

Norman C. Schwab
Yacolt EVFree
January 16, 2005

But God...
Ephesians 2:4-7

Picture yourself deep in rebel held territory in Mosul, Iraq. You have been captured and held prisoner and after months and months of confinement, imprisonment, and brainwashing. You were made to believe that you really are now part of the enemy. You have slowly come to think like the enemy, act like the enemy. You begin to believe in the principles of the Koran and the militant muslim faith. You have begun to dress like the enemy and eat like the enemy. Your attitude toward people and the United States military is of hatred and anger. Then the US Marine commando's invade the rebel compound and find you. They shock you out of your stupor...and suddenly you wake up and realize the lies you have been fed for the last 15 months. You suddenly begin to see the real enemy for what it is. You suddenly see that all the promises they made would never come true, never work out. You realize what the enemy has to offer will never satisfy the deepest longings of your heart. You see the reality of truth as the lights go on. Your heart is now back at home, you desperately want to go back home. But the general passes information to you that he wants you to stay for now in Mosul, stay in the enemy camp. He wants you to infiltrate them. It might be very dangerous for you to live like an alien in the enemies territory, but when you are finally called home, he wants you to bring to freedom as many others as you can who were once as brainwashed and blinded as you were.

Ephesians 2:4 is a refreshing, reviving splash of cold water in the face of we who were once dead in our sin. Ephesians 2:4 is like the US marines coming into our brainwashed delusions and waking us up to the truth. We may be living in enemy territory, but we are not the enemy and

we don't need to be living like it. Wake up and remember who you are. Ephesians 2:1 tells us the desperate condition we were once in. We were deluded. We were dead, not alive, dead. Unable to lift a finger spiritually toward God. We were controlled by the values of this world. We were imprisoned by the Evil One of this world and our very own flesh acted as a traitor inside the gates to deceive us to sin and move us toward destruction. We were once children of wrath. We deserved the very wrath of a holy almighty God. But....v.4 of Ephesians. But God. (READ Eph 2:4-7)

What a statement! We were lost, but God. We were objects of His wrath, But God. We were slaves to passion, But God. We were dead... But God made us alive. We were powerless with out position...But God put us in a high position. This phrase represents a pivot point a contrast, BUT from the previous condition we were in. We were lost hopeless, in a dysfunctional family, wallowing in our sins trespasses impulses pleasure seeking, self-gratifying ways-- but God.

Notice in that chapter 2 after painting a grim picture of our own dead lives and sick world, it does not say in v.4 But... education, But... legislation, But... environmental reforms. We live in the age of information explosion, technology is rapidly exploding but we don't get any smarter about real life. The world continues to anesthetize its pain, but nothing is found for relieving our misery and hurt. Man cannot arrange life in such a way where we can save ourselves. It just can't be done. We may arrange it all very cleverly and dress it up fashionably on the outside...but its all the same bad egg. C.S. Lewis said "No clever arrangement of bad eggs will make a good omelet".

Christians are criticized for being morbidly preoccupied with their own sin and guilt. There are psychologists who love to throw blame on Christian upbringing and pessimistic view of the world saying it stifles self actualization and growth. It is not, however, unhealthy to stare reality of the past, in the face as long as we don't stay there wallowing in it, but instead proceed on to bask in the glory of God's mercy and grace.

Verse 4 says; But God being rich in mercy. God has plenty of mercy to give to those in need. In fact He has more mercy than we could ever imagine. That is why God is called Merciful. He has an incredible, overabundant supply of mercy. And that mercy flows out of His love, His great love for us. Mercy flows out of those who are filled with love. If you find yourself lacking in mercy toward others then it's a given that you are not loving others as you ought to. For the greater the love for others, the greater the mercy will increase in your life. See love always needs an outlet to show itself. Love by its nature looks to give to others. Love is noted by giving. John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he GAVE."

We tend to think of love as a feeling. But feelings aren't always all that great. God has called husbands to love their wives, and if love is just a warm feeling then it would be impossible to always love our wives. Love isn't a feeling it is a choice. Love is a decision of the will to give, to meet the needs of another whether you feel like it or not. When I husband decides to understand and know what the needs of his wife are and then acts to meet them...he begins to love as He begins to give. Ephesians 2:4 says that God knew our situation, He knew our desperate need and did something about it. He moved in love to meet our need. When we were totally dead and absolutely helpless, God did something. God took some action and broke through the spell of evil. We must understand what God has done in Jesus Christ if we want to break free from the brainwashed stupor of the evil one.

