

Ephesians 1

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 June 2006

Preacher: Colin L Macleod

[0 : 00] We'll turn to the passage we read together in Paul's letter to Ephesians, in chapter 2, and we read there verse 1 together. As for you, you are dead in your transgressions and sins.

As for you, you are dead in your transgressions and your sins. Paul is writing to this church in Ephesus, and in chapter 1, at the beginning of this letter, he describes for us, for them and for us, for those who trust and hope within the Lord Jesus Christ, our spiritual possessions, which are in Christ.

And in doing so, he leads for us a paradigm, a framework for our whole lives. In chapter 1, starting at verse 3, all the way through to verse 14, which is one sentence in the original, Paul praises God for all that he has done.

Verse 3, praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms of every spiritual blessing. And then he goes on to expound what blessings God the Father has given, God the Son has given, God the Spirit has given to his people.

It's a great section, it's a marvellous section, it's a majestic section of praise. Praise to God. And then from verse 15 of that first chapter, going to the end to verse 23, Paul then turns to prayer.

[1 : 35] He prays that the Ephesians, and therefore he's praying, or he was praying that all believers, who grow an understanding of what it means to be a Christian, of what it means to be in Christ.

Look at verse 17 in chapter 1. I keep asking, he says, I ask continually, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, may be opened, in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you. He's praying that the believers would go to understand what God has done for them.

He's praying that believers in Ephesus, and today even, would know how greatly blessed you really are. Praise on the one hand, prayer on the other.

Isn't that not a good paradigm for our lives? Isn't that not a good paradigm for our worship? Isn't that not a good paradigm, a good structure for our quiet times? Which is for the whole of our lives, praising God for everything that he has done.

[2 : 47] He's done great things for us. He's done marvellous things for us. And then praying, that we would grow in the grace and in the knowledge of this Jesus. And the people around us would grow.

And that those who don't know, they would know, and come to believe, and come to have their eyes opened, to see, how rich we are, how blessed we are, how truly blessed we are.

So in chapter 1, Paul describes our spiritual possessions, what we have in Christ. And then in chapter 2, he turns to focus on our spiritual position in Christ, from possessions to position.

And in the first 10 verses, he explains what Christ has done for sinners in general, which can be stand up in verse 1 here, which he read, As for you, you are dead in your transgressions and your sins.

But those who are dead, he has made alive, in verse 5. You who are dead, have been made alive. And then from verse 11, to the end of this chapter, he goes on to explain what God has done for the Gentiles, in particular.

[3 : 57] In other words, those who are not Jews. And that can be summed up, probably by the words in verse 13 of chapter 2. But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far away, have been brought near.

How? Through the blood of Christ. But I tonight want to look at just these first 10 verses, as Paul focuses on our spiritual position in Christ.

And I want to look first of all, at what he's going to say about, what we were, before we became Christians. What you were.

What I was. What the Ephesians were. Before we became Christians. He says first of all, you were dead. That's what he says in verse 1.

As for you, you were dead. Now, that must mean something other than physically dead. Because you know, before you became a Christian, you were not physically dead.

[5 : 02] You were alive. You walked about. You did all sorts of things. Obviously, Paul is talking here about a spiritual realm. In relation to God. In relationship to Jesus.

In relationship to the Kingdom of God. We, under Ephesians, were dead. It wasn't that we needed rising from sleep.

It's that we needed a raising from the dead. It's not we needed resuscitation. It's that we needed resurrection. We were as dead as dead can be.

That is what we were. And I want to remind you, or let's remind ourselves that when we're in the world, when we're out there every day, those who do not trust in Jesus, let's remember they are dead.

That's what the Bible says. It's not what the man says. It's not what the preacher says. It's what God says. It's what God's Word says. Dead. We're walking in a graveyard. We're walking about two stones.

[6 : 04] In a place of death and darkness. And sometimes the people seem to be most alive and most happy. Well, they don't know at all that they are dead.

They're dead to God. dead spiritually. But more than that, Paul says, you were dead in your transgressions and your sins in which you used to live.

The way that we walked, the way that we lived, was such that Paul describes it as using two words, two biblical words for sin.

So we were dead to God, but we still did things. We still lived a life. And he says, yes, but that life you lived was characterized by transgression. That word means going beyond the mark.

