

Saved by Grace Ephesians 2:1-10

by J.R. Miller

We are saved by grace through the mercy and love of God, through faith in Christ Jesus, and are called to live a life of good works as a result of our salvation.

Scripture: Ephesians 2:1

Topics: "Grace", "Salvation"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the transformative power of God's grace in the lives of believers, illustrating how the Ephesians were once dead in their sins but have been made alive through Christ. He highlights the importance of recognizing our past state of disobedience and the mercy of God that saved us, reminding us that salvation is a gift, not earned by works but received through faith. Miller explains that God's rich mercy, love, grace, and kindness are the foundations of our redemption, and that good works are the natural result of being saved, not the means to salvation. He encourages believers to live in the light of their new identity in Christ, created for good works as a reflection of God's love. Ultimately, the sermon calls for gratitude and praise for the abounding mercy that has lifted us from death to life.

Transcript

The passage on which this chapter is based begins with a look backward at the condition from which the Ephesians has sprung. They had been raised from the dead. Jesus Christ came into a world of dead men. He himself was the only living man in the world. He came to give life to the dead. "I am come that they might have life." "You. . . who were dead," says the apostle to the Ephesians. They had lived in trespasses and sins. They had walked according to the course of this world instead of after the way of God's commandments. They had come out of heathenism. "The prince of the power of the air" had been their master. This "prince of the power of the air" is Satan. We need not, however, accept the view of the Jewish rabbis that the air is Satan's abode, that it is peopled by demons flitting about invisibly. Probably Paul means here the moral atmosphere of the world. "The power of the air is a fitting designation of the prevailing spirit of the times, whose influence spreads itself like a miasma through the whole atmosphere of the world."

Not only the Ephesians--but we all, lived at one time the same sinful life. We are "children of disobedience" and consequently "children of wrath." If we keep God's commandments we abide in his love. If we do not keep his commandments we are under condemnation. "It is God's smile or frown--that makes the sunshine or the gloom of our whole life."

It is an unflattering picture of humanity which we have in these verses--but who will deny its truthfulness? Who will claim that we are not prone to disobedience? Who will say that wrath is not our just deserving? It is well that we should look at this picture of our natural state, that we may be reminded of what we were--when God found us and had mercy upon us. "Lest we forget!" If we forget what our great need was, and our miserable state before we were redeemed; gratitude will die out of our hearts. But if we remember, we will always praise God for his abounding mercy.

Next we have a view of what God's grace has been done for us. Instead of being dead, we are now alive, "quickenened." The death, resurrection and ascension of Christ--are used to illustrate the change that takes place when one is saved, and also to indicate the source of that change. "The same almighty hand that was laid upon the body of the dead Christ and lifted him from the grave, to the highest seat in heaven--is now laid upon your soul. It has raised you from the grave and death of sin--to share by faith his celestial life."

We are dead in our natural state, like a body lying in the grave. Then we are raised up, made to live. We are raised up with Christ. This suggests what a stupendous work our salvation is. "When a human soul wakes from its trespasses and sins, when the love of God is poured into a heart that was cold and empty; when the Spirit of God breathes into a spirit that lies powerless and dead, there is as true a rising from the dead as when Jesus our Lord came out from his sepulcher." Not only are we raised up with Christ from the grave--but we ascend with him into the heavenly places. We should live in the heavenly life in this world. "If you then are risen with Christ--seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God."

We should study also the divine part in our salvation, as it is here described. The thought of our redemption began not in any desire of our own--but in the heart of God. "We love him--because he first loved us." We have it here in the words, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead. . . has quickened us." God did not save us because we asked him to do so--there never would be anyone lifted up out of death, if God waited for us to call upon him before showing mercy.

Four qualities in God combine in saving us out of our sins--his mercy, his love, his grace, and his kindness.

Mercy inclines God to have pity upon the unworthy. We are all sinners. If there were no mercy in God, none ever could be saved, for none are without sin. But God is merciful--he is "rich in mercy." All the wealth of his being pours itself out in tenderness, in compassion, in forgiveness. His mercy is so great--that the greatest sinner may be forgiven, that the guiltiest sinner does not exhaust it.

Then there is love as well as mercy in God. We can conceive of him as being rich in mercy, yet not loving us. A monarch might pardon a host of convicts--and yet not love one of them. But in the heart of God there is love as well as mercy. The love is the fountain from which the mercy springs. The love of God is that which makes his mercy so wonderful. He not only frees from condemnation--but he takes the forgiven one into his own family! We become children of God. "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

Grace and kindness are phases of the working of love. Grace is love in action, working out and blessing in spite of sin. The cross is its highest manifestation. We have its ministry in the gospel. Kindness is the expression of love in all gentle ways. Kindness has been called the small coin of love. It is the touch of

God's hand, the expression of his affection.

In the first verses we have a picture of our state before God found us and saved us--and it is dark, indeed! Here we have a picture of what the mercy and love of God have done for us in exalting us from death to life, from condemnation to companionship with Christ in heavenly places.

The closing verses tell us something of the way this great redemption is wrought. For one thing, we are saved by grace. That is, our salvation is not earned or won by us; it is not got by any deserving of our own; it comes purely as a divine favor. That is what grace means--free, unmerited love and kindness. We should get this thought clearly fixed in our minds. Some people seem to think that God owes them mercy, that they have earned it. But we deserve nothing but eternal wrath. Salvation is the gift of God. We cannot buy it.

There is a story of a woman whose daughter was ill, and who sought at a garden gate to buy some grapes for her child. The gardener treated her harshly--but the king's daughter who was near heard her piteous request and brought her all the grapes she could carry. The woman wanted to pay for them--but the princess answered: "My father is the king. He does not sell grapes--he gives them." God does not sell the favors of his love--he gives them freely.

We are saved through faith. Faith accepts Christ and rests in him, and thus receives the salvation which he has made for all who believe. Faith is the empty hand which takes what is put into it.

"Not of works." We are not saved because we have done good deeds. We are to do good deeds. There is not a word in the Bible against good works. Indeed, they are enjoined upon all who would follow Christ. We are always to abound in the work of the Lord. We are taught to be kind to the poor, the sick, the distressed, and the needy. In the judgment those who will be on the right hand, will be those to whom the Judge will say, "I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you took care of Me; I was in prison and you visited Me." Those on the left hand will be those who shall hear just the reverse, "I was hungry, and you gave me nothing to eat." Yet we are not saved by good works. We are saved altogether by grace through the mercy and love of God. Then, being thus saved, God's grace enters our hearts and inspires in us all manner of loving service.

"We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." This shows us the place of good works--the result in us of the new creation wrought by the grace of God. We are not saved because we are good--we are to be good because we have been saved. For salvation is infinitely more than the forgiveness of sins. The forgiven sinner is regenerated, born again, becomes a new creature; and this new creature is a child of God, filled with love and abounding in all good works.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jr-miller/saved-by-grace-ephesians-21-10/>

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