

¹ And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² 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, ³ 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. ⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His 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 of works, lest anyone 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.

Text: Ephesians 2:1-10 A 8-16-26 Genesis 4:1-15 Luke 18:9-14 Psalm: 84 Resp. Psalm: 25
Hymns: 375, 378, 376, 374

WE ARE SAVED BY GRACE

- 1. We were spiritually dead**
- 2. God made us spiritually alive**
- 3. We show God our gratitude by our lives**

Grace, 'Tis a charming sound, Harmonious to the ear;
Heaven with the echo shall resound, And all the earth shall hear.

Grace first contrived the way To save rebellious man,
And all the steps that grace display Which drew the wondrous plan.

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

1

We're told, "*You ... were dead in trespasses and sins.*" By our nature, you and I are spiritually dead. A dead person can't do anything. That's the point God is making when He tells us that, by nature, we're spiritually dead. A dead person can't make himself alive. A spiritually dead person can't make himself spiritually alive. We don't believe in God because we're in some way better than other people. We don't believe in God because we resisted Him less than other people resist Him. There was no goodness in us that moved God to choose us. Romans 3:22-23 says, "*For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" The third chapter of Romans says about all of us by nature, "*There is none righteous, no, not one; ... there is none who seeks after God; ... there is none who does good, no, not one.*" (Ro. 3:10-12)

It's even worse. Romans 8:7 says, "*The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.*" Our human reason is an enemy of God. Our human reason fights God and His Word. By nature we don't want to admit that we are sinners who have to answer to God. By nature we think that if there is a god, and if heaven is real, we can do some good things to earn God's favor and earn our way to heaven. But God says, "*You ... were dead in trespasses and sins.*" God says that we can't do anything to make ourselves spiritually alive.

We're told, "[You] 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" (that is, the devil: Eph. 6:12), "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." By nature we're just like the world. By nature the devil is our master. We deserve to be punished forever in hell for our sins. We have to understand this and believe it. Then we understand our need for God to save us.

2

We're told, "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)." "You have been saved" is in the past tense. Our salvation is an accomplished fact and our continuing possession. We're told that God saved us "because of His great love with which He loved us." God saved us, not because of something in us, but because of something in God. God saved us, not because we're so loveable, but because God is so loving. 1 John 4:8 and 16 says, "God is love." Don't look for something in yourself for the reason God loves you. Look to God as the source of His love for you. 1 John 4:10 says, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us...." The word "grace" here in our text comes first in its phrase in the original, emphasizing God's grace. God in His grace – His love for us that we sinners don't deserve – brought us from spiritual death to spiritual life in His Son, Jesus Christ!

2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." God took all of our sins off of us and put them on His Son, Jesus. Jesus paid for our sins with His suffering and death on the cross. Jesus rose from the dead. By faith in Jesus, our sins are forgiven and we're saved. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed" – Isaiah 53:5. As He raised Jesus back to life, so God made us who were spiritually dead, spiritually alive! (Ac. 2:32, 36; 2 Cor. 5:17)

We're told that God "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." Notice that these words are in the past tense. God doesn't say that He will raise us up with Jesus some day in the future. God says that He has "raised us up" and has "made us sit ... in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." By faith in Jesus we have eternal life in heaven. We're not in heaven yet. But by faith in Jesus we will be! Jesus tells us, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life." (Jn. 6:47, my emphasis)

We're told of "the exceeding riches of [God's] grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." The word "kindness" in the original carries with it the idea that God understood our need and gave us just what we needed. The phrase "with Christ" or "in Christ" comes again and again in our text. God's grace in Christ is just what we need.

We're told these beautiful words, "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." We're saved by grace – God's undeserved love for us. I'm not saved by anything I have to do. I'm not saved

because I accepted Christ, or I resisted Christ less, or there's something about me that moved God to save me. I'm saved by faith alone in Jesus and what He did for me! I didn't somehow produce faith in Jesus. God gave me faith in Jesus as a free gift, and saved me!

The fact that we want to accept Jesus and believe in Him and be saved is because God worked those desires in our hearts. Give credit where credit is due. We believe, not because we accepted Christ, but because Christ accepted us. Jesus says, *"This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."* *"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him...."* *"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."* (Jn. 6:29, 44, 37, my emphasis)

This is a great comfort to us. We may wonder, "Am I saved?" "Am I going to make it to heaven?" If our salvation depended on us making a decision for Christ, we might wonder, "If I really made a decision for Christ, why am I having these doubts?" But when I look away from myself to Jesus, Jesus makes me sure that I'm saved and I'm going to heaven. Jesus brought me to faith, Jesus is keeping me in my faith, and Jesus will take me to heaven. We're assured in Philippians 1:6, *"He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."* Jesus promises us, *"I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."* (Jn. 14:2b-3)

3

We're told, *"We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."* Our Lutheran confessions rightly say that it is necessary that we do good works because God tells us to do them. God doesn't force us to do what He wants us to do out of fear of Him. God doesn't force us to do what He wants us to do like puppets on a string. God gives us opportunities to serve Him. God moves us to do what He wants us to do in faith and love. In our new, God-given spiritual life, we live the way God wants us to live. Jesus says, *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit"* (Jn. 15:5). True, everything we do is tainted by sin. But God for Jesus' sake forgives us. For Jesus' sake the good works we do are well pleasing to God. (Philip. 2:13)

The making of a Christian is entirely God's work. God made us, who were spiritually dead, spiritually alive. We live our lives by faith in Jesus, knowing that eternal life is ours. God saved us by His grace in Christ. We live to serve God in faith and love, showing our gratitude for all that He did, and does, for us.

All that I was, my sin, my guilt, My death, was all my own;
All that I am I owe to Thee, My gracious God, alone.

Thy Word first made me feel my sin, It taught me to believe;
Then, in believing, peace I found, And now I live, I live!

All that I am, even here on earth, All that I hope to be,
When Jesus comes and glory dawns, I owe it, Lord, to Thee. Amen.