

SERMON: To The Glory of God's Grace- God's Home on Earth-The Church

GOOD Morning OIC & Welcome to Father's House

Today, we will continue in the Book of Ephesians, written by the Apostle Paul. Last week we saw how Paul instructed the Ephesians, therefore all Christians, to live in God's perspective, as if they were already in Heavenly Places, **BECAUSE THEY ARE!** Now Paul declares that this Grace, *undeserved favor*, from God to be spiritually lifted to Heavenly Places, is the same grace that brought them to first believe in Jesus. Therefore the past, the present, and futures of all Christians are by and to The Glory of God's Grace.

So we read in The Book of Ephesians:

7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 For it is by grace you have been saved... Here Paul makes a transition from the Jesus Follower's future in *the coming ages* to our introduction to the Faith in Jesus. We next read in **(Ephesians 2.8-9)**, *8 For it is by grace you have been saved...through faith – and this is not from yourselves – it is the gift of God – 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.*

It seems that all the false religions, man or devil made, emphasize the adherent or follower's ability to perform rituals or pilgrim journeys to shrines or painful sacrifices. Christianity is totally *the gift of God*. We accept this as we accepted Christ. The longer we follow Jesus, the more we realize how He is both watching us in care, and, going ahead of us with God's power. Jesus keeps us, causes us to stand, and causes us to bear fruit for God.

We read in **(Ephesians 2.8)**, *saved...through faith* - This faith is in Jesus' Sacrificial Death on The Cross as our substitute, to receive on Himself the wrath of God that we deserve. Also, we see that the Bible tells us in **(John 6.29)** *Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."* We are in awe of the power of the Almighty, and of His Mercy in Action, to be doing His Work, to cause belief in the minds and hearts of His Enemies, Sinners. Sinners are helpless to *believe in Him {Jesus} whom He has sent*. Then, **the result of God's Work**, what may take years or microseconds, the supernatural miracle happens: God's Enemies become His Children as they believe and confess Jesus. This is beautifully expressed in Isaac Watts famous hymn in Christendom, *Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed?* (Song # 208 in *THE*

HYMNAL for Worship & Celebration). Maybe in different words than this “King James Bible style”, the just Born-Again Christian feels the first verse of this hymn deep in his innermost being: *Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed And did my sovereign die? Would He devote that Sacred Head For sinners such as I? Then the babe in Christ says **YES HE DID, PRAISE GOD!***

I have devoted this, what seems too-small exegesis, to the most awesome and infinite thing in the Universe, the Salvation of a Sinner. The next few words in **(Ephesians 2.8)** *saved...through faith* are, of course, true but, **Oh the miracle above all miracles!**

Rebirth in Christ through faith in His finished work on the Cross.

It is Jesus' Work, and the Holy Spirit's work, to open eyes and hearts and to give the Gift of Faith. It is not the sinner's efforts to save himself, as in **(Ephesians 2.9):** *not by works, so that no one can boast.* Paul knew that we human beings tend to encourage our self-worth from things we do well, and to boast about it. There is still a proper place for this in a Christian's life. But not in regards to getting saved from God's wrath which we all deserved.

TAKEAWAY #1

It is God's work, not our own work, that saved us! The Holy Spirit found us living willfully in sin, and caused us to repent and to believe in the meaning of the Passion of Christ on the Cross. That is when Jesus received all the Judgment and Wrath of God that we deserve.

(Ephesians 2.10) *For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.* We might imagine the physical work of the Lord Jesus as a boy carpenter with his earthly *adopted* father, Joseph. We should have great confidence in our Lord's *handiwork* as the Bible tells us in **(John 1.2-4)** *2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.* Paul taught in his New Testament Letters, that all Christians, both Jew and Gentile, are **The Chosen** as detailed in **(Romans 8. 28-30/DARBY)** *But we *do* know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 Because whom he has foreknown, he has also predestinated [to be] conformed to the image of his Son, so that he should be [the] firstborn among many brethren. 30 But whom he has predestinated, these also he has called; and whom he has called, these also he has justified; but whom he has justified, these also he has glorified.*

This theology or knowledge for one in a close relationship with God was not totally unknown to the Older Testament as we see in **(Psalm 71.3-6/NASB1995):**

3 *Be to me a rock of habitation to which I may continually come;*

You have given commandment to save me,

For You are my rock and my fortress.

4 *Rescue me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked,*

Out of the grasp of the wrongdoer and ruthless man,

5 *For You are my hope;*

O Lord GOD, You are my confidence from my youth.

