

Saved By Grace Through Faith – Part 2

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul outlines the central tenet of the gospel message: salvation by grace through faith
2. aim – to cause us to understand the core of the gospel message and its power in our lives
3. passage – Ephesians 2:1-10

b. outline

1. The Predicament in Our Salvation (Ephesians 2:1-3)
2. The Power in Our Salvation (Ephesians 2:4-7)
3. The Purpose in Our Salvation (Ephesians 2:8-10)

c. opening

1. the **continuing** thought in **chapter 2**
 - a. it continues the thought of the Ephesians experiencing the power of God
 - b. it explains *how* this power of God is at work in the lives of the Ephesians
 1. Paul's prayer is that we (too!) fully **understand** it, **embrace** it, and **live in** it (**experience it**)
2. the **theological** thought in **chapter 2**
 - a. **vv. 1-10** sets forth a **central** tenet of the Gospel of Jesus Christ:
 1. that salvation is entirely of **grace**, and not of human choice or human desire or human power
 2. and, to truly **understand** grace, it is **imperative** to first understand our **natural spiritual condition**
 - a. that the human race is **spiritually dead** and unable to desire righteousness or cooperate with God towards the goal of becoming righteous (**vv. 1-3**)
 - b. **i.e.** salvation must be entirely of grace since it is never **our choice** to be saved
 - c. so, grace becomes a **malleable** concept when we get this wrong
 3. **but, God in his divine purpose has chosen to save us – he has chosen to exercise his divine power to accomplish in us what he also accomplished in Christ (vv. 4-7)**

II. The Power in Our Salvation (Ephesians 2:4-7)

Content

a. the negation in the power of God

1. "But God" = a statement of **negation**; a "great eraser"; a phrase which is designed to show that the preceding statement has been **negated** by God referencing a different reality (or vantage point)
 - a. **e.g.** using "but" within an apology actually negates the apology by erasing its core ("I'm sorry, but")
 - b. in the N.T., this construct appears 9 (ESV) or 10 (NASB) times *in English* (not in Greek, directly)
 1. the Greek conjunctions *de* or *alla* can be translated "and" or "now" or "even" (**see footnote**)
 2. however, if the English translator sees a clear negation of one idea to another *in the context*, then the use of "but" is legitimate – here, that is quite obvious – some examples:
 - a. **Acts 13:29-30**: Paul's sermon at Antioch contrasting the death & resurrection of Jesus
"when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead ..."
 - b. **1 Cor. 1:26-27**: Paul's contrast of so-called worldly wisdom vs. God's choice of the weak
"For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong"
 - c. **Phil. 2:27**: Paul's contrast in the condition of Epaphroditus, his fellow worker
"Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow."
2. "But God" = the good news that **God himself** has negated something
 - a. **principle: there's no good news in the gospel without first hearing the bad news**
 1. the gospel shines brightest when we fully recognize the black background behind it
 - a. **e.g.** gold coin mints using black floors to highlight fallen bits of gold
 2. the gospel begins (properly) when we fully understand the totality of our depravity
 - a. **i.e.** that we are helpless to do anything about it
 - b. **reality: it is the awful news of vv. 1-3 that makes the news in vv. 4-7 so glorious**
 1. Paul contrasts the deadness of the human race in sin with the **power of God** in Christ
 - a. **e.g.** the synergistic gospel utterly fails at this point – by assigning some aspect of salvation to human "decision" it obliterates the idea that salvation is the exercise of God's power

b. the order in the power of God

1. **emphasize vv. 4-7:** “being” → “because” → “even when” → “made us” → “and ...” → “so that”
 - a. the power of God flows from the nature of God and for a divine reason (v. 4)
 - b. the power of God is in spite of our naturally dead spiritual condition (v. 5a)
 - c. the power of God makes us alive with Christ (as an act of grace, a divine choice; v. 5b)
 - d. the power of God connects us to Christ in his resurrection and in his position (v. 6)
 - e. the power of God demonstrates his divine purpose in redemption (v. 7)

