

Easter Sunday - Ephesians 2:1-10

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[0 : 00] Amen. Good morning. Please take your copy of God's Word and join me in Ephesians chapter 2. God's promises are sure because He lives.

This is why we as a church celebrate the resurrection every single Lord's Day. We are resurrection people.

My wife and I have had discussions about church calendars and why emphasize certain things at certain times. And I have said that if I were to go to an unreached people, had no concept of Christianity whatsoever, the only church calendar I would establish is we meet every Lord's Day and we celebrate all that is true for us in Christ.

But we don't live in that culture and there's a lot of pressures that push into the way we might think about this weekend.

So, that's why we think it good to pick up a specific resurrection text. Had we continued in our study of John, we would have looked at the end of chapter 8.

[1 : 40] There Jesus declares in chapter 8, verse 58 and 59, Truly, truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.

He calls himself Yahweh, the God of Israel. We could have gotten to the resurrection from that text, to be sure.

Verse 59 says, And so they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple. We know this because it wasn't yet the time for his death.

So, it would not have been difficult to talk about the future resurrection from a text where Jesus calls himself God and the Jewish leaders take action to kill him. But I think there is an appropriate cultural sensitivity to take a beat from time to time and be sure we're thinking rightly as we get swept into the moment.

So, we'll look at Ephesians 2, verses 1 through 10. Let's pray before I read it. Father, help us. We ask this morning that you would give us the ability to take your word up together as we should.

[2 : 58] We want to do so humbly. We want to properly understand it. We want to see how it gives application to us this morning and beyond. We want to believe its promises, obey its commands, and we want to have affection for you, its author.

And so we pray that you'll help us to this end in the name of Christ. Amen. Ephesians 2, beginning in verse 1. And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in 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 flesh 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, he 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 works, so that no one may boast.

[4 : 32] For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. I hope you caught why this text is a resurrection text.

Just in case you didn't. Perhaps you were distracted for a moment, or just zoned out for some unanswerable reason. I want to draw your attention to verses 4 through 6.

After Paul has stated, If we're in Christ, who we once were, he says, 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, who is alive.

We are alive with him. By grace you have been saved. And raised us up, resurrected us with him, and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

A lot depends on whether or not Jesus truly is alive. Our faith absolutely falls apart if he is not.

[5 : 50] Charles Spurgeon once said, this is in your bulletin if you care to follow along, quote, The resurrection of Jesus is the keystone of the arch of our holy faith. And if you don't know anything about the way arches are built, there's always a stone in the middle that holds the whole arch together.

If you pull it out, the whole thing will collapse. Back to the quote. If you take the resurrection away, the whole structure lies in ruins. The death of Christ, albeit that it is the ground of our confidence for the pardon of sin, would not have furnished such a foundation had he not risen from the dead.

Were he dead still, his death would have been like the death of any other person. would have given us no assurance of acceptance. His life, with all the beauty of its holiness, would have been simply a perfect example of conduct.

But it could not have become our righteousness if his burial in the tomb of Joseph had been the end of all. It was essential for the confirmation of his life teaching and his death suffering that he should be raised from the dead.

End quote. Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, many sermons will be preached from 1 Corinthians 15 this morning, for good reason. He says, if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

[7 : 18] So then, how can we know that Jesus was raised from the dead? When all is said and done, I posit to you that you will have to accept the reality as an act of faith.

Ultimately, you will have to believe that this is what happened. But, there are some reasons, some really good reasons to be reasonably faithful.

I want to give you three briefly this morning and then we'll get back to our text. So again, the question is, how can we be confident? How can we know that Jesus is in fact resurrected?

Well, firstly, Jesus stated that he would be raised from the dead. This refers back to the Charles Spurgeon quote, but in Mark 8, 31, 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.

Jesus taught this again and again and again about himself. You may recall the argument I have been making to you as we study through the Gospel of John.

[8 : 28] You cannot merely call Jesus a good teacher. You have to do something with him. He makes absolutely audacious claims about himself.

One of those is that he would be resurrected. He would die and three days later he would be raised. So, he is either a liar or he is a lunatic.

