



CANYON HILLS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

Series: Ephesians

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Out of the Grave

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Let's get our Bibles close by and get them open to Ephesians, chapter 2. You hear me say this all the time. This majestic, holy, and awesome God we just worshiped is the same exact God who got here to church way before we did, and he wants to speak to you. The good news is that God knows you and he knows everything about you. It may be that he knows what you're struggling with, what you're fearing right now, or the sin that's getting the best of you. He knows it all, and he wants to speak into your heart. He does that through his written Word.

We are working our way through the book of Ephesians. We got to chapter 2 last week. Just by way of recapping last week, the subject of the first three verses of Ephesians, chapter 2, last Sunday was basically *The Way We Were*, the way we were before we were miraculously born again.

Last week, Paul reminded us that he doesn't want any follower of Jesus to ever, ever forget that the way we were before we were born again was that we were spiritually dead. We didn't know God. We didn't love God. We didn't worship God. We certainly didn't want God. Nothing in us was alive to God before we were saved. One of the worst, most wicked things about sin is that it convinces us that we can be our own God. So, we can't forget where we were before we were saved.

He also wants us to remember that before we were saved, we let the world tell us how to think and live. You see, when you ignore or eliminate God from your life, the Bible teaches that we become slaves to the world. Ultimately, we just let the world tell us what to think and what to believe, and we just listen to the loudest voices screaming in our culture.

Also, before we were saved, we were following Satan. The Bible also teaches that a godless world is ruled by Satan. It is his kingdom. God calls it the kingdom of darkness, where Satan blinds the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel in the face of Jesus.

You see, before we were saved, Satan convinced us. He deceived us into thinking a lot of things that were good for us and right for us were wrong and bad. Just the opposite is true. Satan deceived us into thinking the stuff that's bad for us and wrong for us is actually right and good. Satan is the master of disguise, and when you live in this world without God, you are prey to Satan's rule and reign.

Fourthly, last week we remember that Paul reminded us that before we were saved, we were headed straight for the wrath of God. You see, without Jesus, we are left standing before the perfect holiness of almighty God in the judgment all by ourselves, unable to justify one single sin we've ever committed in thought and deed, big or small. The Bible says we stand before God in the judgment, literally naked and exposed before him to whom we must give an account. That's where we were all headed before we were miraculously born again.

That's where Paul took us last Sunday before we put a comma on it until today. The transition between the way we were and where he wants to take us today comes in two thunderous words. These two words bridge the canyon between the very real death that sin has brought and the very real life that Jesus has brought. These two words open the door to all of heaven's love, mercy, and grace for all who will believe.

So, that's where we find ourselves today now, at that doorstep of transition between the way we were and the way we are. Let's stand now for the reading of God's Word. God is speaking. Verse 4:

"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 in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

Father in heaven, oh, I pray that you would open our minds to the riches of your mercy. I pray, God, that you would comfort any concerns we have right now, any distractions that might be in our thoughts, that you would help us to see in an amazing way your true kindness toward us who believe. I pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

I love those two words, **"But God..."** It's amazing how many times those two words appear together in the Bible. They contain all the power necessary to change every single second of our future that begins with our surrender, repentance, and faith in Jesus. In those two words is all the power necessary to change every single second of our life going forward from the point we repent and believe.

Last week, as I've already said, Paul reminded us of the way we were before we were saved. This week, we remember the way we *are* and what it took for God to bring us from death to life, from the destruction of our souls, for which we were completely liable, to the salvation of our souls, which we were completely helpless to accomplish. What did it take for God to save us?

1. *God offered pardon to us even though he knew we were guilty.* In his abundant mercy, God rescued us out of the grave of our sin. Even though he knows our guilt, he doesn't always issue the punishment that is deserved.

I love the prophet Micah in the Old Testament. You see, everything we're talking about when it comes to Jesus and his life, death, burial, and resurrection... Everything we talk about regarding the gospel has already been talked about in the Old Testament. One of the prophets, named Micah, amazed by God's promise of the coming mercy in Jesus, prophetically wrote these words. He said,

"Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea."

