

Ephesians 2:1-10

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[0:00] Please take out your copy of God's Word, which I hope you have with you today. I suppose it would have made sense for me to preach a text from the book of John, but I'm not. Turn with me please to Ephesians chapter 2.

Every Sunday when we gather together as a church, we gather in celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Every sermon given in the fellowship of our church is a resurrection sermon. The application of which would not be possible if Jesus was not raised. If you ever find yourself hearing a sermon with application that would be possible apart from the resurrection of Jesus Christ, then you are not hearing a gospel sermon and you may not be gathered with a Christian church.

The resurrection of Jesus is central to all that the church is and to all that the church does. The resurrection is the pendule on which the great hinge of the gospel swings.

Everything that we believe falls apart without it. The true Christian church has always believed this.

[1:20] A.W. Tozer, the 20th century pastor, theologian, the quotation on your bulletin said, we understand, he's referring to the gospel church, we understand and acknowledge that the resurrection has placed a glorious crown upon all of Christ's sufferings.

So our text for today is Ephesians chapter 2, verses 1 through 10. And I do want us to take a particular pause and think about the resurrection of Jesus Christ and what it means for us.

But if you're a guest with us today, I want you to know that this is not an odd Sunday for us. We do this week in and week out. Before I read for our benefit Ephesians 2, verses 1 through 10, I want to remind you, beloved, this is God's word to us.

It was written for his glory and for our good. And as such, we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

I begin 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 body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

[3:03] 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.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Note with me from the text, resurrection phrases, right, that tie this text together in verses 5 and 6.

[4:07] Verse 5, Paul says, We were dead, but God made us alive together with Christ.

And in verse 6, Not only were we made alive, but also God raised us up with him being Christ. So as we consider this text, I want our attention to be drawn to the centrality of the resurrection to the Christian faith.

But before we do this, and in brief, I want to ask and answer in brief the question, How can we know that Jesus was raised from the dead?

I recognize that there may be some with us today that place a massive question mark at the end of that sentence. How is it even possible that we can know that this Jesus, this historical figure, was in fact raised from the dead?

Now, I'm going to do this briefly because despite all of the best of apologetic cases, the fact remains that those who follow Jesus Christ do so from faith.

[5:23] We believe that Jesus is raised. We believe that he has brought light to our darkened hearts. But the apologetic cases can be helpful.

And I would like to make two of them, these assertions to you this morning concerning the resurrection. First, we have in the Bible the record that Jesus stated that he would be raised from the dead.

This historical document, the scripture, if you don't take it as God's word, which we do as a church, but if you take it as a historical document, it's recorded that Jesus said in places like Mark chapter 8 and verse 31, 31, and Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man, he's referring to himself, 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 said this about himself and he said it in many places. There's lots of historical veracity to Jesus saying such things.

And we have to wrestle with this Jesus. I said during the Leithuæ time, right? Jesus cannot merely be a good teacher.

[6:49] He is the truth that holds all truths together. C.S. Lewis wrote in Mere Christianity, which is why I did that time with the kids this morning.

He said, I am trying here, so he's made this extensive case, I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Jesus.

I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher.

He would either be a lunatic on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg, or else he would be the devil of hell. You must make your choice.

Either this man was and is the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool. You can spit at him and kill him as a demon, or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God.

[8:04] But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

Now, it seems to me obvious that he was neither a lunatic nor a fiend, and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that he was and is God.

And so, Lewis lays out for us this apologetic argument. People will refer to lunatic, liar, or Lord. But I must say that it is flawed a bit.

And Lewis actually later wrote about the very flaw of such an argument, because there is one other option available. That he was a legend.

And you may be entertaining that idea. Yeah, but what if this is all just a farce? It's all just a story made up. Right? This is an elaboration on a man who existed.

[9:10] We know he was crucified. But the biblical authors just turned him into a legend. So this brings me to my second apologetic point.

Why? I think it's impossible for us to believe that he was created as a legend. Because the disciples were transformed.

Those who claimed to be followers of Jesus Christ were changed. After his resurrection. In Acts chapter 2 and verse 32. This is from Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost.

He said, This Jesus God raised up. And of that we all are witnesses. We have actually seen the raised Jesus Christ.

Now remember that this was the very same Peter who had denied that he even knew Jesus. The disciples, in seeing the risen Christ, were transformed from mice to men.

[10:22] They were a band of bumbling followers following Jesus around. Arguing about the meaning of Jesus' parables and who would be the greatest in the kingdom.

What happened? What happened to cause these men to turn out into the world as proclaimers of Jesus' resurrection?

None of these men opted to support a legend that Jesus had risen for their own benefit. None of them built a big building, gathered large crowds, or built a mansion on the Sea of Galilee.

None of them jetted across the country in a jet to share the message that so many clamored to hear. It was not profitable for these men to declare that Jesus was the Christ.

This was an audacious claim that Jesus was raised from the dead. And it ultimately cost each of these men great suffering, and for most, their very lives.

[11:32] Now, we have some biblical record of what happened to the apostles and the broader disciples. Much of what I'm about to share with you comes from church history.

