

Ephesians 2:1-10

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[0 : 00] This morning I can think of two great benefits of getting to be the pastor of Christ Family Church.! Firstly, I get to make requests of songs, and the band actually does them. So if you didn't like that, I'm sorry, that was for me.

Secondly, I get to preach to you the Word of God and the great blessing that it is. So please turn in your copy of God's Word to Ephesians chapter 2. Ephesians chapter 2, and follow along with me as I read to us verses 1 through 10.

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins of which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved, and raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages you might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not a result of work, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

[1 : 46] This is God's word to us, written for his glory and our good. We would all do well to listen to it and obey it. Let's pray together. Father God, we praise you this morning for the risen and reigning Jesus Christ.

It is in his person and work that we have the redemption of our souls, and it is because of what he has accomplished that you are forming us into a people for your possession, that you are making us into a temple as your dwelling place, with Jesus as the cornerstone.

Father, today we want only to exalt him. I do not want to be exalted. People here, people on the stage, people sitting in the seats, do not want to be exalted.

Father, we want Christ to be exalted. And Lord, all that we do, apart from the work of your spirit, would not exalt Christ. They would be mere motions.

And so we pray that by your spirit you will work in us this day. That the preaching of your word will have power, not because my words have weight, but because my words speak of the word of God.

[2 : 58] Your very revelation to mankind. And that by your spirit you would take those words and you would apply them to our hearts, that we might be changed, not in degree, but in type.

That we will belong to Jesus. And as a result, we will obey his every command. And we pray all of this in his matchless and wonderful name.

Amen. Amen. Well, I know that it's not lost on any of you that today is Easter Sunday, the Sunday that the Christian church celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

But I put forth to you that the church of Christ celebrates in each and every meeting, as well as in each and every action of every day throughout the week, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Now, I'm not against us having a special Sunday in which we do that. I think that that is okay. But I want us to be mindful that this is not the only time of year that we should remember what Christ accomplished.

[4 : 00] His person and his work is what we praise with our lives. At least I hope that's true of you. But today we are going to take a break from our verse-by-verse exposition of the Gospel according to Mark to look in Ephesians and to see some of the benefits that we gain by the resurrection of Christ.

But first I want to ask the question, how can we know that Jesus was raised from the dead? How can we know that this is true? And I'm going to give you four reasons, and these are not exhaustive reasons, but just four reasons that I find particularly compelling.

But let me say to you that ultimately and finally, for these reasons to become reasons for you, they must be accepted by faith. They must be accepted by faith. If we were to say that we ourselves stood in the empty tomb, we could still, with some reason of our mind, say that Jesus' body was stolen.

We could say that somebody broke in, rolled a stone that could be not rolled away by a couple of men, but by an army of men, and took his body. We could somehow rationalize it away as the world does.

We must accept these things by faith. But nonetheless, there are reasons and some very compelling ones. Firstly, Jesus stated that he would be raised from the dead. He himself knew that this was going to happen.

[5 : 15] Mark 8, verse 31. And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed. And after three days, rise again.

There was a prediction on Jesus' part that this would, in fact, take place. Secondly, the tomb was empty. We have a record of that. Luke 24, verses 1-3. We see three women, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and a woman named Salome, go and visit the tomb to bring more spices for the body.

Verse 1 of chapter 24. But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. But when they went in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

Thirdly, in a particularly compelling case, the disciples of Christ were transformed. Those closest to Him called the apostles.

We have many accounts of their fearless proclamation of the gospel of God after Jesus' death. Acts 2, verse 32.

[6 : 20] This is Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost. He says, And you recall, after the death of Christ, what the apostles and the larger group of disciples were doing?

They were cowering in a room together. 150 of them did not know what to do. This Jesus that they thought was going to come and reign politically and militarily, was going to overthrow the Roman government, had been put to death.

And they did not know what to do. They feared for their very lives. Remember, Peter, who preached this sermon, was the one who had denied Christ because of his fear. They were turned from proverbial mice to men when they saw the risen Christ.

