

(Ephesians) Ephesians 1:18-2:9

by Zac Poonen

Paul prays that the eyes of our heart may be enlightened to understand our calling, the riches of God's inheritance, and the surpassing greatness of God's power.

Duration: 1:00:36

Scripture: Ephesians 1:18, Ephesians 1:23 - 2:1, Ephesians 2:8-10, 2 Timothy 2:7

Topics: "Union With Christ", "Spiritual Identity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing that God has called each individual for a specific purpose. He compares the body of Christ to the human body, stating that just as every part of the body has a function, every believer in Christ has a purpose in God's eternal plan. The speaker highlights the need for believers to understand their identity in Christ and the power available to them through God. He also discusses the concept of union with Christ, explaining that when Christ rose from the dead, believers were raised up together with Him. The purpose of this union is for God to display His grace and transformation in the lives of believers, ultimately bringing glory to Himself.

Transcript

We turn to Ephesians in chapter 1 in verse 18 today. We were looking at Paul's prayer for these Ephesian Christians, and we saw that he prayed not that they would understand something in their minds, but that the eyes of their heart would be enlightened. I'm reminded of Paul's words to Timothy when he says in 2 Timothy chapter 2, to him he says, consider what I say.

He tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 2.7, and the Lord will give you understanding. He doesn't tell Timothy, read what I say again and again and you'll understand it. Consider before the Lord.

Wait upon the Lord. Read what I've written, because it's scripture. The Lord will give you understanding.

That's the same thing here. I pray that the eyes of your heart will be opened. Now, remember, he's writing to believers.

We would think the eyes of all believers are already open. Well, it's already open as far as their forgiveness of their sins is concerned, but a lot of other things in scripture to which their eyes are not open. And the devil makes sure that they're blinded to it, so they don't enjoy God's riches in their life.

For example, a lot of believers don't believe that sin shall not have dominion over you. Like it says in Romans 6.14. A lot of believers don't believe that the Holy Spirit can give you power to control your tongue, so that you don't lose your temper. A lot of believers don't believe that the Holy Spirit can give you power to control your eyes, so that you don't lust after women.

Well, if you don't believe the Holy Spirit can give you that power, you don't experience it. A lot of people don't believe that God makes all things work together for the good of those who love him and who are called according to his purpose. There are many things like this, which we don't enjoy the benefit of and we don't believe.

So, Paul is praying that these Ephesian Christians won't miss out on God's best. He says, I pray that the eyes of your heart will be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, number one, the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, number two, and the surpassing greatness of his power to us who believe. These are the three things primarily that he's praying for, and we can look at them one by one.

It's three definite petitions. Number one, that we may understand the hope of our calling. Now, this is very, very important, because once we understand the hope of our calling, we have a sense of dignity about our lives.

We cannot get discouraged. Paul says, because we have received this ministry, we do not faint. We don't get discouraged.

That's a wonderful verse in 2 Corinthians 4. Having received this ministry, we don't get discouraged. We never give up. He was tempted to give up.

He was tempted to get discouraged. All Christians are, but it's the sense that God has called me for something that kept Paul going. And when you recognize that God's called you for something, it'll keep you going.

You may be just a mother looking after children at home, but if you're born again, you have a purpose in God's eternal plan. His plan for the body of Christ, of which you're a member, just like the human body. There is no part of this human body which has been created without a purpose.

Every part of this body has got a very definite function. And every part of the body of Christ has got a very definite function. There's no part of the body without a function.

You must remember that. The moment you're born again, you open your being to the Holy Spirit, you're part of the body of Jesus Christ. And remember, no part of the body of Christ is without a function.

Pray that you will know the hope of your calling. You've been called to fulfill a certain function in the body of Christ. You've been called to reflect and radiate Christ's glory and His nature through your life.

You've been called, the Bible says, to suffer for the sake of Jesus Christ here on earth. And to manifest in your suffering a Christ-like nature, so that other people will be drawn to Him. So it's a wonderful expression here, the hope of His calling.

He's called us for heavenly things, not for earthly things. If you don't understand that your calling is primarily heavenly, what's going to happen is you're going to be occupied with a lot of earthly things. And

that's going to be your primary pursuit in life.

You're going to end up frustrated, or you're going to end up finally standing at the judgment seat of Christ and regretting the way you lived on the earth. I mention this, dear friends, because there's such an emphasis nowadays on the material in Christendom. A lot of Christian television programs emphasize prosperity and making money and getting earthly benefits, but tell you very little about your heavenly calling and your heavenly riches.

