

## Text— Ephesians 2:4-10

Fellow redeemed sinners, redeemed by the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

The words of our Scripture selection are addressed specifically to Christians, for the book of Ephesians opens with the following words: “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 1:1) Yes, folks with faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord are saints in view of the fact that Jesus’ perfect righteousness is imputed to them. Therefore, we Christians are the people to whom the words of our text especially apply.

Interestingly, throughout the book of Ephesians the term “grace” is used twelve times within its six chapters, with three of those usages being found in our sermon text. Therefore, as we meditate upon our Scripture selection, it’s quite appropriate for us Christians to consider the fact we are:

“SAVED BY GOD’S GRACE”

With that as our theme may we, in view of our text and with the help of the Holy Ghost, see—

- 1) What God’s grace is and why we need it
- 2) How we have been saved by God’s grace
- 3) How we are to respond to God for His saving us by His grace

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Verses 4 & 5, ----- (Ephesians 2:4-5)

To really appreciate the opening words of our text it is necessary we realize the spiritual condition of original sin in which we were born into this world, for in Ephesians 2:1-3 we read: “you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 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: Among whom also we all

had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

Note well that we were spiritually dead by nature, following the devil and the sinful lusts of our corrupt flesh, and therefore subject to God’s wrath in view of our sinfulness. Indeed, by nature every naturally conceived human being is dead in trespasses and sins, and is consequently headed for hell since Romans 6:23 clearly states: “the wages of sin is death”; “but” – and praise God for that “but” – “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Yes, it’s as our text says as it opens by informing us: *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace ye are saved.*

Think about it. We undeserving sinners who by nature are children of God’s just wrath have been rescued by the very same holy God since He is *rich in mercy* and *great love*. God loves us, for He has shown the greatest of love and mercy in sending us a Savior in the person of Jesus Christ, for 1 John 4:9-10 relates: “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Oh, we all deserve never-ending death and damnation, but God graciously sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem us, “Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification,” as Romans 4:25 informs us.

Take it to heart that because of our sinfulness we deserve death and damnation since we are by nature spiritually dead in trespasses and sins; and yet, God in His magnificent mercy and great love sent us a Savior, Jesus Christ, and *hath quickened us together with Christ— by grace ye are saved.* Indeed, God’s grace is His love and mercy shown to

us undeserving sinners! God's grace is His unmerited favor shown to us in the person of Jesus Christ who has rescued us from never-ending death and damnation! We Christians have been raised to spiritual life because Jesus died for our sins on the tree of the cross and was raised to life again after three days in the grave.

Take it to heart that our text teaches that we are saved 100% by God's grace shown to us in Christ Jesus. We are NOT saved in whole or in the least part by our own works because we are by nature spiritually dead, and spiritually dead people are unable to do anything to raise themselves to spiritual life, just as physically dead people cannot do anything to raise themselves to physical life, as was the case for instance with Lazarus of old. Recall that it took Jesus' powerful word to raise Lazarus from the dead after the man lay rotting in the grave for four days. Looking at John 11:43-44 we learn that Jesus "cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go." Thus, only the Lord can give life to the dead— whether they be physically dead or spiritually dead.

Hence, let us never forget that God's grace is God's undeserved love— His love and mercy especially shown to us undeserving sinners in sending His only begotten Son who kept God's Law perfectly for us and who paid for our lack of keeping God's Law, for Jesus shed His holy and precious blood to pay for all of our sins in full. 1 Peter 1:18-19 clearly states: "ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Romans 5:6-8 adds, "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Realize that we would be forever lost if not

for God's amazing grace— God's undeserved love, unmerited favor.

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As we continue to ponder our text, let us further see how we have been saved by God's grace.

Verses 4-7, ----- (Ephesians 2:4-7)

*Not only did God in immeasurable love and mercy send His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to keep the Law perfectly for us sinners and to pay for our lack of keeping the Law, But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*

Think about it. God has graciously made us – you and me, fellow Christians – alive together with Christ! God has mercifully and lovingly applied Jesus' life-giving merits to us undeserving sinners! Indeed, it's as we read in 2 Corinthians 5:19, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." Furthermore, God has *raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus*, who says to His followers – His Christians – in John 14:1-3, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Fellow Christians: a wonderful future in heavenly places awaits us by God's grace! It is our's now in Christ, and will be fully enjoyed by us later when

we depart this life. Jesus lives and reigns to all eternity! Jesus lives, and we too shall live forever with Him according to body and soul by the grace of God and His almighty power, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (1 Corinthians 13:12; Philippians 3:20-21) Thanks and praise be to our gracious God and Savior!