Between the years of A.D. 34 and A.D. 74, all of 12 of the apostles, save Judas, who hung himself, and John, who died of natural death, all of them were martyred across a 40-year span.

They didn't come together in a room together, get each other really psyched up to continue to try to promote a myth. And they all were excited about it for a couple of months, and they were all put to death. But across a span of 40 years, these men believed that Jesus lived, and they were willing to give their lives to it.

[7 : 43] Let me give you examples. Paul's first martyr, not an apostle, but Stephen, one of the early deacons, was stoned. As we know, Paul, Saul then, stood aside and watched. James was killed by Herod Agrippa with a sword.

Peter was crucified upside down. There are extra-biblical accounts of all of these things. Andrew was crucified on an olive tree in a town called Petra in Achaia.

Thomas was run through with pine spears, tormented with red-hot plates, and finally burned alive. Philip was tortured, then crucified in Phrygia. Matthew was beheaded.

Bartholomew, also known as Nathaniel, was flayed, split open, and then crucified. The other James, called the Lesser James, was beaten to death with a club.

Simon was crucified in Syria. Judas Thaddeus, beaten to death with sticks in Mesopotamia. Matthias stoned while being crucified in Ethiopia. Paul was beheaded in Rome.

[8 : 43] And then John, as I mentioned previously, died a natural death, but it's rumored and fairly historically accounted for that he was scarred horribly by being burned in boiling oil.

These men were willing to receive these types of torments, these types of death, because they had seen the risen Christ. Turn with me, if you will, to Acts chapter 5.

Keep your finger in Ephesians chapter 2. Acts chapter 5. I'm going to read a little bit to you of an account of early on, in the early church, when the apostles were arrested.

And I want you to see some of the peculiar response here, which helps fortify this reason why we can believe in the resurrection. Beginning of verse 27, So this is a council of Jews had brought them, the apostles.

They set them before the council, and the high priest questioned them, saying, We strictly charge you not to teach in this name, the name of Jesus. Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

[9 : 48] But Peter and the apostles answered. So here's Peter, fearful Peter, denying Christ, just days before. He says to them, to this council, We must obey God, rather than men.

The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses to these things.

And so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him. When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill him. But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, right here, we need to have the same reason that he had here.

A teacher of the law, held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. And he said to them, the council, Men of Israel, take care of what you are about to do with these men.

For before these days, Theodos rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about 400, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing.

[10 : 49] After him, Judas the Galilean rose up on the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. So in the present case, I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone.

For if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail. You catch that? These Jewish people had been waiting for somebody who was going to come and conquer, who was going to fulfill the prophecy of the Old Testament as they saw it.

Someone who was going to come and reign politically and militarily. Someone who was going to come and overthrow the Roman Empire. And some men had come along and said that. They were false in that way, and they were killed, and their followers dispersed.

It will fail. Verse 39, But if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God. So they took this advice, and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus and let them go.

So just the same, bring them in, they beat them, tell them, do not speak in the name of Jesus. Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.

[11 : 58] Strange, if Christ was not risen. And every day in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. This is great reason for us to believe that Jesus was in fact raised from the dead.

John 2.22 says, When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

In Romans 8.18, Paul records, For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. Recognize, beloved, that if we believe the gospel in its fullness, Jesus Christ did in fact bear the wrath of God on our behalf and was killed, buried, and resurrected, he's seated at the right hand, we will be bold in this way.

And we have no reason to be bold in this way if he was not raised from the dead. He was defeated 2,000 plus years ago. Why would we think he can reign now? But he does in fact reign.

Fourthly, the promises of the Bible hinge upon the reality of the resurrection. The promises of the Bible hinge upon it. If we are not willing to believe all of the Bible, we have no business believing any part of the Bible.

[13 : 22] This is revelation. This is God's word to us. It is inerrant. It is powerful. It is sufficient as the rule for our lives. Our experience can affirm the truth of the Bible, but it cannot define it.

