



God is Love

Summary and Goal

False Narrative: We must perform for God to accept us.

True Narrative: Faith is the courage to accept your acceptance.

Bottom Line: By loving us, God made us lovable. We work from our acceptance, not for it.

Main Passages

Ephesians 2:1-8

Session Outline

1. Sin and Death (Eph. 2:1-3)
2. Mercy and Love (Eph. 2:4-7)
3. Grace and Faith (Eph. 2:8)

Theological Theme

The Bible makes plain that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Yet, because of Jesus’ sacrificial death, God is both the just and the Justifier. (See Rom. 3:26.) The Christian’s sin-debt is cancelled and they enjoy adoption as sons and daughter of the one true and living God.

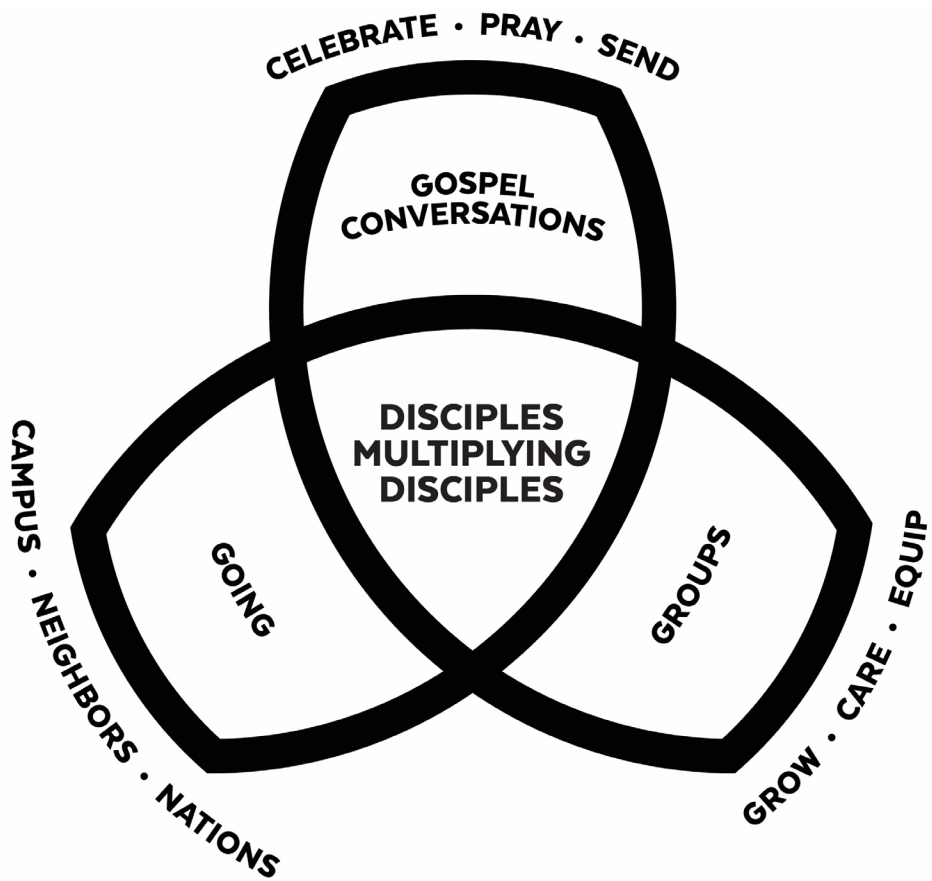
Christ Connection

Christ, the God-man, who was “tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15), now lives to make intercession for all of those who have responded to the gospel with faith and repentance. (See Heb. 7:25.)

Missional Application

As Christians proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, they call sinners to repent of sin and believe the gospel. All those who come to Christ in this way will never be cast away. (See John 6:37.)

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



DxD This Week

Next Step

How are you addressing the things that are breaking your heart in your community? In the world?

How might you address some of these things through neighborhood socials? A community small group? Service projects in your neighborhood?

Who will represent your group on an international mission trip in the next 12 months?

