

The Marvelous Grace of Our Loving Lord, Part 2

Ephesians 2:4-6

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Would you turn with me to Ephesians Chapter 2 as we continue in our study on “The marvelous grace of our loving Lord.” Verse 8 is one of the key verses of all of Chapter 2. If you will look there again, let’s read that and understand afresh a little what he is saying: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God.”

It’s wonderful to me to see how God has worked salvation. If a man goes to hell, he can never blame God, but if a man goes to heaven and is saved, he can never pat himself on the back. God has orchestrated it in such a way that it is just absolutely magnificent. “It is by grace that we are saved through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast.” Grace is what only God can do to a man, for a man, in a man and through a man that a man could never deserve on this earth, and certainly could never do himself.

Let’s go back and read verses 1, 2 and 3: “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.” That’s the backdrop. The apostle Paul is showing the Ephesian believers where they had come from. He shows that awful, awful mire of sin.

Verses 4-10 gives us the most beautiful picture of the grace of God. It’s always up against the backdrop of the blackness of man’s sin. We looked at the giver of grace in our last study. We discovered some wonderful things about Him. It says in Verse 4, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,…” He’s full of love, and because He’s full of love, He’s full of mercy. Now remember, grace and mercy are two sides of the same coin. Grace deals with the sin. Mercy deals with the consequences of our sin. It says He is rich in mercy. Mercy always is that wonderful thing that we are so desperate for. Yes, we can be forgiven, but oh, the consequences to what we have chosen.

We used to have a sign in front of the church that read, “You are free to choose whatever you want to choose, but you are not free to choose it’s consequences.” Those consequences are what are so difficult. The main consequence of verses 1, 2 and 3 is that we were separated from God. God, being rich in mercy, sent Jesus to this earth to die for our sins, to help us to bear up under and to bring us out of the mire of that consequence. God cares about you and about me. He is full of mercy. He is rich in mercy. Why is He? Be-

cause He loves us, He died on a cross to prove His love for all of us.

So much then for the giver of grace. Let's look at the quickening of grace. Look at verse 5: "...even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)." Now think about the quickening power of that grace. Grace, being what God alone can do to a man, in a man, for a man and through a man, made us alive together with Christ. Paul says we were in a state of deadness when God's grace intervened. He says, "we were dead in our transgressions." The tense there when it says "we were dead" is present active. Literally it would be, "we were existing as dead people." We looked at that in verses 1, 2 and 3, and now we see it again in verse 5.

Now to make sure you understand that, let's go over it again. Man's spiritual life was lost when Adam sinned. A man without Christ has no spiritual life whatsoever. Yes, he has a spirit, but God's Spirit is no longer in his spirit. He cannot know God, communicate with God, or understand anything about God. His spiritual life was lost when Adam sinned. Man's soul, at the same time, was immediately disengaged from the wisdom and the knowledge of God when Adam sinned. Man could no longer understand God, comprehend God or know God's will. Man's body began to decay when Adam sinned. Now this is the state of deadness that men were in. While we were existing as dead people, in the state of being dead, through His grace, God did what no one else could ever do: He made us alive together with Christ.

When a person receives Jesus Christ, at the very moment of receiving Christ, he is immediately made alive in Christ. That spiritual life comes back within him. Let's look at the text a minute. The Greek word for "made alive" is *szuzoopoieo*. It comes from two Greek words, *sun*, which means "together with" and *zooopoieo*, which "means to make alive or to quicken." It's an aorist indicative active which means at a certain point in time. In other words, the very moment I bowed down and received Jesus into my life, immediately I was made alive with Christ. You see, God has given me back that spiritual life.

What does it mean to be made alive together with Christ? Jesus rose from the dead, completely and wholly arose from the dead. Jesus now has given us as complete a resurrection from a life of sin to a life of righteousness as His body had being raised from the dead.

