

## CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

717 North Stapley Drive, Mesa, AZ 85203 Phone: (480) 833-7500

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| <b>Series:</b> | <b>Scripture Memory</b>     |  | Pastor/Teacher    |
| <b>Number:</b> | <b>125</b>                  |  | Gary L.W. Johnson |
| <b>Text:</b>   | <b>Ephesians 2:1-13</b>     |  |                   |
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### THE CALL TO REMEMBER

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, one of the great preachers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, insightfully wrote, “I sometimes think, as I read the Bible, and meditate upon it, that the fact of sin and the biblical doctrine of sin is more clearly demonstrated and manifested in this matter of memory than perhaps in any other respect. For is not this the simple truth, that we always tend to forget the very things we want to remember, and conversely we find it almost impossible to forget the things we would like to forget? I have instanced certain things which we would like to remember. These, alas, are the things of which we say we would give the whole world at times if we could but forget them; certain base actions, certain unworthy motives, certain things that one has said in the heat of the moment; things we have done, or something that someone else has done to us. We know perfectly well we should forget it. But we see the person and back it flashes upon us. We may not have thought about it for years, and then something happens and back it comes. Now all that, I say, is a manifestation of sin. That is what sin has done to the human race; that is how it perverts. That is the accursed element in sin, and that is where sin is so hateful and so annoying. It stands between us and that which is best and highest; and nowhere does it show itself more than in this particular matter of memory.”<sup>1</sup> Paul has set forth in 2:1-3 the terrible situation that all men, whether Jew or Gentile, are in by nature. Humanity is not on trial before God; the verdict is in, and the sentence has been passed – *guilty*, one and all. No one deserves salvation; all need it, but none deserves it, nor even seeks it! (cf. Romans 3:11). Our condition is such that we surely cannot earn salvation. Sinners, living in sin and being controlled by “the ruler of the kingdom of this age” (and willing subjects at that), were by nature (*phusei*, lit. “innate disposition,” comp. Galatians 2:15; 4:8) “objects of God’s wrath.” Sinners therefore need mercy. But if the standard by which mercy is given is merit, we are doomed.

#### I. **GOD’S MOTIVE (v. 4).**

This verse begins with the Greek particle *de*, “but” (compare with Romans 3:21). What men are and deserve is offset with God’s abundant mercy. J. A. Robinson points out that, “St. Paul hastens on, as so often, from sin to grace, only mentioning sin in order to shew how grace more than meets it: compare Rom. 3:23f., v. 12-21. Here sin and wrath lead on to *a wealth of grace*.”

*Even though we were dead in trespasses.* With these words he takes up the broken sentence of v. 1: only now the Jew has been linked with the Gentile in the *disobedience* and the *wrath*, and therefore must be kept with the Gentile in the *mercy*. Hence not *you*, but *we*.<sup>2</sup> Notice the way God’s love and mercy are described: *great love* and *rich mercy*. One cannot fail to notice, however, that God’s love and mercy are *selective*. They are poured out on those who *are made alive with Christ*. All are dead in sin, but all are not “made alive.” This is due to God’s electing love and mercy (cf. 1:4, 11).

#### II. **GOD’S MEANS (vv. 5, 6).**

When God’s love is directed towards sinners, it is *mercy*. The love of God is made known to the objects of His love (Romans 5:5-8). It is a love that will not fail (Romans 8:39). This text focuses the love of God upon the guilty and undeserving; as such, it is controlled by and issues from *grace*. God’s *love*, *mercy* and *grace* act; for by these He *made us alive* (*sunezōpoiēsen* – “to make alive together

with,” a synonym for the verb “to raise;” can also have the meaning “to keep or preserve alive”) *with Christ* when we were dead in sin. God does not set back and wait for “dead men” to act or respond – they can’t! Notice how Paul quickly adds, lest there be hiding in the hearts of those to whom he was writing the yeast of Arminianism, *it is by grace you have been saved* (*sesōsmenoi*, perfect passive; the perfect tense points to the completed action with ongoing results stressing the continual state). God acted in *grace*. The whole process of quickening the dead and raising them to life in Christ and seating them with Christ in the heavenly realm (note the parallel in 1:20) is the result of the power of God, a theme that Paul had begun in 1:19. Paul is still dealing with this theme, only now he is underscoring the motive and means for God’s actions.