2

Session Plan

God is Love

Introduction

- ❓ Do you know someone who has been adopted? What responsibilities do adoptive parents take on in this process?
- ❓ How does this process help us know more about the way God loves His children?

Paul wrote this letter to the church in Ephesus, where he had previously evangelized and labored to build up the new believers. He left Timothy there to oversee the work as he continued on his travels. Timothy's role as the pastor of Ephesus was primarily the ministry of teaching the Word. It is through the Word that we clearly see our need for Christ and the reality that once we are in Christ, we no longer have to perform to be accepted by God. Rather, we work out of our acceptance, not for it.

1. Sin and Death (Eph. 2:1-3)

Paul explained in his letter to Timothy that sound teaching was what Timothy had received from Paul himself and was based in the Scriptures. (See 2 Tim. 2:2,15). The content of Ephesians reveals the pattern of teaching Paul wanted Timothy to give to the Ephesians. This is the "good deposit" Paul commanded him to guard (2 Tim. 1:13-14). Ephesians 2:1-8 is the very heart of this good deposit, for it is a divinely inspired description of the work of salvation by God on behalf of man.

- ❓ What is the main idea of Ephesians 2:1-3?
- ❓ What does it mean to be "dead in your trespasses and sins" (v. 1)? What does verse 3 say about the nature of those who are in this state?
- ❓ Application: Why is it important that we understand the sinful condition of man before we attempt to appreciate the mercy and love of God in Christ Jesus?

2. Mercy and Love (Eph. 2:4-7)

The bad news of verses 1-3 gives weight to the amazingly good news of verse 4. The bitterness of those verses makes the sweetness of verses 4-7 sweet like honey. Those who are in Christ rejoice with weeping because of the marvelous mercy and love God has shown them in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

- ❓ How has God displayed mercy to His people through Jesus?
- ❓ How did Jesus reconcile sinners to God?
- ❓ Application: How does it make you feel to know that your salvation had to be earned but Christ earned it on your behalf because you are unable to do so?

3. Grace and Faith (Eph. 2:8)

Grace is unmerited favor. In other words, grace is when a person receives a good thing that they have not earned and do not deserve. Faith is the instrument by which a lost sinner may receive the grace of God in Christ Jesus. We exhibit faith by trusting in and leaning upon the person and work of Jesus Christ without reservation.

- ❓ What is grace? What is faith?
- ❓ How did God show His grace toward us in Christ?
- ❓ Application: Where do you tend to look toward your own spiritual work (faith, baptism, church attendance, etc.) as the root of your salvation instead of to Christ?

Conclusion

- ❓ How might it shape you to meditate on the fact that God now feels no wrath whatsoever toward you even when you sin because Christ has already born that wrath? How would this make you a more joyful, thankful, loving person? Why?
- ❓ How should the grace that Christ has shown us compel us to love others within the church and show love toward them?
- ❓ Why should God's grace motivate us to tell others about Him?



Expanded Session Content

God is Love

Introduction

- ❓ Do you know someone who has been adopted? What responsibilities do adoptive parents take on in this process?
- ❓ How does this process help us know more about the way God loves His children?

Each state has its own adoption processes and procedures, but in many states the adoption process culminates with a courtroom hearing where a child is officially and legally made the child of the adoptive parents. During this hearing it is common for the judge to interview the parents concerning their knowledge of the meaning of adoption and their ability to provide for the child.

A common question that a judge might ask the adoptive parents at one of these hearing goes something like this: “Do you understand that this child will have equal rights and claim to your inheritance as your biological child?” These ceremonies are both joyful and solemn. They are weighty events because what is taking place is profound and life altering.

They are also pictures of grace. The child that is being adopted is grafted into a family based not on their merits, but because of the kindness, compassion, and love of the adoptive parents. The orphaned child isn’t adopted because the parents hope that the child will one day become rich and pay them back. Rather, they are brought into the family because of the kindness and compassion of the father and mother.