That is Micah looking forward to what Paul is talking about here in Ephesians 2, verse 4. If you look at it here, it says, **"But God, being rich in mercy..."** That word *rich*, describing God's mercy, indicates excess. It indicates more than is needed. Paul is painting a picture here of God pouring out his mercy on us in a large amount.

He credits all of our salvation to God's infinite supply of pardon for our sin, and he wants us to be sure that we know it's never our sin that keeps us from receiving God's mercy. No sin is too big for God to mercifully pardon. Just as important, Paul certainly doesn't want us to ever make the mistake of thinking our sin is too small to need God's mercy. He's saying here, "No one is hopeless, and no one is exempt from the need for God's mercy."

A lot of people struggle with forgiving themselves, don't they? Maybe you know somebody who has struggled like that, or maybe you were like that, struggling to forgive yourself. Sadly, sometimes what keeps people from coming to God for mercy and forgiveness is because they think their sin is too horrible, for whatever reason. What keeps a lot of people from coming to God for mercy is that they just think, "There's no way God would ever be merciful." They can't forgive themselves.

Here's the good news. God never asks us to forgive ourselves. Never. That's all pop psychology and the ridiculousness in our culture that's trying to convince us that if you'll just go easy on yourself and just forgive yourself for all the havoc you've wreaked in your life and the lives of others, then you'll just feel fine.

Notice how God never calls on us to forgive ourselves. You see, what he does do is command us to repent and let him forgive us. See, God has more mercy for us than we have for ourselves sometimes. Sin, first and foremost, is always sin against God. Every sin is, first and foremost, a sin against God. Therefore, God calls us and offers pardon, even though he knows we are guilty. That's what it takes, first and foremost, for us to be saved out of the grave of our own sin: A God who offers pardon, even though he knows we're guilty.

2. *It takes God's unconditional love as a lever that releases his mercy.* You see, if God's rich mercy is poured out on us in buckets, then God's love is the bucket. That's what he's saying here. Look at verse 4. **"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us..."** You get the sense that Paul can't stop with gratitude just for God's mercy. He realizes it's God's love that releases God's mercy on us. He calls it God's great love, the great love of God.

See, what makes God's love so great is that it's perfectly fair. It's purely motivated. It's unending. His love is unfailing and, maybe best of all, it's completely unconditional. Every other religion in the world offers a God whose love can only be earned and maintained by some level of our own personal penance or piety, but the one true God of the Bible is the only God who loves us with this great love.

Not the Mormon god, not the Catholic god, not the god of Islam, nor any of the 300 million gods of Hinduism. Every one of these religions teaches a god who requires that you either make yourself worthy or keep yourself worthy of being loved by God, but this is not the god of the Holy Scriptures.

Jesus, God's Son, God in the flesh, the exact representation of God's holy being, said these words: **"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends..."** It's the most radical expression of unconditional love in the universe. God dwelt among us in the person of his Son, Jesus. He stooped down from heaven's throne and he entered the muck and mire of his world that we are destroying with our sin.

Verse 5 says he did all this while we were dead in our trespasses. While we were completely dead toward him in our hatred, rebellion, ignorance, or rejection of him, he loved us unconditionally. He didn't wait. He came to us and he initiated our reconciliation together.

God poured out the blood of his mercy and threw down the rope of his love and lifted us out of the grave of our sin. That's what it took, pouring out the blood of his mercy through his Son and dropping down the rope of his unconditional love and pulling us out of the grave of our sin. At that moment, the way we were was instantaneously reversed because of the way he is. The way we are today is all due to the fact of the way he is.

Paul wants to make absolutely sure that we understand that God's undeserved love is more than just some crazy religious conspiracy. It's not just some religious blind faith. It's not just some religious poetry we've all made up in a cave somewhere and we're all just trying to convince each other every Sunday or when we meet in our Life Groups that this stuff is true. If we just believe it hard enough, maybe it'll be true.

