

The first chapter was almost surreal. Paul took us into the heavenly realms and explained the reality of what God has done for us in Christ. He declared that we have every spiritual blessing in Jesus. God has lavished His grace upon us by sending Jesus to redeem us through His blood. He predestined us to be adopted into the family of God. Paul gave us a glimpse of God's plan (1:4; (5:26-27)), the choosing of a bride for Jesus, and how God went about sanctifying her, us! We saw the wonderful mystery of the sovereignty of God and the freewill of man. We read of the seal of the Holy Spirit that guarantees that we are heirs of all things.

Last week we went over Paul's prayer that asked for the Ephesians to be given a spirit of wisdom and revelation to know God better. He prayed that the eyes of our hearts would be enlightened to see the hope to which he has called us and the riches of God's glorious inheritance in the saints. We spoke of the need to see one another as we will one day be when the work in us is finished and we are like Christ. Then Paul declared that our perfection was inevitable because the power that is at work to transform is the power that raised Jesus from the dead. All things in heaven and earth will be united in Christ, and we are the body of Christ, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. It is so magnificent a plan that we struggle to grasp it with our minds, and certainly our hearts cannot yet contain it all or we would be constantly overflowing with joy. Wait a minute! Maybe that is how we should be! Wouldn't that make unbelievers hungry to know our Redeemer and Lord! (1Peter 1:8)

But after that awe inspiring glimpse of God's plan, Paul reminds us from where we have come. To appreciate the final product, you have to see the original material. Then you can see how much has been accomplished. ¹ *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins² in which you once walked*, Our body was moving and breathing and our brain was functioning, but our spirit did not know life. Jesus is life! He said so! (John 14:6) Until life enters our spirit, it is dead. Our soul directed our life according to our own desires. We lived for self, for pride, possessions, and power. We were our own god, and we worshiped whatever we thought would serve us best. That is what the Bible calls "dead".

We crossed the line that God set and we missed the mark of righteousness by miles. We were enemies of God in our mind and in our actions. (Colossians 1:21) Without realizing it, we were enslaved by evil and under a mountain of debt toward our loving Creator.

Paul goes on to say that we were *following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience*

Commented [Paul1]: Ephesians 1:4 (ESV)
⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love

Commented [Paul2]: Ephesians 5:26-27 (ESV)
²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,
²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Commented [Paul3]: 1 Peter 1:8 (ESV)
⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,

Commented [Paul4]: John 14:6 (ESV)
⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Commented [Paul5]: Colossians 1:21 (NIV)
²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.

Satan took charge of this world and its kingdoms when Adam abdicated the role God had given him in the Garden of Eden. (Genesis 1:28) You'll recall that Satan offered Jesus the kingdoms of this world. (Luke 4:5-6) The course of this world is set by Satan. Though God's plan will ultimately prevail, Satan is still the prince of this world. (John 12:31) He still needs permission to touch God's people and has boundaries set by God, but he has a lot of leeway to wreak havoc, especially in the lives of those who are knowingly or unknowingly following him.

³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

The Satanic primary command is, "Do what thou wilt!" When the spirit is dead the soul lives for the passions of the flesh. Every effort is to carry out the desires of the body and mind which are by nature (the fallen nature we inherited from Adam) selfish. It's all about me, myself, and I, the unholy trinity. Even actions that look generous are to gain the respect of men because we selfishly crave honor. The more we are honored, the more we can have our way. That is why we are shocked when someone we thought was good person is exposed as a swindler or adulterer. Their actions appeared to be genuine goodness but their heart was craving respect for selfish reasons.

Mankind is born in sin and by nature an object justly deserving the wrath of God. A few weeks ago Ryan shared a testimony of man who had a vision of hell. We don't talk about hell much. When we come across it in whatever passage we are studying, we don't shy away from it. D.L. Moody liked to preach on hell to put the fear of God in people until he saw the results of Billy Sunday preaching on the love of God. At first Moody was angered, and then he considered that it is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance. (Romans 2:4)

Someone asked if it seemed unfair for the unrepentant to suffer in hell eternally. I prayed about a better way to help believers understand the wrath of God upon the unrepentant and I believe God gave me the following way to express it. We know that Satan cannot prevail, but if he did, and if he gave you the same option, "Worship me or suffer forever!", what would you do? My mind is made up. I'd tell him what Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego told king Nebuchadnezzar. "God can deliver me, but if He doesn't, I still won't worship you!" (Daniel 3:17-18) My mind is made up for all eternity. Nothing can change it. We are eternal souls. Just as our mind is made up to worship and serve God, there are those whose minds are made up once and for all to reject goodness, righteousness, and truth. They would be just as miserable in heaven where all the focus is on Jesus. Their fingers would be in their ears as we sang songs of praise to God.

