



Sermon Notes

Term – Spring 2019

Series – Wholeness: Ephesians

Gathering & Date – the 10, 10 February

Title – Does my but look big in this?

Preacher – Paul Langham

Reading – Ephesians 1:18 – 2:10

Main message of this talk in one sentence – What God did for Jesus (raising him from death and seating him in heavenly realms), he has done for us

The word ‘wholeness’ – which is the umbrella title for our series at both the 10 & the 5 – is an invitation
To be more fully loved that we may more fully love

Last week we saw that Paul is pointing Christians to a twin hope (in the NT, ‘hope’ is not a vague wish, but a certainty):

- eternal inheritance (future)
- resurrection power (present)

Main points –

Our passage is 2:1-10, but the final verses of chapter 1 help us see what Paul is saying very clearly. The dynamic of the passage is ‘UP’ and Paul travels that twice, firstly speaking about Jesus, and secondly, speaking about us.

In 1:19-22 Paul talks about God raising Jesus from the dead – the Greek here is ‘nekros’ (lit. corpse) which reminds us that the NT is consistently insistent that the death and resurrection of Jesus were physical events. There’s a sense here that God’s power was resisted, presumably by Satan attempting to maintain his power over the realm of the dead, but that he was overwhelmed ...

Having raised Jesus, God

... seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all

- **rule** [*arche* = beginning, origin] and
- **authority** [*exousia* = right to act],
- **power** [*dunamis*] and
- **dominion** [*kuriotes* = Lordship], and
- every **name** [*onoma* = name, character, fame, reputation] that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

In vv 22 & 23 we are told that we [the church] are the Body of Jesus. What would it have been like to have been in the presence of the physical, incarnate Jesus? If we’re his body now, that’s how it should feel for others to be in our presence ... quite a thought ...?

Paul begins chapter 2 in a pretty sombre way – it’s as if he wants to emphasise just what a transformation God has worked in order for us to be the Body of his Son.

Essentially, Paul repeats the same upward dynamic when speaking about us as he used when speaking about Jesus.

'You were dead' is his opening. Again the word is 'nekros' – we were without hope. Our death was 'in' transgressions and sin. Note the contrast to Paul's favourite way of describing Christians – 'in Christ'.

And that's how we lived, before putting our faith in Jesus. In effect, says Paul, we were ruled by the Enemy, here described as the ruler (from the same word 'arche' which we've already been told that Jesus is now seated way above) 'of the air' – that sounds a little odd, but as the word used means the lower atmosphere, the air we breathe, I think it's just another way of belittling Satan in contrast with Jesus.

Before moving on, it's worth noting that 2:1-3 means we have no grounds for boasting as Christians. We can never justify a 'holier than thou' attitude. Everything we have is gift ...

Does my but look big in this?

As so often in the NT, the word 'but' signals a monumental shift of gear and perspective. Paul's *buts* always look big in whatever context ...

⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved.

3 key words we need to understand

- judgement (getting what we deserve)
- mercy (escaping what we deserve)
- grace (getting what we could never even imagine)

James 2:13 'mercy triumphs over grace ...'

All this is God's initiative (1 John 4 – also Romans 5:8 'while we were still sinners, Jesus died for us ...') and initiative means desire ... God's desire is for us to be saved, to be indwelt by his Spirit, to live with him forever.

It would be extraordinary enough if Paul stopped there, with our being raised with Christ. But he goes on to complete the same upward dynamic – we are seated with Christ in the same heavenly realms. Many of us shy away from the sense of status and authority this conveys on the believer – but if we remember how Jesus used his status and authority (to serve others, always to serve others) we need not fear it.

Paul drives that home in 2:7-8

- the aim of seating us with Christ is that we might show others the same grace and kindness we've received
- we're reminded again that grace means we can't boast, that we don't earn our own salvation
- we're reminded that God has designed us to serve others

For further thought and prayer –

Talk about what it means to be the body of Jesus today – what should that feel like for those around us?

Spend some time thanking Jesus for the price he paid us to free us from death

Why don't we have grounds to boast or feel better than others?

Look again at 2:4 – savour God's 'great love for' you, consider his rich mercy and let that lead into praise.

Initiative means desire – how easy do you find it to think of God desiring to be with you?

Spend some time thinking of the implications of 2:6 – you are seated with Jesus in heavenly realms ...!

Allow 2:7-10 to remind you that the purpose of our new-found position 'in Christ' is all to bless others with grace and kindness. For this, says Paul, we were designed.