Paul doesn't want us to go down that road at all. In the next two verses, Paul is going to confirm that everything about God's mercy and love is confirmed in the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. It's validated. It's confirmed. In fact, he wants to tell us that Jesus saved us from the deepest hell to the highest heavens.

In verses 5 and 6, Paul lists three things that are true about Jesus that are now true about us who believe. He says three things in these two verses. He says *we're made alive with Jesus, we're raised up with Jesus, and we're seated with Jesus.*

A. *We're made alive with Jesus.* We really only live now and forever when we are one with Jesus, when we are made one with the one who is alive now and is alive forever.

When we are made one with him, what's true about him now becomes true about us. We are made one with Jesus when, from the bottom of our grave, we throw up our arms, surrender, and respond to his call to repent and believe. When we do that, Paul says, first of all, in verse 5, that we were made alive with Jesus.

Remember what he said last Sunday in the first three verses. We were hopelessly dead in our sins. We were no more able to help ourselves get out of this grave than a corpse can respond to the command to get up. A dead person can't do anything. Paul made sure we didn't forget that. We were under God's just sentence for our sin, and by nature, we were objects of his wrath. That's what he taught us last Sunday.

Then, you come to verse 4, and it says, "**But God...**" Not, "But you..." Not, "But I..." Not, "But we..." Herein lies the beauty and the wonder of the Christian gospel. God intervenes to save us. Only God can awaken the dead. Just like Lazarus, he calls us from our spiritual grave. That call comes from the microphone of the gospel, of the death, burial, and resurrection.

When God called us, some of us ran out of the grave. Others of us walked out of the grave. For someone like me, we crawled out of the grave, but we came out of the grave because we heard his call and we responded to believe.

When we responded to that call, we were taken from spiritual death to life and from spiritual darkness to light. So, when we read Paul's words in Romans 8:1, "**There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...**" for those who have been made alive, because our condemnation has been lifted, now we can know God.

Now we can love and worship God because that which was in us that was dead toward God is now made alive with Jesus and we want to know, obey, and love him. This is the most profound heart transformation imaginable. By telling us we've been made alive with Jesus, Paul is talking about the fact that our disposition toward God has been completely changed. If this change hasn't taken place, then the person involved is not a Christian.

Those words in 2 Corinthians 5:17 are so important right now, where we read, "**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.**" What is Paul talking about right there? He's talking about our disposition toward God.

If there's not a radical and growing desire to know, worship, love, and obey God, then the old disposition has not passed away and behold, the new disposition toward God has not come. It doesn't matter if we call ourselves Christians. Anybody can do that. What matters is if the old has

gone and the new has now come. For those who have answered the call with genuine repentance and belief, we have been made alive, but not only made alive.

B. *We've been raised up with Jesus.* Paul is referring to the ascension of Jesus here. After Jesus rose from the dead, he would ascend into heaven, back with his Father, from where he came. When Jesus rose from the dead, he didn't just live a few more years or a few more decades and then die again, then they buried him. No, he rose from the dead and then he ascended into heaven.

So, when Paul says we have been raised with him, he means we have been taken up into heaven or ascended with Jesus. What in the world does that mean? That means although we're still in this world, we're not *of* this world anymore. We're not bound only by what we can see and touch in the here and now. We're not bound by that.

What he's speaking to here, by us being raised with Jesus, is the fact that we are now more citizens of the kingdom of heaven than we are citizens of the kingdom of this world. Our citizenship has changed. We think differently. We see things differently. We don't just see things in the temporary.

We look at this world and we know nothing in this world lasts, and now we have this eternal view. We know there's an eternity of which we are now a part because we've been made alive and raised with Jesus. Our priorities and our values change when we come to Jesus and answer that call. In 1 John, the apostle John writes,

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever."

See, being raised with Jesus means there's no priority, pursuit, or passion in this world that we would let compromise our devotion to God. That's what happens to those who have been raised with Christ.

Our service, our sacrifice, our moral and ethical holiness, our worship, our compassion, our love for God and for one another... We will not let any temporary thing of this world, whatever passion, pursuit, or priority, compromise that. We are raised with Christ, but not only that. Not only has he saved us from the deepest hell; he has saved us to the highest heaven.