Does it not cause you fear that some people think that they can find truth within themselves? Do you not do this at points in your life? Think that you yourself can define what is and what isn't true? This is a fearful thing. I know myself too well to think that I can define truth. I need some external source of revelation. I need something absolute, something objective, and praise God we have his scriptures.

He condescended to become an author, to write a book for us. There must be an objective reality outside ourselves which governs our lives. And I will tell you that if I cannot believe every word in this book, then I can't believe any of it.

I have no grounds to believe any of it at all. And my salvation is at risk in that. Jesus himself affirms the validity of at least our Old Testament scriptures.

[14:32] He quotes it 78 times in the New Testament. Jesus was a man of the word who believed in the revelation of God. These are great reasons.

Great reasons to believe in the resurrection. And there are three ways that all that we believe to be true of the gospel would fall apart if the resurrection was not in fact a reality.

And that was the introduction. So here we go. Three ways it would all fall apart. Without the reality of the resurrection, we would not have firstly protection from the wrath of God.

We're back in Ephesians chapter 2 now if you're tracking along. I'm going to read to you a few verses here again. And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked.

This is Paul writing to the church at Ephesus those who have claimed to be in the faith. We need to hear this this morning. We know that he is writing to believers. You were dead once you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you once walked.

[15:37] Following the course of this world. Following the prince of the power of the air. That is Satan if you don't know. The spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh.

Carrying out the desires of the body and the mind. And we're by nature. By the very center of who we are. Our definition of who we are. Children of wrath.

Like the rest of mankind. mankind fell in the garden. Original sin now permeates the rest of humanity. And therefore we are apart from Christ enemies of God.

And as enemies of God, God is right. He is just. Not unloving, but just to punish sin. It's right for him to do it. We would not want to worship a God who's not just.

Who one day will not make all things right in judging this world. We want to worship a just God. But because of that, wrath is due us. The weight of our sin, the very thing that it purchased for us, was the wrath of God.

[16:45] Saying to God, you are not God, but I am. I want to be like a God. I want to define truth for myself. It's due the wrath of God.

Romans 1.18, Paul writes, for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

Here's the beautiful message of the gospel. It's not that God lays aside his justice. He doesn't cease to be just in order to be loving, but that in his perfect justice and in his perfect love, he punished for us our sin in Christ.

He poured out his wrath on Jesus. We know that crucifixion is the most horrible death that man has ever imagined. I'm not going to take the time to get into the details for you this day, but it was a horrid, horrid way to die.

But this is nothing. This has nothing. Look at how many of the apostles themselves were crucified. This is nothing compared to the fact that Jesus bore the wrath of God for our sins.

[17:52] It was punished in him. 1 Thessalonians 1, 9-10, Paul writes, And you see how in Paul's mind, Jesus' death and his resurrection are intertwined in his ability to deliver us from the wrath to come.

Right? That he died on behalf of us, but that he was raised and conquered that, that even the consequence of sin could not reign over Jesus Christ. And now we have deliverance from wrath as a result.

Again, Paul writes in Romans 5, 9-10, Since therefore we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. We have life because Jesus is alive.

Praise God. Without the reality of the resurrection, we would not have protection from the wrath of God. But that protection is ours in his death and resurrection.

[19 : 16] Secondly, without the reality of the resurrection, we would not have our sin pardoned. The dismissal of that, it would not be written off.

We would not be justified before him. Again, Ephesians chapter 2, beginning of verse 4, this most precious, my favorite conjunction in all of the Bible.

For those of you students of grammar, it's in fact a discourse connective in case you care about such things. But you see this picture of who we once were. That what was due to us was the wrath of God, eternal destruction, eternal damnation, misery forever, and to these precious words, but God, but God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, even when we were those children of wrath, he made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved. And you have to get this, you have to understand, you have to see the language of the Bible, that it speaks to us not about degree, but about type.

All over our nation today, there are people who are guests in churches, meeting with the people of God because they think in some way that gains them some stance with the Lord, that that puts a check in the good box for them.

[20 : 44] That would be a thinking of degree. I'm a little better here, I'm a little worse here. If my good works just outweigh my bad works, I'll find heaven. That is not the basis on which we are justified.