This is a picture of what God does for His children. In the second chapter of Ephesians, Paul described spiritual adoption. He made plain the fact that those who are children of God were once lifeless and hopeless. Their adoption into the family of God was a result of His graciousness, love, and mercy.

In his hymn, “How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds,” John Newton included this verse:

*By Thee my prayers acceptance gain,
Although with sin defiled;
Satan accuses me in vain,
And I am owned a child.*


Let’s look at Ephesians 2:1-8 together and consider how Christians come to be “owned a child.”

Session Summary


Paul wrote this letter to the church in Ephesus, where he had previously evangelized and labored to build up the new believers. He left Timothy there to oversee the work as he continued on his travels. Paul wrote to Timothy directly to give him instructions concerning his work there. He said, “As I urged you when I went to Macedonia, remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach false doctrine” (1 Tim. 1:3). Throughout the letter Paul continually urged Timothy to pay careful attention to both teaching sound doctrine as well as refuting false teaching. Timothy’s role as the pastor of Ephesus was primarily the ministry of teaching the Word. It is through the Word that we clearly see our need for Christ and the reality that once we are in Christ, we no longer have to perform to be accepted by God. Rather, we work out of our acceptance, not for it.

1. Sin and Death (Eph. 2:1-3)

Paul explained in his letter to Timothy that sound teaching was what Timothy had received from Paul himself and was based in the Scriptures. (See 2 Tim. 2:2,15). The content of Ephesians reveals the pattern of teaching Paul wanted Timothy to give to the Ephesians. This is the “good deposit” Paul commanded him to guard (2 Tim. 1:13-14). Ephesians 2:1-8 is the very heart of this good deposit, for it is a divinely inspired description of the work of salvation by God on behalf of man.


 What is the main idea of Ephesians 2:1-3?

The main idea of these first three verses is that man is so pervaded by sin that they are as good as dead. Paul wrote that before coming to Christ, the Ephesians were “dead in your trespasses and sins” (v. 1). The same can be said of Christians today. All those who are in Christ now were previously dead in their trespasses and sins. Further, we also learn from this passage that those who are not in Christ continue to be dead in their trespasses and sins.

-  What does it mean to be “dead in your trespasses and sins” (v. 1)? What does verse 3 say about the nature of those who are in this state?

Someone who is dead in their trespasses and sins is in a hopeless situation. They are unable to get themselves out of it. They are lost, broken, and separated from God. They have no merit that warrants the favor or blessing of God. In fact, it’s just the opposite.

The text indicates that those who are dead in their sins and trespasses are under the wrath of God. The sinful condition itself is bad, but the real horror of being dead in one’s sins and trespasses is the fact that it makes a person an enemy of God. Those who stay in their sin are God’s enemies and under His wrath. This biblical truth cuts against the accepted social norm that all people are God’s children and each one may find their own way toward God. The fact of the matter is God does love His children with an undiminishing, everlasting love. Many people, however, are not children of the one true and living God. It is a misconception to believe that because God created a person (as all were), they are automatically one of God’s children. This simply isn’t so. The Bible teaches explicitly that some people are children of the devil apart from the saving work of Christ in their lives. (See John 8:44; 1 John 3:10.)

-  Application: Why is it important that we understand the sinful condition of man before we attempt to appreciate the mercy and love of God in Christ Jesus?

2. Mercy and Love (Eph. 2:4-7)

The bad news of verses 1-3 gives weight to the amazingly good news of verse 4. The bitterness of those verses makes the sweetness of verses 4-7 sweet like honey. Those who are in Christ rejoice with weeping because of the marvelous mercy and love God has shown them in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

-  How has God displayed mercy to His people through Jesus?

Mercy is the withholding of deserved punishment. In this case, it is God withholding the penalty for sin, which is eternity in hell. God has shown mercy to many sinners and brought them into His family as beloved children. Those who were once His enemies are now made His friends. Those who were children of the devil have now been made children of God.

But God


Over against the human rejection of God, Paul painted a picture of the new life manifested in God’s gracious acceptance of sinners because of Christ. The strong contrast points to God’s answer to people’s dreadful situation.

