

Ephesians Study - Week 3



[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN](#)

Dearest friends – I must, before we get into this week’s lesson, tell you the **WEIGHT** that I feel in going through this book! Not weight in a “burdensome” sense but in a **HEAVY**, “weight of glory” kind of way! I know that **all** of scripture is **FULL** of the glory of God and weighty in the message that it communicates but there is something about this book that is just so Heavenly, so glorious, so **FULL** that I just feel so inadequate to even **attempt** to go through this with you all. I am encouraged, though, that God’s spirit lives in us that that through prayer and the power of His Holy Spirit we **can** have spiritual eyes and can understand God’s word. I pray that our feeble attempts to discuss these weighty things together will benefit us in some small way and that we would be driven to the scriptures with a new love for God’s word and a desire to know Him more through it. This week we will be going through Chapter 1:15-23 and then Chapter 2:1-10.

The end of Chapter 1 is a prayer of Thanksgiving for those who are reading the letter. I believe that this includes us! It behooves to listen **carefully** to what this Apostle prayed and pray it for ourselves and for The Church.

As we have discussed, Paul was God’s chosen messenger and as you look carefully at all of His letters you see the close relationship that He had with the Lord through prayer. We also see in various places that he was visited by the Lord and that he was given many visions (one of a man in Macedonia pleading with Him to come there, another of Heaven, and others). Paul had a deep fellowship with the Lord Jesus and in this prayer, he was asking God to grant all believers this depth of relationship and understanding of God’s mysteries.

Paul starts off this prayer of thanksgiving by saying “Therefore” or as some translations say “For this reason” – and anytime we see that in scripture we should **STOP** and see what the writer is referencing. As many preachers like to say, “you have to see what the “therefore” is there for!

After encouraging the believers with the amazing truths about God’s plan, he will now give thanks and offer prayers. He says that he is offering prayers of thanksgiving **because** he has heard of their faith in Jesus and their love for the saints.

Paul was **hearing reports** from Ephesus. This church that he had planted and spent nearly three years watering (the longest he spent with any church on his missionary journeys) was healthy and flourishing and he was hearing of this growth. Remember, Ephesus was a hostile place for Christians to live but even despite those conditions, we do not find any admonitions for them but rather praise for the way they loved one another. He may have heard reports of believers

helping each other out in times of persecution and hardship. He knew that they loved each other so well **because of** the way they were showing the love of Christ to one another. He attributed these visible manifestations of love to their faith in Christ. In this way, the [request](#) that Jesus made to His Father on the night that He would be betrayed was being played out in this community of believers. **Paul knew they were believers by the way they loved each other.**

Here are the specific things that Paul prayed for them:

1. That God would give them a **spirit of wisdom and revelation** in the **knowledge of Him** and that the **eyes of their heart would be enlightened.**

In order to see God's revealed truths and have a true knowledge – a true “knowing” of Him - we must be given HIS eyes, HIS wisdom. This ability of vision is GIVEN BY HIM. As we grow in our knowledge of Him (again, a gift of His grace!) we have more of His perspective. The letter to the believers in Ephesus is ALL ABOUT GOD'S GRACIOUS GIFTS. He **gave** us the gift of salvation and then he **gives** us the gift of being able to comprehend that salvation. HE IS A GIVER OF GOOD GIFTS!

Paul prayed for this enlightenment to come to all believers. In praying this, I also believe that Paul was helping to teach them how to pray for themselves and for each other. And if you'll notice in many of Paul's writings, he asks others to pray for HIM! Even though He had seen the Risen Lord with His own eyes and had been appointed to this high office of Apostle, [He asked for prayer repeatedly!](#) He knew the power of prayer. (Click link to see a list of Paul's prayer requests).

May WE be praying for the eyes of OUR hearts to be enlightened to God's truths! So often I think we live the Christian life without these “spiritual eyes” and that's why we sometimes feel devoid of the power of God that Paul says is “toward us.”

[John Piper](#) says that “The main reason many Christians do not **FEEL** the gracious, omnipotent power of God that is **now** at work toward us is that ***the eyes of our hearts are dull to spiritual reality.***”

THIS is why Paul was praying that their eyes would be awakened to spiritual realities. Spiritual things can't be perceived with only human faculties and, like our salvation, the awakening to the spiritual realities would come as a gift from God.

2. Paul prayed that they would know the [hope](#) (expectation of what is sure / certain) to which they were called. He prayed that they would know the **riches** of the

glorious inheritance that was theirs. He had the responsibility of communicating to them what was theirs – now and in the future - because of Christ.