### III. *GOD’S MONUMENT* (v. 7).

Verse 7 begins with what is called a *hina* purpose clause, usually translated “*in order that*” and used to declare a purpose; that is, why something was done. Why did God do this? To *display* (*endeixētai*, aorist middle subjunctive, lit. “show for Himself”) *the exceeding* (*huperballon* cf. 1:19) *riches of his grace* (cf. 1:7) *as seen in his kindness* (*chrēstotēti*, goodness, kindness toward another, used only by Paul, cf. Romans 2:4, 3:12, 11:22; Colossians 3:12; Titus 3:4) *to us in Christ*. Believers are quite literally “*trophies of sovereign grace*.” As Charles Hodge said long ago: “The manifestation of the grace of God, i.e., of his unmerited love, is declared to be the specific object of redemption. From this it follows that whatever clouds the grace of God, or clashes with the gratuitous nature of the blessings promised in the gospel, must be inconsistent with its nature and design. If the salvation of sinners be intended as an exhibition of the grace of God, it must of necessity be gratuitous.”<sup>3</sup>

### IV. *GOD’S MESSAGE* (vv. 8, 9).

“For it is by *the* grace that you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.” Now some have contended that the gift of God refers only to *grace* and not to faith, which they say is our own doing and something that is the result of our freewill. What does *and this is not from yourselves* refer to? Many good theologians say it refers to the complete salvation being spoken of in the text. This is admissible, and is surely correct. But I am inclined to agree with Abraham Kuyper, who writes regarding the grammar of the Greek text, “The general rule is that the demonstrative agrees with the substantive in gender and number – but not always. The antecedent should be looked for in the immediate vicinity of the pronoun or adjective that refers to it.” Kuyper then cites a noted grammarian who says, “Very common is the use of a neuter demonstrative pronoun to indicate an antecedent substantive of masculine or of feminine gender, when the idea conveyed by that substantive is referred to in a general sense.”<sup>4</sup> Now what this somewhat technical definition means is that *faith* (genitive, feminine, singular) is the antecedent of *this* (demonstrative, nominative, neuter) and that the Apostle is declaring that even faith is not from yourselves – something he expressly declares elsewhere as well (cf. Philippians 1:29). This is so *no* one will boast or have any grounds for boasting. I do not see, if freewill is maintained, how men will not have grounds for boasting. *They* responded: all had an equal chance, but some used their free wills and others did not. The ultimate reason they will be saved is not sovereign grace, but sovereign freewill – with which Paul will have no part. It is all of Grace – faith included, as Boice declared “Grace means that there is no cause in us why God should have acted as he did. We think the opposite. We think God owes us something. Even after we become Christians we often find ourselves thinking in these terms. *Certainly God owes everyone at least a chance*, we say. Or when God fails to do something we think he should do, we say, *It just isn’t fair*. So long as we think that way we do not understand grace. Grace is God’s favor to the utterly undeserving.”<sup>5</sup>

### V. *GOD’S MAXIM* (v. 10).

*For his workmanship* (*poiēma* – only here and in Romans 1:20) *are we*, so the Greek text reads. The pronoun *his* is emphatic. We are not saved *by* good works, but *unto* good works. God has *created* us in Christ Jesus (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17). If Paul has not sufficiently dealt a deathblow to all “merit-

mongers,” he does so now with this “coup de grace.” Believers have been *created* – they did not create themselves – *for* (*epi*, aorist subjunctive, used in purpose clauses) *good works*, which are the fruits and evidences of faith. Believers are enabled to do good works not only by the power of God (Philippians 2:13), but also by the example of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 13:14, 15). These have been *prepared beforehand* by God, in order that we should *walk* (*peripatēsōmen*, cf. v. 3) in them. Note the contrast with v. 3. The doctrine of sovereign grace certainly does not encourage sloth; on the contrary, it is the great motivation for diligence in the Christian life and evidence of election (cf. 2 Peter 1:3-10).

