

Subject: God's Best Gifts: Salvation, Part 2

Scripture: Ephesians 2:1-10

The amount of money spent on Christmas gifts worldwide is estimated to be over \$1 trillion, but there is one gift that is worth more than all those gifts put together... God's gift of salvation. It is a gift that money can't buy and death can't take away. It's a gift that only God can give. This text in Ephesians tells us what we are saved from, how we are saved, and some of the rich blessings we have in salvation.

In our last message we saw our need of salvation and God's blessings in salvation. Verses 1-3 show us that we need to be saved from spiritual death, depravity, the devil's control, our disobedience, the desires of the flesh and the mind, and the destruction of God's wrath.

Verse 4 is the turning point ("But God"). God is rich in mercy and great in love toward lost sinners. He shows the exceeding riches of his grace toward us through Christ Jesus. By God's grace in salvation we have all these blessings: forgiveness and cleansing of sin; justification; redemption; adoption; reconciliation; sanctification; and glorification.

We have been saved from the penalty of sin. We are being saved from the power of sin. And we will be saved from the presence and possibility of sin.

In this message I want us to see what the Bible teaches about receiving the gift of salvation. By grace God provides the gift of salvation and by grace he makes us willing and able to receive salvation. We see this in our text.

1. God gives us spiritual life (regeneration)

Twice in this passage we read that God has quickened us or made us alive (vs. 1, 5). We were dead in trespasses and sins. Dead means we were lifeless, spiritually unresponsive toward God). In Christ we have new life and we have been born again.

John 3:5-7 ⁵ *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

The truth of regeneration was not new, but was clearly taught in the Old Testament.

John 3:10 *Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?*

Ezekiel 36:26-27 ²⁶ *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. ²⁷ And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*

1 Peter 1:23 *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

Only God can give birth and new life. R. C. Sproul: “Regenerate people are new creations. Where formerly they had no disposition, inclination, or desire for the things of God, now they are disposed and inclined toward God. In regeneration, God plants a desire for Himself in the human heart that otherwise would not be there.”

Paul describes our walk (conduct, way of life) before we are saved and then after we are saved. In 2:1-3, he describes the old walk. And in 4:17-24, he describes the new walk. Notice again in verse 24, the new man is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Augustine is known as one of the greatest theologians of the Christian faith, but before his salvation he was known for his sinful life. Shortly after his conversion, one of his old girl friends saw him and called out, “Hey there, Augustine, it’s me.” He said, “Yes, I see that, but it’s not me.”

2. God makes us aware of our sinful condition (conviction)

The Holy Spirit convinces us of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

John 16:7-11⁷ Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.⁸ And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:⁹ Of sin, because they believe not on me;¹⁰ Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;¹¹ Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

The Holy Spirit uses God’s law to reveal our sin.

Romans 3:19-20¹⁹ Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Romans 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

3. God gives us a heart to repent and believe

God provided salvation for the world through the gift of Christ (John 3:16), but most people have never received His precious gift of salvation. Why not? Why wouldn’t every person jump at the chance to be saved? They don’t have a heart for it.

John 1:10-13¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.¹¹ He came unto his own, and his own received him not.¹² But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:¹³ Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

The blessings of salvation are applied when we repent of sin and believe in Christ. Even repentance and faith is a gift from God (Eph. 2:8).

Acts 11:18 *When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.*

2 Timothy 2:24-25 ²⁴ *And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,* ²⁵ *In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.*

Philippians 2:12-13 ¹² *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.* ¹³ *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

Our salvation is a gift of God's grace from start to finish. God made a plan to save us. He sent His Son to provide salvation. He works in our hearts to apply the blessings of salvation to us personally.

Paul ties all of this together in Ephesians 2:8-10.

Ephesians 2:8-10 ⁸ *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:* ⁹ *Not of works, lest any man should boast.* ¹⁰ *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

Notice that we (believers) are God's workmanship (Gk., *poema*, masterpiece) created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Only God can create something.

- 1) *By grace* – salvation is possible
- 2) *Through faith* – salvation is personal
- 3) *Unto good works* – salvation is practical

In salvation, God does something *for* us so He can do something *to* us so He can do something *through* us. Jesus died for us on Calvary and then God applies the blessings of salvation to us at a point in time when we turn from our sin and trust Christ as Savior. How do we know our salvation is real? It shows up in the way we live and serve.

Salvation is the best gift that God could ever give us and it is the greatest thing God could ever do for us.