

THE BELIEVER'S CONVERSION (PART I): THE WORK OF GOD'S MERCY EPHESIANS 02:04–07

Introduction

The most astounding interruption in human history is the word “but” in this passage. Man is dead in transgressions and sins, but God is rich in mercy. He has intervened in the destiny of man; He has interrupted the doom of death and judgment. God has had mercy upon us!

- I. God has quickened, made us alive with Christ (vv. 4-5).
- II. God has raised us up with Christ (v. 6).
- III. God has made us sit in heavenly places — in Christ (v. 6).
- IV. God had one great purpose: to show us the riches of His grace in the ages to come (v. 7).

I. *Ephesians 02:04–05 God's Mercy and Love*

The work of God's mercy is to quicken us, make us alive with Christ. We were dead in transgressions and sins, but God has made us alive. Note three significant points.

1. Why has God quickened us, makes us alive? Because of His very nature. God does not have a nature like most men picture: distant, disinterested, unconcerned, vengeful and fearful.
 - a. God is full of mercy (*eleei*): feelings of pity, compassion, affection, kindness. It is a desire to succour, to tenderly draw unto oneself and to care for. Two things are essential in order to have mercy: seeing a need and being able to meet that need. God sees our need and feels for us (Eph. 2:1-3). Therefore, He acts; He has mercy upon us...
 - God withholds His judgment.
 - God provides a way for us to be saved.
 - b. God is love; He is full of love (*agape*): a selfless and sacrificial love; a love of the mind, of the reason, of the will as well as of the heart and affections. It is the love that goes so far...
 - that it loves a person even if he does not deserve to be loved.
 - that it loves the person who is utterly unworthy of being loved.
 - that it is compelled to sacrifice itself for its enemies (Rom. 5:8, 10).

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

Rom 5:6 *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.*

Rom 5:8 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Rom 5:10 *For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!*

2. When did God quicken and make us alive to Him? When we were dead in sins. This refers back to the former passage (see Eph.2:1-3).
3. How did God quicken and make us alive? By making us alive *together with Christ*. Christ is alive; He is in heaven face to face with God right now. God quickens or regenerates and makes us alive with Christ. How does He do this? This is the discussion of the next two major points. As they are discussed remember that it is by God's grace that we are saved. Salvation is all of Him; none of it is of us. We are saved by the act of God and God alone.

II. ***Ephesians 02:06 Man Raised Up with Christ***

The work of God's mercy is to raise us up with Christ. Note a crucial fact. Scripture plainly declares that God has raised up believers *together with Christ*. How is this possible when Christ was crucified and raised up thousands of years ago? What does Scripture mean? It means this: God raised Jesus Christ for three reasons.

1. Jesus Christ lived a sinless and perfect life. God loved man and wanted to save man but He had a problem. Man had already sinned. Righteousness and perfection had already been lost and only perfection can live in the presence of God. However, there was one hope. If a man could live a perfect and ideal life, that man could secure the perfect, ideal righteousness. And then the ideal man could stand for and cover all men who would trust Him. This is what Jesus Christ did. He came to earth as a Man and lived a perfect and sinless life. He never broke the law nor went against God's will — not even once. He secured perfect righteousness. He was the Ideal and Perfect Man. Therefore, He did not deserve to die; He deserved to live eternally with God.
2. Jesus Christ died for man. God loved man and wanted to save man but He had a problem. Man had *already sinned* and broken the law; he had already committed rebellion against God. Therefore, the penalty of death had *already been enacted and pronounced*. Man had to die. However, there was one way out of the dilemma. If the Perfect and Ideal Man would bear the penalty of sin for man, then His ideal death could stand for and cover any man who really trusted Him. This is exactly what Jesus Christ did. He was the Ideal and Perfect Man who loved God with all His heart. Therefore, when God willed Christ to bear man's penalty and judgment for sin, He surrendered and sacrificed Himself. He died for man; He bore man's penalty and punishment for sin. He was perfectly obedient to God the Father *even in death*. Therefore, He did not deserve to die; He deserved to live forever with God.

3. Jesus Christ was raised up from the dead. He was the Ideal and Perfect Man; therefore, His resurrection can stand for and cover any person who truly trusts Him.