This incredible turn of events came about because “God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). In other words, God extends His mercy to those who deserve His condemnation because Jesus Christ, the Son of God, paid the price for sin with His very own blood. In this way God is both just and the justifier. (See Rom. 3:26.) Paul wrote to Timothy, “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). Further, Romans 8:34 says, “Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the one who died, but even more, has been raised; he also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us.”

 How did Jesus reconcile sinners to God?

Jesus, being fully God and fully man, did what no other person is able to do. Jesus lived a life of flawless obedience to the God the Father. Jesus always did what God commanded, and He never did what God prohibited. He pleased God the Father in every way. (See Matt. 3:17.)

His perfect obedience is a wonder to behold and His excellency is more than we can name. But how does Christ’s goodness help us? In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul explained: “He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (5:21). Holy, righteous Jesus submitted Himself to a sinner’s death and took the punishment for the sin of God’s people upon Himself. Jesus Christ, God the Son, took the wrath of God the Father toward our sin upon Himself on the cross. But that’s not all. He not only canceled the debt we owed, but He also credited our account with His righteousness so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.


 Application: How does it make you feel to know that your salvation had to be earned but Christ earned it on your behalf because you are unable to do so?

3. Grace and Faith (Eph. 2:8)

 What is grace? What is faith?


Grace is unmerited favor. In other words, grace is when a person receives a good thing that they have not earned and do not deserve. Faith is the instrument by which a lost sinner may receive the grace of God in Christ Jesus. We exhibit faith by trusting in and leaning upon the person and work of Jesus Christ without reservation.

Notice that Paul regarded both the grace of God and the faith of man as gifts: “this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift.” Both salvation itself and the ability to receive it are due to God’s kindness. Paul’s point was that we don’t look to anything other than Christ as the source of our salvation, not even our faith. Charles Spurgeon said it this way: “Remember, therefore, it is not thy hold of Christ that saves thee—it is Christ; it is not thy joy in Christ that saves thee—it is Christ; it is not even faith in Christ, though that be the instrument—it is Christ’s blood and merits; therefore, look not so much to thy hand with which thou art grasping Christ, as to Christ; look not to thy hope, but to Jesus, the source of thy hope; look not to thy faith, but to Jesus, the author and finisher of thy faith.”¹

 How did God show His grace toward us in Christ?

God is just and sin must be punished. He will not hold back punishing sin. God’s justice would undoubtedly be satisfied for the sins of every man through eternal condemnation. Every person has been guilty before a holy God and their sentence of death was ready to be handed down. But everything changed when Christ appeared to intercede. The Mediator, Christ Jesus, bore sin. Read what Paul wrote to the Colossians: “You, were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive with him and forgave us all our trespasses. He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly; he triumphed over them in him” (Col. 2:13-15).

God the Father did this for Christians so that they might be forgiven of sin through the shed blood of Christ and united to Him. Christians are blessed beyond measure. Not only has their record of sin been canceled, but also they have been adopted into God’s family and enjoy all the rights and privileges of sons and daughters. (See John 1:12.)

 Application: Where do you tend to look toward your own spiritual work (faith, baptism, church attendance, etc.) as the root of your salvation instead of to Christ?

Conclusion

Performance-based religion is a dead end. It may appeal to us and we may even be tempted to buy the product, but we must resist. Works-based righteousness is a bill of goods from the pit of hell that leads all those who subscribe to it there.

This very thing is what makes Christianity distinct from other religions practiced across the globe. All other systems of belief have at its very core the idea that people must earn the favor of God and their way into heaven. The Christian faith is different. The Scriptures teach that it is impossible for a person to gain heaven by their works. Christ promised that He would save all who would come to Him with faith and repentance. He doesn't save them because of merit found within in them, but because of His grace.

