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## Ephesians 2: 1-10

Some of you may remember Corrie Ten Boom. She was a Dutch Christian watchmaker who, with her family hid Jews in their home during WW2. They were caught, arrested and sent to concentration camp where her sister died. On 28 December 1944 she was released (later being told that that had been a clerical error). Returning to Holland she established a refuge to house concentration-camp survivors, Dutch collaborators and, later, any who needed care.

She was a good friend of Brother Andrew, a Dutchman, who became famous in the 1960s as God's Smuggler. Andrew regularly travelled behind the then iron curtain to encourage the persecuted believers.

As their ministries developed they would sometimes share speaking engagements and travel together. And it was on one such trip that Corrie asked Andrew how he was doing. He replied in a way that many of us might. I'm Ok under the circumstances.

Maybe as we adjust to Lockdown 3 we might be in a similar frame of mind. Given all the restrictions, all the challenges, under all these circumstances I'm doing OK.

It is right that, as individuals and as a nation, we are concerned for the mental well-being of ourselves and one another. We continue to live in unprecedented times.

But Corrie's response to Andrew was a shocker and I want to share it with you. She said words to the effect that that is the wrong way to be looking at things. As followers of Jesus we're not under the circumstances but over them. Paul, writing to the church in Ephesus was reminding them of the effects of salvation.

Using the words from The Message Paul writes - It wasn't so long ago that you were mired in that old stagnant life of sin. You let the world, which doesn't know the first thing about living, tell you how to live. You filled your lungs with polluted unbelief, and then exhaled disobedience. We all did it, all of us doing what we felt like doing, when we felt like doing it, all of us in the same boat.

It's a wonder God didn't lose his temper and do away with the whole lot of us. Instead, immense in mercy and with an incredible love, he embraced us. He took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ. He did all this on his own, with no help from us! Then he picked us up and set us down in highest heaven in company with Jesus, our Messiah. Now God has us where he wants us, with all the time in this world and the next to shower grace and kindness upon us in Christ Jesus.

I admit to struggling with this truth some days - I don't feel like someone who is sat down in heaven with Christ. But from that position, we can look down on our circumstances and see them in the perspective from which God sees them.

We can, almost literally, rise above the humdrum and bustle of life. Not that this is cloud-in-the-sky-when-you-die thinking but it will give us the ability to live life as God intends. We're not leaning on our own understanding but we're trusting in God with all our heart. And as Proverbs 3 continues - in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

And note, too, that this positioning in the heavenlies means we're seated - not struggling, rushing around, and frustrated. But calm, rested and at peace.

As I say, I sometimes struggle with this truth but we need to let it dwell in our hearts and minds.

This is the work of God's grace in our lives. Grace is that unearned, unmerited benefit given to us through the work of Christ.

Because of Jesus, we are alive, fully alive, saved from our past and seated with Jesus - NOW.

Corrie was able to share this truth with Andrew because she had been through almost unspeakable horrors at the hands of the German war machine. When, in 1946, she met the very soldiers who so mistreated her she was able to forgive them. How? Because she knew her position in Christ. She was over the circumstances, she was seated with Christ and was living life to the full.

This was a valuable lesson for Andrew and I still remember him telling the story at a conference I attended in the 1980s.

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Today, I want to encourage each of us to take a few moments to review where we are - are we under the circumstances? Letting them control us and affecting our mood. Or are we above them, looking down and seeing them in perspective?

Give thanks to God that his grace is at work in us taking us from what we were and making us suitable to join Jesus and be part of his Kingdom.

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