

But God! - Ephesians 2:1-9 – February 4th, 2018

- I've titled today's teaching, "But God!"
- This because, those two words change everything and even everyone, which is what the Apostle Paul is saying here in our text.
- We see this replete throughout scripture in both the Old and New Testament, and such is the case with the church in Ephesus.

- Notice in verses one through three where Paul reminds them of what they were and how they lived before their lives in Christ.
- Specifically, that of being dead in transgressions and sins following the ways of the world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air.
- All of us lived this way gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following it's desires, which by nature are deserving of His wrath.

- But God! Paul in verses 4-7 says, but God, because of His great love for us; and being rich in mercy, made us alive in Christ.
- So much so, God raises us up with Christ seating us with Him in heaven, to show His incomparable riches, grace and kindness.
- It's what he says next in verse eight and nine, which are well known and for good reason that we need to look at and talk about.

- Namely, that it is by grace that we have been saved, through faith, and that it's not from our selves, rather, it's the gift of God.
- One of the reasons is there's no way anyone could boast about having anything to do with that which only God can, and has.
- Actually, this is where I'm going with this such that if God does it this way for salvation then He must also do it for sanctification.

- If you'll kindly permit me to, I'd like to explain this for the remainder of our time together here in this Epistle to the Ephesians.
- In order to do that, I think it would be good to preface this with the presupposition that we fully understand salvation by grace.
- The reason I mention this is because, grace by its very definition completely eliminates any possibility of any merit on our part.

- It's of vital importance that we fully embrace God's grace in this way because absent this understanding the foundation is faulty.
- Perhaps better said, no fruit can come where no root has been established. Perhaps even better said, good root = good fruit.
- Conversely, bad root=bad fruit and certainly this is true when it comes to a fruitful Christian life that has its base in God's grace.

- I would submit that there can't be anything in your life, that God's grace is not sufficient and adequate for in getting you through.
- The diagnosis and prognosis doesn't look good. But God is good! My marriage is really bad. But God is good and brings good.
- I'm suffering in this extremely difficult trial and do not know how I can go on any longer. But God's grace is sufficient for you.

2 Corinthians 12:8-10 - 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

- While I am keenly aware that being strong in weakness is a paradox of paradoxes, the fact remains that it's how grace works.
- In other words, in order for God's grace to sufficiently work, I have to come to the end of myself realizing I can't make it work.
- This is what one has called the "Three Step Program;" step 1, realize I can't, step two, know that God can, step three, "let Him!"

- One of my favorite examples of this in scripture is the account of what God did for Gideon defeating the army of the Midianites.
- If there was ever a man with a "But God" story, it was Gideon, in that it was possible for God because it was impossible for him.
- He had hid in fear being the least of his family, which was the least of their tribe, which was the least of all the tribes. "But God!"

Hebrews 11:32-38 - 32 And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. 35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. 36 Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—38 the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.

- I would venture to say, in closing, that every single one of us who are here today in Christ, has their own "But God" story to tell.
- I'll take it a step further and suggest that the one person you may need to tell your But God story to is yourself as a reminder.
- By that I mean, you may need a much-needed reminder of what God did for you in the past, to encourage you in the present.