

Are you convinced that nothing can separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38–39)? Does an encounter with troubles make you doubt that or drive you to embrace it?

Feeling “foreign” and out of place is a minor struggle, but a good reminder of a truth that runs throughout Scripture. Those who belong to God are “resident aliens” in this world and have their true citizenship in heaven. Themes running through Ephesians remind us of this, such as the identity of believers in Christ who is in heaven.

It is helpful to understand the new position in Christ which a believer has both individually (Eph 2:1–10) and corporately (Eph 2:11–22). The person who has turned to Jesus Christ experiences what can be described as a radical expression of God’s grace. There is a radical change in who you are by grace, a radical experience with Jesus Christ by grace, and a radical contribution to the eternal glory of God. All of this is true because of the grace which God has shown to the believer. There are three evidences of this radical expression of God’s grace in verses 4–7. Grasping it will change your view of the world, your struggles, and even the “simple” challenges of being foreign.

**I. The contrast between God and man is evidence of God’s radical grace.**

A literal rendering of the word order in verses 4–5 (such as in the ESV, NASB, or KJV) helps highlight this contrast.

1. God’s character is highlighted.
  - a. He is rich in mercy. (In the OT it is lovingkindness, cf. Psalm 118.)
  - b. He loved us with a great love. He loved us before we loved Him (1 John 4:10) and while we were sinners (Romans 5:8).
  - c. He is gracious (v.5 anticipating 2:8–9), showing unmerited favor toward us.
2. Man is in extreme need of mercy: dead in transgressions as explained in vv. 1–3.
  - a. The unbeliever lives according to a different authority, a different way, under the dominion of Satan.
  - b. The unbeliever lives for a different purpose: selfishness, to follow sinful desires and thoughts.
  - c. The unbeliever lives under a different destiny: God’s deserved wrath.

If God demonstrated such great mercy in saving us, He would not leave His children to unnecessary, purposeless suffering (even “simple” suffering under foreignness). Feeling foreign is a merciful reminder that we do not belong in the world.

**II. The union with Christ that believer’s experience is evidence of God's radical grace.**

1. Paul reminds his readers of three gracious actions in saving believers.
  - a. God made them alive together in Christ. This is best understood in contrast to being dead (vv. 1, 5). Spiritual death—separation and alienation from God (cf. Rom 3:11)—is countered with spiritual life. God opens the heart and gives a desire for Himself.
  - b. God resurrected them together with Christ. Though often elsewhere the believer’s resurrection in Christ refers to the future bodily resurrection, here it is something accomplished in the past. It is best understood from a similar reference in the immediate context, Ephesians 1:16–21 and especially vv. 19–20. The power which raised Jesus from the dead is the believer’s experience. To be resurrected together with Christ is to be so joined with Him that the power that resurrected Him is now there for the believer.
  - c. God seated the believer in the heavenly places together with Christ. The believer is not yet physically with Christ in heaven, that will yet come (cf. John 14:1–3). To be seated with Christ is to benefit from His triumph over those powers which previously had rule over the believer (1:20–21; 2:2). It means no longer belonging to this world but belonging to the heavenly realm and rule of heaven (cf. Phil 3:20).

2. Each gracious action is also a reminder that there is only one Mediator of God’s grace, Jesus Christ. Salvation in Christ is radically more than a free ticket to heaven. It is being made alive with Christ, being resurrected with Christ, and being seated with Christ in heaven.

If you experience foreignness, it is because you don’t belong. And a believer should feel foreign in this world. “Normal” foreignness is a merciful reminder that a believer doesn’t belong spiritually to this world. Home is heaven. Allegiance is to a heavenly king.

**III. Our (passive) contribution to the eternal glory of God is yet another evidence of His radical grace.**

1. God’s purpose in saving by grace is to display the beauty of that grace into all eternity.
2. Through the kindness shown to the believer in Jesus Christ, the riches of God’s grace—which are not known in the works of creation—are manifest.

This should encourage in the believer an eternal and divine perspective. Even salvation is not primarily about us, and its effects are not limited to the present.

God saving the believer in Christ is a much more radical expression of His grace than we often acknowledge. It demands our attention, a focus on God. God often uses difficulties to grab our attention. Feeling foreign, culturally or spiritually, should turn our attention to God... in appreciation of His great grace. He is reminding us that we don’t belong here and that He has placed us in Christ in heaven. Heaven, in the presence of God, seated in Christ, is home—by the incomparable riches of God’s grace.