

EXPOSITION OF EPHESIANS

Message #8

Ephesians 2:4-10

In the O.T. prophetic book of Zechariah, God promises that He will one day raise up Jerusalem and bless Israel in her land. In discussing this point, Zechariah records the actual words of God. In Zechariah 12:9-10, here is what He says: “And it will come about in that day that I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And **I will pour out** on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, **a spirit of grace**...so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced and they will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only son and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.”

What this text says is that in order for the nation Israel to finally come to the place where they recognize their spiritual condition as it relates to the one they pierced, **God must pour out a spirit of grace**.

That point about God having to pour out His grace is not just an O.T. point for the nation Israel, because that point is the very point Paul is making concerning the salvation of every single individual right here in Ephesians.

We may remember that last time we saw how sinfully depraved we were prior to God saving us. We were spiritually dead (2:1). We lived with a world focus (2:2a). We lived life in accordance with the satanic world (2:2b). We lived life fulfilling our lusts (2:3a). We all have a nature destined for the wrath of God (2:3b). That is an accurate picture of us all.

So the question comes, how do we get out of this terrible condition? The answer is seen in the first two words of **verse 4- “but God”** (ο δε θεος). In sharp contrast to the wrath of God our nature deserves sits the grace of God we do not deserve.

God in His sovereignty gets us out of our depraved condition by imparting to us His amazing grace. Our previous condition proves we do not deserve grace. We do not deserve to be saved. We cannot earn or merit salvation. We will not even, in and of ourselves, choose to be saved. We are dead. God must sovereignly intervene and pour out His grace on us, just like He eventually will do for Israel. That is what Paul expresses here.

We cannot begin to understand the riches of God’s grace until we recognize the depths of our own depravity. We cannot praise God and worship God for His grace at the highest level until we realize we didn’t choose it, He graciously gave it. That is exactly what Paul reveals in these verses. These verses are designed to teach us that:

GOD IS TO BE PRAISED AND WORSHIPPED FOR THE RICHES OF HIS AMAZING GRACE AND MERCY, WHICH HE HAS GIVEN TO DEPRAVED SINNERS THAT PERMITS US TO HAVE A HEAVENLY POSITION AND RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM.

I doubt that we even begin to fathom the realities involved in the grace of God. Now the key verb of this section is “made alive.” God has made those spiritually dead spiritually alive. There are two major theological realities brought out in this passage:

THEOLOGICAL REALITY #1 – God has made us alive with Jesus Christ . **2:4-5**

Now again we need to observe how **verse 4** begins “but God.” **This is a very sharp “grace contrast” in view of a very real “grave crisis.”** In contrast to our spiritually dead state of depravity, which we were all in, which meant we were destined for God’s wrath, God intervened on our behalf in pure grace and made us alive.

The key verb of these two verses is the verb “made us alive” (συνζωοποιεω) (**v. 5**). This particular verb literally refers to the fact that God actually makes one alive in Jesus Christ and actually joins the believer in a life union with Jesus Christ (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 429).

We could not give ourselves life because we were dead. It is God who took a merciful interest in us and intervened for us. We did not take an interest in Him and give ourselves life. God did it and He is to be praised for it.

There are **four main facts** brought out in these verses about this:

Fact #1 - We are made alive together with Christ because God is rich in mercy . **2:4a**

We are vitally and permanently united with Jesus Christ because of the mercy of God. The word “mercy” (ελεος) is a word that specifically emphasizes the fact that God has pity and compassion on those who are in a miserable and helpless and hopeless condition (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 145).

Mercy is that which sees something as totally hopeless and helpless and it decides to compassionately intervene and help. The emphasis, in this context, is on the total and complete helplessness of the sinner to get out of his depraved condition.

Now carefully notice what is said here; God is not just merciful, He is “rich in mercy.” Dr. Chafer said from whatever angle you want to analyze God’s connection to man God is always seen as “rich in mercy” (*The Epistle to the Ephesians*, p. 64).

God sees man as a totally helpless and hopeless depraved and condemned sinner. As God sees this in each of us, He makes a decision to compassionately reach out to us in order to get us out of our miserable condition. God is truly “rich in mercy.”

Fact #2 - We are made alive together with Christ because God loves us with a great love . **2:4b**

It is on account of His great love that He demonstrates His mercy. People like to think that there was something in them that made them lovable to God. There was nothing in any sinner that made us lovable. The thing that caused God to exercise His mercy was His sovereign love. In other words, the mercy of God elevates the love of God. Over and over again Paul writes about God’s great mercy and love (i.e. Titus 3:4-6).

