

Ephesians: Resources and Responsibilities
Part 5
“From Death to Life”
Ephesians 2:1-10
Pastor Charles Price

Now if you turn to Ephesians Chapter 2, I am going to read the first 10 verses. And we have been looking in Ephesians Chapter 1 for several weeks where Paul has written about all the riches that the people there have in Christ by virtue of their union with Christ.

And then he prays for them in the last part of that chapter. And Paul’s prayers usually pray home the doctrine he has been teaching them. And he prays that this will become increasingly real and fruitful in their own personal experience.

And now in Chapter 2, these verses we are going to read, he sort of gives a kind of spiritual biography of the people he is writing to, where they were in the past tense when they were outside of Christ, and where they are in the present tense, now that they are in Christ.

And I want to look at this with you this morning because it will be equally a spiritual biography of many of us, but I am also very aware there are many people here this morning and many people listening on television and radio who are only in the first part of this biography.

What Paul says “you were” certain things is still the present tense experience that we are in, because we have never yet moved out of that into the quality of life that belongs to those who are in union with Christ and relationship with Christ that is one of the themes of this letter.

So with that in mind, let me read you the first 10 verses where he says,

“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

“All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved.

“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

If I went up to somebody on the street and said at random to some stranger, “Excuse me, you look pretty healthy to me at the moment – you doing alright?”

“Yeah, I’m doing alright.”

“Can I ask you a question? Have you ever been dead?”

They would probably look at me rather strangely and say, “I don’t understand what you are talking about. Do you mean before I was born, was I dead for thousands of years? I don’t think that’s what it means to be dead. No, I’ve never been dead.”

But Paul addresses these Ephesians here by saying, “As for you, you were dead.”

What does he mean?

Elsewhere Paul wrote in 1 Timothy Chapter 5 Verse 6, writing on this occasion about a woman for some reason. He says,

“She who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.”

Now how can you be dead even while you live?

Well this sounds like nonsense unless, of course, he is talking about two different kinds of life. And that of course is what he is talking about.

There is physical life that we are very conscious of but there is something more than just physical life. Let me explain this in this way.

You and I are made up of three parts. And the New Testament distinguishes between these three parts. We have a body, we have a soul and we have a spirit. Now some people regard the soul and spirit as something of a unity and they don’t make a distinguish between them. They say we are bipartite beings, we have two beings – there is the visible and the invisible.

But I think it is more true to the New Testament to understand ourselves as being tripartite – that is we are made up of three parts: body, and the soul and spirit are distinct.

For instance, in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Paul says there,

“May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless.”

And he seems there to make a distinction.

Well, just for clarification, let me explain what the distinction is. We all know we have a body – that’s the most obvious thing about us. It comes in various shapes and sizes and it’s what looks back at you when you look in the mirror.

And we all know we have got a body; we look after it, we feed it, we dress it, we wash it occasionally, we feed it, we paint it (some people do, anyway), we put it to bed at night.

And everybody is aware that they are a physical being possessing a physical body.

In addition to our physical body, we have a soul. We are all aware we have a soul because the soul is the life that inhabits that body; because you know that the highest priority everyday is never to do anything, which causes the body and the soul to separate.

Because if you separate the soul from the body, what is going to happen is your relatives will put your body in a box, dig a hole, put the box in the hole, stand around the hole, sing some songs, say some nice things they never said when you were alive, probably cry, go off and have some sandwiches together, and you don’t want that to happen.

That’s why you don’t walk in front of a moving bus, because if you walk in front of a moving bus, the result is your body and your soul get separated.

So the soul is the life that inhabits the body.

The spirit is the part of which we are probably least conscious, but which is uniquely human. It is the part of us which reaches outside of ourselves, that asks questions animals never ask. We ask, “Where did I come from, where am I going?” We look up in the sky; we say, “I wonder what is up there.” We ask questions like, “What is the meaning to my life?”

It’s the part of us whereby we are designed to know and experience God. Let me illustrate this. There are three different kinds of life in existence: there is plant life, vegetable life; there is animal life and there is human life.

