

November 20, 2022

"We Are God's Handiwork"  
Lesson 3 of Unit

Ephesians 2:1-10

**Intro**

Today's lesson from Ephesians 2 is really about perspective. Paul is writing the letter from Rome, while under house arrest. He was unable to leave, and was under the threat of judgment and execution. But instead of worry and fear, Paul is rejoicing. He speaks of being "raised from the dead."

The people he's writing to are also in difficult situations. Becoming a Christian has led to problems. Jewish Christians were frequently not welcome in the synagogue, and Gentile Christians no longer could practice pagan rituals. Both groups were scorned for associating with the other group. And all Christians were suspected of trying to undermine their societies with their faith.

Paul's message here is about God's perspective in dealing with life. From God's view, the Christians are victorious, not in trouble. They aren't rebels but God's representatives of life and change. Paul reminds them (and us) of what we have gained by being in Christ, and reminds them and us that all we have comes from God's hands, especially our salvation.

**Read Ephesians 2:1-10**

1. vs. 1: This verse is building off of the idea Paul was developing at the end of chapter 1
  - There, he talked about Jesus' resurrection
  - In vs. 1 here, he connects that resurrection to the people he's writing to
  - "As for you..."
  - The results of Jesus' resurrection for the human race are Paul's new topic
  - First, he notes that "you were dead in your transgressions and sins"
  - This is where we all were before we came to Christ
  - We will suffer a physical death, but we don't have to suffer a spiritual death
  - Paul uses the past tense (were), indicating their lives have changed
  
2. vs. 2: Paul reminds the Ephesians of who they formerly were
  - "you followed the ways of this world..."
  - Worldly ways and influences ("those who are disobedient") were their way of life
  - Paul also addresses who is behind the evil ways of the world
  - "the ruler of the kingdom of the air"
  - This is an obvious reference to Satan and those fallen angels who follow him
  - They were disobedient to God
  - The disobedient in Ephesus were also rejecting God's desires for their lives
  - This was their reality prior to learning about Jesus's sacrifice on the cross
  
3. vs. 3: Paul makes sure here that the Ephesians understand the nature of sin
  - He says, "All of us also lived among them at one time"
  - He's showing that everyone, himself included, has disobeyed God by sinning
  - Here he notes the body's "cravings"

People may do something if it “feels good” even if it’s morally wrong  
The issue isn’t what the body desires  
The issue is how we think

Wrong thoughts and thought patterns lead to wrong (sinful) actions  
Right thoughts and thought patterns lead to right (obedient) actions  
Paul concludes this verse with a sobering reminder  
All who live by gratifying the flesh are “deserving of wrath”  
That is the former life: infatuated with sinful things and prodded by the evil one  
and controlled by out-of-control passions

4. vs. 4: This verse begins the contrast from what we were to what we have become

“But”

Verses 1-3 were the truth of who we were before Christ

Now Paul addresses how and why that former condition could be changed

“because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy”

This one phrase alone could be developed for days

How great is God’s love for us?

We sing the song “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us”

It is good to be reminded often of how much God loves us

We know we are sinners—we don’t forget that easily

God also knows who we are, and that we are products of a broken, sinful world

God loves us despite knowing how weak, sinful, and broken we are

“God, who is rich in mercy”

We are deserving of wrath because of our sinful, disobedient actions

But God showed mercy by having Jesus take on Himself the wrath that we deserved

God’s richness is at work in two places in our study of Ephesians so far

In 1:7, God is described as being “rich in grace”

Here God is “rich in mercy”

To be described as rich means one has an exceeding amount of something

If God is “rich”, He has more of that thing than any human can dream of

God uses his wealth of mercy on us, freely giving us as much as we need

How deep the Father’s love for us!

5. vs. 5: “(He) made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions”

Christ was dead and then was raised to life again

So also with us; we were dead in our sins, but then made alive because of Christ

When we are connected to Him through salvation, then we too are resurrected like Him

“It is by grace you have been saved”

Grace should be seen as connected to God’s love and mercy

All three are aspects of God’s nature that are at work in how God loves us

6. vs. 6: “God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms”

First we were made alive (resurrected, like Christ)

Then we are raised up to heavenly places, like Christ ascending back to heaven

God’s grace (vs. 5) allows us to share heavenly places with Jesus

7. vs. 7: Here's the reason why God chose to show us such mercy and love

“That in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace”

We who have been saved from spiritual darkness are the demonstration of His love

Here again Paul uses the word “riches” to describe God's grace toward us

He also refers to God's “kindness to us in Christ Jesus”

God is kind to us not because of anything we have done well

It's His offer to join Him; He's paid the price of admission if we will receive it

8. vs. 8: Paul continues this thought; this verse is one of the more quoted passages in the NT

“For it is by grace you have been saved through faith”

God's grace, His choice to show us kindness and mercy, has been offered to us

We must accept it through faith

Faith has been described as “assent plus trust”

First we agree (assent) to what God says is true about salvation

Then we trust is the provision He has made: Jesus' death cancels our sin debt

He finishes the verse with “and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—”

We have done nothing worthy of God forgiving our sins

Even in our best moments, we still have parts of our lives that are broken

God's gift to us was Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, paying the debt that we owed

We have nothing to do with our salvation except we chose to accept God's offer

We have received the gift that was given

9. vs. 9: Paul drives home the point in vs. 9

“not by works, so that no one can boast”

If we do something noteworthy, it would be right to be proud of that accomplishment

But we have done nothing to be worthy of avoiding God's wrath

There is nothing we can do to be worthy of avoiding God's wrath

We can't save ourselves, so there is no room for boasting on our part

10. vs. 10: Because of God providing the gift of salvation, we are his “handiwork”

God has made us “to do good works”

We have been saved and remade by God

We are being daily conformed to the image of His Son

God has prepared in advance the works He has for us to do

That's exciting!

Our lives in Christ aren't random; God has a plan and has prepared us for it!

Application: This passage is reminding us not to focus on our shortcomings, but on Christ's abundance. God has done everything for us in Christ: full forgiveness of our sins, Christ's sufficient power and presence through the Holy Spirit. We are to remember that we have done nothing to earn or deserve our spiritual status—it's all because of Jesus. We are God's handiwork (workmanship), created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Prayer: Father God, thank You for extending to us the riches of your love and mercy and grace. We know we are undeserving of such a gift, but thank you for giving us what we needed so desperately. Thank you for re-making us so we can be useful to You and do the good works You've prepared for us. In Jesus name, Amen.