So that's why it's important that the eyes of our heart are opened, so that we know the hope of our calling. Very, very, very important. And what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints? He says, the Living Bible puts it like this, I want you to realize that God has become rich because we who are Christ have been given to Him.

Now, we would think that nothing in the world could ever make God rich, but that's not true. It says here that God got an inheritance when He got us. Now, if you want to understand that, you've got to think of some multi-millionaire or multi-billionaire who has got billions in the bank, who owns properties all across the globe, and who's got wealth which you cannot even dream of.

A fantastically rich man, but who's got no children. Year after year after year in his married life he's got no children, but he's got all these billions. His businesses are prospering and booming, but there's something missing.

And then one day after many years, his wife gives birth to a little child. He has a child of his own. How do you think he looks at that child? How does he compare that child with all the billions he owns in his vast business empires? His child is more precious.

He's got an inheritance now. Now, there is an inheritance that he will leave for that child. That's another thing.

But he got an inheritance when he got that child. And that's here. An inheritance that was far more precious to that businessman than all the wealth he had accumulated in his life.

Now, if we can see that, that God who owns the heaven and the earth, who runs the universe, who runs the planets and owns all the silver and gold in the world, who's got millions of angels to serve him and worship him, he got an inheritance when he got you and me in Christ. This is unbelievable, but it is true. But once we see it, we realize how precious we are to God.

I was saying that Ephesians chapters 1 to 3 are foundational. And you see what Paul is driving at with various pictures, all of which are true. He's trying to point out to us our position in Christ.

That's basically what he's trying to show in the first three chapters. Dear brothers and sisters in Ephesus, this is what you are in Christ. You'll never be able to live the Christian life unless this truth is drilled into your head as to what you are in Christ.

So he says, I'm praying that the eyes of your heart be enlightened to know the hope of your calling and to know what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. And thirdly, he says, I'm also praying that you will know the surpassing greatness of God's power available to us who believe. Now, God's power is manifested in many ways.

Is God's power manifested in creation? You read in Genesis chapter 1, God spoke and the worlds were created. And then you read about the remaking of that chaotic earth in Genesis 1, again with the spoken word of God. But here, he's talking about the tremendous power of God in another realm.

We see the power of God in Jesus' earthly life, turning the water into wine and healing the sick, raising the dead, etc. But when it comes to the power, the greatest, greatest, the absolutely greatest manifestation of God's power on earth, here Paul refers to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Compare the resurrection of Christ with the creation of the world.

You go back to Genesis 1 and you come to Matthew 28. In Genesis 1, you have the creation of the world. In Matthew 28, you have the resurrection of Christ.

As you read these two records of what God did, which impresses you as a greater manifestation of God's power? Wouldn't you say it's Genesis 1? That God spoke and there was light and God spoke and there was a sun and a moon and stars and God spoke and the earth came up out of the waters and God spoke and the trees came up and God spoke and the fish and the birds came forth and God spoke and the animals were created just by a spoken word. All the varieties of animals and insects and birds and fish, just with a spoken word. And you say, boy, what tremendous power.

Now that's all on one side. Now you see a simple act of one man, Christ Jesus, being crucified, buried, and conquering death and coming out of the grave. You say, yeah, it's great, but it's not the greatest.

The Bible says it is the greatest. That is the greatest manifestation of God's power in this universe. And you need to understand that.

Because when you understand that, you will seek for that power more than any other power. A lot of people, if they were offered a choice between the power of Christ's resurrection and the power to create things, would choose the power to create things. But here it says the power of resurrection is far superior to the power to create things.

This is God's will that we might experience the power of His resurrection in our life. What does that mean? You see, we live in a world where everything is under spiritual death. And the power of His resurrection is that which lifts us up so that we don't sink into the spiritual depth that is around us.

Paul says, I pray that the eyes of your heart will be enlightened, that you may know this power in your life. Let's turn today to Ephesians 1, verse 18. Here we read of Paul's prayer for the Ephesian Christians.

He says he prays that the eyes of their heart will be enlightened. We saw that in our last two sessions. That they may know the hope with which Christ called them, God called them, the riches of the glory that God has in His inheritance in them.

And thirdly, the tremendously great power that can be theirs, verse 19, if they believe. And this power, it says in verse 19 and 20, is in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places far above all rule, authority, power, dominion, every name that is named, not only in this age but in the age to come. So the power that lifted Christ up from the grave and lifted Him up to heaven and put everything under His feet is mentioned here as the greatest ever manifestation of God's power.

And we were considering at the end of our last study as to the fact that this power is a far greater manifestation of God's power than His power in creating the universe. Why is this so? To our natural minds, the power that created the universe is far greater. But there's one big difference.

