

**4–6 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Messiah (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Messiah Yeshua,**

As we noted, Paul begins this second chapter with a long sequence of phrases which in the Greek contain an initial object of the sentence, i.e., “And you...,” but lacks a primary subject as well as a finite verbal component, using a participle instead and thus creating a long, run-on clause which encompasses vv. 1–3.

And you, being dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience, among them also we lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and we were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest...,

It is now, in vv. 4–6, that Paul completes the long sentence, giving us the subject, “God,” and the verbal components “made alive,” “raised up,” “seated” and we may construct the essential parts of the sentence like this:

And you, being dead in your trespasses and sins (we also lived in the lusts of our flesh and were by nature children of wrath)...God...made us alive... raised us up...and seated us with...Messiah Yeshua.

The main point that Paul is emphasizing in constructing such a long sentence is this: that the helpless and lost condition of mankind who are dead in their sin, both Jew or Gentile, is overcome solely through the sovereign action of God whereby He brings the dead sinner to life by uniting them with Messiah Yeshua in His resurrection, ascension, and heavenly reign as King over all.

*But God...* – The Greek behind the opening words of v. 4 is *ὁ δὲ θεός* (*ho de theos*), which includes the definite article (*the*) but this cannot be easily translated into English, for it would appear awkward to translate the opening words as “But the God, being rich in mercy...” In Ephesians, Paul uses the definite article “the” with “God” four other

times yet *theos* is found 26 times without the article in this epistle.<sup>1</sup> It may be that by using the article in our verse, Paul is emphasizing that only the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is able to bring the dead to life, and also that the God of Israel, the only true and living God, is truly a God of infinite and abounding mercy and love.<sup>2</sup>

“But God...” presents a clear contrast to the previous verses which describe the helpless and hopeless condition of fallen mankind. Some would understand the particle *δέ* (*de*), translated by the English word “But” in the opening words of our verse, simply to signal the completion of the sentence begun in v. 1. Yet most commentators agree that here the Greek particle *de* signals a contrast to the previous context. In view of the condition of sinful man who has rebelled against their Creator, being dead in trespasses and sin, following the enemy of God and even finding their identity as his children, one might expect a righteous and holy God to pour out His wrath upon them all and subdue them by His righteous anger. But just the opposite is true, and this glorious reality is first marked by the opening two words of our text. “But God” stands to introduce the only real remedy for sinners, that God would act to overcome that which has separated them from their Maker.

*being rich in mercy...* – We noted that the opening verse of our chapter incorporated a participle in the phrase, “And you, being dead in your trespasses and sins...,” and that this participle emphasizes a continuing state that marks the overall characteristic of the unbeliever. Here, in v. 4, another participle answers to the one in v. 1, for Paul writes: “But God, being rich in mercy” (πλούσιος ὢν ἐν ἐλέει) where “being” translates the participle ὢν and therefore emphasizes that God, in His infinite and eternal character, is, has been, and always will be “rich in mercy.”

For I, יהוה, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed. (Mal 3:6)

Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. (James 1:17)

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- 1 In Ephesians: θεός with the article: 1:3, 17; 2:4, 10; 4:32. θεός without the article 1:1-2; 2:8, 16, 19, 22; 3:2, 7, 9-10, 19; 4:6, 13, 18, 24, 30; 5:1-2, 5-6, 20; 6:6, 11, 13, 17, 23
  - 2 See Blass, DeBrunner, Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Univ of Chicago, 1961), p. 133, §254 – The article with nouns designating persons like θεός, κύριος, νεκροί, ἔθνη... “the article appears when the specific Jewish or Christian God or Lord is meant...but it is sometimes missing.”

Further, Paul describes God as “being *rich* in mercy” (πλούσιος ὢν ἐν ἐλέει), emphasizing the fact that God’s mercy is boundless. Never is God’s mercy exhausted or diminished but it is complete and full to those He has called to Himself and who are therefore secure in Him. These words, “rich in mercy,” echo a repeated theme in the Tanach in which God’s covenant faithfulness is expressed by the Hebrew רַב־חֶסֶד (*rab chesed*), usually translated as “abundant lovingkindness,” and often in contexts in which He rescues those who deserve His wrath. The Lxx persistently translates this Hebrew phrase with the Greek πολυέλεος (*polueleos*), “very merciful.”

They refused to listen, and did not remember Your wondrous deeds which You had performed among them; so they became stubborn and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But You are a God of forgiveness, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness (*polueleos*); and You did not forsake them. (Neh 9:17)

He prayed to ADONAI and said, “Please ADONAI, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness (*polueleos*), and one who relents concerning calamity. (Jonah 4:2)

God’s “abundant lovingkindness” is a repeated theme in the Psalms in which the covenant faithfulness of God is extolled.

