

Ephesians: Blessed Beyond Belief to Build up the Body

Lesson 3: God's Plan Applied to Individuals Ephesians 2:1-10

Review

I:1-3:21 Positional Unity of the Church

I:1-23 God's (life insurance) plan and benefits

I:1-2 A circular letter to those "in Christ"
Paul writes to those "in Christ—that they might experience God's grace and peace.

God's plan and benefits 1:1-23

- Paul writes to those in Christ 1:1-2
- Who have Every Spiritual Blessing to the praise of His glory 1:3-14
- Praying for greater insight into God's plan 1:15-23

I:3-14 Believers have: **Every spiritual blessing—to the praise of His glory**
The plan, provision and protection of Salvation

God is blessed, because He has blessed those "in Christ" with every spiritual blessing
"God has enriched believers with every spiritual benefit for their spiritual well-being."¹

The Father's Past **Plan**: His eternal plan to choose individuals to be blameless and holy, to be adopted as sons—to the praise of the glory of His grace

The Son's Present **Provision** of salvation: redeemed and forgiven, based on the superabounding riches of His grace, having made known the mystery of His will—to subject everything to Christ ∴ provide an inheritance for those who believe—to the praise of His glory

The Spirit's Present **Protection** of Future salvation: Sealing those who believe as a pledge of His ownership and their assurance of an inheritance—to the praise of His glory

Every Spiritual Blessing to the praise of His glory
1:3-14

- Plan: Father elected us in eternity past 1:3-6
 - To be holy and blameless adopted sons
- Provision: Son redeemed us in the historical present 1:7-12
 - Superabounding grace
 - Redeemed, Forgiven, Informed and Inheritance
- Protection: Spirit sealed us individually in the past for the future 1:13-14
 - Promised Inheritance

A reminder of the great things God has done for the individual believer

WOW—it is all about God
All we have in salvation is for His praise and glory.

I:15-23 Prayer for insight to truly know God

The prayer for those who have everything—know God better

Prayer for personal insight to their relationship with God for the purpose of deeper experiential appreciation of their riches benefits

To realizing the hope, riches and power on their behalf—which is evidenced by Christ current exalted position

Paul prays that believer's know God personally and intimately—so that they would realize the hope of their calling (past), the riches of His inheritance in the saints (value) (future) and the extent of His

Prayer for insight to truly know God 1:15-23

- To realizing
 - The hope of their calling
 - The riches of His inheritance in the saints (value)
 - The extent of His power on their behalf
- Which is evidenced by
 - The power to raise and seat Christ
 - To subject all things to Him
 - To give him to the Church as sufficient head

¹ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2002) p. 301.

power on their behalf (present)—which is evidenced by the power to raise and seat Christ and to subject all things to Him and to give Him to the Church as sufficient head (make Him head of the Church).

Chapter 1—emphasizes our relationship to the three members of the Trinity—Chapter 2 emphasizes God’s activity toward us

Why did He do this?

“In chapters 2 and 3 Paul explains the execution of the eternal plan by showing how God makes sinners into saints and builds them into the church, the body of Christ. In 2:1-10 Paul states how sinners, who deserve nothing but God’s wrath, become trophies of his grace.”²

2:1-10 commentary on 1:19 – the great power towards us has been demonstrated in Christ and is being demonstrated by making sinners into saints.³

Introduction

It contains the first of five explicit “formerly-now” contrasts, which distinguish a life of sin and alienation before Christ from a life of faith in Christ. These contrasts constitute one of the main subjects in Ephesians.

