

**QUEEN OF THE EPISTLES - THE GRACE OF GOD**  
**EPHESIANS 2:1-10**  
**2026-01-18**

We're into the third week of our series on Ephesians, referred to by some as the Queen of the Epistles because the apostle Paul is presumed to have written it while he was in prison in Rome near the end of his career. Having finished the contentious issues in his writing to the Colossians—freedom from works for salvation, from the need to be circumcised, from food sacrificed to idols as well as the rumour that Christ had already returned (the second coming) and had been missed—Paul set to write 1 letter, positive in tone, fundamental and the great doctrine of his life **—the unity of all humanity in Christ and God's purpose for the world through the Church.**

When Stephen was stoned to death—in the presence of Saul (the same Paul who was now writing this letter) a persecution broke out against Christians and the church scattered away from Jerusalem. What had been up to that time an exclusively Jewish sect was adopted by Gentiles who realized the Gospel was for everyone. But seeing the Gospel as being for all people was considered heresy by the Jews. To Paul's bitter sorrow, he saw his doctrine of Christian freedom erected a new barrier against the conversion of the Jewish nation; the universality of the Gospel was ironically excluding the Jew. This change was swift once it started as a result of Paul's missionary action. Splitting the Church into Jewish and Gentile factions was fatal to the mission of Christianity, which was intended to be the healer of the world's divisions.

This background shaped Paul's understanding of **God's plan** and **our place** in it. In fourteen verses, we hear **who God is, who we are, what God wants for us and what we need to do/how.**

Paul called himself an apostle of Christ, by the will of God—to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles. We too should be amazed that God finds each of us worthy to share in His work.

**WE WERE CHOSEN BY GOD** before the beginning of the world. It was always God's plan to confer salvation on us. We've been in God's plans forever. **THE PLAN OF GOD:** "He predestined us for **adoption** as sons through Jesus Christ." How could God convey His love and care for us or the privilege He gives us to be full family members in any deeper way? We were in the power of sin and of the world. Jesus took us out of that power into His and has equipped you to be who He wants you to be. So as believers we find ourselves participating in God's eternal plan.

**THE GIFTS OF GOD:** **Christ redeemed** (delivered) **us** through His blood. Second, there is **forgiveness**. Jesus changed the sense of sin and dreading God, teaching not hate but the love of God. **THE GOAL OF HISTORY:** Christ is God's mystery revealed and His love and care, His grace and mercy are meant for all the world. Jesus came into the world to wipe out all divisions. All history has been a working out of this process, working out the will of God. The

purpose of all life is found in, is central to, and rests in Christ. All things are gathered together, the sum of all things, the uniting of all things in heaven and earth, all things everywhere are **in Christ!**

We've an inheritance that God planned from the beginning so that we will bring praise and glory to Him—that's our purpose! Having believed in Christ, we're marked with a seal, the promised HS, a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance (as adopted children). You and I belong to God.

Jesus—far above anything, owner of every title—not just here but forever—with **EVERYTHING** under Him; the One who fills **EVERYTHING IN EVERY WAY**. The knowledge of God's will unites and brings all things together in Christ; It is the mission of the church to make Jesus known. God's plan for the world is in the hands of the church. Jesus is counting on every one of us to love and honour Him and loving every other to bring about the unity of all people—why Jesus came.

We talk a lot about grace. I try to ensure it is included in some way or another in every message. The grace of God. This is one of the places in Scripture where Paul ensures we don't miss it. After all I've just said in the lengthy intro about the awesomeness of God and His complete care for us, Paul says, "As for you—that's us—you were dead in your transgressions and sins." We may think we're more like a floundering swimmer, going under once, twice then saved by the hand of God reaching down to draw us to Himself. Nope. Paul says we were dead. And best I know, dead people don't reach for anything. God infused us; we did nothing. Grace: all God.

He says we were dead in our transgressions and sins. That's the cause of our death. The Greek word for sin is *hamartia*—a shooting word. It literally means missing the target. That gives sin a universal meaning; it's not just about murderers or thieves or adulterers. Everyone misses the target. We're not the best parents, siblings, friends, colleagues, children, spouses we could be. We all fall short at some or several points. It's hard not to bristle at being called hell-deserving sinners. But we come face to face in this word of failure to be what we ought to be and could be. Life is permeated with sin. The other word Paul uses is trespasses. It's not just a synonym for sin (*paraptoma*), it's a slip or fall, particularly in the sense of a person losing the way or straying from the right road or failing to grasp or slipping away from the truth. It's taking the wrong road when we could take the right one; missing the truth when we should have known. Have we reached the goodness to which we might have attained? Sin is failure. It's every one of us.

