

“But, God’s Love . . .”

Ephesians 2:1-10

www.WORDFORLIFESAYS.com

Please Note: All lesson verses and titles are based on International Sunday School Lesson/Uniform Series ©2013 by the Lesson Committee, but all content/commentary written within is original to wordforlifesays.com unless properly quoted/cited. As always you are encouraged to do your own studies as well. Blessings!)

Introduction:

Often we hear in a service the phrase, “But, God” which signals a shift in a life or a story or a circumstance. Whatever was occurring or unraveling for someone has met up against that word “but” and it contrasts the way a happening was previously playing out. In spite of what was, “but” comes in and takes over providing an alternate ending.

Previously, I jotted down a few notes on the phrase, “But, God . . .” I wrote:

“BUT GOD’ really says it all, doesn’t it?

Somehow or another when life gets turned upside and you can’t see your way clearly . . . BUT GOD! Hurts, troubles and turmoil knock on your door and you didn’t think that you would make it . . . BUT GOD! Love, loss and disappointment with people left your heart broken and in shattered pieces . . . BUT GOD!

God is our answer for everything that life can throw at us. God is our solution for every attack of the enemy. God is our peace when chaos seems to invade every crevice of our being.

No matter what you face today, trust God to compassionately love and care for you and see you through to the other side because life can look a little crazy sometimes, . . . BUT GOD!” (Word For Life Says/ . . . But God!)

This falls right in line with today’s lesson topic. The subject of the “. . . but God” moment discussed in today’s lesson revolves around His love. The love of God is attributed to changing the believer’s life from what was to what they get to experience now in Christ Jesus. His love has changed the atmosphere from our once hopeless condition to give us a new life in Christ. And, it wasn’t because of anything we have done to deserve it. His love was His only motivation.

Ephesians 2:1-3 “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

Paul wrote the letter of Ephesians to the saints or the church in Ephesus (see Ephesians 1:1) supposedly while he was in a Roman prison in about A.D. 61. In this letter, he expresses the redemption the believers now find in their new life in Christ Jesus through His shed blood. God’s love was in effect before the foundation of the world “having predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself . . .” (Ephesians 1:5). The love of God interrupted the destiny of the believers and made them, through their faith in Jesus Christ, as one of His own.

As a reminder of the contrast of their life now to where they were before, Paul reminded the Ephesians church of their previous status without Christ: **“You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”** Life before Christ was nothing short of spiritual death. Condemnation and separation from God was the course we once walked. But, with that word **“quickened”** enters an adjustment in our previous destiny. **“Quickened”** shows restoration of the new life we now have in Jesus Christ. Backed by the word **“were”** its gives revelation of what once

was. **“Were”** shows one’s previous status of the past before Jesus saved us. We were drowning spiritually in the depths of **“trespasses and sins.”**

I believe that’s why the hymnist wrote the song, *Love Lifted Me*. In that author James Rowe writes:

“I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore,

Very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more;

But the Master of the sea heard my despairing cry,

From the waters lifted me, now safe am I.

Love lifted me! Love lifted me!

When nothing else could help,

Love lifted me.

Love lifted me! Love lifted me!

When nothing else could help,

Love lifted me.” (Lyrics Source: Hymnary.org)

It was nothing less than the love of God that brought the heart of the believer to the story of redemption through Jesus Christ. Our previous life was filled with walking **“according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air.”** What that means, instead of being accounted as a good man whose steps are ordered by the Lord (Psalm 37:23), our lives followed the contrary. Humanity before Christ walks the way of evil. Humanity before Christ lived under the influence of the devil. We were slaves to sin (Romans 6:20; see also 1 Peter 4:3-4).

Fulfilling the **“lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind”** was how our pre-salvation days were spent. A life of righteousness was the farthest thing from our mind. Our **“conversation;”** our life choices and lifestyle were contradictory to that of a follower of Christ. The road we traveled

was in opposition to the cross. Our life was a life that was not pleasing to God (see Romans 8:6-8). Our life was a backward march into the imagination of fulfilling evil desires of the heart and not a forward march toward a wholesome relationship with God (see Jeremiah 7:24).

