

Raise Us To Thy Glorious Throne

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- [0 : 0 0] So turn in your Bible, if you would, to Ephesians chapter 2. Ephesians chapter 2. And we are going to look at a phrase that we, of course, just sang together because we sang that hymn that we've been reflecting on through this Advent season.
- Raise us to thy glorious throne. Ephesians chapter 2. So, Audrey, would you please come and serve us this morning?
- This is Ephesians chapter 2. You can probably pick any microphone you want, and Lydia will follow you and grab it. And that you were dead in the trespasses of sins which you once walked, following the course of the world, following the prince of the power in the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind.
- And we were nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich and mercy because of the great love with which he sends us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.
- By grace you have been saved and raised up with him and seated with us in the heavenly places of Christ Jesus, so that the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.
- [1 : 2 9] For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk with them.
- Thank you. Father, we are grateful for the privilege of having your word. Would you please help us now as we turn our attention to it, and as we consider the things that have been inspired and written down and preserved for us here in Ephesians chapter 2.
- Thank you for this particular text. Would you please help us to listen and to hear, to pay attention, and to heed the things that we are hearing, to believe and to obey?
- Would you please help us that we see our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, again this morning, and we are so humbly grateful to be your people and to have this opportunity to gather together.
- So please help us. Holy Spirit, come and work among us. Perhaps you will draw to faith today. Perhaps you will draw someone into a deeper faith today, a better understanding of who they are in Christ, and of all they have received in him.
- [2 : 5 6] We ask that you would please do whatever work is necessary in our hearts. In Jesus' name, amen. If you want to play in a band, I'm just going to get my coffee.
- If you want to play in a band, the end of that desire to play in the band is that you would have skill in making music that people will enjoy.
- And the means to that end, the steps that will be necessary to get you to that end of being in a band would be practice, right?
- Time, perhaps a very patient music teacher, diligence. These are the things that would be the means to get you to the end.

Now, think if you want to build a Lego set. Maybe someone got a Lego set for Christmas. If you want to build a Lego set, the end is the castle or the car or the spaceship that you are trying to build.

[4 : 06] And the means to that end are having all of the right pieces, which can be a challenge sometimes if you're not starting from a box set, getting all of the right pieces, having the instruction book that you can follow and the instruction book is accurate and complete.

No one's ripped out any pages or dumped coffee accidentally or something like that, right? And then keeping your masterpiece away from your siblings or your pet while you are building it so you can get it done.

The end is what you are trying to build. And the means to that end are having the pieces and the instructions and the keeping others away from it.

The same principle will apply. Means and end to an end. If you are making a pot of chili or getting an education or cleaning your room or starting a business, the end is your goal and the means to that end are the steps that you will take to reach the goal.

I wonder how does this apply to our understanding of salvation? When God saves a sinner, is that the ultimate end?

[5 : 31] Or could it be that God has a greater end in mind? What if arriving in heaven, what if your arrival in heaven is not the end, but a means to a greater, more glorious end?

I know this. If you want to win a Super Bowl, the means to that end are drafting players and developing players and paying a team that you are confident can win enough football games to get you to the winning opportunity in the Super Bowl.

In other words, if you want to win the Super Bowl, you start with exceptional athletes. But when it comes to salvation, I want you to notice what God starts with.

And it's in verses 1 through 3. Look in your Bible, Ephesians chapter 2, verses 1 through 3. And you were dead. Dead in your trespasses and sins in which you previously walked according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient.

We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also.

[7 : 19] Dead is not a matter of degrees. If I say to you, I feel sick, it would be very reasonable for you to ask, well, how sick are you?

See, when you're sick, there are degrees to sickness. The same is true with being tired. How tired are you? The same is true with emotions like sadness.

How sad are you? But when Paul writes, you were dead, there are no degrees to deadness. You're either dead or you're alive.

No degrees to deadness. If you say that plant is dead, nobody should be asking you, well, how dead is it? There are no degrees to deadness.

According to Scripture, every person except the Lord Jesus Christ was born physically alive, but spiritually dead.

[8 : 38] and we prove just how dead we are by how we live in this world.

We prove that we are dead by the way that we live. Notice in your Bible, verse 2, three, three ways that we prove this.