And again, you might go, well, but that's church history, right? You're making a great claim that the Bible speaks truth about Jesus. And now we're dipping off into church history once again. It is not an effective propaganda machine to say the leaders of our church died in this way.

It's not helpful for the recruitment of people unless these people are radically transformed by the same grace of God. So let me give you some examples, right?

Stephen, not an apostle, one of the early deacons, was stoned to death, the very first Christian martyr. James was killed with a sword by Herod Agrippa.

Peter was crucified upside down. Andrew was crucified on an olive tree in a town called Patre in Achaia. Thomas was run through with spears, tormented with red-hot plates, and finally burned alive.

[12:42] Philip was tortured and then crucified in Phrygia. Matthew was beheaded at Naddever. Bartholomew was flayed and then crucified. The other James, again, we want to be known as the other James, right?

was beaten to death with a club. Simon, crucified in Syria. Judas Thaddeus, different Judas, was beaten to death with sticks in Mesopotamia.

Matthias was stoned while being crucified in Ethiopia. Paul was beheaded in Rome. And as far as we know, John died a natural death, but it's widely rumored that he was scarred horribly by being burned in boiling oil.

It's not a profitable thing to say that Jesus was raised from the dead when the easier thing to do would have been rather just call him a good moral teacher, right?

He's just one in the line of many prophets in the Mosaic tradition. In Acts 5, verses 40 and 42, we get the conclusion of this trial where all of the apostles are rounded up and they're tried before the Sanhedrin.

[13:58] And then in verse 40 we read, 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. 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. Men radically changed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

John chapter 2 and verse 22 records for us, when therefore Jesus was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, that he had said this would happen, that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

And they all together had this attitude that Paul expresses in Romans 8, 18, where he wrote, for I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Having believed in this risen Christ who is now seated in glory at the right hand of the Father, and that we also will receive this resurrection one day.

[15:22] I think this is a powerful case against this idea that Jesus was a legend. And so, was he a liar, a lunatic, and all of the apostles along with?

Or is he Lord? And he is. I stated in the introduction that all the Christian believes would fall apart without the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The pendle, by the way, is that little pin that goes down on the inside of a hinge. If you don't know what that word is, that's a pendle. So let me show you this morning, briefly, three ways, three ways from our text that Christian belief would fall apart without the resurrection.

Without the reality of the resurrection, we would not have, number one, protection from the wrath of God. Protection from the wrath of God.

We see in verses one through three, apart from Christ, this is who we are. If you're not found in Christ this morning, this is you, verses one through three.

[16:37] If you're found in Christ this morning, this was you, which is who Paul is writing to, Ephesian believers. So past tense for us who are in Christ, present tense for those who are not.

And we see that we were dead in trespasses and sins. We walked in them. This was the way of our very living rebellion against a most holy God.

We followed the way of the world around us. We follow Satan himself, the prince of the power of the air. We are, we are, were, sons of disobedience and were or are by nature, by our very being, children of wrath.

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

Beloved, we have sinned against a most holy God. We have committed egregious sin against him. Whether you have the drug addict under the bridge story or whether you simply didn't obey the command of your parents, we are all guilty of sin and it is weighty before a God who is of infinite holiness.

[18:11] And the promise to us of the Bible is that God must punish sin. In his perfect justice, he must punish that sin. And this is, that punishment is the wrath of God.

poured out on sinners. This is a great problem. This is bad news. Praise be to God for the good news of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

For it is by faith in Jesus' person and work that we are changed from sons of disobedience to sons of obedience, from children of wrath to children of mercy and grace.

Paul again, 1 Thessalonians 1, verses 9 and 10, writes to the Thessalonian church, For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned 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.

As God's wrath is poured out in the final day of judgment on mankind, we will find ourselves safe and secure in Christ.

[19:43] Delivered, protected from the wrath of God. Paul wrote also in Romans 5, verses 9 and 10, Since therefore we have now been justified, declared righteous by Jesus' blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

We are saved by God from God to God. Verse 10, 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.

On that great day of judgment, by what will you plead the mercy of God? Only those who plead the accomplished work of Christ will have entry into the kingdom of heaven.

Only those who stand before God and say, of no merit of mine, but all of Christ will be allowed into the kingdom. Will you join us there?

Oh, I pray, I pray that you would. If you have not seen your need of protection from the wrath of God, I pray that you would feel the weight of offense against him.

[21:09] See that the penalty of your sin is death forever and run in faith to our risen Lord. Without the reality of the resurrection, this living Christ, we would not have protection from the wrath of God.

Jesus would merely be a lunatic or a liar, but he's not. He's the Lord of heaven and earth. And, we have this protection from the wrath of God because our sin is pardoned.

So, without the reality of the resurrection, we would not have our sin pardoned. We can look at verses 4 through 9 of Ephesians chapter 2, which begins, but God. And I'm so thankful for these conjunctions in the Holy Writ. There are many of them that lays out for us who we once were and then says, in spite of who you are, God. God acts. God is gracious. God is, our text says, rich in mercy and full of great love for mankind. [22:31] So, even when, even when we were dead in our trespasses, right? Enemies of God, sons of disobedience, by nature, children of wrath, right?

