

Ephesians 2:4-7
Alive with Christ

As we return to Ephesians 2, I was reminded a couple weeks ago about the importance of context; the importance of understanding someone, or something, in its proper setting. Often times you get little sound bytes, or a little glimpse into what someone has said; or to a situation that you see a portion of it, but you don't see the whole thing. And as this goes, your picture, or your glimpse, or what you hear in that little moment isn't a full and accurate representation of the totality of what took place, as far as what you witnessed, or what you saw, or what you heard. And this is certainly true with just communication in general; this is how conversations go, this is how books and literature go, this is how movies go; when you get a bit or a piece of it, you don't get the fullness of it, you don't get the context, the proper setting of all of it. And so you can kind of warp it at that point, you can miss the proper emphasis, you can miss the fullness of what is being communicated.

And this is certainly true when it comes to the gospel, this is definitely true when it comes to God's Word, and what we have before us. In fact, we're actually commanded to teach the whole counsel of God; we're commanded to make sure that we are not just hitting on the part that we like a lot, and saying that over and over again, and neglecting the totality of what God has given us in His Word. Well it's definitely true in addition to not just teaching in the church, but also to when we go to share the gospel with unbelievers.

And I was reminded of this a few weeks ago, there were some young people from our church that wanted to go out, and we headed out to the Boulevard, and there was the farmer's market; and we were just approaching people and trying to talk to them, and get to know our community better, and see if anyone was up for a conversation, and see how far we could go in talking with them, and getting more specifically to the gospel, and the good news. And when you get a conversation like that, that's where you start to realize the proper setting, the full context of the gospel is really important.

Because you could approach people, and you could talk to them, and you

could just talk about one simple concept, or one thing, and you could just talk about how God wants you to have eternal life, God loves you; and you could say statements like this, and your interaction with most people will probably be, I would say, positive. They might say, "That's nice. I like this, this is hopeful, this is joyful, we need more of this in the world today, more religious people that can be more like you. Be nice, be nicer about it, talk more about love, and joy, and those types of things." And that sounds good, really, you find those elements clearly in the Scriptures, of course, and in the gospel message. But, if you stay with just that, you've communicated, I think, a little short of the totality of what we do know about the good news.

And what we find before us in Ephesians 2 is a good model for that; we get a good example of Paul laying out the gospel in its proper setting. He's giving you context that is actually fair, and right, and gives you a better glimpse into the fullness of this good news, this gospel message that we know and believe as Christians, and that we are taking to the world. And by that, I mean even more specifically, where we come to in verse 4, is so proper and fitting once you've understood verses 1 through 3 of Ephesians 2; that is so necessary. Where we left off last time was in a dark, and a sad place, as far as the depravity of man, and his sinfulness in verses 1 through 3.

Then we come to verse 4, verses 4 through 7, and we get positive. We get good, we get love, we get mercy being portrayed, being proclaimed, even, from Paul, as far as the good news. But to recognize that all this together, when you see it in context, in its proper setting, then we have a good picture of what the gospel is, and thus what people do need to hear, and what they need to understand when it comes to having a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. So Paul gives us a good model of that, and we're going to see that, as we get to focus on the good today; we get to focus on the good part of the good news in verses 4 through 7.

But to do that, and to continue to keep it in its setting, in its context, let's read verses 1 through 3 again, and we'll go down through verse 7. So Ephesians 2, and let's read all of verses 1 through 7. "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of

this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

In verses 4 through 7, we get to good news; we get to see the good news put forth very clearly by Paul, and verses 1 through 3 set up for a proper understanding, and a proper placement of that good news, once we know what verses 1 through 3 speak of. And really, the good news is flowing out of, as we see in verse 4, it's flowing out of God's character. The good news, the gospel is coming out of who God is as a foundation, as a basis by which we can even know, and have, the gospel; because it is a reflection of God's own character. Let's look at verse 4 again: "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us."