Commented [Paul6]: Genesis 1:28 (ESV)

²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

Commented [Paul7]: Luke 4:5-6 (ESV)

⁵ And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time,
⁶ and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will.

Commented [Paul8]: John 12:31 (NIV)

³¹ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.

Commented [Paul9]: Romans 2:4 (ESV)

⁴ Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

Commented [Paul10]: Daniel 3:17-18 (ESV)

¹⁷ If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.
¹⁸ But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.

God will not make us repent. He will not force us to accept His goodness. He will not invade our mind and force our attitude to change. The life in heaven would drive the dead soul insane. Justice demands that those who are set against goodness and truth, and reject the salvation that was so dearly paid for them, face the consequences of their choice. "Vessels of wrath" is the condition of everyone, but everyone has the opportunity to become a vessel of the Holy Spirit of God. (Romans 8:9) The choice will be clear to all, and sadly, many will chose to set their hearts forever against the goodness of God. (Matthew 7:13) The reason we want to argue with God's justice is that either we don't understand the horror of sin, or we don't want to recognize what we deserve.

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, One of my favorite phrases in the Bible is the little two word phrase with which this verse starts, "But God"! This is how it is and who we are ... but God! Let me share with you just a few of my favorites. When Joseph's brothers feared he would get even with them for selling him into slavery he said to them, Genesis 50:20 (NIV) *²⁰ You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.* Man has evil intentions, but God is always working to bring good out of our mess, often in ways beyond our comprehension. 1 Samuel 23:14b (ESV) *^{14b} And Saul sought him every day, but God did not give him into his hand.* When David was hunted by King Saul, it wasn't up to David's cunning or Saul's ability or the strength of their forces. It was God that kept David for His own purposes. In one of the Psalms of David, David speaks of death as the destiny of the mighty. Psalm 49:15 (ESV) *¹⁵ But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me. Selah* David expressed his faith that God is greater than death. This next one is for those in sickness or old age. Psalm 73:26 (ESV) *²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.* Our bodies may fail us and our heart might give up, **but God** is the real strength of the heart of those who trust Him and He is ours forever as we are His! I could go on and on.

We were vessels of wrath and completely without hope, (Ephesians 2:12) enslaved to sin (John 8:34) and rebels toward God, but God is rich in mercy! His love toward us is so great! Hallelujah! He is just and holy, but He is also merciful and loving. I know what I deserve, but God...

Because of His great love toward us, *⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved...* God didn't give life to our spirit because we got our act together or because we did some good deed. Dead people can't do anything truly good. (Psalm 14:1) We were dead in our sins. This is how Paul states it in the book of Romans 5:6-8 (ESV) *⁶ For while we were still weak, at*

Commented [Paul11]: Romans 8:9 (ESV)

⁹You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

Commented [Paul12]: Matthew 7:13 (ESV)

¹³"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.

Commented [Paul13]: Ephesians 2:12 (ESV)

¹²remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Commented [Paul14]: John 8:34 (ESV)

³⁴Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.

Commented [Paul15]: Psalm 14:1 (ESV)

¹The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good.

the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. While we were rebelling against Him, as ungrateful wretches, Jesus died to save us! (1Timothy 1:15)

God not only saved us through Jesus death on the cross, but He also (⁶ *and*) *raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus*, When we die to our old self with Jesus on the cross, we are then raised with Jesus and seated with Him in the heavenly realms, for we are in Christ Jesus. You are with Him and in Him and He is in you.

To understand how fantastic it is to be seated with Jesus, you must understand where Christ is seated. The right hand of God is the place of power and authority. (Mark 10:37) Once again, Paul is telling us something that is very difficult for us to comprehend and accept because of the greatness of the claim.

