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Main Idea: Do you fully realize who we are in Christ and what He did for us? We are made alive! We are no longer dead, separated by our sins from God and healthy relationships with one another. God's just wrath for sin is pacified by what Christ has done. We no longer need to follow the meaningless and deadly ways of the world that only give pain, heartbreak and dysfunction. Satan has no rule over us, because Christ is greater and living in us. When we are distracted by the cravings of sin, we now have the power--His power--to turn away. We who have not earned a thing, we who do not deserve anything have God's boundless love and kindness, greater than can be imagined. By Christ alone, by His unaided grace are we saved; this is a gift freely given that we receive by His grace through our faith in Christ alone. We cannot work for our salvation. We are not entitled to it. Our faith does not purchase or qualify us to our salvation; rather, it is a response. This most valuable gift--more precious and unlike anything from the world--is ours by the hand of the Father who loves us. It is boundless, and it is eternal. The question is this: What are we going to do with our precious gift?

Contexts and Background:

This passage is about how God saves us. It is not about us or by us. Our salvation is by His will and choosing that shows us His grace, greatness and glory. If Christ did not select us, we could never obtain salvation on our own. God being God also has the right to make the choice and choose who He wants, as no one would ever choose Him first! One of the characters of God as Just and Merciful; He will never be unjust or unloving so He never treats us unjustly. This leaves salvation up to God and His love for us and not in the hands of us who would never ever choose Him!

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Were dead.* We can have no life or fellowship with God because we are dead in our sins, also called *Trespasses*. God not only overcame sin, He forgives us of our sins; He takes our guilt away, too (John 3:3-5, 16; Rom. 5:12-21; Col. 2:11-15)!
- *Transgressions and sins / our sinful nature.* *Transgressions* or *trespasses* are our willful, purposeful acts of disobedience and *sins* is a general term of our separation from God. This refers to our heredity of sin, the universal, wicked sin-character of humanity: Original Sin. We placed ourselves under sin, and anyone who has ever lived was and is under this curse. This creates the sinful desires that lure us with passion for what is deceitful and evil. The decay of our understanding of our separation from God the Father, and even, as Christians, our standing in Christ and virtue will cause the decay of ourselves and our culture. This means to be controlled by our desires of sin and rebellion, and having a careless disregard of truth--or consequences! It is our natural, sinful nature to desire what is wrong and to destroy (Gen. 9:6; Rom. 5:12-21; 7:1-6; James 3:9; 2 Pet. 2:14; 3:3).
- *Ways of this world.* Human corruption contrasted with God's Holiness and Word. Many Jews at this time--as some people today--blamed demons for their problem. All we really need to do is to submit to God (Luke 8:11; 1 Pet. 1:22-2:3).
- *Ruler/prince of the kingdom/Ruler of darkness/power of the air.* Satan and the world's kingdom are totally without the light of truth, peace and love. *Air* means the atmosphere, not heaven. Also, a Jewish belief that Satan ruled the angels, as he did before the fall, and he still rules the world, not Israel. Satan does not cause us to sin; instead, he tempts. However, we have the power to

submit to Christ instead. Remember (Acts 26:18; 2 Cor. 6:14; Gal. 4:3; Col. 1:13; Eph. 2:2; 6:12; 1 John 2:9-11).

- *Spirit who is now.* Satan may be the "ruler" of the earth, with tyrannical power, but God is God and is still King and in charge! You are asked to choose between them.
- *Disobedient.* This means our *sinful nature*. We cannot change ourselves. We need a Savior!
- *Cravings of our flesh.* It is not enough just to know what we should know; we must do as we are called to do. We need to not only engage His Word, but also obey and practice its precepts. If not, we are not living as authentic Christians. How do we do this? Put to death our sin and evil desires and not only embrace our new lives in Christ but reside in them as well. We are to make Christ first in order to receive His blessings and empowerment! That way, Jesus is our focus and attention rather than our own agendas. Only then will we lead lives of distinction, maturity, and character (Matt. 6:33; Rom. 6:1-14; Eph. 2:1-10; Col 3:11-11).
- *Deserving of wrath.* The *Wrath of God* is God's just reaction to sin, as He is totally against sin and will make sure that it is punished. Sin brings out God's anger because it hurts too many of His children whom He loves (Zech. 1:2; John 3:36; Rom. 1:18; Col. 2:11-15; Titus 2:12; Rev. 11:18).
- *Great love for us.* God is delighted to save us! Even though we do not deserve it, like disobedient children the parents still love (Deut. 7:6-9; Rom. 8:29-30).
- *Rich in mercy.* Christ displays His triumph over sin, and we are free while Satan is the one who is the captive spectacle! The word means the Roman army overwhelmingly conquering and vanquishing the enemy, which, at that time, they were very good at. Then, they took the prisoners and displayed them in a victory parade that was a great shame for the conquered. Jesus totally took Satan's power away. Satan has no advantage over you. Jesus won the battle of good and evil. Jesus did not win *almost* or *barely*. Christ is victorious decisively and eternally! (Ezek. 18; Matt. 12:29; Luke 10:18; John 12:31; Rom. 5:12; 6:23; 2 Cor. 2:14; Heb. 2:14-15; Rev.12: 9; 20:2).
- *Alive with Christ.* Meaning our sin has been stripped off. We have victory in Christ, so that hostile powers can do nothing to us. Christ has conquered evil, sin, and Satan. Satan was disarmed, and he has no power to control or intimidate. Christ, who triumphs over sin, who captivates us, takes sin captive, and protects us (Zech. 3:1; Matt. 12:29; Luke 10:18; Rom. 5:12; 6:23; 8:33-38; 16:20; 2 Cor. 2:13-15; Eph. 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:8-10; Heb. 2:14-15; Rev. 12:10)!
- *By grace.* This is the undeserving forgiveness and reconciliation that Christ has given us. We are never to take His grace for granted. We are not to see it as cheap, but realize its cost to our Lord, its power and impact upon our lives so we have a response that is real and valid to what Christ has done for us!
- *Saved.* God chose you to be one of His holy people, He will redeem, so we can clothe ourselves in His love and principles (**Acts 13:38-39; Rom.1: 17; 3:31- 5:21; 1 Cor. 1:18; 2 Cor. 2:15; 5:13-21; Gal. 2:15-5:1; Phil. 3:4-14; 1 John 1:9**).
- *Incomparable riches.* There is nothing in the universe greater than the Gift of life and salvation that God gives!
- *Through faith.* This means that God is working in us. We are the receptacles in which God moves and displays His wonder; we are the operation where God expresses His Work of fruit and faith so others can see Him.
- *Not by works.* God will accept us by works and law or by faith, not by both! However; no one has or ever will be able to do it by works. Try if you must, but you will fail! We reject God; He does not reject us. He