- ❓ How might it shape you to meditate on the fact that God now feels no wrath whatsoever toward you even when you sin because Christ has already born that wrath? How would this make you a more joyful, thankful, loving person? Why?
- ❓ How should the grace that Christ has shown us compel us to love others within the church and show love toward them?
- ❓ Why should God's grace motivate us to tell others about Him?

Prayer of Response

Ask the Lord to make the gospel precious to all the members of our church. Ask the Lord to give you a fresh understanding of the gospel message so that you would cherish Christ and treasure His gospel above all things, even your own life. Ask the Lord for opportunities to share the gospel with others.

Additional Resources

- *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians* by Tony Merida
- *Be Rich* by Warren Wiersbe
- *Ephesians* by R. Kent Hughes

For Next Week

Session Title

- God is Trustworthy

Main Passages

- Matthew 6:9-13

Session Outline

1. His Nearness (Matt. 6:9a,11)
2. His Holiness (Matt. 6:9b,12)
3. His Authority (Matt. 6:10,13)

Memorize

⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses.

You are saved by grace!

- Ephesians 2:4-5

Daily Readings

- Monday - Ephesians 2:1-8
- Tuesday - John 3:16
- Wednesday - Zephaniah 3:17
- Thursday - 1 John 4:16
- Friday - 1 John 4:19
- Saturday - Psalm 86:15

Historical Context of Ephesians

Purpose

The book hints at several purposes. The apostle taught that Jewish and Gentile believers are one in Christ. This oneness was to be demonstrated by their love for one another. Paul used the noun or verb form of love (agapē) nineteen times (about one-sixth of the total uses in all the Pauline letters). Ephesians begins with love (1:4–6) and ends with love (6:23–24).

Paul implicitly addressed matters raised by the mystery religions in the Lycus Valley. The letter has much to say about redemption (1:7) and the divine intention for the human race (1:3–14). Additional themes include grace (1:2), predestination (1:4–5), reconciliation, and union with Christ (2:1–21).

Central to the message of Ephesians is the re-creation of the human family according to God’s original intention for it. The new creation destroys the misguided view that God accepts the Jew and rejects the Gentile. Paul says the distinction was abolished at Christ’s sacrificial death. Thus no more hindrance remains to reuniting all humanity as the people of God, with Christ as the head (1:22–23). The new body, the church, has been endowed by the power of the Holy Spirit to enable them to live out their new lives (1:3–2:10) and put into practice the new standards (4:1–6:9). In sum, we can say that the overall emphasis of Ephesians is on the unity of the church in Christ through the power of the Spirit.

Author

Paul referred to himself by name as the author of the book of Ephesians in two places (1:1; 3:1). Many regard this book as the crown of all of Paul’s writings. Today some scholars think the book contains a writing style, vocabulary, and even some teachings that are not typical of the apostle. If that is the case, then it would mean a disciple of Paul had surpassed him in theological insight and spiritual perception. Of such an erudite disciple the early church has no record. Furthermore, pseudonymity (writing under someone else’s name) probably was not practiced by early Christians. We can conclude, in line with the indisputable acceptance of Pauline authorship in the early church, that there is no reason to dispute the Pauline authorship of Ephesians.

Setting

Relatively little is known about the recipients of the letter called Ephesians. Some important and early manuscripts do not contain the words “at Ephesus” (1:1). The letter was carried to its destination by Tychicus, who in Ephesians 6:21 and Colossians 4:7 is identified as Paul’s emissary. The Ephesian and Colossian letters probably were delivered at the same time since in both letters the apostle noted that Tychicus would inform the churches concerning Paul’s situation.

Special Features

Paul’s letter to the Ephesians is an anthem to the sovereign grace of God displayed toward sinners in Christ. It contains some of the worst news (“you were dead in your trespasses and sins”) and best news (“but God . . . made us alive with Christ”) in all of Scripture. In view of this grace, Paul calls believers to “live worthy of the calling” we have received.