In his mercy he held back from handing out the penalty we deserved because of our sin. In His grace He gave us blessing we don't merit, never worked for, don't deserve. In mercy God doesn't give us what we deserve. In grace, God give us what we don't deserve. God loves us and He gave not because of fulfilling 15 out of 20 requirements on a list. Not because we happen to be in the 90th percentile of people who do good deeds in Yacolt. Not because we had Godly parents. Not because we've never blown it really bad. God loves us not for what we have done or not done or will do. God loves us in spite of us based on His very nature to love. He has a tremendous plan to restore a rebel world to Himself, even when we were dead and unusable and wallowing in our sin condition to stumble. God knew our condition and yet loved us anyway.

We were dead...and God made us alive with Christ. We were down and God raised us up with Christ. We were running through life worn out and tired and God seated us in rest with Christ.

V.5 says that God has made us alive. Three word made alive, raised up and seated are all verbs used in the Greek language with a prefix of sun in front of them. Sun means "with". It emphasizes that we were made alive, raised up and seated all with, with, with Jesus Christ. Paul the writer of Ephesians is making it very clear that there is an exact parallel between what happened to Jesus and with us. We are closely welded together with what Jesus experienced and went through. Jesus died. Jesus Rose again. Jesus is at the right hand of the Father. What happened to Jesus has happened to all believers. John 14:20 "...you are in me and I am in you." God has made us alive, just like Christ. Alive spiritually.

What are some characteristics of one who is alive?

No longer dead. full of life, verve, alert, effective, useful.

Stedman p.119 *Riches in Christ*

Again, this follows the parallel of what happened to Jesus. What happened to him is what happens to us. He died. When they took his body down from the cross it gave every evidence, it had all the marks, of death. Rigor mortise had set in. It was cold and stiff. A painting I once was entitled "The Descent from the Cross" showed in stark and grisly detail the terrible fact of the death of Jesus. The mouth was open, the teeth were protruding, the eyes were glaze. It was obvious that this was a dead body. And that dead body was laid in the tomb. The grim reality of that death cast a pall of gloom over the apostles, dashing their hopes and putting an end to all their dreams. The Lord was dead. But on the third morning God the Father infused into the dead body new life, and Jesus was made alive. "And that", says the Apostle Paul, "is exactly what happened to us when we were made alive in Christ. Into the death of our fallen humanity there came a new life, a new Spirit."

We aren't dead any more. We are alive in Jesus. When we believe, God puts in a new heart and now longs for the things of God. "If any man be in Christ He is a new creation, old things have past away behold new things come." The Bible speaks of this with a word picture of the birth, being born again. Where does birth start? Life begins not when the baby

enters the world. It starts at conception by the loving act of a husband and wife, the sperm and ovum are joined together. A wonderful thing has happened but for several weeks, even the mother doesn't know about it, but nevertheless it will totally change her life. That's what happens at the moment of belief. We are totally changed. We may not sense that stirring within us immediately, but regardless the change has happened and will continue to grow. We have been made alive together with Christ. (Stedman p3) We were spiritually dead, but God made us alive with Christ.

v.6 We were down in sins mud, but God raised us up with Christ. We must move our thoughts, our values, our priorities, our actions, to a higher position than before. Colossians 3:1-3 "If then you have been raised up with Christ the keep seeking the things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above not on the things that are on earth for you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. This has already happened for believers. Look at the past tense. We don't have to mature into this position. We are already there. We only must realize the greatness of our position and live in keeping with our new position.

v.6 We were made alive with, raised up with and now seated with Him in heavenly places. Does this mean each of us have thrones right now in heaven next to Jesus. No we are seated in heavenly places means the spiritual realm we are seated. That spiritual realm is the unseen spiritual reality; it's the place of joy and pain and desire and peace temptation and anger. The battlefield is in the mind.

We begin the Christian life by coming back from the dead, being made alive, raised up long enough to be seated. Isn't it interesting that the Christian life begins with sitting down? Christianity does not begin with a big DO but a big DONE. Faith in Christ begins not with what we have done, but with what He has done. We are all invited to begin our faith, but sitting down and enjoying all that God has for us.