The effect of sin is deadly. It kills innocence. No one is the same after he's sinned. Sin leaves a permanent effect on us. We never see things with the same pristine clarity after it. Innocence, once lost, can never be recovered. Sin is deadly. It kills ideals. Once you've sinned, that which you didn't want to do but did, or wanted to do but didn't, becomes easier to do/not do again. Sin is deadly. It kills the will. In the beginning something may be done because you want

to. In the end, it may be done because you cannot help doing it. You become a slave to it. Sin may be forgiven but its effects remain.

In verse two, Paul moves to this as the way you used to live when you followed the ways of the world and the ways of the evil 1, at work in those who are disobedient. We all started there, but we can move on from there. The new life demands forgiveness and love (even to our enemies), and service, traits that are deemed weak in a competitive world that thrives on profitability as the ultimate goal. The world sets itself as the centre. We set Christ and others as the centre. The world knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. Such a life is at the mercy of desire—desire for the wrong or forbidden thing.

In verse three, in that worldly state, we followed the cravings of our sinful nature—not just sexual sin, but also things such as idolatry, hatred, wrath, strife, envy, heresy—anything which gives sin a chance. It is human nature without God, the worst part of us dominates us, and do you see, such living is deserving only of the wrath of God. We all deserve only condemnation. Note Romans 8. It is only in Christ and His love for us that we are forgiven and there is no condemnation.

Verse 4-5, the swing verse of this passage: *“But...because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in our transgressions...”* You can picture Ezekiel in the valley of bones as God breathed on the dead bones and they enfleshed and resuscitated to life. Because of His great love for us, because He is a God of mercy, He airlifted us from death to life.

What's that all about? Sin kills innocence. Jesus can't reverse that, but He can and does take away the sense of guilt about the loss of innocence. Sin creates a feeling of estrangement between us and God. When Isaiah met God there was “Woe is me. I am a man of unclean lips.” When Jesus pulled in the miraculous catch of fish, Peter said, *“Get away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.”* Jesus begins by taking that estrangement away. He came to tell us that no matter what we are like, the door is open to the presence of God; God wants us just the way we are. Sin kills ideals. Jesus reawakens the ideal in our hearts. By that very rekindling, life can rise again. Sin kills the will. Greater than anything else, Jesus revives and restores the lost will. Jesus recreates the will—that is what love always does. Love compels us to goodness.

*Verse 6: “And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms...so that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”*

It's hard to fathom, but as believers in Jesus, and as a part of God's plan to confer salvation on us from the beginning of time, we have been seated with Christ in heaven. It's past tense. It's a done deal! Joann has just returned to where she was intended to be all along. How nice is that! Why? Because of the incomparable riches of His grace—grace, undeserved, unattainable favour of God. This precious gift of God.

So, you have been saved by grace, through faith, but here's the thing; this faith isn't even from you, it's a gift from God. It puts to rest the notion of people telling you, you just need more faith. Somehow, we need to believe, but it's not to our credit. Lots of times we refer to someone who has great faith, but that faith starts and ends with God. No one can boast about it. I think one of the most grievous things anyone can say is, "this will happen (you will be healed...) if you just had more faith. God is the author and the owner of faith. Some how we slide into His will and become the benefactors of the faith He gives. We just accept it.

Put this in the context of sin. It is not God's laws that we've sinned against; it is against His heart. And therefore, only an act of free forgiveness of the grace of God can put us back into the right relationship with Him. And to the next point, works have nothing to do with "earning" salvation. However, we are recreated by God for good works. All the good works in the world can't put us right with God. That said, there is something radically wrong with a Christian not engaged in good works. Not mysterious, this is an inevitable law of love. When we're loved, we cannot and do not deserve it. Yet we know we must spend all life trying to be worthy of it. That's our relationship with God. It is absolutely not that our good works in debt God to us. God is never indebted to anyone. Rather, God's love lays on us the obligation to try through all life to be worthy of it.

We know what God wants us to do. Long beforehand He has prepared the kind of life He wants us to live and has told us about it in His Word and through His Son. We won't earn it but we can show how grateful we are for God's love by seeking with our whole hearts to live the kind of life which brings joy to God's heart. Let's do that this week.