Pitted against Him, His absolute enemies because of His great love, because He's rich in mercy, He made us alive together with Christ. And then Paul inserts, by grace, you have been saved, right? This is not a thing of our doing, verse 8, and this is not your own doing. It's a gift of God. Our very ability to believe, right? We've been saved by grace through faith. This faith is not our own doing. It's a gift that is granted to us in our deadness, right? The gospel is not a picture of us drowning at sea and being thrown a life raft, right? All we must do is climb into the security, right? [23:34] The picture of the gospel is we are dead at the bottom of the sea, right? We are rotting corpses. Little fish are picking away at you. And Christ dives in.

And Christ brings you to the surface and breathes life into you. You are raised up with Him. Not a result of works. I cannot say I climbed into the raft. Good for me. But all my glory due to Christ is given Him because I can say I was dead and Christ delivered me from this death. Here we find at the center 4-9 these two phrases that I originally drew your attention to. Verse 5 we were dead but God made us alive together with Christ. And in verse 6 we've been raised up with Him. Look at it a little more broadly, right? [24:37] Look at the context of verses 5 and 6. we were dead because of sin but have been made alive because of Christ. We have in Him the pardon of our sin and His righteousness is given to us because God is gracious toward mankind.

By grace we have been saved. 1 Peter 1-3 Peter says, 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. We have a living hope because our Savior lives. And then Paul writes in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 17 and if Christ has not been raised. He postulates what if this Jesus was not raised? He says your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. [25:49] If Christ had not been raised we would not have the pardon of our sins and we are all wasting our time this morning. We should turn into a hiking club instead because it's a beautiful day and we have the Appalachian Trail just north of us but rather we gather as Christ Church to praise our risen Lord.

We have been changed from one kind to another kind. We are not differing in degree we are differing in kind. We have been transitioned from those who were enemies to those who were friends. Our sins have been pardoned. We have been made new. We have been made alive to live eternally with our God as His people for His praise. Luke writes in Luke chapter 20 verse 36 They cannot die anymore He's quoting Jesus because they are equal to angels and are sons of God being sons of the resurrection. And Paul writes in Romans chapter 8 verse 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. [27:22] 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

thirdly we would not have the presence of Jesus.

Notice verse 10 of Ephesians chapter 2 For we are His workmanship like He's created us created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

So having been made this new kind we begin to evidence our changedness in the way that we go and live. God prepared beforehand good works for us to carry out.

It is granted to us to walk in good works and we do so with the presence and therefore the power of Jesus Christ.

How do we do this? Why am I making pulling out of Ephesians chapter 2 the presence of Jesus would not be ours? We've been given this task to walk in these good works.

[28:39] How is it that we do this? I'm saying to you we do it with the presence of Christ. Let me show you. John chapter 14 verse 15 and following Jesus said if you love me you will keep my commandments.

And I don't believe that verse 16 is conditioned on verse 15. If you love me you will keep my commandments! give 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.

So notice that Jesus says I'm going to send to you the helper the spirit right we've heard him as the holy spirit but then he very quickly in verse 18 says I will not leave you as orphans I will come to you.

It's very trinitarian idea carried here. Jesus himself is with us as the spirit is with us. And then verse 19 yet a little while and the world will see me no more but you will see me because I live you also will live.

[30:16] So without the resurrection we don't have the presence of Jesus. Paul writes again boy I'm using Paul this morning aren't I?

Romans chapter 8 beginning in verse 9 and then through 11 which I read previously Paul wrote 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 you see the beauty that Paul weaves there with his language right you however not in the flesh but in the spirit in fact the spirit of God dwells in you anyone who does not have the spirit of Christ changing his name his title the spirit Christ is in you so we have the presence we have the presence of Christ if we have the spirit of Christ and then verse 11 if the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you he raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit who dwells in you this is how Jesus makes good on this text Ephesians 2 10 right where his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works that we should walk in them he gives us himself by the power of his spirit and it's how he makes good on the!

Matthew chapter 28 the last half of verse 20 where he said behold I am with you always to the end of the age and this is a sure promise Paul writes in Romans chapter 6 verse 9 we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again death no longer has dominion over him we have a risen Christ who died once was raised and will never die again so we have his presence now and will have his presence forever without the reality of the resurrection however we would not have protection from the wrath of God our sin pardoned or the presence of Jesus praise be to God that Jesus was in fact raised from the dead and that all things hold together in him do you believe this no then believe it today

I want you to be protected from the wrath of God because of the pardon of your sin and I want you to experience the presence of Jesus Christ our Lord beloved is the goodness of these realities warming your hearts this morning we are slow learners and we are quick to forget God's good promises to us which are made sure by the resurrection of Jesus Christ if your heart has grown cold to these great truths warm your hearts at the fire of Ephesians chapter 2 verses 1 through 10 which places at its very center the resurrection of Jesus Christ