When we believe, immediately the first thing that had disappeared in the garden is regained: spiritual life comes back within. That's part of that resurrection. That's part of that newness of life that we are talking about. I John 5:12 says that he who has the Son has the life. The life comes back in. If you have never received Christ, you don't understand God, you can't communicate with God, your prayers go unanswered. When you do receive Christ, then the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, comes in and that life returns. You are raised to walk in newness of life. It's a brand new day when a person becomes a believer. It's a resurrection of spiritual life.

Immediately something else happens. Somehow we now can understand the things of God. Why? Because the Spirit who is that life, now brings with Him the ability that we need to understand spiritual truth. It doesn't happen overnight. There is a progression. This is what sanctification is all about. I've got to make some choices. I've got to get in the Book. I've got to know Him by obeying Him. All of this progressively begins to happen, but there's been a resurrection. There's been a newness of life. Now I can understand the deep things of God.

I Corinthians 2 says we didn't receive the spirit of the world, but the spirit is from God

who teaches us the deep things and searches the deep things of God. That's why Romans 12:2 says that we ought to renew our minds. Rip out the old way of thinking and put in the new way of thinking. There has been a resurrection not only to spiritual life, but now the ability to comprehend His wisdom, His will, and His Word.

One day, the third thing that was effected in the garden when Adam sinned will be restored: our bodies will resurrect one day. When we die, we put our bodies in the ground. Why do we do that? Well, it's like planting a body. When you plant it, what do you expect it to do? You expect it to come up one of these days. We know what is going to happen to that body. When we are saved, a newness of life comes in, and one day everything that was lost in the garden will be restored. It's a resurrection of a brand new life that God has given to us.

I Corinthians 15 documents that it will take place. I Thessalonians 4:13-18 tell us when it is going to take place, at the Rapture of the Church. That final thing that needs to be restored is going to be given back to us, a glorified body. In the same progression that it was lost, it will come back. We have been raised up with Christ Jesus. We have been made alive with Him. Oh, the quickening power of the grace of God. He's not just the giver of grace but He's also the quickener of grace.

Look at that little last phrase there in verse 5: "by grace you have [already] been saved." It was God's grace that reached down and saved us. It was what He could do, not what man could do. The word "saved" means "delivered out of, to be rescued." It comes from the word *sozo*. The perfect tense is used there. When the perfect tense is used it describes the state that something now is permanently in. We were in a permanent state of what? Being dead in our trespasses and in our sins. Because of the grace of God we have been rescued out and made alive with Christ Jesus. What God makes alive, He keeps alive. It is in the passive voice. It is not up to us. It's up to Him.

If you've been saved, you've been born from above, made alive in Christ and made inseparable from the mysterious union that man now has with Him. That's the quickening of grace. Oh, the marvelous grace of our loving Lord. He's the giver of grace. He's full of compassion. He's full of mercy. How do we know that? Jesus came and died. Why? To effect a brand new way of living for you and me. I once was dead, but now I am alive with Christ Jesus. We are not the same anymore.

You know caterpillars are not really fun to look at, are they? That caterpillar secretes a little fluid inside of its own body and makes a cocoon that he wraps around himself. He loses all of his identity. You wouldn't know it was a caterpillar with that cocoon wrapped around him. Then one day, something happens. That cocoon begins to break open, and you wouldn't recognize that little caterpillar. He is a brand new creature. We call that metamorphosis.

That's the word "transform" in Romans 12:2 when it says, "Be ye transformed," that means "be ye metamorphosized." "Be ye being changed and transformed in your life." That's what happens to us. When you are a believer, you are no longer the same. You've been made alive with Christ. Just as the order in the garden was lost, now it is going to be regained. The final thing will be the glorification of our body.

First of all we saw the giver of grace. Then we saw the quickening of grace. Now thirdly the identification of grace. Verse 6 is the toughest verse I've dealt with in a long time. What do I mean by the identification of grace? Well, there are two words that stress identification. One is the word "with," and the other one is "in."

Look in Verse 6: “and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places*, in Christ Jesus.” The word, “with” and the word “in” are identification words. I’m in Him. Somehow, we are identified mysteriously together. We are one together. Not only did God make us alive with Christ, but He raised us up and seated us with Christ in the heavenlies.

