

“God’s Incomparable Grace for the Church”

Ephesians 2:1-10

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Introduction:

1. People generally have an interest in their heritage or roots. Some people are fascinated by the study of their family tree, and others are intrigued by history in a more general sense. Every once in a while, it is wise to ask, “How did we get here? What brought us to this point?”
2. Today we will look at the history of the church in a general sense—the things that all Christians share in common, though with endless variation. We want to see how God’s incomparable grace has changed us.

Exposition:

- I. God’s grace finds the church in a desperate condition.
 - A. Our former way of life described. It was life under the control of sin (2:1-3).
 1. It was a lifestyle in conformity with the ways of this world: pleasure-seeking (2 Tm 3:4), greediness (2 Tm 3:2; Rm 1:29), pride (2 Tm 3:2), and abusiveness (2 Tm 3:2).

Illustration: An example of the last would be, “It doesn’t matter whom you hurt—just get the job done!”

Apply: These sins I have just mentioned—pleasure-seeking, greediness, abusiveness, and pride—are the “darling sins” of our culture. Rarely do we consider their insidious affect on us. We need to grow in holiness and godliness so that we may be able to speak to our generation.

2. It was a lifestyle under the rule of Satan. While people imagine themselves to be free, they are really Satan’s slaves.

Illustration: Sinful people are really “cannon fodder” in the evil one’s war against God.

3. It was a lifestyle that pursued fleshly cravings (Gal 5:19-21).
 - B. Our former way of life defeated. God’s grace triumphs over that bondage (2:4-5).
 1. We must realize our former impotence. We were dead in sin.

Illustration: Often we hear the fire whistle some our town's rescue squad. If someone is sick or injured, they do all they can to help the person. But if someone is already dead when they arrive, there is nothing that they can do. They are beyond human help. The same is true of every sinner.

2. God's grace is able to give life to those who are dead in sin. "God... made us alive with Christ... by grace you have been saved."

Action Step: This is critically important in evangelism. The unbeliever needs to know his/her true condition, so that he/she realizes that the only hope is Jesus Christ.

Action Step: This is just as important in worship. Untaught (or wrongly taught) believers have not been able to praise the Lord for the riches of his saving grace. Consider Lk 7:47.

Apply: To say this in another way, knowing this turns a person from being satisfied with self to being satisfied with Christ alone.

II. God's grace gives the church a new position.

A. The foundation of this position is union with Christ. Note: "with Christ" and "in Christ Jesus."

1. "Every spiritual blessing which is necessary for our full salvation and which renders us complete in grace flows out of and is derived from our union with Christ."
[Morey, p. 88]

2. Let's think about some Biblical illustrations of this union: the vine and the branches (Jn 15:5) and the head and the body (Eph 1:22-23).

B. The greatness of this position is discovered in the truth that we are one with the Ascended Christ (2:6).

1. This union provides access to the Father (2:18). We have the privilege and right to approach God the Father boldly with all our needs and love.

2. This union assures triumph over our enemies (Rm 8:37).

A question answered: Someone might ask, "Why then am I not seeing this in my life?" And the answer is "Are you living by faith in Christ?" A follower of Christ must learn to live by faith what he/she is in Christ (1 Jn 5:4).

3. This union secures completed redemption (Heb 1:3). We are completely, totally, finally, and absolutely saved by Christ. He has completed his work, and we have sat down with him (Heb 10:11-14).

Hymn: Grace Hymns, #282.

Apply: Christian, you are not merely “saved”. You are in the Ascended Lord of Glory! Rejoice in the Lord! Watch out for those who would tell you that you need something more. Christ is all! By faith, lay hold of all that is yours in Christ. Pray for the Holy Spirit to make these things known to you. “Spirit of God my teacher be, showing the things of Christ to me.”

III. God’s grace guarantees glorification.

A. God’s grace has been given to us in conformity with God’s purpose.

1. Remember what God’s ultimate purpose is. He works everything for his own glory (1:6,12,14).

2. This is true in reference to us and our salvation. God has saved us not merely for this life, but to enjoy his people forever! Our heavenly Father is a joyful Father, and he wants you to share his joy with him forever. Hallelujah!

B. The best is yet to come for the saints.

Illustration: Consider the sadness of the unbeliever. All they can do is sit back and eat their crab legs and drink their beer and say, “It doesn’t get any better than this.” Sad to say, that is true.

That is all they will ever have, though they could have so much more!

1. The saint still looks forward to a new body, forever free from sickness, pain, suffering and death!

2. The saint still looks forward to fullness of joy with God forever! Ps 16:11

3. The saint still looks forward to reigning forever with Christ.

Illustration: Only a fool would spend his life’s savings on a night of pleasure. Yet this world is filled with fools, for multitudes spend their lives for brief and painful pleasure. At the end of the day they have nothing left to show for their expenditure, except the flames of hell. For in pursuing pleasure, they never found Christ.

Conclusion:

1. Here is hope for the Christian. Why are you downcast? Set your heart on things above!

2. Here is an invitation to those apart from Christ. Though you have no hope now, come to Christ and you will have a new and living hope.