Vegetable life consists of just bodies. So if you have a tree outside your house, it is alive, but you don't go outside in the morning and talk to it and say, "Good morning tree, did you have a good night? Was the music too loud last night? We'll keep it a little lower tomorrow if it disturbed you."

If you start talking to a tree like that, your neighbors will start to get worried about you because although the tree is alive, it is purely physical life.

Animals have a body and a soul. In fact the Hebrew word for soul in the Old Testament is the word for animal life. So they have what we call the components of personality: mind, emotion, will.

Animals can think – some of them not very well. If you have got cats, you know they don't think very well, but they do think. They have a mind; they have emotions.

You put a cat in front of a strange dog, it goes into an emotional experience, becomes twice its size, it has emotion, it has a will. You shut it out of the house and it will find a way to get in.

Animals have a soul and a body. But what makes human beings unique is that we have a spirit, which is that capacity which causes us to ask questions animals never ask.

You see animals never ask, "Where did I come from?" You don't find a dog trying to trace its ancestry ("Who's my granny?") And if they did find her, they would fight her anyway.

It's a part of human beings – we try to find the meaning of life. What is the meaning? What gives me satisfaction? Animals don't have that.

Cats don't try to find the meaning to life. They don't have any meaning. They're just cats. They don't get all uptight because, you know, the local tomcat went off with the tabby so this cat climbs a tree and jumps off and commits suicide. Splat!

Human beings do that.

You don't find cows in the field looking up into the sky, "I wonder if there's milk on Mars." They couldn't care less. It's not a question of intelligence, although there is difference in intelligence. It's a question of capacity. It's a spiritual capacity whereby you and I were created to know and enjoy God and experience God.

When God created human beings back in the beginning and placed them in the Garden of Eden, He said, "You can eat of any tree in the garden – any tree – except one."

He said,

“You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for the day you eat of it, you will die.”

You remember they ate of the tree. What happened? Did they die? Did they fall over dead? Did God find two corpses lying at the foot of the tree the next morning?

Well, physically they did not die. But what happened was that spiritually they died. In the language of Paul later in Ephesians Chapter 4 and Verse 18, he describes it then as being separated from the life of God.

In other words, the day they acted in independence of God, the Spirit of God was withdrawn. And although they remained physically alive, they became spiritually dead, which has become a hereditary condition in which you and I were born.

1 Corinthians 15:22 says,

“In Adam all die.”

Paul wrote in Romans 6:23,

“The wages of sin is death.”

Present tense, notice that. Not will be one day that you will die, but the wages of sin is that you are already dead, separated from God.

And this state of spiritual death is the state in which you and I were born. And when Paul writes to these Ephesians here and he gives them this sort of spiritual biography and he talks about what they were, he says, “The first thing you need to understand is that you were dead. That says nothing about your physical life nor your soulish life, your intellectual capacities and abilities. But it says - nor about the fact that you retain a spiritual capacity, but you do not have spiritual life. You still ask the questions but you don’t have the answers. You have become separated from God.

Now what is the result of this? Well let me read on. He says in Verse 1 and 2,

“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient” (notice that word).

The consequence of being dead is that you are disobedient. This is inevitable. And he gives reasons in that Verse 2: “You followed the ways of this world inevitably because you have been separated from God. So you are now detached from God, only subject to the ways of this world. You followed the ruler of the kingdom of the air.”

He then goes on to say, “You followed the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.”

He says, “You are gratifying the cravings of the sinful nature and you are following its desires and thoughts.”

So left to yourself, detached from God, you actually have no choice but to be swept along with the ways of this world, with the ruler of the kingdom of the air, with the spirit that is at work in those who are disobedient, gratifying only the sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts.

And the result is, he says, you are disobedient.

You see, this is inevitable; I’ll tell you why. When we are separated from God, having been designed to function in union with God, in relationship with God; having become separated from God, there is a vacuum left that has to be filled. And it is filled by those things, which are satanic in origin.

