

“But God” - Ephesians 2:4

By Wendy Wood



This will be the first blog in a series entitled “But God” written by various Canyon Hills counselors. These two words are small, but contain the biggest, most magnificent, decisive action possible. “But God” is the phrase that reminds us that God is sovereign and good. “But God” reminds us that it is God who is powerful and decisive in bringing about his will. In this series, each writing will feature a scripture that contains “But God” and you will encounter the power and reality of a God who is sovereign and wise.

Ephesians 2:4 “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us”

The book of Ephesians starts off with one of the most beautiful descriptions of the spiritual blessings believers have in Christ. The tone of chapter one is worship and awe as Paul describes what God has done for his children through Christ. This amazing plan of God to redeem a group of people and adopt them as his children began “before

the foundation of the world” (verse 4). Paul paints the picture of our inheritance in Christ which is all to the praise and glory of God. The union with Christ is possible only because God works all things according to the purpose of his will (verse 11). Paul ends chapter one with a prayer of thanksgiving to the God who is sovereign over salvation from start to finish. This glorious truth of salvation, being sealed with the Holy Spirit, and the guarantee that our inheritance will be realized in heaven is the celebration of being God’s child.

But, chapter two reminds us of who we were. The beginning of chapter two paints an ugly picture of reality. We were dead in our sins. We followed the course of this world. We were happily following our selfish, fleshly desires. 1 John 2:16 says “For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.” We gladly succumbed to these temptations and our sinful natures indulged in sinful thoughts and actions. Paul confirms that we were living in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and we were children of wrath (verse 3). The sad, awful truth is that we are totally depraved. Total depravity does not mean that everyone is as absolutely sinful as they could be. God puts his grace on all people, believers and unbelievers (Matthew 5:45), and restrains sin according to his will. God’s grace keeps us from being as sinful as we can possibly be. However, total depravity means that every aspect of our being - our thoughts, our emotions, our desires, our words and behavior - are all impacted by the curse of sin. Because of this, we are born sinners. We are natural enemies of God. We are spiritually dead.

Dead people have no capacity to bring life to themselves. Dead people don’t think or reason. Dead people don’t see or look for God. Dead people don’t get up and work to achieve good things. Dead people are not capable of doing anything for themselves. We were dead. We were without life, without a future, and completely without hope.

“But God”

And here is where those two small words make all the difference!

“But God” brings life to the dead.

“But God” brings hope to the hopeless.

God did not look at our deadness and see something that attracted him to us. God didn't look at our sins and think, "she's not that bad, maybe I'll do something with her". God didn't see anything in us that led him to choose us.

"But God" is the decisive statement that reveals all action and all credit belongs to God. **"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us"(verse 4)**. We are given life in Christ because God is a merciful God. God chose us to display his mercy and goodness. At the very essence of who God is, he is a merciful being who set us apart for himself before the foundation of the world. Our predestined salvation is about God. It is not about us. God is a loving God. God chose us to display his love and to reveal more of himself through the work of Christ on the cross. We were dead. He made us alive with Christ! He, by grace, raised us up! God chose to display his "immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus".

"But God" are two of the greatest words in the Bible. "But God" allows us to know him, be redeemed by him, and receive every spiritual blessing in Christ through him. "But God" reminds us that God is sovereign and good and that, in Christ, God is for us.

Praise God for "But God"!