

Rooted in Christ's Grace, Part 2

Preached by: Matthew S. Black

Text: Ephesians 2:1-10

Series: Rooted in Christ

Date: January 29, 2012, 10:30am

Living Hope Bible Church of Roselle, IL

Introduction: Open your Bibles to Ephesians. We are continuing our series: "Rooted in Christ". The title of the message is: "Rooted in Christ's Grace".

Our outline today is simple:

- I. **Our Misery requires God's grace** (vs. 1-3) "dead in trespasses".
- II. **The Motive of God's grace is His love** (vs. 4) "because of the great love".
- III. **We see the Miracle of God's grace** (vs. 5-6) "made alive with Christ".
- IV. **We are God's Masterpiece of grace** (vs. 7-10) "we are His workmanship".

Illustration: What is it that makes the difference between heaven and hell? This morning in *heaven* there are missionaries, and pastors, and prostitutes and publicans. And this morning in *hell* there are prostitutes and missionaries and pastors and publicans as well. All people have knowledge of God. Many have knowledge of the Savior. The difference between heaven and hell is not knowledge alone, but grace. The grace that God gives to fully trust God and abandon our selves to His love and care.

We learned last week...

- I. **Our Misery requires God's grace**(vs. 1-3).

Verses 1-3, "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 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 — 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind".

This morning we come to a place in the Bible where God meets us where we are. He meets us just as we are. Verse 3 paints a terrifying picture of where we all are by nature and by choice. **If the chapter ended with verse 3, we would all be in trouble**, "we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."

Verses 1-3 are some of the darkest verses in the Bible. The Bible holds nothing back in telling us the awful truth of our offense against God. Here, we look into the mirror and we see the disfigurement of our souls in the light of God's Word, and it is ugly, isn't it? Our trespasses are piled higher than the heavens. In our sins we have utterly missed the mark of God's pure and perfect nature. We are not even close. We deserve condemnation. God's justice must be required. His sense of satisfaction with a just penalty for sin requires a price to be paid. We are

guilty. God called us His enemies (Romans 5:10). And we were all by nature awaiting His just wrath and meticulous judgment of our offences against Him.

If the Bible ended with Ephesians 2:3, we would all be without hope. But the Bible doesn't end there. Here we find the two most important words in the Bible, "But God"!
"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,"

II. The Motive of God's grace is His love (vs. 4).

Ephesians 2:4 (ESV) — "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us".

First, in order to see God's love, we must first comprehend:

A. The intervention of God's love – "but God" (vs. 4a). God's love drove Him to intervene!

Were it not for grace, we would all be living for ourselves. If not for grace, we would all be slaves to our sins. Were it not for God's love, we would all be vile, guilty sinners awaiting God's judgment! "But God". Glorious words!

Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, "These two words in and of themselves contain the whole Gospel". There was nothing in any of us that would cause God to love us. He does not love us because we are good. He loves us because He is good. We were on our way to a place "where the word dies not, and the fire is not quenched" "but God!" O this is the great exception. Are you a part of it?

But see also...

B. The extravagance of God's love – "God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us..." (vs. 4).

God doesn't deal with us According to our Sins if we come by Faith

If God dealt with us according to even one of our sins, we would all be lost forever.

If God even dealt with us according to our so-called righteousness deeds (which are as filthy rags), we would be lost forever.

Psalm 130:3-4, "If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? 4 But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared."

ALL those in Christ are COVERED

All those in Christ have been covered in the extravagant love of God. O the price that Christ paid to cover our iniquities! O the depths of woe that Christ suffered. O the ocean of agony that He endured. If you are in Christ, God's sense of justice is satisfied with your sins. The penalty of your sin has been eradicated because Christ endured the full measure of God's wrath for them!

Martin Luther said we all carry in our pocket Christ's nails. Who crucified Christ? You did! I did! Christ died "for us". Are you aware that you have Christ's nails in your possession? Look at the love God has for us!

What Kept Jesus Christ on the Cross?

What kept Christ on that cross? What was it that held Him there? As He bore every ounce of the wrath of God for you, He became your eternal shield. He felt every ounce of the agony you deserved, and there was one thing that made it all worth it to Him. He loved you. He loved me. He loved you long before you came into this world. He will love you when ten thousand ages have passed. Christ's love for you held Him there on the cross.

ANY outside of Christ are CONDEMNED

But if you are outside of Christ, you are covered in filth and condemnation. Every one of your sins will be punished. Every one of your sins will be remembered. Your name is recorded in God's book. On the day of Judgment, you will give an account for every thought you have thought with your mind, every word you have spoken with your mouth, and every deed you have rendered with your body. If you are outside of Christ then every one of your iniquities are MARKED and will count against you, and you will suffer for them. Holiness will clash with your sin, and there will be wrath!