Paul was appointed to be the Apostle (the messenger) to the Gentile world. He was thrust out of His Jewish bubble and would spend the rest of His life traveling all over the known world to explain to “[those who were once afar off](#)” what the promises of Messiah were: **Confident expectation** of being able to stand before God totally blameless and sinless **because of HIS perfect sacrifice, confident expectation** of eternal life, a **confident expectation** of a coming kingdom of peace ruled by The King of All Kings and the promise that we will rule with Him. This King Jesus was THE way to have fellowship with THE God of all, the creator of all things. He is not the “god of this” or “god of that” – He is **God of ALL**. THIS God was their **FATHER** and He had **CHOSEN** them to be in his family. **This was radically different from their idea of deity.** Ephesians worshipped Artemis as the “mother of all” and these Christians would have come out of a culture who had deep devotion to this “mother goddess.”

And what about The Roman Emperor Nero who demanded to be worshipped as God above all gods? He was certainly not one they could trust in as a loving Father – not one who loved them and had imparted them power and authority. He was brutal to everyone, not just Christians. He was unpredictable – a man once known for his mildness would later be known for ordering the murder of his own mother. No, they had no “confident expectation” that Caesar would show kindness to them because of His great love.

What Paul was desperately trying to convey to them about God and His character would HAVE to be conveyed to them *through the enlightenment of their spiritual eyes*. They needed to grasp the HUGENESS of the truth that God the Father had adopted them into His family.

Paul prayed fervently that they would “GET IT” – That they would know what a big deal this was! Oh, that we would GET IT, Church!! That WE know what a BIG DEAL this is!

3. He prayed that they would know the *immeasurable [limitless, unending, unfathomable]* **greatness** of God’s power **toward** them. He prayed that they would understand that this power towards them was “according to” or “**in the same measure as**” His great strength that raised Jesus from the dead!

The greatness of His power toward believers is so enormous it is unable to be quantifiably measured and yet... Paul was praying that on *some* level, they would feel the weight of it, that they might somehow comprehend the full measure of it!

What if we were to fully grasp the truth that the same power, might and strength that God exercised when He raised Jesus’ lifeless body from the grave is “at work toward us” through the Holy Spirit and it makes us alive in the same measure as Christ was made alive! We were *spiritually* as dead as Jesus was *physically* dead after his brutal crucifixion. We were **THAT** dead.

Dead as a man who had been beaten beyond recognition, nailed to a tree, pierced in his side and had laid in a tomb for three days. But, just as God raised Him from the dead, so have **we** been raised to THAT kind of empowered life *spiritually* (and one day physically as well). This, if this were the reality in which we operated, think of the things that would change in our lives! And what is the key to believers “operating in” this knowledge? First, of course, is that our spiritual eyes would recognize this as truth. In addition, we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, to “put on the new man” and we are to put on the full armor of God. (We’ll get to that in Chapter 6.)

I feel compelled to stop and state the obvious: We, as humans living in this “body of death” that is at war with our new nature, will not always walk in this power that is toward us (not on this side of eternity, anyway) but “[Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord](#)” who **rescues us** from this body of death! (Read [Romans 7:24](#) and be comforted that even Paul himself struggled!)

In the final words of Chapter 1, Paul tells us about Jesus’ high position.

Jesus is:

- Raised to new life
- At the right hand of God
- In the heavenly places
- Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion
- Above every name that is named not only in this age but in the age to come
- With all things under his feet
- The head of the church (his body)
- Filling all things everywhere with Himself

That’s a pretty impressive resume and as we will see in Chapter 2, we are **SEATED WITH HIM IN THE HEAVENLY REALMS**. No wonder Paul prayed for our eyes to be opened to the spiritual realities of this truth – they’re pretty AMAZING! We **need** “spiritual eyes” to believe the things that He is telling us because they are quite unbelievable otherwise!

Ephesians 2:1-10

If the purpose of chapter one was to deliver the **good news about God**, chapter two gives us the **bad news about us**. It starts off like this... “AND YOU...”

Paul tells us, “And you were DEAD in your sins.” Our sin used to rule over us, it was once our Master. We were following the course (the pattern, the logic, the wisdom) of this world and in

doing so, we were following Satan who is “the prince of the power of the air.”

