



TIME OF GRACE®

Churchy Words Explained (and Why You Should Care): Saved

Study Notes

Summary

Few words get as much Christian press as *save*, *saved*, and *Savior*. But what does *saved* mean? Who is saved by whom and from what and for what? This message gives a robust definition to one of the Bible's most important words, triggering praises from every person who has truly been saved.

- **Ephesians 2:1-7:** ¹ As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.
- Saved = _____ from _____.

Points to Ponder

1. How does doing life together with other Christians help you fight the devil, the world, and your own sinful flesh? Think concretely about the temptations you face and how fellow believers help you remain faithful to God.
2. Read the origin story of the Ephesians in Acts 19:1-41. What connections do you see between this chapter and Paul's famous words from Ephesians chapter 2?
3. When it comes to giving (either financial giving or volunteering), how would you compare "the ways of this world" with the ways of God's word? List at least three differences.

4. Meditate on Ephesians 2:3-5, specifically thinking of a friend who does not yet believe in Jesus. What do these verses lead you to pray for? What do they lead you to do?

Homework for Next Week

Read Ephesians 2:8-10.

Time of Grace Ministry
Churchy Words Explained (and Why You Should Care): Saved
Ephesians 2:1-7
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Pastor Mike Novotny

There is a Bible right next to my laptop in my office. I got it back in 2003, just before I said I do and got married. And if you can somehow page through this Bible after church, you would find some pages that look, you know, not brand new but pretty new. Like maybe I have read them three or four times but not too many. Like bunch of the stuff in Leviticus maybe I have read it but have not spent that much time in it. And then there is other pages like in the book of Romans or in John 3. You could tell that they are pretty worn and crinkled. I have turned there for counseling sessions and Bible classes.

Then somehow if someone stole your Bible and they were going to throw it into the fire and you could grab only one page and rip it before the tragedy happened you might choose this one. But actually, before I open that I want to warn you. This page in the Bible is not like one of those kids ride at a local amusement park. You have the little lady bugs that kind of go like this up and down. Little two-year-olds get in and giggle. This is not that kind of part of the Bible.

In this part of the Bible the Apostle Paul is going to give us a good square punch right in the throat. And as we are gasping and maybe doubled over, he is going to elbow us in the back of the head. And when you collapse to the ground, he is going to look at you and just kick you once in the small of the back and you are going to wince in pain. You are going to kind of hate it a little bit. You are going to say well this is depressing. And why am I watching this. And why did I come to church today? And then just when you think it is worthless, the Apostle Paul is going to lean over, give you a hand, help you up, give you a hug. And then he is going to strap this rocket pack to your back and he is going to push the green button. And he is going to launch you off into the most amazing, life changing mission; that is so incredible. You will say, I am so glad I am in church today. I am so glad I am watching this at home. It is going to be that kind of journey. So, you up for that? Well you are here, so it is going to happen.

So here ladies and gentlemen is one of the best chapters in the Bible. It is called Ephesians 2. And here is how it begins. The Apostle Paul says, "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient."

Almost every Saturday night in our house our family cooks dinner together. We pick a favorite movie, we pile up like cave people on the couch downstairs and we watch something fun. But recently my wife and I decided we really need to introduce our daughters who are almost 12 and 13 to some of the classics of American cinema. Tommy Boy, Anchorman, Billy Madison, Happy

-- you know the stuff that we grew up with in the 80s and 90s. The stuff we could quote in our sleep that we watched constantly when we were in high school. And so we keep picking these movies saying the girls are going to love this. Mom and dad can quote every line from this. But something keeps happening when we watch those movies from back in the day. Parents, has this ever happened to you? It is like I am sitting here and Kim is sitting there and the girls are slouched down in between us and there are times during the movies when I look over at Kim and the expression on my face says, are we bad parents? You know what I am talking about? It is like oh, I did not remember that part. And oh, I forgot about that language. You know maybe some of it we get it that there are swear words that we forget about. The sexual innuendos that just went over your head when you were 13.

