

Ephesians- Lesson Six

Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 11. What is God's providence?

A. *God's providence is His completely holy, wise, and powerful preserving every creature and every action.*

Review of Chapter 2:1-7:

Dead in sins (1-3)- Sin makes men totally unable to do what is ultimately good in God's sight, to earn God's mercy, or to come to Him. The "T" in Total Depravity.

WCF 16. 7. Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others;^a yet because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith,^b nor are done in a right manner, according to the Word,^c nor to a right end, the glory of God;^d they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God.^e And yet their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing unto God.

The World, the Flesh and the Devil (2-3)- Sin totally permeates every area of our existence. We are part of a way of life and kingdom led by an evil enemy we can't escape. Sin distorts our desires so we do what we want (freedom) but what we want is opposed to God. Worst of all we are under God's wrath.

Summary of hope in God's response (4-6)- "But God..." When we were still dead in sin God's character of mercy led to his response to deal with our sin.

The great "withs" of God's work. Alive with Christ, Raised with Christ, Seated with Christ

Ephesians 2:7-13 (ESV)- A detailed picture of Vs 4-6; we are saved from God, by God, and for God.

For by grace- Grace is God's favor. It is the merciful fulfilment of God's justice by His acts for His glory.

You have been saved- Saved is in the perfect tense. It conveys past, present, and future- something ongoing. Saved conveys wellness and wholeness as well as deliverance (like shalom in OT). Zaccheus.

Matthew 1:21 (ESV) She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

Through faith- Grace is the objective cause of salvation, faith is the subjective means of salvation. Faith is intellectual assent to the truth (the faith once delivered- Jude 3) and personal trust in its power. Ex of sitting on chair or man willing to be carried by a tightrope walker.

WSC Q 86. What is faith in Jesus Christ?

A. Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, by which we receive and rest on Him alone for sanctification, as He is offered to us in the gospel.

Romans 4:2-3 (ESV) For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."

And this- "This" likely refers not just to faith, but to the whole nature of salvation being described.

Is not your own doing- Literally, not out of you. Man is not the source of salvation in any way.

It is the gift of God- Literally, God, the gift. God follows immediately after you (man). Word order can vary in Greek to provide emphasis. Salvation is from God (his wrath described in vs 3) and is solely by God as the attention is taken away from human effort of any type. Every aspect of salvation is a gift of God.

Not a result of works- Literally, not out of works. The point is repeated with the reason to follow.

So that no one can boast- The reason to be clear that salvation is from God is so there can be no boasting in man but only boasting in God and His grace.

1 Corinthians 1:28–31 (ESV) God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are,²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.³⁰ And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,³¹ so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

For we are his workmanship- The root of the word for workmanship is where we get the word poem. We are God’s carefully designed and valuable work both in our creation and in our sanctification.

Isaiah 45:9 (ESV) Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, ‘What are you making?’ or ‘Your work has no handles’?

Created in Christ Jesus for good works- Salvation is for God. Being in Christ is again central. It is clear that the work of God described here is sanctification- it comes as a result of being born again in Christ.

Philippians 2:12–13 (ESV) work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Which God prepared beforehand- God has a general design for what our life should be. That includes His law and all His revelation. But there is a particular plan for each of us as well. All that happens to us in all of life (even before coming to Christ) is used by God to form us. All of it (even our sin and failures) will be used for His glory. “God works all things together for good...” Romans 8.

That we should walk in them- The theme of walking is repeated. We formerly walked in darkness and were captives in the kingdom of Satan. Now we walk in the light of the kingdom of God.

WCF 16. 6. Yet notwithstanding, the persons of believers being accepted through Christ, their good works also are accepted in him,^a not as though they were in this life wholly unblamable and unreprovable in God’s sight;^b but that he, looking upon them in his Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections.

Ephesians 2:11 (ESV) Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Paul focuses on the condition of non-Jews. They are strangers to the covenants and alienated from Israel. But in Christ that is no longer the case. Gentile Christians can claim the heritage of the OT promises and be part of a new Israel. God’s grace not only saved persons but made a new people.