Verse 4, when we consider the context of Ephesians 2, it's just a glorious transition; there's no way around it, you have to just appreciate the way that Paul has been writing. You look at verses 1 through 3, and you get a very clear picture of bad news; and you get to verse 4, and it's a wonderful transition, a wonderful shift. Ephesians 2:1-3, focusing upon the depravity of mankind in detail; Paul reminding us that all men were following according to the course of this world, just going with the flow. Whatever the world says, whatever the world promotes, eating it up, and desiring it themselves. And then even further, not realizing on a second level, that man was walking according to the course of the world; and not knowing that Satan himself was at work infusing lies into the world, and bringing what he desires, and what he wishes to do to distract you and I from the glory of God, and to make us continue down a path of what the world teaches, and what our flesh wants. And then on the third level of our depravity, seeing that we were

content, fulfilling those desires we had, giving in to our flesh; whatever our mind could muster up, whatever we could think of, and want, and desire, we fulfilled it, we carried it out, this deep depravity, as far as the fact that we were spiritually dead. And that was a fact, that was a very simple fact that Paul stated in verse 1: All men are spiritually dead in sin. That's the bad news. All men, spiritually dead in sin. It's dark, it's depressing, it's a bad situation for mankind.

Then you come to verse 4, and is this not glorious? "But God," the first two words. "But God," a shift, a burst of light; hope that is now infused, that we get, and we get to finally come up from the muck, and the mire of sinfulness in verses 1 through 3. And we see God; God is going to act, God is going to move. Paul turns our attention away from the painfully depressing situation of our sinfulness, and he gives us hope. That hope is very clear, it's coming from not ourselves, but God, God Himself. Paul will go on to specify how God acts on our behalf, and what He does in verses 5 and 6, and we will get to that; but notice that, what he does in verse 4, is he gives us a basis for it. The only means by which God does act, the only reason God does what He does, the only reason there is hope for you and I, is because it comes from His own character, it comes from who God is. The gospel is grounded, not in your worth, your value, your attempts, your efforts at trying to impress God; but the gospel comes from the character of God. It's on the basis of who God is, that there is actually good news for you, that there is hope for mankind.

So here in verse 4, Paul highlights just two, two clear and very vital aspects of God's character that move Him to act on our behalf. First, you can see clearly in verse 4, after he mentions God being the one intervening in our case, he says, "God being rich in mercy." God is rich in mercy. And at its very core, the concept, the word mercy has the idea of showing pity, or compassion upon someone due to their misfortune, or their unlucky, or bad situation that they find themselves in. You see someone in a desperate situation and you feel bad for them, and so you have pity. You're moved with compassion, or mercy, upon that person. And this happens all the time; I'm sure we've all witnessed various displays of mercy being exercised from one person toward another, or one group toward another. This happens,

people are motivated just because there's people that are living currently, and they're homeless, or they're jobless, or they're in a situation where they don't have health, or something of that nature; or they don't have relationships, or family, or they don't have those people around them, and so people have mercy. They move, they have pity and compassion upon those people; and this happens all the time, we see mercy being displayed.

But, let's come back to what kind of mercy we're talking about here. When it comes to the gospel; in our case, God moving because of His rich mercy, it was not really a matter of unfortunate circumstances, that's not really the situation here. We can't say that that's where we were, that we were in this unlucky situation that some people are in, and some people aren't in, and we happen to be on the wrong side; and we're really in an unfortunate situation, and so God acts because he pities us. Not quite.

To be clear, to keep it in its proper setting here, and remember what Paul has just said in verses 1 through 3, we were dead because of our own sins. We were dead in our own sins; we were in a bad situation because we put ourselves in a bad situation, it's all because of us. We're the ones to blame for the spiritual condition of being dead. God knew that we were dead, and He knew that we wanted it that way; we were fulfilling more and more of those desires that are coming from our flesh, this is who we were. So not people in an unfortunate situation, but people wanting to be in a bad situation of spiritual depravity. We weren't innocent, we weren't helpless, we were sinful, in a sinful position; and really, as far as verse 3 is concerned, as Paul has already mentioned, we were wretched enemies, opposed to God, and therefore deserving of God's wrath. Deserving of God's own wrath, because of our loving and wanting more of our sinful depravity.

So there's a difference here, as far as we're understanding mercy; this is a profound display of mercy. I mean, just picture for instance; imagine the reaction you might have if upon your doorstep, you have this mysterious arrival, and it's an infant, an infant that has been left at your doorstep. Immediately, you wouldn't even think twice, you would reach down, you would comfort and care for this infant immediately; mercy would just fill

you, and you wouldn't even have to let some instinct kick in, you would grab this infant and you would care for it until you could find what the best thing to do for this child would be. There's no question about it, you would think, "This is an innocent infant - what has happened, what's the story? I don't know, but I'm going to care and show mercy."