Now, how does God raise up the believer together with Christ? By belief — trust — faith. When a person truly believes in Jesus Christ, God loves His Son so much that He *counts* the person's faith as his identification with Christ. God sees the persons' faith and love for Christ, and He honours his faith and love by doing the very thing the person believes. The person believes and loves Christ for His righteousness, death and resurrection; therefore, God counts the person as *being together* with Christ in His righteousness, death and resurrection. God counts or credits the persons' faith...

- as his having already died and been raised with Christ.
- as his having been placed in the death and resurrection of Christ.
- as his having been identified in the death and resurrection of Christ.
- as his having been made a partaker in the death and resurrection of Christ.
- as his having been in union with the death and resurrection of Christ.
- as his having been bound together with the death and resurrection of Christ.

Gen 15:6 *Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*

Acts 13:39 *Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.*

Rom 3:23-24 *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

Rom 4:3 *What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."*

Rom 4:24-25 *But also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness — for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

Rom 5:1 *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Rom 5:9 *Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!*

Rom 6:7 *Because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.*

Rom 8:11 *And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.*

Rom 8:33 *Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.*

1 Cor 6:11 *And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

Gal 2:16 *Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.*

Gal 3:6 *Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."*

Gal 3:24 *So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.*

Phil 3:9 *And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.*

III. ***Ephesians 02:06 Heaven, Salvation***

The work of God's mercy is to sit us in heavenly places in Christ. Note two facts.

1. "Heavenly realms" should read "in the heavenlies." The believer is said to be *in Christ*. Christ is said to be "in the heavenlies." Therefore, the believer is in the heavenly realm of experience with Christ. True, the believer physically lives on earth, but spiritually he has already been placed "in the heavenlies." The believer is of both realms. He belongs to two worlds. He has two addresses: *in Ephesus* and *in Christ*. He maintains two relationships: one to earth and one to heaven (cp. Heb. 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:11).
2. The believer's salvation, his resurrection and exaltation, is an accomplished fact. In the words "raised us up with Christ" (*synegeiro*) a profound truth is unfolded.
 - a. God's unsurpassing power is said to have raised Christ from the dead and made Him to sit at God's right hand in the heavenly realms (Eph. 1:20).
 - b. Believers are said to have been raised *with Christ* and are urged to "set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God..." (Col. 2:12; 3:1, 3).
 - c. It is said that believers are already raised from the dead *with Christ* and already seated *with Christ* at the right hand of God. The words "made us alive" and "raised" and "seated" are all in the Greek aorist tense. They express what God has already done for His children in Christ. Christ has already died and been raised and exalted to live in heaven with God forever. God sees all things as they really are. Therefore, He sees believers as having already been raised and exalted to live eternally with Him — all because He sees them in Christ Jesus. He sees their faith and counts them — considers them, looks upon them — as being in Christ (cp. Acts 1:10-11; Ph. 2:9; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10).

Rom 8:11 *And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.*

Rom 8:17 *Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

Rom 8:18 *I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*

2 Cor 4:17 *For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.*

Phil 3:21 *Who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

Col 3:4 *When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

Rev 5:10 *“You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”*

2 Tim 2:10 *Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.*

1 Pet 5:1 *To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed:*

Rev 3:21 *To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.*

Rev 22:5 *There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.*

Psa 91:14 *“Because he loves me,” says the Lord, “I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.”*

Dan 12:3 *Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.*

IV. Ephesians 02:07 Salvation, Purpose

The work of God's mercy has one great purpose — to show believers the riches of His grace throughout all the ages to come. Very simply stated, God's one great purpose is...

- to show the riches of grace toward us demonstrated in Christ Jesus.

God has done so much for us through Christ Jesus that it will take an eternity to show it all off. “Ages” (aiosin) literally means in the ages that are coming one upon another; that roll in one upon another. It means an eternity of ages. Grasping the verse is helped by breaking it up like this...

- the incomparable riches
- of His grace expressed in His kindness
- to us
- in Christ Jesus

God is going to be eternally glorified for His grace and kindness toward us. All creatures will live in *stark amazement* at God's wondrous mercy shown to men — all in Christ Jesus (see Eph. 3:10).

Mat 13:43 *“Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.”*

Rom 2:4 *Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?*

Eph 1:7 *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.*

Eph 2:7 *In order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*

1 Tim 1:14 *The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ■*