Now the word translated “love” in this verse is agape (αγαπη). In this context, we get to see what this love actually is. It is a love that chooses to do the best for another. It is a love that chooses the highest good, the best of all the alternatives.

God saw us in our depraved condition. He saw us hopeless and helpless. In pure mercy and love He made a decision to do the best thing He could do and that is to make it possible for sinners to get into a proper relationship with Him and then rescue them.

Fact #3 - We are made alive together with Christ when we were dead in our transgressions. **2:5a**

We have already seen this point in verse 1 and now Paul brings it up again. Why? Because to understand the riches of God’s grace, we must understand our condition; we were dead in our trespasses and sins. The word “transgressions” is the same word translated “trespasses” in verse 1. We were dead in a relationship with God and in fellowship with God because of our sins. What that means is that every one of us walked off the path of righteousness many, many times. Our sins left us in a dead state.

This is a key point that is stressed in grace. We were dead and God made us alive. We were not sick, we were dead. We had no life. We would not seek God. We would not choose God. God gave us life when we were dead. He gave us a life union with Jesus Christ when we were dead.

Fact #4 - We are made alive with Christ by God’s grace that has saved us. **2:5b**

The perfect tense of the verb “have been saved” means God saved us at a point of time in the past (before the foundation of the world-1:4) and we continue to be saved at the present and on into the future.

Now the statement here is that we “have been saved by grace.” The actual word “grace” (χαριτι) refers to a kind, favorable gift that God gives which is freely given. It is not earned, it is not merited. It is not deserved. It is a free gift. **We have been made alive with Jesus Christ as a free gift of God.**

God did not see anything in us that was good or positive. We were dead and in pure grace, He reached out to us and He saved us.

THEOLOGICAL REALITY #2 – God has connected us to Jesus Christ and elevated us to a heavenly status. **2:6-10**

Now when God in grace gave us life, He did not leave us in a graveyard. We were so united to Jesus Christ that He changed our position and place of residency from eternal death to eternal life, from the tomb of the world to the temple of His heaven. We have been called out of the grave and called into heaven and we have been invited to have intimate fellowship with Jesus Christ. Two major status changes have occurred:

Status Change #1 - We have been raised with Christ. **2:6a**

The moment God gives us life, we are a new creation. We have been raised from our dead state and given a life state with Him. God spiritually raises us out of our depraved dead state and makes us alive unto Him.

Status Change #2 - We have been seated with Christ. **2:6b**

We have been relocated with Christ. We have been taken to heavenly places. Now the climax of the finished work of Jesus Christ and His exaltation was when He ascended into heaven and was seated at the right hand of God the Father. What is being revealed here is that we have already been given an exalted state in our connection to Jesus Christ. Paul says in Philippians 3:20 that we have a heavenly citizenship.

Now Christ was raised and we have been raised. Christ was seated in heavenly places and so are we. What does that tell us? It tells us that Jesus Christ is the federal head of all the redeemed. We are linked to Jesus Christ. Everything Christ did He did as our federal head.

He died for our sins, we didn't. He bore our penalty, we didn't. Heaven cannot punish one person for whom Christ died and saved. He bore our penalty and therefore when He is raised so are we. When He is in heaven, so are we. We are so linked to Jesus Christ that we are already seated with Him at the right hand of God in heavenly places. The entire grace package is found in Jesus Christ.

Why would God do that for us? What would motivate Him to do that for us? Notice **verse 7**: **The fundamental reason and motivation for God doing all of this is so that in the ages to come God may show the surpassing riches of His grace toward us concerning everything He has given us in Christ.**

In future eternity, God is going to show the amazing riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in everything we have in Christ Jesus. Now wealthy people today will often display their wealth in museums and mausoleums. Think about God displaying the riches of His grace toward us and to us forever.

It will be an amazing heaven. Walter Liefeld said that he used to think that heaven would be a boring place until he read Ephesians 2:7. He said when he realized that in coming ages God was going to show the surpassing riches of His grace, he concluded there was no way it could be boring (*Ephesians*, p. 63).

It is possible that we will see how God's grace worked in each person's life. Won't that be something? Think of that. There will be people from every tribe and language and nation. We will get to see how God's grace worked in them and they will get to see how God's grace worked in us.

Now notice the conjunction that begins **verse 8** "for." That conjunction is powerful because it informs us that the salvation that anyone has did not originate or result from any human merit, works or effort. One thing God is going to do for ages and ages is show how He manifested the exceeding riches of His grace to us.