Actually, what really, really, really bothered me about those movies from the 80s, is the way that things used to be. I think what has really struck me about it is the way that we used to speak both to and about women. This is not like the seventh century A.D. This was my childhood. And the way that we just assumed that you could speak about women I can guarantee you Hollywood would not make a movie like that today. But I tell you what, when I was a kid no one said... [gasp] It is just the way that things were. You know people made fun of a woman's intelligence or strength or abilities or ability to drive a car, all kinds of things. We would say things and do things. And it was not like abnormally wrong. It was just kind of the way the world was. And now looking back we say wow. For some of you did that ever happen with your grandparents and race? Like it was not that long ago that the things we would say about people from other nations, other cultures for whom English was not their first language, it was rough. It was really bad.

But lots of people who are doing such obviously racist things they did not think it was that bad in the moment it was just the way things were. And that is what Paul is saying. You know it is not like you have to be a serial killer. It is not like you have to be Hitler. He said, friends you were dead in sin because you followed the ways of the world. God wanted you to live like this, but they were living like that. And when you followed them, you ended up in a spot that was very, very, very far from God.

Last night I went out to dinner at a Thai restaurant. And I wonder if I saw a little bit of the ways of this world. Apparently, the kitchen was very short staffed. The food was simply incredible but it took two hours for our entree to come out. Three or four years ago my wife and I got to go to Thailand and we learned in Thailand that there is one thing you never ever, ever, ever, ever, ever do. You never embarrass someone in public. To the Thai people to yell at someone in public where others can hear is so shameful, it is wrong, it is simply so evil that they call Thailand the land of smiles. Because even if you are super frustrated you would never say it. But in America... You know what happened in the restaurant as 30 minutes turned into 60, 60 turned in 90 and 90 turned into 120? The white people got angry. "I need to speak to you!" One gentleman said so the whole restaurant could hear. And the waitress sheepishly took his venom, right, because it is America. We have rights, we have expectations. We can say what we want. We do not have to stuff this down.

I am sitting there honestly struggling myself. I am repeating Bible passages in my head, love is patient, love is patient, love is patient, love is patient. I got up at one point. My wife thought I was going to go at it. I just went to the bathroom and said love is patient, love is patient. You are a pastor. And you know I think about that. Every culture, right, there is just a way that things are. And I just wondered what things are in this culture that can take us step by step far away from God. But that is just the punch to the throat. Now Paul drops the elbow on the head. Here is what he says in verse 3. He says, "All of us also lived among them at one time gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts."

If you are kind of new to the Bible this is stunning. The Ephesian people lived in a city where sexual immorality was rampant. The goddess of Ephesus was a Greek goddess named Artemis. She was the fertility goddess and so prostitution, orgies, adultery, drunkenness. That is just kind of how things were in Greek cities. But then Paul says you know what, I was in the same spot as you were. He says all of us also lived among them at one time. And Paul was a pretty squeaky clean, church going, praying every day, never miss a service, reading his Old Testament kind of guy. So when he says, yeah me and my people, we were dead too. You say wait, really? And Paul explains himself. He talks about the flesh.

It is kind of a fancy Bible word that refers to that thing within you that does not always agree with God. I bet you fought your flesh as often as I fought mine. If it is a little kid you say, be nice. Share your toys with your brother. But I had them first. But it is my turn. But I. But I. Or you open that page in the Bible that says, children obey your parents. Honor your father and mother. Do not roll your eyes. Do not talk back. Do not frustrate them with everything you do. Do not dig in your heels. But I. But I do not like curfew. But I do not like the chores. But I do not like the rules. But I.

And God says on the second page of the Bible, a man shall leave his father and mother, be united to his wife and then the two will become one flesh. Sex was God's idea. But it is a gift that is only given to one man and one woman who have made the commitment of marriage. But I do not agree with that. But I think we are in love. But I think marriage is just a piece of paper. But I have desires. But I have needs. But I have cravings. But I.