That was creative power. This is moral power. And moral power is superior to creative power.

That's the thing we need to understand. The power to speak a word and heal the sick that God gives to some people. They lay hands on the sick and they recover.

Do miracles in Jesus' name. Well, that's a tremendous manifestation of power. Blind eyes being created in the sockets of those whose eyes were blind.

And many other miracles like that. But, moral power is something far superior to that. A lot of people who have supernatural gifts God gives them to do supernatural things on the outside don't have moral power.

They fall a prey to the love of money. They lack integrity. They tell lies.

They lust after women. They lust after money. And they don't have moral power.

But they have tremendous abilities in their mind and naturally and sometimes supernaturally. We see numerous cases like that. You think of a man like Samson who could tear Delilah to pieces.

Who could tear a lion to pieces? Sorry. But Delilah tore him to pieces. Who's stronger? A lion or Delilah? Well, you see, in Samson's life, who's stronger? So, there is moral power which is stronger than creative power.

What sort of power are you looking for in your life? Is it like the power that Samson had to tear a lion to pieces? Or are you looking for power from God to overcome the wiles of Delilah? If you tear a lion to pieces, you'll get a lot of honor before men. If you overcome lust in your thought, you're not going to get much honor before men. But that is a greater power.

It is the power of resurrection. It's the power that Jesus manifested when He rose up from the dead. In the resurrection of Christ is something very wonderful.

It is the demonstration of the truth that Jesus Christ conquered sin, death, hell, the devil, the grave, everything. All of man's enemies were conquered. That is what we see in the resurrection of Christ.

And He did it on our behalf. That's why He came as a man. He came as a man to do this on our behalf.

And Paul prays that this power, the surpassing greatness of this power, that we might see it. In other words, in no area of our life need we be defeated anymore. This moral power is capable of equipping us and enabling us so that we can overcome in every single area of our life.

The surpassing greatness of His power that's available to us who believe. Now notice that also. It says here that this power is not available to everybody.

This is the same power of the Holy Spirit that He has mentioned earlier. The power that the Holy Spirit comes to give us. Now, He has a specific prayer that we might experience that power in Ephesians 3. But now He's praying that our eyes may be opened to see what tremendous power is available to us.

Our eyes need to be opened that there's a tremendous power available to us through the Holy Spirit coming and filling us which can enable us to triumph like Christ did over all our enemies. And one day enable us to triumph even over the grave. But it is only available to those who believe.

Not everybody can experience this power. A lot of Christians believe in this in their heads. Now there's a difference between believing in our minds and experiencing it in our lives.

The Bible always speaks about believing in the heart. Have you noticed that? It doesn't speak about believing in the mind. A lot of Christians, their faith is in their minds.

They believe facts about God. Just like the devil. The devil believes a lot of facts about God.

The devil's faith is in his mind. And if your faith is in your mind, your faith is no better than the devil's and it won't do you any more good than the devil's faith does to him. It speaks in James chapter 2 about that type of faith.

Faith without works. It's dead. He says the devil's also have that type of faith, James chapter 2, and they tremble.

And he says of faith without works of faith in the mind is like a body without breath. But faith in the heart is different. That's a living thing.

Notice in Romans in chapter 10, it says in Romans chapter 10 that verse 9, that if you confess with your mouth and believe in Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead. What are we supposed to believe in our heart? That God created the world? No. That Jesus Christ was raised from the dead by God.

And where do I have to believe it? I have to believe it in my heart. And it says in verse 10, for with the heart man believes resulting in righteousness. With the mind, he may believe, it will result in nothing.

It will result in the type of faith the devil has. But with the heart. And what is the difference between believing in the mind and believing in the heart? This is so important.

Because if we are to know the power of Christ's resurrection in our life, lifting us up over sin, over the corruption of our flesh and the corruption in the world, then we must know what it is to have faith in our heart. Belief in our mind is an intellectual thing. We believe the world is round.

We believe in the solar system that the sun, the earth goes around the sun, the earth rotates on its own axis and the solar system is itself part of a galaxy and there are many galaxies. We believe so many things. We believe in the internal workings of the human body that we have learned through the study of medicine.

There are many things we can believe in our mind. But belief in the heart is what we could call trust. I trust.

You know, a little child trusts its mother to care for it. We trust something. It is not just an intellectual thing.

It is a trust which leads to a confidence that makes us do something. You trust a bank, for example. How do you know you trust a bank? You go and put all your money there.

It is not something intellectual. It is more than that. You love money and you would not want to lose it.

