

THE GRACE OF GOD EMPOWERS US TO DO GOOD WITH JOY

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Shalom,

How happy and proud we are to have our God in Jesus Christ! We sense these feelings as we are studying the Letter to the Ephesians which points to the Table of Showbread displayed in the Tabernacle scheme. As a container, we hold the bread (the Word of God) so that we can share with others what we have been receiving so far.

Let's take a closer look at Ephesians 2: 1-10. Specifically, these verses comprise three parts:

□ Ephesians 2: 1-3

"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others."

Why do the Ephesians (and we) deserve wrath and death penalty? Because they (and we) do not feel the need to come to and believe in God. It is not their (and our) lack of knowledge that stands in the way. It is simply because they (and we) do not want to acknowledge God as explained in Romans 1: 21-22, 28-32 below:

"Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Professing to be wise, they became fools And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them."

These are the behavioral descriptions of the wicked and the ungodly. Although they know God, their foolish hearts are darkened and their thoughts futile. They are not empowered to resist the undermining attacks of the power of impurity. Instead, they live in them. They even practice sexual perversions such as bestiality. It stands to reason that they are deserving of wrath.

Warning: Let's not persist in wickedness and impurity realizing fact that we have heard the Word of God for ages. That way, we can escape from God's wrath.

□ Ephesians 2: 4-7

"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

It is firmly said that if one lives way far from God, they are deserving of wrath or condemnation. Yet He desires to save anyone who wants to know His truth. For this reason, His grace gives anyone a chance to repent and this offer is implicitly stated

in Roman 2: 4, "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?" Being merciful, God gives anyone the opportunity to repent and come to Jesus regardless of their conditions as Romans 5: 6-9 strongly says, "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."

Thanks to God's grace, we (the ungodly) were delivered from His wrath through the death of Jesus and made righteous by His blood. But by degrees, we were reconciled with God through Jesus. Consequently, we got the opportunity to obtain salvation along with a new life under the control of God's spirit. Now, we no longer live in flesh but by faith (Galatians 2: 19-20).

Do we still remember our pitch-dark pasts that deserved nothing but condemnation? Have we accepted God's grace that makes it possible for Jesus Christ to live in us? How do we know that Christ lives in us? To live together with Jesus, we are to be willing to die with Him. If we fear God and know how merciful and just He is, we will live an orderly life with respect to Him and others, rather than putting our lives at risk.

It is no longer we who live, but Christ lives in us. This fact enables us to live up to God's will. If the Mission Team, for example, believes that Jesus is with them, they are empowered to accomplish their ministries well in spite of multiple challenges coming along the way.

We were raised up in Jesus Christ and seated with Him in heaven. This is the summit point of grace granted to the believers through Jesus' sacrifice. God's plan takes in both our death and resurrection. With this in mind, we turn our backs on the old lifestyles and live a transformed life teeming with hope for the imperishable and undefiled inheritance reserved in heaven (1 Peter 1: 3-5).

By the grace of God, we were saved in Jesus Christ who died for us all. In exchange for our past lives doomed to death, we have received a new life that will never perish and fade away. This is the promised hope. Somehow, it all depends on us. If we do not stay rock solid and get carried away by challenges and pressures of the world, we will be deserving of God's wrath and end up dying in eternity. For this reason, we must struggle all out to the full assurance of the hope we are looking forward to. The Holy spirit empowers us to persevere and stay forbearing when faced with temptations and undermined by the power of darkness (Hebrews 6: 11-12). Bear in mind that God has promised us to be with Jesus in heaven for eternity.

□ Ephesians 2: 8-10

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

Evidently, it is faith, instead of our efforts, that brings about our salvation. It is a gift of God. So, we have no reason whatsoever to boast about the things we are able to do even in our ministries. Jesus is the matchless model of humility. He invites us to come to Him at the point when we are weary and burdened since He is ready to give us rest (Matthew 11: 28-29).

May the grace of God empowers us to joyfully do good works that benefit others. Take the two spies in Jericho for example. They were saved by a prostitute named Rahab whose action could have cost her life if it had been foiled (Joshua 2).

We were once dead in our transgressions and sins. Thanks to God's grace, we were made

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alive and saved through the death of Jesus Christ to do good deeds. God wants us to stay humble and act wisely.

Apart from that, we should fear the Lord because He takes control of the life of every believer who relies on Him. Amen.