We were considered **“by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”** No man can take pride in his/her salvation. Salvation was not something we could obtain naturally as if we had the power to deliver ourselves from our previous wayward walk. As a matter of fact, those who we would dare to point the finger at now and consider not in our class, we are reminded, before Jesus stepped in and cleaned us up we were exposed to the same condemnation **“others”** now face. Our previous sinful **“nature”** made us objects of God’s **“wrath.”**

When discussing the wrath of God one must be careful not to identify the actions of humans with the righteous God. God does not react with a quick temper or a lack of self-control. As a matter of fact the very Word of God tells us, “The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; *slow to anger*, and of great mercy,” (Psalm 145:8; see also Ps. 103:8; emphasis mine). Yet, even knowing this some still choose to turn away from that proffered mercy and relish in a life filled with ungodliness and unrighteousness. And, those who operate in those same unholy ways are characterized as those who have the same **“spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.”** These actions that remained unchecked by the saving blood of Jesus Christ will receive their recompense of judgment; the wrath of God.

That’s who we once were. But, God’s love . . .

Ephesians 2:4-7 “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”

But, God's love had a better plan. God operates out of the abundance of who He is, which in last week's lesson we learned God is love. The depth of His love far exceeds the wording noted here of Him as being **"rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us."** God had compassion on struggling humanity and refused to leave them tangled in the way of sin without a way out; without a plan for deliverance. His **"love"** would not and could not settle with the very idea of it. So, when we were at our worst, God was working His best for us. Romans 5:8 tells us, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

He didn't wait for us to clean ourselves up in order to be accepted by His love. That is a sheer impossibility anyway. Our lesson tells us, **"Even when we were dead in sins . . ."** Even when we were tore up from the floor up . . . Even when our lives contradicted everything He wanted for us . . . Even when we were going nowhere fast . . . Even when we were enjoying living lives ensconced by the dark . . . God stepped in with His plan of salvation and "commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

And **"hath quickened us together with Christ."** As our Savior was raised from the dead, God in His saving love raised us up to a restored life; a brand new life made possible through Jesus Christ. God's rich **"mercy"** became our lifesaver tossed out in the sea of sin from whence we were drowning to bring us to the shores of His redeeming love. No, we didn't deserve it, nor could we earn it on our own merit. God simply put this plan to save mankind from himself and the enemy of our soul into action because **"he loved us."** Love was His only motivation. Love is what steered Him to take the course of action that put His only begotten Son on the cross in our place. Love and only love was His reason for everything!

Thus, as believers, we readily recognize this is nothing short of a God-sized miracle. For it is **"by grace ye are saved."** It doesn't matter who you are or what your status is in life, the only way one can enter into a renewed relationship with God is through the grace and forgiveness offered through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. You can't earn your way into it. You can't bargain your way there. Only by going through the doors of grace can you be saved.

What would happen if today God sat down and took account of all the wrongs we have done? What would it be like if we stood before Him unable to pay what we owe? Guess What? We were there! Jesus knew the predicament that humanity was in. He knew that man could never get himself out of the debt of sin, so through Him, we obtain that freedom from the old life we lived through grace, mercy, and compassion as a people who don't deserve it.

I guarantee if we were to look at ourselves, we could not fathom how many times our accounts would have gone unpaid had it not been for the blood of Christ. But, thank God, He acted in love to save us! No just us – but, everyone who comes to Him in faith regardless of their background of sin. It is all a work of **“grace.”** It is all done as the ultimate act of **“love.”**

Because of our now restored relationship with God, He **“made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”** (compare Ephesians 1:3). Our position in Him is now heaven bound and not following those previous dictates of an evil heart and conscience. Our position in Him is a secured and unmovable eternity apart from those who choose to walk in the path of disobedience. Our position in Him is now spiritually full and spiritually alive as opposed to the previous dead state our sins condemned us with. We now walk in the newness of life (Romans 6:4).

Therefore, whatever you and I were identified by before receiving Jesus Christ as our Savior is now gone. Your life has not only been changed, but you have been totally transformed. Your destiny has been totally transformed. Your position has been totally transformed. **“When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit,”** (Titus 3:4, NLT). You are now a child of the King seated with Him in glory (compare Ephesians 1:20) and it was His act of love that brought us there.

We are saved through His work on the cross. His work on the cross was compelled by His love for humanity, **“That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”**

The truth of God's love is there. If mankind can but look beyond the realm of self and sin they will see **“the exceeding riches of his grace”** at work throughout

history to bring about a day of hope; a time when God and man can be reconciled from the broken relationship that was torn apart in Eden. God's love; His grace is on display through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to show **"his kindness toward us."**

"Us" describes the focus of all this lavished mercy and the focus is on us – sin sick humanity. Us – who ate of the forbidden fruit in the garden. Us - who caused catastrophic floods due to rebellion and disobedience. Us – who eventually gave the Roman officials the whips for His back and nails to secure Him to the cross. We in no ways deserved such love, but love He gave toward us (compare Ephesians 1:19).

