



THE GOSPEL TRANSFORMS

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

EPHESIANS 2:1-10

God's Incredible Power in Us

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We have learned so far in Ephesians that God is blessed (Ephesians 1:3). This means that he is happy because all God things exist in himself perfectly. We have also learned that our blessed God blesses us with incredible spiritual blessings – election (1:4), adoption (1:4-5), redemption (1:7-10), an inheritance (1:11-12), and the seal of the Spirit (1:13-14). These blessings flow to us from our blessed God. In other words, we get these blessings because God is blessed. Now, the Ephesian church has experienced these blessings and responded properly to them. They have responded with faith in Jesus and love for the saints (1:15-16). Paul,

therefore, prays with thanksgiving that the church would know the God who gave these blessings better (1:15-17). He wants them to know, specifically, the hope of God's calling (1:18), the glory of God's inheritance (1:18), and the power of God's might (1:19-2:10). In Ephesians 1:20-23, Paul explains how God's power was at work in the Son. God raised Jesus from the dead, seated him at his right hand, and put all powers under his feet (1:20-23). The Father's awesome power is at work in the Son.

Now, in Ephesians 2:1-10, Paul describes how the Father's power is at work in us. Knowing that God's mighty power is at work in us is not just a fact to know for Paul; it is a truth to transform. Paul reminds the church of this truth – and the truth that they have a hope (1:18) and an inheritance (1:18) – so that the church would not boast, but so that they would do good works.

THE MAIN POINT OF THIS PASSAGE AND SERMON IS THAT GOD'S GREAT POWER WORKS IN US, NOT FOR BOASTING, BUT FOR GOOD WORKS.

LET'S INVESTIGATE THIS BEAUTIFUL TRUTH IN
EPHESIANS 2:1-10.



GOD'S POWER IN US: EPHESIANS 2:1-7

“*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body[a] and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.[b] ⁴ But[c] God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ —by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

Previously, the members of the Ephesian church were spiritual dead according to Paul (2:1). Paul says in verse 1, “you were dead.” Every person outside of Christ is spiritually dead. People are not spiritually alive or even sort of alive. They are dead. And prior to coming to Christ, we were all spiritually dead. Our spiritual death is the result of us willfully walking in sins (Ephesians 2:1). This is what sin does – it kills. Paul makes this point powerfully in Romans 6:23 where he tells us the wages of sin is death. The death of sin is not only eternal death

after we die, but also spiritual death now. This is why God told Adam and Eve that on the day that you eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you will die. Although they did not die physically on that day, they died spiritually.

Church family, we must grasp this point. Sin makes image bearers of God dead to God, dead to everything that gives spiritual life, and dead to all blessings. All of the blessings that God gives to his people are in Christ, and outside of Christ, we are dead to all of them. Dead to the glory of God for our joy; we are dead.

Paul further points out that the members of the Ephesian church followed the prince of the power of the air, the devil (2:2-3). Now this does not mean that they were self-professed devil worshipers. Likely few of them were. Most of them worshiped many gods including Artemis, the goddess of fertility. One of the ancient wonders of the world was the temple of Artemis in Ephesus, and Luke tells us in Acts 19 that many Ephesians were beginning to worship the Lord and no longer Artemis. Yet, worship of other gods, amounts to nothing more than the worship of demons. Moses makes this point in Deuteronomy 32:17: “They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently,



whom your fathers had never dreaded.” Moses is stating that when Israel wandered around the desert and worshiped other gods, they were worshiping demons. Paul makes the same in 1 Corinthians 10:20. Here he says, “No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons.” Paul identifies idol worship with demon worship. We by nature do not follow the Lord, we follow the prince of this world.

Next, Paul says that the Ephesian Christians were formerly children of wrath (2:3). Wrath is intense anger, and unfortunately, many Christians do not understand the doctrine of God having wrath because this thought is declared to be offensive. This doctrine though is actually a manifestation of God’s goodness. God expresses wrath toward sinners because he is good, not because he is evil. Take for example the Israelites who worship the golden calves in Exodus 32. The Israelite worship of other gods evokes God’s wrath. Imagine a situation where God responded to Israel worshiping the golden calves with joy. What would that tell you about God? It would tell you awful realities about him. It could indicate that worshiping a statute of a golden calf is more joyous than worshiping the living God. What would that tell us about the joy of living for and knowing God, and the joy God has in himself. It would tell us that this joy is weak and not worth our pursuit.



