

Resurrecting Grace

- I. Last week, Pastor David bought us a message about God's Planned Grace.
 - A. In his message, he answered three important questions from scripture.
 1. The first question was "When did God choose to love and save his people?"
 - a) God planned to love and save his people before the creation of the world.
 - b) **Ephesians 1:4-5 ESV (Pg. 567-568) "...even as *he chose us* in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love *he predestined us for adoption* to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will..."**
 2. Secondly, "How is Jesus our Sacrifice?"
 - a) He is the Lamb of God that takes away our sin.
 - b) **Isaiah 53:5 ESV (Pg. 356) "But he was pierced for *our* transgressions; he was crushed for *our* iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought *us* peace, and with his wounds *we* are healed."**
 3. Lastly, "What hope does the message of the cross offer us?"
 - a) We belong to Jesus because he bought us with his blood.
 - b) **1 Corinthians 6:19b-20 (Pg. 556) *You are not your own*, 20 for you were *bought with a price*. So glorify God in your body.**
 - B. Today we turn our attention to God's Resurrecting Grace, seeking to answer three more questions: "Who will come to God?" "Can you come to God in your own power?" and "How does the Holy Spirit make us alive?"
 1. We are basing this series on "PROOF" by Daniel Montgomery and Timothy Jones. We have a few copies available in the foyer. Cash, Check, Kiosk, etc.
 2. Last week's message generated a lot of questions and discussion. We hope that continues. We invite you to text your questions to **(806)928-8632**. We will set aside some time to answer all your questions publicly and efficiently.
 3. If you have a pressing question about anything this series, don't wait! Feel free to approach any of the elders and we will do our best to respond.
- II. When I was about 12, I went with my older sister to the college library where she was studying with a friend. Bored, I pulled a VHS tape from the media section and settled in to one of the AV stations to watch it. It was the 1968 low-budget, black-and-white horror classic, "The Night of the Living Dead". I remember sitting in that very public setting, in broad daylight, scared senseless at the depiction of wave after wave of the undead attacking a group of terrified, huddled strangers in a farmhouse.
 - A. The whole "zombie genre" wasn't nearly as popular as it's become in recent years, so I wasn't numbed to the disturbing sight of the undead, emerging from their graves, prowling around in order to consume human flesh.
 1. "Living Dead" is obviously an oxymoron, and "undead" is a more apt description of zombies. They aren't alive, but they aren't entirely dead. They are not resurrected; merely re-animated.
 2. The book describes zombies as "never resting"; "always on the move, but never truly living, always consuming but never satisfied."
 - B. This is how the Bible describes us. Though we appear to be very much alive, The Bible says that we are actually dead in our "trespasses and sins" (as Pastor David shared last week). But how did we get into this zombie state?

1. In the beginning, God created the first man and the first woman and placed them in a beautiful garden. He blessed them, told them to enjoy making love and populating the earth, and he made them managers over the entire planet.
 - a) He withheld nothing from them but the fruit of one single tree. This was so that they would never forget that all of their blessings and authority had a source higher than themselves, worthy of respect and obedience.
 - b) **Genesis 2:17 ESV (Pg. 1) "...of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for *in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.*"**
 2. But an enemy crept into the garden and deceived the couple, telling them that their generous creator was actually holding out on them. They ate the fruit and felt the consequence. And just as God had said would happen, the crown and pinnacle of his creation died that very day.
 - a) But they didn't die physically right away, though bodily death was now guaranteed for them. They immediately, however, died spiritually.
 - b) For the first time, they were alienated from the flow of life from God. As a result they began to despise all that God treasured, and all that he was.
 3. The most traumatic effect of their fall was that they released a genetic contagion of sin, affecting every person in every generation of their offspring.
 - a) There is a difference between **sins** (which are acts of rebellion against God's holiness - of which we are all guilty); and indwelling **sin**, the condition into which we are all born.
 - b) No matter what we may think about ourselves, we are all "born dead" because of both our sinful actions and the inherited curse of sin.
- C. But there is good news! God never gave up on the human race, and he never will! God actually planned a much better gift for his people than a place in paradise, managing creation. God intended to show all of creation the glory of his grace by paying a price (too high for any one else to pay!) to reverse the damage done by the deceiver and the foolish choices of the human prototypes.
1. God would send his own sinless Son to be tortured and mocked, and nailed to a cross, to pay the bill for all of the sins of humanity. He would also rise from death after 3 days, defeating the very consequence of sin, death itself.
 2. If we just believe, we can appropriate Christ's suffering to our own debt and in exchange, receive all of his goodness, even as he took all of our badness. There is nothing you can do to earn this forgiveness, Jesus has satisfied every bit of God's fully justified wrath against us. It is a free gift!
- D. But here's the bad news: left to ourselves, not a single one of us will accept this free gift of Christ's righteousness. This is not because we don't have the power to choose, but rather because we've already made our choice.
1. We chose based on what we most desired, and what we most desired is not holiness, righteousness, or salvation. What we wanted was self-gratification and self-worship. God's kingdom operating methods, which demand that we treasure him above all else, will never do for a bunch of DOA zombies like us.
 2. **Romans 3:10 ESV (Pg. 548) as it is written: "*None* is righteous, no, *not one*; **11 no one** understands; *no one seeks for God*. **12 All** have turned aside; together they have become worthless; *no one* does good, *not even one.*"**