And you put money only in a bank you can trust. You reveal your secrets to someone you can trust. It is a heart thing.

A little child knows his mother will never harm it. It is a heart thing. That is the type of trust we are to have in God, in Jesus Christ.

It is not, do you believe in your head that Christ died for your sins, that Christ rose from the dead, that He is coming back in glory. A lot of people never experience the power of God in their life because their faith is in their mind, not in their heart. The Bible never speaks about having faith in the mind.

That is a dead faith. A living thing is in the heart. And there is where we need to experience this power.

So Paul prays that the eyes of their heart, Ephesians 1.18, will be enlightened, so that they may know what is the surpassing greatness of the mighty power of God that is available to all who believe, who have this trust. Do you remember when the two blind men came to Jesus? We read about that in Matthew chapter 9, verse 24 onwards. And they said they wanted to be healed.

And Jesus asked them a question. He said, Do you believe that I am able to do this for you? Matthew 9, verse 28. And they said, Yes, Lord, we believe.

And Jesus replied, According to your faith be it unto you. That is a very important principle. Not according to my desire or according to your desire.

A lot of people think that if I have a desire, God will give it to me. Or if God has a desire, He will give it to me. But it is not true.

Let me show you some of the saddest words written in the entire Gospels. In Matthew chapter 13, verse 58, it says that Jesus could not do many mighty works in one place because of their unbelief. He did only a few great miracles there.

Because of their unbelief, He could not do many miracles. It is repeated in Mark 6 too, Mark chapter 6 also, as He could not do many miracles there. Here it says He did not do it.

Because of their unbelief. Unbelief ties the hand of God. They didn't trust Him.

And if the blind people had said, No, we're not sure whether you can open our eyes, the Lord would have said, Okay, according to your faith be it unto you. Your eyes won't be open. If one blind man had said, I believe one eye can be open, only one eye would be open.

According to your faith, be it unto you. Remember this principle all through your life. Come to God with a simple trust, and you can have God's best.

We turn today to Ephesians and chapter 1. Reading again from verse 18, which we have been considering the last two or three studies, about Paul's prayer for these Ephesian Christians, that the eyes of their heart may be enlightened, that they may know what is the hope of God's calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, what is the surpassing greatness of His power available to those who believe. All these are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might, which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places. Far above all rule, authority, power, dominion, every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the age to come.

And put all things in subjection under His feet. So we read here about the greatest manifestation of God's power in the resurrection of Christ, because it was a moral power that was manifested there. Satan was defeated.

Man's greatest enemy was defeated. It says, the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. Death was defeated.

Satan was defeated. Sin was overcome. Temptation was overcome.

All man's fears were driven away. And therefore, the resurrection of Christ accomplished far more than creation did. In creation, man came forth and could sin and bring chaos into the world.

But through the resurrection of Christ, man has come forth with the possibility of partaking of God's own nature, so that a time can come when he can become completely like Christ when Jesus comes again. And in that new heaven and new earth, he will never sin again. So, the resurrection of Christ is obviously far greater than creation.

So, that's why it says here that Paul prays, that's why Paul prays here, that the eyes of their heart will be enlightened, so they can see what a wonderful thing God did in raising Christ from the dead on our behalf. It's all for us. And if you believe we can experience that power, Paul felt this was such an important thing, that towards the end of his life, he writes in Philippians chapter 3, he says, I want to know God, verse 10.

And I want to know the power of His resurrection. And I want to know the fellowship of His sufferings being conformed to His death. He knew that it's only as I die with Jesus that I can rise with Him and experience His power.

His passion in life was to know Christ more intimately. His passion in Christ was to, passion in life was to know the power of Christ's resurrection more in His life than ever before. So, we see this is what he prays for the Ephesian Christians too, that they may also know God, as we read in Ephesians chapter 1, verse 17, revelation, the spirit of wisdom and revelation of the knowledge of the true God, and that they may know the power of His resurrection, what He longed for Himself, He longs for in the Ephesian Christians.

And this is the power that will lift us up. Resurrection power is a power that lifts us up. It lifts us up over sin, over fear, over Satan, over everything in this world that pulls us down.

It's the opposite of the law of gravity. The law of gravity pulls everything down. You don't have to make an effort for something to drop.

You drop a coin, it falls to the ground. You drop a stone, it falls down. You drop a ball, it falls down.

The resurrection of Christ is the opposite of that. It's a power that keeps on lifting us up. It's the power that it says in Jude 24 is able to keep us from falling, keep us from falling into sin.

What is that? It's the opposite of the power of gravity. And that is the greatest power manifested in the universe. It's like the power that, a picture of it would be the power that drives a rocket into space, overcoming the law of gravity.

