

God's Power that Saved You

Ephesians

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Turn in your Bibles to the book of Ephesians. I am very excited to share this text with you here today. Today we begin our study of Ephesians 2 and we will be here for a few weeks. We finished chapter 1 last week and now we're moving into chapter 2 and before we do that, before we move into this text which I know is very familiar to you, I want to give you a little background about the Bible that you hold in your hands that perhaps will be new information for you that will help prepare you for what we have to study here today. You have probably never given much thought if any to the existence of the chapter markings and the verse divisions in your Bible. It is the only thing that you have ever known. Every Bible that you have had has had chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and verses and all of that. It's the only thing that you've ever known and it is a means that we find our way around Scripture. If we had to go to the book of Isaiah and find Isaiah 40:31 about mounting up on eagle's wings, if we just had a block of text and tried to find that verse, it would be very difficult for us to do if we didn't have chapters and verses to help us navigate and get to it rather quickly. It's kind of like a GPS system that orients you and gets you to the exact point that you want to go. Well, it wasn't always that way. There were no chapter divisions, they were no verse divisions in the original manuscripts or in manuscripts that followed, the copies that were prepared, for many centuries after the apostles and the prophets first wrote their books.

So, chapters and verses are a comparatively recent addition to God's word. It's an interesting and it's actually kind of hard to find this information, you have to go to some kind of obscure sources in order to get it but there was a lecturer, there was a professor at the University of Paris who died in 1228, almost 800 years ago, by the name of Stephen Langton who introduced our present system of chapter divisions. He did that in the Latin Bible before his death in the year 1228. Chapter divisions. Trust me, this is all going somewhere really, really important. "He's introducing Ephesians 2? Talking about stuff that happened 800 years ago? What is the matter with him?" Well, just stay with me. The first Bible with the current verse divisions was a Latin Bible published by Robert Stephanus in 1555. While on a journey in France, France seems to be the common denominator here, while on a journey from Paris to Lyons France, he introduced verse divisions for a version of the Bible that he was about to publish and that found its way into the first complete English Bible with these chapter and verse divisions when the

Geneva Bible was published in 1560. Now, here's the point: almost since the days of the Reformation, all we have known are chapter and verse divisions of the Bible. That's what we have received from our forefathers in the faith. That's what we have received from publishers and they are helpful. After all of this time and after such universal usage, this system will not and it should not change. I'm grateful that there are chapter and verse divisions in the Bible but there is something really important that you need to see that is directly related to your ability to receive what Scripture has to say in our text here today. As you grow in your Christian life, you should be aware of something very important as you are reading your Bible and as you are seeing chapter and verse divisions. You should be aware that they affect your understanding of Scripture even though they were not part of the original text that God inspired the apostles and the prophets to write. Stay with me on this, this is so important: the visual impact of seeing separation between one verse and another, between one chapter and another, affects your mental perception of the text. You see a break and you think that the next thing is talking about something different. Subconsciously you think that. You go from one thing to another. "I'm done with that and now I move onto something else." It's just a natural result of what has been introduced into the text. So when you see a chapter break in the text, your tendency is to naturally think that the chapter is now going to introduce a new and perhaps unrelated unit of thought to what you were just reading or studying. That may cause you to miss the entire point of what's being said. Indeed, A. T. Robertson, the great Greek scholar who died in 1934 after a tremendously God-blessed career at Southern Seminary in Louisville, said this and I quote, "The first step in interpretation is to ignore the modern chapters and verses."

Now, why all of this background information? Why would we start a message on Ephesians 2 with that? Well, this whole issue of chapter breaks and the potential for them to impact your understanding and your thinking about the text is extraordinarily true as we come to Ephesians chapter 2. Look, it is easier to preach on unfamiliar texts to the audience than it is to preach on familiar texts because when you are preaching on unfamiliar texts, you don't have to try to knife your way through preconceptions and prior understandings and all of that. People can just receive it for what it is. Here's the thing about Ephesians 2: Ephesians 2 is often and understandably and rightly used to make evangelistic and theological points that are true enough as they are made. However, when those evangelistic and theological points are being made, they almost always ignore the context of Paul's words and for you today, for your spiritual benefit, for your love for Christ that you were just singing you wanted more of, you need to understand that chapter 2 is not introducing a change in thought from what we have been studying in chapter 1. We want to be more careful than simply making a theological point at the expense of context this morning. And what you are about to see, I promise you if you are in Christ, will invigorate you with a fresh sense of joy over the power of God that saved you from sin.