We’ve been raised up and seated with Christ Jesus in the heavenly places. I think in order to believe it, we’ve got to better understand it. Look back in 1:20. Look where Jesus is seated: “which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*.” He is seated by the Father in the heavenlies. Now I am in Him so, therefore, I am seated with Him in the heavenlies at the right hand of the Father.

Maybe somehow this is what was on Paul’s mind when he wrote Romans 8:37. Here’s Paul, talking about always being a conqueror: “But in all these things [speaking of persecution] we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.” He is saying we are always conquerors in Jesus Christ. Now wait a minute. We know that Christians are martyred, we know that Christians die; what does he mean, “we are always conquerors in Christ Jesus”? Could he have on his mind that positionally we are seated in the heavenlies with Christ Jesus?

Look in II Corinthians 2:14. He says, “But thanks be to God, who always lead us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.”

We saw in Ephesians 1 that Christ is far above all rule and dominion and powers and every name that’s ever been named. He’s seated at the right hand of the Father, and mysteriously, we are seated with Him in the heavenly places. We are identified in Him and with Him. Those are identification words. Paul was in a Roman prison when he wrote Ephesians, and yet there’s no smell of a prison in Ephesians. There is no clank of prison chains to be heard. Why? Because Paul is not bound in his spirit. He is only bound in his body. Where is his spirit? Well, technically and positionally, it is seated in Christ in the heavenly places. He is identified completely and wholly in Jesus. He claims not to be a prisoner of Rome in Ephesians. He says, “I am a prisoner of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul knows that he is in Christ and seated with Christ. Therefore, he can go through anything down here on this earth. His spirit is free, though his body is imprisoned.

This is positional truth. Yes, we are down here, but we are seated in the heavenlies with Christ Jesus. It’s finished. It’s done. It’s over as far as God sees it. We are victorious in Christ, and we are always led in His triumph.

The key to understanding this is in the word “heavenlies.” He is saying to those people at Ephesus, “You are at Ephesus but you are in Christ.” We are in Chattanooga, but we are in Christ. Yes, we are here, but we are there! That’s hard to grab hold of. The word “heavenlies” there refers to the things that pertain to or that are in heaven. Now we’ve got to realize that we are not of this world. Paul has already shown us this in the same book. Ephesians 1:3 says, “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ.” In other words, they are not material blessings. This is something much greater than that. They are the spiritual blessings of God.

So another way of saying we are seated in the heavenlies is to say we are no longer of this world. We are in it, but we are not of it. We are of a different world. We do not live as

if we are still dead in our trespasses and our sins. We don't walk according to the course of this world any more. Our position is now in Christ. What did it used to be? It used to be that we belonged to the world. If you know somebody that is lost that doesn't know Jesus, they totally belong to the world and the devil until they come to receive Christ in their life. That is the only moment they will know freedom from the domination of their flesh and from the domination of Satan using their lives.

I want you to see one more thing. In 2:6 it says, "...and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places*." He seated us. You know, that depicts rest. We can rest, folks, because we are in Him and we are with Him. In Him we find and have our victory. We triumph in Him. Whatever happens to us down here can't affect what's going on in that inner man and in that position that we have spiritually with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Have you learned to rest in the conqueror who is far above all principalities and powers. I thought I had, but something will pop up, and immediately I get under it, and I forget. All I have to do is listen to Him. He is the One who has already conquered. If I'll just surrender to Him, I can rest in the fact that He's far above all principalities and all power. Nothing can come against you or against me that He cannot handle. He is far above. We are seated with Him. Don't ever get the idea you can do anything. It is what He does in accordance to our willingness to surrender to Him.

That's why it says in Ephesians 5, "Be filled with the Spirit." If that wasn't in there, then we could be arrogant. But no, it says you have to be up under the control of the Holy Spirit of God. As you are, then you walk in victory, and you are always caused to triumph. He has seated us with Him in the heavenlies.