

## FROM DEATH TO LIFE, PT. 4; EPH. 2:4-5a (Ed O'Leary)

### INTRODUCTION.

TODAY, ~ WE CONTINUE OUR LOOK AT THIS NEXT SECTION OF EPHESIANS, ~ 2:1-10.

▶▶ As we are very familiar by now, ~ in this paragraph, ~ Paul explains that God has brought believers from spiritual death to spiritual life by His grace alone.

SO FAR IN THIS SECTION, ~ WE HAVE EXAMINED VERSES 1-3, ~ IN WHICH PAUL discusses our lives prior to salvation.

▶▶ Could be entitled, ~ "The way we were."

▶▶ As we know, ~ Paul went into detail about our pre-salvation lives. ~ And he may have done so for a couple of reasons.

▷▷ 1<sup>st</sup>, ~ perhaps to emphasize just how bad off we were and how much we needed a Savior.

▷▷ And 2<sup>nd</sup>, ~ perhaps to bring us to a greater appreciation for God ~ and ~ for what He has done for us.

THIS A.M., ~ WE'LL BEGIN GOING OVER VERSES 4-7 OF this paragraph, ~ 2:1-10.

IN VERSES 4-7, ~ PAUL ACCOMPLISHES TWO THINGS.

▶▶ 1<sup>st</sup>, ~ in **verses 4-6**, ~ as we have been pointing out, ~ Paul describes the gracious, ~ merciful, ~ and loving act of God that brought us from spiritual death to spiritual life. ~ ~ **Read\***

\*▶▶ And 2<sup>nd</sup>, ~ in **verse 7**, ~ as we've also noted, ~ Paul points out a purpose of God's gracious, ~ merciful, ~ and loving act of bringing us from spiritual death to spiritual life. ~ ~ **Read\*\***

\*\*TODAY, ~ WE'LL COVER VERSES 4-5a, ~ part of Paul's description of .....

PAUL BEGINS IN VERSE 4a, ~ BY SIMPLY SAYING, ~ "BUT GOD."

▶▶ In **verses 1-3**, ~ as we have learned, ~ Paul told us that, ~ before we were saved, ~ we were spiritually dead, ~ because of our trespasses and sins.

▷▷ He said that we were 100% sinful, ~ and that sinning was a way of life for us. **↴↴ 1/8**

↳↳ Paul told us that we were following the standards of this "present evil age" ~ and Satan. ~ We were definitely not following God.

→→ He said that we were enslaved to our sinful nature and its sinful desires ~ and we carried those sinful desires out.

↳↳ And, ~ Paul told us that, ~ in our natural condition, ~ i.e., ~ in our unredeemed human nature, ~ we were lost ~ ¶¶

→→ and subject to, ~ deserving of, ~ and destined for a horrifying and terrible eternity from the moment we came into existence.

▶▶ Then, ~ in [verse 4a](#), ~ he wrote those simple but beautiful words, ~ "But God." ~ Let's not miss the implication here.

▷▷ And that is, ~ although we were in that condition ~ even though we were alienated and separated from God, ~ even though we were His enemies, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ and subject to, ~ deserving of, ~ and destined for His wrath, ~ God, ~ Paul implies in these simple words, ~ "But God," ~ chose to act on our behalf, ~ to rectify our situation.

▶▶ In [Jn. 1:29](#), ~ John writes, ~ "The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, ~ and said, ~ 'Behold, ~ the Lamb of God, ~ who takes away the sin of the world!'"

▷▷ And in [Jn. 3:16](#), ~ Jesus said, ~ "For God so loved the world, ~ that he gave his only Son, ~ that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

↳↳ God sent his Son as a sacrifice ~ to take away our sins, ~ to rectify our horribly sinful, ~ helpless, ~ and hopeless condition, ~ and to enable us to escape His wrath.