Now, let's get into the text a little bit. As we've said for the past two or three weeks, here in Ephesians and at the end of chapter 1, verses 15 through 23, Paul has been praying for his readers. Let me remind you of the context especially those of you who are visiting here today and it's wonderful to have you and we hope that you come back many times in

the future. In Ephesians chapter 1, verses 3 through 14, Paul has been praising God for the greatness of the Triune work in salvation. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and then he ticks off line after line after line of the work of God to save us and he is just praising God for the majesty of it all. As you go into verse 15, Paul says, "For this reason," because of the greatness of salvation, verse 15, look at it with me, put your finger right on the text there, he says, "For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints," verse 16, "do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers." Now listen: in what follows, verses 15 through 23, Paul is praying. He is not lecturing on theology, he is praying. And he is praying with a pastoral, apostolic heart that says, "I want you as my readers to grasp and understand the magnitude of what it means to be a Christian. The wonder of what it means is something that would pass your mind and you would miss it if God didn't do a work to help you grasp it. So," Paul says, "I am praying for you," verse 16. He says, "I'm praying that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ would give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. I'm praying that you would understand that God would open your mind and illuminate your understanding so that you could see the greatness of the things that we are talking about."

Now, time out at that point. Look, in some ways when we get so familiar with certain passages of Scripture, it almost works against us because familiarity tends to breed contempt. Familiarity tends to breed an attitude that, "I already know this. I've already seen this. I've read this a number of times." But I want to step back and have you think about what we're talking about here right in the middle of Paul's prayer. Look, the Bible is inspired by God. God the Father planned out salvation before the beginning of time. From the greatness of his loving, great heart, from his great wisdom, he planned the whole method and plan of salvation from beginning to end before he ever created things in Genesis 1:1. So even from that limited perspective, we're dealing with something vastly greater than anything that we have ever seen before. In verse 15, Paul brings the Lord Jesus Christ to bear upon it and he says, "I'm praying that the God of the Lord Jesus Christ would help you understand. We have been saved by the blood of Christ." We were regenerated by the Holy Spirit and now in that great Triune work of salvation and Paul, an apostle writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit himself, with all of that power and all of that knowledge of God operating, Paul goes further and Paul filled with the Spirit prays to God the Father and says, "O God, help them understand even more." There is a great power of God that is at work in this passage in inspiring the Scripture and Paul who wrote it now is praying that the people that he is writing to would understand. He is asking God who by his power created all things, God who by his power is inspiring the apostle as he writes, saying, "God, I want you to exercise another aspect of your power and help these people who are reading to understand," so that what we see is this immense, staggering, wonderful work of God that from so many different dimensions, the inspiration of the Scripture, Paul praying to God and now the God that dwells within us being called upon to use his power in us to open our understanding, understand that there is an exponential majesty of power that is at work in the passage that we're seeing here; God's power is on full display and in full operation with what we're looking at. This is no superficial issue that we're dealing with. The power of God is at work and the power of God Paul prays, would be exercised to help us understand even more. This is very

sacred ground that we are treading. This is majestically wonderful truth that God has given us the eyes and the understanding and the ears to hear. So with this explosive, wonderful, power, strength and might of God, Paul prays that we would understand still more. Look at verse 18 where he says, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what of the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe." This whole passage is about Paul praying that God's power would be understood by those who had been redeemed by the blood of Christ. Apparently, it's really important because God inspired it and Paul is praying that we would understand it. This must be vital to a healthy, constructive understanding of what it means to be a Christian.

