

Ephesians 2: 4-10 (ESV) – Grace is a Gift

Main point: God's graces are innumerable.



Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.

Background¹: Ephesus was a major seaport city on the coast of Asia Minor (today, western Turkey). It's no longer on the coast, but the ruins of ancient Ephesus are still there, including a large amphitheater, library (once the largest in the ancient world), elaborate homes, and public gathering places. Scholars estimate that ancient Ephesus could have had 200,000 residents.

Paul wrote this letter to the church at Ephesus, though probably it was meant for several churches and passed around. Just before this passage, he writes about how all of mankind is was "dead in trespasses and sin."

Focus of the study:

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 God might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ 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. ¹⁰ For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Questions:

1. *This section starts with "but God." Why are these such powerful words?*
 - a. Shows that something major has changed; we were going in one direction, and now there's been a right turn! God changes everything, turns our direction towards spiritual death towards LIFE.
2. *What has God done, and why?*
 - a. v. 5: made us *alive* together with Christ
 - b. v. 4: because of the great love with which God loved us, even when we were sinful and separated
3. *What's the word Paul uses for how we're saved?*
 - a. v. 5: grace
4. *I wonder what grace means to you? [discuss; list as many as possible²]*
5. *What happens when you receive God's gift of grace?*
 - a. v. 6: God raises us up with him, seats us with him
 - b. v. 7: Why? So that "in the coming ages God might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."
6. *We've just listed several kinds of grace in our lives [repeat list generated by the group or add more³] – but how many are there really?*
 - a. IMMEASURABLE. *What does that mean?*

¹ <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/markdroberts/series/ancient-ephesus-and-the-new-testament/>

² Responses I've heard include "great love, he's always there, care, mercy, salvation, forgiveness, prayers, loyalty"

³ Other responses I've heard for God's gifts: like kids, work, the day WWII armistice was signed

- i. impossible to count! We could sit here all day – all week – all year – and never reach the end of the list of God’s graces to us.
 - ii. It’s like a suitcase: with a normal suitcase, you could open it and you can count how many items are in it; eventually it would be empty. But in the “grace suitcase,” you’d never reach the end of everything in it!
 - b. *So how long will it take? How long is “innumerable”?*
 - i. Forever; “in the coming ages” – eternally, in heaven, we will be counting and praising God for the riches of his grace
 - 7. Then there’s this great, famous verse 8: “For by grace you have been saved, through faith.”
 - a. *How do we receive God’s grace?* through faith – it is a gift that we receive as our own through faith – “yes, I believe this gift has got my name on it!”
 - b. *How do we not receive God’s grace?* It’s *not* a payment for good works – it’s not because we “do all the right things”
 - i. If we did (or even could do) all the right things, why might we think we “deserve” God’s grace?
 - 1. “Earned it, did my part, held up my end of the bargain” – boasting
 - 8. v. 10: “For/because we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works”
 - a. *So, do we just sit back and let the grace roll over us?*
 - i. No – we are created for good works
 - b. Is grace free? *Yes* – it is always and completely a *gift* – but what is the evidence of it?
 - i. Good works – such as?
 - c. *What is the point of “good works”?*
 - i. *Not* to earn anything from God
 - ii. Exercises our faith in God and in Christ Jesus – walking in his ways for our own good – continue to see and to count the innumerable riches of his grace
- Ask for prayer requests for today.
 - Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
 - End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace

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