You see when God created the three different kinds of life – vegetable life, animal life and human life – God in His creating of them, placed in each of them a governing force that would enable them to function properly.

For instance, when God created vegetable life, plant life, He also created seasons. Genesis 8:22 says this, speaking to Noah after the flood,

“As long as the earth endures, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.”

Why? Because these are necessary in order for plant life to function. That’s why we have seasons, why we have nighttime and daytime.

Having just come back from Israel, they are having a drought, the worst drought for more than 50 years. The Sea of Galilee is many feet below its normal level. The River Jordan is reduced to little more than a trickle. The Dead Sea is shrunk significantly.

And as a result, the necessary water and rainfall to enable plants to grow are threatening the crops that ought by now to be growing.

We have seen parts of the world where the rains have not come, and as a result, the vegetation has just withered and dried and there have been famines as a result. Because into vegetable life, God created this governing force that we call seasons – rain, sunshine, dry heat, day and night.

When He created the animal world, God placed into animals a little sort of computer chip, if you like, that we have given a convenient name to. We call it instinct.

So every animal is born programmed to behave in a certain way. The Bible talks about this several times. In Proverbs 6:6 Solomon is writing about the fact that people do not live the way they should live and he says,

“Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.”

Now the kind of ant he is talking about in a hot climate is probably those that live in these anthills. They have a community up to 100,000 ants that live there and every ant has a job and every job – well, many of the jobs are different.

And they know exactly what to do, how to behave. There are worker ants that go out and they get food and they know how to tell folks where the food is and they bring it back. They know where to store it.

You have ants back home who are keeping the place at exactly the right temperature. You have ants who are looking after the incubation process when the queen ant lays her eggs and they put them in a little place at the right temperature to incubate.

And then when they are ready to give birth to a new baby ant, they know what to do with them, where to move them, how to feed them, how to prepare them. And then they put them into elementary school and they go through the process. That's how it works. It's incredible!

And Solomon says, “Look at the ant.”

Look at migrating birds. Jeremiah writes about this, or God says to Jeremiah,

“Even the stork in the sky knows her appointed seasons and the dove and the swift and the thrush observe their time of migration. But my people do not know what to do.”

So He makes the contrast. Look at the birds in the air; they know exactly what to do and when to do it. Why is it that the birds function well and human beings don't?

The migrating pattern of birds is incredible, as you will know. When we lived in England, we had a garage at our home in which swallows used to nest.

They would arrive in the spring, build their nests, or repair their nests from the previous year, lay their eggs, hatch their eggs. We watched little babies grow up and learn to fly.

And at the end of the summer, as the fall was coming, they would take off and disappear and they would fly the length of England, down to the south coast, across the English Channel, the length of France, over Spain, right the length of Spain. Then they would cross the Mediterranean Ocean into North Africa; they would fly all the way across the Sahara Desert into central Africa and further down until eventually they arrived in South Africa, where they would stop.

Whew! Take a breath, enjoy the South African summer, and something inside of them at a certain time would say, "It's time to go home."

And they would turn around, they would fly up from South Africa over central Africa, up through North Africa, across the Sahara desert, across the Mediterranean Ocean, across the length of Spain, across the length of France, across the English Channel and they would fly up across about 350 miles of England until they came to our garage.

And the same sparrows came back, or the kids who were born there last year, came back every year, every spring, to the same garage, to the same nests. We used to look for them. We knew spring had arrived when the sparrows came and we would see who was the first to see the sparrows coming home.

Well how can the sparrows find their way from South Africa back to the garage at my house? I mean my wife sometimes had difficulty finding her way back to the garage after she had been to town.

Who taught these sparrows the way to go? Well, they tell us, those people who are smart enough to work these things out, they actually navigate by the stars. Well, that's pretty impressive!

Because they have within them this little thing called instinct, you see, which causes them to behave as they are supposed to behave. And looking into the animal kingdom and the whole question of migrating animals, not just birds.

