

Eph. 2:1-10 “By Grace”

For the Children: Imagine a little child who helps his father with a big job – say stacking a lot of firewood. The child is too little to do any real good, but does pick up a couple of twigs and throws them on the pile. Later, mum says to dad, “Wow. You did a great job!” The child pipes up, “I did some too!” People often want to get more praise than they deserve. The work of saving us is entirely God’s doing. We can’t even pick up a twig of it to add to it. But we often want some of the praise. No, all the praise should go to God. We are not to boast – especially for something in which we have nothing to boast about! **Questions:** What makes us unable to help with our own salvation? Could our *faith* be our addition? What other things do people sometimes suggest as way of helping with their own salvation?

Introduction:

First Point: The Natural Man Is Dead

- 1) Dead in Sin: In order to convince Jews and Gentiles that salvation for all of them is by grace alone, the apostle first proves the natural man’s helpless state. He is *dead* in sin, unable to save himself. He has come off the rails (trespasses), missed the target (sins) and crossed God’s line (transgressions). This affects both flesh and mind – the whole person. It is a settled condition, not just an occasional mistake – a “walk” and “life” and “nature.” He is a “son” of disobedience. This is why we speak of “total depravity.”
- 2) According to the Devil: In addition, the natural man is under the devil’s control – the “prince of the power of the air.” “Air” means an impure atmosphere. The unusual term may mean simply that the devil is the prince of darkness, or of the murky realm of unseen demonic forces. It is his busy work that creates the “spirit of the age” that the natural man also follows without realizing how bound he is to it.

Second Point: But God Made Us Alive

- 1) In and with Christ: As in chap.1:2,5-7 strongly emphasizes Christ’s role in God’s intervention. Note the frequency of the terms “in Christ,” “with Christ,” and “with Him.” Moreover, all this is done not just for our benefit; but above all to show the surpassing riches of God’s grace “in Christ Jesus” (v. 7).
- 2) Following His Pattern: Christ, after His death, was made alive, then raised up to heaven, and finally seated at His Father’s right hand. We are united to Christ, our Head and Representative, therefore we share in His work. We are made alive, raised up to heaven and given a share in His power and authority – “with/in Him.” These things are all expressed using a “once-and-for-all” form of the verbs. That means we already participate in these things now, though the full expression of them comes in the next life, especially when Jesus returns. If the apostle meant to make faith or salvation in any way a contribution from man, this point would be weakened and there would be no explanation as to how a sinner could accomplish that – in light of vss. 1-5.

Third Point: He Did So by Grace

- 1) The Point Reiterated: Far from weakening his case, the apostle repeatedly stresses that salvation is all of God, not man. It is a matter of God’s rich mercy (pity) and great love to those who were dead (vss. 4-5); it is “by grace” (vss. 5, 8); it is to show God’s grace in Christ, not our good efforts (v. 7).
- 2) The Role of Faith: V. 8 points out that we are saved “through” faith – it is the instrument that connects us to Christ. But this faith is not our contribution to our own salvation. It is a *gift from God* (v. 8). Both the salvation and the faith are “by grace.” None of it is a “result of works, that no one may boast” (v. 9). In fact, both we, the ones exercising faith and doing good works, are God’s “creation”; and the works we do are by *His* “preparation” from before the world (v. 10). Though the believer is to be responsible in exercising faith and doing good works, none of it contributes to our salvation. It is all of God, by grace.

Conclusion:

