

Ephesians Chapter 2 - Part 1

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald explores the grandeur of God's grace in Ephesians Chapter 2, emphasizing the necessity of substitution for salvation.

Duration: 43:23

Scripture: Ephesians 2:1

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the simplicity of the gospel message, stating that it is accessible to everyone. He highlights the concept of substitution as the central theme of the gospel, explaining that God devised a plan where a substitute would pay the penalty for the sins of the people He wanted to save. The preacher also mentions the idea of salvation being offered to all and being sufficient for all, without any restrictions or exclusions. He concludes by emphasizing that salvation cannot be forced upon anyone and that it eliminates human boasting. The sermon is based on Ephesians chapter 2.

Transcript

I wondered what it would be like if Paul and Peter and John and the other apostles could come back and see Christendom as it exists today. And the tape recorder had crashed last week, so there was no recording, but I still have a few extra copies of the notes on that message last week. If anybody would like one, please feel free to come up afterwards and just take one.

Today I'd like to start just a little series on the subject of the grandeur of God's grace. And not surprisingly, we will turn to Ephesians chapter 2, please. Ephesians chapter 2, and we'll read the first ten verses.

I'm sure these are so familiar that most of you could recite them from memory. Ephesians 2, 1. 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 lust 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 unto good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." God had a problem on his hands. Well, not exactly.

God doesn't have problems. God solves problems. There's no problem with God.

None whatever. But it seems to us that God had a problem in figuring out a plan of salvation for mankind. When we say that he had a problem, we're using the language of human appearance.

From our standpoint, it looks to us as if he had a problem. Now that we've cleared that up, what was the problem? Actually, the problem arose from a seeming clash between two of God's attributes. On the one hand, God is love, and on the other hand, God is holy.

It was a clash between his love and his righteousness. On the one hand, God is a God of love. God loves people passionately.

Men and women, boys and girls, they're the crowning work of God's creation. It's interesting that it should be so, isn't it? Because he has a lot of wonders in his creation, but in a special way, his love goes out to humanity. And believe it or not, God wants the fellowship of every man and woman, boy and girl, throughout all eternity.

That is basically the desire of his heart. That's marvelous when you start to think of it, isn't it? I mean, heaven is populated with hosts of angels who never disobey him, never speak back to him, who always do his will. And yet, we read in Proverbs chapter 8, his delights were with the sons of men.

In a special way, God is delighted with humanity. Marvelous, I think it's marvelous. But the problem arises from the fact that we are sinners, and God is righteous.

God cannot look upon sin with approval. He can't wink at it. He can't condone it.

And sin must be punished, because God is a righteous God. Sin must be punished, and the wages of sin is what? Death. So, if sinners are ever going to dwell with God in heaven, those sins have to be put away, because I, in my sinful state, could never enter heaven's gates.

Somehow or other, the penalty of those sins must be paid. God's righteousness must be satisfied before we could ever be with him. In other words, what I'm saying is, people must be clean and pure to live in heaven.

You see the problem now, don't you? He loves us. He wants us with him throughout all eternity in heaven, and yet his holiness... Our sins are the obstacle, and his holiness must be satisfied. God is not willing that any should perish.

He doesn't desire the eternal destruction of anyone. He wants everybody to enjoy the splendors and delights of heaven forever and ever. But God is not only love, he's light.

And when it says in the Bible that God is light, it's speaking about his purity, his holiness, his righteousness. And his light demands that the sinner's sins must be punished, must be atoned for. Every evil thought, every word and every deed has to be taken care of.

No unforgiven sinner can ever enter heaven. Now, how can God devise a plan of salvation where his love will be satisfied and his righteousness will be satisfied? That's the problem. How could God ever do that? We want a way of salvation where his love is satisfied and his holiness is not compromised.

Or, to use the language of Scripture, how can he be a just God and a justifier? Paul uses that expression in Romans chapter 3. That's the problem. How can he be a just God and a justifier? Or, how can he be a just God and a savior at the same time? Problem. That's the dilemma.

The Greek philosopher Socrates once said to Plato, who was his pupil at the time, it may be that God can forgive sins, but I don't see how. Socrates, one of the wisest men that ever lived, and he said that, and I think it's marvelous. I think he had his thinking cap on that day.

It may be that God can forgive sins, but I don't see how. Now, we want to think about plans. We're going to try to devise a plan of salvation, taking in mind the fact that God is love and that God is holy.

