

RECEIVING MERCY AND GRACE IN CHRIST

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Ephesians 2:1-10

By Grace Through Faith

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

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The transformation of our life in Christ, begins when we realize that we are sinners in need of a Savior, meaning we have done what is contrary to the will of God. We then are led by the Holy Spirit to believe on Jesus as being the Christ, the Son of God, and the transformation begins to take place, to where, as we were dead in our sins, but have now become alive in Christ! Our lives then begin to change as we are then further led by the Holy Spirit, to no longer follow the ways of the world, in the lusts of the flesh, and the pursuing of just our own selfish desires. The Holy Spirit begins working in us to being like Jesus Christ.

In our 10 verses then, in Ephesians 2:1-10, we can see a comparison of what our life now should be, or can be, by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, versus the life that we once had prior to our believing on Christ. The primary comparison is based on the fact that we are believing on the Words of Jesus, such as in **John 3:16-17** where Jesus said, “**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**” Also, we are believing on what Jesus said to the Jewish leader, Nicodemus, “**Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**” (**John 3:3**) Those are just written words on pages of a book, in what we call the Bible, or Holy Bible, yet they come alive to us as the truth, that they are the very Words of God, as the Holy Spirit reveals that to us. A combination of those two words of Jesus is summed up in **John 1:12-13**, “But as many as received Him [Jesus], to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Jesus had explained to Nicodemus that being born-again is being born of the Spirit, which then means, you are literally receiving the Holy Spirit, that then becomes a part of you, and begins working in you. Jesus literally begins to become us, or looked at in the other way, we are becoming like Jesus.

The Holy Spirit does that by working in us the fruit of the Spirit which is, “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” (**Galatians 5:22-23**) The Holy Spirit is renewing our minds and changing our hearts to think and act like Christ, which ultimately means we are learning to love God and to follow His will as He leads us by His Spirit and we can know God’s will for our lives by knowing His Word in the Holy Bible. We are letting Christ become us, as we are letting Him work in us, making us into the likeness of Himself.

A prime example for us is in **Romans 12:1-2** where the Apostle Paul says, “I beseech (meaning, ‘I’m begging you’) you therefore, brethren, **by the mercies of God**, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And **do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” That, is what the holy Spirit will do as we believe on Christ, receive Him into our hearts, and then we learn to follow God’s will according to His will, all while the Holy Spirit is transforming us along the way.

In the comparison that Paul gives, we are made alive in Christ to then begin to live contrary to the natural tendency of what is human nature, as we know it is called from Scripture, the sin-nature or the carnal nature (carnal meaning of the flesh). What first becomes very uncomfortable to us, since we are beginning to be led to live and act contrary to what seems natural but through time and experience we begin to feel more natural in living in God’s ways and in being led by the Holy Spirit. We are first led by the Holy Spirit to recognize that we are sinners, meaning we have sinned against God (**Romans 3:23**, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”). God is our Creator and the Creator of all things. Just as it says to us in **Psalms 24:1**, “The earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.” We are also acknowledging to God that we are in need of a Savior so that we can be reconciled to God, meaning we are right with God as we are forgiven of our sins, so that there is nothing hindering our relationship with God, as we are now covered by the blood of Jesus. We are beginning to more fully realize that we are in God’s creation, on God’s time, and are living according to God’s purpose. That becomes more and more real to us as we continue to trust God and walk by the faith, trusting God is going to get us to the finish line, He has the perfect plan for our lives, according to His kingdom’s purpose, as He continues to work through us. We are all called by God to take on the character of Christ but each and every one of us has a unique and important purpose in God’s eternal kingdom!

After we believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, we then speak that to God, to Jesus, to save us from our sins. That speaking to God can be coming just from our hearts but eventually it will also be coming out of our mouths as we will want to rejoice and share our testimony with others that Jesus has saved us. That is nothing to be ashamed of. The Apostle said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.” (**Romans 1:16**) God is hoping each and every person on this earth will come to Him for salvation that is in Christ Jesus. “For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (**Romans 10:13**) Another passage of Scripture that speaks to that is **Romans 10:9-10**, “that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

The next part of our believing on Christ Jesus is that we then are a new creation in Christ, are being made into the very image of Christ, and we are a child of God. We have become a part of the family of God Almighty, the King of kings and Lord of lords! We are already deemed righteous and saved in Christ Jesus, yet we are also allowing Him to **work in us** His Righteousness and Salvation. He is working in us, His Wisdom, His Righteousness, His Sanctification, and His Redemption. (**1 Corinthians 1:30**) We are allowing the light of Christ to shine in us, so to speak. As a child of God we are told by Jesus, “**Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.**” (**Matthew 5:16**) There is going to be evidence of our rebirth in Christ. Others around us will have recognized a difference in you. The Apostle John stated, “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” That isn’t saying that we are always acting super spiritual and always in fellowship with one another 24/7. What that is saying to us is that He is working in us to walk in the

His light which is contrary to the sinful nature, which becomes our testimony. Anybody can just claim to be a Christian or a child of God. As the saying goes, “actions speak louder than words”. What naturally begins to flow out of us ends up affecting other people. After all, the same can be said we live selfishly and in our own pride and agenda. That affects other people too, in a negative way. You may not see clear results of what God is doing through your living testimony right away, and many times we may never see all the fruit of what God is doing. But everything that God is doing through us is for His glory. When you begin to love God, as He first loved us, that just naturally becomes your desire, for our good and loving God is glorified!

