

Christian Students Association Bible Study

November 4, 2020

The Producing of the Church

- 1** And you, though dead in your offenses and sins,
- 2** In which you once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit which is now operating in the sons of disobedience;
- 3** Among whom we also all conducted ourselves once in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the thoughts, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest;
- 4** But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,
- 5** Even when we were dead in offenses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)
- 6** And raised us up together with Him and seated us together with Him in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus,
- 7** That He might display in the ages to come the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
- 8** For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not of yourselves; it is the gift of God;

Note for “dead” in verse 1 – Dead refers to the deadness of our spirit, which pervaded our entire being and caused us to lose the function that enables us to contact God.

Note for “offenses” in verse 1 – Offenses are acts that overstep the limit of one’s rights. Sins are evil doings. Before we were saved, we were dead in offenses and sins. It was from this background of death that we were saved to be the church, the Body of Christ. The dead have been made alive to be a living organism to express Christ.

Note for “age” in verse 2 - This world refers to the satanic system, which is composed of many ages. Hence, the age here refers to a part, a section, an aspect, the present and modern appearance, of the system of Satan, which is used by him to usurp and occupy people and keep them away from God and His purpose. When we were dead in offenses and sins, we walked according to the age, the modern appearance, the present course, of the world, the satanic system.

Note for “spirit” in verse 2 – The spirit, in apposition to the authority of the air, refers to the aggregate power, the aggregate of all the evil angelic authorities, over which Satan is the ruler. This aggregate spirit is now operating in the sons of disobedience. When we were dead in offenses and sins, we walked not only according to the age of this world but also according to Satan, the ruler of the aerial authority, the evil spiritual power.

Note for “lusts” in verse 3 – When we were dead in offenses and sins, we conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires not only of the flesh but also of the thoughts. Three evil things — the

age of this world, which is outside of us; the ruler of the aerial authority, which is above and within us; and the lusts of our flesh in our fallen nature — dominated our lives. From these evil things we have been saved to be the Body of Christ.

Note for “mercy” in verse 4 - The object of love should be in a lovable condition, but the object of mercy is always in a pitiful situation. Hence, God’s mercy reaches farther than His love. God loves us because we are the object of His selection. But because of our fall we became pitiful, even dead in our offenses and sins; therefore, we need God’s mercy. Because of His great love, God is rich in mercy to save us out of our wretched position into a condition that is suitable for His love.

Note for “alive” in verse 5 - In comparison with the book of Romans, the book of Ephesians does not consider us sinners; it considers us dead persons. As sinners, we need God’s forgiveness and justification, as revealed in the book of Romans. But as dead persons, we need to be made alive. Forgiveness and justification bring us back to God’s presence to enjoy His grace and participate in His life, whereas being made alive causes us, the living members of the Body of Christ, to express Him. God made us alive by imparting His eternal life, which is Christ Himself (Col. 3:4), into our dead spirit through His Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2). He has enlivened us together with Christ.

Note for “saved” in verse 5 - We were saved not only as sinners but also as dead persons, and not only by Christ’s death with its redemption but also by His resurrection with its resurrection life, and even by His ascension with its transcendency. This is the transcending salvation given to the dead sinners by the incarnated, crucified, resurrected, and ascended Christ, the very embodiment of the processed Triune God. Such a salvation produces the church as the issue of the processed Divine Trinity for His expression.

Note for “together” in verse 6 - From our standpoint we have been raised up from our position of death one by one. But in God’s view we were all raised up together, just as all the Israelites were raised up together from the death waters of the Red Sea (Exo. 14).

Note for “heavenlies” in verse 6 - The heavenlies are the highest position, into which we have been saved in Christ. In the book of Romans, Christ as our righteousness brought us into a state in which we are acceptable to God. In the book of Ephesians, Christ as our life has saved us into a position in which we are above all God’s enemies. Here in the heavenly atmosphere, with a heavenly nature and a heavenly characteristic, we are a heavenly people.

Discussion Questions

- What was our condition before God before we were saved?
- How does God save us from our wretched condition?
- What is the result (or outcome) of being saved by God?