One of the verses of Scripture most quoted by Jesus was Psalm 110:1 (ESV) ¹ *The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."* Jesus is at the right hand of Almighty God waiting for all things to be made subject to Him. You and I and all believers are seated with Him in Him there. Once again we see why some call this letter the letter of the cosmic Christ. The rich mercy of God along with His great love redeemed us through Christ's death and raised us through the power of resurrection to sit with Christ at the right hand of God! By God's glorious grace we've gone from being vessels of wrath in rebellion toward God, to having a seat at the most honored place in all creation, His right hand! That's mind boggling!

Why would God do something so gracious as that? ⁷ *so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.* God is revealing Himself through His actions. Just as our actions show who we are in character, so the actions of God reveal His nature to us. He raises us up and seats us with Jesus to show the immeasurable riches of His grace. That grace was demonstrated in the kindness we received through the work of Christ Jesus.

Perhaps the fall in the Garden and all the suffering in the world, and all evil man has chosen was necessary to demonstrate the immeasurable riches of God's grace. What would freewill beings do when presented with good and evil? Eventually they will choose the evil and go down the road humanity has chosen. But the more important question is, what would a good and holy God of love and mercy do in response? He demonstrated the immeasurable riches of His grace in an incredible expression. That expression was the cross of Jesus and the result it has is now and forever in our lives. (Hebrews 7:27) He demonstrated His gracious and loving heart.

Commented [Paul16]: 1 Timothy 1:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

Commented [Paul17]: Mark 10:37 (ESV)

³⁷ And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory. E

Commented [Paul18]: 1 Timothy 1:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. Here is your next memory verses if you haven't memorized it already. Note that it follows this amazing truth of being seated with Christ in the heavenly realms. We are seated there because it was by grace we were saved through faith. We didn't have anything to do with it. God planned it to show us who He is. No work of ours could ever have earned that forgiveness and position we have in Jesus. All the glory goes to God for His gracious gift. We simply accepted this free gift bought and paid for by Jesus Christ. (Acts 13:31)

In fact, there is no way we could have ever done it on our own. Our only hope was that God would somehow intervene. We were doomed objects of wrath, **but God...**

¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Believers in Jesus are God's workmanship. He is the designer and finisher of the product. The end result is a bride suitable for His son, a partner for the Trinity. God is the master designer. We are the masterpiece. Remember, a few weeks ago I encouraged you to do what Paul was doing and envision the final product. We are a work in progress, but oh what a thing God is creating. (Revelation 21:2) Don't get discouraged with the process in yourself or others. God will finish what He began. (Philippians 1:6)

We are created in Christ Jesus for good works. God prepared those good things in which we participate with Him before we were born. That too is a demonstration of His kindness and immeasurable riches of His grace. He didn't have to include us in what He is doing in the earth, but He chose to do so out of love. He has opportunities for you on a regular basis to step into His preplanned good works. You join with Him in the good things He is doing and in the process store up treasures in heaven. (Matthew 6:20)

We serve an amazingly gracious and good God! If He is so merciful and kind to us, no wonder He expects us to be the same with others. (1Peter 1:15) If He demonstrates such love toward us, no wonder He commands us to love one another. (John 15:12) If God is beautiful in holiness (Psalm 29:2), no wonder His masterpiece will be beautifully holy as well, when the work is completed. It looks impossible from my vantage point... **but God...!**

Questions

- 1 Review the first chapter.
- 2 Why does Paul say we were dead?
- 3 How does he describe our former life?
- 4 Who is the prince of this world?
- 5 We were objects of _____!

Commented [Paul19]: Acts 16:31 (ESV)

³¹ And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

Commented [Paul20]: Revelation 21:2 (ESV)

² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Commented [Paul21]: Philippians 1:6 (ESV)

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Commented [Paul22]: Matthew 6:20 (ESV)

²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Commented [Paul23]: 1 Peter 1:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,

Commented [Paul24]: John 15:12 (ESV)

¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Commented [Paul25]: Psalm 29:2 (ESV)

² Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.

- 6 What changed that? How?
- 7 What is "raised up with Christ"?
- 8 What is "seated with Christ"?
- 9 Did we do anything to be saved?
- 10 What are we to God?