c. the flow in the power of God

1. “being rich in mercy” = the nature of God from which his power to save flows
 - a. **note** “riches” used in **1:7** and **1:18** to denote the *extent* and *value* of our inheritance (**as here**)
 1. (**again**) an **ontological** reality of the character of God – God *is* rich in mercy – his character overflows with a sense of something concrete being exercised towards his own
 - b. “mercy” = pity; compassion; tenderness; kindness; grace; favor towards
 1. lit. compassion towards those in helpless distress or debt who possess no claim to favorable treatment; a choice to act benevolently towards someone who doesn’t deserve it (**i.e.** grace)
 2. (**in divine reckoning**) the opposite of **justice** – to choose to forgive the consequences of sin
 - c. **truth: what humans need most from God (more than any physical thing) is mercy**
2. “because of the great love with which he loved us” = the reason that God exerts his power of mercy
 - a. “agape” = the kind of divine affection exhibited without regard to 1) the worthiness of the one receiving it or 2) the requite (receipt of it back) of that affection by the one being loved
 1. **IOW:** a love that is unselfish and unconditional by virtue of worthiness (**1 John 4:10**)
“In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us [unconditionally] and sent his Son [unselfishly] to be the propitiation for our sins.”
 2. **popular:** love as a selfish *emotion*, a set of *feelings* from a temporary view (**e.g.** falling in love)
 3. **principle: God exerts his divine power to save because of something within himself, not something within us – he does not love us because we love him**
 - b. **note** (from “mercy” and “love”): in reformed circles, we have a tendency to focus on the justice and wrath of God, whereas the synergist has a tendency to focus on the mercy and love of God
 1. **i.e.** to “right” the imbalance, we have a tendency to swing the pendulum too far
 2. it is essential that we properly balance the full nature of God in our presentation of the gospel
3. “even when we were dead” = it is *over* our naturally dead spiritual condition that God exerts his power
 - a. **reality: there is no resurrection where there is no death (contra the synergist)!!**
 - b. the power of the gospel is the power of God to deal with the dead
4. “made us alive together with Christ” = the power of God is to raise dead sinners with Christ
 - a. regeneration = the creative work of the Spirit of God by which he 1) imparts spiritual life into the nature (soul) of a dead reprobate and 2) brings forth that life from its hidden depths in the dual actions of repentance and faith (**John 1:13; 3:1-8; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 2:29; 3:9**)
“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.” (1 John 5:1)
 1. it is a work **entirely** of God and by his power (it is not a “cooperative” effort)
 2. it is a work that **precedes** any spiritual response (it is a resurrection; “made alive”)
 3. it is a work that is **instantaneous** in its effect upon the whole *Imago Dei* (not a gradual work)
 4. it is a work that produces **both** a new heart in the believer **and** a corresponding life of faith
 5. it is a work that creates a radical change of the **disposition** of the soul (a desire to do good)
 - b. **every true follower of Jesus experiences this radical change of nature and disposition – false converts “confess” a connection to Jesus, but their dead nature remains**
 1. that is why Jesus said “you will recognize them by their fruits” (**Matt. 7:15-20**) and followed that with “not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven” (**v. 21**)
 2. the (**most important**) evidence of the “new birth” is a desire for holiness and sinlessness
 - c. **principle: God exerts his divine power to raise dead sinners, to do in them spiritually what he did for Jesus physically**
5. “and raised us up with him and seated us with him ...” = the power of God to connect us to Christ
 - a. “raised us up with him” = a repetition of the above phrase (“made alive”)
 1. just as Jesus was raised from the dead (quicken), so we have been raised from deadness
 - b. “seated us with him” = a state of *inclusion* in the power and position of Christ
 1. **note** “heavenly places” used in **1:3** – the abode of God; his presence; where his decrees and purposes originate – the place where our blessings in Christ are *real* and *realized*
 2. **note** “seated” used in **1:20** – the place of power; the right hand of God; where the Son of God executes the power and authority of the Godhead over all things
 3. “in Christ Jesus” = in the redemptive purpose that God had in Christ; to include (graft) a people into all of the *intimate* blessings of the Son in relation to the Father

- c. **principle: God exerts his divine power to seat his elect at the right hand of Jesus, at the most intimate place where God speaks to them through him**
 - 1. **e.g. (Boice)** the place of honor at a meal was at the right hand of the host (**John 13:35-36**)
- 6. “so that ... he might show ...” =
 - a. “coming ages” = throughout the *eschaton*; throughout the history of the church and straight on into eternity; the kingdom of God (heaven)
 - b. “immeasurable riches” = the continued blessing that comes from knowing God, from receiving his “kindness” (in every way imaginable), from being included in his “future”
 - c. **principle: God exerts his divine power to “graft” his elect into everything that he has promised to his Son, to include them in his eternal plan to glorify the Son above all else**
- d. the center of the power of God**
 - 1. against the backdrop of our spiritual *necrosis*, the Father has *chosen* to exercise his divine power
 - a. because of his nature of mercy and love, in spite of our hatred toward him and condemnation
 - b. to endow us with new life, and to draw that life out of us by his Spirit
 - c. to include us in every spiritual blessing that was preordained to be given to the Son
 - 2. “by grace you have been saved” = all of this is an act of *grace*
 - a. **the real power of God is his grace – his willingness to extend kindness to us, to smell the awful stench rising from our rotting, sinful corpses, yet to touch us and give us life**
 - b. those who truly know saving faith in Christ know that this power has been exercised in them – they take no credit for it for themselves, but give the glory to a resurrecting God alone