C. *We have been seated with Jesus in the heavenlies.* This is exciting when you go back to chapter 1. In fact, I want you to do that. In chapter 1, we read where Paul was praying a prayer in the beginning of the letter for the people who would be reading this letter. He was praying that they would grow in their knowledge of God, that they would grow in their faith, purity, and love.

He says, in verses 19-20, that he wants them to grow and understand **"...what is the immeasurable greatness of [God's] power toward us who believe, according to the working**

of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places..." Paul says, "I want you to remember how great God's power is. Just look at what he did for Jesus."

Yet in chapter 1, he doesn't mention us. He doesn't mention us being seated with Jesus in the heavenlies, not until chapter 2. I think it's because Paul wanted, first of all, for us to feel the enormity of our desperation before he lets the cat out of the bag. So, he prays that prayer in chapter 1. Then, in chapter 2, three verses last Sunday, he reminds us of the way we were. It wasn't good.

Now, in chapter 2, verse 6, he says, "Guess what! That same power that raised Jesus up and seated him at the right hand has raised you up and seated you with him." It's written in a way that means it's already a fact in the future. It's already done. It just hasn't happened yet in the present. You see, in the mind of God, we're already ascended with Jesus, seated with him next to the throne of God.

This speaks of our victory. This speaks of our security, privilege, and rejoicing. This says, "It is finished." Do you remember those three words? Paul is saying it's finished. We reign with him already. This is exactly what happens to us as a result of our union, our oneness with Jesus. In God's great work of salvation, we come alive, we're raised up, and we will sit down.

In verse 7, Paul races to God's grace and kindness. He has already mentioned God's grace once, right at the end of verse 5. It's almost like he couldn't help himself. He's saying here, "**...even when we were dead in our trespasses, [he] made us alive together with Christ...**" Then, he kind of just explodes. He's like, "**...by grace you have been saved...**"! It's like he couldn't help it. He just threw that in there. He just says, "Don't forget! This is God's gift. Everything I'm telling you right now is because of God's gift to you. Don't forget that."

He just interjects it, and then he keeps going. "**...and raised us up with him and seated us with him...**" Then, in verse 7, "**...so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace...**" There's the second time he brings up grace. Then, in verse 8, he says, "**For by grace you have been saved...**" Three times, he mentions grace!

If he's talking about it three times in just one or two sentences, it should dawn on us that this grace thing is a big deal. So, instead of just trying to talk about the meaning of God's grace for us today in one little part of one little point in one little sermon, we're going to wait till next Sunday. We're going to talk about God's grace and only God's grace, so don't miss next week. All we're going to talk about is what God's grace is and what it means for us.

Notice what he does here. He races right to God's grace, the "**...riches of his grace in kindness toward us...**" I mean, think about it. He's talking about the mercy of God, the great love of God, and the grace of God, and then he says *kindness*. *Kindness* is one of those words... It's like the word *nice*. Right? It's just kind of a nice word, but it doesn't seem to fit with the riches of his mercy and the greatness of his love... And kindness! That's how it struck me. It doesn't seem to fit, but oh, it does fit.

See, God's kindness flows from God's character, and God is not weak. In the course of our lives, we're going to sin. Now, we're going to sin less and less as we get transformed more and more into the image of Jesus, but we're going to sin (and sometimes, horribly sin). Yet when we do, God does not strike us down. He doesn't turn on us. Instead, God is astonishingly kind to us, and he calls us back to that path of obedience.

Don't get me wrong. God is not kind toward our sin. Paul isn't saying that. Paul is saying our sin is never safe with God, but we are. Your sin is never safe with God. Don't make that mistake. But you are. The riches of his grace and his kindness toward us who believe... God is all these things: merciful, loving, gracious, kind toward us who are in Jesus...

In verse 7, he gives us kind of the crowning reason of it all. It's so that God's glory is on eternal display. Look what it says in verse 7. **"...so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."** Whenever you see this idea of God's glory, we're talking about the perfection of God's goodness.