Now, let's picture a different situation. How would your reaction be if a man, in an orange jumpsuit that said "California State Prison," was upon your doorstep? Would you be moved with mercy right away towards that person? Probably not. And what we have to understand, with God's rich mercy, and our spiritual depravity, we're kind of like the latter - we're definitely like the latter. We're not like the former, we're not the innocent and helpless infant there, and God decides to go, "Oh, how unfortunate, let me help you." No. We have already been convicted, we have been found guilty, and it's no question about it. We have sealed our destiny; we wanted sin, and we've continued to live in it. We are rebels, completely against God; and we've already made that decision, and we just continue in it, having no power to do differently. This is the kind of mercy that God shows - to that rebel. He then is moved with pity and compassion upon the rebel, upon the person that is against Him, His enemy; this is what Paul means when he says, "God is rich in mercy." It really is a profound understanding of mercy for us, and it's a profound understanding of the character of God, which helps us make sense of how this good news can come to such terrible people, like ourselves. It's why Paul calls God "The One who is rich in mercy."

And he doesn't leave it at that, he continues on; in verse 4, Paul describes God as possessing great love. Paul is saying that God's rich mercy really stems from this great love. How is it that God is rich in mercy? It's because of this great love that is coming from God. We could say that at its core, the good news is birthed from the love of God; at its very core, the good news is birthed from the love of God. While God's righteous wrath for sin has been fairly, and justly, and necessarily stored up for us; God's love is also an operation, and it is great love. I think we can see this very clearly; we can see that God acted to satisfy both of these attributes, both of these aspects of His character - His righteous wrath towards sin, His great love towards

mankind. Both of these have been manifested in what we know as Jesus upon the cross, Jesus going to the cross.

The cross represents the convergence of both of these attributes; the fulfillment of them coming together, the love and the justice of God, His wrath and His love coming together. I mean, think about what we just covered in Mark's gospel; this is where we ended, thinking about Jesus on the cross. It was a profound moment; on the one hand, you clearly had the wrath of God in that moment when Jesus was hanging on the cross. You had darkness coming over the land for three hours, you had this obvious sign in the middle of the day, where you're recognizing this darkness - this is clearly a supernatural act of God. You had the mocking that was being thrown at Jesus from everyone there; you had Jesus even crying out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Jesus recognizing, "My father has abandoned me, he's turned his back on me. He's essentially called me as one who is not his own in this moment." He was abandoned and punished by His Father, who considered His Son cursed as He hung upon the tree. God's wrath was poured out upon the cross. God's wrath was very much present in the cross, because Jesus was taking that punishment. Jesus was taking your punishment, the sins of mankind, upon Himself, on the cross; God's wrath present in that moment.

But at the same time, on the other hand; you cannot miss, it's impossible to do so, the love of God on display on the cross. Jesus, willingly going to this point, willingly going to suffer and die and face the wrath of God; asking His Father to forgive those who were torturing and mocking Him. And most notably what Jesus says at the end, "It is finished," when He yields up His spirit and dies. Jesus finished His work of taking the punishment of sin upon Himself, in the place of His bride, the church. Jesus did this work, and that was completely done out of love. There's no question about it; I mean, He displayed the epitome of what we know as love. This is what the New Testament writers will go on to specify, that we know love, in the very act of what Jesus did at the cross, laying down His life. There can be no question that what happened at the cross truly is great love, and the great love was demonstrated in what Jesus did on our behalf. This is the character of God;

He is rich in mercy, He possesses great love, and it's only because of that that Paul can say something good next. It's only because of who God is, that Paul can actually deliver some form of good news to us, in light of our desperate situation.

So after noting this mercy of God, and the loving character of God, Paul explains what God did; and that's what we find in verse 5, our co-resurrection, God made us alive. Our co-resurrection, God made us alive with Christ, in verse 5. Looking at verse 5, we read, "even when we were dead in our trespasses, he made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)." Paul explains the first major way that God's character led Him to act for our benefit; this is the first one, we'll see another one in verse 6. Namely, Paul states that God made us alive together with Christ. This is what God did, this is how He acted; He made you alive together with Christ. And to make sure, if there's any way that we forgot verses 1 through 3, this is how he begins verse 5. Just to remind us again, as if it wasn't clear enough, he reminds us of our condition before God acted. "Even when you were dead." Even when we were dead in our trespasses, then, God made us alive. Paul reminds us of our spiritual death.

