

The Guilt of Man vs The Grace of God

Lesson 6 Notes

Ephesians 2:1-10

Ephesians 2:1-10 contains three main segments: (1) Verses 1-3; (2) Verses 4-6; and (3) Verses 7-10. Verses 1-3 focus on fallen man, and his hopeless condition (dead) as a result of his sin. Verses 4-6 focus on God, and on His mercy and grace in making a provision for man's salvation in Christ. Verses 7-10 focus on the purpose of salvation, to the praise of the glory of His grace. All together, they show us the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Context

Man's Problem: Dead in Sin **Ephesians 2:1-3**

Looking at our verses in question 1, a touch point in Romans 3:23, the last part of verse 23 says 'fall short of the Glory of God.

Moving to the end of Romans 3:23, we read, "the glory of God." What is God's glory? In this case, the word glory is of God. The word glory used here describes God's "manifested perfection of God's character, especially His righteousness..." In light of the previous phrase, all have sinned, this phrase presents the reality of God's standard of perfection as measured by Himself through the law (1 Peter 5:10-12).

The rod of iron used as the truth and power to measure and break are seen in Revelation 19:11-16. When Jesus returns with the believers (church) to rescue Israel, He is referred to as Faithful and True and named the Word of God (Revelation 20:11-13). The Word of God, described as the sharp sword that goes out of His mouth will destroy the nations and rule (measure) them with a rod of iron. Simply stated, the Word of God is the standard of measurement and the rod is used to measure the people using the standard of the Word.

Therefore, to come short of the glory of God means that humanity does not measure up to the standard of God as defined by His Word. Since we fall short of the glory of God, we need a way that we can measure up to the glory of God. That is where Jesus Christ comes in. He was born into this world to live a perfect life that measures up to God's glory.

Since Jesus did not break the law, He did not have to pay the wages of sin, which are death (Romans 6:23). Yet he allowed Himself to be crucified upon the cross (die the death of a criminal) to pay for our sin. He took upon Himself our sin and gave us His righteousness in exchange for our sin, as a gift. So, when it comes to being measured by the Word of God, we no longer fall short. Instead, God now looks upon the believer as having the full measure of Christ and declares us perfect according to His Word. One day, when we stand before Him, our perfection will be more than just positional in Christ, it will be literal through Christ as we are conformed to His perfect image (Romans 8:29).

The reality is that fallen man doesn't even realize his condition until after he is saved. Lost men, blinded and deceived by Satan, think they are really "living it up," when in reality they are dead. They think that living as they desire, they are enjoying life to its fullest, but they are not. They suppose that they are free, subject to no one, but they are really enslaved to sin and the flesh. Paul sums up the condition of lost men in one word: dead. To be dead is to be lifeless. To be dead is to be unable to help oneself. To be dead is to be absolutely powerless.

Second, men sin and are therefore sinners because they are born in sin, and without the intervention of Christ, they follow the world in its course of sin and rebellion. Sinners love and seek companions, co-sinners, to share in the excitement and (unknowingly) in the penalty of sin (see Proverbs 1:8-19). This is why the Bible instructs us to avoid being pressured by the world to conform to its values and lifestyle. Romans 12 gives us a beautiful picture of God's promise and power as believers when we entrust ourselves to Him. We can see that as believers this passage gives us a clear picture of what we need to do in our walk with Christ. It also presents us a clear picture of how unbelievers can be deceived as they practice the opposite.

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:1-2).

Third, unbelievers sin because they are unwittingly subject to the influence of Satan. *1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. 2 You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led (1 Corinthians 12:1-2).*

By the desires of their flesh, unbelievers are led to believe by the influences of this world, and the god of this world, that what is desired is good and healthy and normal, and if you disagree you are prejudice, or homophobic or harsh or judgmental. But as those who believe in Christ, and have given their lives to Him, He presents a different way to live. *“And the Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.”* (2 Timothy 2:24-26). Our goal is always the gospel.

God’s Grace: Alive in Christ (2:4-6)

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus,

The words, “But God ...” are a beacon of light and hope in a life of despair. The condition of men in sin is not hopeless or terminal because God has come to the rescue of fallen men through His provision in Jesus Christ.

Paul begins with the motivation of God, *being rich in mercy*, which prompted Him to provide a way of escape from our condition of sin and eternal death. God was motivated by His mercy and His love for us. This divine motivation does very little to appease our flesh, however, but it will do much to promote humility on our lives, and a deep gratitude toward God.

Our love for God is prompted by His love for us, a divine love which initiates our love in response: “We love, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). God’s love for us is vastly different from our love for Him. He loved us while we were His enemies, while we were still dead in our sins and transgressions:

5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. 6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:5-8).

