

God Revealed through the Church

The Church - A Demonstration of God's Grace

When we see a container wrenched open, the hinges torn away, or the clasp destroyed, we mark at once the hand of the Spoiler, but when we observe another container deftly opened with a master key, and the sparkling contents revealed, we note the hand of the Owner. Conversion is not, as some suppose, a violent opening of the heart by grace, in which will, reason, and judgment are all ignored or crushed. This is too barbarous a method for him who comes not as a plunderer to his prey, but as a possessor to his treasure. In conversion, the Lord who made the human heart deals with it according to its nature and constitution. His key insinuates itself into the wards; the will is not enslaved but enfranchised; the reason is not blinded but enlightened, and the whole man is made to act with a glorious liberty which it never knew till it fell under the restraints of grace.

C.H. Spurgeon

Ephesians 2: 1 - 10

1) Dead in sin (vs. 1 – 3)

- It is so easy to downplay the gravity of sin. We do this in a number of ways:
 - We think we are OK because we are good people
 - We compare ourselves with others and consider ourselves good compared to them
 - We think that sin is OK as long as we don't hurt anyone.
 - We categorise sins into big sins and small sins.
- There are some facts about sin that we have to believe to understand the full gravity of sin
 - We have all sinned – no one is without sin (Romans 3: 23)
 - We are already spiritually dead in our sins (Ephesians 2: 1)
 - Sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59: 2)
 - Sin is destructive by nature – it destroys our lives and the lives of those around us
 - Sin leads to death (Romans 6: 23)
 - Under sin we are objects of God's wrath (Ephesians 2: 3)
 - We are slaves to sin (Romans 6: 16)
- We can try our utmost to free ourselves from the bondage of sin or to cover over our sin but without outside help it will devour us and there is nothing that we can do about it
 - A man purchased a white mouse to use as food for his pet snake. He dropped the unsuspecting mouse into the snake's glass cage, where the snake was sleeping in a bed of sawdust. The tiny mouse had a serious problem on his hands. At any moment he could be swallowed alive. Obviously, the mouse needed to come up with a brilliant plan. What did the terrified creature do? He quickly set to work covering the snake with sawdust chips until it was completely buried. With that, the mouse apparently thought he had solved his problem. The solution, however, came from outside. The man took pity on the silly little mouse and removed him from the cage.

No matter how hard we try to cover or deny our sinful nature, it's fool's work. Sin will eventually awake from sleep and shake off its cover. Were it not for the saving grace of the Master's hand, sin would eat us alive.

2) God's grace revealed (vs. 4 – 9)

- Paul had just been speaking about what the believers were before believing in Christ. He then goes on to speak about God's grace and says:
 - BUT because of his great love for us.
 - God's love is not a reaction or a response to something that we have done for Him. Rather it is an action that comes out of His nature of love. He didn't wait for us to do something good or become something good before He loved us. On the contrary it is while we were still sinners that he demonstrated His love for us in that Christ died for us. (Rom 5: 8)
 - What greater love can we have than one lay down his life for his friends (John 15: 13)

- God, who is rich in mercy
 - We have seen that under sin we were objects of God's wrath but God didn't desire to carry out His wrath on us because He is rich in mercy.
 - Mercy triumphs over judgment (James 2: 13)
 - 2 Peter 3: 9 "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."
 - He is patient because He is rich in mercy
- God made us alive in Christ
 - It was at the cross that our sin was put to death and at the resurrection that we were raised to new life in Christ.
 - We were dead in our sins – it is only God who can give life to that which is dead.
 - If He didn't have grace on us and breathe His life into us we would still be dead in our sins.
- Not only did God make us alive in Christ but He also seated us with Christ in the heavenly realms
 - God's grace to us goes far beyond the bare minimum and gives us far more than we deserve.
 - It is like a king coming across a poor man who is very sick and starving in the street. Besides having him medically treated and feeding him – giving him life – he then takes him to his royal palace and lets him be seated in the place of honour. Feeding him and getting medical treatment for him would have been grace in itself. But seating him in a place of honour is almost unreasonable in its grace.
- God's grace will be demonstrated in us not only in this life but also in the coming ages
 - Throughout eternity God's grace will be remembered.
- We always bear in mind that it is by grace that we have been saved
 - Through faith which isn't from ourselves.
 - Even our faith is a gift of God. (Romans 10: 17)
 - Not by works so that no one can boast.

3) God's grace demonstrated (v. 10)

- God has done a work of grace in us
 - His grace to us is also intended to be grace through us in the way of good works
 - These good works aren't activities that God thinks up as He saves each of us. They are all part of His purposes that He knew from the beginning of time (if not before that).
- God purpose for the church is to be the body of Christ demonstrating God's grace to one another and to the world around us.
 - As we have received God's grace so we should give God's grace.
- How is God's grace demonstrated through the church?
 - When someone hurts us we forgive them
 - When someone really messes up we don't judge them but have mercy by helping them to be restored.
 - Once they are restored to give them more than they ever expected
 - By being patient with those who are struggling with sin and other issues.
 - By trying to understand people and not judging them for who they are.
 - We ought to learn the unlovable and give ourselves to them for their benefit even it takes sacrifice on our behalf.
- Luke 7: 36 – 50