This is really where Paul is finally picking up from how he began in verse 1. In verse 1 he said, "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked." And he went on to explain just how dead we were, to finally give us that transition. But now, we have hope, we've been made alive. But to remind us, one more time, before he declares that we've been made alive, he reminds us that we were dead; even when we were in that dead, rebellious state of sin, God acts, God works, God makes you alive. This is how we appreciate the magnitude, this is where we get the context and the setting of the gospel, this is why it's such amazing and good news. Paul could have just said, "And God made you alive." Or, "God saved you." "God delivered you." And those are true statements; but to see the proper setting come forth of how dead we really were, and then God acting to make us alive, we are amazed. This truly is good news for mankind.

Paul states that this intervention really was the simple statement that God

made us alive together with Christ. Since we were dead in our sin, we needed someone to act upon us in order for anything to change in our situation; and that's kind of what it means to be dead. You can't act on your own, you can't do anything in and of yourself. Paul uses similar wording in Colossians 2:13; "And you who were dead in your trespasses, and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses." God acted and made us alive. Notice that he doesn't just say that, "You were dead, and He made you alive." But notice how he says it; Paul adds that we were "made alive together with Christ." That's why we're calling it our co-resurrection; together with Christ.

This fits perfectly with what Paul's been teaching in Ephesians 1. If you go back to Ephesians 1, and you remember the glorious blessings that we have in our salvation; the fact that we were chosen before the foundation of the world, we were adopted into His family, forgiven all of our trespasses, redeemed by His blood, made known the mystery of His will. We were actually sealed with His holy spirit after we believed that good news; all those blessings and your connection to them, your access to them is only because you are in Christ. That's why Paul says over and over again, "In Him, you have this." "In Him, we have that." In Christ, you have access to the glories of our salvation.

And this is what is happening here in Ephesians 2; it's the same concept, the key to our salvation is association with Jesus. The key to your salvation is the fact that you are one with Him; your union in Christ, your union with Christ. Christ, our Savior, is the founder; He truly is the author of our salvation, and we follow after Him. As the helium balloon soars up into the air, so also does the string that's attached to it. And that's you and I in this sense; we just simply grab ahold of Christ, and we are along for the ride because we're with Him. We are with Him, we identify with Him; salvation has to do with our identity in Him, and no one else, not even ourselves.

So the point that Paul is making here is, as He died physically, we too were dead spiritually; and as He was raised to new life physically, in His resurrection, we too have been made alive spiritually. It's a beautiful

blessing, salvation; we have been co-resurrected with Christ. We have been, in this sense, we have been saved because we are with Him. Because we are with Christ, we now have access to God; because we are with Christ, we can actually stand in God's presence and He can accept us, rather than need to judge us. Our salvation is completely hinged upon our identification; and if you identify as one who is in Christ, you are with Him, and you have been co-resurrected, and you have been made alive. I mean, this is simply why we say, "Salvation is found in no one else." You don't find salvation in any other name, other than the name Jesus Christ; you must identify with Christ if you want this hope, if you want to be rescued from your death and your sins.

Finally, Paul states that our spiritual resurrection was based upon the grace of God. To make this clear again - Paul has to show this over and over again, this is all because of God. This is God's doing, this is God's desire, this is God's character, not you. At the beginning of verse 5, he reminded us that we were spiritually dead; so that was a good reminder that we did nothing. And then, when he went on to describe how salvation took place, we were made alive; a good reminder that we did nothing. This was God making us alive with Christ. And then third now, he adds it's by grace that we have been saved; something that he will elaborate on in verses 8 and 9.

But for now, it's worth noting that God graciously gave us that which we did not deserve, life in Christ. It's a gracious gift from Him. It's also worth noting how he states it; that we "have been saved." You are not accomplishing this yourself. No one is saving themselves, no one is performing actions independent of others, that is not how this works; instead, we're just simply the passive party, we're receiving the good that God has already done, His favor that He is giving upon us, that He is lavishing upon us, because of His own character. Not because of what you did, and not because of what we offer. What can this all mean, except that God did the work of raising us from death to life? God did the work of saving us, and that's based upon the work of Jesus, and it flows from God's own grace toward us. This is one beautiful aspect of our salvation; we were dead, He made us alive with Jesus, and we identify with Him.