O but if you have yielded your life to Christ, there is only one thing awaiting you, and that is the enveloping love of God! His extravagant love is lavished on you in Christ Jesus. All your sin is placed on Him. All His goodness and righteousness bathes you and cleanses you!

WHEN Christ Comes Again

When Christ comes again, it will not be a day of Judgment and Wrath for you, but it will be a Day of Joy, a day of Bliss, a day of pleasure. For all who know Christ, they burn

God is extravagant in mercy! He is affluent in His attribute of grace. He lavishes His love upon us! He's rich in redemption. His grace has no end. His mercy has no limit. God is extravagant in His love to poor, helpless sinners. Helpless as we may be. Powerless as we are. God comes to us. We cannot help ourselves. God's love, as rich as it is, is self-sacrificing and reaches out to the most unworthy. He gives ALL to us. God holds nothing back for us.

God Saw You

God looked down from heaven and saw you "dead in your trespasses and sins". He saw that you were controlled by Satan himself. All people who are outside of Christ have this harness upon them. They are controlled by the passions of their body and their mind. Day in and day out our life was like this. Never did we think "How can I please God today?" You never said, "O God I'm yours, my life is yours". Why because your goal was to please yourself. You were controlled by your own passions and your mind was controlled by the "prince of the power of the air."

The Love of God Invaded Your Universe

But there came a day when the love of God invaded your universe. Two words in verse 4 strike us: "But God!" You were dead, you were in slavery to the passions of your body and your mind,

you were carrying out the will of the prince of the power of the air, and then God stepped in! There was a split in your destiny. You were dead in your sins, BUT GOD had other plans. God had another AGENDA to transform you, to change you, to restore you and reconcile you as His own child. BUT GOD – He stepped in to make you what He wants you to be!

III. **The Miracle of God's grace** (vs. 5-6).

“even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by **grace** you have been saved” (vs. 5).

He loved us when we were not capable of responding. We were dead and corrupted and rotten in our sin and stinking! We were “dead in the trespasses and sins” that we were enslaved to. We were blind and deaf to God. But He came to us and healed our eyes and gave us ears to hear and a heart to perceive!

God loved us when all that was within us scorned God. When we were repulsive and violently sinful to His holy and gentle nature, He could have judged us! He SHOULD have judged us.

— “But God, being rich in mercy... loved us”! He loved us!

He loved us when we couldn't move one little finger to help ourselves. But God!

His Love is Greater your Trespasses and Sins!!

Can I tell you that God's love is so powerful and miraculous, that it is greater than anything that stands against it!

- His love is greater than your **rebellion!** I was a rebel with my parents and with the law, but God when I was 15 saved me!
- His love is greater than your **family history!**
My grandfather abused his body and lived for himself. My father – the same thing! BUT God set me free from the sins of my heritage and gave me a new family! Whatever you've gone through, God's love can overcome!
- His love is greater than your **sin and guilt!** Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” You were guilty, but GOD has justified you and is sanctifying you.

A. *He's plucked us up from the grave.*

Look at **Ephesians 2:4–6** (ESV), “ 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”.

“made us alive... and raised us up with him” – that’s regeneration. He’s taken the record of our sin and nailed it to the cross. He’s taken our old dead corpse and filled us with His Spirit and raised us to “walk in newness of life”. We will never be the same.

We are saved by GRACE.

We weren’t seeking it. We were seeking our passions. God awakened us from our sinful stupor!

Romans 8:32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

He has loved us from eternity (Jeremiah 31:3). His mercy has triumphed. His love is victorious!

Romans 8:10-11, “But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”

B. He’s seated us the throne with him -

“and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...” (vs. 6).

Imagine the awesome wonder of it! God has seated us on His glorious throne! In Christ we are already seated where He is. God has enveloped us in Christ so that when He looks at us, He always sees His Son. No matter how or when God looks at us, He sees Christ – He sees the beauty of His holiness, the glory of His grace, and all the splendor of His person.

What Has God Done? (Resurrection and Ascension Power)

I want to talk about Resurrection and Ascension Power. Verse 6 tells us we are united in Christ’s resurrection and His ascension. This is significant. He “raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...”

Christ’s resurrection demonstrates His power over death and His ascension demonstrates His victory over sin, hell, and the grave! We are SEATED with Him.

We read in **Hebrews 1:3**, “He [Christ] is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

He tells us in **Revelation 3:21**, “The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.” This tells us that we will one day share in Christ’s victory. But Ephesians 2:6 tells us that we ALREADY share in Christ’s victory. We are raised with Him. We are SEATED with Him!!

IV. We are God's Masterpiece of grace (vs. 7-10).

Verses 7-10, "so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

A. *The Focus of our salvation (vs. 7).*

Verse 7, "so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus". Salvation is not about you, it's all about God.

