



# EVENING PRAYER DEVOTIONAL

FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 2020

*Readings: Psalm 49; Proverbs 18; Ephesians 2:1-10*

“Grace, grace, God’s grace, Grace that will pardon and cleanse within. Grace, grace, God’s grace, Grace that is greater than all our sin.”

Where does grace begin? Not with our righteousness or even with our faith. It begins with our deadness. This is the beginning of chapter two in our Ephesians text. What can the dead possibly do? Nothing, of course. There was nothing we could do to alter our status as “children of wrath.” Notice how Paul describes the Ephesians in the past tense here. You *were* dead in your trespasses.

God crashed into our deadness.

Paul inserts the interruption of our dire estate by saying “but God.” God was the only one who could do something, and we hear that it was out of God’s sheer richness of mercy and of the great love with which He loved us despite our deadness. As you read this text, you can sense Paul getting swept up in all of this because in the midst of trying to communicate our deadness and God’s great love for us, despite our wretchedness, comes a sort of pregnant pause to say, “by grace you have been saved.” Grace is God’s unmerited favor towards unfitting sinners. The word literally means “gift.” It is not only an undeserved gift of rescue, but it is an unfitting gift. Grace, when communicated properly, doesn’t sound fair or wise because it is not (at least not from the world’s perspective).

We are not inclined towards grace, but rather towards justice. We would rather the criminal executed, and not pardoned. But God’s grace goes even further than a pardon; for Paul, it takes what is dead and makes it alive. This is why the Gospel is never about bad people getting better, but it is about the dead being made alive. Grace is what ignites life. It is the great surprise we never see coming, and yet when it comes, we realized it was what we needed all along. Grace always births faith. It births a trust in the living and loving God who makes us alive in Christ Jesus. In this kind of new life we live, and move,

and have our being. Notice for Paul that even our good works are a gift. They were already prepared for us that we should walk in them. We couldn’t produce them in our deadness, but grace gave us a new heart and a new life. What a relief. Grace always and only meets us in our deadness, and it is still given for the life of a Christian.



Baptized child of the Triune God, rest easy upon your pillows tonight. Amen.

- Fr. Joe