And sins, falling short of the mark. Clever useful words Paul has. You see what he's saying? You were going beyond. You were going too far. In everything that you did, you were a rebel before God.

[7 : 15] And then when he says that you were dead in your transgressions and sins, you were a failure. You were missing the mark. You were falling short. So Paul is saying, we were dead and then even what we were doing, we were going too far, we were rebels, and then we were falling short.

We were failures. So sums up this picture of us of people who are hopeless. Absolutely hopeless. Dead in the sight of God.

That's the first thing he says. And then he says you were disobedient. In verses 2, in which dead in transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit is now at work and those who are disobedient.

All of us who lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts.

We were disobedient in how we lived. We disobeyed God. And our lives were focused on other things.

[8 : 24] There were other influences in our lives and Paul here outlines it for us. We call it the world, the flesh, and the devil. It's the three that are there. The world, he says in verse 2.

The ways of the world. The ways of the world meant more to us, didn't they? What people said about us meant more to us than what God said. What people thought about us meant more than what God thought.

How we looked meant far more than, how we looked in the eyes of the world meant far more than how we looked in the sight of God. That somebody had said, you know, you're clothed in a filthy garment in the sight of God.

You just said, wait on about man, you're mad. That's the latest stuff. I'm alright. My hair's okay. I'm looking good. I'm losing weight. That was what, that is the kind of influences that were upon us before we became Christians.

The world moulded us and shaped us. And let's always remember that is a past thing. We mustn't let the world shape us and mould us now. The world cannot shape us and mould us now because we're more concerned about what the Lord thinks about us than what any person thinks about us.

[9 : 35] It doesn't matter what we wear, what we look like ultimately. Man looks on the outward face. The Lord looks upon the heart. I fear that that is the case so that we are even at the church as a people, as Christians, we're becoming more concerned about the world.

What we've been brought from, these negative influences, that's to bring into mould and shape us. Rather than, what does the Lord think? What does the Lord say? How much time do we spend getting ourselves ready in the morning compared to spending time with Jesus?

You ask yourself that and I must ask myself that. What's more important? Getting up early to read the Bible and be with Jesus for getting our body to make sure that we're presentable for getting out there into the world.

That is the way we wear. The world did used to influence us totally. That's what Paul says. And then he says it's not just the world, it's the flesh.

Now, here in verse 3, the NIV describes it in this way. All of us also lived among them at one time gratifying the cravings of a sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts.

[10 : 58] That word is, you look at it again, it's flesh. The word is not sinful nature. That's not the word that's there. It perhaps can be translated sinful nature.

But the word is flesh. That word is used in different ways in the New Testament. John uses it in one way, the word was made flesh. Jesus did not become sinful human nature.

Of course he did. John uses it in one way, Paul uses it in another. So we have to be careful when we use these terms. But I think what Paul is saying is that what we wanted is what went.

What we desired is what we went out to get. Whatever the Lord said or what the Bible said, it didn't mean anything to us or very little. But what I wanted, what I desired, what I, my aim was, that is what was most important.

I was first. And even tonight, the mighty people here say, I don't put myself first. People who aren't Christians, I like to put others before myself. But in a sense, you are putting yourself first.

[12 : 05] Because by putting others first, it's to gratify yourself, it's to make you feel better. Put Jesus first. Put Him first in your life.

I challenge you to do that. And what do you say to that? If you don't say yes, then you are gratifying the cravings of the flesh which just wants to be fed.

We've all been there. Every Christian knows what it is. Just to want what's for me, me, me. And that is what Paul says.

We were disobedient. We followed the ways of the world. We only wanted what the flesh wanted. And then finally he talks about the devil. He describes us as the ruler in verse 2, the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who's not worth in those who are disobedient.

We talked about him this morning, and I'm a bit who'd love to talk any more about him, to be honest. Don't want to give him too much airtime. But he was an influence in our lives, as I think I said this morning, accusing us, distracting us, doing anything he could to keep us away from Jesus and from his word.

[13 : 29] The Bible tells us that the devil comes and takes away the word that is planted in the heart sometimes. That is what he does. that is what he was doing in our lives.