For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness (*chesed*) to all who call upon You. (Ps 86:5)

But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, Slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth (*chesed v'emet*). (Ps 86:15)

ADONAI is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness (*chesed*). (Ps 103:8)

ADONAI is gracious and merciful; Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness (*chesed*). (Ps 145:8)

Very often, the Hebrew word רַב־חֶסֶד (*chesed*) is used in relationship to a covenant and carries the sense of “faithfulness to the covenant vows.”

Since Paul is using an expression that very much parallels language of the Tanach, it is very possible that he likewise is speaking of God “being rich in mercy” in the context of the covenant promises made to Abraham, that “in your seed all the nations/families of the earth will be blessed.” The unbounded mercy of God given to those whom He saves flows from His faithfulness to the covenant promises made to Abraham, which Paul equates with the gospel in his epistle to the Galatians.

The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU.” (Gal 3:8)

This same theme is taught by Yeshua in His parable of the “unjust servant,” for though he owed the King the unimaginable sum of 10,000 talents, the King, who represents God, had mercy upon the servant and forgave the debt (Matt 18:33). The lesson of the parable is this: if we have experienced the riches of God in having become objects of His mercy, then surely our lives should likewise be characterized by extending mercy and forgiveness to others.

*because of His great love with which He loved us...* – Here, once again, we see Paul using heightened language as he describes the divine motivation for “making us alive” who were “dead in our trespasses and sins.” It is because of “His great love.” Actually, the Greek *πολλὴν ἀγάπην αὐτοῦ* could be more accurately translated as “His abundant love” or “His never-ending love,” for while the Greek *πολύς* (*polus*) can carry the sense of “being high on a scale of extent,” it more often carries the meaning of “large in number or quantity.”<sup>1</sup> Paul’s point is this: God’s love is never exhausted and thus His love can and does overcome all obstacles.

Further, the way Paul constructs this phrase adds additional emphasis upon the very manner of God’s love. For he does not simply write that “God loved us,” but that “by means of (*διά*, *dia*) His love He loved us.” Using the same word (“love”) both as a noun (*ἀγάπη*, *agapē*) and as a verb (*ἀγαπάω*, *agapaō*) in a single phrase adds emphasis. And the emphasis would seem clearly to be that God’s love, when put into action bringing His chosen ones to Himself, is a love unmatched by any other being in the universe, for it is a love that always results in eternal salvation of those who are the objects of His redeeming love.

This likewise emphasizes the fact that “the love with which He loved us” is a particular love, that is, a love directed specifically to

1 cf. *BDAG*, “*πολύς*,” p. 849.

those whom God has chosen to be His. This teaches us that the electing love of God always results in the eternal salvation of the one loved, that is, God's elective love is always effectual in bringing His chosen ones to Himself. For as Paul will emphasize in the following texts, His love is coupled with His grace and thus provides all things necessary for salvation, including the gifts of repentance and saving faith in the Messiah Yeshua by whom the price of redemption has been paid.

*even when we were dead in our transgressions...*, – Here Paul puts the helpless plight of sinful mankind in direct juxtaposition with God's abundant, redeeming love. In reiterating the words of v. 1, "dead in ... trespasses," he not only ties together this run-on sentence, but even more he makes amply clear that God's elective and redeeming love flows from His own, infinite being and purposes, not as though sinful mankind has anything within himself that would attract God's love.

Note how the phrase here differs from that of v. 1. In v. 1 Paul states "you were dead in *your* trespasses and sins," but in our verse the plural "you" is changed to the plural "we" – "even when *we* were dead in *our* transgressions." Thus Paul emphatically teaches us that it is not one's people group status that attracts God's redeeming love. The Jew and non-Jew are alike in having nothing in themselves to attract God's love.

Paul makes a very similar statement in Rom 5:6, 8.

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Messiah died for the ungodly... But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Messiah died for us. (Rom 5:6, 8)

*(He) made us alive together with Messiah, by grace you have been saved, and raised us up with Him* – Finally Paul states the first of three verbs which govern this long sentence: "He...made us alive together" *συνεζωποίησεν τῷ Χριστῷ*, (*sunezōpoiēsen tō Xristō*). The verb is a compound word based upon three words: "with" (*σύν, sun*), "life" (*ζῶη, zōē*), and "to make" (*ποιέω, poiēō*). This word is found only here and in the parallel text of Col 2:13.

When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together (*συνεζωποίησεν, sunezōpoiēse*) with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, (Col 2:13)

It seems very possible that this is a word put together by Paul

himself since we do not find it used in any other Greek literature prior to Paul.<sup>1</sup> Regardless, the primary point that Paul is making here is that even as the death of Yeshua was actual payment for the sins of all He would save, so is His resurrection an actual conquering of death of all He would save.