So Paul wants his readers to understand the power of God in their lives and then he goes in verses 19 through 23 which we saw last time and he says, "This is the same power that raised Christ from the dead and exalted him." Look at verse 19. I want you to understand this power. You might ask what is this power? Paul says in verse 19, "I'll tell you, these are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might." You see, all of those synonyms of power, strength, might, energy, "which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places." God raised him from the dead and he seated him at his right hand. Verse 22, "And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church." So understand like we said last week, this is about God's power in salvation. Paul is praying that we would understand it and as he draws these verses that we now know as chapter 1 to a close, he has finished on the high note of the resurrection and the exaltation of Christ as, get this, that is the measure by which you are to understand how great the power is. You see, it's one thing to say that God is strong and mighty, it's another thing to say that he is so strong and mighty that he could raise Christ from the dead, exalt him to heaven, put him at his right hand where he rules over the universe and where he is head over the church. One thing to say that God is powerful, it is another thing to explain what that power can do and has done. Alright? And so, end of chapter. End of chapter 1. We end up in heaven with Christ over all.

Now, but for what I told you at the beginning of this message, you might think that Paul was moving to something new because we're going into a different chapter now and you say, "Okay, he's going to pivot and talk about something else. Let me see what else he's going to talk about now. I can put chapter 1 behind me because in my journey I have come to Ephesians chapter 2." But that is not the case. Look at Ephesians 2:1. "And." Stop right there. "Are you kidding me? You're going to expound on the word 'and.'" You bet I am because expounding on the word "and" here is vital for your spiritual well-being. It's vital for your Christian understanding. The word "and" means something additional is about to come; it means moreover; it means further than this, in addition to what I have already said. It joins a parallel thought with another parallel thought. Paul isn't changing his subject in Ephesians 2:1, he is continuing the discussion of the power of God that he has just been expounding on that we saw was so very important in verses 15 through 23. And. And. What we're going to see as we start to dip our toes into Ephesians 2 is we're going to see three aspects further about Paul's prayer for the Ephesians that are going to

give you a foundation of joy and understanding that will invigorate your life for Christ. You must see this. You have no option but to see this and to understand. Paul is talking about something else that displays the power of God. He's not changing the subject. He's continuing the subject and I want you to see that with all clarity here this morning.

Chapter 2:1,

1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins.

First thing that I want you to see from the text this morning is that the power of God is measured in part by your past condition of death. That's point number 1: your past condition of death. What we are studying here this morning is God's power that saved you and I want you to see this as this unfolds. We're only going to introduce the passage this morning but we're going to introduce it in a way that is utterly overwhelmingly humbling and encouraging and invigorating for every true Christian. I won't repeat myself although I want to. We're talking about God's power. What happened at the end of chapter 1, that same topic is being continued in chapter 2. You know that by the word "and." Even if I hadn't given you any kind of introduction, you would be able to see with your own eyes that "and" is designed to be a bridge between what happened before and what now comes next. It's a bridge connecting two things, not a bomb that breaks up the two things. Okay? This is so important.

"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins." So somehow what's about to be said is a further explanation of the power of God in your salvation. What can we say about it? The power of God is so great that not only did it resurrect and exalt Christ which we saw at the end of chapter 1, it even raised you from spiritual death. Look at verse 1 with me now, actually read the whole verse, chapter 2, verse 1, "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins." Look over at verse 5 where it says, "even when we were dead in our transgressions." Paul is saying that you were in a hopeless condition before you became a Christian. You were dead. There was no spiritual life in you. There was no spark of divinity in your soul that could be blown upon and flame up into eternal life. You were a spiritual corpse. You were under bondage as we'll see next week. You were under bondage to the devil, you were under the wrath of God and you had no power to save yourself. Those of you who are Christians, those of you who like me came to Christ a little bit later in life, if you would look back on your spiritual condition, you would realize that before you became a Christian, you would understand that it was miserably impossible for you to generate any spiritual desires that had any lasting effect in your life. You can't make your sin-dominated mind by your own power and say, "Okay, I'm going to be a spirit-filled Christian now." You don't have that ability. You were dead and in that hopeless condition of spiritual death, of bondage to Satan, of being a child of wrath even like the rest as we'll see next week, in your hopeless weak inability, in that condition is the point, God brought you to life.

