

Ephesians 2:1-12

Eternal Savior

In the last two messages our focus was on obedience by remembering. This morning we bring together Paul's warning and blessings. Beginning with verse 12 we are commanded to **“remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”** Remember! Do not ever forget. For if we forget our desperate need for a Savior we will not treasure Him and if we do not treasure Him all is lost. This is essential. If I do not treasure Jesus as my Savior, well then, I do not have Him as Savior.

Paul longs for us to treasure Jesus Christ as Savior and I long for all of us to treasure Jesus Christ as Savior this Christmas. Therefore Paul wrote and I have preached three things from Ephesians 2:1-3 about our need for a Savior. In verse 1 we see our need for a Savior because of our corruption in sin. In verse 2, we need a Savior because of our captivity to Satan. Verse 3 teaches we need a Savior because of our condemnation to hell as sons of disobedience. If people do not have Christ as their Savior they are dead in their sin, captive to an alien power and children of wrath.

The world is not going to tell people this. Only God and his messengers care enough about people to warn them to flee from the wrath to come. As one of those messengers, I have warned people for years and I will continue until God is finished with me here on earth. Over the last couple of weeks we heard Paul's warnings, now this morning may God give every one of us the grace to treasure what Paul now teaches us.

Eternal Good News

Reading beginning in verse 4, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, 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,⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:4-7) The eternal good news this Advent, this Christmas is Jesus Christ is the Savior.

When we were unsaved we were dead in our sin, BUT GOD “made us alive together with Christ! As children of this fallen world we were captive to “the prince of the power of the air” and enslaved to this world, BUT GOD “raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus!” Now, my beloved is this not good news! This is the best news of Christmas! This is what Christmas is about! God sent His Son to save sinners.

If men of the world recognized their plight without God they would cry out, “I am hopeless! I am spiritually dead! I have no hope – alas, no hope. I am captive to the prince of this world. I have no hope, no hope. I am doomed to hell. I am without hope, for all is lost.” This is what the Word of God teaches – without God the Father and Jesus Christ there is no hope! Yes, dead in sin! Yes, captive to the world! Yes, doomed to hell! However, as we read on in the Word of God we see our hope, “But God.” Beginning in verse 4, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved!” All is without hope, until we read “But God!” Except for God, all is hopeless! Nothing is impossible for God.

Think about the impossible. The angel comes to Mary and says, “Greetings, O

favored one, the Lord is with you!’ ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.’ ³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, ‘How will this be, since I am a virgin?’ ³⁵ And the angel answered her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.’ ” (Luke 1:28–35) We know the reality is that a virgin cannot have a baby, BUT GOD does the impossible! He gives His Son to the virgin Mary.

This is what verses 4 to 7 are about – the impossible that God makes not only possible, but guarantees them for those who become His children. Compare verse 3 with verse 7. We “were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind” BUT GOD “in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” Look at verse 2 in comparison to verse 6; we were enslaved to “prince of the power of the air” BUT GOD “seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Compare verse 1 with 5, we “were dead in the trespasses and sins” BUT GOD “made us alive together with Christ.” With God the impossible is possible.

The first thing I noticed as I studied this passage is God gives kindness where wrath is deserved. At the end of verse 3 we read, we “were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.” By our inherited fallen nature we are rebellious against God’s laws and broke them without regard and are deserving of His wrath. BUT GOD says come to His Son this Christmas and He will no longer have wrath towards those who believe in His Son.

I sat in front of the fire as I wrote this message and watched it consume the wood to create heat. I enjoy watching a fire from a distance, but it also brought images of hell to my mind – to be so utterly consumed by fire and yet never completely consumed, burning for eternity – that is hell. The world did not put this image in my mind; this image came from the warnings of Christ.

Christ is the one who warned the church, His people, most vividly when He said, “if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.”

(Matthew 5:30) Christ said, in Matthew 13 “at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous⁵⁰ and throw them into the fiery furnace.” (Matthew 13:49–50) At Christ’s return He “will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ...⁴¹ Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’ ” (Matthew 25:32-33 & 41) It was Christ that explained because of the torment of hell “In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

(Matthew 13:50) Again and again Jesus warned and the writer of Hebrews warns that “just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment” (Hebrews 9:27) These are not some vane warnings but the truth of God’s coming wrath for all those who are not saved. Jesus is like the glass door on my wood-burning stove, He holds back the destructive fire and lets it give warm. He is the Savior of mercy without Him the warmth becomes a raging inferno eternally burning, consuming, but never consumed.

Now, in typical biblical fashion, after the merciful warnings come the merciful promises found in verse 7. For those who trust Christ, God the Father commits himself to the following purpose, “that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” Notice

how Paul builds a picture using words to make a deep and lasting impression on our hearts. God's purpose is to be gracious to those who are in Christ Jesus. Paul does not stop with just the word “[grace](#)” but he adds the words, “[in kindness toward us.](#)” God’s “[riches](#)” and “[grace](#)” and “[kindness](#)” are beyond measure towards those for whom Jesus Christ is their Savior. Now ask yourself this question, “Considering all of the people you can think of who possess wealth and power and how if they chose to they could use their resources to lavish kindness upon you, would you choose them over God?” You might be able to think of a thousand ways that these people could bring kindnesses to you, but then your imagination would run out. But God's imagination and His kindnesses towards you will never run out.