He actually thought that but it was entirely false or and as we should believe he is in fact resurrected and he is Lord.

You really only have those three options. You can't just call him a good teacher teacher because of the things he said about himself. He is either liar lunatic or he is Lord.

Secondly, the tomb was empty. We see a record of this in Luke chapter 24 verses 1 through 3.

There Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome go 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.

[9 : 49] But when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. There's historical facts that show this stone would not have been moved in the middle of the night.

There's a biblical account that they had to scheme together to make up this lie that his body had been stolen. The tomb was empty.

And you must do something with what happened to the body of Jesus. Thirdly, and this is what's so helpful to me as I thought through these matters over the years, the disciples were transformed.

Think back to Peter leading up to the time of Jesus' crucifixion and his three-time denial like powering in the shadows.

And then in Acts 2 and verse 32 we see him delivering a sermon on the day of Pentecost having been filled with the Spirit. And there he says to a vast crowd, this Jesus God raised up and of that we are all witnesses.

[10:58] Remember, at the beginning of Acts these men are cowering in an upper room. They are hiding from the authorities when they are visited by the risen Christ and they are transformed from mice into men.

They go out, they spread across a 40-year span from AD 34 to approximately AD 74 and they preach the gospel everywhere and not to their commendation, not because it was the popular thing for them to go forth and do.

We have lots of accounts. Some are confidently historical, some are tradition, but listen to what happened to the men who shared the good news of Jesus Christ.

Stephen, Acts chapter 8, was stoned as Paul stood by and watched. James was killed by Herod Agrippa with a sword.

Peter was crucified upside down. He himself requested this, didn't see himself worthy to be killed as his savior. Andrew was crucified on an olive tree in a town called Patre in Achaia.

[12:15] Thomas was run through with spears, tormented with red hot plates and finally burned alive. Philip was tortured then crucified in Phrygia.

Matthew was beheaded at Nod Devar. Bartholomew or Nathaniel was flayed and then crucified. the other James beaten to death with a club.

Simon crucified in Syria. Judas Thaddeus beaten to death with sticks in Mesitamia. Matthias stoned while being crucified in Ethiopia.

Paul beheaded in Rome. John died a natural death but it's rumored that he was scarred horribly because he had been burned in boiling oil.

Not to their profit that they would have carried out some kind of myth and preached that Jesus was resurrected from the dead. So significant that they had this kind of fervor, spines of steel to go forth and share because they had been witnesses!

[13:23] of him raised. Now if none of that is helpful to you, we can tell them the apostles after arresting them, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus and let them go.

Then they left the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name and every day in the temple and from house to house they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

Clearly changed from towering in an upper room to! bold proclaimers of the resurrection of Christ. And then you'll see Paul say in Romans 8 and verse 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

So Paul so clearly set against the church stood by at the stoning of Stephen approved of the stoning of Stephen now declaring that the sufferings of this present time for the proclamation of the gospel are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

So some reasons for you to believe if you don't already believe that Jesus is raised from the dead. Now then Jesus was resurrected but what if he had not been?

[14:54] I want to show you from our text today three ways our faith would all fall apart. Number one, without the reality of the resurrection we would not have protection from the wrath of God.

Protection from the wrath of God. and you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked.

Spiritually dead. This is not a picture of sickness in sin. This is spiritually dead. In the way your life practiced out, this walking out, you were dead in those trespasses and sins.

You were following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now in work and the sons of disobedience. And just in case you don't know who that is, he's talking about Satan at this point.

Among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

[16:12] We were apart from Christ and if you're apart from Christ this morning, you are a child of wrath by your very nature.

This wrath is a thing that should cause us to tremble. Great fear before a God who is angry, rightly angry at sin.

Paul writes in Romans 1 verse 18, for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

We experience in this life the effect of sin. We are seeing it all the time all around us. This is a judgment taking place even now as trite and benign as this will seem.

All of our pollen suffering this past week. It's part of the judgment on sin. But so much more than that, all of the things that we experience that press against goodness in our lives is God's judgment in the world.