elects us; we do not elect Him (Rom. 9:19-29; Eph. 1:4-5; 2:8-9; Titus 2:14; 3:8-14; James 2:14-26; 1 John 3:7).

- *Boast.* No entitlement of favor to receive, only Christ alone. We are to be in unity and filled with gratitude, which will set the tone for our lives, spiritual growth, and our relationship with God and others.
- *God's handiwork/workmanship.* God made us, and we belong to Him (Rom. 1:20).
- *To do good works.* This is our response to Who and what Christ has done for us, and this gratitude will produce Fruit. God works in us, and there should be an outpouring onto others. This is also "breaking away from," or "putting off" our old sin-driven life. There is no need to follow the Old Covenant when we have a new one. We do not need to follow legalism of the law or man's rules for our salvation and growth (Ex. 20:1; Deut. 5:29; 30:6-14; Acts 15; Rom. 2:28-29; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:26-29; Phil. 3:3; Col. 2:11-15).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

We are chosen by God and by God alone for His pleasure through His love! We are not made for this world; we are made for eternity. Christ and heaven is our true home. The Holy Spirit sets us apart. We are able to hear and receive His Words of grace and life. God chose us not by merit or worth, but just because of His pure and perfect purpose and knowledge, which we do not deserve. This is to motivate our "human responsibility." This is called "Election" and is never an excuse to ignore our faith or responsibility to produce fruit and unity; in fact, because we have been chosen and are secure in Christ, we can respond back to Him and others with gratitude. When the reality of what Christ has done for us hits and motivates us, we can put forth every conceivable effort and passion to live out the Christian life. As Augustine, Calvin, and Spurgeon all said, "*divine sovereignty and human responsibility go hand in hand*". So, why would we not put off what holds us back? Why would we not want to be grateful, grace oriented, forgiving, loving, and virtuous (Deut. 4:37; Isa. 60:21; 61:3; Jer. 2:13; 13:11; Amos. 4:6; John 3:16; 6:37, 44, 65; 15:1-16; Rom. 3:21-26; 8:29-33; 9:10-24; 11:4-5; 1 Cor. 1:1-2, 26-31; Eph. 1:4-5; Phil. 1:6; Col. 3:12-14; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:8-9; Tit. 3:4; 1 Pet. 1:1-2; 2:9)?

Church Leadership Tip: We are never to forget or forsake the basics of our Christianity, by Grace alone, by faith alone, by Christ alone, which we get through Scripture alone all to give God the Glory. The church leadership and pastor's job is to point to Christ, His Word, and help manage a response to our house and community.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions, see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. Do you fully realize who you are in Christ and what He did for us?
2. What does it mean to you that you are God's handiwork?
3. Have you or have you known someone who blamed demons for their problems, when all we need to do is to submit to God?
4. What gets you distracted from committing to Christ?
5. How powerful are the cravings of sin?
6. How and why is our natural, sinful nature to desire cause wrong and hurt? Why does God hate it?
7. How has Christ given you the power to turn away from sin? Can you give an example?
8. What does it mean to you that we have God's boundless love and kindness? Is there anything greater which could be given?
9. Why can't we work for our salvation? Why are we not entitled to it?
10. What are we going to do with our precious gift? How can your church be an impact from this passage?
11. What can you and your church do to be the crucible in which God moves and displays His wonder?
12. What would happen if your church actually was the operation center in your community where God expresses His Work of fruit and faith so others can see Him?