**IN THE LATTER PART OF VERSE 4, ~ PAUL GIVES TWO REASONS WHY GOD CHOSE to act on our behalf.**

FOR CONTEXT, ~ WE'LL READ ALL OF VERSE 4. ~ ~

▶▶ "But God, ~ 4b being rich in mercy, ~ 4c because of the great love with which he loved us."

**THE FIRST REASON GOD CHOSE TO ACT ON OUR BEHALF IS BECAUSE HE IS "RICH in mercy, ~ Paul says in verse 4b."**

IN [TITUS 3:4-5](#), ~ PAUL MAKES IT CLEAR THAT IT WAS BECAUSE OF HIS MERCY GOD saved us, ~ and not because of any good works on our part. ¶¶ 2/8

▶▶Paul writes ~ "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ~ he saved us, ~ not because of works done by us in righteousness, ~ but according to his own mercy, ~ by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit."

NOW, ~ PAUL HAD JUST FINISHED SAYING IN VERSE 3 OF EPH. 2 ~ THAT, ~ PRIOR TO our salvation, ~ we were subject to, ~ deserving of, ~ and destined for God's wrath.

▶▶So the next thing one might very well expect from Paul is a focus on God's wrath ~ and a statement such as, ~ "God is rich in wrath."

▷▷After all, ~ God has every right to bring His wrath down upon our heads.

▶▶But Paul pulls a surprise. ~ Basically, ~ Paul says that "we, ~ in our unregenerate state, ~ were subject to, ~ deserving of, ~ and facing ~ the wrath of God coming down upon our heads."

▷▷"But," ~ Paul continues, ~ "surprise!! ~ God is not rich in wrath. ~ He is rich in mercy."

↳↳In Ps. 86:15, ~ David points this out as well. ~ He writes, ~ "But you, ~ O Lord, ~ are a God merciful and gracious, ~ slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness."

▶▶That God is "rich in mercy" ~ implies, ~ and this is extremely important, ~ let's not miss this, ~ that God is "rich in mercy" implies that He is much more interested in being merciful to humans than in bringing His wrath down upon our heads.

▷▷To put it differently, ~ God would much rather people face His mercy, ~ love, ~ and grace ~ than His wrath. ~ Scripture makes this abundantly clear.

↳↳In Jn. 3: ~ 17, ~ Jesus said, ~ "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, ~ but in order that the world might be saved through him."

↳↳In 1 Tim. 2: ~ 4, ~ Paul tells us that God "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." ~ Please understand. ~ Not saying . . . .

↳↳And in Ezek. ~ 33: ~ 11a, ~ God says, ~ "Say to them, ~ As I live, ~ declares the Lord God, ~ I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, ~ but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

▷▷But having said this, ~ that God would rather people face his mercy, ~ love, ~ and grace ~ than His wrath, ~ it is also true ~ that when those who have rejected Jesus die, ~ they will face God's wrath. ~ God has no choice . . . . ↴ 3/8

↳↳ Ex. 34:6-7a ~ makes both of these truths clear. ~ "The Lord passed before him ~ [i.e., ~ Moses] ~ and proclaimed, ~ "The Lord, ~ the Lord, ~ a God merciful and gracious, ~ slow to anger, ~ and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ~ keeping steadfast love for thousands, ~ forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, ~ but who will by no means clear the guilty."

↳↳ And Jn. 3:36 brings both truths out as well. ~ John writes, ~ NIV, ~ "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, ~ but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, ~ for God's wrath remains on them."

PAUL SAYS THAT GOD CHOSE TO ACT ON OUR BEHALF ~ BECAUSE HE IS "RICH IN mercy." ~ Now, ~ there is much involved in the meaning of "mercy."

▶▶ For one thing, ~ it is a compassionate attitude toward ~ and a willingness to forgive ~ an offender or adversary.

▷▷ When we were spiritually dead, ~ we were both offenders and adversaries of God.

▷▷ In Rom. 3:23, ~ Paul writes, ~ "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

▷▷ That our sins offend God is illustrated in the life of David. ~ Adultery/Murder . . . .