Imagine a situation where God responded to Israel worshiping the golden calves by ignoring the sin. What would that tell us about God? Again, it would indicate awful realities about God. It would indicate that God is not willing to instruct us and put up with us for the sake of our everlasting joy. Oh, how awful that would be.

You see God's wrath expressed in Scripture has a purpose: the purpose is so that the nations might know who the true God is. If God withholds judgment on sinners, the world has no idea that he is the true God. If God let's Israel worship the golden calves, he has essentially given them over to the twisted schemes of the devil without giving them any instruction or proof that this pathway leads to everlasting destruction. If God withholds his wrath he rejects a clear testimony to all bystanders that he is the true God worthy of all worship.

Brothers and sisters, God has wrath toward sinners and this is good and right. Imagine one other situation. Imagine a human judge who rejoiced in the sin of a criminal. What would you say about that judge? You would say, "That judge is wicked!" and that would be correct. Now imagine a judge who judged a criminal justly and was rightly provoked by the sin of the criminal so that the criminal received a just penalty for their crime. You would say, "That judge is righteous!" Church family, God's wrath is a good response to sin and this response indicates that God is good, not evil.



Now, let's listen carefully please, church family. We by nature are children of wrath. You and I, because of sin, belong under God's intense anger, and this is good and right. Think of the horrific reality of sin. Sin causes spiritual death; this is horrific. Sin causes us to follow the devil; this is horrific. Sin causes us to be subject to God's intense anger; this, too, is horrific. Think of the awfulness here. You and I were made to enjoy God's goodness, but sin causes us to writhe under the goodness of God. Oh, how awful sin is, and we have willingly decided to sin, God has not made us sin.

BUT GOD. Oh, the beauty of verse 4. On the one hand, we should see the awfulness of sin and feel its weight. We are dead because of sin; we follow the devil because of sin; and we are children of wrath because of sin. Notice something else. The first few words of verse 5 is a summary of verses 1-3. This tells us that Paul could have started with verse 5 and the general idea of verses 1-4 would not have been lost. The general idea is that although we were dead in our sins, God made us alive in Christ. An important question then to ask is this: "Why does Paul elaborate so much on our prior state outside of Christ?" "Why does he tell us that we are not only spiritually dead, but we were followers of the devil and that we were children of wrath by nature?" The purpose, I believe, is so that we would see more clearly



the heinousness and awful reality of our sin so that we would enjoy the beautiful grace of God more deeply. The more clearly, we see our sin, the more clearly, we see God's grace. A deeper understanding of our sin as Christians does not crush us; rather, it is an occasion for great joy because God has pursued us despite all of this and forgiven even our most wicked thoughts and deeds. When we see the awfulness of our sin, we see God's grace more clearly.

Remember, Ephesians 2:1-10 is an explanation of God's power. Whereas Ephesians 1:20-23 explains the Father's power at work in the Son, Ephesians 2:1-10 explains the Father's power at work in us. Notice that both Jesus and we were dead (1:20; 2:1, 5), and God has raised us both up (1:20; 2:6) and seated us in heaven (1:20; 2:6). Paul wants us the Ephesian church to know that the power of God at work in Jesus is also at work in us.

How can God's power be at work in us? That is a good question. The answer is found in a short-repeated phrase. Paul says we are made alive together "with Christ" (2:5), raised up "with him" (2:6), and seated "with him." God's power works in us because we are "with Christ." Thus, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1:20 that "all the promises of God find their Yes in him."



The fact that we can be “with him” is because of God’s grace. Notice how Paul interrupts himself in verse 5 to exclaim, “By grace you have been saved!” He cannot withhold this point any longer. Our salvation that happened in the past is by grace alone. Grace, again, is God giving us righteousness as a gift, and this is how we are saved. The purpose of the universe is to magnify God’s grace (1:6, 12, 14) in uniting all things in Jesus (1:9-10). God does this by extending grace to us through the blood of Jesus so that we might see the surpassing riches of his grace toward us for eternity. Ephesians 2:7 tells us that this is our destiny. Our destiny is an eternal enjoyment of the riches of God’s grace.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF CHRIST, GRACE, AND FAITH: EPHESIANS 2:8-10

“ 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.



