

Inconceivable

Long Beach Alliance Church • April 27, 2014 • Pastor Chris Lankford

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved —
~*Ephesians 2:4-5 (ESV)*

1) Incomprehensible Tragedy

- A) Ephesians begins with Paul (the writer) blessing God for His lavish salvation work “in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3-14). Paul actively engages God’s promises in praying for the Christ-followers in Ephesus, encouraging them to find their purpose, value, and power “in Christ” (1:15-23).
- B) Still glowing from the fireplace-warmth of God’s epic redemptive plan of identity “in Christ” (1:20-23), the writer shockingly dumps an abrupt and unexpected freezing cold bucket of water onto us (2:1)!
- C) Do you remember your “B.C.” (Before Christ) life? You were sealed in a crypt of “trespasses and sins,” trapped in a living death (2:1). Without Christ, you were “objects of God’s wrath” (2:3), out of fellowship with God “by nature” (instinct, DNA), destined for and deserving of destruction (Romans 1:29-32).
- D) Without Christ, we were all profoundly impacted by evil influences, including the “ways of the world” (culture, 2:2), the parental “prince” of “disobedience” (supernaturally powerful evil, 2:2), and our own selfish “passions” and “desires” (intellectual and physical cravings demanding satisfaction, 2:3). No one is naturally “good,” no one seeks God (Romans 3:10-18).
- E) Mankind is helpless, hopeless, and hostile. Consumed by self-will, God is rejected, self becomes king, and hope is placed in self-medicating desires, providing a temporary dulling peace for the soul. Drowning while breathing, mankind is incomprehensibly lost.

2) Inconceivable Salvation

- A) But God... (2:4). The simple adversative phrase hits with stunning force. As mankind happily drowns, God suddenly emerges to provide rescue.
- B) The hopelessness of mankind's situation serves to magnify the exceedingly great riches (cf. 1:7, 18) of God's "mercy" (compassion, pity) and "love" (personal affection, interest, care) which God "expends" on us (2:4).
- C) God's rescue is not based on the "cleaning up" or "getting right" of the person (2:5), but is poured out while we are still "dead in our trespasses" (2:5). There is no condition we must meet!
- D) However, God's mercy and love are not "unconditional." We ought not to think of God's love as "unconditional" in this sense, but rather it is obtained "together with Christ" (2:5, cf. Romans 5:6-8).
- E) Inconceivably, mankind is not meant to "self-rescue" in the drowning waters of sin, but rather receive rescue from Jesus Christ who leaps into sinful waters Himself to reveal God's merciful and loving heart (2:5).
- F) But the rescue of mankind comes with a wicked and promised price (cf. Genesis 2:17). While Jesus rescues some from the waters of sin, He Himself will die in the place of those He rescues. Because it is "by grace you have been saved" (2:5).
- G) The God of the universe, the Creator, the Cause, the Provider, the Great Shepherd, the Mighty One, the Promise, the Infinite Almighty Perfect One, out of the wisdom and fellowship of the Trinity, chooses to redeem sinful mankind, "in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him" (1:9-10) -- all for His own glory!

3) With Him -- Alive, Raised, Seated

- A) God provides all these things to us "with Him" (parallel to "together with Christ" and "in Christ"). He has given us life, resurrection, and authority "with Christ" (2:5-6). We are to be focused on life "in Christ," who lives "in the heavenly places" (cf. Colossians 3:1).
- B) God's unique work of "making us alive in Christ" provides us a future experience of "immeasurable" grace and kindness from God through Christ (2:7), entirely because of God's "mercy" and "love!"

growth group guide

“inconceivable” (ephesians 2:1-7) april 27-may 2, 2014

warm up

Have you ever been given a gift so generous, you felt accepting the gift was wrong? Who was it from & how did you handle it?

Any impressions, comments, or questions from Sunday's Sermon?

chop it up

Read The Text: Ephesians 2:1-7

The Apostle Paul explores the pre-Christian condition of man in Ephesians 2:1-3. There are three different aspects of mankind's condition which Paul explores. What are they, why are they significant, and what do we do with this important information?

The Apostle Paul explores the Christian condition of man in Ephesians 2:4-7. There are three different aspects of the Christian life which are framed around the phrase “by grace you have been saved.” What are they, why are they significant, and what do we do with this important information?



It's pretty easy to walk through this life and feel like God is dead and our natural human condition is alive! But God has done something extraordinary in us which has already been accomplished by Christ, making us “alive, raised up, and seated” with Him.

This is all well and good, but what difference does it make?

How does the dramatic contrast between Ephesians 2:1-3 (without Christ) & Ephesians 2:1-7 (with Christ) make a difference in our lives?

Consider application for these areas:

- Home/Family?
- Work/Co-workers?
- Community/Friends?



Why does Paul speak of the resurrection as “already happened” in Ephesians 2:5-6, but in Romans 6:5-8; 2 Corinthians 4:14, and Philippians 3:11 Paul speaks of the resurrection as a “not yet” event?