

**Ephesians 2: 1-5; “God Being Rich in Mercy”, Message # 11 in a series entitled –  
“The Exceeding Greatness of His Power”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on  
January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024, in the Morning Worship Service.**

The words in verse 1, “hath He quickened” in the King James, or “He made alive” in the other good translations, are not in the original Greek text. It literally reads – “And you, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked...” The words “He made alive” were added there in verse 1, by the translators. They were added very properly I believe, in order to set forth the great contrast between our being dead spiritually before we come to Christ, and being made alive spiritually when we do.

God is the only One who can give spiritual life. And so these words – “He made alive” were supplied in verse 1 in order to lead our minds to the truth which Paul is going to state plainly in verse 5 – “Even when we were dead in trespasses, He made us alive together with Christ.” There has been no violence done in the adding of these words in verse 1. The truth that I would have you to think about at this time, is that our deadness in trespasses and sins is no barrier to the exercise of God’s great power, in raising us from the dead, spiritually speaking. This truth is reinforced by the truth found in verse 4, that God is rich in mercy.

He can be rich in mercy because He is love in His essential Being. He has great riches of grace stored up to give to the person who will believe in Jesus. 3 truths that I would have you consider concerning God’s being rich in mercy. As I relate these truths to you, let us love and praise and wonder, that God pities fallen sinful men, that He has mercy on them; that He saves some of them, even though they do not deserve to be saved, and are unworthy of the least of His mercies.

**1<sup>st</sup> – The deadness of all men’s hearts requires God’s merciful intervention if they are to be saved.**

“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Now, we must ask ourselves, what is this death that is being talked about here? It is the particular death that exists in every man and woman who is born into the world, but some are saved from it by being given New Life from God. The answer is, that the death that is being spoken about here is a spiritual death in trespasses and sins. How is it, then, that all men and women are born into the world, dead in their trespasses and sins? People have the physical life of the body, and they have an eternal spirit joined together with their body.

This life of their having a spirit is with them from the moment that they are born until the moment that they die physically. And then this life continues on for all eternity, because men and women were created in the image and likeness of God. So in what sense is Paul speaking, here, when he says that all mankind is dead in trespasses and sins? Well, we must understand, that it is a particular kind of death which Paul is speaking of. It is what the first man Adam brought into the world by his sinning in eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Turn with me over to Genesis chapter 2, verses 15-17. It says here – “Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.” “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’” In the original Hebrew it says – “Dying you shall die”. In other words, Adam when he ate of the fruit would not die physically right away; although eventually that would happen after 900 plus years. But he would die spiritually in some sense, immediately.

In what sense would he die spiritually? What was it that happened when Adam ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? The answer is that he, for the most part, lost the life of God in his soul. The image of God in his heart was marred. The entrance of sin into his mind and heart separated him from God spiritually. His eating of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil robbed him of much of the glory with which he was created. Sin affected every aspect of

his being and it took away his desire for fellowship with God. It took away his desire for the things of God. He no longer wanted to be righteous and holy in the way that God wanted him to be righteous and holy. These things were no longer important to him. In other words, he became alienated from the life of God, and he was dead, spiritually, to living to God's glory. He would rather live to himself and to his own idea of life, apart from God's word. Sin had made a separation between him and God.

Well, all of us need to understand that Adam did not simply sin for himself when he partook of the forbidden fruit. His sin has affected every one of us, his descendants, because each of us is born into the world, in his fallen image, because of his sin. Because of his sin we too have sin in our very nature. And because of his sin, we all die physically, and we are all dead spiritually. We commit sins ourselves because we are sinners. And we all confirm our sinnership, by many sins of our own against God, and against His holy law.

This is proved for us if we look over at Romans chapter 5, verses 12-19. "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned – For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law." "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come." "But the free gift is not like the offense."

"For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many." "And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned." "For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification." "For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."

"Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life." "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous." So we see here that through the one man Adam sin entered the world, and death through sin. Adam's sin affected all men because it was by his sin that death spread to all men.

