

## NOTES FROM SAM GORDON'S SERMON- Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept. 2024 am

TITLE: "The Genius of God's grace" TEXT: Ephesians 2 verses 1-10

Scripture references from the ESV

**Ephesians 2:1-10** And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— <sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. <sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Chapter 1 of Ephesians gives us the opportunity to count our blessings, and then in this second chapter, Paul underlines the revolution of the Christian life by homing in on our spiritual position in Christ. Ch 1 finished with a marvellous picture of Christ and the church, showing how they are bonded together with Christ as the head and the church as his body.

- Where did God get the basic material to start making his church?

In this lies the genius of God's grace. He starts with the most unpromising and unlikely material, with those who are rejects and worthless. Yet he ends with a church that shares the exaltation of Christ in the highest heights of glory. He builds his church with the crooked timbers of humanity so that the glory is ascribed exclusively to him. God sees us not only as we were; he sees the the potential of what we can become.

- Everything changes when we come to revere him as one who is **rich in mercy** and has such great love for us that he has made us alive in Christ (**vv4-5**).

**God has taken us out of the great cemetery of sin and placed us into the throne room of glory.**

1. **Outside of Jesus, we were dead (v1).**

- Spiritually speaking, we had no life and that is the awful plight of any man who does not know Jesus personally.
- We were **dead in trespasses**. We had stepped out of line and rebelled against God.
- We were **dead in sins**. We had completely missed the mark and failed to reach God's high and holy standard.

That is the state of every sinner today. The unbeliever is not sick, he is dead and needs new life to change him. It makes no difference what anyone's status is in this life – all are dead if they do not know Jesus personally. Our world is one vast graveyard.

**2. We were deluded (v2).** The way we used to live was the norm as far as we were concerned. We did not know any better. The great deceiver had pulled the wool over our eyes. Before they gave their lives to Jesus, the people at Ephesus were no different to anyone else. Their hopes and dreams were controlled by all that this world had to offer, and the same applies today.

Yet Paul tells us that there is now a big difference. We still live in the real world, but it has ceased to be the controlling influence in our lives. The devil had us eating out of his hand until Christ changed us and we saw the light. When we found Jesus, we saw through the superficial sham of all that the world has to offer.

**3. We were disobedient (v2b).** We were not simply disobedient children. Rather, we were sons of the disobedient one – the devil was our father. It was by one man's disobedience that sin entered the world and so we are heirs to a disobedient spirit. We were on the side of the devil, the sworn enemy of God, and we rejected the rule of God over us.

**4. We were defiled (v3).** We see ourselves as God sees us and it is not a pretty picture. We were slaves to sin, searching for pleasure and always living to gratify our many desires. We were fallen creatures, controlled by natural desire and depravity. We had reached rock bottom, grovelling in the muck and mire of sin.

**5. We were doomed (v3).** By nature, we were children of wrath and by deed, we were children of disobedience. Outside of Jesus, we were bound for a Christless

eternity, and destined for hell. The unconverted person is **condemned already** (John 3:18). The sentence has been passed, but God, in his mercy, has stayed the day of execution to give men time to get right with him.

That was you and me and we should never forget what we were. Isaiah tells us to **look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug (51:1)**.

- We were without God, without hope and without Christ.
- We were sinners by birth, by choice and by practice
- Our lot was cast in a world controlled by the evil one.
- Our destiny at the end of the road was an eternity banished from the presence of the Lord.

That is not the end of the story. The Holy Spirit leads us into the next verse and our attention is grabbed by the opening words '**But God**'. Over vv4-6, we see that:

**God has shown his love to us and shared his love with us.**

Paul has painted a very black picture of man's depravity and the wrath of a holy God, but now he draws attention to God's mercy and love.

**God is rich in mercy, rich in wisdom, rich in majesty and might and rich in glory.**

**He has lavished the vast treasures of his mercy upon us.**

In his infinite mercy, he does not give us what we deserve, but in the greatness of his love he gives us what we do **not** deserve. Amazingly, it is you and me who he loves – hell deserving, devil embracing sinners. He does not just pity us, he truly loves us, and he loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses. He did not shrink from us, even though our condition was wretched and hopeless. He came to where we were to save us, and in love he reached out to us, showing his love to each one of us.

