

Time to Reflect

- Can you think of some of the many ways in which we can seek to please ourselves as opposed to living faithfully for God?
- What do you find most amazing about God's love, mercy and grace?

Last week we focused on the importance of spiritual growth and we were encouraged to recognise the great wealth that we have in Christ. We also studied Paul's great prayer and saw how it affects our daily Christian living. This week our attention is drawn to the themes of God's love and grace. We will reflect on the remarkable transformation that God affords us when we turn to Him in faith and with repentance.

"What a miracle of God's grace! We are taken out of the great graveyard of sin and placed into the throne room of glory."

(Warren Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians*, p51)

Specifics

- This week's passage is tremendously powerful. It reminds us of what God has done for all sinners and it highlights the incredible spiritual change that occurs when we are 'Made Alive In Christ.'
- 1. Sin's Work Against Us (v1-3)**
 - The opening three verses of our passage reveal much about the significance of living in ways that displease God. Paul taught with directness and honesty, out of pastoral and spiritual concern for the Ephesians.
 - Note how he declared "...you were dead in your transgressions and sins..." (v1). This is a reference to spiritual death and Warren Wiersbe helps us understand what this means. He writes, "Of course, this means spiritually dead: that is, he is unable to understand and appreciate spiritual things. He possesses no spiritual life, and he can do nothing of himself to please God."¹
 - The cause of this spiritual death, as identified by Paul (v1), is transgressions and sin. In Romans 6:23 we are reminded that "The wages of sin is death." In the Bible, death means 'separation.' This may be physical separation (soul from the body) as mentioned in James 2:26 or spiritual separation from God (Isaiah 59:2).
 - The coming of spiritual death can be traced back to the Garden of Eden and it was caused by disobedience. Wiersbe reflects, "Since that time, mankind has lived in disobedience to God. There are three forces that encourage man in his disobedience – the world, the Devil, and the flesh."²
 - The world, or ways of the world, seek to pressurise each person to conform (Romans 12:2). Christians are called to be distinctive, authentic and faithful to God.

¹ Warren Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians* (David C Cook, 2009), p52.

² Ibid, p53.

- The devil is “...the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient” (v2). Unlike God, Satan is not omnipresent and cannot be everywhere all of the time. But he does influence the lives of all people through “...the powers of this dark world....and the spiritual forces of evil...” (Ephesians 6:12).
- One way Satan tries to get people to disobey God is through the use of lies and this was also evident from the very beginning in Eden.
- The flesh is, essentially, the fallen nature that we were all born with. We are tempted to sin and we succumb to temptation because of the reality that human nature is fallen. Quite often, we live to please ourselves and not God (v3b).

2. God’s Work For Us (v4-9)

- The passage now focuses on God and His work for us. As we read this section we can recall the teaching contained in Jonah 2:9, “Salvation is of the Lord.”
- (v4) challenges us to focus on God’s great love. However, it is important to see the love of God as it exists in relationship to the earlier teachings of (v1-3). With this in mind, Wiersbe reflects, “Love is one of God’s intrinsic attributes, but when this love is related to sinners, it becomes grace and mercy.³”
- Indeed, the mercy of God is also mentioned in (v4). In His mercy and through His love, God offers each of us what we do not deserve. This is made possible because of what occurred on Calvary’s hill.
- The sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross was God’s ultimate expression of love and mercy, so that we could be eternally forgiven and afforded the opportunity to be made alive in Christ, as opposed to being dead in transgressions and sin. Ultimately, this is all about God’s amazing grace (v5).
- Wiersbe unpacks this even further as he contends, “We are not raised from the dead and left in the graveyard. Because we are united to Christ, we have been exalted with Him, and we are sharing His throne in the heavenlies.⁴”
- Put simply, we are exalted by God so that we can enjoy His fellowship for all eternity (v6).

3. God’s Work In Us (v10)

- Having been rescued from the reality and consequences of sin, and having experienced God’s love and mercy in our lives, we then pursue holiness in our daily living.
- Day by day, God works in us to lead us ever closer to becoming the people that He would have us be. We must be open to God working in us through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Conversion is hugely important but it is the beginning and not the end of our Christian journey. God’s purpose is to make each of us more like Jesus (Romans 8:29) and He is continually equipping us for our walk and our work here on earth.
- We need to be a prayerful people and we need to study the Word of God each day. As we spend time with God, we learn more about Him, and we should strive to apply that learning to our daily lives. This is the journey of a lifetime.
- This is God’s work in us so that we ultimately experience God’s work through us (v10).
- Wiersbe offers an excellent concluding observation. He suggests, “As a Christian, you have been raised and seated on the throne. Practice your position in Christ! He has worked for you; now let Him work in you and through you, that He might give you an exciting, creative life to the glory of God.⁵”

³ Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians*, p55.

⁴ Ibid, p56.

⁵ Ibid, p61.