When you see the idea of God's glory, it is meant to get us to think about everything that is good about God. God shows his rich mercy, his great love, and his wonderful grace and kindness to us so that as we respond to his call, we would be lights that shine on the glory of God in all the coming generations after the cross and the empty tomb.

In all of the coming days after Jesus did all that, all the people who stake their souls to Jesus are his shining lights to the world, shining on his pardon for the guilty, on his unconditional love for the undeserving, on all of that poured out on us who are one with Jesus by faith in his life, death, burial, and resurrection for us.

Wow! You see, the cross and the empty tomb are heaven's floodlight shining on God's glory. We are all his spotlights shining on it in this generation. I don't know about you, but even as I'm talking about this, even after studying this all week, my heart still starts beating faster and faster. What an amazing thought! What it took for God to save us, to take us from the way we were to the way we are because of the way he is...

I think the only response to this would be to bow our heads for a moment in silence. Would you do that with me? Would you bow your heads? Just force yourself to push aside any distraction right now and just sit here in this moment. The question I want to ask you is...*Are you in Jesus?* Jesus said, **"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live..."** If you are in Jesus, the only appropriate thing to do right now is to just thank God for his mercy and love.

In your own words, would you just express any and all gratitude you might have for what it took to save you? Thank him and praise him right now. Thank him for his endless supply of mercy. Praise him that his love was not conditional on you getting your life right or perfect. Praise him that he didn't wait for you to do that. Thank him for the undeniable evidence that his mercy and

love are real in the cross of Jesus. Praise him for willingly sacrificing his own love to pardon us from our own sin.

[Song]

Before I spoke a word, you were singing over me
You have been so, so good to me
Before I took a breath, you breathed your life in me
You have been so, so kind to me

Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God
Oh, it chases me down, fights till I'm found, leaves the 99
I couldn't earn it and I don't deserve it. Still, you give yourself away
Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God, yeah

When I was your foe, still your love fought for me
You have been so, so good to me
When I felt no worth, you paid it all for me
You have been so, so kind to me

Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God
Oh, it chases me down, fights till I'm found, leaves the 99
I couldn't earn it and I don't deserve it. Still, you give yourself away
Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God

Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God
Oh, it chases me down, fights till I'm found, leaves the 99
I couldn't earn it and I don't deserve it. Still, you give yourself away
Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God, yeah

Never-ending, never-failing

[End of song]

[Song]

I was buried beneath my shame
Who could carry that kind of weight
It was my tomb
Till I met You

I was breathing, but not alive
All my failures I tried to hide
It was my tomb
Till I met You

You called my name
And I ran out of that grave
Out of the darkness
Into Your glorious day

You called my name
And I ran out of that grave
Out of the darkness
Into Your glorious day

Now Your mercy has saved my soul
Now Your freedom is all I know
The old made new
Jesus, when I met You

You called my name
And I ran out of that grave
Out of the darkness
Into Your glorious day

You called my name
And I ran out of that grave
Out of the darkness
Into Your glorious day

I needed rescue
My sin was heavy
But chains break at the weight of Your glory
I needed shelter
I was an orphan
But You call me a citizen of heaven
When I was broken
You were my healing
Your love is the air that I'm breathing
I have a future
My eyes are open

You called my name
And I ran out of that grave

Out of the darkness
Into Your glorious day

You called my name
And I ran out of that grave
Out of the darkness
Into your glorious day

[End of song]

Pastor Koby Orr: The question each of us faces is...*Am I in Jesus?* Because if the answer is yes, then you and I have a reason to worship and to celebrate each and every day, and certainly when we gather in this place as the family of God, but if you're here today and you are not in Christ or you don't know what that means, there are going to be people down in front here at the end of this service who would love the opportunity to share with you, to pray with you, and to help you walk through what those next steps might look like.

If you're here today and you just need prayer, man, they would love an opportunity to pray with you as well. We hope you have a great rest of your day and a great week. We'll see you all back here next Sunday.