The true litmus test for us is in what Jesus called the great commandment, saying, “**you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.**’ This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: ‘**You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:30-31) When we have the desire within us to want to know God, to have more of God in our lives and to love God, to just love God for who He is, and then also to love other people, as they are His created people as much as we are, that is a great sign that one has the Spirit of Christ reigning in them and that you are on the right path. But it is always for us to remember that it is truly in Christ alone, that we are redeemed or saved by God, and that it is in Christ alone that we are able to do anything in bearing fruit for God’s kingdom and glory. Just as Jesus said, “**I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.**” (John 15:5)

Yet, that is exactly what God has purposed for each of us. Each of you are incredibly precious to God and with each of you, God has a life plan to use you in being a blessing to other people as He is building His eternal kingdom. There is no greater gift that we can give to someone else than to share the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. That comes in many forms. That can mean being a good listener when someone just needs to talk to someone. That can mean sharing something that you have that others have an essential need of. That can also mean being kind to someone who may or may not be reciprocating the same. As **Proverbs 15:1** says, “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” Does that always work? No, there are times where it may take someone a bit of time to get over whatever is making them act out in anger. But God still loves them, right? He still loved me in all of the times that I was angry or less than kind with others. God has given us the great blessing and responsibility to be His agents of love and in sharing the great news that is in Jesus Christ being the Savior of the world! Jesus tells us to “**love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.**” (Matthew 5:44-45) What’s the point in that? It is in the goodness of God that can lead someone to repentance, to have a change of mind, to want the saving grace that is offered to us by Jesus dying on a cross for our sins.

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

God’s mercy is described as ‘not receiving the punishment that is due us.’ Did you catch the part about God being **rich in mercy**? How truly great is the mercy of God! I don’t know about any of you, but I should have been zapped into a pile of dust many times in my ranting at God and shaking my fist at Him. I’m incredibly thankful to have experienced the wonderful mercies of God. It reminds me of how much God loves each and every person on this earth. We are ALL His precious creation and we were ALL purposed by God before the foundation of the earth. “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, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.” (**Ephesians 1:3-6**)

The work that is done is in Christ alone though, which is good news to me and anyone else that may think that you’re not good enough, smart enough, spiritual enough, or motivated enough to be a Christian. We are believing on Christ, receiving Christ, then we then begin walking in what He is working in us. “But as many as received Him [Jesus], to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” That there is being born-again, right? For our Scripture today, if you’re doing any memorizing of Scripture, which I hope you all make an effort to do, **Ephesians 2:8-9** is a good one to have in your mind and your heart. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” In God’s great mercy, He has made a way to be forgiven of our sins, which chief among them, it could be said, is in not loving our God and Creator or in not loving His people, His created people. Once again, that means each and every person on this planet, whether one realizes it or not. God truly loves us all, for we are His creation. Yet, praise the Lord, we are not just here to acknowledge His salvation in Christ and then that’s it. We get to be part of His building His eternal kingdom, as His representatives, His ambassadors, His agents---of His love, and goodness, mercy and grace, and in sharing the the gospel of Jesus Christ with others! Verse 10 then says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

Those good works are in sharing and showing the love and the gospel of Jesus Christ. How many of you have tried rehearsing that line? What would you say after that to someone if you were to tell them that as a Christian, a child of God, that we are God’s representatives in sharing and showing the love and the gospel of Jesus Christ? Well, if we are working at being good listeners we may not say anything if they don’t want to listen to us or our message, but if they ask how is that, you can read **Ephesians 2:8-10** that I just read. That explains to us that by God’s grace, which means His undeserved favor, and because of His great love for His people, God has made a way for us to have a right relationship with Him, so that we may obtain mercy and grace in our time of need, or when we are praying for others, for their time of need. We are told, that as we are in Christ Jesus, “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (**Hebrews 4:16**) That is a great perk for us as children of God. We can go to our heavenly Father in prayer and ask for His mercy and grace!

Anybody need some mercy and/or grace from God? I do-very much. For myself, my family, my friends, all of us need God’s mercies and grace. Where do we need then to first go in our time of need? We just have to go to the King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus. “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” (**1 Peter 5:6-7**) Of our own selves we are not worthy of receiving anything from God. In Christ, we can receive His abundant mercies and grace in our time of need. That, once again, can mean a need for ourselves, or a need for someone we are praying for. God is always waiting for us to call on Him, with humility, after all He is God almighty, Creator of all things. Then we can ask Him for His mercies and grace, His help, His protection, His provision for our needs---He is our merciful and gracious Heavenly Father through the redemption we have in Christ Jesus!