

God's Great Love

"But God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved) and raised us up with him and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us is in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:4-7).

Paul gives us a "before and after" picture here: what we were and what we have become, all through the love and grace of Christ. BEFORE: dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:13). AFTER: made alive, raised up with Christ, made to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. What comfort, indeed. Such a contrast is possible for all because of God's great love. In these early verses in Ephesians 2 Paul writes that God is "*rich in mercy*" (vs. 4); that "*his great love wherewith he loved us*" (vs. 4); that by "*grace he has saved us*" (vs. 5); that He might show the "*exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us*" (vs. 7). Mercy. Grace. Kindness. How comforting these three words are to all who are dead through trespasses and sins for the same reason the Gentiles and Jews were to whom Paul addressed this Ephesian letter. This love of God for sinful man is a frequent subject with Paul. He wrote Titus, "*For we also once were foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love toward man appeared, not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us ...*" (Ti. 3:3-5).

To the Corinthians: "*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you, but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God"* (1 Cor. 6:9-11). To the Romans: "*For while we were weak in due season Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, for peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die. But God commended his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Rom. 5:6-8).

"Why did my Savior come to earth, and to the humble go? Why did he choose a lowly birth, because he loved me so!" Jesus spake of Himself when He told His apostles, "*Greater love hath no man that this, that than a man lay down his life for his friends"* (Jn. 15:13).

And so the question comes to us, "What more could we expect Jesus to do for us that he has not already done?" We could not truly expect Him to do what He did do. It was divine, unselfish, compelling love which marked His advent and led Him to the cross. All for you. All for me. Why won't we accept His extended grace?

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