

] Having No Hope [

Ephesians 2:8 - 13

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~ Our Spiritual Safari experienced the past, present, and the future — all come together in one Scriptural place in our last report concerning the life of a believer. We were dead in trespasses and sins, walking according to the ways of the world. Then, by God's unexplainable and infinite grace, He reached down and saved us, and gave us a wonderful future; a future where we will be on display eternally, revealing His mercy and holiness through us. That doesn't mean we're going to exude our own goodness by being nice and sweet little Sunday school boys and girls; but, rather, we will be part of exhibit number one for the glory of God. The only way we're going to be there, though, is because of the grace provided for us by Christ on the cross....

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

~ Many Christians are making one of three major mistakes today. One is that they want to do something for their salvation. That manifests itself in myriad ways that range from going to church to exercising what they think are sign gifts, or repentance; huge mistakes when associating them with salvation, or as the evidence of salvation. Some people tell me that speaking in tongues is the evidence of the Holy Spirit in them; well, maybe it's a good thing they do speak in tongues then — because, if they didn't, no one would ever know they were saved. Their lives and mouth don't reveal Christ. No, friends, the real evidence of our salvation is a *holy life* that glorifies God, edifies the church, changes our hearts, and actually helps and leads people to salvation. External selfish practices factor into neither salvation nor the evidence of our salvation in any way, shape or form.

The second common mistake a Christian makes is asking people if they are saved; to which the typical reply is, "*I hope so.*" Well, can you say today, "*I AM saved?*" Believe it or not, many people *won't* say they are definitively saved; because they are unsure of their future. The sin question is not

settled in their lives. If that theology is left unchecked, these people turn into the sinless perfection crowd. They either label sin “mistakes,” or they insist there is no sin in their lives at all. That’s where apostasy is conceived.

Third, there are those who are sure they are saved, but they never seem to be quite sure about me! The judgmental Christian is the most dangerous, meanest, nastiest, and unloving person there is in the world — or in the church. They are forever reminding everyone of what sin is; and they are always happy to point out *your* shortcomings to you — but they never refer to themselves as a sinner saved by grace. Our salvation is not based on what we do or don’t do; it’s based on what God did for us. We just read that in verse eight. God has saved us by grace — period — and we can be confident of that.

God said He will perform the good work He started in us until the day of Jesus Christ. So, if you can lose your salvation, then God must have just never begun a good work in you. I understand many of God’s children wander *VERY* far away from home; but God always has a plan — and a way home — a way is made for you to get back in His direct will. If the Prodigal Son had died in the pig-pen, he would still have been a son — he never turned into a pig. If you have trusted Christ as your Savior, then you have been saved; and you have a finished salvation — and it is all on the basis of one thing and one thing only: what Christ has done for you — period. That’s not a “*hope so*” salvation, or an “*I’ll try harder to do good*” salvation — no, it’s a salvation that can say, “*by grace I have been saved.*” ~

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

~ The most widely accepted theological definition of grace is “*unmerited favor*,” but our safari definition of grace will always be “*love in action!*” Dr. Louis Sperry Chafer once said, and I am paraphrasing somewhat “.... *a sharp distinction is properly drawn between the compassionate love of God for sinners and His grace, which is now offered to them in the Lord Jesus Christ. Divine love and divine grace are not one and the same. God may love sinners and have unutterable compassion for them; and, yet, because of the demands of outraged divine justice and holiness, God may be unable to rescue them from a righteous doom. However, as has been before stated, if*

love should graciously provide for the sinner, all that holiness, justice and righteousness could ever demand, the love of God would then be free to act without restraint on behalf of those for whom the perfect substitutionary sacrifice on the cross was made. That's what Christ did for us when He died on the cross! On the other hand, divine grace and salvation is the unrestrained compassion of God acting towards sinners on the basis of that freedom that has already been secured through righteous judgment against sin; secured by Christ in His sacrificial death! Divine love may desire to save yet be unable righteously to do so; but divine grace is free to act because Christ has paid the penalty for our sins. It is to be observed that the eternal purpose of God is not the manifestation of His love alone, although His love and mercy are just as His grace when mentioned in this context, but is expressed in Christ's death as a manifestation of His grace." I have never seen it written any better than that!