Ephesians 4 says, "Let no unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful for building others up. That it may benefit those who listen." But I have been waiting an hour and a half for my Pad Thai. But I do not like the government. But I did not vote for him. But I do not agree with that. It is like God says all this stuff and something within us just fights it. And we do not agree with it. And Paul says I get it. But that will kill you. And that is why he kicks us. At the end of verse 3 Paul says this, "Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath."

Friends, left to ourselves, you and I would be in so much trouble. And you can spend your whole life pushing back on that. But that is just the church, right? That is just some overreaction. That is just fire and brimstone, pounding the pulpit, hell talk. You can think that. But Paul was very close to God and he knew the truth and Jesus said the exact same thing. By nature we were deserving of God's wrath. But thank God for grammar.

Just a quick survey how many of you when you were in school, loved, loved, loved English grammar class? I got one. I got one and half. Alright that is better than the last survey. You actually should adore grammar right now. Look at the passage behind me for a second. Anyone notice the verb that Paul used? He said "were." He did not say you and I are deserving of wrath. And back at the start of Ephesians 2, he did not say my friends you are dead in transgressions and sins. Instead he said, were. You were. This was your situation in the past. This is where you were. But then something happened. Then this happened.

There are two words that my family loves. Two words that we love so much we actually found this piece of art that hangs in my mother-in-law's home. Back in 2017 my wife's father was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. And the doctor said he had six, probably 12 maybe if he was blessed, 18 months left to live. And it turns out he got 17 days. After he passed, I got to stand in our North campus church and preach a sermon to my grieving mother-in-law. To my grieving wife. And I decided for the theme of that sermon to be just two words. They were two words that I was speaking from the Bible the moment that Wayne passed from this life to the next. Those two words were not "but they," that is what the world says. And they were not "but I," that is what the flesh says. Those two words were "but God." But God.

And that is exactly what Paul says in Ephesians 2. We were dead, we were deserving of wrath. We had a problem and you and I could not fix it. But God. Check out what Paul says starting in verse 4, he says but God. "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus." God looked at the Ephesians with all their brokenness, their sexual sin. He looked at Paul with all of his pride and struggles with the flesh, but God loved and did something to change his situation. He was dead but God made him alive. Like you should have been over here while glorious God was over here. And Jesus did this. And Paul should have been dead and in the grave. And God should have been in heaven but he raised them up and did this. And Jesus should have been here celebrating with saints and angels. And Paul should have been seated way over here in a dark corner, but God did this.

And the death, and the distance, and the loneliness, hopelessness he changed all of it. Man, I get why someone would write hundreds of pages about these words but here is my favorite line, God seated us with Jesus. You ever had a seat right next to someone whose very, very interesting. As a pastor I get to go to a lot of weddings. And sometimes I know a lot of people at the weddings, but it is pretty common where I only know like the couple from church and their family members and friends and college roommates, I have no clue. So, it is kind of difficult for the couple to know where to put me and my wife at a wedding. Sometimes I have sat like next to the parents at a place of honor. He is the pastor should we put him there? I do not know, let us put him there. And sometimes they put me at the random table. Ever had to sit at the random table at a wedding? It is like who do they fit with? The second cousins? I do not know like my mom's friends? It is like table 37 in the corner, they always forget to refill the fried chicken. It is like way back.

But do you catch what Paul said in Ephesians 2? Because God is so great in his love and so rich in his mercy. He seated us with Jesus. You know where Jesus sits at the wedding feast of heaven? At the head table. You know who sits with him? His bride. Christians are sometimes called the bride of Christ. And I have been to a lot of weddings and here is what I know, the bride always gets as much fried chicken as she wants. She gets the best food. The warmest food. The special champagne. When you are sitting in a place that important you are so, so blessed and that is what Paul's saying about us.