First of all, there are five requirements for any plan of salvation. Five requirements for any plan of salvation. Since God loves everyone, first of all, his offer must be made to all.

It must be offered to all. He doesn't want anyone to be left out. God so loved the world that nobody was ever born apart from the love of God.

And so, God's salvation must be offered to all. Now, whatever plan of salvation he's going to devise must be of universal offer. Number two, it must be sufficient for all.

It must meet the needs of every person without exception. That's something to think about, isn't it? And then, thirdly, it must be something for which everyone is eligible. For instance, no amount of evil should ever be able to bar anyone from participation.

It must be offered to all. It must be sufficient to all. It must be a plan of salvation for which everyone is eligible.

It's getting harder, isn't it? And, it must be something which everyone can receive. In other words, it mustn't have any conditions that everyone couldn't meet. For instance, if it said, well, you have to climb 20 stairs on your knees, well, that leaves out a lot of people who couldn't do it.

Some people don't have knees, they couldn't be saved. So, whatever plan of salvation God devises, it must be something for which everyone is eligible. And, which anyone can receive.

And, there's something else interesting. Whatever plan of salvation the Lord would devise, it must be something that eliminates boasting. You say, why? Well, because there can't be any boasting in heaven.

Boasting is the parent's sin. Pride. It's the parent.

That was the first of all sins that was ever committed. Pride. In heaven, when Satan said he would be like God.

So, in devising a plan of salvation, God had to devise a plan where there could be no pride on the part of the recipient. Are you with me? It's getting harder. No possibility for human boasting.

And, in order to do that, God had to devise a plan of salvation where everyone would have the same fitness for heaven. In order to eliminate boasting, everyone would have to have the same fitness for heaven. And yet, finally, it had to be a plan which God didn't force on anyone.

It had to be a salvation which God didn't force on a person against his will. I said five requirements. It's more than five.

I'm just not counting right today. Let me go over them again. Offered to all.

Sufficient for all. Something for which everyone is eligible. I think I didn't mention that it's simple enough for everyone to understand.

There's no use making a plan of salvation that some people couldn't understand. It can't be complicated. It's got to be really simple.

Something which anyone can receive, whether you have knees or not, whether you can speak or not. It's got to eliminate human boasting, and it can't be something that's forced on anyone. You can't do it against your will.

Because if people were to have it forced upon them, some people would be in heaven who didn't want to be there. It would be horrible, wouldn't it? Had people in heaven who didn't want to be there, it wouldn't be heaven. Now, how can you do this? Could you please tell me how you can devise a plan of salvation that meets all of those requirements? Well, the answer lies in a single word.

And that word is substitution. I think it's good for us to realize this, especially when we're presenting the gospel to somebody else. The whole gist of the gospel is substitution.

God had to devise a plan where a substitute would pay the penalty for the sins of the people whom he wanted to save. Most of us are familiar with the idea of substitution, aren't we? You watch an athletic event on TV, and you see the coach sending in a substitute for one of the players. One of the players comes running off the field, and another goes running on to take his place.

He's a substitute. And certainly the Hebrew people in the Old Testament understood the idea of substitution. They would bring a lamb or a sheep or some other animal to the altar, and they would lay their hands on the head of that animal.

They understood what that meant. They understood that animal was going to die for them. That animal was going to die in their place.

They were saying, in effect, I ought to die, but this animal's going to die for me. Substitution. So, the solution to the divine dilemma is for God to find a substitute to die for sinful people so that his love could be satisfied through all eternity by having those people with him in heaven.

Now, even here there are some conditions to be met. There are certain conditions that the substitute must meet. First of all, he must be human.

The substitute must be human, because it wouldn't be an equal exchange otherwise. If an angel died for me, or even if an animal died for me, it wouldn't be equal. A man must die, or a person must die for another person.

Otherwise, Satan could accuse God of partiality, unfairness. Then the substitute must be a sinless person. He must be a person, too.

He must be a sinless person. Why? Because if he was a sinner, he had to die for his own sins, not for somebody else's. That seems quite clear on the face of it.

It's getting harder. He must be a human being. He must be sinless.

If that isn't enough, he must be God. So, why? Why does the substitute have to be God? Because he's going to have to die for an infinite number of sins, and only God is infinite. His work has to be of infinite value.

