the glory
 - (B) throughout the' church age

- (C) and throughout eternity
 - b. just as Jude prays in verse 25, 'to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, [be] glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.' (Jude 1:25)
2. ... Its Degree in Extent
- a. the extent of its richness
 - (A) 'he might show the surpassing riches of His grace' 2:7b
 - b. the extent of its worth
 - (A) '... grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus' 2:7c
 - (B) that worth is seen in the gift given to us in Christ Jesus – "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:15) – a gift beyond description
 - c. the extent of its witness
 - (A) 'so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.' (Ephesians 3:10)
 - (B) you, in your redeemed, reborn life in Jesus Christ are part of a host of men and women, who, by their very lives and being, demonstrate, both now and throughout time, both on the earth and in the heavens, God's manifold wisdom in His saving grace

F. Conclusion

- 1. there are truths in Scripture that
 - a. we cannot comprehend
 - (A) we are unable to encompass them, take them all in, with our human understanding
 - (B) we cannot scale their heights
 - (C) nor can we plummet their depths
 - b. but which we can most assuredly know
 - (A) we can know them in our hearts, our innermost being
 - (B) we can realize them in our minds, appreciate them
 - (C) we can practically know them in our lives as the Holy Spirit of God indwells us and works our sanctification

2. and this book of Ephesians, particularly in this chapter
 - a. is filled with such knowable truth
 - b. that as we appreciate it and let it sink into our spirits
 - c. we are given cause to pause and to praise God with Paul, “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! ... For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.” (Romans 11:33, 36)
 - d. may it be with that spirit that we sing our closing hymn — “I Am Not Skilled to Understand”

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Various other English versions of the Holy Bible may be used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in {braces}. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

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2. By Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby sometime prior to 1951.
3. From 'God's New Society' by John R. Stott, page 69; Intervarsity Press, 1979
4. Adapted from The Biblical Museum, *in loc*
5. A. Skevington Wood, in the Expositor's Bible Commentary, *in loc*