If we believe in Jesus, we are not dead. We are not deserving of wrath. We were, but that is not what we are. We get to live every single day knowing that God is right here. But Jesus is in my midst. But I have a purpose. I am loved. God feels for my situation and he is going to help get me through it. But God. The world would say but they. The flesh, but I. And Paul says here is the Christian faith, but God. But God. There is a word for all of this. The word is saved. If we were in a very dangerous situation. If we would have died without believing in Jesus, wrath would have been it. But God. He rescued us from all of it.

So, if you are taking notes in your program today. If you are taking notes at home, I would love for you to write this down. The word saved in the Bible simply means this, rescued from danger. Rescued from danger. The thought of having died without Jesus is terrifying. But he saved us. And if that is new news to you. If you would say hey when I turn this program on TV, if I found this online, if I came here to church. I do not know if I exactly believe that it is not too late for you to be saved. Believe in the only name that can save you. The one who came down from heaven. Whose love is like a mighty flood. You do not have to work for it. You do not have to earn it. You do not have to deserve it. It is a free gift by grace. You can be saved.

Just like me, just like Paul, just like them. Makes me think of what happened down in Chile about a decade ago. Any of you remember the story? There were 33 miners who were working underground when at a very tragic and dangerous moment the mine collapsed, and they were stuck. And they were fairly strong men, fairly capable men but there was a half mile between them and the light. Between them and love. Between them and their family. They could do nothing to fix their situation. They estimated that they had between two and three days worth of full meals in reserves.

But 68 days later they were still stuck in the darkness. But then on day 69, saved. It took the Chilean government, NASA, and 20 million dollars of donations to create a device that they called the Phoenix. Remember the bird that dies and comes back to life? The drill went all the way down a half mile into the earth. A little capsule came down. A single door opened and if a man stepped inside that capsule he would be raised from the darkness into the light.

And one by one by one, men who were in grave danger were rescued. They were saved. And then you did not have to be there, you can just Google the images. And feel the emotion of that moment. A picture like this, one guy got out. And total strangers embraced him and loved him. One man saw his wife for the first time in over two months and he held on to her like he was never going to let her go. One grandpa got down on one knee, as his grandkids came running towards him. Saved.

But something even more interesting happened four months after that. The Israeli ministry of tourism offered all 33 men a free all-expense paid trip to Israel. A bunch of them went. And they toured the place where Jesus was born, where he lived. And then they got to the spot where he died and where he rose. And I wonder what they felt? Like as men who knew what it was like to be so close to the unthinkable but then in a day, saved.

It is probably what the early Christians felt. When Jesus was dead and gone. Buried in a dark tomb and then on a single Sunday, saved. That is probably what people like us feel. When we bring another load of the flesh, another load of sins into church. And we look up at the cross and we realize, I am not dead, I am not gone. I sinned, I messed up, I strayed, but God. But God saves. Thank God for that.

Let us pray.

God, we love you. But you love us more. We love you but you loved us first. You are worthy of our love and we are not worthy of yours. But God you do not let that stop you.

Thank you, heavenly Father, for being yourself. There is no one else in the universe who is like you. Years ago, when the children in Israel were stuck, you turned the Red Sea into a highway, and they were saved. 2,000 years ago, when the disciples were lost and desperate, you changed that grave into an empty tomb and they were saved. And every one of us who believes in the name of Jesus we turn from death to life. We are blind but now we see. We were in such danger but no more. We are saved.

And I pray God for everyone here who has not believed that just yet. If you are dead in sin, you cannot fix your own situation, so save them Father with the gift of faith. And for all of us who believe by your grace and through faith, I ask heavenly Father that you will help us to hold on to that. To believe that we are not what we were.

We may still struggle with this world and with our flesh. We have a brand-new identity. We are yours and we get to do life with Jesus. What a gift that is. So, open our eyes to see that. Open our heart to feel that. That we might truly rejoice in his beautifully loaded word, saved.

I thank you God for Ephesians 2. You could have skipped that when you inspired the Bible but you did not. And we are so grateful for it. We praise you today. And we pray all these things in Jesus' name. And all God's people said, Amen.