

The Book of Ephesians
Ephesians 2:1
Session 14: The Fulness of God's Grace

Remembrance #2

The next issue to have in mind is that all of this is due to God's grace. Even though we haven't begun chapter two yet, when we do, you will see my summary statement for the chapter: the fulness of God's grace to us in Christ, making us fit for our heavenly vocation. There is a natural segue from chapter one to chapter two that comes from Paul's discussion of grace (1:6-7).

As we read, we will notice that everything is "to the praise of the glory of His grace."

Ephesians 1:6 To the praise of the glory of his grace...

Ephesians 1:12...to the praise of His glory...

Ephesians 1:14...unto the praise of His glory...

We are going to step aside here to get a picture of God's glory and this will be information that opens our understanding of what Paul is saying in Ephesians 2.

This theme of grace continues on throughout the epistle.

Ephesians 1:7 ... the riches of his grace;

Ephesians 2:5 ... (by grace ye are saved;)

Ephesians 2:7 ... the exceeding riches of his grace...

Ephesians 2:8 ...by grace are ye saved...

Ephesians 3:2 ...the dispensation of the grace of God...

I want to pause for a moment and talk about the word "dispensation." There are many who just do not like that word and I am not just talking about individuals.

The Presbyterian Church USA describes dispensationalism as "evil and subversive." Calvinistic churches despise the notion of dispensationalism.

Why?

Firstly, because dispensationalism runs contrary to doctrinal stances which certain denominations hold to.

But notice, not every brand of dispensationalism is correct. At the same time, the critics of dispensationalism often misunderstand it and their rejection is based on their own misunderstanding.

A dispensation is a dispensing, and even though it takes place in time, it is not really about a period of time.

Another way people think about a dispensation is by thinking it is an allowance to do something which is not allowed. (Catholic) But this is not what the Bible has in mind when it talks about a dispensation.

A dispensation describes how God is going about, doing the things He is doing. A **dispensation** is really close to an *economy* (which is our English word derived from the Greek word). If we were to write the Greek word up on the board, it would be almost identical to our word economy as defined in its #1 definition:

I. The way in which something is managed; the management of resources; household management.

A dispensation of grace is a dispensing of grace as the way God is managing his work in the world.

Ephesians 3:7 ...the gift of the grace of God ...

Ephesians 3:8 ...this grace...

Ephesians 4:7 ... grace according to the measure...of Christ.

Ephesians 4:29 ...that it may minister grace...

The idea here is to show you the prominence of grace in Ephesians.

Toward the end of chapter one, Paul moves on to something else. He emphasizes the importance of understanding these things clearly. This is why his prayer for the Ephesians is that they may have “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.” He prays the eyes of their understanding will be enlightened; that they may come to know certain things and know them for certain.

If we are to fully live our sanctified lives, if we are to fully function as members of the body of Christ in this DoGG, we must have this spiritual understanding of certain things. What things?

- 1) The greatness of His salvation and the glory of it
- 2) The hope of His calling and the certainty of it
- 3) The glory of His inheritance
- 4) The exceeding greatness of His power

The key here to understanding what Paul prays for them/us to know, is to stop looking at outward things or even at ourselves and start looking at these great and glorious things!

We need to understand that for the most part, this life we are living is not about doing these things and not doing these other things (although there is some of that), but it is about what to know and believe. Just look at Paul's prayer at the end of chapter 1; that ye may know... Paul knows if they know about certain things, then their behavior will line up with the truth of God's word they have come to know.

This is an important principle which we will revisit over and over again.

Ephesians 1:18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is **the hope of his calling**, and what **the riches of the glory of his inheritance** in the saints, ¹⁹ And what *is* **the exceeding greatness of his power** to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, ²⁰ Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*,

It is that power that allows us to live in this present evil world, in the feebleness of our flesh, with human and cosmic opposition against us, facing a world steeped in sin and the evil of men, and not quit. It is that power that makes us more than conquerors in the face of all that confronts us. Paul knows that if we only understand these things, it will make all the difference to us, so he prays for that understanding.

We, today, must have this understanding. It is as necessary for us as for the Ephesians.

But notice something; as soon as Paul prays for them to understand these things, he proceeds immediately to give them a measure of instruction concerning it.