6 *By You I have been sustained from my birth;*

You are He who took me from my mother's womb;

My praise is continually of You.

The phrase, ***You have given commandment to save me***, most likely referred to more of a temporal deliverance from physical enemies than as the Newer Testament teaches. But the exclamation,

You are He who took me from my mother's womb; definitely points towards the theology of **The Chosen!**

Thus **The Chosen** become *God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, as in (Ephesians 2.10)*. God is the God who created Heaven and Earth and everything and everyone in it all. He is not *passive* but *active*. We easily mistake that God is passive from the Bible verse, *The Lord is Peace*. These are the words etched by Gideon on the altar to the Lord, which he built after he tore down his father's altar to Baal in **(Judges 6.24)** *Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and called it, The Lord is Peace. To this day it still stands in Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiezrites*. The Bible tells us that God gave Gideon an *inner peace* as Gideon was obeying the LORD to go and make **war** on Baal worship and on the Midianites.

Yes, The Lord is Peace; but in fact, Paul says here in this Letter that Christians have been *created in Christ Jesus to do good works*. Any Christian who follows Jesus in these good works knows that Satan, the Enemy of Jesus and His Church, hinders and attempts to stop this *doing of good works*. His main tactic of attack is to first take away a Christian's **Joy** and then to take away *his Peace*. The Book of Ephesians is as much a Manual of War as it is the Book of Encouragement. We will see Paul bringing out this side of a Christian's life in Ephesians Chapter 3 and the well known "Armor of God" teaching in Ephesians Chapter 6. The Lord Jesus gives us inner peace to strengthen our relationship with Him often in-between conflicts. The Holy Spirit often reminds us of the Word as promised in **(Romans 8.37)** *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us*. God causes great encouragements as we are Soldiers for Jesus in the midst of the fiercest battles against the Devil and his messengers. One encouragement to keep us *courageous* is when we suddenly experience the peace, as Gideon did,

when we also face overwhelming odds against us as described in **(Phillipians 4.7):** *And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

TAKEAWAY #2

We Christians choose to show our love for God and His people by actions as well by words. I suggest that we also ask God to lead us to what still may be unknown *good works that we were created in Christ Jesus to do.*

Jew and Gentile Reconciled Through Christ is the heading for the following verses in the NIVUK Bible. Reading: **(Ephesians 2.11-13)** *11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called 'uncircumcised' by those who call themselves 'the circumcision' (which is done in the body by human hands) – 12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.* Paul had taught the Gentiles in the Churches in Rome to be grateful that, as a wild olive branch, they were grafted into the Family of the Faith of Father Abraham, the natural olive branch. He wrote in **(Romans 11.17-18)** *If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, 18 do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, consider this: you do not support the root, but the root supports you.* Paul exhorts or implores these Gentiles to be thankful and remember that unbelief broke off the Jewish Branches that were naturally in Father Abraham's lineage. These Gentiles too must keep the faith or they will also be broken off. Now, here in **(Ephesians 2.13)** he declares that ***the blood of Christ*** has eliminated the distance between the Gentiles and the religious citizenship of spiritual Israel.

(Ephesians 2.14-15) reads: *14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations.* The Lord Jesus, *He himself, is our peace.* *The Lord is Peace*, as I had mentioned above, was the touch of God on Gideon's heart, after he had attacked the idolatry of his family and neighbors, and also accepted his call to battle against the superior Midianite Army. This was obviously the Peace as is written in The Newer Testament in **(Phillipians 4.7):** *And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* Remember, Bible students, that before Christ came to Earth in a physical body, He

was acting upon those *few and select leaders in Israel* by the Holy Spirit. Such was the timid but obedient Gideon!

But now Paul is declaring that *Jesus is our Peace*, that is for Jews and Gentiles in fellowship. This was the elimination of thousands of years of hostility between Jew and Gentile by the One and Only Saviour! We must realize that this was huge and world-shaking news in the 1st Century. It had immediate practical effect in everyday life not just in the churches.

(Ephesians 2.15-16) says, *who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,* Then Paul repeats that Jesus' blood sacrifice paid it all: *15 by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations.* Therefore we can truly say that the Law which separated Jew and Gentile was nailed to the Cross with Jesus, *and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,* Paul made this truth clear to the Colossian Church in:

(Colossians 2.13-14) *13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, {The Law} which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.*

(Ephesians 2.17-18) says: *He {Jesus} came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.*

Now Paul gets back to the fact that both Jews and Gentiles needed this same Jesus to save their souls, to be brought to God. As my favorite *Seed Planting Verse* emphasizes being brought to God in **(1 Peter 3.18)** says: *18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.* The Jews being closer than the Gentiles in culture, and religious practice, and history, would mean nothing without the gift of faith in the Sacrificial Lamb, Jesus. Now, the one Holy Spirit gives Jewish and Gentile Christians access to the Father, Jesus' Father and now theirs.