Extended Commentary

Ephesians 2:1-8

2:1. In chapter 1, Paul enumerates God's spiritual blessings for us and then prays that we might be able to comprehend them. One of those spiritual blessings was forgiveness of sins and redemption by Christ. In chapter 2, Paul explains that great truth more specifically: we were spiritually dead, separated and alienated from God, because of our transgressions and sins. Later in the chapter, he talks about the consequences of this spiritual death, but for now he just establishes it as fact.

2:2. Paul describes the way we lived while we were in this spiritually alienated condition. We followed the ways of this world. That is, we lived according to the non-Christian value system. This value system is created and energized by Satan (the ruler of the kingdom of the air). This does not mean that non-Christians realize that their values are created and energized by Satan. In fact, most would probably deny it. Nevertheless, Satan, in his craftiness, places the things in front of us that we, in our sinful condition, find attractive, and, therefore, pursue as though they were our ideas. The spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient is probably not the ruler of the kingdom of the air as the niv translation suggests but rather an impersonal atmosphere created and energized by the ruler. Satan's kingdom encourages us to have ungodly values, attitudes, and actions, much the same way a spirit of enthusiasm at a ball game might encourage us to embrace the attitudes and actions of a sports fan. We cheer, yell, jump up and down, and otherwise act in ways that we would not if we were not under the influence of the spirit of enthusiasm. Under the spirit of Satan's kingdom we act in disobedient ways we would not normally follow.

2:3. Specifically, our Satanically energized value system motivated us to gratify illicit desires. As a result, we were objects of wrath, meaning God's wrath, just like all other non-Christians.

The wrath of God comes on us in this life in two ways. At times we receive the natural cause-effect consequences of violating God's principles. Galatians 6:7 tells us that we reap what we sow. For example, if we are sexually immoral, we may contract a sexually transmitted disease. If we are violent or angry, we may receive the hatred and resistance of those around us. At other times God may bring his wrath on us specifically, in direct divine judgment. Such instances would be difficult to prove, but examples of such temporal judgment can be found in the Bible (Rom. 1:18–27; Acts 5:5; 1 Cor. 11:30).

In addition to the wrath of God coming on non-Christians in this life, the wrath of God will certainly come on them after death. Hebrews 9:27 says, "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment." For the non-Christian, this is a terrifying thing. Second Peter 3:7 reads, "The present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." Ephesians 2:1–3 presents a hopeless picture for the non-Christian.

2:4. Against this bleak backdrop of the hopelessness of the non-Christian, Paul presents heartening news. God's mercy restrains his wrath. He refrains from punishing us even though we are sinners. Why? This mercy flows out of his great love for us. He desires to do good for those he loves, not evil. As a result he has done three things for us.

2:5. First, he made us alive with Christ. Our sins had made us spiritually dead. They separated us from God. The resurrected Christ overcame death. God lets us share in Christ's life. In so doing he caused us no longer to be spiritually alienated from himself. Why give us life when we deserved death? Because we earned it? Surely not! We deserved the death we got. We are alive because of God's grace, a concept we will explore further in verse 8.

2:6. Second, he raised us up with Christ. Life in Christ came because we experienced Christ's resurrection in the spiritual realm. We were raised up from our sin death and given opportunity for new life. Still facing life on earth where Satan reigns, we live with Christ as part of his kingdom.

Third, he seated us with him in the heavenly realms. That is, he has made possible and certain our resurrection from the dead and has mysteriously positioned us in heaven where Christ dwells (see 1:20). To be seated with Christ in the heavenlies is a figure of speech meaning God considers us worthy and destined to be seated with Christ in heaven when we get there. God has decided to do it, and it is as good as done. We just have to wait for a few years until it happens. The significance of being seated with Christ is much the same as being seated at the head table of a banquet where there are many important people. It is a privilege and honor, and it marks you as one of the important people. We will be important in heaven.

How will we be important? We will share with Christ in his rule as king. We will be seated on thrones (see Rev. 3:21). In fact, we already exercise power with Christ over the powers of this age. We can live lives reflecting Christ's kingdom, not Satan's. We are no longer dead in trespasses and sin. We are alive in Christ, sharing his power and authority, representing him in the battle with Satan where victory is assured through the resurrection.

2:7. God's intention in this, in addition to the natural response of love which he has for us (v. 4), is to show for eternity the magnitude of his grace toward us. The word show actually means "display." In the same sense that an artist might display his canvasses to reveal his skill, so God displays his redeemed children to the universe to demonstrate his grace. The grace shown in his children seated in heavenly realms is the same grace or kindness shown in the death and resurrection of Christ. Once supremely in Christ, God showed his loving attitude to the world. From now on he continues to show that attitude in the lives of his people whom he has delivered from the ways and ruler of this world and given protection and power in the heavenly realms.

2:8. In verse 5, Paul made the parenthetical statement, it is by grace you have been saved. Now, in verse 8, he picks up that idea and elaborates on it. Grace carries with it the idea of benevolence being bestowed on someone without that person having merited it by his actions. God was not required to offer us salvation. He would be justified in condemning all people to eternal separation from himself. In spite of the fact that our actions bring deserved judgment upon ourselves, God offered us an escape. He didn't have to, but because he loved us, he wanted to. That is grace, and that is what saved us, or delivered us, from eternal judgment. God's escape belongs to him and to his initiative alone. No part of it can be credited to you. The whole of salvation, the grace as well as the faith, is a gift of God.

He chose to make salvation possible in this way. He handed salvation to you. You did nothing but stick out a hand and accept the gift. Faith is exactly that. It is trustfully accepting from God what he has provided without totally understanding what you are receiving. Faith is giving up on being able to provide what you need for yourself and letting God give what he alone can provide.²

References

1. Charles H. Spurgeon, “Charles Haddon Spurgeon: Morning and Evening,” Spurgeon’s June 28th - Morning Reading (Blue Letter Bible), accessed May 20, 2021, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/devotionals/me/view.cfm?Date=06%2F28&Time=both&body=1>.
2. Max E. Anders, *Holman New Testament Commentary: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians & Colossians* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1999).

Author Bio

Charles Spurgeon (Charles Haddon Spurgeon: Morning and Evening)

A prolific author and pastor, Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) remains a respected and influential source of inspiration and study. His classic collection of devotions for morning and evening remain a beloved treasure of wisdom and teaching for Christians.

Max Anders (Holman New Testament Commentary: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians & Colossians)

Dr. Max Anders is the author of over 25 books, including the bestselling 30 Days to Understanding the Bible, and is the creator and general editor of the 32-volume Holman Bible Commentary series. He has taught on the college and seminary level and is a veteran pastor. Max provides resources and discipleship strategies at www.maxanders.com to help people grow spiritually.

Tony Merida (Exalting Jesus in Ephesians)

Tony Merida is lead pastor of Imago Dei Church in Raleigh, NC, and associate professor of preaching at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC.

Warren Wiersbe (Be Rich)

Warren W. Wiersbe, former pastor of the Moody Church and general director of Back to the Bible, has traveled widely as a Bible teacher and conference speaker. Because of his encouragement to those in ministry, Dr. Wiersbe is often referred to as “the pastor’s pastor.” He has ministered in churches and conferences throughout the United States as well as in Canada, Central and South America, and Europe. Dr. Wiersbe has written over 150 books, including the popular BE series of commentaries on every book of the Bible, which has sold more than four million copies. At the 2002 Christian Booksellers Convention, he was awarded the Gold Medallion Lifetime Achievement Award by the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association. Dr. Wiersbe and his wife, Betty, live in Lincoln, Nebraska.

R. Kent Hughes (Ephesians)

R. Kent Hughes (DMin, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) is senior pastor emeritus of College Church in Wheaton, Illinois, and former professor of practical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Hughes is also a founder of the Charles Simeon Trust, which conducts expository preaching conferences throughout North America and worldwide. He serves as the series editor for the Preaching the Word commentary series and is the author or coauthor of many books. He and his wife, Barbara, live in Wyncote, Pennsylvania, and have four children and an ever-increasing number of grandchildren.