Chapter 2, verse 1,

1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

You walked in accordance to the spirits that dominated you in that black realm of unbelief. Verse 3,

3 Among them we too all formerly [we were all there] lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Dead in sin. Dominated by the devil. Doomed to suffer the wrath of God. There was nothing in you. You had no ability whatsoever to save yourself, to get out from under the bondage of sin and Satan. You had nothing. There was no man that could come and help you. Heaven knows, there was no priest that could sprinkle water on you and make that better as if dripping H₂O on your skin could somehow cleanse the dirt that was in your heart. You were helpless. You were dead. And you were held in chains by the devil and God condemned you for your sinful nature, your sinful acts, and your spiritual indifference to him. Listen beloved, you couldn't turn away the wrath of God on your own. You had no power to snap the chain by which Satan held you and you had no power to turn the spiritual death in your heart. A dead man can't do anything and a spiritually dead man can't breathe himself into new life. Your situation was desperate. Hopeless. So was mine. Paul says, "In that condition, the only way to describe you was dead." If you've seen corpses you know that nothing helps. You can blow in their ear, you can shake them, nothing happens. That was you spiritually before Christ and those of you who were enslaved to habits that you couldn't get out of, you know something about it. It was in that condition of yours that God intervened and saved you by the power of the Gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Look at verse 4. This is all about power is Paul's point. He says,

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions [remember, he's talking about power, that's the whole context but God while you were like that] made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved.

And so he's saying that while you were absolutely out, the lights were out, it was black and dark and there was no light switch to turn on, God stepped into your spiritual misery, your spiritual absence of life, your spiritual darkness and he turned all the lights on and brought you to life by the power that he has to rescue sinners from the dominion of sin. And Paul's point is that that is one great power. That's the point. That's the point. You could not do it on your own. You could not rescue yourself from sin, Satan and God's wrath. It took a great spiritual power to deliver you from that depth of spiritual death. How great is the power of God? It's so great that it even brought you to spiritual life. It brought you out of death into spiritual life. That's how great the power of God is so that

his point is and the whole big context of things, he's saying, "I'm praying that you would understand the power of God. You understand, do you realize that it raised Christ from the dead, exalted him to heaven at the right hand of God from which position of authority and favor he rules over the universe and he is head over the church. And while I'm at it, let me tell you something else about the power of God: it raised you from your condition of spiritual death. God didn't use his power just to raise Christ, he also displayed it in its magnificent working of strength by raising you from death to life." He brought spiritual life out of spiritual death. That's something no human being could do. That's how great the power of God is that is at work in the life of every true Christian.

Now, let me call another timeout. We get three each half, right? This is the first half of the sermon. I've got two timeouts. I'm using my second timeout and we'll go into other ones later maybe. Look beloved, to one degree or another, most of us come out of situations where we were taught different things about the reality of salvation and what it meant to be a Christian. We were taught that there were rules and rituals that we needed to keep and if we kept them long enough that maybe the good would outweigh the bad and we could go to heaven. That's a demonic lie. We've been conditioned over time to focus on external things: the way we dress, what kind of music is played in the church. These are the things that you have to do and the external things to keep if you want to be a part of a church or you want to call yourself a Christian. Listen to me: do you see by comparison how cheap and tawdry and worthless all of that stuff is compared to what Paul describes here in Ephesians about the greatness of salvation? When you talk about spiritual resurrection power, when you talk about raising Christ from the dead and exalting him to heaven from which he reigns, to substitute in this man-made junk and say that's what salvation is, you can see why God so greatly hates false religion. It utterly robs him of his rightful glory. It utterly redirects things and makes people think that they can do it on their own and they look to their own effort and in pride they start to say, "I'm good enough." You weren't good enough and neither was I and we could never be good enough. And as long as we think that we could and as long as we focus on these silly externals, we take a big, broad, black paintbrush and just paint over the glory of God so that it can't be seen. False religion is a great, great sin against God. That's the end of the timeout.

Coming back to what we're saying here: Christian, we'll talk about this more next week but if you will simply embrace the reality of what Scripture says about your spiritual condition before Christ, if you will cease from trying to preserve some element of pride that, "I wasn't all that bad. Yeah, I needed help from Jesus but it wasn't all that bad," if you would cease and turn away from trying to preserve that corner of your human pride and just receive what Scripture says, you were dead and you were helpless, then it's like the glory of Christ rises and ascends more and more in your mind. "I was saved from a great peril that I could not have saved myself from." And all you can do in that is not congratulate yourself but just fall down and say, "Jesus, thank you. God the Father, thank you for planning my salvation because I would have been lost unless you had exercised your power on my behalf." This radically revolutionizes the way that you live life. It totally reorients the way that you think about God and the way that you think about yourself. We should look at this and realize that, "That was what I was. And so the fact

that I am now a living, breathing Christian means that a great power has been exercised." That's Paul's point. That's what he wants you to get. The power exalted Christ and it raised you from spiritual death and both of those things, listen, listen, listen, listen, listen: both of those things, the exaltation of Christ and raising you from your spiritual death, both of those things were humanly impossible. Only God could exalt Christ. Only God could raise a sinner to new life.

