

**Listen to the words of Paul from his letter to the Ephesians as he describes God's Amazing Grace:**

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. **This is God's Word.**

**Dear Recipients of God's Saving Grace,**

There are two days of the year that many children look forward to with great anticipation. Those two days are Christmas and their birthday. They look forward to these days because on these special days they know that they are going to receive gifts. They receive these gifts not because they have been perfect children all year, but because someone loves them. Usually it's their parents, maybe grandparents and sponsors or friends that give them these gifts.

This portion of scripture also talks about someone who loves us. It talks about God and the gifts he has given us because of His grace. As we consider this portion of scripture, we want to see that, **"God's Grace Gives You Three Gifts."** **"The Gift of a New Life,"** **"The Gift of a New Home,"** and **"The Gift of a New Job."**

**I.** To understand God's first gift, **"The Gift of a New Life,"** we have to understand what our old life was all about. Paul describes our old life in this way, **"We were dead in our transgressions and sins, in which we used to live when we followed the ways of the world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature,"** (Eph. 2:1-3). Paul's point is that we were once spiritually dead. Our sins made us that way. The original sin we inherited and which we were born with, and the actual sins that we commit every day.

Those sins lumped us together with all those who are disobedient to God's Word. Rather than following God's Word, we were being led by the ways of the world and the cravings of our own sinful flesh. In other words, we were living for ourselves – everything centered on me. Putting yourself first sounds good to a lot of people for their physical lives, but when it comes to your spiritual life, putting yourselves first only earns you death – spiritual and physical death.

That's why the Apostle Paul points out our former condition—what we once were – spiritually dead – a corpse unable to do anything for our salvation. But in contrast to our sinful condition, God gives us "A New Life." He does this because of his great love for us. The Bible calls God's love a "one way" kind of love because nothing in us prompts that love. God loves us in spite of our sinful and disobedient condition. And in addition to God's love, Paul tells us that God is rich in mercy.

When God sees our pitiful condition, his mercy prompts him to take action and that action is to make us alive with Christ. God does all this because of his grace – the undeserved love that he has for us. The conduit for God’s grace is faith. God’s grace comes to us through faith! Even faith, the ability to believe God’s Word and to come to know Jesus as our Savior, is given us as a free gift from God. God has done everything needed for our salvation for us and because God has done it all for us we can be assured that it has been done right and that nothing more needs to be done. So our salvation is not about anything we have done, but rather it is all about everything that Jesus has done for us.

He endured suffering and death on the cross for our sins. He made the payment for us and since our sins have been paid for, he makes us alive through faith. Along with our new life comes the forgiveness of sins and the sure hope of eternal life. What a wonderful and priceless gift our God, who is rich in mercy, has given us, but there is more. In addition to the “Gift of a New Life,” our God has also given us, **“A Gift of a New Home.”**

**II.** Paul writes, **“God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus,”** (Eph. 2:6-7). We have a new home through the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection of Jesus signals the completion of his work. It seals our redemption because it assures us that the price of our sins has been paid in full and Christ is now at home in heaven reigning for the benefit of all believers.

So we are with Christ through faith. We are in the sphere of his rule. We are citizens of heaven and because we are citizens of heaven we have the benefits that come along with being citizens of heaven. We have access to our heavenly king through prayer. We have the forgiveness he won for us on the cross and along with that forgiveness comes a spiritual peace and comfort knowing that our Savior will help us fight all our battles against the temptations of the devil.

The greatest benefit of being a citizen of heaven, though, is the sure hope of eternal life it brings us. In the Gospel of John Jesus explained how he has prepared his gift of a new home for his believers when he said, **“In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”** (John 14:2-3). It is when we reach heaven that we will see the fullness of God’s incomparable riches. As great and glorious as God’s present blessings are they don’t compare with what God will do for His believers in heaven. We can try and describe heaven, but when you think about it, there is really nothing on earth to compare it to.

As Paul points to God’s gift of a new home he reminds us once again that there is nothing we do to earn or deserve eternal life in heaven. Sometimes we may be tempted to say, that we are a good person, or that we are trying hard or that we’ll get to heaven because we have lived a good life, but Paul points out that God goes through a seven step process to eliminate any such thoughts that we have that we might somehow cooperate in our salvation .

Look at vs. 8 - it says

- 1) by grace (God's undeserved love)
- 2) you have been saved (a passive thing - something that was done to us)
- 3) through faith (simple trust in Christ crucified and raised)
- 4) not of ourselves (we don't even bring ourselves to faith - it isn't something that we decide on - we're dead)
- 5) it is the gift (a gift is something that is unearned)
- 6) of God (God gives us this gift of faith in Christ - we can't say we decided to come to faith)
- 7) not of works, so that no one can boast.

This eliminates any thoughts whatsoever that we could be saved by choosing, working, or doing anything to get to our new home in heaven. This gift of a new home comes to us purely by God's grace. If Paul was able to speak with such confidence to the Ephesians about their future home - then why not about yours? Are you any more sinful than they or Paul - who actually persecuted Christians? Even if you are more sinful, will God be any less gracious to you? Not at all. We have the same forgiveness and the same Lord.

God assures us - through the sacrifice of Christ - you are as good as in your heavenly home. This is not a home that you have to worry will not be there when you die, because Christ is already there. He will come back to take you home. He won't leave you behind.

**III.** Paul ends this portion of scripture by talking about the last gift of God's grace – a new job. Now you may be thinking. “A New Job,” that's not the kind of gift I was looking for. That means I have to work and I was hoping once I became a Christian, life would be easier – that I could just kick back and not have a worry in the world.

When I got my first job, it was delivering papers. I thought it was a great job. I got to make money and it only took me about an hour every day, but then winter came and I had to walk instead of ride my bike and it was cold and the snow was deep and it wasn't so much fun any more. It was work!

That's how some people look at Christianity. They see it as a lot of work. Their thoughts go something like this, “That means I have to go church every week, give money, donate time, and be nice to people? No thanks.” Let's be honest. Even though heaven is free, living as a Christian is work, isn't it? Should we give people the impression that it's real easy to be a Christian? That once you become a Christian all your problems will disappear?

Being a Christian isn't always easy. As Christians, we don't get drunk. We don't hold grudges. We don't get revenge. We bless those who curse us. We give our first fruits to God. We study the Bible on a regular basis. We come to church every week to worship God. It's not always easy. Sometimes it's pretty hard work and there are times when we don't always measure up.

So why do we do these things? Paul says we work this way because we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works. We do them because that's what God created us to do and he gives us plenty of opportunities to forgive others and to talk about Jesus and to pray, not only for ourselves but for other people. We do all this because with the Holy Spirit living in us, these things come naturally to us. As redeemed sinners we want to thank our God by doing his will and so we praise and thank our God through good works.

The Holy Spirit helps us to do this joyously as he strengthens our faith and encourages us through God's Word. As we grow in our faith we find out that this new job in Christ, while it is hard work, it is not a burden but a privilege.

God has given us great gifts! At Christmas time or our birthday, we sometimes make a list of things we would like. We ask for them. But without even asking, God has given us three great gifts.

Gifts that will last an eternity.

Gifts that we all need.

Because of God's great love, his mercy and grace, we have a new life – we have been delivered from death. We have a new, permanent home in heaven, and we have a new job - all through faith in Jesus Christ.

Thank God for these gifts today. Use them and enjoy them. Amen.