Paul is making a pretty clear distinction here: There are 2 Kingdoms. We are born in to one and when we believe we are transferred into another. Our enemy, Satan is currently the “[god of this age](#).” He sets the course for **this world**. The normal course is to be ruled by sin and hence to be ruled by Satan. If you think about a course or a track, you just *run* it, you just *follow* it. You don’t choose where you’ll go, that’s set out for you. When we’re born, we are set upon a course that leads to destruction. Those who are ruled by sin are destined for wrath. We are **by nature** destined for wrath. This is why the news of God’s choosing us before the foundation of the world “[for good works that we might walk in them](#)” is so glorious! When we are “[born again to a living hope](#)” we become “[new creations](#)”. We are **set free** from that track that ultimately leads to our destruction. We are RESCUED, DELIVERED, TRANSFERRED to the course set forth by God that is for our good and His glory! As Paul would write to the [Colossians](#), we’ve been transferred [purchased] **out of** Satan’s kingdom and placed **into** The Kingdom of Jesus!

It was imperative that they knew not only what they were called TO but what they had been saved FROM! The message of the gospel is incomplete without both of these messages. We’re saved, yes! But from what? The wrath of God.

Before we believed, we used to have this spirit of disobedience ruling over us and in us! We used to follow this evil prince and were **by nature** children of wrath “like the rest of mankind”. We can’t repeat this too much: **WE WERE BORN FOR WRATH BUT HAVE BEEN RESCUED FROM IT THROUGH JESUS.**

Again, The depth and the extremity of our lostness, our DEADNESS, is something that we need to recognize if we are to in turn recognize what we have been rescued FROM and delivered TO! We do the gospel no justice when we downplay the depravity of Human nature. Paul magnified the goodness of God by painting a very bleak picture of human nature. We have been influenced by the prince of the power of the air when we think that we are not as bad off as we really are. **WE WERE DEAD.** The message of the gospel is not “this will change your life – your behaviors, your thoughts” – Those things *do* change when the gospel is believed but those things are the RESULTS of the REAL change that takes place. The real change is LIFE FROM THE DEAD.

OK... So we’ve hammered that pretty hard, right? WE WERE DEAD IN OUR SINS AND TRESSPASSES. Let’s move on to the good news.

Now, in verse 4 Paul shifts from his description of our hopeless state **back to** the awesomeness of our rescuer-God. Some have called these the most blessed words in all of scripture...

“BUT GOD...”

Did you see that? He moves from “And you...” in verse 1 to “But GOD!” in verse 4! **And YOU were destined for wrath..... BUT GOD....”**

But God, being rich in mercy, BECAUSE of His great love for us changed the course we were on. *(And he decided He was going to do this **before He even created the world!** Before things ever got off course to begin with. MIND. BLOWING.)*

So... Let's review:

- When did He deliver us from wrath? Before He made the world.
- By what means did He do this? By His Grace, out of love for us, through the atoning death of Jesus that paid for our sin.
- What was the REASON that He did this? **“So that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” He did all of this to show the riches of His grace. His grace is amazing!**

In the last part of this section we have again affirmation that **this is all God's doing**. “For it is **by grace** you have been saved, through faith [in Jesus]—and this is not from yourselves, **it is the gift of God**— not by works, so that no one can boast.”

The faith that we have in Jesus, our saving faith that brings us into the Kingdom – It's a GIFT from God! It is a gift of His mercy and grace BECAUSE HE LOVED US.

Now I am no theologian and I realize that this verse is one that various groups will debate and argue over but really, what's to fight about? This is glorious! One side says, “I'm saved [from the course of this world, from my former life, from the wrath of God] because I believe in Jesus” and yes, that is TRUE! We are saved through faith in Jesus! Hallelujah! Others emphasize that this faith that we have, we had nothing to do with it - it's a GIFT FROM GOD and yes, THAT's true as well! I personally love the reminder that I'm taken out of the equation because I certainly would mess things up if it depended on me!

Now I realize that wars have been fought over this. Free Will, Predestination, Arminianism, Calvinism. I don't think that my feeble words will explain away the questions surrounding this issue. All I know to say is this; Paul said, “We were saved [adopted into God's family] when we believed.” Jesus said, “unless you repent, you will perish!” – And then there's John 3:16 – “Whosoever BELIEVES in Him should not perish but have everlasting life!” We (are called) to do SOMETHING *AND* He **chose us** in Him before the foundation of the world to do those things so in that sense we do NOTHING. God is totally sovereign. Our Faith in Him is a Gift from Him! We are to [actively] PUT ON the armor of God and” fight the good fight!” We do it through God's power. We submit to His authority and we work through His power. ALL THESE THINGS

ARE TRUE! God is so big! He calls us, we respond! That's beautiful. Can we leave it at that?