Now, secondly, what I want you to see here, all I want you to see really in one sense in this message is that I want you to see that Paul has not changed the subject from chapter 1 to chapter 2. I'm going to give you another way to see that. We're seeing the word "and" although I didn't make a separate point of it. We saw your past condition of death but secondly there's just something interesting in the text that I want you to see. This is the kind of stuff that geeks me out. I just love to see stuff like this. It just makes Scripture so rich. Point number 2: the parallel terms of life. The parallel terms of life. I'll show you what I mean by that. Paul here in Ephesians 1 and Ephesians 2 is using extraordinarily bold and vibrant language to communicate to us the nature of God's power that is at work in us. Remember how he spoke of Christ's exaltation. Look at Ephesians 1:20. The point here is that Paul is talking about the same thing in chapter 1 as he is in chapter 2. That's the bigger point that I'm making here and now I'm helping you see this from the text with something that you can see with your own eyes. There is no complicated Greek in this. I'm not speaking in anything that you can't understand. I'm simply showing you in your own Bible with your own eyes what is right on the surface so that you can understand. When Paul was talking about God's power to raise Christ, look at what he said in chapter 1, verse 20, he said that that power, "brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places." Okay? Now watch how he describes our new life in Christ. Watch this. Turn over to Ephesians 2:5. I need to introduce what I'm about to say. We're really going to verse 6 here. He says in verse 5, he "made us alive together with Christ." He said there was a spiritual resurrection that took place when God saved you. Now watch how he describes it in 2:6. It's practically the exact same language that he just used in describing the resurrection of Christ. Verse 6,

6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Look at this, turn back to Ephesians 1:20. He's talking about Christ here and he says, "He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places." Now, chapter 2:6, he "raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Do you see it? He's using the same language to describe what he did with Christ to what he did with us. The same, here's the point:, the same language, the same words, it's actually a compound version in chapter 2 of the same verbs in chapter 1. Here's the point, this is what you've got to plug into the outlet of your mind so that the power starts to energize your thinking in life: the same language about the physical resurrection of Christ is describing our spiritual resurrection from sin and the reason that he uses the same language is to help you see without fail that he is describing the same power of God. The omnipotent power of God raised Christ from the dead and physically raised him from the dead and in the same way, with the same power, he exercised his

power to bring about a spiritual resurrection in your life so that you are supposed to see in this discussion of God's power, point number 1: look at what that power did in Christ; point number 2: look at what that power did in you. So that you make the connection, "I've seen it from multiple views here. The power of God is omnipotent. It is great. It is mighty. Look at what it has done historically. It raised Christ and it raised me too."

That's his point. The same language describes the same power so that you are to understand that you did not save yourself. You did not have the power to save yourself so if you are here today as a Christian, the connection you're supposed to make is that there is a great power of God that is at work in my life. We'll talk about the implications of that in a moment. And chapter 1 is connected to chapter 2. This power raised you from the dead. I'm describing, speaking as the Apostle Paul, I'm describing, I'm going to use the same words to describe what God did with Christ to describe what he did with you so that you can't miss the point. He doesn't change the language because if he changed the language, it might look like he was saying something different about you rather than Christ. It's the same thing. In the heavenly places. He raised us. He seated us.