B. *The Failure of a works salvation (vs. 8-9).*

Verses 8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

Salvation by works has already failed. One sin is all it takes. How many sins did it take for Lucifer to be cast out of heaven? One!

God's Sense of Justice Demands Perfect Righteousness

You might say, "I'll live a good life to make up for it!" You could never make up for it. All the righteous deeds in the world cannot erase one sin! You can't live a good enough life. One sin separates you forever from a holy God. You committed that first sin a long time ago. You were conceived in sin, and born in it. It's too late.

Is there anyone here who can claim that he is already saved by works, so far in life? Has anyone here been without sin? Look at your lives; examine your conscience; observe your words, your thoughts, your imaginations, your motives; for all these things will be brought to account on the Last Day. Is there a man here that "doeth good, and sinneth not"? Scripture declares that "there is none that doeth good, no, not one." "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way."

C. *The Fountain of true salvation (vs. 10a).*

Verse 10a, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus".

We are literally God's Masterpiece. This is something God has done. It's God's work. At salvation, God puts in us a new nature. It is a gift. We are "created in Christ Jesus". This is a metaphor for regeneration.

In order to understand that we cannot decide when a person is saved, let us be reminded of some of the metaphors of regeneration in the Bible. In these metaphors God is the active mover and miracle worker. These metaphors draw attention to the glory of God's grace to powerless sinners who cannot help themselves.

- **Resurrection:** In the new life raised from the dead (Ephesians 2:1-6; Ezekiel 37, i.e. "dry bones"), God brings the dead sinner to life.
- In the Ezekiel God likens it to the **Rescue of an Abandoned Infant:** In this rescue, the sovereign compassion of God is illustrated to sinners who are as helpless as an abandoned newborn (Ezekiel 16:6, "And when I passed by you and saw you wallowing in your blood, I said to you in your blood, 'Live!' I said to you in your blood, 'Live!'").
- He likens it to **New Birth:** In the new birth (John 3:3; 1 Peter 1:23) God makes a new person by conceiving faith in the sinner by the Word of God.
- He likens it to the **Metamorphosis of our heart:** In the conversion of heart (Ezekiel 36:26-27; Deuteronomy 30:6) God transforms the heart of stone into a tender heart of flesh.
- **Wineskins:** In the new wineskins (Matthew 9:17) the new heart is able to handle the ever expanding illumination of Christ's doctrine (i.e. the new wine). When truth is illuminated, like old wineskins, the old heart does not hold it. A new wineskin must be given (representing the new heart).
- **A Miraculous Harvest:** In the miraculous increase of the harvest (1 Corinthians 3:6) Paul plants, Apollos waters, but it is God who gives the increase.
- And of course, here he tells us we are "created in Christ Jesus". I am a new Creation. I cannot create myself. I am passive in it. In the new creation (2 Corinthians 4:6; 5:17), God speaks and creates something out of nothing.

God forms us by the Word of God! As **James 1:18**, "Of his own will begat he us with the Word of truth..." Salvation is a miracle. It is a new birth! John 3:3 Jesus tells us, "Unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." As **Ezekiel 36:26** says, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." That's an act of creation. That's a sovereign act of God!

D. The Fruit of true salvation (vs. 10b).

Verse 10b, "...created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Before the foundation of the world, God prepares our good works. We are not saved BY good works, but for them. In other words, good works are the evidence that we are truly converted.

Paul tells us that Christ came "to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous [ON FIRE] for good works" (**Titus 2:14**). Let

me ask you are you ON FIRE to do God's bidding through Christ in your life? Are you EAGER to do His will, to BLESS His people, to LAUNCH out and rescue other lost souls from the burning? O the day of God's Grace will soon end, and ALL His enemies will be put under His feet! Are you a vessel for Christ? Are you displaying the glory of His GRACE in your life? Are you living up to the high CALLING He's put on you as His MASTERPIECE?

Conclusion: Martin Luther tried everything to try to gain God's favor. He slept on hard floors. Going without food, even climbing a staircase to Rome on his hands and knees—but it was to no avail. His teachers in the monastery told him that he was doing enough to have peace with God, but he had no peace. His sense of sin was too great.

Luther one day turned to Romans 1:16, "the just shall live by faith". God's grace opened up His heart to understand it. God gives to the needy sinner the righteousness which he needs by faith. Luther no longer felt the wrath of God, but the love of God. The love of God entered his heart and life and changed the world.

Dear friend, the only difference between HEAVEN and HELL is not whether you are a prostitute or a preacher, a missionary or miscreant. It is this – do you know Christ? Have you been raised with Him? Have you been seated with Him in His ascension? Are you His Masterpiece carrying out His will in this world?