Over and over again the Apostle Paul stresses that we are saved by grace through faith. We are not saved by works. **This entire grace package is a gift of God.** There is not one thing we can boast about except the grace of God.

There are six amazing facts brought out about God's grace here:

(Grace Fact #1) - We have been saved by God's grace. **2:8a**

Here it is clear and simple; we have been saved by the grace of God.

(Grace Fact #2) - We have been saved by God's grace through faith. **2:8b**

The means by which one experiences grace salvation is through faith. So salvation is experienced the moment one trusts in or places his confidence in Jesus Christ.

(Grace Fact #3) - We have not been saved by anything we did ourselves. **2:8c**

This solves a big riddle. God's grace salvation does not have any origin or source with humans. Nothing about grace salvation originated with any sinful human being. As we will see in a moment not even the faith that saved us was ours.

(Grace Fact #4) - We have been saved by God's grace gift, which includes our faith. **2:8d**

There has been much grammatical debate concerning the word "that." The debate concerns whether or not the pronoun "that" or "this" refers to the gift of grace or the gift of faith. The pronoun "that" or "this" is neuter and the nouns "grace" and "faith" are both feminine. So what that means is that the pronoun does not fit the gender of either grace or faith.

Those who connect the "that" or "this" to grace say grace is God's part and faith is our part. Those who connected the "that" or "this" to "faith" say both grace and faith are God's gift. But from a technical grammatical standpoint you cannot specifically connect it to either one.

Furthermore, the theological problem with the first view is that faith that saves is never self-produced and is always created by the saving grace of God. Plus, as we have mentioned there are the gender problems of the pronoun and you have a major contextual matter of the "for" ($\gamma\alpha\rho$) that begins **verse 10**.

The "for" of verse 10 explains that our salvation is all due to the workmanship of God. Paul actually says here that we have been created by God in Christ Jesus. We were dead in our sins.

We conclude with a host of other serious students of Scripture that the pronoun "that" or "this" refers to the whole package of grace salvation. It is all a gift of God. The whole system of grace and faith were wrought by God out of the riches of His grace. This is the only thing that fits the syntax and grammar.

Clement of Rome who was one of the early pastors of Rome who was a student of both Paul and Peter said that the determining factor of one who believes on Jesus Christ is "the will of God" (*Pillars of Grace*, Vol. 2, p. 55).

Irenaeus (A.D. 130-200), who trained under Polycarp of whom it is said that he was responsible for converting almost everyone in the city of Lyons, taught that “Christ creates faith by which sinners believe in Him. No spiritually dead sinner has the power of choice to believe on Christ apart from divine enabling” (*Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 101).

Augustine, the great theologian, came to understand that faith and grace were all a gift of God by reading I Corinthians 4:7, which he said hit him like a ton of bricks. The verse asks “Who makes you differ or superior” and “what do you have that you did not receive.” Augustine said that caused him to realize if he had faith it had to be a gift of God because he was no different than anyone else.

When we begin to understand grace at a depth level, we begin to see that it is all of God.

(Grace Fact #5) - We are not saved by our works. 2:9a

I love something Warren Wiersbe said: “Since we have not been saved by our good works, we cannot be lost by our bad works” (*Be Rich*, p. 45). Our works have nothing to do with us being saved. Martin Luther said “It’s not against works that we contend; it’s against trust in works that we contend.” Our works are not in the equation of grace salvation. Our salvation is all of God’s grace.

(Grace Fact #6) - We cannot boast about anything in our salvation because we didn’t have anything to do with it. 2:9b

You may be certain that if anything in faith or grace were by works we would be boasting. We cannot boast in ourselves for there is nothing in ourselves worth boasting about.

The “for” of verse 10 explains why we cannot boast because we are God’s workmanship in Christ. Notice we are not our workmanship, but we are His workmanship. He has created us; he has saved us and any works we do that is good is because of the grace God has given to us.

We have all of these things by grace through faith. It was not of our works, it was not of ourselves. It was all a gift of God. The gift of God refers to the entire grace salvation that was given to us.

God wants to display us as the workmanship of His grace. In fact, He has prepared us for this. He has foreordained our salvation and He has prepared the works in which we should walk. We have Grace Age instruction in which we should be prepared to walk. Some spend all of their time praying Lord what would you have me do. Yet they are napping because His Word has already told them what they are supposed to do.

But here is the point- God is to be worshipped and praised because of His amazing grace. If you believe that Jesus Christ is the only Savior who can save you from your sins, then you are rich and you have experienced the amazing grace of God and God’s grace is grace that is greater than all our sin.