

BECAUSE OF THE CROSS

Ephesians 2:1-10

Because of the cross...

1. I am made alive.

Ephesians 2:4-5(NIV) 4But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

The victory is won. Our faith is not simply an ambulance that rushes to pick up casualties. We are made alive in Christ and that is an armor that protects us and gives us victory.

I've often mentioned Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the three young men who refused to worship King Nebuchadnezzar's gods, or bow down to the great golden image.

Threatened with death in a fiery furnace, their reply is a classic statement of the victory and freedom all Christians have.

“If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

You know the story. The soldiers who threw them into the furnace were killed by the heat, but Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego weren't even singed.

When the king looked into the fire he saw four men, not three. Jesus was in that fire protecting those three, faithful young men. Jesus is in the making alive business!

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego won the victory because of their absolute faith in God. They were made alive long before when they put their trust in God.

They were confident that God could save them from the fire if He chose to—and they were equally confident that it was okay if He didn't. Their faith was in God—not in a miracle.

The Lord's Supper reminds us that our faith is in the living Savior. His suffering and death are remembered. We are humbled as we think what it cost God to give us the gift of salvation.

But we are also reminded that our salvation was won on that cross—that victory over Satan and death was assured on that cross. Jesus Christ made us alive.

From beginning to end the New Testament holds out reassurance and ultimate triumph. The New Testament people were a singing and victorious people. They had a deep assurance of God's presence, His purpose, and His victory over evil.

They were convinced that God was active in their lives. They were empowered by the Holy Spirit to tell others about their exciting faith.

All too often we become preoccupied with problems and difficulties. All we want to talk about is what's wrong with the government, our schools, businesses, the youth, the church, etc.

The Lord's Supper reminds us that we don't have to keep in step with the world. We march to a different drummer. That drummer is Jesus Christ.

Because the crucified Christ, buried and raised by God to life again—is alive, He's here today. Understand this, know this, and grasp this great truth of victory.

Our God is able to do immeasurable more than we can ask or imagine. Our victory is in Jesus Christ.

Because of the cross...

2. My salvation is guaranteed.

Ephesians 2:6(NIV) And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

Your salvation is because of God's amazing grace. Sometimes we think we are so bad, so sinful that this keeps us from complete salvation. I asked for "Amazing Grace" because of John Newton

As a teenage rebel he was gang-pressed into the British navy; was flogged for desertion, and when he was 23-years old, was fighting for his life in a terrible storm.

Almost frozen he cried out for God's mercy, and was amazed that he was saved from almost certain death. Yet, even then, he didn't turn to Christ. Later he became captain of an African slave ship. He lived a life of dissipation and wretchedness.

He became a Christian after reading the book, *The Imitation of Christ*. The change in his life was amazing. He worked to end slavery. Among the many songs he wrote was *Amazing Grace*.

He truly understood how amazing his salvation was. As amazing as his story is, the truly amazing thing is that God saved you and me. He forgave you and He saved you, and He guarantees your salvation.

Paul, before he met Jesus, thought that persecuting Christians would make him right with God. He did everything he could to stamp out Christianity. Even he was saved by God's grace.

As you drink the juice that represents Christ's blood, remember, you are worth everything to God.

Because of the cross...

3. I am a showpiece of God's grace.

Ephesians 2:7(NIV) ...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.

We were dead in our sins and helpless to save ourselves. We were under God's wrath; only His love could triumph over wrath. We deserved nothing at God's hand but judgment.

Why then did God save us? Out of His sheer mercy, love, grace and kindness. And beyond that—He saved us to show the incomparable riches of His grace—to make us a showpiece.

When God raised and exalted Christ He demonstrated the greatness of His power. When He saved and exalted us He displayed the riches of His grace—and will continue to do so throughout eternity.

In the tiny book of Jude, v. 24, are these words, “To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy.”

Jude is saying that Jesus keeps us from falling from God’s grace, and will present us one day to God the Father—Believers in Jesus Christ.

I’m sure everyone of us has tripped and fallen. It usually happens at the most unexpected time. It may be a misstep, an icy spot, a crack in the sidewalk, a wrinkled throw rug, or something else.

Spiritually we can fall at any time. The person who says, “I will never . . .” as he or she condemn sin in someone else’s life is often the one who falls the hardest.

It’s at those times that doubt creeps in and we wonder whether we really are saved. Jesus keeps us from falling from God’s grace.

The Apostle Peter had foot in the mouth disease; he was overly impetuous, and he was impatient. Yet Jesus told him to feed His lambs.

Thomas was “Doubting Thomas” because he found the resurrection hard to believe. It just wasn’t possible. Not until he saw the resurrected Christ for himself did he believe. Spiritually he was never out of Christ’s hands.

James and John desired power—they wanted to rule over the others in Christ’s kingdom. They all faced the same temptations that we do every single day.

We think of big sins, but all of us are sinners—we’re filled with pride, greed, hatefulness, gossipy—which of us is exempt from such temptations

The answer of course is, none of us. But thank the Lord Jesus, we cannot fall out of God’s grace. Christ is able; and we are made alive by faith in Him.

Application:

The Lord’s Supper reminds us of Christ’s suffering and death. It also reminds us that when Christ cried out, “It is finished,” victory was ours. Because of the cross and our faith in the Savior of the cross, we belong to God’s family forever.