

Books and Bagels
1100 Court
7:30 – 10:45 AM
Wednesday, June 28th

Introduction

Have you ever responded with a reciprocal action for an overwhelming gift or an act of love toward you? It may have been with a thank you card, a visit or even more. In chapter three of Ephesians Paul is responding to the overwhelming gift of God's grace. It is more than you could ever could imagine! This describes what the believer in Christ has in salvation!

Review:

Over the past few weeks we have looked at the peace God has provided in Christ. He nullified the dividing wall of hostility which the text identified as the law(2:15). Christ nullified the effect of the law upon the believer by standing in our place and fulfilling the law for us.

More than that, God's unfolding plan created the new man, which is every believer as one body in this new covenant age, both Jew and Gentile. This was unbelievable news to the first century Gentiles.

The grace gift of salvation is awesome. It is the greatest achievement by God. The book of Ephesians, up through chapter three, has explained this awesome and amazing grace gift.

1. Salvation is Built on the Bedrock of Christ

Ephesians chapter one gave the believers in Ephesus a glance at the deep foundation of salvation. Salvation from the horrid entrapment of sin was planned by God and it goes beyond our comprehension.

I was a sophomore in high school, the first time I ever walked into a real skyscraper; it was the John Hancock Center, an 1128 foot tall skyscraper at 875 North Michigan Ave, Chicago, Illinois. At present, it is the 8th tallest building in the United States. I was taken back as I approached the building. Literally, I almost fell backward craning my neck back to try and see the top. The observation deck is 1000 feet up and the day I was there I could see more than fifty miles! The building moved. I felt the building sway! I learned that Skyscrapers are built to sway to withstand strong winds. Architectural designers fit the building design for different frequencies, (flexibility and stiffness) so there is not a resonance that would cause a failure in the building structure. The sensation of swaying takes a person from the fascination of height to the pondering of the building's foundation. The John Hancock foundation is the same size as the footprint of the building and goes 35 meters below

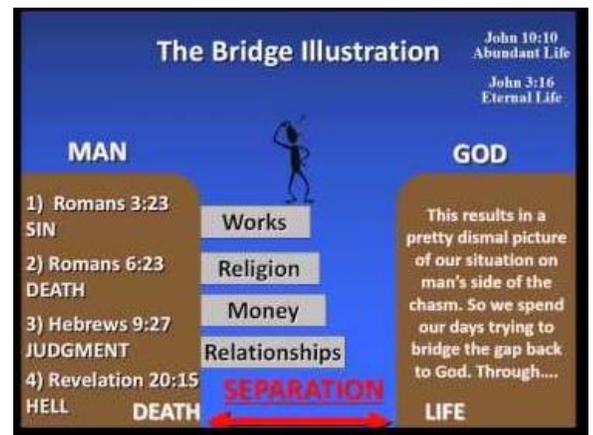
the surface to bedrock. "Deep rock foundations transfer the load at a point far below the substructure. The common deep foundation systems for buildings are piles, caissons or shafts. These deep rock foundations are made up of concrete and steel."¹ These foundation shafts put steel into bedrock. The reason the building stands is because of the time, effort and calculated design of the foundation.

The Holy Spirit, writing through the Apostle Paul, in chapter one, takes the believer to the very bedrock of salvation. In eternity past God drove the foundational shafts to God the son, securing the foundation of redemption. Nothing can topple salvation, it is as sure as God himself. This is mercy and grace! God has loved mankind so much that He provided a gift of mercy and grace that all who call upon the Name of the Lord can receive. This gift cannot be earned nor is it deserved. Chapter two explains...

2. Salvation is not possible to achieve only receive

Ephesians two revealed that man is in no position to save himself. Man is born into this world dead in sin. It is only God who can resurrect man from spiritual death.

The salvation of a man's soul is such a grand achievement of God. It has to be because man cannot achieve salvation in and of himself. This is illustrated² in the chart below. All the attempts of man to get to God fall short.

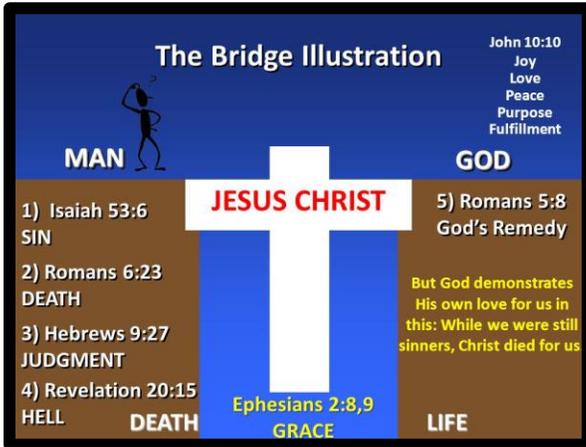


Paul points out, "For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves... Ephesians 2:8a." Man does not work up faith within himself to save himself, God calls the sinner to life from spiritual death. Awakening faith includes hearing the word of Christ, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ," Romans 10:17 ESV.