Paul wants us to understand that God's purpose is to spend the “[riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.](#)” How much are God’s riches? They are beyond what one can imagine! How rich is God? Compared to all the billionaires in this world, their wealth is like a few grains of sand compared to God’s Sahara Desert and all the beaches of the world.

But that is not all to consider for these billionaires would only be able to show you kindness for a matter of years; 10 or 40 or maybe as many as 60 until their resources ran out or they died. Now look what Paul says God intends to do for you. God has reserved a seat for “[us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,](#)⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in [kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.](#)” How long are “[the coming ages](#)?” How many ages are coming? The answer is simple; all “[the coming ages](#)” lay in the future with God and God is eternal. So, in “[the coming ages](#)” we are seated eternally with Christ in “[heavenly places!](#)” Why does Paul say it this way? Because Paul wants you to understand, to consider that God does not run out of new ways to continually lavish His kindness on you throughout eternity. Let ask, “When does eternity end?” Not in 100 or 1000 years, eternity never ends!

This is the meaning of Christmas, “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8) God chose to save a remnant so that we would love, honor, cherish and bring Him glory for all eternity. God saved us so we would forever value His riches. God’s riches far outstrip the riches of this entire world. The riches of this world will burn, but God’s riches will endure for eternity.

Eternal God

This Christmas remember - We were ...

- by nature children of wrath, BUT GOD has promised us eternal kindness instead.
- captive to an alien power, BUT GOD rescued our hearts and put them in heaven and made us free from Satan.
- dead in sin, BUT GOD made us alive!

We have the riches of God because He brought us from the spiritually dead to spiritual life in Christ. This is what Christmas is about! How can people receive the riches of God this Christmas? Verse 8 gives us the answer, “For by grace you have been saved through faith.” Why does God save us by His grace? Look at verses 8 and 9, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” If one is raised from spiritual death to life in Christ by God’s grace and they are given freedom from sin and Satan by God’s grace and God gives the assured promise of eternal kindness by His grace – well then, it is clear that there is only one way to receive this grace given by God and that is through faith, faith in His Son and our Savior, Christ Jesus. Paul says in simply, clearly “by grace you have been saved through faith.”

Eternal Faith

Through faith we receive God's grace that saves us and He "raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." What does this imply? Our hearts use to belong to this world. We have all left our hearts in places and at times through life. I have left my heart in a number of countries with people I grew to love and yet, will most likely not see again until heaven. The singer Tony Bennett sings, "I left my heart in San Francisco." This is also what God does when He saves us; He takes our hearts out of this world and places them in heaven. We may be here in the East Mountains but our hearts are in heaven. Paul alluded to this writing, "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." (Colossians 3:2–4) This is where our hearts are. It is heaven that is always pulling us upwards; it is heaven that governs our desires. We may look like we are in the world but the world has no claim on our affections. For those who believe - the world is a foreign land. We are exiles and aliens in this world.

Eternal Trust

Verse 10 says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." God calls His children to walk or live in good works, to overcome the temptations of this world and here is what that means. It means that from here on out you will trust in your heart that the death and resurrection of Christ has covered all your sins and guaranteed all the promises of God on your behalf. You know and you are sure of this; you were spiritually dead and condemned BUT GOD gave you eternal life. You owe Him your life.

When you are tempted to steal, instead you will put your trust in the promise of

God that He “will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19) You will be tempted to steal BUT GOD will meet your needs and give you the power to overcome.

When you are tempted to lie to get yourself out of a difficult situation, instead you will trust the promise of God that “No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.” (Psalm 84:11) Taking this to heart you will not lie, but walk uprightly and trust Him to help you make things right.

When you are tempted to take revenge for wrong, instead you will trust the promise of God, “Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’”²⁰ To the contrary, ‘if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.’²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Romans 12:19–21) Without Christ our desire is for revenge BUT GOD gives us a heart of compassion.

The bottom line is that this Christmas you need to trust Christ for you were saved by His grace. Once you were children of wrath BUT GOD made you His children and gave you faith. By faith trust Him with your relationships. Trust Him with your job. Trust Him with your health. Trust him with your money. Trust Him with your future - all the way to eternity.

Have faith for He is a great God of wonders! He makes the dead to live. He sets the captive free. He will spend eternity lavishing the riches of His kindness on those who trust Him. The world is without hope. “BUT GOD” grants eternal hope to those who trust Him. This Christmas trust God who gave us Christ so that we sinners would be saved.

Benediction

It has been done! God's Good News has been shared! A young virgin bore a child and she called him Jesus.

But that is the beginning of the story, a story that has not yet ended. It is God's story that includes us, a story in which we play a part.

So we go out to live the story, to tell of the **Hope** that has been born among us this Christmas, to share the **Love** of this season with the world. Be agents of **Peace** in times of trouble. Sing songs of deep and abiding **Joy**.

As you go, God will go with you. He is challenging us to respond to His Call in ways that are new. Go live the gospel of Christ. Amen