

Union United Methodist Church

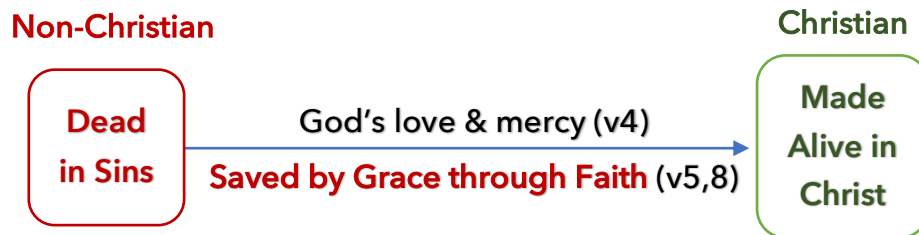
Sermon Outline: **Victorious Living in Christ 7: Receiving Grace By Faith**

November 13th, 2022. Pastor Michael Larbi

Readings: **Ephesians 2:1-10; Mark 4:2-20**

1. From Death to Life in Christ: Ephesians 2:1-10

The diagram below shows our state before we become Christians, and what we are now, after inviting Christ into our hearts and committing ourselves to the Lord. Before becoming Christians, we were “dead in sins.” Ephesians 2:1-3 explains what that means, as shown in the left side of the diagram. After becoming a Christian, a person is “made alive in Christ.” This is also explained in Ephesians 2 and depicted in the right side of the diagram.



- Following the ways of the world
 - Following the spirit which is at work among those living in disobedience to God (“the ruler of the kingdom of the air” - the devil)
 - Following the desires/cravings of our “flesh and senses”
 - By nature, “children of wrath” - deserving God’s anger and judgement
- Raised up with Christ
 - Seated with Christ in the heavenly places
 - God’s handiwork Created in Christ Jesus to do good works, prepared in advance us by God
 - Immeasurable riches of grace to come in Christ
 - Dead to sin; Sin is not to have dominion over us (no longer our master) - Romans 6:14

A person who is made alive in Christ does not follow the devil, the ways of the world, nor is the person controlled by the desires of the human body and senses.

2. Saved by Grace, Live by Grace; Saved through Faith, Live by Faith.

When we believe in and accept Christ into our lives, we are accepting God's love and mercy. In addition, we receive grace. This grace makes us alive in Christ and is the power that helps us to overcome what we could not before.

- **Means of Grace**¹

John Wesley explained that God has given us channels (means) through which we can receive grace, and grow in grace.² These include:

1. The sacraments - baptism, holy communion, etc.
2. The scriptures
3. Prayer
4. Fellowship with other believers

- **Great Importance of Faith**

Believing in Christ brings grace for our salvation. That is what Paul explains as:

"By grace you have been saved through faith"

We receive grace for our salvation through our faith. In the same way we receive grace for staying alive in Christ through faith.

God's grace is abundantly available. But the only way to receive it is through our faith. Therefore, faith is the critically important thing that we must cultivate and grow. With faith we can obtain the grace we need in any situation. Thus, as the scripture says,

"My righteous one will live by faith" Hebrews 10:38 NRSV

¹ John Wesley, sermon titled "The Means of Grace"

² Ibid

Without faith, we pretty much cannot function well as Christians. For instance, without faith

- We cannot be saved (Ephesians 2:8)
- We cannot live victoriously as Christians (Hebrews 11:32-35)
- We cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6)
- We cannot get our prayers answered (James 1:5-8)
- We cannot continue to receive the grace we need through the means of grace - grace is received by faith (Ephesians 2:8)

The Christian life is a life of walking by faith. It involves spiritual warfare which we can only win with grace obtained from the Lord, using the weapons God has given us.

- **The "Good Fight" of Faith**

We are constantly engaged in a spiritual battle, whether we are aware of it or not. There are forces endeavoring to pull us away from God, and God makes grace available for us to overcome them and live for God in Christ. Through our faith in God, we win this fight - it is called the "good fight of faith":

"Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses."
1 Timothy 6:12

3. Winning the Fight of Faith:

Lessons from the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4)

Jesus described the parable of the Sower as a fundamental parable that we must grasp. He asked his first disciples:

"Do you not understand this parable?"

Then how will you understand all the parables?" Mark 4:13 NRSV

- **The Seed is the Word**

So, what did the Sower sow?

"The sower sows the word" Mark 4:14

The Word of God is really important - it has power to transform. Like seed, if nurtured and watered in us, it will grow and bear fruit.

- **We are the ground**

Anyone who hears God's word is like the ground on which seed is sown. Not every ground is well prepared to bear fruit. One can hear God's powerful word of promise and covenant and still receive little or no grace.

- **Losers and Winners: 4 Types of Ground**

1. **Losers: Stony Ground**

15 These are the ones on the path where the word is sown: **when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them.**

These may be people who are cynical, unbelieving, or distracted.

Result: no fruit

2. **Losers: Rocky Ground**

16And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: **when they hear the word, they immediately receive it with joy. 17But they have no root, and endure only for a while; then, when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away**

Result: no fruit

3. **Losers: Thorny Ground**

18And others are those sown among the thorns: these are **the ones who hear the word, 19but the cares of the world, and the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things come in and choke the word, and it yields nothing.**

Result: no fruit

4. Winners: Good Soil

20And these are the ones sown on **the good soil: they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.**"

How do we become good soil? **HEAR, ACCEPT, PRODUCE (bear fruit).**
"Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves." James 1:22 NRSV

Example: **Abraham and Sarah** (Genesis 17, 18, 21:1-7)

Hear once? NO!

- **Feeding on God's Word & Continuing in the Word of God**
"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
Romans 10:17 NKJV

31Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him,
"If you continue in my word,
you are truly my disciples;
and you will know the truth,
and the truth will make you free."

John 8:31-32 NRSV

- **Through Meditation on God's Word**
"This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful." Joshua 1:8 NRSV

Through meditation on God's word, we change our thinking and become transformed, and successfully resist the world's influence:

2Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:2 NIV