I mean every eel you have ever seen anywhere in North America or Europe was born in the Sargasso Sea just north of Puerto Rico. We had eels in a pond behind our home in England and these eels, by the time they arrived in our pond were about 10 years old, stayed for 10 years. At the end of 10 years, incredibly their stomachs dissolve. They no longer have a stomach – they never eat for the next

two years. They have built up enough living in that pond to go back down the stream into the river, into the ocean, back across the Atlantic Ocean.

They get back home into the Sargasso Sea. They are now mature enough to mate, lay their eggs, and they believe that the eggs born to that parent eel, who will then die, will make their way back across the Atlantic Ocean, up the same river, up the same stream and up the same ditch to get to the same pond where the parent was 20 years before. Incredible isn't it?

(You look as though you don't believe me. It's on Wikipedia – must be true!)

Now if God gave to the animal kingdom this little governing force called instinct, when God created human beings, although we have instincts, that isn't what is designed to govern us. We get anarchy if we just govern by instinct.

When God created human beings, He placed His own Spirit in the human being to be the means of governing how we live and how we behave. His presence in us produced in us what is called in Genesis the image of God – that is the moral image of God, that we behave in such a way as to portray what He is like in His character, His love, His kindness, His patience, His goodness.

What do you think would happen if plants lose the seasons and there is no rain or there was no sunshine? Well of course we have seen it happen; they will wither and die.

What would happen to an animal or a bird or a fish if it were possible for it to lose its instinct?

If a swallow from our garage in England in South Africa kind of banged its head on a tree somehow, and in so doing, lost its instinct, would it find its way home? The answer is no, of course it wouldn't – couldn't.

Let me ask you another question. What happens if a human being loses God? The answer is they do not know how to behave. They do not know how to live.

And Paul's statement is that as a consequence of being dead – that is, separated from the life of God, spiritually dead, you have lost what plays the role of instinct in the animal and seasons in the vegetable world. You have lost the means of living the way you are supposed to live. And so instead, you follow the ways of this world, the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit now at work in those who are disobedient. You are gratifying the cravings of your old sinful nature and you follow its desires and thoughts and you are disobedient.

You see what we do is not our real problem; it's what we are in our condition of separation from God that is the cause of what we do. And if we attend to what we do, if we attend to behaviour modification and we think that's Christianity, or

adopt principles of behavioural science and think that is what makes a better person, we have not understood that the root cause is that, in being spiritually dead, separated from the life of God, we do not have the capacity to do what we are intended to do and live the way we are intended to live.

So Paul says you are dead; that's what you were; that's how every one of us here was born. For many this is past tense; you are no longer dead. But for some of us here this morning, it's probably present tense. We are still in that state of separation from God.

As a result you are disobedient because the natural flesh, the old nature, he says, its desires and thoughts, step into the vacuum and govern how we live.

But does it matter? You bet it does. Let me read Verse 3:

“All of us lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.”

Now he says, where this leaves us is by nature as objects of the wrath of God. Because you were dead and you were disobedient - Paul doesn't mince his words - you're doomed by nature, left to yourself; you are under the wrath of God.

The wrath of God is not something we like to talk about or think about, but Scripture does speak about it. And the wrath of God is not a kink in God's character.

Most things about God are wonderful. He is love, He is holy, He is righteous, but unfortunately He also has wrath, He is also angry. No, it's not a kink in His character.

The very attributes that we worship in God are the very attributes that are the source of his wrath. The fact that God is love, that fact that He is pure, that fact that He is holy, the fact that He is righteous is the reason why He is angry at sin, which violates and distorts and destroys what is His purpose.

You see wrath is inevitable to a God of love. Otherwise the love is a wishy-washy meaninglessness. And our natural state (and we will address this in a moment) but our natural state, says Paul, we are by nature objects of wrath.

There is only one place where we are sheltered from the wrath of God, only one place. And that is in Christ. And outside of Christ we are not sheltered at all, as we'll see in a moment.