God's love is not a response. God's mercy is not prompted by our potential or by any qualities we think we possess, but by our own lost condition. Divine grace was not bestowed on us because we were so worthy, or because God found anything good in us, but because of the goodness which is in God Himself. The goodness is in the giver, not the recipient.

God's grace and salvation does not come to us in various forms, from which we may choose. His grace has been poured out to us lavishly in Christ, and in Him alone. It is through our union with Him that we are transformed from what we were to what He is. Our separation from God through sin has made us what we were in Ephesians 2:1-3. Our identification with Christ, through faith, makes us all that Christ is, as described in Ephesians 1:19-23.

On account of our sin we were dead, in Christ we are made alive (verse 5). Though we were formerly dead, we have been raised up in Him (verse 6). And although we were formerly enslaved to our own passions, to the world, and to Satan, in Christ we are seated in the heavenly places, now free from all heavenly and earthly powers that oppose God, and have become bond slaves to Him, who by love, delivered us from our bondage to sin and to death.

God's Purpose:

The Praise of the Glory of His Grace

(2:7-10)

7 in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, that no one should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

So often when we study these verses, we usually just study Eph 2:8-9. Verses 8 & 10 both begin with the word 'For', indicating that what comes before and after 8 & 9 are very important to understanding God's purpose.

The primary purpose of God for sending His Son to die in the sinner's place, was not to produce the happiness of the sinner, saved by grace, but rather the demonstration of the grace of God for all eternity.

God's purposes are not merely temporal, they are eternal. God's purpose in saving sinners is not just to make us happy, to provide blessings, or to enable us to escape the

torments of hell. The fact is that God is just as glorified by the punishment of the wicked as He is the salvation of those whom He makes righteous (Romans 9:14-23; 1 Peter 2:12; Revelation 16:4-7). Whether it be in the punishment of the wicked or in the salvation of sinners by grace, God is working out all things to His own glory. The salvation of sinners is thus subordinate to God's ultimate purpose of bringing glory to Himself. In the case of the salvation of sinners, it is the grace of God which is on display. In the case of the judgment of the wicked, it is the holiness and justice of God which is demonstrated.

As we study this passage, we understand Paul's desire is that the believers understand that the riches of the grace of God which are displayed for all eternity in salvation, must be all of God's doing, and not of our own. Grace is divine favor which is undeserved. God will not share His glory with any other being, and thus the work of salvation is entirely His work.

Paul gives two lines of supporting evidence for his statement that God has saved us for the demonstration of the riches of His grace. Each of these begin with the word "for." The first is found in verses 8, the second in verse 10. The first concentrates on the cause of our salvation; the second on its effects. Whether in its cause or in its effects, salvation is all of God, and all of grace.

In Ephesians 2:8 Paul contends that salvation is not of man's doing, but of God's. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast We have been saved by grace, through faith. This salvation is God's gift, and not compensation for our efforts. And this is so that we will not boast, but will rather give glory to God. One cannot boast because of what we have done, but only in what He has done. As Paul writes elsewhere,

"26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, 29 that no man should boast before God. 30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 31 that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:26-31).

The second reason why God will be glorified for all eternity for His grace toward men is that any good deeds which result from our salvation as also the result of God's grace: For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10).

As saints, we are what we are because of His doing. We are a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), but we are His creation. He created us in Jesus Christ. Any good works which we might do as Christians are the works which He foreordained, which He planned and prepared in eternity past. We dare not take credit for them. We are simply to "walk in them." Good works will not save us, and neither will they be the cause for our boasting, except as we boast in the Lord.

Conclusion

The passage before us sets before us the glorious difference between what we once were, apart from Christ, and what we now are, in Christ. The good news of the gospel is that we need not remain dead in our transgressions and sin, separated from God and destined for wrath. God has provided a way of salvation—one way—by which sinners can become saints. And this "way" is Jesus Christ:

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me" (John 14:6).

Christ died for our sins, so that we need not suffer the penalty of death. Christ rose from the dead and was ascended to the right hand of the Father. In Christ, we too are assured of our resurrection from the dead, and of our position with God in the heavenlies. All we must do is to agree with God concerning our condition, as outlined in Ephesians 2:1-3, and to receive Jesus Christ as God's provision for our salvation, as explained in verses 4-6. In Christ we cease to be what we once were, and we forever continue to be what Christ is.

If you are a Christian, this passage should serve as a reminder of what you once were, and of what you now are, in Christ. It should produce both humility and gratitude. It should stimulate you to love and good deeds, knowing that even the good works which you do are those which God has accomplished in and through you, for His glory. It should encourage you to encourage one another day after day. Heb 3:13

John MacArthur
Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary
Matthew Henry's Commentary
PC Study Bible