6/10/20 Devotion

Let us contemplate the words of scripture from the letter of Ephesians:

*“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 our sins. It is by grace that you have been saved.*” Ephesians 2:4-5

We must first understand the reality of sin before the concept of grace will make sense to us. The Bible is clear about sin and its consequences. Sin refers to our broken relationship with God. Humanity rebelled against its creator. Humanity is living in a wrong relationship with God. Humanity is guilty of idolatry by chasing after and worshipping other gods rather than the one true God. Humanity is spiritually dead. Human sin deserves punishment. Scripture says: *“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Given the reality of human sin, what is the foundation of grace? Grace is rooted in the mercy of God. It’s grounded in God’s amazing love for us and for this world. Grace is God’s unmerited, unearned, undeserved, unconditional, unlimited, and unending favor shown to the world, in God’s sending his Son Jesus Christ to live, die and rise again for our salvation. God does for us that which we cannot do for ourselves. No one can boast or take credit for his or her salvation. We can’t work for it. It is the free gift of God. Grace is about God’s mercy, not our merit; God’s promise, not our performance.

Grace is God’s invitation to enter into His Kingdom and a saving relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. It is God’s invitation to enter into His church, the Body of Christ. Grace is God’s accepting us, and inviting us into fellowship with Him, even though, because of our sin, we don’t deserve it.

God’s invitation offers us three things which make a difference in our lives. First, God’s *saving grace*removes our guilt and sets us free from the burden of guilt and the power of sin and its consequences. Grace says – you are forgiven. Have you ever felt the burden of guilt lifted from your soul or a great weight lifted from your shoulders? That is grace. Ephesians 1 says: *“By the death of Christ, we are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven. How great is the grace of God which He gave to us in such large measure.”* Because of grace as demonstrated in Jesus’ death on the cross, through faith, we can now live in a right relationship with God. We are saved by grace through faith.

Some people think they don’t need God because they are a good person. God judges us according to the person of Jesus Christ and the Bible says, when compared to Jesus, we all fall short of God’s glory. If we could save ourselves by our own goodness, then Jesus’ death was in vain. A religion without grace means you have no way out of your guilt, your shame, your failures and your poor decisions. But the gospel says that by God’s grace we can experience true forgiveness today.

Second, God’s strengthening *grace* reshapes our life. God’s grace is power, the power to lead us closer to becoming more like Christ. It has the power to change our attitudes, our thinking, our character and our behavior. God’s strengthening grace changes us into becoming who God wants us to be. God’s grace reshapes our heart and mind. Someone said: *“God loves you just the way you are, true, but God loves you far too much to let you stay that way.”*

Third, God’s sustaining grace helps us persevere when we want to give up. Have you ever experienced that? The Bible says: *“My grace is all you need for my power is strongest when you are weak.”*  You may now be facing a crisis. God helps us through adversity with his sustaining grace. We can overcome whatever comes in this life, with the help of God’s grace. Grace is something you can never get but only be given. Like any gift, the gift of grace can be ours when we reach out and take it.

God’s grace be with you all,

Rev. Alan W. Deuel