Our identification with Jesus doesn't stop there; in verse 6, he goes on to say that we have been co-exalted with Christ. We see our co-exaltation with Christ in verse 6. So not only have we been made alive together with Christ; in verse 6, he goes on to say, "and he raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." This good news doesn't stop with our resurrection, our co-resurrection with Christ, spiritually speaking; the good news includes our spiritual co-exaltation with Christ. Paul states that we have been "raised up and seated with Christ in the heavenly places." Pretty big statement; and it's just a continuation of the benefits that we receive as believers, when we are associating with Christ. This is all, and only possible, because we identify with Christ, because of our union with Christ. Our union with Christ meant that we received the spiritual resurrection, according to His physical resurrection; and also, our union with Christ means that God views us as exalted, even now, with Christ in the heavenly places. I'm going to say that again. Our union with Christ means that God views us as exalted, even now, with Christ in the heavenly places.

This is not just one statement that just slips our attention in Scripture, it comes up often. It's noted more than once; even Paul himself can't help himself, but will say it and repeat it in other books in Scripture. For instance, consider Philippians 3, verses 20 and 21: "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself." Consider what is being stated very clearly; our citizenship is in heaven. Not will be, it's not maybe your citizenship might be in heaven; or there's a wishing, that it will hopefully happen sometime in the future, it currently is that way. If you are in Christ, you are a citizen of heaven - currently, right now.

However, there's a future expectation that is still even more glorious; that we will be transformed, and we will receive a glorious body to be like Him, and to be with Him forever. Paul will continue this type of thinking in Colossians 3, verses 1 through 4. "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on

earth. 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." Again, consider the present reality of your salvation; the present reality of your salvation as Paul is teaching it, demands that you recognize you currently are, in a spiritual sense, hidden with Christ in God in the heavenly places. This is what Paul says in verse 3. But then he goes on in verse 4 to say, "When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

There is a present reality we now know, that spiritually, it's a done deal in terms of our salvation; God views us as with Christ, even now, as He's seated at His right hand. He views you there, He views me there with Him. But we know that the fullness of that will come into being when Christ returns, and we will become like Him. One commentator summed it up this way: "We are exalted with Christ spiritually; and while eternal life is a present possession, we will not enter eternity until we die." Paul has said that we are "citizens of heaven" right now, the full realization of that status later on.

And the sister passage in Colossians 3 shows that though we live on earth, we can seek and think the things above right now. Our final glory has already begun, but it is not yet fully realized. This is amazing. Consider the fullness of the gospel, consider the fullness of the good news that has now been stated. Consider the context, the setting of all of it; where you were, where you are now, and where you will be, all being put right before us as the grace of God. You see, we can't just limit our salvation to the cross; the cross is sufficient, the cross is enough, the cross is what saves us, absolutely. But look at what Paul is saying here. The work of God on our behalf continues, in and through Jesus. We follow after Him, we lay ahold of Him, and we identify with Him in all that He does after the cross too, in His resurrection and exaltation. It's best to see our salvation as directly connected to Jesus; we associate with Him, we identify with Him, our union with Christ. Salvation does include glorious forgiveness of our sins, and necessarily so, because of what Christ did on the cross.

However, we've got to continue to strive to see that big picture that's getting put before us; our salvation includes this spiritual union with Christ. Our salvation really is depicted in this way by Paul, and our spiritual union with Christ implies that we live with certain priorities. This has massive implications; this isn't just to say, "Oh great, spiritually, God sees me as in heaven, exalted with Christ now. That's nice." It doesn't stop there. Because of that present reality right now, you live differently. As Colossians 3 mentions, you no longer think on earthly things, but you think on things that are above; because God sees you as above right now, in Christ. You live to seek first His kingdom, and His righteousness, because you're a citizen of that kingdom, right now. We count ourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Yes, you still struggle with your flesh; but you, as far as God is concerned in looking at you, sees you as alive in Christ. We are to act like those citizens of heaven, that until that final fulfillment of our salvation, when we will be with God forever. We need to actually let this have a present impact now. This is how God sees us, this is how we ought to live, it ought to affect us right now.