If God can open our spiritual eyes and empower us to see that we are seated with Christ in Heavenly places and that we will inherit a body that will never die and that Jesus is coming back from Heaven on the clouds with power and great Glory then I think he can help us reconcile the fact that He gave us instructions DO things ([love Him and love our neighbor](#), [walk](#) in His ways, *fight* the good fight, [take hold](#) of eternal life, [keep ourselves](#) from idolatry and [keep ourselves](#) in His love) with the fact that it's **all a working of HIS grace!**

I believe that I am called to repent and believe on The Lord Jesus Christ and walk in His ways. I also believe that [I didn't choose Him](#), He [chose me](#) before the foundation of the world to do those things! GOD IS SO BIG! His ways are unsearchable! Let's live our lives in ways that Glorify God and make His name a blessing in all the Earth, not fight over whether we're Arminians or Calvinists. WE ARE THE CHURCH, CHRIST'S BODY. That's all the identification we need, Amen?

I'll stop this part of the discussion by citing the classic illustration – "On the outside of the Gates of Heaven is a sign that reads '[Whosoever will come, come!](#)' - Upon passing through, you look back and see written: '[Chosen of God before the foundation of the world](#)'.

Last, but certainly not least, Paul tells us that "we are God's handiwork created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Let's look at those three things one at a time:

1. We are God's handiwork. His workmanship. His masterpiece. [His poem](#). His delight. He rejoices over us with singing. Just stop for a minute and read that again. Read it 17 times. Read it until it soaks in. Can you see it? Do you know it? Know it and let it WASH OVER YOU.
2. We, the loving work of His hands, were created (made anew, brought to life) IN CHRIST JESUS. When Jesus was raised, we were raised to LIFE with Him. The family of God was created **through** Jesus. Do you believe that Jesus was raised to life after three days? Good. Do you believe that we are **HIS BODY** raised to life WITH HIM? Believe it! Know it and let it WASH OVER YOU.
3. God chose us before the foundation of the world and He prepares works for us to walk in. GOD HAS PLANS FOR US, CHURCH! Think of it – We are His Body. When we do these things prepared in advance for us to do, we are being the "hands and feet of Jesus."

Sometimes it's hard to know what those works are, isn't it? But what if we looked at all of our lives as service to Him and for Him? Do they have to be big monumental things? I don't think so. As I was changing sheets in the middle of the night last weekend, this hit me like a ton of bricks. There's nothing in me that would joyfully, in the middle of the night, calmly and happily change sheets with vomit all over them. In that moment, when I was THANKING GOD that this virus that was traveling through the GI tracts of my 4 children was a fleeting thing and not a permanent thing, I was walking in a work that He had prepared for me. Before the foundation of the world, He had planned that I would be giving Him glory in the midst of sickness and vomit and laundry and 2am baths. I was singing to one son while He was in the bathtub and rubbing another son's shoulders as he threw up in the toilet. This was a work that God had prepared for me in advance. Now I do not say any of this to bring glory to myself because I tell you, in MY OWN POWER, I would have been huffing and puffing as I pulled those sheets off of the bed and would have been rushing to get everyone else settled so that I could go back to sleep but by God's strength, I was able to be loving toward my children and thank God for the extra moments of snuggle time I got to have with them because of this sickness. I knew in that moment that I was, by the grace of God, walking in His power and in the work He had prepared for me to do in that moment. I do not always do that. There's plenty of huffing and puffing at 6am when they're rip roaring and ready to start the day but this is a process. I have already been justified before God (declared by God as being righteous) and I am currently being sanctified (being conformed to the image of His son) as I walk through this life. These works bring God glory and sanctify me. Oh that I would walk in them!

I suppose we could get back to the previous discussion along the lines of "Do I **choose** to follow Jesus and walk in these works? Or... "Does **He cause me to do** what has prepared me to do?" but, why? Instead of debating whether or not we can resist God's will (that just even sounds ridiculous, doesn't it?) I am desperate to be surrounded by fellow redeemed sisters and brothers who will remind me that I am SEATED IN HEAVENLY PLACES WITH CHRIST and that GOD WILL CRUSH SATAN UNDER MY FEET and that I am GOD'S HANDIWORK!

So let's get to it, ladies. In HIS power, and by the strength of HIS might – In the same measure of the power that raised Christ from the dead – Let's walk in these works that He has prepared in advance for us to do! Let's **decide** to do it and let's acknowledge that He **calls** us to do it! **WE ARE HIS MASTERPIECES!** Onward! For His Kingdom and His Glory! Amen!