Verse 2, according to or following the ways of the world. we live according to social norms and customs and traditions and habits and practices, ways of living that are very often opposed to God.

Why? Because, number two, they are directed by the devil. We walk according to or following the ruler of the power of the air.

That is the devil. And if that wasn't bad enough, the world and the devil who controls it. We are also, number three, carrying out our own fleshly desires, the passions, the inclinations of our hearts.

[9 : 47] We do what we want, when we want, how we want, because we want it. We are lawbreakers.

That's the word in verse 1, trespasses. We are lawbreakers. But we are also sinners, also in verse 1, those who have fallen short of God's glory, failed to measure up to God's glory.

But we are also those who reject God's will and chase whatever we think is going to satisfy our desires. whatever will make us happy.

And the scripture calls that rebellion, iniquity. Trespasses, sins, iniquity. It should not surprise us at all how this particular portion of the text wraps up.

That the result of our rebellion against God is that God's wrath is hanging over our heads. wrath is this should surprise no one. Wrath is what trespassers and sinners and those who are filled with iniquity, rebellion against God.

[11 : 04] This is what we deserve. When God purposes to save a sinner, he does not start with an exceptional person, like if you were building a championship football team.

God starts with one who is dead and disobedient and doomed. Now, religion offers a particular solution to this dilemma.

Religion's answer goes like this, do more, and like this, try harder, and like this, be better. do more to love God and others. Try harder to be a real friend. You need to be a nicer person.

You need to develop better habits. You need to get involved in your community. You need to give more generously. You need to practice the spiritual disciplines. Pray more. Read your Bible more consistently.

[12 : 28] Go to church more regularly and act like you really want to be there. Listen, all of these activities are very worth your effort. But remember, you're dead.

And since there are no degrees of being dead, it's impossible for you to make yourself more alive by doing more and trying harder and being better.

if you are dead like Lazarus in John chapter 11, then your only hope is that someone outside of yourself makes you alive.

Verse four, but God who is rich in mercy because of his great love that he had for us made us alive with Christ.

Even though we were dead in trespasses, you are saved by grace. He also raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus.

[13 : 56] What does it mean to be rich? What does it mean to be rich? You have a lot of what? You have a lot of money.

If you're rich, you have a lot of money. That's not the only thing you could be rich in. You could be rich in books. You could be rich in Christmas cookies.

You could be rich in Pokemon cards or Lego pieces or quarterbacks. You could be rich in lots of things.

When Paul writes that God is rich, imagine having so much money that you could never ever spend it all.

But more valuable than money. God is rich in mercy. Do you see that in your Bible? We sing this on occasion.

[15 : 00] Our sins, they are many. His mercy is more. Because God is rich in mercy.

And God being rich in mercy is very, very good news. Because our trespasses and our sins and our iniquity, our rebellion in our hearts, this makes us guilty.

And that means you deserve God's judgment. But God shows mercy to those who deserve judgment for their trespasses and their sin and their iniquity.

because of his great love, God brings spiritually dead people back to life. We call this regeneration or the new birth.

Salvation does not require cooperation. Do you remember the movie Mary Poppins?

[16 : 13] Remember the scene where Bert has made the chalk drawings? And then Mary Poppins and Bert and the children jump into one of those drawings and they end up having a whole escapade down there.

Thank you. And there is a horse race, but you'll recall that the horses are from the carousel that they were riding on. It's a whole thing, right? Mary Poppins ends up winning this horse race and she has these reporters gathered around her and the reporters ask her, how are you feeling?

Describe your feelings after winning this race. And Mary P responds with a song. Do you remember the song? Super califragilistic ex bial lidocious.

This is a made up word when you don't know, for when you don't know what to say. Paul, in verses five and six, makes up some words.

sin. Because there aren't words in the language for him to describe what he is trying to communicate to God's people. And so, he makes up three words.

[17 : 43] I'll show you where they are. He makes up these three words. This is how he does it. He takes the Greek prefix to the word sin, s-y-n, not s-i-n, s-y-n, which means with.

With. We get this when we use our words synthesize, right? I need to bring a bunch of things together. They need to be with one another.

I'm going to synthesize. Or, the band needs to synchronize. We need to get in step. We need to be with one another so our rhythms match.

Synchronize. You will also see this. It has been devolved just a little bit in some of our words that start with s-y-n, not just s-y-n.

You'll see this same prefix, s-y-n, like in sympathy. This is to be with someone in their suffering.

[18 : 46] Paul makes up three words by attaching this Greek prefix, s-y-n. Verse 5, he says, you are alive with Christ.

Made up a word, not super califragilistic. He makes up a Greek word here because he doesn't have anything to describe this. So he takes the prefix, s-y-n, and he combines it with alive.

And he says, you are alive with Christ. And then he does it again in verse 6. He says, you are raised with Christ.

And then he does it a third time. You are seated with Christ. Now, you should be asking at this point, wait a minute, you're telling me I am raised with Christ and I am seated with Christ, but I am clearly seated here listening to you.

What is going on here? And to that I would say it's another sermon, but let's start with this. This is the idea of already but not yet.

[20 : 04] This is true of us, but we have not yet experienced it. It's true. We are raised with Christ.

We are seated with Christ, but we have not yet experienced that. If you live in a home, you may have a mortgage on your home.

And if someone were to say to you, do you own your home? You could rightly say, yes, I own my home.

if you have a mortgage, that's not entirely true, is it? It's true in the sense that you own it, you're not renting or leasing or borrowing or any of those things, but it's not fully experienced because you really own it with the bank.

The bank and you share ownership of the house. It's yours, but you don't fully have it yet. This is similar. We also get something similar when we talk about the time between our presidential election and the inauguration.

[21 : 22] We know who the next president is going to be. Some already will refer to him as the president. He is already that, but yet he is not yet that.

Similar! Who raised us? Who seated us with Christ? Well, you were dead.

You were unresponsive. You were unfeeling. You were unable to help yourself, but God made us alive with Christ, raised us with Christ, seated us with Christ.

Sinners, Paul says, are saved by grace. And if you have to do more to get it, or try harder to earn it, or be better to deserve it, then by definition, that's not grace.

Salvation does not require cooperation. And just so we don't miss the point, Paul restates this for those in the back. Verse number eight.

[22 : 33] For you are saved by grace. grace, through faith, and this is not from yourselves.

It is God's gift. Not from works so that no one can boast. You were dead, disobedient, and doomed.

But now, by grace, through faith, you are saved. not by doing more, not by trying harder, not by being better, because those will definitely lead to boasting, won't they?

No, salvation, including the faith that is necessary to believe, is God's gift. If salvation was the end, then this passage could stop here at verse number nine.

If salvation was the end, but the text continues verse number 10, and it shows us God's greater purpose.

[23 : 53] Verse 10, for we are his workmanship. workmanship. We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works.

Notice, not by good works, for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.

This word workmanship is beautiful, but also not unique in that it's the only one. There's only one other usage of it in the New Testament. When you think of this word workmanship, think about any of these things, a statue, or a song, or a project, a piece of architecture, a painting, a poem, a novel, a speech.

It's a workmanship. You this brings it home to us maybe a little better. You can also think about a woodworking project, or a craft, a cross stitch project, for example, a perfectly mowed and trimmed and cared for yard, house decorations, a puzzle that you have been working on.

All of these would fall somewhere in this realm of this word masterpiece. Paul uses this same word in Romans chapter 1 and verse 20 to refer to all that God has created.

[25 : 32] Creation is God's masterpiece. Workmanship then is anything that you can look at and recognize as good, beautiful, meaningful, right.

And if we are God's workmanship, then salvation is not the end because God's goal for me is his glory.

You were created, recreated, reborn, rebirthed, regenerated. You were created. God saved you to glorify him through good works.

Salvation then is a means to what? To an end that God receives glory. This is lost a little bit in our translation.

In the CSB, it's also lost in the NIV, but ESV captures this. Back up in verse number two. Once you walked, we walked following the course of the world and following the power of the air, the devil, and following after our fleshly desires.

[26 : 59] This is how you used to walk, but now, Paul said, you walk in good works. Same word. Salvation is not the end, but a means to an end that you glorify God as his masterpiece.

God's goal for me is his glory. If you want to make one of my favorite meals, the end is a savory pot of chili.