Infinite means measureless. And so this substitute has to die for all the sins of all the world, of all the people who have ever lived, who are living, who ever will live. His death has to be sufficient for that, and only God would ever meet that requirement.

It's getting more and more difficult. Next, he must shed his blood. Whoever the substitute is must shed his blood.

Which is another way of saying he must die, but he must die by the shedding of his blood. Why? Because the divine decree says without the shedding of blood there's no remission of sin. It's tremendous when you start to think of it.

Life is in the blood. And God says there has to be life for life. I didn't make it up.

God did. And then, wonder of all wonders, whoever this substitute is going to be has to be willing. You can't drag some unwilling substitute to the altar of sacrifice.

Otherwise, Satan would charge God with forcing an involuntary substitute to die in the place of ungodly sin. The only conceivable way God could ever solve his problem would be by substitution. And the substitute must be human.

He must be sinless. He must be divine. He must shed his blood, and he must be willing.

And you know, there's only one person in the whole universe who meets those qualifications, and his name is Jesus. I think that's marvelous. Talk about the grace of God.

The only one. The Lord Jesus Christ qualifies on all counts. Is he human? Yes, of course he's human.

He became man at Bethlehem. Born of the Virgin Mary, the perfect man. The great Christian hymn writer Charles Wesley said, Our God contracted to a span, incomprehensibly made man.

Our God contracted to a span, incomprehensibly made man. That's the marvel of Bethlehem, isn't it? came and, if I can use the expression, reduced himself to that human body. Contracted to a span.

God became man. So, the Lord Jesus qualifies on that count. He is human.

Not only that, he's God. He has the attributes of God. He's omniscient.

He's omnipotent. He's omnipresent. He's all the things that God the Father is.

He has the titles of God. They're given to him, and he's equal with God the Father in all respects. He's man.

He's God. He's without sin. Remember, we said the sacrifice had to be, the substitute had to be without sin.

Well, the Lord Jesus said the record is very, very clear. He did no sin. He knew no sin, but what no sin did do.

He was a sinless, spotless substitute. He shed his blood on the cross of Calvary. He didn't die by asphyxiation.

He died in the way that the divine decree demanded the substitute should die. He shed his blood as a substitute for sinners on the cross of Calvary, and multitudes have availed themselves of the value of that blood that cleanses from all sin. Finally, he did it willingly.

I think that's wonderful. Isn't it wonderful that the only person in the world, in the universe, who was qualified to be our substitute was also willing? He didn't have to do it. I think that's one of the most helpful things for me to remember, that Jesus didn't have to come down to us, didn't he? The Father said, whom will I send and who will go for me? He said, here am I. The volume of the book that is written of me, I delight to do thy will.

Oh, my God. He was willing to do it. So, the Lord Jesus Christ qualifies on all counts, doesn't he? He was human.

He was divine. He shed his blood. He was sinless, and he was God.

And, you know, the truth of the Lord Jesus being our substitute is found throughout the Bible. It's marvelous, really, when you think of it. I think we just accept these verses.

We don't really ponder them. But, Isaiah boldly proclaims, Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He substitutes.

Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He said, Isaiah said, he was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities.

The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. Isaiah said, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. Substitute.

John the Baptist cried, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Substitution. And lost in wonder, love, and praise, the Apostle Paul said, The Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

And Peter added his testimony. Peter didn't want to be left out. He added his testimony.

He said, He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree. And the beloved Apostle John said, He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. Marvelous, isn't it? And not only does the Lord Jesus qualify as the substitute for us, but you know, now God's plan of salvation qualifies on all counts.

Because the Lord Jesus Christ meets all the requirements for a substitutionary sacrifice, God can now proclaim his marvelous way of salvation, the good news of his grace. He can offer salvation as a free gift to any who will come believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. God can now give salvation to those who repent of their sins and say, Christ for me.

Notice, first of all, that God's salvation is offered, it's available to all. Remember, we said it had to be offered to all, okay? God's salvation is now available to all. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Whoever believes on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. It's available to all. Notice, if this salvation depended upon money, the poor would be left out.

No, it's available to all. And not only so, but it's sufficient for all. The work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary is just insufficient.

For everyone who's ever lived, his blood is his power to cleanse away the sins of anyone. His death as power to atone for the sins of all the world is supremely adequate. And you know, this is good too.

Everybody's eligible for this salvation. You know why? Because everyone's a sinner. That's what makes a person eligible for God's salvation.