So this is His diagnosis of what they were, by nature – dead, disobedient and doomed.

But if that is what they were – the past tense of their condition – he then talks of what they are in Christ. What they were without Christ – dead, disobedient and doomed. Now what they are in Christ, and in Verse 4 he then says,

“But...”

And that is one of the most wonderful words in the Bible. It crops up at absolutely crucial places. He has just talked about being objects of the wrath of God. You couldn't get in a lower position than to realize that is the natural state in which I am, but – but what?

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.”

What do dead people need? There's only one thing dead people need: life. It's no good feeding a dead person, no good dressing up a dead person; it doesn't do anything for them.

And he says, although you were dead, here's the remedy: you were made alive with Christ. Verse 6:

“God raised us up with Christ.”

So in contrast with being dead, we are raised, is what he teaches here. You see our first need is not that we are guilty and need forgiving. Our first need is that we are dead and we need raising.

And God raised us up with Christ.

Now read that carefully. How does God make us alive? He doesn't say God raised up by Christ as though Christ was the means by which. Now of course He is the means by which we are raised to life, but something even more than that: He raised us up *with* Christ. The means of raising of us is Christ; the means of imparting spiritual life is imparting Christ.

You see if you have a flashlight with no battery, it's not going to function. You make it work with a battery. What does that mean? You stick the battery in the flashlight and then it will give a light. You stick (if I may put it with that illustration) - you stick Christ into a human being.

That's of course what the gospel does; the life lost in the Garden of Eden was the life of God. The life restored is the life of God; it is His presence in us. He made you alive with Christ. You see it's not you came alive because you tried to follow Jesus' teaching and you made such a good job of it, God said, “At last I can give you some life.”

No, He makes you alive in your condition of death by giving you Christ. He makes you alive with Christ.

That's why John writes in 1 John 5:11,

“This is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.”

Not simply from the Son, though it is from Him, but it is in the Son. Therefore,

“He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

Because the life is the life of the Son.

Peter writes about becoming partakers of the divine nature because the very presence and nature of Jesus Christ is implanted in us.

And if the antidote to being dead is being raised to life, and if disobedience is a result of being dead, then the antidote to being disobedient is that having been raised to life, we are then redirected to good works, which God prepares in advance for us to do.

Let me read that in Verse 10 – Verse 10 says,

“For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

Having been raised, we are redirected. You see if it is seasons that enable plant life to function, so when the rains fall on dry ground, the plants come to life; if it is instinct that enables the animals in the animal world to function properly, then it is the Holy Spirit of God that enables human beings to function properly. And we begin to engage in good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do, he says.

You see our disobedience is because we live by the spirit of this world. We follow, he says, the cravings of our sinful nature – we follow its desires and thoughts.

Now the Holy Spirit in us works in us, as Philippians 2:13 says,

“It's God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”

God works in you to give you the will, the motivation, the desire, the aspirations for that which is good and then the enabling that we might do it.

So we are raised to life in order to be redirected to good works.

You know the disobedience is evidence that somebody is dead in the same way obedience is evidence that somebody has come alive. Later in Ephesians (we'll look at this on another occasion) Paul writes about the works of a person give evidence of what is going on inside their hearts.

He says of this you can be sure; no immoral, impure or greedy person has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ. Let no one deceive you, he says, with empty words, for because of such things, God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

So he goes back to what he has talked about here in Chapter 2 and talks about disobedience and God's wrath coming on those who are disobedient. He says, don't let anybody deceive you, don't let anybody kid you and say, "Well I'm a Christian because on a certain day I prayed a prayer."

But he says, they are immoral, they are impure, they are greedy. No, they have no inheritance because there is no evidence of the life of the Spirit of God at work within them.

Our works are the evidence of what is going on inside. Bad works are evidence of being spiritually dead. Good works are the evidence of spiritual life; the Spirit of God is at work within us.

Now I know it doesn't happen automatically and Paul says to them (we'll look at this later too in Ephesians Chapter 4) – He says,

“Put on the new self, created to be like God.”

