

To the Saints at Kossuth Street . . . Be a Remembering Community!

Ephesians 2:4-10

November 21, 2010

Intro. What is the opposite of remembering? Is it always forgetting? Isn't it more often distraction with other things, getting caught up with other interests that force the object to be remembered to the back of the long line of matters clamoring for our affection and attention?

Jesus' simple command of 'do this in remembrance of me' is a call to clear our heads from the interests that have distracted us from him and direct our hearts back to rich and living communion with him. This certainly involves confession of sin, repentance toward God and others, feeding on the truths of the cross and expressing fresh gratitude for Jesus effective death on our behalf. In doing this, our remembering becomes preaching as we explain and illustrate the transformational power of the death of Jesus Christ through our lives and the symbols of his death and shed blood.

We choose to remember Christ against the current of distractions and sins. We have found in our study of Ephesians 2 that one of the obstacles that we often confront is a discrepancy between our perception of God saving a person and the description of God saving a person in these verses of scripture. Whether it is the description of our condition before God saved us, or the extent of God's kindness in why he saved us or the nature of the work God did in us when he saved us, it seems that our memory falls short and needs to be renewed on these truths. Jesus knew that we needed to remember and do so accurately and often.

World magazine in June, 2005 published a column by Gene Veith that helps us understand what forgetting has come to look like in our church culture. Veith refers to research published by the National Study of Youth and Religion at the University of North Carolina that focuses on the religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers. The authors of this study coined a phrase to describe the prevailing beliefs of American Christianity as reflected in the thinking of over 3,000 teenagers, as Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. My understanding of these terms is . . .

Moralistic . . . not only is being good necessary to be a Christian, it is easy to be good if you know what is right and will try really hard.

Therapeutic . . . feeling good about yourself and keeping your self-respect are core values as our self-help, 3 steps to success platitudes squeeze Christ and the cross out to the periphery.

Deism . . . God is typically distant and non-interfering but ready to respond when needed has replaced the truth of his active direction and sustaining of all things.

Veith concludes his article . . .

Christianity is about grace, not moralism; changing lives, not making people feel better about themselves; the God made flesh, not an uninvolved deity.

It is any understanding of a saving faith in Christ that promotes anything other than Christ that we must go to war against as parents, teachers, church leaders, small group leaders and followers of Christ. We wage war for the gospel of grace by remembering accurately and often. MTD has, as Veith and these researchers write, 'become the dominant civil religion and it is colonizing American Christianity.' The gospel of Christ, grace and transformational power has been morphed into seemingly Christian MTD.

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

Remember what you were before God saved you . . . Facing the truth about yourself . . .

2:1-3

1. You were dead toward God. 2:1
2. You were enslaved to compelling forces. 2:2-3
3. You were condemned by God. 2:3

Remember why God saved you. 2:4-7

What prompted or motivated God to save you? God saved you in order to display his enormous kindness . . . in a sense to show off. Terms piled up in 2:4-7 that explain why God saved you. . .

- He is rich in mercy 4 an expression of love and generosity where none is expected.
- His love is great 4 God gives of himself for your benefit.
- His grace is immeasurable 7 God's goodness toward those who deserve punishment
- He is kind 7 Kindness is a summary term for God's graciousness to sinners

God saved you to display/make known his extravagant, extraordinary love and grace.

Remember what happened when God saved you. 2:4-7

What took place inside you when God saved you? God united you to Christ so that all the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection have become yours.

- You were made alive together with Christ. 2:5

What was dead has now been made alive.
A profound transformation –you are alive to God just as Jesus is.
New disposition; not new faculties/members. Rom.6:1-14
Col. 2:13
Hearing illus . . . dead nerve endings God's words, Spirit, Son, prayer

- You were raised up together with Christ. 2:6

What was enslaved to world, devil and self has been released to new values/environment.
A powerful ascension/breakthrough to new realities . . . outside of self, pleasure, evil
Newness of life of Romans 6:4

Set free to a living hope . . . 1Peter 1:3 Col.3:1 . . . set your mind on things above

- You were seated with Christ in heavenly places. 2:6

What was condemned is now seated in a place of intimacy with God through Christ.
Cmp E 1:20-23 A powerful transformation from wrath to intimacy.

Born again – born from above . . . John 3:7; 6:34,44

Remember how God saved you.

2:8-10

Note that verse 8 moves the reader's attention to the nature of how God saves you. What are the means that God uses to save a person? Salvation by God from death, enslavement and condemnation is always and only appropriated to a person in the way described in these verses.

- God saved you by grace. 2:5, 8

'by grace' is amplified in verses 8-9 by two supporting/defining truths:

- 1) Your salvation's origin, source and cause are from God. 8b

Not from yourself, it is the gift of God not human initiative
Romans 3:24 5:15-17 6:23

- 2) Your salvation is not performance based. 9

Works – human effort in general; self confidence, religious commitment, self trust
'so that' – divine intent . . . to exclude all human boasting . . . what you talk
about, express confidence in is indicator.
Not a reward for good deeds

- God saved you through faith. 2:8

'through faith' is the human response by which salvation is received. Phil.3:9

Common Misunderstandings of saving faith . . .

- 1) subjective feeling
- 2) strong desire
- 3) positive attitude

3 components of saving faith . . .

- 1) Knowledge knowledge/understanding of facts/truth
- 2) Assent belief that facts are indeed true, this stuff really happened
- 3) Trust commitment of life, repenting & casting yourself on Christ

- God saved you on purpose. 2:10

A saved person is God's workmanship . . . 'what is made.' The assurance of a saved person is the fruit displayed of the new life God gives through union with Christ Jesus. Cmp. 2Cor. 5:17

A saved person is a piece of God's work who produces 'good works' from the transformed heart that God gives when he creates the new person in Christ Jesus.

Remember what you were before God saved you. 2:1-3

Remember why God saved you. 2:4-7

Remember what happened when God saved you. 2:4-7

Remember how God saved you. 2:8-10

Ways to remember . . .

1. Review and rehearse the facts of God saving you.
2. Acknowledge and clear your head of distracting self promotion regarding your salvation.
3. Thank God for saving you.
4. Turn from your sin and cry out to God today to save you in Christ.

Study Questions

1. Read Ephesians 2:1-10 together. These verses seem to break down into three sections of 1-3, 4-7, and 8-10. Come up with a title or descriptive phrase for the content of each section.
2. Review, from memory if possible, the 4 things to remember and the descriptive points from our study of Eph. 2:1-10.
3. Share with the group your personal story of how God saved you. Try to reflect the truth of Eph.2:1-10 in your life experience as you shape your story.
4. What do you think about MTD (see intro)? What's the difference between being saved by God and MTD? How do you, parents and church teachers drift into MTD without realizing it?
5. What does 'saved by grace' mean? Express the supporting truths of verses 8-9 in a way that helps the group understand 'saved by grace' better.
6. Explain saving faith without using the words 'believe' or 'faith.' If faith is a gift from God, is it possible for a person to genuinely believe and not be born again? Review Phil. 3:9 and Rom. 4:20-25 for help.
7. What do you want to do, use or remember from this study?
8. Ask your group to pray for you as you attempt to talk about/remember your salvation with someone this week. Pray that you will be able to remember it with new insight and energy from God.