

By Grace Through Faith (Ephesians 2:1–10)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (3/21/2021)

Introduction

Three principles are in the text.

1. The universal state of humans is one of spiritual death, subjecting all to Satan and one's own corrupt affections, leaving them helpless and hopeless in a state of condemnation from which there is no human remedy (vv. 1–3).

Arthur Pink wrote: “Multitudes desire to be saved from hell (the natural instinct of self-preservation) who are quite unwilling to be saved from sin.”

2. The change that the Ephesian believers experienced was a *spiritual resurrection*—regeneration—concerning which the apostle teaches that God is life and gives life (vv. 4–6). Regeneration is the fruit of His love (as shown by the discrimination of the recipients of life as the *gift* of grace). This new life comes through Christ—through the believer's union with Him. This union with Christ involves great exaltation and association with Him in His glory.
3. The explanation of the design of this dispensation is a manifestation of grace because salvation is the gift of God's mercy (vv. 8–10). Grace is the act of *gifting*; mercy is the *disposition* of the Giver granting the gift, which is relief from judgment (wrath)—*salvation*. The fact that the Ephesian believers accepted this gift of salvation was not due to themselves but to God alone. Faith is “*the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.*” Good works are the fruits, not of nature, but of grace. We were created unto good works.

I. Grace Alone

“*For by grace you have been saved [perfect tense] through faith—and this too is not from you—it is the gift of God, not the result of works, so that no one may boast*” (Eph. 2:8, 9).

1. Grace is the sole means of salvation. The whole issue falls on the word “only.” All agree that salvation is of grace through faith in the work of Jesus Christ; however, many disagree on the place of works, obedience, and faithful adherence to religious tradition in salvation.
 - a. This brings us to ask, what is grace? The Greek term is *charis* (*charis*)—“the favor of one toward another.” It assumes inability in the one who is shown favor. It also assumes unworthiness in the one shown favor.
 - b. The root of *charis* is the idea of *gift*, and the response to gifting is *thanking* for the gifting.
 - c. You were *children of wrath*—being guilty and condemned, which required pardon and forgiveness.
3. The operation of grace (vv. 4–10)—“*But God.*”
 - a. God is wealthy in *mercy*, which is in His nature to express.
 - b. His expression of mercy is driven by His great *love*.
 - c. His action in grace was to identify His people with Christ, which act was a *judicial*, not experiential, operation.

- d. Paul's enthusiasm in rehearsing this great truth prompted the parenthetical interjection ("*by grace you have been saved*"), which restates the action. Paul's response was like that of Moses, to whom the Lord revealed His glorious Person on Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:6, 7).
4. The result of grace is the salvation of His people.
 - a. This grace gives real *meaning* to our lives.
 - b. This grace brings real *joy* to our hearts.
 - c. This grace puts real *worship* on our lips.
 - d. This grace instills *strength* and *resolve* in our fight with remaining corruption.

II. Faith Alone

"For by grace you have been saved [perfect tense] through faith—and this too is not from you—it is the gift of God, not the result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9).

1. It is by *faith*, not works, which excludes any notion that faith is the sinner's contribution to the saving process. Faith cannot be the sinner's response to the offer of grace. Why? While faith is necessary to salvation, it cannot be the sinner's response to grace because the sinner is *dead* in trespasses and sins. It would be like going to a funeral and having the one officiating offer life if the deceased will only accept the offer. Faith is either the gift of God or it is a work of man (John 6:28, 29).
2. How is faith a gift? It is the most *logical* noun reference to the pro-noun "that" (better, "this"). It is the only noun in the reference that we might be tempted to claim as coming from us (not *grace* or *salvation*). "*And this*" has the added emphasis of "*and this too*," pointing to faith as a gift. Paul exalted the marvelous grace of God; to make grace depend on the free exercise of the sinner would demean the glory of grace and detract from Paul's purpose to exalt God in His loving gift to the undeserving sinner.
3. Other Scripture clearly teaches that faith is a gift to sinners (Ephesians 1:19, 20; Philippians 1:29; Colossians 2:12).
4. Three *elements* mark faith that are not possible to sinners but must come to them from God.
 - a. *Knowledge* from the Word of God informs the sinner what he is to believe.
 - b. *Assent* to the truth is possible only as God en-lightens the heart of the sinner to the truth.
 - c. *Trust* in the Savior is possible only as God enables the sinner to see the glorious beauty of Christ in His faithfulness to keep His Word to the sinner.

Conclusion

Why is all this important? Paul is reminding the saints at Ephesus of the glorious nature of their salvation. No one has any hope of eternal life unless God graciously resurrects their dead souls to new life in Christ.

We live in a day when people who strive to be politically correct are sadly ignorant concerning truth. We must get it right, or we are doomed.