Naturally, faith is the instrumental cause of salvation, and the only element a sinner brings to the great transaction of salvation; however, even faith is a gift of God. This may very well overload the mind of some; but it will cause some others to say, "*.... well, God hasn't given me that gift, so I am not to blame.*" Well, that's where you're exactly wrong, my friend. God has made it abundantly clear that faith cometh be hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. If you want to trust Christ, you're going to have to make a sincere attempt to understand the Word of God. God will give faith to all who diligently seek Him, and who take heed to the Gospel message found only in Holy Writ; and even that does not negate that this is purely God's free gift to us. Is that difficult and harsh? – Perhaps; but it is certainly legitimate and sincere. It's a great comfort to me.

2 Corinthians 3: 12 *Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: 13 And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: 14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ. 15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. 16 Nevertheless when the heart shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away ~*

Most people think the veil was placed on Moses face because he was blinding the children of Israel like a deer in the headlights. Oh, no, my friends, that's not it. The veil was placed on Moses because the glory of God was *fading away*. The Mosaic System of Law was already diminishing in dispensation before Moses even came down from Mount Sinai! Today, we can behold the unveiled Christ Jesus and the Gospel can be declared. It's a matter of the heart – plain and simple. Anytime you are ready to turn to Jesus, you can.

The atheist says, “.... *I cannot believe because I have no evidence and I have not been given the gift of faith.*” They also say, “.... *what about the talking snake and Jonah and floating iron?*” My atheistic friend, you do not have an intellectual problem; because you aren't smart enough to have an intellectual problem in the first place. You have moral problems – very *real* moral problems. Your problem is sin in your life that the Word of God condemns, but you refuse to acknowledge. You cannot face up to that fact of truth. It's that simple; and, yet, just that complicated.

When we decide to turn away from ourself, from our empty and meaningless religion, and from the darkness of the things of the world, then God is ready to remove our chains and give us faith by sight. Failure to be brought into the light causes '*emotional instability.*' Instead of living in the present, and thinking of the future, they live completely in the past, preoccupied with personal failures and regrets; and the only possible outlook is in and of themselves. That's when the realization of this still, small voice will set in to a reasonable, thinking mind, and come to terms with being doomed on our own volition. Try looking to Christ today, and be saved, my beloved readers....

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them on this earth to bring glory to His Name.

11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

~ So, our Spiritual Safari ends this leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God with the method of construction for the temple. The church at Ephesus was comprised mainly of Gentiles believers. There was a colony of Jews, but they were certainly the smallest minority. Those who “*have no hope*” in verse twelve speak of the lost. To be lost means alienated from the nation Israel; but we have no right reaching back willy-nilly into the Old Testament, presumptuously grabbing promises God made to the children of Israel, and claiming them as our own, either. God didn’t make those promises to you and me in any way, shape or form. Verse twelve makes that more than crystal clear.

If you travel to Israel, and stake a homestead claim on a piece of property based on Old Testament Scripture, then you’re going to get a big surprise. God promised Israel that land — not you; and they will receive it again some day — but not today — because they will only ever get it on God’s terms — not their terms, which defines their present-day occupation of the land. Israel does *not* worship the True and Living God, the Lord Jesus Christ, as their Messiah today — they worship science and education. As a result, they cannot have peace and safety.

Today, Jesus has told us that He has gone to prepare a place for us. That place is in Heaven. He is going to return and receive us unto Himself. We either believe that, or we have no hope. The religions of the world have no hope whatsoever; even the Moslem’s concept of ‘*heaven*’ in their holy book is exceedingly vague and hazy concerning after-death. There’s no resurrection, and there are no promises outside of “*lunch with the prophet*” and some undetermined concept of interaction with some amount of “*virgins;*” both of which require *a body* in the first place!

No, my friends – Islamism doesn’t work to bring hope to any honest and sincere human being. Further, there is no other religion that offers salvation from sins on *any* level. That’s hopelessness; and that was the pagan and heathen position of most of the Gentiles in Ephesus when Paul

wrote this epistle. All of that is what it means to be lost; and billions of people are wandering around the topside of this dying world as I write this report and as you read it in that condition. Even though some of them think they are saved, they have absolutely no hope. Frankly, if I were in their place, I would do many of the things they do; that is, I would try to suck every drop of juice from this lemon of life I could drain. There won't be anything hopeful for them after physical death — might as well get it now. It's going to be the blackness of darkness forever for them. Naturally, they say it all ends for us, too — so we should want to get it all now, too. Well, the Bible has been so frighteningly accurate in my life, that I would be a fool not to trust God with my eternity; and Scripture contradicts them. God says love not the things of the world. Let's try to get some hope to this lost and dying world by sharing the message of salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ in sound doctrine with them....

13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ ~

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