↳↳ But David knew that ultimately, ~ his sins offended God. ~ In Ps. 51:1-4a, ~ David writes, ~ ¶¶

→→ "Have mercy on me, ~ O God, ~ according to your steadfast love; ~ according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. ~ Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, ~ and cleanse me from my sin! ~ ¶¶

↳↳ For I know my transgressions, ~ and my sin is ever before me. ~ Against you, ~ you only, ~ have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight."

▷▷ Rom. 5:10 tells us that we were God's enemies when Christ reconciled us to God.

▷▷ And in Col. 1:21a, ~ Paul notes that before we were saved, ~ we were alienated from and had a hostile attitude toward ~ God.

▷▷ Offenders, ~ adversaries, ~ subject to, ~ deserving of, ~ and headed straight for God's wrath.

↳↳ But rather than a wrathful attitude, ~ God displayed a compassionate and forgiving attitude toward us. ¶¶ 4/8

↳↳ And all those who confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord ~ and believe in their heart that God raised Him from the dead ~ **will receive compassion and forgiveness, ~ and be delivered from the wrath to come.**

▶▶ Also, ~ speaking of the meaning of mercy, ~ mercy is the compassionate attitude that prompts a person to treat an offender better than he deserves.

▷▷ Think through our salvation and its accompanying blessings, ~ and we'll see that God has certainly treated us better than we deserve.

↳↳ Back in Eph. 1:3, ~ Paul says, ~ "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ~ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."

→→ "every spiritual blessing." ~ And let me tell you how many of those blessings we deserve. ~ None!! ~ Not a single one. ~ **We are objects of mercy . . . .**

▶▶ Furthermore, ~ one more time speaking of the meaning of mercy, ~ mercy is a kind or forgiving attitude toward someone that you have the power to harm or the right to punish.

▷▷ Let's return to Ps. 51, ~ and read all of **verse 4** this time.

↳↳ David says, ~ "For I know my transgressions, ~ and my sin is ever before me. ~ Against you, ~ you only, ~ have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, ~ so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

→→ In that last statement, ~ David is acknowledging God's right to judge him.

▶▶ God had every right to send each of us to hell. ~ He had every right to save none of us. ~ But God is "**rich in mercy.**"

▷▷ But God had a compassionate attitude toward ~ and a willingness to forgive ~ us.

↳↳ But God had a compassionate attitude that prompted Him to treat us better than we deserved.

→→ But God had a forgiving attitude toward people whom He had every right to condemn for eternity.

▷▷ And He sent His Son, ~ His one and only Son, ~ to provide forgiveness and a way to escape His wrath.

↳↳ & the awesome mercy of God was on display ~ as His Son hung on the cross. **🔪 5/8**

## WE FIND THE SECOND REASON GOD CHOSE TO ACT ON OUR BEHALF IN VERSE 4c.

PAUL SAYS THAT GOD ACTED ON OUR BEHALF ~ "BECAUSE OF THE GREAT LOVE WITH which he loved us."

▶▶ Notice that Paul uses the word love twice. ~~ He could have simply said, ~ "because God loved us." ~~ But he didn't. ~~ He said "because of the great love with which he loved us."

▷▷ The repetition emphasizes God's great love for us. ~~ And Paul emphasizes it even further by the adjective "great."

↪↪ Paul says that God acted on our behalf ~ "because of the great love with which he loved us." ~~ Paul wants us to get a real sense of just how much God loves us.

→→ The old hymn sums it up quite well. ~~ "O the deep, ~ deep love of Jesus, ~ vast, unmeasured, ~ boundless, ~ free!"

▶▶ The Greek word for "love" that Paul uses here ~ refers to an unselfish, ~ loyal, ~ compassionate, ~ and relatively high level of interest in the well-being of another.

▷▷ It is a love that seeks the highest good in the one loved. ~~ It is given irrespective of merit ~ and to those who are undeserving. ~~ Certainly . . . .

↪↪ And it is a love that moves one to sacrifice one's self for the benefit of the one loved.

