

015 - God's Mercy, Love, and Grace - Ephesians 2:1-5 - 2014-08-31

Call to Worship: 1 John 4:19

Scripture Reading: Micah 7:18-19

Sermon: "God's Mercy, Love, and Grace" Ephesians 2:1-5

Benediction: 2 John 1:3

Ephesians 2:1-5 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, (2) in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, (3) among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. (4) But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, (5) even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

The apostle of Jesus Christ prayed for us and taught us to know what amazing power it was that God exerted in bringing us to faith in Jesus Christ. We need to know this so that we don't have too high an opinion of ourselves, as if our repenting of sin and trusting in Christ was somehow our own doing, for which we deserve some praise. We need to know this so that we don't have too low an opinion of God, as if God does not work all things according to the counsel of His own will, but leaves us to work some things ourselves, or works some things according to our will. All of this is so that we may praise God for all the blessings He has given us in Christ Jesus rather than praising ourselves for any of it.

To know this great power of God in bringing us to faith in Christ, we need to understand that it was really a raising of the dead to life. We who were dead, God made alive!

You were dead in trespasses and sins; you were sons of disobedience; you walked with the world under the power of the devil; you fulfilled the desires of your flesh instead of the commandments of God; you were by nature children of wrath.

But God made you alive together with Christ!

Today we read that He did so by two great qualities of His own character---love and mercy. And we see how this salvation God has given us by His love and mercy amounts to a salvation entirely by God's grace.

TEXT: Ephesians 2:1-5

In the text, mercy is mentioned first, but love is mentioned as being the cause for the outpouring of mercy, so let's look at love first

I. God made us who were dead in trespasses to be alive together with Christ because of His great love

A. Love

What is meant by love in this sense:

Puritans (Goodwin, Henry) a desire or inclination or disposition to do good to us as His creatures

B. Great love

What about it makes the apostle say it is great?

1. it is the love of God, therefore it is infinite and perfect

2. it is love entirely from Himself

a. we always love because something in the object of our love moves us

b. God always loves from Himself

3. it is perfect love of the most unlovely object

4. it is self-sacrificing love

that He would love us enough to give His own Son for us when we were rebels against Him

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

5. it is an adopting love

a. having love for your own children is natural

i. they are my own flesh and blood

ii. they look like me

iii. from earliest childhood I teach them how to act, so their behavior is generally acceptable to me

b. having love for adopted children is something different

i. if they are no natural relatives of yours

ii. if they have a different color skin

iii. if they have been in a troubled home, so they misbehave, with deeply-imbedded bad habits hard to break

c. God's adopting love for us is like that, except much higher, more wonderful, because He is Holy God, and we are dead in trespasses and sins, sons of disobedience and children of wrath

illus. imagine you inquire about adoption, and you meet a teenager in a state home for troubled children

i. he has a terrible disease, like AIDS or leprosy

ii. he is horribly dirty; if forced into bathing, dirties himself again

iii. he behaves terribly; he is mean, vindictive, ungrateful

iv. he is a thief and hurts people just out of spite

If two parents loved such a child and adopted him as their own son, that kind of love would give a small glimpse into the nature of God's love for us sinners

d. Yet, of course, we were far more undeserving, far more hateful, far more unlovely, than the worst child you can imagine

C. with which He loved us (v. 4b)

A. what does the apostle mean by "us"?

1. us, the ones who have come to faith in Jesus Christ
2. but starting before we came to Christ

B. Consider Jacob

1. God loved him, not his twin brother, before they were born
2. God loved Jacob despite his being a sinful man

C. This situation was created by God to teach us what it means for God to love us and not others

1. not because of anything we have done right or others have done wrong
Romans 9:10-13 And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (11) (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), (12) it was said to her, "THE OLDER SHALL SERVE THE YOUNGER." (13) As it is written, "JACOB I HAVE LOVED, BUT ESAU I HAVE HATED."

2. in spite of the sinful lives God knew we would lead

D. This idea that God loves His elect in a way in which He does not love anyone else is humbling; if it angers you, I think that is pride; pride must be destroyed in order for you to give all glory to God for your salvation

God made us who were dead in trespasses to be alive together with Christ because of His great love, and

II. God made us who were dead in trespasses to be alive together with Christ by God's riches of mercy

A. Greek word *eleos*

B. What is meant by mercy in this sense:

Puritan (Goodwin, Henry) a desire or inclination to do good to us as miserable creatures, to relieve our misery

Trench, from ISBE: *eleos* has in view misery and its relief

C. God is merciful; it is in His nature to be merciful

D. God is rich in mercy; He has an unlimited treasury of mercy in Himself

E. He is the great reliever of suffering; the great rescuer; the great Savior

Matthew 9:27-30a When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, "Son of David, have mercy on us!" (28) And when He had

come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." (29) Then He touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith let it be to you." (30) And their eyes were opened.