There's something of that that God puts in us when the Holy Spirit brings this resurrection life of Christ into us. Something that can lift us up about this gravitational power of sin on this earth that keeps pulling us down. That lifts us up, lifts us up, lifts us up, lifts us up.

And the same power that lifted Jesus and seated Him in the heavenly places, verse 20, lifts us up also, Ephesians 2.6, and places us there too. And as Jesus has been exalted to that place, it says in verse 22, He has been put there in that place with everything under His feet. And that's not the end of it.

From that place He has been given, Paul says, as head over all things to the church, which is His body. The fullness of Him who fills all in all. That's an amazing statement.

Paul speaks there and prays that the eyes of these Ephesian Christians will be opened to understand how Christ has been lifted up, exalted on man's behalf, and there in the heavenly places, He is now the head of His body on earth, which is the church. We are the body of Christ. And we are members of His body.

And everything that is in the head can flow down to the body. And here's the wonderful thing. If everything is under His feet, then everything can be under our feet too.

If everything has been put in subjection under His feet, and we take our place as members of His body under His headship, then those things are under our feet too. That's why the Bible says, we know that the devil was crushed under Jesus' feet. The seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent.

It says you will pierce His heel, but He will crush your head. So Jesus trampled the serpent with His foot. But Romans 16.20 says that the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.

How is that? How can Satan be crushed under the feet of believers? Because those believers are the body of Christ who is the head to whom all things have been made subject. So this is the wonderful truth that we see here in Ephesians 1.22 and 23. This church is the body of Jesus Christ.

And just like a human body under the headship of a human head. The head controls every member of our body. Our fingers, toes, every function inside.

Everything is controlled by the head. Christ wants to have that same control over every member of His body. This is a tremendous revelation that God gave to the apostle Paul.

More than to any other apostle. That the church, and by church we mean believers, born again believers, not a building, not a denomination, but believers who come together. That's a local church.

Believers all over the world are the worldwide church. And this is the body of Jesus Christ. And Christ wants to have a relationship with us exactly like our head has to the body.

There are many wonderful truths that we can learn from this. And Paul understood it first on the road to Damascus. When he was riding that horse to Damascus, he heard this voice from heaven that said, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? And he looked up to heaven and said, Lord, who are you? I'm not persecuting anybody up there in heaven.

I'm just persecuting a lot of people here on earth who are heretics, so-called Christians. And Jesus said, well, that's me. You're persecuting me.

That's my body. I'm up here as head, but that's my body down on earth, and when you touch me down there persecuting my body, I feel it up here in heaven. That was the day Paul began to get a revelation of the fact that there was a relationship between Christ up in heaven and his body here on earth.

This is not true in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, God was in heaven and his people were on earth, but there was no organic living connection between God and his people. He came down and blessed them, and if they turned away from him, he left them.

But today, it's different. Just like the head has got an internal, intimate connection with every part of the body, Jesus Christ in heaven has got an internal and intimate connection with every member of his earthly body. That is the type of relationship that he wants to have with you as a child of God, where when something touches you, it touches him.

And if you behave in a bad way, you bring dishonor to him. It's like the body behaving badly and the head gets dishonored. We need to have this, our eyes open to see this great truth.

Paul prayed that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened to see all these things listed from verse 18 to 23. We need to see all of them. And the last, the most glorious truth of all, that we are the body of Jesus Christ, and that since everything is under his feet, everything is under my feet too.

He is the fullness of him who fills all in all means he is the author and giver of everything everywhere, as the living Bible says. God has put all things under his feet, and that is why we can live on this earth without any fear. And that is why it says in 1 John and chapter 4, that as Jesus is, 1 John 4, 17, so also are we in this world.

I think the glory and the wonder of this has not gripped many Christians. That we're supposed to live on this earth exactly like Jesus lived on this earth before us. Exactly like him.

He lived on earth such a perfect, wonderful life. And he lived that as a man. Now, if he lived that as God, well, that's no example for us.

Though he was God, he lived on earth as a man in the power of the Holy Spirit. He did not access those inherent powers he had as God. It's like a multi-millionaire not using his credit card, but living with people in the slums, just with the resources that others around him have.

That's how Jesus lived on this earth. And that is how God wants us to live. As overcomers in the power of his Holy Spirit.

And we can follow in Jesus' footsteps there. Let's turn today to Ephesians and chapter 2 and verse 1. In the last few studies, we were looking at Ephesians chapter 1, and we saw how that is the foundation, the first three chapters of Ephesians are the foundation on which the later chapters are built. And there was an introduction in Ephesians 1, the word ministry of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and it concluded with Christ being exalted over all and being given to the church as head.