The chasm between man and God has been bridged by Christ. He is the way to peace and relationship with God. Have you put your trust in Christ alone?

¹ Ribeiro Sousa, David Chapman, Tiago Miranda, "Deep Rock Foundations of Skyscrapers", *Soils and Rocks*, January 2010

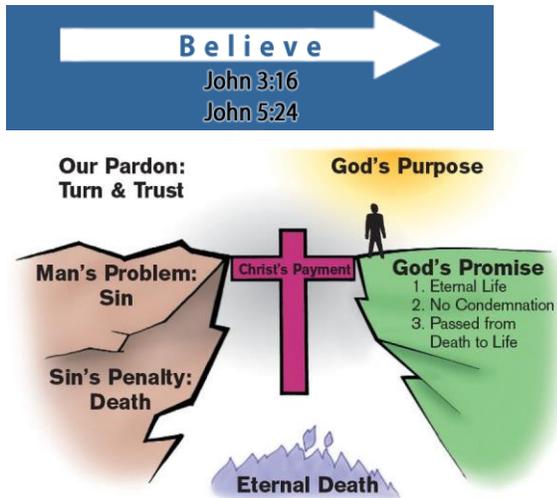
² Roger Peterson, Navigator Bridge Illustration, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-rVBrXcKVI>



The Bible calls this decision, believing. It is putting your trust in what Christ has done. It is a volitional decision to receive this gift of grace. Romans 10:9, 10 *“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified (declared righteous by God, clarification mine).*

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”*

John 5:24 *“Truly, truly I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me (Jesus) has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life.”*



What have you done with the gift of God's son?

3. Paul responds to God's unfolding grace

“For this reason, I Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of Gentiles -...became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace.” Ephesians 3:1,10

“For this reason” points back to the unfolding grace presented in the text so far. It was dispensed in Paul's life on the Damascus road. This gift is called a dispensation of grace. An *oikonomos*, a word that literally means “house steward”. It is descriptive of a great estate that has been entrusted to your care. How will Paul steward this great inheritance of grace? This unspeakable gift of grace captured the Apostle Paul. It captured him like a person saving your life would capture you.

In some cultures, when a person saves your life, you became their bond-servant for the remainder of your life in gratitude. This is the idea Paul is presenting. He has grasped the forever salvation of God. He uses two distinct words regarding His response.

- a. The attitude and perspective of a prisoner of Christ
Prisoner – it is the Greek Word describing a person who is confined. Especially a person who has been convicted or accused of a criminal offense.

Paul has written this letter from his house arrest position in Rome. Paul wrote in his letter to the Philippians that whatever has happened to him has happened to further the gospel, Philippians 1:12.

It is that perspective and attitude that allowed the good news to flow through Paul to others.

Paul presents to you how to be a steward of this wonderful gift of grace. Allow your life situations to be used to carry forth God's plan to share God's redemption with others.

The gospel in Paul gave him strength to live in the worst of times, and in the worst of situations. But He lived with the attitude of joy!

Stewarding the gift of grace means that your Christianity cannot be kept in a box, it is lived out through your life. It is not meant to be left at church or at home. It is meant to be brought into every part of your career. It is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

You may not be a prisoner today, but you may find yourself in a pickle, or a predicament, or with a physical ailment. You may have a great need that is burdening you. As a believer, God can be glorified, not just in the miraculous removal of the affliction, but by your attitude, your revealed reliance upon God and your strength in Christ while you are going through it! Steward God's grace through the attitude of being a prisoner for Christ.

- b. The action of a servant of Christ
The second response of those stewarding God's grace is presented in vs. 7 *“I was made a servant, (diakonos) of the gospel.” ... this word means someone who waits on or attends to the needs of another. The other in this case is the good news. Notice that Paul makes himself a servant to the gospel, not others.*

The direct outflow of being a servant to the gospel is ministering to others, but the balance of addressing needs physical versus needs spiritual is governed by what you are servant to. The gospel keeps the balance. Paul acted out being a servant of the gospel in two ways. He shared it and he made it plain (vs. 8).

Both of these actions require great effort and communication preparation.

How do you steward the amazing grace given to you through Christ? You pass it on; again, and again!

Capitol Commission Bible Studies

Tuesday @ 7:30am – 8:00am, LOB 414

Monday @ 12:00Pm – 1:00pm, LB 2nd Flr.

Monday @ 12 Noon – 12:45pm, Chapel