We are justified by type. And that is that God has made us alive. By grace you have been saved. In verse 6, and here's the axiom verse, and raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Jesus, both the language for raised and for seated in the Greek, it's speaking as if it's already happened. Because of the personal work of Christ, these things have been guaranteed on our behalf.

Verse 7, so in the coming ages, he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus, so that for all eternity, that's what it's saying, that God can show his grace toward us, to the world.

Verse 8, for by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. God gives to us by his grace a gift called faith, and it opens up our heart that we might believe in who Jesus is, that he is in fact the Christ, the anointed one of God, that he is risen and that he reigns, and it is by this act that we are made new.

[22 : 14] I hope that we can echo with Paul, Galatians 6, 14, but far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is important, this is axiom that we might understand that our sins are forgiven because Christ has been raised. 1 Corinthians 15, 17, and if Christ has not been raised, if he's not been raised, if this is not true, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins.

Paul goes on to say, we are to be most pitied for believing such foolishness. If Christ has not been raised, but because he has, we have the redemption of our souls. 1 Peter 1, 3, Peter writes, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Beloved, we do not differ in degree, but we differ in kind. We are those who belong to God. We are his people. We have been made alive eternally. Luke 20, verse 36, it says, for they cannot die anymore because they are equal to angels and are sons of God.

[23 : 27] There is that type, being sons of the resurrection. Romans 8, 11, if the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit who dwells in you.

Without the reality of the resurrection, we would not have our sins pardoned. Without the reality of the resurrection, we wouldn't have protection from the wrath of God, our sins pardoned, or thirdly, the presence of Jesus Christ.

The last verse that we read there in chapter 2, verse 10, for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

We have been made now into a new type. Those who are disciples of Jesus Christ, those who are called Christian, those who are sons of God, we've been created in Christ Jesus.

And not just to our own ends, but for a greater end, and that is for good works. Good works that God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them, that he might be displayed in this world.

[24 : 37] And we do this by the power of the Spirit that's been granted to us now because of the accomplished work of Christ. Romans 8, 9-11. Paul writes, You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you, if you are in fact believers.

Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

What is this life? It is a life of pursuit of Jesus Christ. John 14, verse 15-19. Jesus says, If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another helper to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him.

You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.

[25 : 53] Do you see the resurrection language that's so spun throughout all of the New Testament? If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I'm going to give you a helper.

The Spirit of God is going to come and abide with you because I have been resurrected. Because I have left, I will send you a helper. It's with this confidence that he says, Jesus says in Matthew 28, in the Great Commission, verse 20, Behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.

Paul writes in Romans 6-9, We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again. Death no longer has dominion over him.

So because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we now have the Spirit of God that dwells within us, that gives to us his presence in every moment of every day.

So without the reality of the resurrection, we would not have protection from the wrath of God. We would not have our sin pardoned. And we would not have the presence of Jesus.

[27 : 00] Praise God for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now what is the application of all of this? What does it mean for us? Good, I believe. You may be sitting there saying, of course I believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I see the benefits. I know what they are. The application for us is this day and every day moving forward. If we are those who claim to know Christ, to have placed our faith in Him, is that we enjoy the realities of the resurrection in a way that causes us to exalt the name of Jesus Christ in our experience, in our display, and in our proclamation.

That in everything we do, we say to this world, we worship a risen King. He sits now and He reigns. Beloved, this is the kingdom that we are a part of.

We should be less concerned about the politics of this world. We should be less concerned about amassing for ourselves a kingdom, stuff for our enjoyment.

We should be more concerned about the name of our Christ. We should be more concerned about exalting Him among this world. This is the application today.

[28 : 16] Knowing that Christ has risen, should move us, should give us boldness like the boldness that the apostles had. For a 40 year span to preach the gospel in the fear of death.

To know that His kingdom will advance because He reigns. This should be the great cry of our hearts. This should be the great activity of our lives.

Let's pray together that we will do that. Let's pray together that