And the church is his body, Ephesians 1.23. And chapter 2, verse 1, begins with the word and. It's really the same paragraph referring to those who are now in the body of Christ. When we are born again, we come into Christ's body.

And you were in the past dead in your trespasses and sins in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that's now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them, we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. Now, if you read carefully, you will see here in verses 2 and 3, the three enemies of the believer.

The world, the devil, and the flesh. They're all there in verse 2 and 3. We were dead, spiritually dead, surrendering to the lusts of our flesh, influenced by the forces in the world, and under the control of the prince of the power of the air, that's the devil. The same spirit that's now working in the sons of disobedience.

The emphasis on disobedience there, that the devil leads people to disobedience, just like he led Eve. The implication is, of course, that if you are born again and you've been delivered from the power of Satan, you should now be a son of obedience, just like disobedience to God characterized your life when you were under the control of Satan. Obedience to God should characterize your life if you are really under the control of the Holy Spirit.

And we formerly lived according to that, indulging the desires of the flesh and the mind and so on, doing our own will, doing whatever satisfied us. And by nature, right from birth, we were all children of wrath. Children who lived in sin, surrendering to the lust of our flesh, to the pleasures of the world, and the influences of Satan, and as a result, dead, and children that deserved God's judgment.

In that condition, God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ. By grace, you have been saved. The work of salvation we see here is very clearly entirely the work of God.

There's nothing we can do to pull ourselves up from the pit in which we are. And God did it, not because of anything He saw in us, but the reason given here is God is rich in mercy and great in His love. Two things mentioned here in verse 4, the richness of God's mercy and the greatness of His love, which were the only reasons why He pulled us out of the pit, made us alive together with Christ.

Here we see a theme that runs through all of Paul's letters, union with Christ. That means when Christ rose up from the dead, we rose up together with Him. Now, you may say, well, I wasn't alive way back then, 2,000 years ago when Christ rose from the dead.

How could I have been raised up together with Him? How could I have died with Him? We saw earlier when we studied Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 4 that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. So as far as God's mind is concerned, you existed even before Adam was created. You were in God's mind.

And there's a verse in Romans which says, God calls the things that don't exist as though they do. And so, as far as God's concerned, you were there. And He placed you in Christ when Christ died 2,000 years ago, all of God's children.

And they all died in Him. And they rose again with Him and were made alive together with Christ. Here's another wonderful word, by grace you have been saved.

It's repeated again in verse 8. Grace is God holding out the blessings of heaven, every spiritual blessing in heavenly places as we saw in chapter 1, verse 3, offering them to us freely in Christ. That's grace. All of God's blessings, all of God's power, everything that we need for life and godliness on earth, God offers to us freely.

That is grace. Grace is not undeserved favor. Now, a lot of people have used that definition of grace.

And it's amazing how certain definitions can become popular without any scriptural foundation and gradually so popular that people begin to think it's almost found in some verse of scripture. But grace cannot be undeserved favor because even unbelievers get God's undeserved favor. And Old Testament people got God's undeserved favor.

Whereas John 1, 17 says grace came only when Jesus Christ came. There was no grace on earth before that. Verses like Genesis 6 where it says Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord only means that he found favor.

But grace as used in the New Testament is something John 1, 17 says came only through Jesus Christ. Today grace comes upon people through the Holy Spirit. And it is God's power providing us everything that we need for our salvation.

Beginning with the forgiveness of sins and all the way till the time we are raptured up to glory. So grace is not God's undeserved favor because everybody in the Old Testament got God's undeserved favor. Every unbeliever today gets God's undeserved favor.

But grace is much more than that. Grace is something distinctively available in the New Testament after the day of Pentecost because it's the Holy Spirit who communicates grace to us when He comes to dwell within us. He's called the Spirit of Grace in Hebrews 10, 29.

And it is through this grace that we are saved. In the Old Testament they never had salvation. They had forgiveness of sins as we read in Psalm 103 where it says, Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgives all your iniquities.

So they did have that a thousand years before Christ, David could say that. But what they didn't have was grace. God's Spirit dwelling within and empowering them.

They didn't have that. And so we see here that this grace is also what, it comes there in brackets, is what united us with Christ, raised us up together with Him, not only from the dead, but right up, verse 6, to the heavenly places with Him and in Christ Jesus. God raised us up and seated us with Christ in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

I'm sure that none of us have any doubt as to where Jesus Christ is today. We know that He ascended up to heaven, to the right hand of the Father, and nobody believes He's on earth. He's in heaven at the right hand of the Father.