This is not only the death of the body that is being talked about here. It is also a spiritual or moral one. Death passed upon all men because they are in Adam. He was the common parent and representative head of all mankind in regard to his original righteousness and his original sin. It is because of that fact that we are all are constituted sinners in God's sight, and the fact that we are all men who are fallen creatures in him; this is why we must have Christ. We have all confirmed our sinnership by their own sins. And being thus dead, we must be given life.

Paul further explains that this was not because we sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, but because our sins came forth from our own sinful nature. In our thoughts and actions we are both guilty and defiled in our nature. And we want to do own will rather than God's. The truth of our being dead in our trespasses and sins is further proved by the fact that until the law was given to Moses on Mt. Sinai, sin was still in the world. But during that time it was not imputed, or formally charged upon people. And nevertheless, men and women still died.

Their deaths proved that they themselves had sinned, even though they had not sinned in the likeness of Adam's offense. God still saw them as guilty sinners, and He punished them accordingly, with the death of the body, because of Adam's sin. But their committing their own sins confirmed that they themselves were deserving of death. They were dead in trespasses and sins by nature and practice. This is the very nature of sin, to separate us from God and to bring death to all of us. We are still alive, physically, but we are dead spiritually, both in the sight of

God, and in relation to our experience of spiritual things. The deadness of people's hearts requires the merciful intervention of God. God must show mercy and graciously give the grace of Christ to those who hear the gospel or they will not believe. A person who is dead spiritually cannot live on his own, by his own will. According to His eternal purpose, God gives spiritual life to unworthy sinners, in order to save those who will believe in His Son.

In this limited and specific sense, Adam is a type of Him who was to come, even Christ. They are both seen by God as federal heads; Adam of all mankind except for Christ. And Christ as the federal head of a new holy race of people, a new world, and a new creation of men, who are being saved out of the old and first creation. They are the people whom God will forgive for Christ's sake. According to God's purpose, they are saved and transformed into righteous people through His purchased grace being applied to them. All those who believe in Jesus and receive the free gift of righteousness will be saved. For their believing results in justification; of their being declared righteous in the sight of God.

And their faith in Christ also results in justification of grace also being imparted to them in the spiritual life which is being given to them. For verse 18 says that it was by the "one Man's righteous act (that is, Christ's fulfilling the law and dying for our sins) that the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life". This is not only a sinner's being justified in the sight of God as a declarative act. But it also results in God's being able to give spiritual life to all of His saints. This is New Spiritual life in the New Birth. And it is this life which is given, which becomes the basis of the on-going daily work of the Holy Spirit, in the sanctification process. In that holy process, a sinner becomes a saint. And they will, over time, grow up to be more like Christ, over the course of the rest of their lifetime.

Verse 19 – "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous." So this being "made alive" in Ephesians 2: 1 refers to this great gift of Christ, and His gracious working by His Spirit, according to the will of God to bring about the restoration of real life in your soul. And because of God's sovereign work in salvation, the righteous image of Christ begins to be formed in all who believe in Christ. And by this means, over time, they are transformed.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – The way that all men walk, requires God's merciful intervention if they are to be saved.**

We are told here that men walk according the prince of the power of air. They walk, they live their lives according to Satan's unholy and false suggestions as to what they ought to think, and how they ought to live. And if we will recall Eve's experience in the garden of Eden, what did Satan do? He attempted to mix lies with the truth and make the lie seem very reasonable. Look at Genesis 3: 1-5 – "Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." "And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden" "And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'you shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die." "Then the serpent said the woman, 'You will not surely die." "For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

And you know the rest of the story, Eve saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate it. And she gave to her husband with her, and he ate. This leads me to think that when Satan is referred to as the prince of the power of the air, that he is a spirit being, who seems as it were, to hover in the air over those whom he wants to deceive; in this case, all of mankind. He is a prince over all the demonic angelic beings, and he has a kingdom.