God loves us! God loves us that much! Why is it so hard for the human brain to comprehend the lengths He will go through and has gone through to get you and me into heaven in eternity with Him? Jesus once told parables of a lost sheep and a lost coin and used those parables to describe the joy in heaven over just one sinner repenting (read Luke 15:1-10). God wants you where He is. God wants you saved for no other motivation than the love He has for you!

Ephesians 2:8-10 "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is a gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

"Grace" is a word that shows up three times in our lesson and appears many more times in the book of Ephesians. All throughout the Bible grace is a driving factor of God restoring a lost humanity back to Himself. It is by **"grace are ye saved."** Our spiritual deliverance has nothing with our own initiatives or works; it's not accomplished of **"yourselves."** Our deliverance is through the grace that He gives to the one who turns to Him through **"faith."** Coming to Jesus with all our wrongs and trusting Him to heal and forgive is a walk of faith; steps that begin with believing in Him as the Savior of our soul. It's the only way to find true peace in one's life and be saved.

“It is a gift of God.” Isn’t it wonderful – this gift of His? Isn’t it magnificent that no matter our status in life or how hard we work it can never be earned? It can never be put in our repertoire of attainments to salvation. It is a gift!

Gifts are meant to be received. On a number of occasions, my husband and even my children have tried to give me something out of the blue. While I am very grateful for the consideration that they want to give me something, I wind up doing a lot of questioning to try to ascertain the reason for them wanting to give it in the first place. I want to know what I did to deserve it. “Oh, you don’t have to go to such lengths. And, yadda, yadda, yadda . . .” In turn, what was a thoughtful expression is now tainted by frustration in the giver. They become frustrated with me for doing so much questioning instead of just receiving; for implying the only reason I am worthy is because of some work I must have done for them.

Human perception in this kind of outpouring of love has been marred by this sinful world. In it dwells the attitude of “if you do for me, then I’ll do for you.” “If you scratch my back, then I’ll scratch yours.” It is hard for one to believe in a motivation of pure love; to believe that one would give just because they love.

God’s motivation was love. He didn’t do it for us because of some great checklist we marked off as job complete, now I deserve this. His love gave us the gift to receive, **“Not of works, lest any man should boast.”**

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” It is God who has made us and established us (see Deuteronomy 32:6). We are “his people and the sheep of his pasture,” (Psalm 100:3). We are made according to His original design for our life and we are remade and renewed according to the gift of grace we have received; the salvation we find in Jesus Christ alone (see Ephesians 4:24). Everything points back to the blatant truth: we could not and did not do this of our own accord; we could not save ourselves. We are able to walk in the newness of life; produce **“good works”** through **“Jesus Christ”** because of His love initiative at work in our lives. Our salvation is His masterpiece and we are blessed, through His love, to be a part of that divine design.

“Which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” God has a predetermined plan for His people. While our works do not save us, there are **“good works”** that should readily be manifested from our lives and **“we should walk in them”** or order our lives after them. The Bible tells us, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,” (Matthew 5:16). The life we live before the world gives testimony to the God we serve and can draw others to His redeeming love.

The world needs a visual display of how this thing works. They need someone to show them how to shine; how to live this life the way God designed for mankind to live it. This world lacks good representation. “We are ambassadors for Christ,” (2 Corinthians 5:20). Before He left this world to return to heaven, Jesus said, “I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do,” (John 17:4). We, who are now saved, as ambassadors, are to carry on the work of glorifying our heavenly Father. As Jesus Himself pointed out, it goes beyond lip service; rather it is a life that has obediently followed Him and walked in what He has **“before ordained.”**

Oswald Chambers said, “If you are always keeping blessings to yourself and never learning to pour out anything “to the Lord,” **other people will never have their vision of God expanded through you,**” (Quote Source: Freerepublic.com). When the world sees what God has done in your life it will draw them to Him and they may get a glimpse of what His true love has done and can do in their lives as well.

Conclusion:

God loves us! “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” (John 3:16). When we accept that love and are saved by His grace through Christ Jesus our lives are changed forever. We become more than a part of His family; we are His workmanship recreated and regenerated into a new life that shows the world how they too can find a future and hope in His love.

Word For Life Says