For instance, it's a good thing that God's salvation isn't just for the intellectual. I would never have got in. It's a good thing it's not just for the good-looking.

I never would have got in. It's a good thing it's not just for the wealthy. I never would have got in.

And you can go down the list. The famous, some of us would never qualify. Even if it were only for those who could read, climb, talk, hear, see.

Some would be excluded. Only the gospel suits the whole world. It's simple enough for everyone to understand.

You know, I said it mustn't be complicated because some couldn't understand it. But the Bible is simple for everyone to understand. In the gospel, the Lord Jesus says, come.

Anybody can understand come. It's one of the first things that you parents said to your children. You know, when they first started the toddle.

He said, come. Come to mommy. Come to daddy.

You don't have to explain. You don't have to sit down and give a 15-minute discourse to the child on the meaning of the word come. Now, the gospel says, come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

There's nothing complicated about the gospel. I did it with William Cooper who said, how unlike the complex ways of man, God's easy, heartless, unencumbered plan. And it is.

It's so unlike the complex ways of man, the gospel, God's easy, heartless, unencumbered plan. Anyone can receive it. You say, really? Anyone can receive what? Because anyone can repent.

You have to repent. All priests repentance toward God. Well, repentance is just taking sides with yourself against the Lord.

Anybody can do that. Anybody can believe. Repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Anybody can believe. What is more reasonable than that the creature should believe his creator? That's what the gospel tells you to do. Amazing what people can believe today.

They can't believe the gospel. Anybody can receive it. And, you know, then grace excludes boasting.

God's way of salvation excludes boasting. A well-said... .. I love that. It transcends human reason.

It has no human logic. And I... Of him? Of him? He's hurt. How's him? He's a patriot.

Shocking as it may seem. Listen carefully. That is, he doesn't try to repent.

It's only by ceasing to act that a person can serve for Jesus Christ... .. Another shocker is that the only kind of people God sent is the ungodly. Have you ever worked out for a leader when he was just before the ungodly? Yes. No matter.

I'll tell you. The only type of people are the ungodly. Not good people.

My people, they do their best. People that are willing to admit they're ungodly. Who retents.

You admit before God you're ungodly. Say that again. Who retents to admit they're ungodly.

People that work in misery and war do not recognize that. That's the crucial worry. The lead means to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

It means to accept him as your only hope as the one who paid the penalty for your sin. It means to depend on him as your only passport to heaven. The consistent testimony of scripture.

With salvation. It's quite great, isn't it? To approach him with reason and insight. And to know him.

Not by his feelings. But by the incalculable word of God. I figured that this morning.

God's problem. How can he be a God of love and a God of holiness at the same time? Because we're sinners. We're cut off from God.

We're on earth's planet. I have faith in the word. Substitution.

The word. Perish the sin. Alas.

What to do. There's a sudden taste of him. Of the people he loves.

And his way of celebration. If he's got his divinal plan of salvation, then that's what he'll offer to all of us. Available for all.

And has to be sufficient for all of us. You know? All of us. All of us.

And there's some people who have certain qualifications. You have to be good with me. You have to be divine.

You have to be sinner. You have to be holy. You have to be willing.

Yes, sir. Came to an eye of one person. The right hand of God.

The Lord Jesus Christ. The right hand of God. He might have grown.

Slain. Lost. In time.

How does he? I work within God. Who's wrong with me? When there's palpation. There's tongue of grief.

There's thirst. There's thirst. How do we do it? You do that all the time.

Everybody. Well, what do you do? I'm a sinner. But you're a sinner, sir.

What do you do? Why are you a sinner? The church is the only society in the world. Where? It's your ineligibility that makes you ineligible. That makes you eligible.

In order to join the fraternities of the world. You really have to have something going for you. That's why I'm saying.

That's why I'm telling you. In the spirit of the nature of God's word. Pursue it.

Everyone around you. Be you. And what are you saying? The God of the world.

He's a word to a definite time. In the last time. With God.

With my hands. With my ears. With my mouth.

With God. With the spirit of God. And why don't they? I don't know.

I don't want to know. I don't want to know. But I know that you have one thing that you need.

A good word to deliver. Well, somebody has come up with a good word to use to help you. What is it? Why don't we just rush it through the door? What do you think of your situation? What do you think of your situation? How are you going to solve this? Never do it.

You have a substantive, well-verified qualification. And all I want you to believe in every one of them. Because you should.

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