But here is what is more difficult to believe, that we are also there in Spirit. Now if that's not true, then the Word of God's telling a lie here when it says He has seated us, Ephesians 2, 6, with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. God has placed us in Christ.

When He died, I died. When He rose up, I rose up. When He ascended, I ascended.

And when He's seated there, I'm seated with Him. And it is when I take that place by faith, that place in the heavenlies, along with Christ, in Christ, in the heavenlies, that I have the authority that's spoken of in Ephesians 1, verse 20 to 22, where all things are under His feet and all things are under my feet. Now, again, as we saw repeatedly in when we studied Ephesians chapter 1, the purpose of all this, what is the purpose of God giving us this grace? When we are self-centered, children of Adam, we think of everything around us as something for our benefit, and we consider all the time, right from childhood, how we can

use things and people for our benefit and gain.

The sad thing is that when people are converted, many Christians don't get rid of that habit. They haven't been converted from self-centeredness. They've been converted from going to hell and being judged by God and being converted to going to heaven and being forgiven by God.

But they haven't been converted or saved from their self-centered way of life. And so, when they hear of God's blessings or God's grace, they always think in terms of how will that benefit me? And that is not the primary purpose of God's grace. It says here that God does all this so that in the ages to come, in future ages, He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

So God's purpose is that in that final day, He will show the whole world what a wonderful work He did in us through the grace that He gave us in Christ so that He would be glorified. In other words, He'll pick us up one by one and show the world what terrible sinners we were and what a tremendous work He was able to do in us to make us so Christ-like before we ended our earthly life. This is the purpose of grace.

Today we turn to Ephesians and chapter 2. We were looking at verse 6, how God has raised us up with Christ, seated us together with Him in the heavenly places in Christ, so that in the ages to come, He can show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. In other words, our life should be so transformed that when we stand before the Lord, He can pick us up each as specimen cases of people who are so deep in sin, but in whom God did such a tremendous transforming work through the power of the Holy Spirit, through His kindness and through the riches of His grace. And He goes on to say now in verse 8, For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.

Salvation is by grace through faith. As we said earlier, salvation is more than forgiveness. Forgiveness is just blotting out the failures of the past, the guilt of the past.

But salvation is being delivered from the corruption of our nature as well. When it says by grace you have been saved, just like grace is a New Testament word, saved is also a New Testament word. And it means more than being forgiven, which is an Old Testament word.

Mercy is an Old Testament word. God is rich in mercy, Ephesians 2.4. That's in the Old Testament. The Lord is good, His mercy endures forever.

Repeated frequently in the Old Testament. But you never read about God's grace in the Old Testament. You never read about salvation in the Old Testament.

Nobody could experience it. None of the prophets, not even John the Baptist, the greatest of them all. But he who is least in the kingdom of heaven can experience these things.

Can experience God's grace that saves him. Saves him, first of all, from the penalty of sin. Salvation has got three tenses.

Past, present, and future. In the past, from the penalty or the punishment of sin, through the death of Christ on the cross and His resurrection, we're saved from the punishment due to us because of our sin. Then secondly, salvation in the present tense refers to being saved from the power of sin.

That's a daily affair. Because we need to be saved from the power of sin every day. It's not a once for all thing like being saved from the penalty of sin.

So we can say in relation to our past life and the penalty of sin, we have already been saved. That's finished. That's once for all.

But when it comes to being saved from the power of sin, from the sinful habits we've been enslaved to, from the things that come forth from our Adamic nature, which the Bible calls the flesh, from that, we have to be saved every day. Because there are so many things to be saved from until the day Christ comes again. And we will be totally like Him.

That's in the future. So that is salvation in the present tense, to be saved from the power of sin. And then there's a salvation in the future tense also, which is to be saved from the very presence of sin.

And that is when Christ comes again. We'll never be saved from the presence of sin as long as we're on this earth. We may fall any time.

Sin dwells very close to us in our flesh, even the most holy of us. We can trip and fall any day into sin. But the day will come when we'll be saved from the very presence of sin.

So, salvation is past, present, and future. We've experienced the past. We should be experiencing the present.

And we look forward to experiencing salvation in the future. But all three aspects of salvation are, by grace, through faith. It's not that salvation from the guilt of sin is by grace through faith, but salvation today from the power of sin is by our own effort.

No. That's the mistake the Galatians made. They started in the spirit and tried to be perfect in the flesh.

And it's not just the Galatians. There are multitudes of Christians who made that same mistake. You go to them and ask them, can you do a single work to get any of your sins forgiven? And they'll give you the right scriptural answer.