In that kingdom he rules by craft and deception over people who are blinded to the truth by his working. It is a kingdom of darkness and not light. It says in our text that he now works in

the sons of disobedience. That is, all those who do not know God, all those who are dead in their trespasses and sins. He works in their lives, even making suggestions to their minds and hearts, as to how they ought to live in rebellion to God and to His word. And he does this, so that God will be neglected, ignored, despised, and dishonored by people. He works in conjunction with the fallen flesh of mankind; trying to promote their ultimate satisfaction in relation to this world and its pleasures. He tempts them, as they walk through this world. He works in the sons of disobedience, to try to convince them to seek to obtain power, and to get glory for themselves.

But in the process of that, people's lives are ruined by his lying suggestions. This is because he promotes rebellion and their sinning against God. He will try through false teachers to promote false doctrine. He promotes religious practices which act as a substitute for the true religion of the Bible and following Christ. His being the prince of the power of the air means that he would like to control and direct what men believe about God and the Bible. If you look at a concordance under the word, "air", you find some interesting verses in this regard.

Ecclesiastes 10: 20 – "Do not curse the king, even in your thought; do not curse the rich, even in your bedroom; for a bird of the air may carry your voice, and a bird in flight may tell the matter." This is how Satan operates in the spread of slander and lies concerning Christians, and even God Himself. He may in this unholy way try to deceive Christians and unbelievers alike, and even pit Christians against each other. For instance, when it says a bird may carry your voice, it is the same thing when you speak things about other people, that are either not true about them, or you know that it would not be profitable for that person to hear about them. You actually are doing Satan's work, and you may not even realize it.

Satan would have people to sniff the air, to see which way the theological wind is blowing. And thus truth is twisted to include lies or errors in doctrine. Truth is twisted to the damnation or misdirection of many souls. We can further say, on the level of individuals, that Satan is working to bring about disobedience to God and to His word. He does this, both in regards to the things that are believed, and the things that are done as religious works. So God is not glorified, nor His commandments kept.

Look at 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4: 1-5 – "Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God." "For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles – when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries." "In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you." "They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead."

Brothers and sisters, this is how we once were. This was how we conducted ourselves. But since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, we should arm ourselves with the same mind. In what sense have we ceased from sin? We have not lost our indwelling remaining corruption. So in what sense is Peter speaking here? It is that we do not want to sin purposely. And we have the power not to sin. And so, all of that process of sanctification, is going to involve some degree of suffering in our flesh. That is, denying ourselves, and crucifying the flesh with its lusts and passions. We will sometimes need to remind ourselves that we have spent too much time pursuing these sinful things that we once pursued. But now we resolve by Christ's grace, that we will do so no longer.

**For 3<sup>rd</sup> – In relation to all of God's elect, those who will believe in Christ, God has mercifully intervened.**

Verses 4 and 5 say – "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)." Although the child of God was once under God's wrath, they are no longer under it because God has shown them rich mercy and great love. God is described here as being rich in

mercy to all those whom He calls to Himself. Rich in mercy, because “He saw us ruined by the Fall, and loved us, notwithstanding all.” “He justly claims a song from me, His lovingkindness is so free.” His mercy, His lovingkindness, is so free to me. But it cost God so much. Even the giving of His dear Son to be crucified on our behalf, so that we might be shown this mercy and grace. It is amazing how God loves His elect people with an everlasting love. When you are born into this world, you are a child of wrath, even as the rest of the unbelievers, until you turn to Christ. And yet He loves you with an everlasting love if you are one of His. His love is so great that even though you were dead in your trespasses and sins, He made you alive together with Christ.

That was real mercy! What amazing love, to show mercy to us who only deserved eternal wrath. Let us thank Him and praise Him that He is the God of all grace and the Father of mercies. He brings everlasting consolation and good hope by grace to those who trust in Him. 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2: 16 and 17 – “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.” Let us rejoice even now, and worship Him, that He has shown us such mercy!