You've got that Spirit of God in your inner self now but that has to work out in the new self you put on, created to be like God in righteousness and holiness.

Then he says,

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.”

Yes these things are still there to tempt us and divert us and seduce us, but he says get rid of them and instead,

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

Now the glory of the Christian life is not, “Now I’m a Christian, I’m supposed to do certain things”; the glory of the Christian life is that now that Jesus Christ lives in you, God works in you to will and to do of His good purpose. You have an appetite for those things that are of God.

If you have no appetite, the likelihood is that you are spiritually dead. And if you are not spiritually dead, you are spiritually sick. It is possible to grieve and quench the Holy Spirit in your heart and to take those appetites away.

But if you have never known them, the almost certain likelihood is that despite you may have a profession, you have no real experience of God at all because the life creates the appetite.

But there’s more. If in what they were (they were dead, which led to being disobedient, which leads to being doomed under the wrath of God), what they are, what the gospel does for a person is they are raised; you have made alive with Christ, you are raised in Christ. They are redirected to those good works God prepared for us to do.

But the third thing, instead of being doomed, we are rescued. The word used here is the word saved. Verse 8:

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith”

It is not from yourselves, it is not countering your bad works with a display of good works that’s so impressive that it saves you. No, no.

This is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.”

Here’s an interesting study in these verses, which I considered being the basis of what I say to you this morning, but instead I have changed it to what I am saying to you.

But an interesting study of these verses is the nature of God and the expression of His nature when you are outside of Christ than when you are in Christ.

You see outside of Christ, Verse 2, we were by nature objects of wrath. But then because His wrath was met and satisfied in the cross of Christ, when Jesus Christ, who Himself as a man was not under the judgement of His Father, was not spiritually dead, was born as Adam had been created (that’s why He is called the second Adam).

Not inheriting that state of death, which is why He was born of a virgin, for it was the Holy Spirit who brought about His conception and He was a full man as God

intended man to be, spiritually alive and obedient to His Father. He is our substitute, took our place before the wrath of God, and endured His wrath on the cross.

We have celebrated communion here this morning and we do that because we need to remind ourselves that it was the substitute that Jesus Christ was for us in His death and His broken body and His poured out blood that addressed and satisfied the just anger and wrath of God against Him. That having become what we are, made sin for us, we might become what He is – we might share the righteousness of God in Christ, Paul teaches us.

And instead we find here in Verse 4:

“Because of his great love for us...”

He speaks in Verse 4,

“God, who is rich in mercy...”

He speaks in Verse 5 about,

“It is by grace you have been saved.”

And down in Verse 7 he speaks of,

“...The incomparable riches of his grace.”

And he also speaks in Verse 7 of,

“...His kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”

Here’s a great study sometime on your own – study those words. The wrath of God – understand that. But understand in Christ we are under and recipients of the love of God, His great love, the mercy of God (He is rich in mercy), the grace of God (grace means to give what we don’t deserve).

Mercy means to not give what we do deserve. Grace means to give what we don’t deserve - the other side of that same thing, giving what we don’t deserve.

The incomparable riches of His grace. And then look at His kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

And so when you are in Christ, that’s the only safe place to be. The wrath of God has already been met in Jesus Christ and we are protected in Christ, instead become the recipients of His love, His mercy, His grace, His kindness.

And Paul thinks of adjectives to go with all of those words: His great love, His rich mercy, His incomparable riches of His grace, His kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

And that's why you can be safe. To be saved means to be safe.

But it's not just for now, it's not just instead of being dead, disobedient and doomed, we are raised, redirected and rescued for this life.

But Verse 7 goes on to say that

“In the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”

That is, in the coming ages, beyond this age, beyond this time, beyond this moment, He might show and we might see and experience the incomparable riches of His grace. We'll go on living in the good of that. We'll go on living in His kindness and in His love.

When Jesus was at the tomb of Lazarus, been dead for four days, and Martha his sister was upset and she was criticizing Jesus for the fact that He hadn't come four days earlier.