All our works are like filthy rags. All our good works, righteousness. We can't be saved by our works.

They understand that as far as salvation from the guilt of sin is concerned. But when it comes to salvation from the power of sin, they think it's going to be by their effort. That's not true.

It's God who sanctifies you holy. It's the Holy Spirit who conforms us to the likeness of Christ. We're not called to imitate God's nature.

We're called to partake of God's nature. And there's a lot of difference between imitating something and partaking of something. A pig can imitate a cat, but there's a lot of difference between a pig and a cat, even if it tries to imitate one.

If a pig could partake of Christ's nature, of a cat's nature, rather, it would be able to behave itself clean. So, here, salvation is by partaking of God's nature through faith. It's free.

It's by grace. God stretches out His hand and says, here you are. What is faith? Faith is my hand reaching up and taking from God's hand.

Grace is God's hand reaching down with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ for me. Faith is my hand reaching up and taking them one by one. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you for this. Thank you for this. Thank you for this.

And as we appropriate, like taking a check and cashing it in the bank, one check after another, we cash them in the bank, cash them in the bank, cash them in the bank, and we get the benefit. This is how we're supposed to live as Christians. A person who does not exercise his faith to receive what God is offering by grace will be a poverty-stricken Christian.

So, it says here, salvation is not of yourselves. Verse 8. Very important to understand that it is the gift of God. Salvation from guilt is the gift of God.

Salvation from the power of sin today is the gift of God so that no one should boast. Not, verse 9, not as a result of works so that no one should boast. That's the purpose.

The ultimate purpose is that nobody should be able to boast before God. Now, sometimes you find people who pursue holiness, you sense in them a tendency towards boasting. They may not do that in crude ways, but as you talk to them, they give you the impression that they are a little superior to you.

And they make you feel small. That means they're boasting. And if they're boasting, then the work that was done in them, whatever holiness they have, is their own product.

I mean, if I were to pass around a cake that somebody else baked, and people praise it, saying it's a wonderful cake, I won't even be tempted to take any credit for it because I say, hey, I didn't make this. Somebody else made it. I'm just passing it around.

Whereas, if I made that cake, if I baked it myself, and people praised that cake, saying it was a wonderful cake, I would really be tempted to be proud. It's the same with holiness. If your holiness is something you manufactured, then you'll be proud of it.

But if your holiness is something God gave you as a gift, you can't be proud of it. That's the difference. So whenever you see a man who appears to be holy and is proud of his holiness, you can be absolutely sure that's not the holiness the Bible speaks of.

The primary mark of the holiness the Bible speaks of is humility. Let me give you this little test which will save you from a lot of counterfeit holiness. If you've got the real holiness of God, my brother, sister, you'll be a humble person.

The holier you become, the humbler you'll become. And use that test for other people too. People who claim to be holy first evaluate whether they've got humility.

If they don't have humility, however upright they may appear to be, it's a counterfeit holiness. If you don't have humility, if you don't think of yourself as nothing in Christ, Christ is everything and you're nothing, if you don't think of yourself like that, whatever holiness you have is a counterfeit. Not a works lest anyone should boast.

In other words, if it were the result of human works, it would give room for people to boast. One could boast more than the other and one say, I've accomplished more than you. It says here that, continues on in the same theme, that we are His workmanship.

And the word workmanship in the Greek language is a word, poema, from which we get the English word, poem. We are God's piece of poetry. We're God's poem.

We're supposed to be something beautiful. We're His handiwork. We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works.

Now, a holiness as I said, which I have produced by gritting my teeth, is my own workmanship. And that's not beautiful. It's ugly.

When the pressure comes, you find it yields, and we sin. Whereas the workmanship of God does not fall or yield under pressure. God gives us grace.

We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works. Now, notice the balance in Scripture. It's beautiful to see the balance of Scripture, and very often cults are formed through a person taking one verse all by itself, and taking it off to an extreme.

Not of works, verse 9, but unto good works, verse 10. So there is no place for good works in order to be saved from the penalty of sin. But there's plenty of place for good works after we are born again in a life where we please God.

That's the contrast to verse 9 and 10 in the balance. Verse 8 and 9 is referring to God saving us, and our works are no use there. But after we are saved, we're saved not by works, but, verse 10, unto good works.

In other words, if you're really born again, your life should be characterized by good works. And if that's not true, of your life, then something is radically missing. God has prepared these works beforehand that we should walk in them.

In other words, God's made a specific plan for your life that you should walk in those good works which He planned for you before the worlds were created.

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