

“Christian Perks”

Eph 2:4-7

1.29.23

Any Costco fans in the house? We like Costco too. I was a member of Costco in college but when Andrea and I moved to the suburbs of Chicago for seminary we were Costcoless.

We were excited when Costco came to Davenport. Even though we have been Sam's club members since we moved to Iowa, we still joined Costco.

Costco has less expensive gasoline, a great selection of food and clothing. Most of the clothes you see me wearing on a Sunday is from Costco.

For under \$5 you can get a tasty rotisserie chicken. If you are hungry, grab some of the free samples or a buy a footlong hotdog or slice of pizza for a few bucks.

If you have a membership at Costco, you already know this stuff. But there are many other perks that not a lot of members know or utilize.

There is the Costco auto program. You can get discounts on a new or used vehicle, or even an RV.

Costco Travel provides discounts on rental cars, theme parks and cruises. Costco Travel also offers vacation packages to many destinations in the United States and the world.

Like Costco, Christians might know some blessings as a believer but they may not know or utilize other perks that God has given them.

What are some perks Christians receive for trusting in Jesus? We are going to see three from our text. One is known by most Christians, the other two are less known but so exciting to think about.

Please turn with me to Ephesians 2:4–7 (ESV), Pg 976 in Red Bibles. “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 in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

When you trusted in Christ you received some amazing perks. For those who have not trusted in Christ, listen closely to what God will give you when you choose Jesus as your Savior.

The first Christian perk we see in this text is:

Perk #1: **You received a new nature.**

Verse 5, “even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.”

Last Sunday we discussed that we are all born spiritually dead. A spiritually dead person is not interested in, nor able to respond to spiritual things. A spiritually dead person is hopelessly stuck being dead. A spiritually dead person cannot resurrect himself. The only way a spiritually dead person can come alive spiritually is through Jesus.

The perk we want to focus on regarding being “made alive” is the dramatic change from living according to the sinful nature or flesh that we inherited. All of us were born with a sinful nature. The Greek word for sinful nature is sarx from which we get the word “flesh.” Flesh can mean our literal flesh or body or our very existence. In this case,

flesh has the “connotation of ungodly lifestyle of selfishness and self-gratification.” Our flesh or sinful nature has a propensity to do wrong- to seek self-gratification.

Eph 2:3 speaks to this, “We all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind.” By nature we choose the self-centered way. By nature we are drawn to what pleases us above all.

The problem with our sinful nature is that it is in conflict with God. It will always choose to do what the flesh desires. **“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh,** but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ **For to set the mind on the flesh is death,** but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.”

When you accepted Christ as your Savior, your old nature was crucified. “We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For one who has died has been set free from sin.” Rom 6:6-7

Those in Christ, you were given a new spiritual nature. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” ² Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

Because we have a new nature, we can say no to the sinful nature and yes to the Spirit. Paul describes this act like changing clothes. “Throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. ²³ Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. ²⁴ Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.” Eph 4:23-24

When we wear our dirty clothes we were born with, we will naturally do stinky things. When we put on the new clothes of the Spirit, the God clothes, we will naturally do good things. Which clothes do you wear most during the week?

In order to be the person God calls us to be, we need to be throwing aside the dirty clothes of our sinful nature and instead put on the God clothes with its desire to follow the Spirit.

How do you do that practically? You acknowledge your sins before God and ask the Spirit to empower you. That is putting on God clothes.

Perk #2: You received a new citizenship.

Verse 6, “And raised us up with him...” Ephesians 2:6 (ESV) There are two aspects of raised up here. The first has to do with a resurrection. We were spiritually dead. We needed a resurrection to a new life. And that is what Christ accomplished for us. Rom 6:5, 8, "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his...⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.”

We have been resurrected to a new life. Like Lazarus we have been called from the grave, resurrected to a new life with Jesus.

The perk we are drawing our attention to is what else happens when someone is raised up with Christ? We are raise up to where Christ is, spiritually speaking.

