

# Studies on Ephesians

## Study 3: Ephesians 2:1-10

© BETHANY HOPE BIBLE STUDIES

2009

Authored by: Mark Watson

# Studies on Ephesians

## Study 3: Ephesians 2:1-10

### Background

In Chapter 1 Paul wrote of the great purposes and plan of God, culminating in the universal headship of Christ (1:10), all of which is to be for “the praise of His glory” (1:14). He now goes on to explain the steps by which God will accomplish His purposes, beginning with the salvation of individuals, both Jew and Gentile alike.

### The Message

#### Verses 1-3

These verses tell us about:

- i. The nature of humanity.
- ii. The nature of evil.
- iii. The work of Satan in the world.

### The nature of humanity

#### Questions

1. What do you think it means here to be ‘dead’?
2. Is this condition something that can only affect humanity?

Our past moral and spiritual condition was an existence separated from the life of God. In the Bible, to be dead is to be beyond any human help or hope. It describes the nothingness with which we could be left when once our heart and brain stop functioning. In Ephesians 2:1 the state of death describes us when we were left in our sin and transgressions, without hope and lifeless (life apart from God). However, in the Bible even the dead have a history because God will judge them (2 Timothy 4:1, Revelations 20:13).

### The nature of evil

#### Questions

1. What are the signs of us being ‘dead’ in this context?
2. How might we define sin?
3. How might we define evil?
4. What do you think it means by the expression “Children of wrath” (v3)?

“All those who are in their sins, are dead in sins. A state of sin is a state of conformity to the state of the world”. We only need to look around us today to see the state of the world. The **“whole of creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time”** (Romans 8:22). Through the fall, creation is subject to bondage and so it sighs or groans until God’s children are manifested. Christians also groan as they await the transformation of the earthly body. The Spirit sighs in His intercession for us, which cannot be expressed or grasped in human words, but which God understands. The reference here is not to the Spirit’s work in us, e.g. in prayer or tongues, but to intercession on our behalf in the divine sphere where human words are totally inadequate.

## The work of satan in the world

### Questions

1. What do we know of satan?
2. How much of that is from what we read of in the Bible? (Reference, reference, reference!)
3. What is the course of this world?

It is interesting that some people express a belief in God, but do not believe in satan! Yet we know that satan is the “*prince of this world*” (John 14:30). He has a hold on people because of their fallen state. Since Christ was sinless, satan could have no hold on Him. Satan is no earth-bound enemy (Ephesians 6:12). Satan is a created, but not a human, being (Job 1:6, Ezekiel 28:15). Satan comes to bring division, to corrupt all that is pure, and to rebel against the will of God. In contrast to what we have read in Ephesians, we must also remember that through Christ NOTHING can separate us from God’s love (Romans 8:38). In 1 Peter 5:8-9 we are told to “*Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in the entire world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering.*”

### Verses 4-10

These verses tell us about:

- i. God who is rich in mercy.
- ii. God’s plans.
- iii. God’s grace.
- iv. God’s purpose.

### God, who is rich in mercy (verse 4)

#### Questions

1. What does mercy mean to you?
2. What is the difference between grace and mercy?
3. What is the basis of our salvation?
4. How does this shape our understanding of the atonement?

Mercy is an attribute of God that demonstrates the character of His love towards us. It reminds us that everything we have has been given by God as a gift. He did not have to make Himself known to us or offer us a way of salvation. James 2:13 says “*Mercy triumphs over judgment*”, and when we start to think of the overwhelming nature of God’s love to us it is a tremendously humbling and awesome experience (1 Peter 1:3).

### God’s plans (verse 7)

#### Questions

1. How does this verse speak into our understanding of salvation?
2. What are God’s riches?

Even when we were ‘dead’ God loved us and in verse 7 we see how God’s plans for us are that we should experience His “immeasurable riches” not as a one-off, but as a consequence of moving into a deeper relationship with Him. In Ephesians 3:16 we see that through prayer and according to the “*riches of His glory, he may strengthen our inner*

*being with power through His Spirit*". So we see that in God's eyes "riches" are about relationship and discipleship.

## God's grace and purpose

### Questions

1. What does verse 8 mean to us?
2. Why is verse 10 so important?

Even though we are Christians and have been Born Again, Paul keeps stressing the importance of us realising that our salvation is through grace, it is a gift. Our faith is an integral part of that. We can do nothing to earn or to deserve favour with God, and as Paul astutely points out, it prevents us from boasting either in ourselves or in someone else. Later in Hebrews, we are warned more severely about the consequences of human sin if people have not obtained grace (Hebrews 12:15). However, having become Christians {through which we are God's workmanship, which has the literal connotation of 'work of art'}, God can enable us to do the good works He prepared for us beforehand. These good works are not in the worldly nature of having a job or 'doing a good turn' but rather should be our way of life, as natural as breathing, and an outpouring or fruit of the Holy Spirit who we have been blessed with. To do good works one must be a shoot of the true vine (John 15:5).

### Questions

- i. Think for a few moments of what might be signs of a broken / fallen world, and then write them down in a list. Once you have produced the list, think of the opposites of each of the signs you have written down. Does the second list give you some pointer of what heaven might be like?
- ii. The devil prowls around like a roaring lion. This is a very vivid picture, and for very good reason. What measures do you think we may apply or practice might we follow to avoid this 'roaring lion'?
- iii. To what extent are God's 'riches' apparent in your life, and what changes do you think you could make so that they might be more apparent?