Further, while the NASB translates “made us alive together *with* Messiah,” the Greek could more accurately be translated “made us alive together *in* Messiah,” utilizing one of Paul’s favorite expressions. Thus he emphasizes that union with Messiah means union with Him in both His death *and* resurrection.

Paul’s words here in Ephesians add an additional aspect to the central biblical doctrine of “union with Messiah.” For in Romans when Paul writes regarding believers that they have risen with the Messiah in His resurrection, he couples this with the fact that the believer has also died with the Messiah in His death upon the cross. The believer is in union with Messiah in both His death and His resurrection.

Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Messiah was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection... (Rom 6:4–5)

Here in Ephesians, however, the death of which Paul speaks is that of all mankind for all are “dead in trespasses and sin.” While Yeshua’s resurrection conquered death in general and thus secured the final resurrection of all, Paul’s point here in Ephesians is that the death of Yeshua as well as His resurrection procured and made inevitable the eternal salvation of all the elect.

In 1:20 Paul rehearsed God’s great power in bringing Jesus back to physical life. Jesus had been physically dead, and God raised him from among the dead and installed him on his heavenly throne at God’s right hand. Now we learn here that much more was riding on Jesus’ resurrection than simply the restoration of his own physical life... We participated in Christ’s resurrection from the dead, and it means we too live now. Though our physical resurrection awaits the

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1 At least in Liddel, Scott, Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, 1940) no other references are noted.

end of the age, again Paul has brought eschatology into the present. What will happen physically has already happened spiritually, since we are “in Christ.” Formerly “dead,” we now live. Formerly dominated by the power center of the world system, we now live through the power of the Holy Spirit (1:13, 18–19).

*by grace you have been saved* – Paul continually reminds us that our life in the Messiah, our standing righteous before the Father, and our possession of eternal life, is all of grace. To state that we have been “saved by grace” negates any notion that one who is dead in sin could, in any way, merit salvation from the Almighty.

The verb “saved” in this clause is a perfect tense verb in the Greek (χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι). The emphasis of the perfect tense in this phrase is that our salvation has been completed in terms of payment for our sins, for Yeshua died once for all time (cf. 1Pet 3:18), never to die again (Rom 6:9), and yet the reality of that historical event continues to have real application in the present. The point is simply this: we are saved now and will be saved for eternity. The historical reality of Yeshua’s death and resurrection is being applied to each believer’s life now and will continue to be applied forever.

*and raised us up with Him...* – “Raised us up with Him” is the second of the three verbs that governs this long sentence. The English is a translation of one compound word in the Greek, *συνεγείρω*, *sunegeirō*, once again used only here and in Colossians (2:12; 3:1). It is in the aorist tense, emphasizing that the death and resurrection of Yeshua are together a completed and finished work, and so this is likewise true for all who are “in Him.”

*and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Messiah Yeshua.* – Having once been dead in trespasses and sin, the believer has been given new life as the gift of God’s abundant love, has been raised up with Yeshua and thus enabled to live a life of righteousness unto Him, and has also been “seated with Yeshua in the heavenly places.” Like the previous verbs in this sentence, this third verb is a single, compound word (*συνκαθίζω*, *sunkathizō*) translated by the phrase “seated us with Him.” It too is an aorist verb, once again emphasizing that our being seated with Yeshua in the heavenly places is something that has been accomplished and thus is forever. His victory is shared by all who are in Him.

Here we have what some have referred to as “realized eschatology.” Though Paul often speaks of that which is yet to come in the future as we anticipate the return of Yeshua, here he teaches us that even now

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we are seated with Yeshua in the heavenly places. This has at least two important realities for all who are “in Messiah.” The first is that the metaphor of being seated with Messiah in the heavenly places means that all who are His have ready access to the Father. While the ancient Tabernacle and Temple were divided so that only the high priest could enter the most holy place where the visible glory of God was seen, we who have been raised with Messiah have, in a spiritual sense, ascended with Him into the heavenly places. This means that even as Yeshua is fully received into the very presence of the Father, so we, through the Ruach HaKodesh, have full access to the Father as we seek His blessings and provision in our lives. The admonition of the author of Hebrews speaks to this very reality.

Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Heb 4:16)

The second important truth we glean from this reality, that we are seated with Yeshua in the heavenlies, is that our future place in the world to come, in eternity with Yeshua, is absolutely secured for all who are “in Him.” For our future, physical existence in the world to come is just as sure as is our present union with Messiah, seated now with Him in the heavenly places. As John teaches us:

By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. (1Jn 4:17)