- III. So we are spiritually doomed. And this is because of what we were and what we did, and, in light of that, we find that our doom is deserved. Ephesians 2 (Pg. 568).
- A. We are doomed because of what we were. **Ephesians 2:1 ESV (Pg. 568) “And you were *dead* in the trespasses and sins”**
1. What we were (as we have said) was dead. This is important for two reasons:
 - a) First, Being dead means that we weren't merely sick, needing a shot of spiritual penicillin; or merely lost, needing a compass to find our way back to Jesus; or merely bad, needing a moral tune-up; or merely confused, needing better information. Outside of Christ we were rotten, stinking corpses. The doctor “called it”. We were “toe-tagged and body-bagged”!
 - b) Second, this means that no matter what your mama, your church, or your social club has been telling you, you are ***not*** an inherently good person! There was not some shred of light in you that helped you get saved!
 2. “You contribute nothing to your salvation except the sin that made it necessary.” - Jonathan Edwards
- B. We are not only doomed because of what we were, but because of what we did. **Ephesians 2:2 ESV (Pg 568) in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— **3a** among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind** In this verse Paul says that we followed three things:
1. The course of this world meaning that our default setting is to go with the current of the fallen culture and not swim against it. **Proverbs 16:25 ESV (Pg. 311) There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.**
 2. Secondly, we followed the devil (the prince of the power of the air)! We were not merely his victims. In our sin, we were his co-conspirators! The enemy's power is what is at work in those who are spiritually dead, who are perishing.
 3. Third, we lived in the passions of our flesh; meaning we settled, our homesteaded, there. We were not interested in God's rule or way.
 - a) instead we carried out the desires of our body. This speaks of the times that we surrendered to our basest animal instincts - our unchallenged responses to our fallen nature. “If it feels good, do it!”
 - b) We also carried out the desires of our mind. This speaks of the ***premeditated*** sinful acts of our will or volition. Anger, lust, envy, gossip.
- C. So we deserve judgement as rebels against God's gracious rule. **Ephesians 2:3b ESV (Pg 568) and were by nature *children of wrath*, like the rest of mankind.** We are targets of God's righteous wrath; none of us having a single argument to make in our defense. Our just verdict is “guilty”. When Paul says we are children of wrath “like the rest of mankind”, he is making it clear that no one has ever dug themselves out of this pit of sin, nor ever will. How then can we be saved?
- IV. **Ephesians 2:4 ESV (Pg. 568) 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.*

- A. So God, for no discernible reason, other than the fact that he is “rich in mercy” and has loved us with a “great love” has done the unthinkable! He has come down to the morgue, the funeral home, the tomb, and he has made us alive together with his risen Son!
 - 1. He has done what we could not do, and elected us, making us able to respond to his great love and rich mercy!
 - 2. And he did this to show everything in all creation “the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus”! What God has done in us should result in him receiving bucketloads of praise and glory!
- B. In JRR Tolkien’s “Lord of the Rings”, there is powerful scene where the recently resurrected wizard, Gandalf the White goes to rescue Theoden, the King of Rohan. The King is under a spell from the wizard Saruman and his toadie, Grima Wormtongue. As Gandalf and his men prepare to enter the Royal Hall of Rohan, Wormtongue has them disarmed. Let’s watch the scene from the film “The Two Towers” from that point. ([Play Clip](#))
 - 1. Just like Gandalf, Jesus slipped into our world seemingly “unarmed”: born in a manger to peasants, unknown until he was 30, rejected by the religious and political powers alike, executed like a common criminal on a Roman cross.
 - a) No one was worried about Gandalf’s staff - it was a symbol of his weakness- something for an old man to lean upon. But Wormtongue knew! In the eyes of the Jews and Romans, Jesus’ cross was a symbol of his weakness. The Son of God couldn’t be crucified! But Satan knew!
 - b) But just as Gandalf uses his staff to free Theoden, Paul says **1 Corinthians 1:18 ESV (Pg. 554) For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.**
 - 2. Gandalf had been mocked and disregarded in his old form of “Gandalf the Gray”, but something in the atmosphere changed when he revealed himself as Gandalf the White, who had passed through “fire and death”.
 - 3. It was in this renewed identity that Gandalf could say to Saruman, “You did not kill me. You will not kill him.” **Romans 6:8 ESV (Pg. 549) Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.** Jesus died so we don’t have to! Jesus lives so we can too!
 - 4. Theoden had no power to save himself. He was as good as dead. He needed someone stronger than him, who had already prevailed over his enemies, to come and work salvation for him.
- V. **Romans 5:6 ESV (Pg. 549) For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the**

wrath of God. **10** For if ***while we were enemies*** we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. **11** More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

- A. So who will come to God? Not those who choose to, or those who find their way. All of that is nonsense! Only those whom he makes alive by his resurrecting grace will come.
- B. Can you come to God in your own power? No. we are dead in sin and we need the Holy Spirit to make us alive.
- C. How does the Holy Spirit make us alive? The Holy Spirit helps us to have faith in Jesus. **Ephesians 2:8 ESV (Pg. 568)** 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 his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.