F. The riches of God's mercy are dispensed according to God's great love

1. The Lord Jesus taught us this in the parable of the Good Samaritan, in which the point of the parable was love

a. the man was lying along the road, beaten and dying

b. the priest and the levite did not relieve the man's suffering; that is, they were not merciful

c. the Samaritan relieved the man's misery; this was described as "showing mercy," and this was how it was known that the Samaritan loved him

2. The apostle Paul writes that here (v. 4)

a. the riches of God's mercy were dispensed to us because God loved us with a great love

3. as mentioned above, in talking about love, you see that God loves His elect in a sense in which He does not love other people; that is why He is merciful to His elect, saving them from their misery

Romans 9:14-18 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! (15) For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOMEVER I WILL HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOMEVER I WILL HAVE COMPASSION." (16) So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. (17) For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I HAVE RAISED YOU UP, THAT I MAY SHOW MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MAY BE DECLARED IN ALL THE EARTH." (18) Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

G. This is very humbling, and is meant to be

1. if you find yourself angry about it, I think that it is pride

God made us who were dead in trespasses to be alive together with Christ because of His great love;

God made us who were dead in trespasses to be alive together with Christ by God's riches of mercy; and

III. God making us who were dead in trespasses to be alive together with Christ is a salvation by God's grace

A. What does Paul mean by "by grace you are saved"?

1. He means primarily, by God favoring you when you have not done anything to deserve it

Romans 11:6 And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.

Henry: "the free undeserved goodness and favour of God"

2. He does not mean something actively done in you or to you by His Holy Spirit. We know this because this grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before we actually existed

2 Timothy 1:9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,

3. When we actually came into existence in this life, because God had given us grace in Christ Jesus, He then began to work in us, to give us the power and desire to do His will; the bible calls this "grace," also

4. But, when the bible talks about being saved by grace, it does not mean we are saved by God giving us the power and desire to do His will; it means we are saved by God looking favorably on us when we did not deserve it

5. By grace you are saved = by God favoring you when you did not deserve it you are saved

B. You see that Paul is glorifying the grace of God by showing that if we were dead in trespasses and sins, being sons of disobedience and children of wrath, then we did not deserve any good at all from God. So if we then were saved, of course it must have been entirely by God's grace, not by our works in the least degree, so that all praise must be to God alone, not to ourselves in the least measure.

CONCLUSION

You were dead in trespasses and sins, but God made you alive together with Christ! He did so by two great qualities of His own character---love and mercy. And this salvation God has given us by His love and mercy amounts to a salvation entirely by God's grace.

BUT GOD . . .

He made us who were dead alive

Goodwin:

he speaks of the causes of our salvation, mercy and love.

I begin with love; his shewing mercy is revolved into it.

love: a desire to communicate good, the chiefest good, unto the creature

mercy: to pull the creature out of a depth of misery

Henry:

Love is his inclination to do us good considered simply as creatures; mercy respects us as apostate and as miserable creatures.

He is rich in mercy [G1656 *eleos*]

Luke 1:53-55 He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty. (54) He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His **mercy**, (55) As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever."

Luke 1:67-75 Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: (68) "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, (69) And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, (70) As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began, (71) That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us, (72) To perform the **mercy** promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, (73) The oath which He swore to our father Abraham: (74) To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, (75) In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.

Luke 10:36-37 So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" (37) And he said, "He who showed **mercy** on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Romans 9:22-23 What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, (23) and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of **mercy**, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,

Romans 15:8-9 Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, (9) and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His **mercy**, as it is written: "FOR THIS REASON I WILL CONFESS TO YOU AMONG THE GENTILES, AND SING TO YOUR NAME."

Titus 3:3-7 For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. (4) But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, (5) not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His **mercy** He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, (6) whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, (7) that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Hebrews 4:15-16 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. (16) Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain **mercy** and find grace to help in time of need.

1 Peter 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant **mercy** has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (4) to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

because of His great love with which He loved us

Borgman, referencing “the old writers” and Francis Turretin
three-fold distinction of God’s love

love of benevolence: the desire to do good to someone

Turretin: He loved us before we were; elects

love of beneficence: actually doing the good

Turretin: He loves us as we are; redeems and sanctifies

love of complacency: God delights Himself in the creature on account of His image in them; He is pleased with the creature

Turretin: He loves us when we are; rewards us as holy and obedient

Borgman quoting Packer

“God loves all men in some ways and some men in all ways.”

By grace you have been saved

Henry:

The grace that saves them is the free undeserved goodness and favour of God