The number of oppositions in this passage is striking: living in transgressions and sins versus living in good works prepared by God; this world versus the heavenly realms; death versus life; sinful nature (lit., “flesh”) versus union with Christ; wrath versus mercy and salvation; under the “ruler” versus seated with Christ; by nature versus by grace; not from works versus through faith.⁴

Compare 2:1-7 to 1:18-21 what was said of Jesus is now applied to believer

Our Condition Apart from Christ 2:1-3

Former life

2:1 Our Condition

“and”—not connective, previous section—God acting in relationship to Son, here on behalf of sinners

“being dead”—Participle –continual force

Elsewhere Paul views death as a tyrant that dominates unredeemed humanity, both in their present living and in their destiny in the grave. Ernest Best describes the view in 2:1 as “a realized eschatological conception of death.” In other words, the end result has invaded and permeated the present. Death controls life. It is nonrelational, powerless, and corrupting. As a consequence of sin, people have no relation to God and distorted relations with each other. They are powerless to change and are being pulled down to destruction.⁵

Focus is on the outcome of being dead more than on what being dead is like or the cause.

NB the context—having been enlightened

1 Corinthians 2:14

Trespasses / sins = conscious and deliberate false steps

“They connote more than an inadvertent mistake for they express a conscious and willful action against God’s holiness and righteousness and thus a failure to live as one should.”⁶

—dative— indicates cause “because of your transgressions and sins”

² Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2002) p. 305.

³ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2002) p. 306.

⁴ Klyne Snodgrass, NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Ephesians, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 1996) p. 93.

⁵ Klyne Snodgrass, NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Ephesians, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 1996) p. 95.

⁶ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2002) p. 308

Dative of sphere “in your”

2:2-3 Paul’s claim explained

sn *Among whom.* The relative pronoun phrase that begins v. 3 is identical, except for gender, to the one that begins v. 2 (ἐν αἵς [en hais], ἐν οἴς [en hois]). By the structure, the author is building an argument for our hopeless condition: We lived in sin and we lived among sinful people. Our doom looked to be sealed as well in v. 2: Both the external environment (*kingdom of the air*) and our internal motivation and attitude (*the spirit that is now energizing*) were under the devil’s thumb (cf. 2 Cor 4:4).⁷

Notice that in the flow Paul does not address grace until we understand our desperate condition

“walked according to the course of this world”

—may have nuance of spirit of the age or worldview, and the temporal aspect is consistent with Paul’s usage (1:21; 2:7; 3:9, 11, 21)—so while “course” could be translated “age” or “era” the idea is of a span of time.

The unregenerate walk according to the values of the present age

“according to the prince {ruler} of the power {realm} of the air,”

The devil is the ruler over the realm of the air

The unregenerate are under the control of the leader who rules over this evil world

“of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.”

Explains how the devil works

The devil rules over the inward person of the unregenerate.

“now” contrast to “formerly”

2:3

Change from “you” to “we”

Includes “all” (see Romans 1:18-3:20)

“All humans in the unregenerate state are in the same condition of rebellion against God.”⁸

“formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh,”

“lived” –repeated action

“flesh” –can be neutral simply refereeing to material substance or can have an ethical dimension, which speaks of the natural inclination of the whole person away from God

One’s existence apart from God and thus opposed to God and His ways

Believers in contrast are in the spirit (Romans 8:9)

“indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, “

“desire” – can be either, good or bad—i.e. neutral

The moral character of the desire is determined by the object of the desire

How are the desires of the flesh being carried out?

By doing the will of the flesh

Sound repetitive

⁷Biblical Studies Press. The NET Bible Notes, Eph 2:3, 2003.

⁸ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2002) p. 317

But “it is one thing for the flesh to have desires but another to act on those desires.”

“mind” – process of thinking or reasoning

Point—the unregenerate are not only confronted by the external satanic power, but also by internal powerful desires of the flesh

The unregenerate not only are in the sphere of the desires of flesh, but are doing the wishes or dictates of the flesh.

“and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.”

