

SALVATION BY CHRIST

Ephesians 2:1-10

It is wonderful to be a Christian. It is very important that we know how we became a Christian, and why we are Christians. That is the matchless story that is unfolded here. This great chapter presents in panorama the past, the present and the future of every child of God. It contains one of the clearest and most comprehensive statements to be found anywhere of the wonderful work of God in lifting people out of sin into fellowship with Christ.

I. The Flight of Sinners. Ephesians 2:1-3.

God's Word deals with man as a sinner, hostile to God, and destitute of spiritual life. The Psalmist said, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). In describing our condition before Christ saved us Paul mentions three things:

1. We were dead in trespasses and sins. Ephesians 2:1.

We were alive physically, but we were dead spiritually. We were dead to God and to everything that pertained to the things of the Spirit. Sin was the cause of our spiritual death or separation from God. The teaching that the unsaved person is dead spiritually is hated by many proud hearts today, but it is true nevertheless.

A "trespass" is a deviation from the right path. A "sin" is a missing of the mark. It is the act of a person in failing to see that his life measures up to or conforms to the will of God. "All have sinned (missed the mark,) and at present come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Man was created to glorify God, and he sins when he fails to do so.

2. We were disobedient to God. Ephesians 2:2-3a.

Belonging to the present age, we were part of a world system, and we moved along with it. We thought and lived as the world did, in alienation from God. Influenced by entangling affections, sinful associates and unholy companions, we yielded our allegiance to Satan and did what he wanted us to do. We followed our own evil natures, "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." Two kinds of lust are described here. One is the coarse and sensual -- "the desires of the flesh"; and the other is more refined and aesthetic -- "the desires of the mind". Before we were saved, we walked according to the standard of the world, meaning that system of evil of which Satan is head. We were in the grip and at the mercy of the world, the flesh and Satan.

3. We were deserving of wrath. Ephesians 2:3b.

In John 3:36 we are told that "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of

God abideth on him." This wrath rested upon us before we were saved. We "were by nature the children of wrath."

II. The Provision of Salvation. Ephesians 2:4-7.

Salvation means deliverance from the penalty of sin, from the power of sin, and eventually from the presence of sin. This tremendous blessing has its origin in the matchless grace and the marvelous love of God. As an expression of His love for lost sinners, God sent His only begotten Son into the world to redeem them. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (I Corinthians 15:3).

After describing our past condition before we were saved, Paul here tells us about our present position, or what we are in contrast with what we were.

1. We are quickened from the dead. Ephesians 2:5a.

Rich in mercy and love, God came to us "when we were dead in sins", "quickened us", and made us alive in Christ. Between our natural state and the one to which we have been brought there is as much difference as that which obtains between death and life in the physical realm.

2. We are saved from sin. Ephesians 2:5b.

Today people teach three methods of salvation. Some preach salvation by works alone, thus making man his own saviour and declaring that Christ's death on the cross was a useless sacrifice. Others teach that salvation is by grace and works, thereby making salvation dependent upon the grace of God plus man's own efforts, thus giving man some credit for his salvation and rendering it impossible without his works. Still others of us believe what the Bible says on this subject, and teach with Paul, that salvation is by grace alone, and apart from any human effort or merit, thus making the Lord Jesus Christ the Saviour. This verse clearly states that salvation is by grace without any mixture of human works. How grateful we are, and rightly so, that in mercy and love God provided a Saviour for us, and that by Him we have been saved!

3. We are raised with Christ. Ephesians 2:6a.

The same Almighty power that lifted up the body of the dead Christ from Joseph's tomb to the highest place in heaven, grasps lost sinners and lifts them up out of the old life of sin.

4. We are seated in the heavenlies in Christ. Ephesians 2:6b.

Not only have the riches of His mercy delivered us from degradation and ruin, but they have raised us into a glorious blessedness. This fact is glorious, and it enables us to abound in assurance and to be decisive in victory.

III. The Plan of Salvation. Ephesians 2:8-10.

1. It is by grace.

"For by grace are ye saved." We have heard grace defined as the unmerited favor

of God, but it is much more than that. Standing for all that God is, grace represents His abiding love and abounding power flowing full and free to undeserving sinners who are in need of His great salvation. Grace is God loving man with a love that does not have any limitations, giving His Son to die on the cross as an atonement for man's sins, and lifting man out of his sinfulness, and giving him eternal life and that glorious liberty which belongs to those who become the children of God. Not until we get to heaven shall we fully appreciate all that grace has done for us. In the meantime we can praise God for His marvelous and amazing grace.

Salvation is never received as wages for work, or as the result of human efforts, but always as a gift of God. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Some try to obtain salvation through personal efforts and meritorious works, but they do so in spite of the fact that God's Word states that it is an utter impossibility. What can be plainer than emphatic statements like the following? "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" (Ephesians 2:8-9). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (Titus 3:5). Man must accept salvation as a gift from God or he will never receive it.

2. It is through faith. Ephesians 2:8.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith." Salvation is provided by grace and it becomes ours through faith. Faith is (as it were) the hand that receives the gift which the Lord presents to us. It is the connection or channel through which the divine supply travels to the human need. Some say that salvation is by grace through faith plus something else, but God's Word teaches that it is by grace through faith alone.

IV. The Purpose of Salvation. Ephesians 2:10.

Salvation is not the work of self, the work of other men, or the work of the church, but it is the work of God. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." God has done something for us, and in us, in order that He may do something through us. He has saved us in order that we may do good works for Him. Good works are those which are done by the children of God, in conformity to the will of God, for the glory of God, and for the benefit of others. Instead of being a means of salvation, good works are always an evidence or a proof that one has been saved. They are the dividends or the fruits which God receives from the salvation which He has given to us. He expects us to do good works habitually. We can and should glorify Him through the praises that we offer to Him, through the lives that we live, and through the services that we render for Him.