Grace transforms through faith. Faith is not a work as made clear in Ephesians 2:8-9. Notice verse 8, “This is not your own doing.” This refers to salvation by grace through faith, and this is not your doing. If salvation was the result of your work, salvation would no longer be a gift. Imagine that I owed you \$5 for mowing my lawn, and I gave you 10, how much did I give you as a gift. I only give you \$5 as a gift; the other \$5 was a wage. If any of salvation depends on us, then the entire process is no longer a gift – part of it becomes a wage.

Brothers and sisters, if salvation was a wage – the result of our own doing – salvation would be impossible. Remember, we are spiritually dead. If the program of salvation depends on us at all, we are damned because sin prohibits us from responding to salvation properly – sin makes us dead. Why did Paul use the image of death in Ephesians 2:1, 6? He uses it to indicate that we cannot earn salvation – any part of it.

Salvation is a gift, and this is good. First, this is good because it prohibits boasting. If salvation depends on you ultimately, then those who are saved could boast. We would naturally look down on those who have not believed in God. Thoughts like, “Why don’t you just choose God, come on?” would be common. This is not the paradigm of salvation. This robs God of glory in so



many ways since it minimizes God's power. God's power rose the spiritually dead, not the spiritually almost dead. It takes more power to raise the dead, and God did this. Furthermore, God's power worked a new creation. Paul calls our salvation in verse 10 God's workmanship "created" in Christ Jesus. Just as God created the universe without anyone's help, so God recreates with no help from us. Salvation depends on God and the result is that God gets the glory. Therefore, we have no room to boast.

Second, salvation is a gift, and this is good because this motivates obedience. God has brought new creation into this old creation in Jesus Christ, and God did this so that we would walk in good works. Notice the parallel here. By nature, we walk in sin (2:1), but because of Christ, grace, and faith, we walk in good works. We no longer belong to the old creation following the devil, but now we are new creation following the Lord. Now, we get to do good works (Ephesians 2:9-10). Paul will discuss what good works he has in mind in detail in Ephesians 4-6. Today, we need to know this: God's powerful grace prohibits boasting and causes us to walk in good deeds.





CONCLUSION

Church family, God's power is incredible. His power was at work in Jesus (1:20-23) and is at work in us because we are in Jesus (2:6). The truth of God's powerful grace in us must transform us. So, here is our weekly challenge: every day this week, I challenge you to tell someone about a particular way that God is transforming you by his powerful grace. Perhaps God has answered a prayer, helped you overcome a sin, taught you new truths, and/or comforted you in a special way, however God's grace is at work in your life, tell others about it. Tell your Christian family, friends, and church family, and/or the lost. I challenge you to speak about how God's grace is transforming you every day this week.



LET'S PRAY

Oh God, you are kind to share your blessings with us. You are kind to take us – those who were spiritually dead – and raise us up to life in Christ. Help us to speak of this power this week. Give us grace to remind ourselves of this power, to speak this truth with our family, and to proclaim it with the lost. Give us grace to accomplish this weekly challenge for your glory. In Jesus name we pray, amen.

HOW IS GOD TRANSFORMING YOU?

Ephesians 2:1-10

COMMIT TO TELLING ONE PERSON EACH DAY ABOUT HOW GOD IS TRANSFORMING YOUR LIFE. THIS CAN BE A CHRISTIAN FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND CHURCH FAMILY, AND/OR THE LOST. WRITE THEIR NAME IN THE BOXES BELOW.

SUNDAY

JOHN SMITH

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

HOW IS GOD'S GRACE TRANSFORMING YOU?

- RE-READ EPHESIANS 2:1-10
- HAS HE ANSWERED A PRAYER?
- HAS HE HELPED YOU OVERCOME SIN?
- HAS HE TAUGHT YOU A NEW TRUTH?
- HAS HE COMFORTED YOU IN A SPECIAL WAY?
- HAS HE PROVIDED FOR YOU IN A SPECIAL WAY?