He was the prince of the power, the ruler of the kingdom of the air. And he said, what to those who are now disobedient? So the wild and the flesh and the devil, they were influences in our lives.

But when we before became Christians, we were dead, we were disobedient. Thirdly, Paul says, we were doomed. we were doomed.

He says, in the second part of verse three, like the rest we were by nature, objects, or as as the original children, of wrath. That's what we were.

We were doomed. Jesus says, whoever believes in you is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

[14 : 38] We were doomed. We were heading for destruction. We were dead. We were disobedient. We were doomed. We were in a mess. We were in a state.

That is what we were before we became Christians. That's what Paul, that's what Paul describes us. That's what Paul describes someone tonight who does not trust the Lord Jesus Christ.

These are hard words to say. But this is the Bible speaking. This is God's word speaking. This is our maker speaking to us about our condition before him.

That is what we were. But then he describes now what are you, what you are, what the Ephesians were and what we are in verses 4 to 9.

And the whole picture changes. He says first of all, you are loved. In verse 4, but because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy.

[15 : 48] Because of God's love, we are loved by God. Hallelujah, praise the Lord, we who are dead, who are dead and disobedient, and dude, we were loved.

And he loved us. And the Bible tells us he loved us with an everlasting love. First, we are still dead in trespasses and sins. It's not that we can make ourselves better, presentable, spend time in front of the spiritual middle, saying, I'm okay, God.

We couldn't hear any of that. First, we were filthy and dead in trespasses and sins. He loved us. He loved us before the world wars. He loved us before the creation of the universe.

He loved us and we are now loved. God so loved the world that he gave us some. I believe the Lord loves the world.

But you, who are a Christian, he loves you specially. He loves you with that everlasting, saving love. love. That love that will never let you go.

[16 : 53] That love that will never let you fall away. That love that will always carry you and always keep you. That love that took you from the fearful prison, from the mighty cave, and set your feet upon the rock, establishing your way, putting a new song in your life, a song of praise to Jesus.

How? Why? Because we are loved, we praise the Lord. Because God loves us. You ask any psychologist, or any sociologist, or anthropologist, or any other ologist in the world, what is it that makes us take, what is it that's important for us?

And I'll tell you, we'll say, what they'll say is all tantamount to being loved. We all need to be loved, goodness sake, every one of us needs to be loved. Even the toughest guys amongst us here tonight, we need to know that we're loved, that we're safe, that we're secure in a relationship.

And that is no greater relationship in the universe tonight, than to know that we are loved by God. That is mind-blowing.

That is mind-blowing. God loves me. He does. Jesus loves me. This I know. For the Bible tells me so.

[18 : 13] You are loved, Paul says in verse 4. Then he says you are living in verse 5. This God who loves us, who is rich and mushy, made us alive with Christ.

We are now living. We were dead. We are now alive. We are living. In other words, we've been resurrected from the grave. Resurrected from our death.

Taken out of the cemetery and out of the land of the living. We are living, friends. We are alive. How so often we live as if we are still dead.

All we talk about is our sins and our shortcomings and our transgressions and our pestilences. But no, the Bible says in policy, we're living now. We're living relationship. God has taken us out of that old condition and that old space.

He's raised us from the dead. and using the same power that he used to create this universe. There's no different powers of God.

[19 : 23] When God said in the beginning, let there be, that power that brought into being, into existence, for him, and reality and matter out of nothing, what is nothing?

It's crazy. I don't understand it. But that power is the same power that raised you from the dead. The power that he's worth in us is the same power that he's worth in Jesus, raising him from the dead as well.

Read the last few verses of Ephesians 1. He told you that power is like the working of his mighty strength in verse 19 and then verse 20, which he exerted in Christ when he raised them from the dead and seated them at the right hand of the heavenly realms.

We are living, we are made alive by the power of God, by the power of this God who loves us. So we are loved, we are now living, we are lifted, we are lifted in verse 6, and God raised us up with Christ, and seated us with them in the heavenly realms, in Christ Jesus.

He has not just loved us and made us living, he has lifted us. It's not that we are just standing low, he is lifting us up to heaven itself to where Jesus is.

[20 : 51] That's what Paul is saying. He has seated us with Christ, he has raised us up with Christ. We are somewhere in heaven with Jesus right now.