**VI. GOD’S MANDATE (v. 11-13).** Note the emphasis on *remembering*. This is something that the Scriptures call upon God’s people to do. In v. 11 and again in v. 12 Paul calls upon his readers to *recall* their past.

1. ***Remember God.***

1 Chronicles 16:12 – Remember the wonders He has done; His miracles, and the judgments He pronounced.

Nehemiah 4:14 – Remember the LORD, who is great.

Job 36:24 – Remember to extol his work.

Psalms 77:11 – I will remember the deeds of the LORD, I will remember your miracles of long ago.

Psalms 105:5 – remember the wonder He has done.

Psalms 119:55 – In the night I remember your name.

Ecclesiastes 12:1 – Remember your Creator in the day of your youth.

Ecclesiastes 12:6 – Remember Him – before the silver cord is severed or the golden bowl is broken.

2. ***Remember Past Conduct and Lessons of Life.***

Lamentations 3:19 – I remember my affliction and my wandering.

Luke 17:32 – Remember Lot’s wife.

Ephesians 2:11, 12 – Remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth . . . remember that at that time you were separated from Christ.

Hebrews 10:32 – Remember those earlier days after you had received Light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the fire of suffering.

3. ***Remember the Teachings of Scripture.***

Acts 20:31 – Remember that for three years I have never stopped warning each of you day and night with tears.

2 Timothy 2:8 – Remember that Jesus Christ raised from the dead (Luke 24:6).

Jude 17 – Remember what the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold (about scoffers and false teachers).

1 Corinthians 11:24, 25 – Do this (Lord’s Supper) in remembrance.

**CONCLUSION:** “[R]emember to call to mind,” says Paul in verse 12, “that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.” The Gentiles suffered fivefold alienation. They were *Christless* (aliens to the Messiah) – *remember that at that time you were separate from Christ*. They were not part of the Messianic people (cf. Romans 9:5). They had no thought or hope of a Messiah. They were *stateless* (alien to God’s nation) – *excluded from citizenship in Israel*. Israel was a nation under God, a theocracy, but the Gentiles had no part or franchise in this. They were *friendless* (alien to the covenants) – *and foreigners to the covenants of the promise*. God had bound himself unconditionally to bring blessing upon and through Israel. But the Gentiles

had no such promise. (Cf. Genesis 12:2ff.; 13:14.; 15:1ff.; and 22:15ff.). They were *hopeless* and *godless* (alien to hope and to God) – *without hope and without God in the world*. The pagan world was religious in everything. There were temples and statues everywhere. Similarly, look at the great world religions today. Can the Scriptures be right – is the pagan world then and now godless? Yes, because false gods are *nothing*, and religious ceremonies are *nothing* without the true God. The Christian Church needs to believe its own Scriptures (cf. Romans 3:11). The Gentiles were indeed without hope and without God.”<sup>6</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Expository Sermons on II Peter* (Banner of Truth, 1983), p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> J. A. Robinson, *Commentary On Ephesians, Exposition of the Greek Text* (rpt. Kregel, 1979), p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> C. Hodge, *Commentary on The Epistle To The Ephesians* (rpt. Eerdmans, 1950), p. 116,

<sup>4</sup> A. Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (rpt. Eerdmans, 1973), p. 412.

<sup>5</sup> J. M. Boice, *Ephesians: An Expositional Commentary* (Baker, 1988), p. 55. “By repeating *hoti* at the opening of v. 12, Paul resumes his point begun in v. 11 with what his audience was to recall. This recollection consists of five things true of their former pagan state, and these are articulated in each of the five cola in this period.” S. M. Baugh, *Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Lexham Press, 2016), p. 182.

<sup>6</sup> R. K. Hughes, *Ephesians: Preaching The Word* (Crossway, 1990), p. 90.