Children here is intended to be more personal than “sons” earlier
NIV “objects” instead of “children” to be pc

Genitive of direction or purpose and hence the unregenerate are children destined to God’s wrath

Disobedience comes from unbelief

“In conclusion, the unregenerate Ephesians walked according to the values of the present age. Not only were they in step with the world, but they also went according to the wishes of the ruler (the devil) who is in control of the spiritual atmosphere and that spirit is presently working in the sons of disobedience. Since the world system is controlled by the devil, it is not surprising that the unregenerate do what the rest of the world does. Furthermore, the unconverted not only are under the pressure of the world system and its commander’s control, but they also enjoy it. . . .”⁹

Summary: In our unregenerate state

1. We did what everyone else did—walked according to the era of the ungodly world
2. We did what the devil wanted—walk according to the ruler of the realm of the world
3. We enjoyed it because we did what pleased our flesh and mind

We did what came naturally because it fit the external and internal pattern

So that is why we were dead in our trespasses and sin—caught in a vicious cycle and unable to escape without God’s intervention.

Our New Position: Alive in Christ 2:4-10

God’s merciful provision of salvation in Christ and its purpose

2:4-6 Action of God’s Grace

“BUT”

See Romans 5:1-14

God’s Character—mercy

“God being rich in mercy”

God is the grammatical subject of the whole section,

Leaving the subject of here, when read makes the point more forceful “BUT GOD”

Rich is probably parallel to “great” in next clause

“mercy” – loving-kindness

The consequence of sin is not undeserved, but God extends His mercy toward those helplessly entrapped by their own snare—is underserved—mercy.

⁹ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2002) p. 316

The word “mercy” (*eleos*) does not often occur in Paul’s letters. The importance of this theme for Paul, however, is evident in its use in Romans (9:16 – 18, 23; 11:30 – 32; 15:9) and in descriptions of his own conversion (1 Tim. 1:13 – 16).¹⁰

God’s motivation / cause—Love

“because of his great love with which he loved us”

This explains the cause for the demonstration of mercy

“love”

“a love that seeks the highest good in the one loved”¹¹

“with which he love us” – constative aorist—sees the entire action (not the beginning, progress, or end

The “love” of God is a major theme in Paul’s understanding of salvation. Once again, the theocentric focus of Ephesians is emphasized. God is not an onlooker in the salvation process or in an “angry huff” waiting to be appeased. Rather, he is the primary actor, the one who by his love deals with his own wrath and shows mercy to his people.¹²

Concurrent with our being dead in transgressions God loved us.

No the main verbs / action of the section are given

συνεζωποίησεν to make alive together with

The ref. is to people who were dead in their sins, but through union with Christ have been made alive by God together with him.

Spiritual not physical resurrection – we are alive spiritually—we are no longer separated from God

Paul’s theology asserts that Christians were included in the redemptive events of Christ’s death and resurrection. The threefold repetition of “with” is significant and underscores the Pauline emphasis on participation with Christ. To enjoy salvation requires being joined to the Savior (cf. Rom. 7:4.) The gift cannot be separated from the Giver.¹³

“by grace you have been saved”

This causes a parenthetical outburst—by grace you are saved

It’s as though Paul can’t contain himself until verse 8!

“Grace” – God’s unmerited and undeserved favor

Provides salvation for the sinner

Through the substitution death of Christ

Enable the believer to live acceptably before God

The passive is a divine passive—God is clearly the actor

“and raised us up with him”

συνήγειρεν to raise together

Having been made alive—we logically are resurrected with him

Positional resurrection—the power of the resurrection is at work in us

Colossians 3:1-3

¹⁰ Klyne Snodgrass, NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Ephesians, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 1996) p. 100.

¹¹ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2002) p. 327

¹² Klyne Snodgrass, NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Ephesians, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 1996) p. 100.

¹³ Klyne Snodgrass, NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Ephesians, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 1996) p. 100.