We are united to Jesus Christ. this Lord has lifted us higher. I think that we understand. Have you ever thought of that?

That we are united to Jesus who is at the right hand of the majesty on high. We are united to him. He is lifted us there. In a way we are seated with him. It's mind-blowing.

We are loved, we are living, we are lifted. And then he says, we are liberated. In other words, we are set free, we are saved.

In verse 8, for it is by grace you have been saved. It is by grace you have been liberated, set free.

[21 : 57] Liberated from death, from disobedience, from doom. Set free from that condition. And if the Son has set you free, as Jesus himself said, you are man, woman, boy and girl, you are free indeed.

Let no one shame you in any way. You are free. You are alive. You are lifted. You are loved by God Almighty. There are four words that Paul uses to describe, just to describe our liberation, salvation, our being set free.

The first is grace. We saw it in verse 8. And we say it again in verse 5. It is by grace that you have been saved. And again in verse 8, it is by grace you have been saved.

Grace. We use that word just flippantly use it so often. What does it mean? Grace is God's undeserved kindness to us. God giving us what we don't deserve.

Tired to this idea of love and of mercy, but the key idea here is grace. God giving us something that we just don't deserve.

[23 : 15] That is his liberation, his salvation and all the blessings that come with it. The second word is gift. Gift again in verse 8.

It is by grace you have been saved through faith. This is more for yourselves. it is the gift of God. It's a second word. A gift, this faith by which you receive this salvation, this liberation and all the blessings of salvation, that faith itself, Paul says, it's a gift.

The means of receiving salvation is a gift from God. Not by words, he says, that nobody can boast. So we can't say, so we cannot claim faith is of ourselves.

So we can never fall back on our faith, if you like. Because ultimately, it's not faith that saves us. it is God's grace that saves us.

Even the faith, faith that is the hand that receives that salvation, that is a gift from God. That's amazing.

[24 : 41] The third word that Paul uses to describe this liberation, third G, is God. Is God. See in verse 4, it says that because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy.

In the original, it's but God. These are the first two words. But God. You see, it all flows from God.

We have this picture of death and disobedience and doom. And then verse 4, but God. Into this darkness comes light. Into this picture of death comes life.

Into this picture of doom comes hope. How? But God, God steps into the picture. God brings us hope.

God brings us salvation. That's the third word that Paul uses to describe this liberation that we are received and that we enjoy. And then finally, or fourthly, the fourth word is Golgotha.

[25 : 48] you will find that word there. You will find Golgotha in that, these ten verses. But you will find Christ. Because it's all bound up in Christ or with Christ.

See how often with Christ and in Christ appears in these first ten verses. And it was on Golgotha's hill, in other words, Calvary's hill, it was on Golgotha that Christ died for sinners like you and me.

It was on Golgotha the place of the skull, that Jesus paid the penalty for my sins and your sins, these transgressions and sins and iniquities and guilt. It was on Golgotha that he cried it is finished and they had accomplished the salvation and won the salvation that Paul speaks about here.

It is all in Christ. Golgotha is so important. So Paul looks at what we wear.

Paul describes what we are. Praise the Lord what we are. And then finally and very briefly he describes what we must be.

[27 : 05] And that's in verse 10 for us. What we must be. For we he says are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.

God's work in us. God's work through us. We are God's workmanship. God's work in us. That word workmanship means something that is created or made.

And so the picture we have here is God has saved us. we are converted, we are saved, but that's just the beginning. It's just the beginning of the process. God has us before him.

We are like a, you know, I don't know, a lump of clay that he's going to shape and mold to be like Jesus Christ. That's the whole purpose of our salvation, that we become like him and show him to the whole world.

And I believe tonight that as we are God's workmanship and he works in us, he is as a master worker, a master tradesman, using three tools, perhaps more, but three tools to chip away the rough edges, to shape us and mold us to be what we should be.

[28 : 28] The first is scripture, the very word of God. When you read the word, the Lord speaks to us, when you read his word, what was I saying to the kids this morning?

He speaks, to us. Let's believe that, that he is actually speaking to us and through his word, he is working away in our lives, convicting us of sin, showing us things we never knew about ourselves, opening our eyes to understand how great a salvation we have, bringing us closer to Jesus.