So many people say, "Thank the Lord for the cross. I'm saved, I'm not going to hell, I'll just hang out until that final day comes. I'll wait until God calls me home. I'll wait until Christ comes back." That's not it. That's not a proper, full understanding of your salvation. Your salvation is praising God that you don't experience His wrath, but Christ did for you; and it's an acting upon it, because you recognize, right now, God sees you as exalted with His Son. Right now, that's how God sees you, so live like it. Live like it, live like you are a child of God, live like you are a citizen of heaven, live like you are identifying with Christ and all of who He is and what He did. This is a part of understanding our salvation, and getting the gospel. It continues to impact, and it continues to give us our directions in how we live, until that day does come when He comes back, or calls us to His home. This is a glorious picture of good news, in light of how terribly sick and lost we were.

Paul feels the necessity, though, to remind us again of God's complete sovereignty in all of this, and His will that is done, and the glory that He ought to get; and that's what he says in verse 7, that all of this amounts for

the purpose of bringing glory to God. God gets the credit, God is the one who deserves the attention in light of all of this. Amazing, wonderful benefits for you and I, all for the purpose of looking to God. Verse 7, "so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

After summarizing the content of the good news - we've been made alive, we've been co-resurrected with Christ, we've been co-exalted with Christ - Paul gives the purpose for God's actions. He signals it just by those first two words of verse 7 - "so that." Why this amazing act of God? We see already, it came out of His character because He's a merciful God, and a loving God; but what's this supposed to accomplish? What's the end product? What's the result and the purpose of all this? For God to receive glory. So that, God would receive glory. Paul's point in this verse is that God's rich mercy and great love toward us in Christ is all for the purpose of Him receiving glory, for all eternity. He's showing off. He gets the glory. All of history is doxological; that is a praise unto Him, attention on Him, all eyes on Him, He gets the worship, He receives the glory. In the coming ages, God will display His immeasurable riches of grace.

If you think of wealthy people throughout history, wealthy people have had different ways of operating; and some people love to parade their wealth, and they do so by inviting people over for a massive party. And they just throw a party for the sake of showing off their luxury, and their wealth, and all of what they have; and they want people to see just how rich they are by throwing this ridiculously unnecessary party. And they just parade it for all to see, and display their wealth. Well, in a similar fashion, we could say, "God is actually worthy, God is the one who has the wealth of grace and mercy that He has poured out, and God will parade that for eternity. God will display that for eternity, and we will be in awe for eternity at the riches of God's grace. Immeasurable, can't even begin to fathom now, especially. He has displayed these riches in Christ, and we have understood just the surface of them, in this life."

Really, you start to zoom out and you see just how small we are. God acted

not because of me, but because of His own character. God did all of this, and I didn't do any of it. He worked, I received. And in the future, I'm a little pawn; I'm just another data point, I'm another blip that is pointing to Him, and what He did in my life. I'm a trophy, you're a trophy, you are one of the many, many trophies and souls that God has bought with the blood of His Son. I remember when I was playing college soccer, and the first time I went into the locker room, you kind of notice everything for the first time. You see your locker, and you see everything about it; and on top of all the lockers were a bunch of trophies, some of them pretty big, too. And on top of that, our coach was a storyteller; and so he loved to spend time just talking about old stories of old games, and how they won these trophies. He'd say, "Okay, sit down, we're not going to start practice on time, you've got to hear this one." And he loved to tell these stories about these trophies that he had won.

And in a similar way, that's you and I - we're those trophies. And for all eternity, we have God declaring His own glory, and showing the trophies. "Look at how I bought this one, and look at what I did to rescue that one, and how I reached down and saved them from their depravity, all by the blood of my Son, because of my grace and mercy." We will all be in heaven as trophies of God's grace, that He has earned through His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. We display His glory, all of salvation, for Him, for His glory in the end, for all eternity.

We're not in heaven thinking about ourselves, we're not in heaven talking about ourselves; we're continuing to be in awe, as we are in this moment, and we think about what God has done for us when we didn't deserve it. We continue that awe, inspiration, we continue that worship of God throughout all eternity, as we are amazed at His grace on display in Christ. We experience just a taste of it now, it ought to change the way we live; but we will see the fullness of it and be amazed because of who God is. He gets the glory, He gets the attention, He gets the praise. And our role? It starts now, right now, as a present reality, He sees us as spiritually in Christ. Even now, we can live like that. Live as one who is in Christ, live as a citizen of heaven, and do that even now. That is what we ought to do; bring glory to God now, for that is what we will be doing for eternity.