Now, what that should do to you is it should make you want to stop talking. What I mean by that is that it should make you fall silent in the presence of God and realize the holiness and the majesty and the eternal grandeur of what has happened in your life as a Christian. This is meant to be a showstopper and it is so easy to miss the point. It's so easy to take it for granted. But Paul says, "I am praying that the Holy Spirit wouldn't let that happen. You are at risk, every one of you. Every one of you is at risk right now of missing the point." So you step back and you quiet your heart. You quiet your thoughts and you just think and you reflect and you meditate, "God raised Christ from the dead and that's the same power that raised me. That's big." That's what should be happening in your heart as you see these things from the book of Ephesians and we are so weak and pitiful that Paul prays, "God, don't let them miss it. God, illuminate their understanding so that they would see something about the greatness of this." Because if you see this, it will humble you. If you see this, it will make you stop trying to take credit for some small sliver of the aspect of your salvation and in place of congratulating yourself that, "I was so smart that I chose to believe in Christ," that gets thrown out the window and in its place becomes this element of awe and worship and gratitude toward the God who exercised his power to save you when you could not save yourself. There are immense spiritual implications to what we are talking about here and most people miss it. The Scripture text prays that you wouldn't and the measure by which you can see if you are starting to get it is: is there a wonder that builds up in your heart? Is there a recognition that, "God, you are so great and you are so mighty and to parallel my spiritual resurrection with that of Christ, that's immense." There should be a sense in your mind right now that we're talking about something much, much greater than anything that's in this room. This exceeds and transcends our comprehension. And to think that the God of omnipotence did that by name for you and me if you are a Christian, whoa, marvelous, wonderful.

There is a third aspect of it that takes it into a completely additional realm and it's this: you see, the power of God that raised you when he could have used that power to

condemn you, to judge you, to righteously execute your eternal death sentence for your sin and rebellion and indifference to him, the power of God that raised you actually points and reflects to something else about his character that is right here on the surface of the text of Ephesians 2. What is this contemplation? Listen to me: what's this contemplation of the power of God supposed to lead us to? Point number 3: it leads us to the prevailing goodness of God. The prevailing goodness of God. This is just by way of introduction for what we'll talk about over the next two or three weeks.

Okay, let's step back. Final timeout. We've seen this power on display and we look about, so to speak, in our lives and we say, "I'm a Christian by the power of God," and you look and you say, "Wow, that's wonderful. This is tremendous. How great is God's power. He delivered a wretch like me." Now, you're not supposed to stop thinking at that point. You should ask yourself this question: why on earth did he do that? "Sure, he exercised this power and that's incredible, it's awesome, it's majestic. I worship and honor him for that but why? Why did he do that? What would possibly motivate a holy God to use his power in favor of sinful creatures like me? What could possibly motivate him to bring and adopt into his family a rebel like me? Why would he do that?" Because he is a God of great love, kindness and mercy. This wasn't an abstraction to him. God didn't do this just to show off like some starstruck teenage boy showing off to a girl he's trying to impress. God did this, displayed his power like this, because he is a God of love, kindness and mercy to undeserving sinners. So the power points you to something further. Christian, God used his power to save you because he greatly loves you.

Look at Ephesians 2:4. Paul starts to run out of superlatives to describe the wonder of the love of God but pick it up in verse 4. We are presupposing he had just said, "You are dead in sin, dominated by the devil and doomed to suffer the wrath of God and you deserved it and you couldn't help yourself." Verse 4 says, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved." God has this great power. He used it to raise you from spiritual death and he did it because he is rich in mercy, because he loved you with a great divine love and he did it out of grace. Not because you deserved it because he exercised favor to your benefit. You did not deserve that and you did not contribute to the result. God saved you by his power and out of his great goodness so that he could achieve an even greater eternal end. The majesty of this just unfolds into ever greater wonders. This is just an unfolding in these few brief verses, this is just an unfolding of the greatness of God on display. The power of God raised Christ and exalted him and it raised you out of spiritual death and that shows what he is eternally like: he is a God of grace, love, mercy and kindness. That alone is more than we can get our minds around. That alone would be cause to worship him. That alone would be cause to invigorate and strengthen you and cause you so much joy and worship. Yet, that's barely the start. Do you understand that all of these great things that we have been seeing about God from the text is just barely the beginning of his majesty? It has just barely scratched the surface of the love of Christ, the Savior of the world because, look at chapter 2, verse 7, he did all of this, he raised us up with him, verse 6, seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ, we who are now the recipients of the power, the saving power of God motivated by his love and mercy. That's where we stand right

now but look at verse 7, "so that," there's an even greater purpose. There is another divine purpose being unfolded in everything that we've said so far. Here's the divine intuit,