That means our true home’s address has changed. From here to heaven. “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.” Ephesians 2:19 (ESV)

“But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Philippians 3:20 (ESV)

“A citizen is a person who legally belongs to a country and has the rights and protection of that country. Citizens adopt the culture and practices of the nation or kingdom to which they belong.”

At birth, we were born into the kingdom of this world. We grew up following the culture and practices of the world.

But thanks to Jesus, when He raised us up to be with Him, our citizenship was transferred to heaven. We now belong to Him and will forever be with Him where He is. We have a place secured in heaven. That we means we are aliens or sojourners on earth. We are passing through.

Though we are here physically, we are positionally with Jesus now in heaven. And that won't change until we die or He comes again. At either point, our soul will be united with Christ.

Too often we can get stuck in the day to day. We live as though the earth is our residence. Our residence is heaven. Your home is heaven.

If you think about your citizenship is in heaven, it will change the way you live here on earth. I will speak more to this in just a few minutes.

The third perk as a result of being a Christian is

Perk #3: **You received a new authority.**

Verse 6, "And raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Ephesians 2:6 (ESV)

Earlier in chapter 1, we saw that Christ was seated at the right hand of God. "That he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places." Ephesians 1:20 (ESV) Sitting at the right hand of God denotes honor and authority.

Here in verse 6, it shows that we are seated **with Christ** in the heavenly places.

Just as there a few other perks within the perks listed earlier so here. When you think of sitting down, visualize being near Christ, seated at banquet table with Him. One day, we will sit with Him at His wedding table. “And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb...” Revelation 19:9 (ESV)

If you know Jesus, you will always have a place at the Lord’s table. You are that special to Him. I hope that sinks in. That is an incredible truth that should give you great encouragement, gratefulness and hope.

When we began this series, I shared a key theme that was throughout Ephesians. Ephesians has a greater percentage of power terminology than any other NT book. The emphasis in Ephesians is the power of Christ over the power of evil.

The **perk of being seated with Christ connects us to His authority**. Prior to knowing Christ we no authority over the spiritual realm. We could not exercise power over the “powers of this age.” We were under the authority of satan. As Paul wrote in Eph 2:2, “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.”

We could not resist the devil and his rule. That changed when we trusted in Christ and we were seated with Him in the heavenly places.

Thanks to being seated with Christ we can resist the devil. We can say no to him. “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to **stand against the schemes of the devil.**” Ephesians 6:11 (ESV)

“So humble yourselves before God. **Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.**” James 4:7 (NLT)

When Christian Herter was governor of Massachusetts, he was running hard for a second term in office. One day, after a busy morning chasing votes (and no lunch) he

arrived at a church barbecue. It was late afternoon and Herter was famished. As Herter moved down the serving line, he held out his plate to the woman serving chicken. She put a piece on his plate and turned to the next person in line.

"Excuse me," Governor Herter said, "do you mind if I have another piece of chicken?"

"Sorry," the woman told him. "I'm supposed to give one piece of chicken to each person."

"But I'm starved," the governor said.

"Sorry," the woman said again. "Only one to a customer."

Governor Herter was a modest and unassuming man, but he decided that this time he would throw a little weight around.

"Do you know who I am?" he said. "I am the governor of this state."

"Do you know who I am?" the woman said. "I'm the lady in charge of the chicken. Move along, mister."

Satan no longer has authority over us. If he would say to you "Do you know who I am?" You can say, "Do you know who I belong to? Do you know who is my Master? Do you know what authority He gives me? Be gone." Satan will need to leave because of the authority you have in Christ for you are seated with Him in the heavenly places.

What is the outcome of the perks Costco members receive? As we experience the wonderful benefits of being a Costco member we are thankful. We are excited. We are motivated to talk about the wonders of Costco with people who are not members. We make Costco look better in their eyes.