This is perfectly in line with what we have learned about sonship prayer. People sometimes think that I am teaching that we cannot make requests to God for things, but that is not correct. We can make requests, and I believe we should, but not as children, not as though God is going to magically make something happen. We make requests about those things as adults by praying for things which we will involve ourselves in accomplishing.

Prayer is meant to activate the doctrine in us, which is another way of saying that prayer should move us to live out of that doctrine in connection with those things we are concerned with.

Our godly action in connection with our prayer is the oft-missing element of true prayer. When we prayed like children, we liked to give God the list of stuff to do while we just sit back and hope it all works out okay. If it does, we like to say, "I

prayed for you.” If it doesn’t, we simply chalk it up to “It’s not my fault, I prayed for you; it must not have been God’s will.”

Prayer is not meant to be an island unto itself. Prayer, as it pertains to making requests, is not meant to be a mental exercise whereby we tell God what we would like to see happen and then we can walk away from all of it. Prayer requests are meant to be accompanied by godly actions which stem from the doctrine working in us. That is intelligent, sonship prayer; that is adult prayer.

So, if we think to pray for someone’s salvation, we should have on our “to do” list to witness to them. Prayer activates the doctrine! If we think to pray for someone who has a need (like groceries) then we should do what we can to alleviate their situation. In other words, if we are praying about some situation which can be fixed, then we should be involved in fixing it.

But what about those times when we cannot fix it? In those instances where we cannot accomplish our prayer because it is beyond the scope of our ability to perform (for example, the healing of someone who has suffered an accident and can no longer function to perform normal household duties) we may not be able to heal them. Does that mean we cannot pray for them? Of course we can, but the question is “What do we pray?” If our prayer is in connection with something we can do, then the question is: “what can we do?”

We can **encourage them** and our prayer life should include that kind of thinking. We can encourage them in the doctrine but, let me caution you not to resort to this too quickly. There is a time to “weep with those who weep” and that does not mean “give a sermon to those who weep.” There will be a time to encourage them in the faith, so be discerning.

Can we encourage someone who is suffering? Can someone suffer a debilitating physical injury and still be at peace in their inner man? Can we still consider ourselves blessed when we suffer physical needs? Can we still function as an adopted son even though our physical man is no longer functioning? The answer is “yes.” And can we have a part in that? Of course, we can.

We may not be able to heal them, but **we can perform various tasks for them** which they cannot perform, such as cleaning, cooking, picking up groceries, mowing the yard, etc. We can **love them** and find ways to **include them**. These kinds of actions should be the result of our mature prayer life and our concern for our fellow saints.

Following this same pattern, Paul prays for the Ephesians to understand these things, but then he immediately proceeds to give them a measure of instruction about those things.

Even in these areas, he isn't counting on God doing it some other way. His prayer activates the doctrine in him. If he is talking to God about His desire for them to know these three truths, then it makes perfect sense for him to begin teaching these things.

For example, he explains that the power working in them is the same power that "raised Christ from the dead and set Him at the right hand of God in heavenly places...". That is some great power, is it not?

That same power is working in us. So, think about how powerful the power is, that is working in you. Look at the verse again and see this issue being spelled out.

Ephesians 1:19 And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward **who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,**

In other words, we believe, *as a result of* (according to the working of) his mighty power! What is that supposed to mean to us? It means: if we are believers at all, it is because that power has already begun working in us!

Plus, there are things which were accomplished in us, by the power of God's grace, which we would not even know about unless we were told about it. In chapter two, we are going to be told about some of these things, and we will know them to be evidence that the power of God has already been at work in us.

Do not misunderstand what "the exceeding greatness of His power" is. This is not where we turn into the incredible hulk with some kind of superpower where we don't feel physical or emotional pain. Neither is this something you feel physically, like some terrific surge of energy or physical strength.

Paul will tell us this power is at work in us, in our inward man, in our spirit, not in our arms and legs and hands.

This is the power that is also at work in spiritual warfare. It is greater than depression, guilt, fear, anxiety, disappointment, anger, lust, and every other emotion that torments because we have believed a lie from the Adversary.

This power is greater than any stronghold Satan has built in our soul no matter how long we have had it. That power is so great, there are no excuses for failure.

And this sets us up for moving into chapter two, which we will do next time.