

GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES (December 24, 2023)

For Personal or Group Study

What is the most exciting time of the year for your child? It would have to be Christmas followed by birthdays, wouldn't it? The Santa Claus song says, "you better not pout, you better not cry, you better not shout I'm telling you why, Santa Claus is coming to town. He knows if you've been sleeping, he know if you're awake, he knows if you've been bad or good, so be good for goodness sake." Christmas is a time when parents give you gifts in spite of the way you've been. The apostle Paul says that God is the same way. Now, I am not saying that God is Santa Clause! But, we have not been good, yet God's grace, or His love for us, which is undeserved, drives Him to give us gifts anyway.

God reached down to us in our worthless, degraded and rebellious state and worked a miracle. He made us alive with Christ. This is the ultimate demonstration of love, in that "while yet sinners, Christ died for us." Jesus paid the price of our sin so that we might be made righteous before God through Him. The power of God that raised Jesus Christ from the dead also made us alive in Christ. We who were separated from God and without hope were brought into a personal relationship with God. This is all His work of grace. There was nothing we or any other human could do to change our situation. It is God's work and it is all of His grace. "We love because He first loved us." Love made the first move; our love for God is simply a response to His love for us. That brings us back to this season. One in which we are drawn to the Christ-child. The best Christmas gift isn't wrapped under the tree, but the baby laying a manger.

Listen to What I Say - Love

SERMON PASSAGE: Ephesians 2:4-10 and Ephesians 2:1-4

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. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (NIV)

² 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. (NIV)

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1. In these two passages, Paul divides a Christian's life into two periods. What are they?
2. Who controlled you in the first period v.2-4? What was the result?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1. If we are "dead" because of sin, how are we made alive v.4-5?
2. What is the relationship between God's grace and good works?

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

1. What has God's grace meant to you in your life?
2. What good work do you feel God may have in mind for you.
3. What in your life is due only to God's presence and goodness?
4. What special gift have you received recently?

Notes: _____

Spend time in silence, praying (even if just for a moment or two). Prayer is simply a conversation with God. Be honest. If you don't know how or what to pray admit that and ask God to help you pray.