

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians

by Oliver B. Greene

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CHAPTER EIGHT -

THREE GREAT WORDS DESCRIBE THE MATCHLESS REMEDY GOD PROVIDED FOR SINNERS

Ephesians 2, verse 4

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us."

1. Mercy: "But God, who is rich in mercy . . ."

GOD had a perfect right to mete out judgment and wrath upon Adam. Adam had sinned. GOD has a perfect right to mete out judgment and wrath upon you and me because we have all sinned. If man is to escape the wrath of GOD (which he deserves), the escape can come only by and through the undeserved mercy, the unmerited favor, of a holy GOD. That is exactly what GOD displayed when He promised the coming of JESUS, in Genesis 3:15. In the fulness of time JESUS was born (Galatians 4:4); He died on the rugged Cross while GOD's creatures mocked, sneered and jeered (Matthew 27; Mark 15; John 19).

IN MERCY GOD IS RICH: "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the Heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them" (Psalm 103:8-18).

I dare not comment on such Scripture. Read it, and re-read it Chew it, swallow it, digest it, live by it, die by it! GOD has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. GOD's mercy glories and rejoices in pardon for every sinner who will repent and believe on the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

2. Love: "But God . . . for His great love wherewith He loved us. Love is the one word that describes the nature of GOD . . . **"God is love."** It is natural for love to beget love. It is easy to love someone who loves you, to love someone who is always doing kind things for you and

saying nice things about you. But God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners . . . totally depraved, despicable, sordid, ungodly, hateful, hating one another . . . CHRIST died for us.

God commended His love toward such as that; God loved us even when we were dead in sins. The fact that our hopeless, unlovely condition failed to cause GOD to condemn us and damn us, sets forth the truth that His love is far, far beyond human imagination. As we sing,

"Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade,"

we could never write or describe the love of God. Such love is beyond human imagination. No wonder The HOLY SPIRIT refers to GOD's love as "**GREAT LOVE**."

Love consists of two elements:

- (a) desire
- (b) delight

Desire is the essence of GOD's love toward us, even when we were yet sinners. It is GOD's desire to save the sinner. It was GOD's desire to cover Adam with coats of skins. Adam yielded . . . submitted to God - and God covered him. It is not GOD's will that any perish, but that all come to repentance. "**Whosoever will, let him drink of the water of life freely.**" "**Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.**" "**Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.**" God desires to save every sinner.

His *delight* is in the sinner made a saint - by grace through faith in JESUS, the SON. I think most of us can comprehend the delight of GOD in a saint. I believe it is easy to see how GOD could delight in an honest, upright, lovable, kind, compassionate person who had once been a horrible, hateful, despicable, gutter drunk. To see that degenerate character transformed into a saint would rejoice the heart of GOD. But the amazing grace that brings to our ears so sweet a sound is how GOD could love the unlovely sinner who is dead, deteriorating, rotting in sin. Perhaps you do not particularly like the expression, "rotting in sin." Suppose we allow The HOLY SPIRIT to describe the unregenerate:

"FOR FROM WITHIN, OUT OF THE HEART OF MEN (unregenerated men), PROCEED:

**Evil thoughts,
Adulteries,
Fornications,
Murders,
Thefts,
Covetousness ,
Wickedness,
Deceit,**

**Lasciviousness,
An evil eye,
Blasphemy,
Pride,
Foolishness:**

ALL THESE EVIL THINGS COME FROM WITHIN, AND DEFILE THE MAN" (Mark 7:21-23).

If that Scripture does not prove to you that within every unregenerated person there is a potential spiritual garbage can, hear this:

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"
(Jeremiah 17:9).

Every unregenerated person reading these lines has within his bosom a heart that is capable of manufacturing, producing, and delivering anyone of the evils catalogued in Mark 7:21-23. The only way to guarantee yourself that you will not practice these evils is to submit your heart to GOD and let Him remove that heart by the operation of The HOLY GHOST and put a brand new heart in its place! Is that possible? We will look in our Textbook to find out:

"A NEW HEART also will I give you, AND A NEW SPIRIT will I put within you: and I will take away THE STONY HEART out of your flesh, and I WILL GIVE YOU AN HEART OF FLESH" (Ezekiel 36:26).

