

By Grace Are Ye Saved Through Faith
Ephesians 2:1-10, Judica (Passion) Sunday
March 21, 2010

Beloved of the Lord.....Ephesians chapter two is one of the most beautiful chapters in all the Bible. Like John 3:16 we should commit to memory, Ephesians 2:8-9. "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." Chapter two concerns itself mainly with spiritual life and death. "Even when we were dead in sins, hath [He] quickened us together with Christ, by grace ye are saved." Believers in Christ have true spiritual life, even everlasting life, because Christ our life first tasted the most bitter pangs of death on the cross, that we who were dead might live. Death is made sweet in that since Jesus by His death conquer our enemy of death, death is now for us but the window to life everlasting. Jesus said "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

This week I found myself wondering, what would happen if God permitted one of His heavenly saints to return and tell us what takes place at the moment of death? They would certainly tell us with the greatest of joy how the angels immediately carried their soul into paradise where they saw their Beautiful Savior face to face. They would go on and on and on about how wonderful heaven was, the garden, the angels, the saints, the singing, the rivers and streams. Indeed to hear them speak for just a few minutes would make us very anxious for death, and we could not wait for Jesus to take us home. Therefore dear Christians when we consider that hard subject of death, it is for the believer the entrance into life everlasting. Through Christ we have been raised from the dead, that we may sit together with Him in heavenly places.

I. Christians were once dead too. Let us begin now with verse one. "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." This is not physical death, but spiritual death. Christians are by nature spiritually blind, dead, and an enemy of God. We are the sinful offspring of our sinful parents, born on the sinful side of darkness, born in sin - hence we must be born again. This is also why even after the new birth Christians will discover quite often evil and perverse thoughts within, and all manner of dark evil brooding. Even with faith we find the old man within us is just as dead as he's always been. He is that part of us who reasons we don't deserve the eternal punishments of hell for our sins. While we have no problem saying Hitler, Stalin, and the like deserve hell for their sins, we don't want to think the same thing for us. Whom have I murdered?... we reason. But God reveals our guilt of

heart in I John 3 says, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."

Thus "wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Before the quickening of the Holy Spirit, we served Satan alone and the carnal pleasures of the flesh. We did as we pleased, disobeyed God's commandments, served the devil and sin. This is the naturally sinful state of every man. There is no difference between Jew or Gentile, American or Muslim, high class low class, rich or poor, for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." If we think we are by nature better than the heathen, the very thought of pride reveals we are just as bad, if not worse: for adulterers, murders, and fornicators know they are adulterers, murderers, and fornicators. But all who are self-righteous will refuse to admit they are adulterers, murderers, and fornicators at heart. The sinner who outwardly hides and covers up his sins with holiness is further away from God's kingdom than the open sinner who doesn't deny his sin. This is why Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men's* bones, and of all uncleanness." Hell is filled with not only adulterers and fornicators, but also many good, upright, and fine religious people who thought they had no real sins to repent of. Will we be that Pharisee who thinks they lived a holy life, or will we repent of our unholy life, and find in Christ the holy life we need? True Christians well know they are totally and absolutely dead in trespasses and sins, and that is why they rejoice that Christ is their life.

II. All glory belongs to God alone for the grace through Christ which saves us, and the faith to believe it. Because "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love where with he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ!" Here then we see there is life after death, because God is RICH in mercy, and God freely gives His mercy to sinners through Christ! To be merciful is to have compassion on those who are only worthy of death. To be gracious is to show love toward those who is not worthy of such love. Grace is God's love toward undeserving sinners. "Grace is the divine mercy, favor, and love which had been intended toward the sinner from eternity, gained by the Son of God in time and revealed by the Holy Ghost in forgiveness of sins" (Gosswein).

Thus when we speak of grace and the riches of God's mercies, we must always include Christ in the definition. For there are those in our world who speak of grace in such a way, that God is gracious without Christ. In doing so they take away the great cost of our sin, the very payment of God's blood absolutely necessary if men are to be saved. Such people want a gracious God who allows sin and they make God's grace a license to sin. They also demote Christ into a moral figure, a good example, a false savior who winks at sin and allows it. They do not understand nor do they really believe if men were to be saved from hell, Jesus would have to suffer the most excruciating and shameful death of the cross in order to turn God's heart from wrath to love. Such people speak of grace, grace, grace, and God's love, love, love, but have no comprehension of either God's grace or love, for they do not really believe their sins merit flames of hell. They are still their own savior. They are still trying to climb the ladder into heaven. They are still looking within for something good which caused God to come and save them.

But the truth of the matter is that because of sin there was nothing good in us which moved God to come and save us. There were no works lest any man should boast. Rather God was moved by mercy and compassion within Himself. He looked with pity upon the entire human race of mankind His great heart dear sinner, yearned for your salvation. I must come and save them! I will come and save them! Christ therefore came forth out of the heavenly bosom of God the Father. Likewise the Father gave from His heart, His heavenly Son, His greatest treasure. Jesus came with healing in His wings. Jesus would pay that price we could not pay. When we see our Savior bleeding and suffering, enduring the most bitter pangs of death upon the cross, we begin to see the great cost of our sin. When we understand Jesus wanted to do this to save us from our sins, we begin to see how great, how infinite God's love truly is. Who is worthy of such a love as this? Are you? Am I? It is our own unworthiness which makes Christ so worthy. Moreover since Christ was a willing and worthy sacrifice who made full atonement for all sins, God through Christ declares all the sins of the world forgiven! Your sins, my sins, our sins of hatred, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, blasphemy, they are indeed truly forgiven us from God's reconciled heart. Jesus came "that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace IN HIS KINDNESS TOWARD US THROUGH Christ Jesus."

This is why dear Christian you know well, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves." Both the grace that God through Christ has given, and the faith to believe it, are gifts of God,

"not of works, lest any man should boast." When the Holy Spirit teaches our dead hearts that Christ is our life, it is as Jesus calling to life dead Lazarus from the tomb. Though we are spiritually blind, dead, and enemies of God by nature, God preaches the Gospel of Jesus Christ into our dead ears that our dead hearts may be quickened and believe "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief". We are totally passive in our own conversion, namely the Holy Spirit comes to the dead patient, operates on the dead patient, and He replaces the stony heart with an heart of flesh. When we see Christ by faith, when we know Him by faith to be who He is, namely the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world, we break forth from our spiritual grave, we are born again "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature!" Who then would dare to take credit for their own faith? Shall we boast? Shall we brag? If a father gives a son a gift at Christmastime, will the son tear open the present and say, "This present is mine because I unwrapped it!" Such would be pure folly! Yet such is the fool who takes credit for their own faith. Such a "faith" is no faith at all, for true faith is not our work but "the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast."

III. Do good works out of thanks to Him who loved you first. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Indeed "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Since He has done all, there is nothing left to do, but live for Him, "that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." Throughout our life then God has ordained, He has ordered and arranged good works for us to do, namely we are to obey His Ten Commandments by faith and love. Therefore love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself. Since Christ has indeed done all things for our salvation, there is nothing left to be done but praise Him by good works. Walk then in faith, in the path God has given you, then "When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Amen.