Verses 8 & 9, -----. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

We are all familiar with the Bible verse, John 3:16, which says, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." So, faith in Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior and Lord is necessary if one would receive the forgiveness of sins and the salvation which Jesus earned for the whole world, for John 3:17-18 informs us, "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Hence, unbelief leaves one condemned to hell.

Nevertheless, belief in Christ – that is, faith in Christ – is NOT something the individual has by his or her own power and choice since we human beings are by nature spiritually dead, as we noted earlier from Holy Scripture. Accordingly, our text states in no uncertain terms: *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.*

Note well that we are saved BY GOD'S GRACE THROUGH FAITH; we are NOT saved BY faith. Faith is but the God-given means through which the individual personally receives the forgiveness of

sins and salvation which God has graciously provided by the redemptive work of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Faith is itself a gift of God's grace and is NOT of our own doing since our text clearly states: *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.*

I get sick and tired of hearing people say they made a decision for Christ as if they had such a power. Holy Scripture is quite clear, for besides what we just read in our text, Holy Writ also declares: "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (1 Corinthians 12:3; Romans 8:7) Additionally, Jesus once clearly said to His followers: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." (John 15:16) Realize that our own works do NOT save us in whole or in part, nor is genuine faith in Jesus Christ a result of our own works in whole or in part. God does the saving, all of it!

Fellow Christians, take it to heart and cling to the fact that we would not be Christians if God did not graciously gift us with faith in Jesus Christ, *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.*

Now, consider how it is that God graciously gifted us with faith, for the truth is that He uses specific means which He has chosen, His WORD in particular since we read in Romans 10:17, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." And, the apostle Paul by inspiration of God writes in Romans 1:16-17, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." Thus, God's Word, the Gospel of Christ in particular, is

the means by which God graciously gifts folks with faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord, “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe,” declares 1 Corinthians 1:21.

Furthermore, it is written in 1 Peter 3:21-22, “baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.” Yes, baptism saves because God’s Word is attached to the waters of Holy Baptism, for we read in Ephesians 5:25-27, “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Accordingly, faith in Jesus Christ is indeed a gracious gift of God by His working in us, not by our own works.

Fellow Christians, let us highly value the Word of God – the Gospel of Christ in particular – because when it is preached or attached to visible elements in the sacraments the same God who graciously gifted us with faith in Christ also keeps us in the faith. God does NOT normally work in the hearts of human beings without the means which He Himself has ordained and commanded, for before Jesus visibly ascended into heaven He said to His disciples, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matthew 28:19-20) Let us highly value the means of grace which God has given us: His Word and sacraments. Let us regularly thank and praise the true God – Father, Son, and Holy Ghost – for His grace, since it is by His grace that we are saved.

As we ponder the remaining verse of our text, let us see how we are to respond to God for His saving us by His grace.

Verse 10, ----- (Ephesians 2:10)

Fellow Christians, God has graciously gifted us with faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord, and it is through that God-given and God-sustained faith that we continue to possess the forgiveness of sins and the salvation which Jesus has earned for us by His atoning work. Hence, we certainly owe God a debt of gratitude for all that He has done and still does, *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

Yes, not only WERE we Christians God’s workmanship, we ARE God’s workmanship since He continues His gracious work in us and for us. Thus, we should always be mindful of all that God has graciously done for us and all that He continues to graciously do for us. Consequently, we should thank and praise Him regularly as Psalm 106:1 instructs, where we read, “Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.”

Furthermore, we Christians need to remember that God has graciously saved us for a purpose: to serve Him rightly in word and in deed, *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

Good works are ONLY those works done in full accord with God’s Word, for 2 Timothy 3:16-17 states, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” Hence, we Christians are NOT free to live any way our flesh desires; rather, we are to strive to live in full accord

with God's will as revealed in His Holy Word since that is the way God has before ordained that we should walk in this world.

Nevertheless, while our proper response to God for His saving us by His grace is that we thank and praise Him in thoughts, words, and deeds done in full accord with His Word, we must also realize that we cannot do so without God's continued grace, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure," declares Philippians 2:13.

My friends in Christ, let us never forget that we are saved by God's grace. We are totally dependent on the Lord God for life, for the forgiveness of sins, for salvation, and for the ability to do anything that is right in His sight.

Let us daily and sincerely repent of our sins. Let us, by the power of the Holy Ghost, keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus as our God-sent Savior and Lord. And, let us, with God's gracious help, go forward endeavoring to show our gratefulness to God for His grace by striving to live in full accord with His Word. Amen.

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