3. Grace: The age-old definition of Grace, accepted by most believers, is simply "GOD's unmerited favor!" Of course, that is a very limited definition of Grace. Read the account of the sufferings of JESUS in the Prophets, the Psalms and the Gospels - and then:

"For the Law was given by Moses, BUT GRACE AND TRUTH came by Jesus Christ"
(John 1:17). Grace is **"the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man . . . not by works of righteousness which we have done"** (Titus 3:4-5). Grace therefore is constantly set in the Scriptures in contrast to the Law of Moses - under the Law of Moses, God demands righteousness from man. But under Grace, God in CHRIST gives righteousness TO man (study Romans 3:20-22; 8:4; 10:4, Philippians 3:9).

The Law came by Moses; the Law is connected with Moses and with works. Grace came by JESUS CHRIST - yea, Grace WAS JESUS CHRIST - and becomes ours by faith (John 1:17; Romans 10:4-10; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 2:11). The Law extends blessings to the good - but Grace extends salvation to the bad . . . yea, to the worst. (Study Exodus 19:5; Ephesians 2:1-9; Titus 2:11-15.) The Law demands that blessings be earned by righteous works; but Grace is the free gift of GOD, no strings attached. By Grace . . . the gift of GOD. (Study Deuteronomy 28:1-6; Ephesians 2:8; Romans 4:4-5.)

The Dispensation of Grace began with the death and resurrection of the Lord JESUS. (Study Romans 3:24-26 and 4:24-25.) Since the Cross, salvation does not depend upon religious practices such as rituals, feasts, the keeping of Sabbaths, assemblies, etc. Salvation depends upon

receiving JESUS. In this dispensation we are saved or lost because we receive or reject JESUS. Good works have nothing to do with salvation. Good works are the evidence, the fruit, of salvation. (Study carefully John 1:12-13; 3:36; 5:24; Matthew 21:37; 22:42; John 15:22-25; Hebrews 1:1-3; I John 5:10-12.)

No person has ever been saved by keeping the Law. The only person who ever kept the Law was the Lord JESUS CHRIST (Matthew 5:17; John 17). No one except JESUS ever kept GOD's Law perfectly - and GOD's Law demands perfection. If we break the least, we are guilty of all.

The Law of GOD was not given to save people: "**Therefore, by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified**" (Romans 3:20). The Law demands a certain standard of conduct . . . a standard that must conform to GOD's righteous requirements for man; and when man oversteps these requirements he is automatically a sinner, an enemy to GOD. ALL men have overstepped the requirements of the Law.

The Law condemns man because of his inability to live up to the requirements of the Law. However, the Grace of GOD on the other hand provides and meets the needs of man. Grace provides the righteousness which GOD's righteousness requires under Law. Grace provides what Law could never have provided. The Law was weak through the flesh (Romans 8:1-3). But GOD the Father made CHRIST the Son to be sin for us (II Corinthians 5:21) in order that we in JESUS might be made the righteousness of GOD.

When we are justified by faith we are just as just as JESUS is just in the sight of GOD Almighty. We are just as pure as the Blood that covers us. We are just as righteous as the divine nature that abides within (II Peter 1:4). On the grounds and basis of the righteousness provided by the Grace of GOD, GOD sets aside man's just deserts . . . He overlooks man's demerit and ill desert as though man had never sinned.

It is not the merit of man that makes us acceptable unto GOD, but the merit of the God-Man, JESUS in flesh. Because death could not hold Him He is able to save to the uttermost all who come to GOD by Him. When we are saved we are placed in CHRIST, we become holy because He is holy (Colossians 1:27; 3:3; Galatians 2:20). The natural man is dead in sins, disobedient to the holy GOD, thereby deserving GOD's wrath. The natural man is not able to correct his ill conduct toward GOD, he is not able to do anything about his just desert from a holy GOD; therefore the natural man finds himself in darkness and despair - helpless, hopeless, and hell-bound. "**BUT GOD . . .**" in His mercy and love did something about it. GOD has wholly corrected and provided a way of escape by His mercy, His love, and His grace. GOD's mercy, GOD's love, and GOD's grace are the sole source and secret of our glorious salvation.

GOD is a "**CONSUMING FIRE**" (Hebrews 12:29), but GOD is also a GOD of LOVINGKINDNESSES AND TENDER MERCIES.

~ end of chapter 8 ~

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