7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

When we are in heaven, somehow in a way that I won't pretend to understand or put my sinful lips to try to describe, the holy glory of it all, when we are in heaven, somehow God will throughout eternity further display his great kindness toward us in all of the unfolding ages upon ages to come. Christian, the fact that God saved you shows how powerful he is. He didn't exercise that power in an indifferent way, he had divine love, grace and mercy in his heart that rescued you from your pitiful condition and in a way that you could never have asked for, that you never could have deserved. He did that so that he could achieve an even greater end that throughout the whole stretches of eternity which make this life insignificant by comparison, throughout all of eternity, somehow we're going to see in deeper, greater measure the grace and goodness and kindness of God. We are going to be enveloped in his kingdom, enveloped in love and worship and it's going to be so perfect and it's going to be so gracious and it's going to be so magnificent that we are just going to be overwhelmed in the response of worship saying, "God, thank you for springing me into this because it shows how kind and loving and merciful you were to a wretch like me." Listen, we're not going to get tired of heaven. It's going to be as wonderful 200,000 years into it as the day that it started if we can speak about eternity from the perspective of time. This glory that God has stored up for those who believe in him, it will never cease. It will never grow old.

And here in Ephesians 1 and 2, Paul has developed a very consistent thread through the riches of everything that he says in verses 15 through chapter 2, verse 10. There is a very consistent thread that is running through it as he prays for these Christians. By the way, his prayer for these Christians is written under the inspiration of God, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and so this is a reflection. What Paul is praying is really just a reflection of what God wants for his children. This is what God wants for you to understand if you are a Christian. God wants you to understand that he used a great power to save you. Here's the simplicity of it all: God used a great power to save you because he is loving and gracious and merciful to you and he intends to bless you throughout all of eternity. That is what this beautiful passage is saying and it is so magnificent that Paul says, "O God, help them to understand." Our prayer should be similar, "O God, help us to understand." When we're wrapped up in earthly stuff, we're losing sight of the glory of this. God's power raised Christ from the dead and it raised you too so that you could receive blessing from God forever.

Beloved, you should be astonished, speechless at God's power. Encouraged that he used it on your behalf and humbled to the point that you gladly accept that he gets all the glory for it. The power of God saved us, now the recognition of his mercy lifts us to praise and enables us to obey while we wait for the final consummation of our salvation. Christian, every one of you, every single one of you, every single one of you, no more excuses for half-hearted devotion to Christ. No more justification for patterns of disobedience in your

life. We have been so greatly blessed by the power and love of God that our whole heart should be captivated and oriented toward thanking him and loving him and praising him until we get to do it forever in heaven. God has raised us from the dead. Now let us rise and love and follow Christ.

Let's pray.

Father, help us to understand. Help us to grasp the magnitude of these words from Scripture so that they would change us. Father, we don't even know where to begin to respond in worship. Do we worship you for supernatural power that is greater than anything that we could imagine, that has no earthly parallel? So that our salvation has to be parallel to the divine exaltation of Christ because there's nothing else to compare it to? Yes, Father, we start there, I guess, and we worship you for that but then we realize, Lord, that you exercise your power not abstractly, not theoretically, but because of your conscious love, mercy and kindness that you directed toward us who are in Christ Jesus. We are on the receiving end of goodness from your hand. You have blessed us where judgment would have been right and appropriate. You have been kind to us where your severity could have been displayed. O Father, help us. Help the people that are in this room. Help those who will hear it in different media in the future. Help us to grasp how this totally shapes our understanding, our affections and the reason that we live. Father, may the certain reality, more certain than our next breath, that we will see exponentially greater displays of your love and kindness when we are in your presence in the ages to come, just fill us with such a great sense of hope and anticipation and eagerness, Father, for the consummation of our salvation that the whole of life from this moment forward would just be flavored with gratitude and praise and love and in confidence because you who lovingly began the work will most certainly complete it. We honor and worship you.

For those of you that are here today, I've spoken to Christians but let me just be real clear with those of you who are here and you are not a Christian. God offers you this same salvation and he calls you to turn from sin, to leave behind your life of sin and selfishness and receive this great Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, so that he could pour this same blessing upon you. Come to Christ and these riches can be yours. Leave sin behind and embrace Christ that you might join in this course of gratitude and praise. Father, seal these things to each of our hearts in Jesus' blessed name. Amen.

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