Everybody stand up for a second. Did that take some effort? Some who are older might feel it a bit on your bones. Go ahead and sit down. When you just sat down in the chair, what happened? You rested. All your muscles relaxed, your bones take a break from the strain of holding you up. In the spiritual realm, we can rest our weighty problems, our

burdens, our pains, our disappointments, all our problems on the Lord. Walking and standing implies effort on our part. And that will be a part of the Christian experience. Later in the book of Ephesians we will see the doing part we are called to, but that is not the way to start out. It cannot start out that way. Just 3 verses further in Ephesians 2:9 says that we are saved, “not as a result of works that no one can boast about it”. To sit is to rest in full support. We are to sit with an attitude of rest unloading all our stuff on the Lord and resting in all that He has done for us.

Are you resting in Him? Are you resting in what he has done or continuing to scramble through life working hard to please God without the strength to do so? In Genesis we read of the creation account. For six days God worked in creation. On the sixth day he created?...man. then on the 7th day He rested. What was the first day for man? The 7th day. That was day that God rested. While God worked and then rested. Man rested on the first day of His new life and then worked. So too in redemption. Jesus did His work on the cross and then sat down at the right hand of the Father. Man begins by coming to faith in Christ not doing anything but resting in the new creative work of God. (Nee p16)

Have you learned to rest in Him. Matthew 11:28 “Come to Me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest”. Watchman Nee tells of a man who has been on the blunt end of an unkind remark said right in the presence of your friends. How do you respond in such a situation? Grit your teeth? Bite your tongue? Swallow hard and count to 10 and respond with a reasonably polite response? You walk out and feel you have gained a great victory for having said nothing nasty in response, but the resentment is still there as you replay the video tape of the incident in your mind that night lying awake in bed. The anger is still there it is just covered up. What is the problem? When we do that we are trying to walk before we have sat down. Christian life does not begin with walking, it begins with sitting down. The secret to deliverance from sin is not to do something but to rest on what God has already done. Are you needing to forgive someone today? Are you holding strongly onto a bitterness that just wont go away? You know you should let it go but you just can't the bitterness is too great and so you keep clenching your teeth and forging ahead through life. You know as a Christian you ought to

forgiven that person who has wronged you so deeply, but you just can't and continue to hate them.

The solution lies at the cross. When Jesus died on the cross he not only took on your sins, he took on you too. When Jesus was crucified, He also took your old unforgiving self away. He took away that person of you who refuses to forgive those who have wronged us. God dealt with all of that at the cross and there is nothing left for you to deal with. Just say to the Lord, "God I can't love and I give up trying....but I will count on your perfect great love. God I can't forgive, but I am going to trust you to forgive and do it in me."

When we come to belief in Christ we welded together with Christ and what was true of Him has now become true of me. Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who lives but Christ who lives in me and the life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and delivered himself up for me." When we cease doing, God will then begin to do. God is waiting for us to sit down and rest and believe and trust and have faith in what He has already done. Then He will move to heal and restore.

In high school I took the first few classes of WSI instruction and they taught us how to save someone who is drowning. They will often be struggling and trashing about so violently that it is impossible for you to move to save them. The trouble is that His fear prevents him from trusting you, or even seeing that you are there to save him. I was told there is only two way to go about it. Either you must knock him out unconscious then you can safely drag him to shore. Or you must leave him to struggle until his strength is finally gone and then you can go to his rescue. If you try to save him before he is totally depleted, he will grab you in fear and possibly drag you both under. (Nee p.23)

God is waiting for us to stop struggling. "Be still, cease striving and know that I am God." Once we have ceased the struggle and rest in His strong arms of rescue He will move. He will love. He will forgive. He will cleanse. He will restore.

To what extent will He love and show mercy toward us? V.7 "in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. How long will it take for Gods kindness to run out? Certainly as long as the ages to come. How

many of them? All of them. How long is eternity? God's love, mercy and grace will never run out. Are you dead in sin? Are you down in spirit? Are you exhausted from running? Then experience the resurrection power. You are made alive with Christ. Live in keeping with your new position. You have been raised up with Christ. Rest in what He has done and will do for you. For you are seated with Christ.