We read in **(Ephesians 2.19-20)** *19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household,*

20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. Words chosen by Paul in **(v.19)** : *no longer strangers, fellow citizens, and members of His household* are all saying **“Welcome to the Family of God, dear Gentile Christians!”** My Sunday morning greeting, “Welcome to Father's House.” is intended to say a similar thing to saints in the Family of God, and to sinners who desperately need to enter the Family of God.

Paul now takes the structure of a building, probably alluding to the Temple built by King Solomon, to illustrate this new unity in Christ. As we read in **(Ephesians 2.20)** *20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.*

The stone pieces for 1st Century stone buildings, such as the Temple in Jerusalem, were supported by a **chief cornerstone**. This rather ingenious piece of engineering is not what we may think of as

just a stone at the corner of a building. It is a huge stone cut into the shape of an arch which supports all the other stones above and around it.

The Apostle Peter also referred to Jesus as this **Cornerstone** in **(1 Peter 2.6-7)** :

*For in Scripture it says: 'See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious **cornerstone**, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.'* { Peter quoting Isaiah 28.16} *Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, 'The stone the builders rejected has become the **cornerstone**,'* Peter actually quoted the Older Testament prophet, Isaiah, who Paul may have been referring to, as he wrote of *the foundation of the apostles and prophets.* Paul was likely also thinking of Peter, as well as other fellow Apostles as the verbal foundation, those who preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. 1st Century Jewish Christians were well aware of these Jewish Religious leaders who rejected the *Cornerstone Jesus*, and had also pushed Pilate to crucify Him, the Author of Life.

In **(Ephesians 2.21-22)** Paul continues this beautiful analogy of *Christ the Cornerstone* as prophesied by Isaiah, as we read verse **21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.**

Paul's knowledge of God, by his close relationship with Jesus, shows over and over in his Letters with his wonderful word pictures. In the last two Messages I have highlighted the powerful but simple concept of the truth that Christians are **In Christ**. The two superior or most powerful results for every Christian: **The First "in Christ,"** is eternal life on earth and also bodily into Heaven **To The Glory of God's Grace.** **The Second "in Christ,"** is that we are already **Raised to Heavenly Realms with Christ!** Now Paul points our eyes back down to earth from our Heavenly position to see God's plan to raise His Family of Jesus Followers into **a holy temple in the Lord, Christ's Church.** Christian Churches may meet in buildings, but the Church or Temple is the people! The stones resting on the Cornerstone, Christ, are **joined together and rise.** This clearly shows God's intentions that we Christians learn to live closer together, day by day. It also declares that God will add New Stones to make the Building Rise up.

TAKEAWAY #3

Church Growth is not a question or an option with God. Buildings don't rise unless more stones are added!

(Ephesians 2.22) next says: *And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.* We Christians **being built together** is God's patient loving work in us and for us. God actually lives in us together, and individually also, **by His Spirit.** That

wonderful sense of peace and calm and forgiveness and Fruit of the Spirit in each Christian is often most strongly sensed by simply *going to Church*, on Sunday or any day, to be with other Christians. Jesus said in **(Matthew 18.20)** *For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.*'

Dear OIC Saints! We have much to thank God for:

Now, we are **in Christ**, and spiritually with Jesus in Heaven in His resurrected and glorified body. OIC is Father's House, for God lives here with us Christians by the Holy Spirit. Let's thank God with our lips and lives for the Miracle of God living in us and in our church here in OIC!

PRAISE GOD WITH OUR LIPS: It was God's work, not our own work, that saved us! The Holy Spirit sought us and convinced us that Jesus bought us with His redeeming Blood.

PRAISE GOD WITH OUR LIVES: Let us show our love for God and His people by actions as well by words, including prayers to ask God to lead us to what still may be unknown *good works that we were created in Christ Jesus to do.* Let's remember that we are *in Him and are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

PRAISE GOD WITH OUR LIPS AND LIVES:

Church Growth is not a question or an option with God. Buildings don't rise unless more stones are added! Let us show God's love for the sinners in Osaka, and be proactive to pray and to act, believing that God will bring more stones to be fitted into the Body of Christ here, His Holy temple at OIC.

Let Us Pray

REFERENCES

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