

• *God's power in the new birth of the Christian*

Paul is now explaining what he means by the exceeding greatness of God's power. It is seen first of all in the resurrection of Christ.<sup>☐1</sup> But next that same resurrection-power is seen in the new birth of the Christian. 'And God made you alive', says Paul. The same power which raised Christ from the dead, also raised Christians from their spiritual death. The same 'exceeding greatness of God's power' which was needed to raise Christ and make Him the king of the universe, that same power was needed to raise the Christian to newness of life. This shows the severity and greatness of the human problem. The Christian was not just a little bit sick, or a little bit needy. He was not a person who was basically all right but needed a bit of help. His problem was as severe as the problem of Jesus when He was dead and buried and sealed in a tomb. The Christian was also – at one time – dead and buried and sealed in a tomb. It takes resurrection-power for anyone to come to salvation at all.

☐1 1:9b-23

*The depths of the Human problem*

Ephesians 2:1–3 analyses the depths of the human problem. 'And God made you alive, you who were dead in your trespasses and sins<sup>☐1</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the ruler of the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience'.<sup>☐2</sup>

☐1 2:1

☐2 2:2

There are at least five aspects to the human condition without the grace of God

*1. Spiritually dead*

1. **Men and women are spiritually dead.** 'God made you alive, you who were dead...'. Paul's description here is very severe, but we need to take it seriously. Unless we realise how deep is man's problem we shall grasp at superficial answers. It is not the circumstances of men and women that are wrong; it is human nature itself. By nature men and women are spiritually dead. They are insensitive, unresponsive towards God, without any longing or appetite for God. Of course, there are plenty of people who are religious and have ideas about God and even think they like God. But they are born without appetite for the God of the Bible! The idea that natural people are wanting God is not right. Men and women are dead. They are ignorant of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*2. Follow the course of the world*

2. **Men and women follow the course of the world.** There is a kind of anti-God mentality in the world. Men and women are in the grip of this anti-God mentality until released by Christ. They like sin and selfishness, and they **corporately** like sin. There is a **collective** anti-God outlook which has power over the entire human race. You 'walked, following the course of this world' says Paul.

*3. Controlled by the devil*

3. **Men and women are controlled by the devil.** Back behind the world is 'the ruler of the power of the air, the ruler of the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience'. There is an evil principle working powerfully in this world. Paul calls it 'the power of the air' and 'the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience'. Over this spirit or power is a ruler, a personality that the Bible elsewhere calls Satan or the devil.<sup>☐1</sup> Every Christian was once in this state. 'Among these we all once lived...'

☐1 2:2

#### 4. Jewish Christians

4. **Men and women are naturally in bondage.** ‘Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and of mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind’.<sup>1</sup> Our very natures were in the grip of sin. This is why Paul calls unconverted people ‘children of disobedience’. It means their very character is damaged and ruined and instinctively runs to disobedience.

1 2:3

It sets up a slavery. People are in bondage to their own desires, whether they are physical and fleshy or whether they are nice and respectable – but godless. There are the obvious desires of the flesh, but there are more subtle sins of the mind.

#### 5. Under God’s Anger

5. **Men and women are under God’s anger against sin.** They are ‘by nature children of wrath’. Everyone was in this predicament, Christians too, ‘like the rest of mankind’.

A great turning point comes with the word ‘But God...’. Having described the plight of men and women, Paul reminds the Ephesians how they experienced the intervention of God.

#### God’s intervention

‘But God who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us’<sup>1</sup> (even when we were dead in trespasses), made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)<sup>2</sup> and raised us together with Him and seated us together with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus<sup>3</sup> in order that in the coming ages He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness towards us, in Christ Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

1 2:4

2 2:5

3 2:6

4 2:7

#### 1. Only God’s goodness brings change

1. **Only God’s goodness brings about any change.** Any change in the plight of men and women comes about because of the great mercy of God. His graciousness, and His love are at work when anyone comes to salvation.

#### 2. When man was entirely impotent

2. **He saved us when we were dead in trespasses.** There was no question of our coming alive first, and His then saving us. We were entirely impotent – dead – when God stepped into our lives.

#### 3. Utterly by God’s grace

3. **Salvation, then, is entirely and utterly from God’s grace.** It is scarcely possible to put this matter in a more extreme way than what Paul says here. We did not save ourselves by our freewill or our natural ability to believe. We were dead when God did a work of spiritual-resurrection. The same power that raised Christ, saved us.

#### 4. United to Christ

4. **Our position now is similar to that of Christ.** We are united to Him. He is alive. He is raised. He is ascended. We are made alive. A seed of new life is put into us, waking us up to God and giving us a love towards Him. We are raised. We are ascended. Spiritually we are united with Christ in heaven!

#### • The riches of His grace

God has a purpose in all of this: He wants to display for ever and ever the exceeding riches of His grace.



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Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible* (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



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