“and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus”

συνεκάθισεν to make to sit together, to sit together

He love us

He liberated us

He lifted us

2:7 Purpose of God’s Grace

To demonstrate His Grace

By its very nature the gospel is a revelation. The revelation of God’s character will continue throughout eternity, and the primary evidence of his grace and kindness are the people who have received life in Christ Jesus. We should also remember the expression “to the praise of his glory” in 1:6, 12, and 14. God’s saving work shows who he really is and results in worship, both now and throughout eternity.¹⁴

2:8-10 Explanation of God’s Grace

Further explanation or clarification of this gift

Source: God

Basis: Grace

Obtained: by mean of faith or trust

Resulting in: good works

Verse 8 is similar to 1:13, describing the *means* by which salvation is appropriated. Language is especially important here. Christians are saved by God’s grace, not by their faith. Faith is the only *means* by which this grace is received. The rest of the letter underscores the importance of faith and its cognates for salvation and life (3:12, 17; 4:5, 13; 6:16, 21, 23).

Faith (*pistis*) cannot be limited to mental assent or to believing certain ideas. The Greek noun can mean “faith,” “faithfulness,” “reliability,” “promise,” “pledge,” “proof,” “trust,” and “confidence.” In addition, it can be used of the act of believing, the content of what is believed, or as a word that encapsulates all the gospel stands for — in essence, “the faith religion” (cf. Gal. 3:23; Eph. 4:5). The verb *pisteuo* can mean “trust,” “give credence to,” “be convinced that,” “entrust,” and “have confidence.” Primarily, this word group treats *that on which one may rely* or *the act of relying on something believed reliable*. Both sides of the coin are present — relying on something or someone believed reliable. As always, context — not a catalogue of possibilities — determines meaning.

Paul assumes this two-sided nature of faith in his discussions of salvation. *Faith is relational*, describing reliance on a reliable God. Faith is a *covenant* word, expressing the commitment and trust that bind two parties together. Throughout Scripture, God by his grace makes promises and commits himself to his people. They in turn are to trust those promises and live in light of them. God shows himself faithful and people are to respond in faithfulness. To say “I have faith” does not so much say anything about oneself; rather it says, “God is a trustworthy God.”

People who believe do not merely assent to certain ideas; they are bound to God and live in response to him. Paul’s frequent use of phrases such as “with Christ” and “in Christ” show his conviction that faith joins them to Jesus Christ so strongly that they are in him and that what is true of him is true of them. Christ’s past is their past, and he determines their present and future. Faith has an *adhesive* quality to it; it binds the believer to the one who is believed. Salvation does not come from believing ideas or an emotional decision, but from being bound to Christ.¹⁵

Review

2:1-10 God’s plan (1:3-14) applied to individuals

Condition apart from God (2:1-3)

¹⁴ Klyne Snodgrass, NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Ephesians, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 1996) p. 104.

¹⁵ Klyne Snodgrass, NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Ephesians, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 1996) p. 104-105.

- though dead in trespasses and sin resulting from
 - nature/life—walk according to the values of the world
 - devil—are controlled by the ruler of the world
 - and actions of the will (enjoyment of sin)
- But God (2:4—7)
 - Character—rich in mercy
 - Cause—full of great love (motivation)
 - to apply his power to makes us
 - Alive with Christ
 - Raise with Christ
 - Seat with Christ
 - So that we would be a revelation of God’s grace
 - Based—by grace (2:8-10)
 - Provided a gift
 - A relationship with Him
 - No longer dead (separated) but alive (with Him)
 - How is it obtained—by faith
 - Not by works
 - Why—to do works of grace
 - To reveal God’s grace through actions

God’s plan applied to individuals

Who’s condition, apart from God is hopeless because they are dead in trespasses and sin as a result of their walking according to the values of the world, are controlled by the ruler of the world, and by actions in keeping with their desires.

But God

- Who is rich in mercy (character), motivated by His great love (cause)
 - Applied His power to make believers alive, raised, and seated with Christ, so that they would be a revelation of God’s grace
- Based on His grace provided a gift
 - a relationship with Him—no longer separated (dead) but unified (alive) as an expression of the surpassing rich of His grace
- Obtained through faith
 - not works
- For the purpose of doing good works
 - to reveal God’s grace through actions

Questions

- How does this passage remind you of a bad pasted?
- How do you respond to the reality of “dead in trespasses”?
- What characteristics of God does this passage affirm?
- How should we respond in light of this passage?