

Ephesians Chapter 2

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This lesson covers the last handful of verses of Chapter 1 and all of Chapter 2. In the original Greek, it is interesting that Paul uses a lot of run-on sentences here! It is as if he's so overwhelmed by what God does for us as believers, whoever's taking dictation from Paul can barely keep up with his thoughts. It's the perfect way to open the lesson as Paul (and I) desire Christians to grasp what a blessed privilege it's to be part of that club. If you're wondering what's in it for me, realize that Paul states that the Christian church (those who believe in Jesus in the "church age"), gets a greater eternal status than whoever else is and will be in heaven. This section of the book gives us clues of why we exist and what will happen to us eternally! Paul was so excited to explain this it's as if he could barely contain himself. Again, the original Greek has a bunch of run on sentences. With all that out of my system, let's talk about the text itself and what all of this means for our eternal destiny!

As I said, I left off at Verse 15 of Chapter 1. Before I start, let me get something off my chest: Here is what I consider the hardest bible parts to teach: First I say the book of Genesis, not because it is hard to understand but the scope is so wide, it's hard to get one's "arms around it". I'd then argue that the last 9 chapter of Ezekiel is up there because it doesn't tie to any historical event so it's hard to describe. Then my third and final choice for the hardest part of the bible to grasp is the first 3 chapters of Ephesians. I am pounding the point that Paul speaks in run-on sentences (in the original Greek). I suspect he's trying his best to try to grasp all God has done for us as believers! If I am struggling to explain the first three chapters of Ephesians, I'm in good company as the original author (Paul) struggled too!

It may help to explain this to think about where Paul was when he wrote this: He was in prison as he's waiting in Rome to be tried for the crime of preaching Jesus! Among his three missionary journeys he completed before that arrest, he spent three years in the city of Ephesus which is located in the country of Turkey today. (The city is mostly ruins today and a tourist spot!) Bottom line Paul had a spot in his heart for those believers there! He doesn't say, "You're all saved, good luck with your lives, and do not speak about Jesus or you'll be arrested like me!" Instead, Paul wants them and us to think about what it means to be saved! Paul uses biblical facts to help us grasp just what it means to be saved. In effect he is saying if God the Father had the power to raise Jesus from the dead, He's going to do the same for us after we die, but not just to save us to say, "sit on a cloud with a harp for eternity"! It is a reminder that Jesus rules over all (big emphasis on all) things in heaven and we get the privilege of ruling with Him!

So how do multitudes of people get close to Jesus and rule with Him? That's why I've always believed we exist in more than three dimensions in heaven! It allows all of us who've put our hope in Jesus to be close to Him for eternity! So who do we rule over? Angelic creatures and other believers who are not part of the church! Whether or not we think we deserve that, obviously we don't! It's only by His grace we get that benefit. God choose each believer before the world began to get that privilege! So what do we do with that privilege? We'll get to that in the 2nd half of this book. The first half is all about trying to comprehend what all that means! The bottom line is whether we feel we deserve this or not, if we're trusting in Jesus for our salvation, that's the deal so accept it!

Again the main purpose (in my opinion) of the first three chapters is to think about what it means to be a Christian and what's the benefit of that belief! Chapter 2 opens up by reminding us in effect, "We've never stood a chance of being eternally saved unless God picked us!" The fact most of us came from a non-Jewish background means we'd never even have a chance at salvation unless God explained all the aspects of who He is and what He's done. Since God's perfect, He expects perfection by us accepting a

perfect price paid for our sins (which is one of the many reasons why Jesus must be God!). Just saying if God never put this plan in place for Jesus to form a group of believers from all races and all walks of life to be the church, we'd all be wasting our lives as most people do today! Unfortunately, most people won't accept the idea that there's a single perfect God who expects perfection (perfectly forgiven) to be with Him forever! That's why most people try to earn God's favor by being a "good person". As most of us know that's a complete waste of time! Of course I believe Christians should live a good life not to earn His love but out of gratitude for what He did for us! That is why God created in the first place: to do good works so the world can see what it is God did for us and our gratitude for us!

While I'm dealing with the run-on sentence of Chapter 2, Verses 1-10, there's one part here that I admit is tough for me to grasp! I get the fact in heaven God will raise us up to be with Him. The mystery we don't get explained is Verse 7. It says in the ages yet to come (life in heaven) God will show us what is the extent of His grace. Yes, we can comprehend the fact we're saved just because God picked us. It is left to the imagination just what we do there. I can't see us being bored for all of eternity. Just saying it is beyond our imagination to understand what God has in store for us, which is why I believe Paul isn't expanding on what eternity means. For what it's worth, I've always viewed the bible as a guide on how God expects us to live here and now. What happens to us after we die, other than the fact we are saved for eternity, is up to Him to show us when we get there!

All of that leads to the next "run on" sentence of Ephesians (again in the original Greek): Verses 11 to 22 which is the end of Chapter 2, is one sentence in the original Greek. As I say constantly, the chapter breaks weren't added to about the time of the printing press (about a thousand years after Paul)! If I had to pick one word to describe this section, it is "unity". I'm well aware that Christian churches differ on non-salvation issues! I listened to many sermons by a pastor (Greg Laurie) from a hippie era. He gave his life to Jesus at a young age. He had a brother with a military background was also a Christian. His point is despite their different world perspectives, they are united as brothers. That point reminds me a little of Paul discussing Jewish and non-Jewish people (who became Christians) uniting to form what's the entity we call the Christian church. Realize it can be applied to believers of different social classes, background or even if one is male or female. As far as the church is concerned, there are only believers (who will be united with Jesus for all of eternity to rule over it) or those sentenced to hell because they refused to accept that free gift of salvation! As far as the naïve I'll let God judge them accordingly.

Of course, I've heard the arguments that is not fair! My first thought is it is God's world, so He decides who gets to be with Him forever! Yes, God calls on us to spread the Word because He chooses to work through people to lead others to Him. Yet only God knows who is saved! The way I look it at is all the people God meant to be there, will be there, no exceptions! So, is it fair someone is condemned to hell for all eternity for say murder or theft? Yes, but to reject God's free gift is to say in effect, "We do not want God to rule over us!" To quote the famous Christian author C.S. Lewis, "The gates of hell will be locked from the inside" referring to the fact they choose to reject God not the other way around.

You may have thought I wandered away from Ephesians, but no I have not! The key point is believers have become unified in Jesus because He made it possible through the cross! Before Jesus, non-Jewish people could only get "close to God" is by Jewish people witnessing to them! Do I believe non-Jewish people before Jesus are in heaven, yes but they're not part of the church! It's our faith in what Jesus did is the cornerstone of what the church is! It's not literal, in the sense we will not become pieces of stone that form a big church building! That is why I preach about heaven being a place where believers exist in more than three dimensions so we can all be close to Him. Of course, I believe heaven is a real place that God created to be with Him forever! Obviously I can't prove my specific theory about heaven, but I can study my bible and think logically about it, which is in a sense what Paul did!

Which leads me to the conclusion of this lesson. I know a lot of this stuff is "old news" to us veterans of bible study! I believe what Paul desires is that we spend time thinking about and being grateful for our salvation. When we spend time realizing all that God has done for us, it makes us grateful. As we know grateful people are happy people and if we are grateful for our salvation, we're willing to make a difference for Jesus which is why we were saved in the first place!