[17:20] But it is but a shadow of the wrath that is to come. If you don't think that you deserve God's wrath for your sin, you think far too much of yourself and you don't think nearly enough of God's holiness.

There is a wrath that awaits those who are not found in Christ at the judgment. And just hear me plead with you. Seriously consider what the scripture has to say about the wrath to come. That judgment, it does await you. Flee from that wrath to Christ. The resurrected Christ. Without the reality of the resurrection, we have no protection from the wrath of God. But in Christ, we are saved from God's wrath.

Look with me at two other places. Paul shows that the doctrine of the resurrection is integral to our salvation from God's wrath. You may want to turn there. It's okay if you don't. 1 Thessalonians chapter 1.

[18:32] I read verse 9 and following. For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you and how you turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his son from heaven whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.

How is it that he accomplished this work? It's the doctrine of justification. A declaration by faith in Christ that we are now righteous.

The penalty of our sin expunged. Jesus takes our sin on himself on the cross. He pays the penalty in full. The eternal weight of our debt paid by an eternal savior.

But not only that, we are granted his righteousness, his perfect law keeping and the resurrection is the proof that he accomplished the task that God gave him to accomplish.

God the Father raised Jesus from the dead and he delivers us from the wrath to come. Another place, Romans chapter 5, also verse 9 and 10.

[19:53] Since therefore we have now been justified, by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For 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.

Without the reality of the resurrection, we would not have protection from the wrath of God. But praise God, because of the resurrection, we can be saved.

To develop that a bit further, secondly, without the reality of the resurrection, we would not have our sin pardoned. Verse 4 begins with a blessed conjunction.

It's a connection to the discourse above. He says, but God, God, you were dead in your trespasses. We all once were this, but God.

Not because we did anything to deserve it. We were this, but God acted. Being rich in mercy, verse 4 tells us.

[21:14] Abundant mercy, overflowing mercy. God is himself merciful, full of wrath for sin, but merciful at the exact same time, and always being those things at all times.

The doctrine is called the simplicity of God, and it's hard to wrap your mind around how he is who he is all the time, and does not change. but because he's merciful, and because he is love, the text goes on, because of the great love with which he loved us.

Even when we were dead in our trespasses, enemies of God, he made us alive together with Christ.

Because Christ is raised, we can be made alive with Christ. by grace you have been saved.

And not only that, we've been raised up with him and seated with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages, that is not this age, that's the ages that will come, he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

[22:39] at our Good Friday service, I read the first eight chapters from a book called The Biggest Story. My hope for the sake of the children with us that evening and perhaps for some of us adults who can appreciate things simplified and in childlike language, myself included, was to present the grand narrative of God's rescuing work in the atoning death of Jesus Christ.

It's a story that starts all the way back at creation and we live in that story today. Now, I don't know if that reading was a hit or a miss.

The kids were fussy that night, I'm not sure, and it might have been too long. But for those children paying attention that evening and perhaps a few adults, I want to spend just a little bit of my allotted time to finish reading this book.

So settle in with me just for a moment, and then I'll turn our attention back to Ephesians 2. The very end of the last chapter we read, after speaking of the death of Christ, says this, but the biggest surprise to everyone was that the chosen one of God was chosen by God to die.

It just didn't seem right that the one destined to crush the serpent would be crushed himself. So when Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the living God, died on the cross that Friday afternoon, it seemed a shocking evil beyond belief.

[24 : 18] And it was the worst thing that's ever happened in the world. But it was also the best thing that's ever happened in the world, just as we would expect from God, and just as God planned it.

We break promises, so God keeps his. We run from God, so he comes to us. We suffer for sin, so the Savior suffers for us.

Our story is the story of God doing what we can't in order to make up for us doing what we shouldn't. The Christ suffers for our sin that we might share in his sinlessness.

And so deliverers are born to die. Things fall apart so they can come together. God kicks his own people out of paradise and then does whatever it takes to bring them back again.

As you may have heard and should definitely tell someone else, the snake crusher who died on the cross didn't stay dead. He couldn't.

