

“Enthroned with Christ”: Ephesians 2:6-7

Twentieth Sunday after Trinity – Oct 25, 2020

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Ephesians 2:1-7: “And you being dead in the trespasses and sins ²in 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— ³among 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, ⁴but God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

Introduction

1. Last week, we considered vv.4-5 of this part of Paul’s letter: because of God’s overwhelming love and mercy toward us, he made us alive in Christ, despite the fact that we were far away from him.
2. This morning, we’re going to follow Paul’s train of thought and look at vv.6-7, where describes two additional actions God took on our behalf and the startling reason for them.

Exposition

- Paul’s overall train of thought in vv.5b-7:

“but God,

1. “made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)”
2. “and raised us up with him”
3. “and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,”

⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

“⁶ and raised us up with him”

- This is a single compound word *συνεγείρω* (pronounced “soon-a-guy-row”), used only here and in Col 2:12 and 3:1. Paul never uses this term in reference to our physical resurrection.

- Jesus' resurrection occurred all at once, as a single event. When Jesus died, his body remained in the tomb while his soul/spirit went to the place of the dead or the "underworld" (Heb. *sheol* or Gk. *hades*).

- The same thing happened to everyone up to that point in time: the righteous went to the part of *hades* called "Paradise" or "Abraham's bosom", to await their release by the Messiah, and the unrighteous went to a different part of *hades* to await the final judgment (cf. Lk 16:19-31).

- When Jesus was resurrected, his soul was rejoined to his body, and the substance of his body was instantaneously transformed: its weaknesses, congenital diseases, injuries were gone forever. His body now had new, "super-human" properties. It was still material, but was now a "spiritual body" (1 Cor 15:42-49) or a "glorious body" (Phil 3:20-21).

- Then, as a whole person (spirit/body unit), Jesus was raised up to the place of His and the Father's presence in the heavenly realm, taking all the righteous saints with him. They are referred to in Heb 12:23 as "the spirits of the righteous made perfect."

- Since the time of Jesus, every believer who dies experiences a two-step resurrection process. Their souls are raised immediately into the presence of the Father and Son in the heavenly realm. That's why, for believers in Jesus, death is not a tragedy but a victory, a release, a joy! Meanwhile, unbelievers go to the place of the unrighteous dead to await the final judgment.

- When Jesus comes again to earth, the righteous dead will come with him and their bodies will be resurrected, made new and glorified, and rejoined to their souls forever. And those Christians who are alive on earth will be taken up to him while their bodies are instantaneously changed into glorious bodies (1 Cor 15:51-52).

- So, back to Eph 2:6, when Paul talks about our being raised up with Christ, he isn't referring to the resurrection of our soul (which happens when we die) or of our body (which happens when he returns). He's talking about the fact that, when believers receive the Holy Spirit, they are bound by an inseparable connection to Jesus which gives us the means to share or participate in his life. So, when he was raised up to heaven, our lives were raised up with him so we can experience what is going on there. Col 3:3: "For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God."

- So, through the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit, we are given the spiritual capacity to be in two places simultaneously. According to the NT, we are in Christ and he is in us. This is where our imaginations can help us spiritually. When you imagine God, where do you image Him? (Try imagining him in you, not above or beside you)

"and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus"

- "seated us with him" is another compound verb *συγκαθίζω* (pronounced "sug-cot-theed-zo").

- Look back a few verses at **Eph 1: 20-21**. Three things worth noting:
 1. **“heavenly places”** – not on earth; not yet. He is seated in the realm where the *elohim* dwell. *Elohim*: the “host of heaven” consisting of all the spiritual beings that populate the non-material sphere (e.g., angels, cherubim, seraphim, watchers, living creatures, etc.).
 2. **“right hand”** – place of supreme authority and power. He is enthroned as King of kings and Lord of lords (cf. Phil 2:9-10). Matt 28:18: “All authority in heaven and earth is given to me”.
 3. **“Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion”**. Not references to things but to creatures: ranks of angelic beings. “Far above”, infinitely far above the highest of these. Why? Col 1:15-16.

· So, in this text, Paul is teaching that Jesus is enthroned in the heavenly realm as a man. Jesus said he had “all authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man” (John 5:27). We are enthroned with him, united by a common humanity and the Holy Spirit, sharing his life, power and authority over all. Implications:

1. In this life, we now have his authority to do his will. We have the authority to do miracles, heal the sick, cast out demons. Demons and fallen angels are terrified of Jesus and his Name. James 2:19: “The demons believe and tremble!”
2. In the judgment to come, we will judge spiritual beings. 1 Cor 6:3. “Do you not know you will judge angels?”
3. In the life to come, we will rule some part of the earth under his authority. (Dan 7:27; Rev 3:21; 2:26; Lk 19:11-27).

“⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

· This is one of the most extraordinary verses in the bible. What Paul claims is nothing short of revolutionary as concerns our concept of God: the Father united us to Jesus Christ for the express purpose of lavishing his love and affection on us for eternity. As Paul describes it:

· **“the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness”** – Have you ever experienced “the immeasurable riches of grace in kindness” from another human being?

· What might it be like to experience it from God forever?

· Paul says: **“in the coming ages”** – includes this life and the one to come: 100 billion trillion years from now he will still be showing us new kindnesses.

· God's kindness toward us in Christ is inexhaustible. But don't we often doubt the kindness of God? There are a couple reasons for that.

1. We misconstrue his perception of us. We think he sees us only as sinful, and unworthy of his love. We often imagine him to be grouchy, ticked off and disappointed with us. We think he sees us perpetually at our worst when, in reality, he chooses to see us at our best: spotless, holy, clothed in the righteousness of Jesus, cleansed of all our sins.

2. We misinterpret the events of our life. All of us naturally want our life to be happy, healthy and hassle free. So, when sickness, financial setbacks, relational strains, disappointments and losses come, we interpret these as signs that God doesn't care about us. But Jesus warned us that this life would be hard: "in this world you will have trouble". But He added, "take heart: I've overcome the world" (Jn 16:33). So, in these difficult events of our lives, he is inviting us into a place of deeper, more authentic relationship with him and is shaping our character, training us like an expert coach, so we can be ready for the challenges and greater responsibilities in this life and the to come. We easily forget this fallen, fractured world is not a playground but a battleground. It's not a quiet evening sipping cocktails by the ocean; it's a full on gymnasium where we develop the perseverance and strength we need to be fully human. Most importantly, it's not the final destination but a spot along the way on the long journey to becoming who we most truly are.

· We sometimes judge God for not being kind when in reality he is the best and kindest of beings. It's our fallen world that is unkind. And after Jesus comes again, it will be changed forever into the beautiful and generous world God intended.

Take away

· You have been privileged to share the very life of Christ: you've been raised up and enthroned in heaven with him. The reason is that God has chosen you for special favor and kindness.

· Each day this coming week, let's all take a little time to reflect on the love and kindness God has shown us, large and small. As you reflect, thank him for his goodness to you and ask him to help you be increasingly aware of his kindnesses and more grateful for them.