How often have you gone through the word of God, with a burden in your heart, with a burden in your soul, and there on the very page of scripture, God speaks to you. And you think, thank you Lord, why did I not come here before?

It takes a bit of maturity just to keep coming back to the world, and still try to work out our problems by ourselves. Because it's not about us at the end of the day, it's about whom he's working in us.

So the scripture, I believe the scripture is something that the Lord uses, God uses, to shape us, and to mold us. the second thing is supplication, prayer.

[29 : 42] We pray to God, we present our requests to God, we make known in our hearts to God, but he also speaks to us.

Do you know what it is tonight, Christian, to be still in the presence of the Lord? Have you ever cried just, do you know the psalmist says, be still, and know that I am God.

I will be exalted. Be still and listening for the Lord. And I'm not in any way saying, wait to hear some voice speaking, I am mostly not, but just be still and let the word flow through that the Lord speaks by the Spirit.

Let the Spirit guide our thoughts and carry us in another direction in prayer. I remember in my days in Aberdeen, I remember we used to have a prayer meeting and Samuel and myself and others used to meet in the flat and I think in listening for a particular reason we meant to pray.

And I was always so taken by this fact. We would be praying and Sam would be praying about something, then I would pray about something else and then I would be just sitting thinking.

[31 : 00] And he would then pray for that very thing. That I was thinking about. And then somebody else would pray about something and we would say, it's funny, I was just thinking about these things. It's about waiting upon the Lord and praying to the Lord and waiting upon him in prayer as well.

Because he needs to teach us in prayer. He needs to teach us through prayer. Prayer is hard work. But let's allow ourselves to be taught, shaped and molded by God who saved us.

that he might shape us and mold us into the people he wants us to be. And I think the final tool, and this is the most harsh tool, or the harshest tool that God uses, and that is suffering.

Nobody wants God to use the tool of suffering on them. But I do not know a Christian who has not said, having come through suffering, yes, at the time it was not good, dear me no, but I learned something, or I'm learning something, that I'm seeing in some way how this was necessary.

This was, for some reason, painfully teaching me something. Maybe not now, maybe in years to come. have you ever noticed, friends, how often it is the suffering church, it is the growing church, it is the persecuted church, it is the church that's thriving, and a better witness.

[32 : 38] Maybe we're not suffering enough, maybe that's the problem. But I'm convinced that we being God's workmanship, are worked upon by the Lord, and scripture, and supplication, and suffering, are three tools that he uses, most wisely, most wisely in his hands.

So we are God's workmanship, God's work in us. But then with this I close, God's work through us. We are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

there's two things about these good works that we are to do. One is that we are positive, we are good.

We are to live our lives as Christians, doing good. Jesus was known as a man who went about, what is it, what does that tell us, doing good. We are to be known as a people who do good, not do evil.

Our good works are to abound in every way, Paul tells the Corinthians. It's so easy for us to fall back in our sound theology, but then our practice, you think that doesn't really matter.

[33 : 58] Well, it does matter. And Paul says it matters. He's just got stranded some brilliant theology here. And then he ends this section by saying, you've got to go and do good works. Do good.

Show the world that you're different. Show the world that you're loving, that you love, that you've lifted up to the heavens. Show the world that you are something different by how you live.

Do good. Do good unto all men. Just as the Lord does good unto all men. They are positive. And then finally they are prepared.

These good works God prepared in advance for us to do. You know the picture I have here? God has saved us.

And then he's working in us. And he's got these good works for us. When we leave church tonight, he's got something for us to do. It's waiting for us to do, to be done.

[35 : 00] It's been prepared in advance. And we just have to go out there and find, Lord, what is the good that you'd have me to do tonight? What is the good that you'd have me to do tomorrow? Do you see what I'm saying?

It's waiting there. It's something that's, it's like a car outside waiting to be gone into. I'm driven away. Those good works are waiting to be done. We must ask ourselves, what is it?

What good can I do? What is it that God wants me to do? To show that I am one who though as dead is alive, who is doomed as I've given hope.

What is it I can do? What is it I must do to show that Jesus and Jesus alone is the one who can save us and give us hope.

May the Lord bless these thoughts to us.