[25 : 21] Death had no claim on him. The devil had no case against him. And sin had no wages for him that he couldn't pay. Jesus just couldn't stay dead and God just wouldn't let him rot in the tomb.

So on the third day, God raised him from the dead. A whole bunch of people saw him and ate with him and told their friends that he was really alive.

Forty days later, God lifted him into the sky and gave him the seat of honor at his right hand. And you know what the snake crusher did next?

Jesus, because his work was done, he sat down. And God gave him the name above all names so that at the name of Jesus, everybody and everything would start to sing and shout and worship.

Then just to make things even better and to make good on even more promises, God the Father and God the Son sent the best present of all time down to earth. They gave the gift of the Holy Spirit.

[26 : 27] And because of the Spirit, we can have power and peace and the presence of Christ with us all the time. As you can tell, this story is a big story.

In fact, it's the biggest story. It's a familiar story to some of us. It's a true story for all of us. But we haven't seen the end of the story, not yet.

We live in the beginning of the end of the story that we are still in the middle of. We know it's not the end because we haven't made it back to the garden. We get glimpses of the garden here and there, in our hearts, in our families, in the church.

But anyone who loves this story longs to see the one who is the center of the story. The snake crusher is coming back again to wipe away all the bad guys and wipe away every tear.

He's coming to make a new beginning and to finish what he started. He's coming to give us the home we once had and might have forgotten that we lost. So keep waiting for him.

[27 : 33] Keep believing in him. Keep trusting that the story isn't over yet. God's promises never fail and the promised one never disappoints.

One day we will see him. One day we will be with him. One day there will be nothing but the best of days, day after day after day after day and forever and ever it will be a wonderful time to be God's children in God's wonderful world.

We live in the beginning of the end of the story that we are still in the middle of. We have so much to look forward to.

Our sin is pardoned by faith in the resurrected Christ. Verse 8 says, 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. What a wonderful, blessed thing it is that we are not asked to earn our salvation, because none of us would be saved if this was the case.

[28 : 52] none of us would measure up to the perfect expectation of God. We would all fail. Christianity is the only world religion that gets this right, understands our sinful state, our deadness in our trespasses and sins, and presents to us a God, the true living God, who acts on our behalf, because he's merciful and he's full of love.

So we get to live and be free in him, free to obey, a faith that finds itself working, but not a faith that thinks it earns salvation.

Paul says in Galatians 6.14, far be it for me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Now Paul is not the only one who closely unites the doctrine of resurrection with our salvation. Peter says in 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 3, 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 in kind, born again, new creation. If you are in Christ, then you have been made alive eternally because Jesus is alive.

[30 : 36] Listen to what Jesus says in Luke chapter 20 and verse 36. They cannot die anymore, those who are in heaven, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

Without the reality of the resurrection, we would not have our sin pardoned. And then lastly, without the resurrection, we would not have the presence of Jesus.

Have you ever imagined what it might be like to walk with Jesus? on the earth. The road to Emmaus where he expounds all of the Old Testament and shows how it all points to him as the moment I would have wanted to experience.

If you consider that it's a better thing still, that is given to us the spirit of Christ. We have his very presence with us by faith in him.

Verse 10 says, for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Paul's going to go on to talk about God working in us to will and to work for his good pleasure.

[31 : 58] John 14 15 and following there Jesus says, if you love me you will keep my commandments and I 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 in the world will see me no more but you will see me because I live you also will live.

Paul writes in Romans 8 verse 9 and following you however are not in the flesh but in the spirit if in fact the spirit of God dwells in you. 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 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.

[33 : 11] The resurrected Christ dwells in all who believe in him. The resurrected Christ says in Matthew chapter 28 verse 20 behold I am with you always to the end of the age.

In Romans 6 9 we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again. Death no longer has dominion over him.

What a thing to consider because Jesus lives we have his presence with us now through his spirit and forever more as we live with him in eternity.

So without the reality of the resurrection we would not have protection from the wrath of God our sin pardoned or the presence of Jesus and so praise be to God that Jesus is in fact raised from the dead.

All of the promises of God find their yes and amen in the resurrected Christ. Let's pray together.