“If only you had been here, my brother would not have died”, she said.

Jesus said, “Well he will rise again.”

“I know he will rise again in the resurrection of the last day.” And she goes from the past (“if You had been here”) to the future (“in the last day”).

And Jesus said to her this:

“I am” (present tense) “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”

Not talking about the physical body of Lazarus who was about to raise him from the dead. His physical body would have died, of course. But He says, “Martha, I am the resurrection. Don't put Me in the past, if you'd been here, or the future one day, but I am (present tense) the resurrection and the life. If you believe in Me, even though you die, you will live. For whoever lives and believes in Me will never die.”

Then He looked at Martha and said,

“Do you believe this?”

He threw it back into her court. “Do you believe this?”

She said, “Yes, Lord, I believe.”

Believing doesn’t mean, are you gullible enough to believe this?

I talked to a man in Israel actually who said, “Yeah, yeah, yeah, you believe this. You can believe whatever you like. I believe something else.”

I said, “Well, that’s not the point. Of course you can believe whatever you like. The point is, is it true? If you believe something isn’t true you are living in Cloud Cuckoo land. If you don’t believe what is true, you are going to be in trouble.”

“Do you believe this Martha? Is this true?”

And because it’s true, do you say, “Lord, because it’s true I believe, I trust You, I look to You, I come to You, I confess my state of being spiritually dead, evidenced by the disobedience that I confess to You as part of my life. But I thank You, although by nature under the wrath of God, You stood in my place, You took the wrath and God’s justice was satisfied.

“And now I want to be united with You, I want to come into that union with Yourself whereby I, in Christ, am now died with Christ. His death is my death, buried with Him, raised again in order now that I live in the power of the life of the indwelling Jesus Christ.

“And I find in Him new appetites for what is good and right. And I find that I am safe, not only now, but for the coming ages, the generations that will pass, the centuries that will pass, the millenniums that will pass until there is no more time, only eternity.”

We don’t measure it anymore; we just live in that wonderful relationship with Him for which we were created.

This is the spiritual biography of the Christians in Ephesus; what they were: dead, disobedient and doomed. And what they are now in Christ: raised, redirected, rescued.

And if you, like the Ephesians, say, “Yes, I was, but now I am in this position.” Then thank God for that, understand it, live in the good of it.

But if you are in the past tense that these Ephesians were in, and you have never come to Christ, you have never realized your lostness and your deadness without Him, and the powerlessness of your life without Him, then this morning you can say, “Lord, I come to You.”

As the Spirit of God speaks to your heart, and those of you watching on television, listening on the radio, as the Spirit of God speaks to your heart, you can simply say, “Lord, I come to You. I give my life to You. And I thank You that You will give Your life to me, to raise me from the dead, to redirect my life and to be rescued forever.”

When I close, as I am doing so now, if you have never settled this issue with certainty in your own heart, and as other people will be leaving, some going through to the Bridge next door that we told you about, stay back here and we would love to talk with you and pray with you and help you to be sure of this. Nothing is as important.

Let’s pray together. Lord, we thank You for the clarity of Your Word. It tells us what we are by nature. It doesn’t cushion it. And we realize it’s a desperate position we are in by nature without You, with no future and no hope. But thank You that the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world to be the only means by which men, women, boys and girls might be reconciled to God.

I thank You for every person in this building who lives in fellowship with Yourself. They have been forgiven and cleansed, born again of the Holy Spirit and made alive in Christ. Thank You for them. I pray for them that they will live in the power of that risen life.

And for those of us who haven’t yet come to that point, I pray that the Holy Spirit will draw us today, we’ll open our hearts to You and You will come to live within us. And I pray we’ll know the Holy Spirit, as Your Word puts it, bearing witness with our spirits that we are children of God, that we just know something new has taken place, something exciting has begun. And thank You for the way You will cause our lives to fulfill the purpose for which You made us.

I commit each one here to You now in Jesus’ Name, Amen.