What is the the outcome of Christian perks? They cause us to to glorify God. Verse 7, "So that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." Ephesians 2:7 (ESV)

God did this work so that in the coming ages- for the believer that is forever- eternity. For eternity God might show the immeasurable riches of His grace.

The word “show” means to display. Think of a photographer or painter displaying their finished work.

You look at the work created and are impressed. But then your mind goes to the skill of the photographer or painter. And your awe of the one who created it is increased. “What skill with the brush. What eye the photographer has to capture this beauty.” [Please show picture]



When we see what God has done with us, through His immeasurable grace, we turn our attention and praise to God.

“To the praise of His glory” has been a theme throughout chapter 1 as we saw what God did to secure a relationship with us. Ephesians 1:6 (ESV), “to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.”

Ephesians 1:12 (ESV), “so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.”

Ephesians 1:14 (ESV), “Who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

Family, heaven will not be boring. It will not be boring for a myriad of reasons but verse 7 lets us know that as we are in heaven we continue to be amazed at God’s saving grace. We continue to be amazed at what He has made us into- perfect people who are like Jesus.

- We continue to be amazed at what God has prepared for us. We look around heaven and ooh and ah.

- We continue to be amazed at who God is. He is so much greater than we ever thought. Each day His greatness increases as we understand Him better.
- We continue to be amazed at God's love for us. It will take eternity to show us how much He loves us.

Oh the immeasurable riches of God's grace that He has and will forever lavish on His children!

Many of the Costco perks go unused. Let us not do that with the perks God gives to the believer. These perks are not just for the ages to come. They are for today as well.

You have a new nature. Choose to throw off the dirty clothes of the past and put on the God clothes so that you will experience the life and works that God has in store for you.

You are a citizen of heaven. You don't belong to this earth. Paul challenges us to have heavenly thinking, to think about where we truly belong. "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." Colossians 3:1–4 (ESV)

What are the things that are above that will help us while we are here?

First, heavenly thinking will remind us of our security in Christ. Paul writes in verse 3, "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." The words "Hidden in Christ" describe security/safety. Greek scholar, Dr. A.T. Robertson wrote, "So here we are in Christ who is in God, and no burglar, not even Satan himself, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. No one can separate us from God because we are already seated with Christ in the heavenly places remember?"

If we think we belong to this earth, we are going to feel very insecure because the world does not provide security. True security is above- the place where you are already a citizen.

Second, **heavenly thinking will help us to endure suffering while we reside on earth.** Heavenly thinking reminds us that suffering is only temporal. 2 Corinthians 4:17–18 (NLT), “For our present troubles are small and won’t last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! ¹⁸ So we don’t look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.”

Third, **heavenly thinking helps us from living our lives for temporal pleasures.** That doesn’t mean you cannot enjoy life and make good memories. What it means is this life is not all there is. Eternity is to come. We are sojourners. We are just passing through. Let us not get entangled by things that are temporary.

Esau had a temporal mindset. He gave up his birthright for a pot of stew. Heb. 12:16-17 in *The Message* is a good reminder to keep your eyes on heavenly things. “Watch out for the Esau syndrome: trading away God’s lifelong gift in order to satisfy a short-term appetite.”

And fourth, **heavenly thinking motivates us to live lives of significance.**

How we live our lives in our short time on earth determines what we do in heaven. C.S. Lewis wrote, "If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this." (Mere Christianity).

Once we received Christ, God could’ve ushered us right into heaven. But He didn’t. Why? Do you think He left us on earth to sin? No, He left us here to make a difference,

to bring glory to Him by the way we live in His power and the way we reach out in love to the body and to those outside the body.

We are encouraging everyone to adopt a person or family that is either unchurched or an unbeliever. Have you figured out who you are going to show and share the love of Jesus with this year? Be praying and looking for ways to show and share love with them.

Enjoy the perks of your faith in Christ to the fullest. Let them make a difference in how you live each day for the glory of God.

Let's pray

o.b.g.