**Praise him for he has shared his love with us.**

He has plucked us from the tomb, in which we were just corpses. Instead, he has made us **alive together with Christ, and raised us up with him. (vv5,6)**. God is not daunted by death. Our trespasses and sins brought us to that place, but then God acted in grace and power. He quickened us, plucking us from the tomb as he made us alive.

**The resurrection of Jesus was the master key**

Because all our sins were dealt with on the cross, when he arose it became possible for us too to arise to a new life in Christ. God raised us from the tomb in which our sins had placed us, just as he raised Christ from the tomb in which our sins had placed him.

**We were made alive in Jesus Christ.**

**Grace triumphed over guilt and the grave.**

- We should think about this often – God reached down and raised us up. He has plucked us from the tomb, but look where he has put us. He has placed us on the throne.

We are seated on his glorious throne. In Christ, we are already seated where he is.

**God has enveloped us in Christ so that, when he looks at us, he always sees Christ.** In the heights of heaven, we see a throne where God sits, where Christ sits and where he has seated us as well. All this is already done, and it cannot be undone. We can revel in it now even while we cannot grasp how wonderful this is.

- We have seen what we were and what we have become but what about the future?

**Vv7-10** tell us what is to come.

- **God's grace is revealed through us (v7).** Our sin gave God the ideal opportunity to show a side of his character that might not otherwise have been fully revealed. He displayed his wisdom and power in creation.

**In redemption he has demonstrated not just his grace, but the incomparable riches of his grace.**

That grace is seen in the church. She will be the object of awe and admiration in eternity itself.

Everyone will see the throne of God, and the Lord Jesus. However, they will see us there too, as trophies of the grace of God, perfected forever. God is the one who will get all the pleasure of showing us off.

- **God's grace is revealed to us (vv8-9).** This is a great summary of the gospel. The gift of God is salvation and it is made available to us by the grace of God. It is received by us through faith. We cannot purchase it, work for it or earn it – it is the free gift of God. It is all of God and all of grace from start to finish.

- **God's grace is shown in his plan for your life (v10).** Good works are part of God's plan for your life. They are the proof of salvation, not the price of it. Good works are the evidence that God is at work in our lives, the token that we have passed from death to new life in Jesus Christ. Paul reminds us that we are God's workmanship, and the Greek suggests that we are his poem, his masterpiece! What an amazing thought. We are meant to be a visual aid, a work of art that displays all that the grace of God can do in our lives. Though we are rough, uncut diamonds, the good news is that he has not finished with us yet. When his work in us is done, that will be eternal ecstasy.

**When you think of what you were and look at what you now are,  
then you should be thrilled and excited by what you, one day, shall be.**

Why does God work in us? It is so that he can then work through us in works that are both good and prepared. We see many examples in the Bible.

- **Moses** – God spent 40 years working in Moses before he could work **through** him. Moses was impetuous and depended on his own strength, killing an Egyptian and having to flee Egypt. God worked in his life during the 40 years he spent as a humble shepherd, and that work prepared him for 40 years of magnificent service.
- **Joseph** – he suffered for 13 years before God made him second only to Pharaoh in Egypt.
- **David** – he was anointed king as a young man, but did not ascend to the throne until he had suffered in exile for many years.
- **Paul** – he spent 3 years in Arabia after his conversion, no doubt experiencing God at work to prepare him for his ministry.

**God has to work in us before he can effectively work through us**

**Your loving, heavenly Father has a specific and gracious plan, for the will of God  
comes from the heart of God.**

The challenge for each one of us is this:

- What kind of clothes are you wearing? Are you still wearing the grave clothes of the old life or are you adorned with the beautiful grace clothes of the new life?

Have you moved from a position of utter depravity to one of unsurpassed intimacy, from the graveyard of sin to an elevated position near the throne?  
It is who you know, not what you know or your situation in this life, that makes the difference.

**Do you know Jesus?**

I have a shepherd, one I love so well,  
how he has blessed me, tongue can never tell,  
on the cross he suffered, shed his blood and died,  
that I might ever in his love confide.

**We see the genius of God's grace.**

**He is still working on us, but his grace takes us from what we were to what we one day will be.**

**It is all of God and for his glory.**