▶▶ And the depth of God's love for us was demonstrated in Him sending His Son as the sacrifice for our sins.

▶▶ In 1 Jn. 4:10, ~ John writes, ~ "In this is love, ~ not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

▷▷ First off, ~ John makes the point that God sending His Son was in no way a response to humanity's love for God.

↪↪ It was the exact opposite John says. ~~ He echoes Paul and says that it was because of God's love for us that He sent Jesus.

▷▷ And secondly, ~ Isaiah gives us a pretty good definition of what John is talking about when he says that Jesus is "the propitiation for our sins."

↪↪ Hundreds of years before Jesus came, ~ Isaiah foresaw His suffering and death for our sins. ↴↴ 6/8

→→And he describes quite well ~ what John means by saying Jesus is "the propitiation for our sins."

↳↳Is. 53:4-6. ~~ "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; ~~ yet we esteemed him stricken, ~ smitten by God, ~ and afflicted. ~~ ¶¶

→→But he was pierced for our transgressions; ~~ he was crushed for our iniquities; ~~ upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, ~ and with his wounds we are healed. ~~ ¶¶

↳↳All we like sheep have gone astray; ~~ we have turned—every one—to his own way; ~~ and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

↳↳Substitute . . . .

↳↳Isaiah says that Jesus "was wounded for our transgressions; ~~ he was crushed for our iniquities."

→→the words "wounded" and "crushed" describe extreme distress resulting in death.

→→The Hebrew words behind these terms are the strongest ones in that language for violent and excruciating death. ~~ Jesus died a violent and excruciating death for us.

→→This is how much God loved us. ~~ He allowed His Son to die a violent and excruciating death that we might escape His wrath ~ and have eternal life.

BECAUSE GOD IS RICH IN MERCY. ~~ AND "BECAUSE OF THE GREAT LOVE WITH WHICH he loved us," ~ ¶¶

▶▶God acted on our behalf ~ to rectify our horribly sinful, ~ helpless, ~ and hopeless condition.

▶▶Notice, ~ and we'll just mention it in passing, ~ since we'll deal with it later in the paragraph, ~ and earlier we read Titus 3:4-5, ~ but it's extremely important that we mention it, ~ ¶¶

▷▷notice ~ that it was nothing within us ~ or that we had done ~ that caused God to act on our behalf.

↳↳It was only because He is "rich in mercy" ~ and loved us with a great love ~ that He gave His one and only Son. ¶¶ 7/8

IN VERSE 5a, ~ PAUL SAYS THAT GOD ACTED "EVEN WHEN WE WERE DEAD IN OUR trespasses."

VERSE 5a ~ IS A CONCLUSION STATEMENT TO WHAT PAUL SAYS IN VERSE 4.

▶▶ And it makes clear ~ what Paul implied by the phrase "But God" after he described our pre-salvation life in verses 1-3.

▷▷ So we can summarize **verses 4-5a** this way: ~ ~ ¶¶

↳↳ But God acted on our behalf ~ because He is "rich in mercy" ~ and "because of the great love with which he loved us," ~ even though we were dead in our sins.

CONCLUSION.

AND IN CLOSING, ~ TO GET THE FULLER CONTEXT, ~ WE CAN EXPAND AND summarize verses 1-5a.

▶▶ Even though we were 100% sinful, ~ even though sinning was a way of life for us, ~ even though we were following the standards of this "present evil age" and Satan, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ even though we were enslaved to our sinful nature and its sinful desires ~ and we carried those sinful desires out, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ And even though we were subject to, ~ deserving of, ~ and destined for ~ God's wrath, ~ ¶¶

→→ God, ~ because He is "rich in mercy," ~ and because of "the great love with which he loved us," ~ ¶¶

↳↳ acted on our behalf to rectify our horribly sinful, ~ helpless, ~ and hopeless situation.

▶▶ That's pretty amazing isn't it? ~ ~ Amazing love! ~ how can it be That Thou, ~ my God, ~ shouldst die for me!

LET'S PRAY . . . . 8/8