And the means to get to that end, this savory pot of delicious chili, is the right mix of hamburger and spicy sausage and chili beans and tomato juice and spices and then giving it plenty of time so that it can all simmer together.

Mmm, my favorite. And then after you ladle this savory concoction over a beautiful bed of Fritos and sprinkle a generous helping of Colby Jack cheese on the top of this savory stew, you may think this is it, it's the perfect bowl of chili and you would almost be right.

Except for I'm going to reach for some ghost pepper sauce and I'm going to douse it with some more hot sauce.

[29 : 01] Mmm, it is going to be so good. Like an extra shot of hot sauce on top of this beautiful end of chili.

There is one more truth that we need to synthesize in this text. It's in verse number seven. so that in the coming ages he, God, might display the immeasurable riches of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ!

Jesus. for all eternity, God will show off sinners who used to be dead, disobedient, and doomed.

He will show them off as trophies of his grace. can you imagine in eternity the Lord Jesus Christ himself standing back pointing towards Corey and saying he was dead but I made him alive.

can you imagine the Lord Jesus standing back in eternity and pointing towards Sarah and saying she was lost but I found her.

[31 : 06] He was hopeless. He was helpless. He was godless but I rescued him. he was a rebel without a cause.

She deserved wrath but got my mercy. And the angels and the great cloud of witnesses that we looked at a few weeks back.

They are going to clap and shout with delight look look what God has done. look what God has done.

All glory be to Christ. And as the ages roll on like an endless wave like the endless waves on a seashore that's the idea here in the age to come do you see that in seven in the coming ages like rolling waves wave after wave after wave after wave again and again God will be glorified for his rich mercy for his great love for his sovereign grace for his sweet kindness towards us in Christ Jesus why because he started with those who were dead disobedient and doomed and he has raised us to his glorious throne and so even though

Christmas has come and gone with Christians now and those who were before us and those who will come after us we can rightly sing come come thou long expected Jesus and raise us to your glorious throne make real what is already true are you still trying to be right with God by your own best efforts by your good works are you still putting off trusting in Jesus you think well I'll do it someday but not today what are you waiting for please stop trying and begin trusting come to

[33 : 57] Jesus and be saved brothers and sisters dead is not a matter of degrees and salvation does not require cooperation and God's goal for me is his glory you are alive with Christ you are raised with Christ you are seated with Christ in the heavenly places and one day that will be a physical and eternal reality but until that day you are God's workmanship God's masterpiece and so ask him what good works did you prepare for me today what goodness can I display right here right now in this moment to maximize your glory how can I respond like Jesus so that those around me say look what

God has done let's pray father we are grateful to receive this text we are humbled again at this summary this beautiful encapsulation of the plan of salvation and we find ourselves again corrected in our thinking where we have begun to stray perhaps wondering if there was some good some merit some part that we deserved thank you for your word that corrects us and puts us back in our place and humbles us again so that we can say this is all of grace and all glory be to Christ and there will be no boasting in any one of us father perhaps this particular text and the power of the

Holy Spirit is now at work in someone's heart and this text is being applied by the Holy Spirit would you please grant life and faith and repentance so that some dead disobedient doomed sinner responds by believing in Jesus father we ask this not for our glory not for our fame but for the glory and the fame of Jesus because we understand that our salvation is not the end but a means to an end that you father son and Holy Spirit are glorified both now as we are your workmanship and in eternity as trophies of your grace father as we prepare to receive the Lord's supper we also would like to be humble before you in acknowledging that we have not consistently walked in the good works that you have prepared for us we have strayed there is much that we have left undone and there is much that we have done in a wrong attitude with a heart of pride or anger or frustration would you please soften our hearts by the power of the

Holy Spirit and prepare us to receive the Lord's supper father thank you for the forgiveness that is ours through our savior Jesus that his death on the cross has atoned for our sin past present and future we plead again the merit of our savior Jesus he is worthy because he is righteous and holy and so we plead the merit of his poured out blood on our behalf and we claim the forgiveness that is ours as your word tells us in first John if we confess our sins you are faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness thank you for the grace that continues to be ours in our savior Jesus help us as we continue in this time of worship in Jesus name amen amen