



Ephesians: The One New Temple of God

Raised By the Same Power... Ephesians 1:15-2:7

^{NIV} **Ephesians 1:15**...For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I keep asking 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. ¹⁸ I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰ which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

^{NIV} **Ephesians 2:1** As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² 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 who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

As I mentioned last week, the first three chapters of Ephesians are divided into three parts: (1) a greeting in verses 1-2, (2) an offering to God of praise for what He has done for us in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-14), (3) a prayer to God that He will enlighten the hearts of the Ephesians to fully comprehend all that He has done for them in Christ (Ephesians 1:15-3:21).

It is this third idea, the idea of a prayer for the enlightenment of believers that we are finally going to look at this morning. Sudden enlightenment is, of course, a wonderful thing. It is something, as an ex-schoolteacher that I have witnessed many times. I have seen the eyes of a student transformed by the first rays of understanding. Perhaps it was some piece of abstract knowledge like a complex geometry formula or a difficult piece of English syntax that had clouded their mind. But surprisingly after the rephrasing of some piece of instruction or the inclusion of some homespun illustration the lights just suddenly came on. It is an apt metaphor, I think on the part of Paul, to use the phrase **“eyes of your heart”**. I have seen students whose eyes betray complete confusion suddenly get a concept and suddenly where there was discouragement and confusion almost in the twinkling of an eye there is a complete change.

No doubt many of you have experienced the same kind of enlightenment regarding spiritual matters. There may have been some spiritual truth that everyone else seemed to comprehend without difficulty but you just could not accept. Then, suddenly, some biblical passage or the quiet witness of the Spirit clarified everything and you were baffled at what it was exactly that was so hard to understand. It has happened to me many times and while I've always appreciated the enlightenment I almost always hate the embarrassment.

That's one of the reasons why I so appreciate the story one famous minister tells on one of his friends. Please allow me to paraphrase.

I have a friend who likes to ice-fish but he has always harbored a deep phobia concerning falling through the ice. It was his extraordinarily deep love of fishing alone that allowed him to overcome his fears; it almost compelled him out onto the ice.

One Saturday he was fishing and signs of the approaching spring were beginning to fill the air. My friend noticed, as he had never noticed before, that if you stared down into the ice you could actually see large cracks beneath the surface. He began to think he could almost feel the ice moving. He even thought he could hear the beginnings of a faint rumbling. His pulse quickened; his breathing grew labored. He began to think about the fact that he was virtually in the middle of the lake. Fear crashed down upon him like a pounding wave.

He threw down his rod and began to run to the closest bank. But as he ran he was sure he sensed the increased vibration of the breaking ice. He slowed first to a walk and then to a snail's pace. He was certain now that at any moment the ice would give way. He got down on his knees thinking that by so distributing his weight he might just make it off the ice. But as he inched along on his knees he knew for sure there was an increase in vibration. Without question the noise of the breaking ice was growing louder and louder. He stretched out completely prone and found himself inching along in a serpentine fashion.

But the noise kept getting louder and louder. Finally, when he could bear the noise no longer he jerked his head around just in time to see of all things a fully loaded 40 foot tractor trailer pull up and stop right beside him. A burly, bearded man leaned his head out the window and said, **"Hey, Mac are you all right?"**

The fisherman looked up and replied sheepishly, **"Uh, yeah. I'm O.K."**

"Just wondered," the trucker asked. **"Hey, ain't this ice great? Saves me almost an hour cutting across the lake like this. Ice this thick will probably last at least another two months, don't you think?"**

Finally, as the trucker pulled away, the enlightened fisherman made his way back to retrieve his rod stomping as hard as he could all the way. (James Montgomery Boice, *Ephesians*)

Now, there is a sense in which everyone of us as Christians act just like this poor brother on the ice. We grasp neither the glorious nature of the full blessing we have in Christ or the power of God in securing our salvation in Christ's atoning work. It is that kind of enlightenment with which Paul is concerned in our passage this morning. Notice what he says in verse 15.

^{NIV} **Ephesians 1:15**...For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

Do you see what Paul is saying? He is saying that as he prays for the Ephesians' faith and love for the saints that he constantly gives thanks to God for all that happened to them. He is filled with gratitude that God has not only granted them faith but has granted them a faith that is showing itself to be genuine by the affection that they have for their Christian brothers and sisters. But that is not enough for Paul, he not only thanks God for what He has done. He also prays that God will do more. Look at what he says in verse 17.

^{NIV} **Ephesians 1:17**...I keep asking 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.

Now, it's strange how often you hear some people today use these phrases "**spirit of wisdom and revelation**" to talk about knowing all different kinds of things. I don't want to caricature the kinds of things that I have heard people claim as "**revelations**" and "**words of wisdom**" but they are obviously on a much different track than Paul was here. Their concern is almost always centered on themselves or some physical malady. Paul's interest, his great concern, was

that the Ephesians be given a **“spirit of wisdom and revelation”** not just in knowledge but in their knowledge of God.

All of that leads me to try to anticipate how Paul is going to flesh out this idea of growing in the knowledge of God. But look what he says in verse 18.

^{NIV} **Ephesians 1:18**...I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

Paul says that he wants the Ephesians to be enlightened so that they may finally grasp three things: (1) the hope of God’s calling (2) the rich glory of being a part of God’s inheritance, and lastly (3) something of God’s glorious power.

The **“hope of His calling”** is a summary of almost all of the blessings in Christ that Paul has thus talked about. It included God’s grace or kindness. It included the idea that we are now at peace with God. It included the idea that God has redeemed us and adopted us as His sons. Paul is saying that he wants the Spirit of God to enlighten the minds of the Ephesians so that they will be comforted by the sure and steady hope of all that God has already done for them in Christ.

Secondly, Paul wants the Ephesians to know something of the rich inheritance of which they are a part. It really makes no difference whether you think it means the inheritance which believers will receive or the fact that believers have been incorporated into God’s people and are thus now a part of His inheritance, His possession. Paul is saying that you and I are now a part of something wondrously grand.

If you will grant just a moment I want to make a small observation here. One of the reasons that we take the idea of worship so seriously here, one of the reasons that we don't have plays or drama or skits, one of the reasons that we approach worship with a measure of solemnity is that Presbyterians have always viewed the Sunday worship of God's people as if they are joining the eternal worship of God that is already in progress. If I may, I would like to expand that idea. We see our worship as a welcome intrusion into the worship of God that has been going on from all eternity. We worship together on Sunday but it is only our own self-absorption that causes us to say things like, **"You know, I just did not get anything out of worship this morning."**

But if we were to view worship rightly, we would begin to understand worship in heaven is going on perpetually. We are entering into a holy scene where angels are praising God, where the apostles and the saints like Abraham and David are praising God. We are entering into the ongoing worship of Athanasius, Anselm, Luther, Calvin and Knox and the untold, unknown martyrs of all ages. That is why we exult in saying the great confessions of the faith; that is why we long to sing the great hymns of the faith. That is why we confess our sins together. That is why we read psalms together. It is not that we can not think of any new way or style of worship. Rather, it is that we want to number ourselves in the great inheritance of God's redeemed; we want to number ourselves in that great, eternal chorus of praise that existed from the moment of creation and will exist throughout the endless ages of eternity.

Finally, Paul wants us to know something of God's glorious power. But it is not just any power it is the very power that raised Christ from the dead. It is this

power that is the true expression of the power of God. It is this same power that God used in the salvation of His people.

Dr. McGee used to like to say that the power of God in creation is noted as God's finger-work. It is only when scripture refers to God's power in the salvation of sinners that we see God, and I say this reverently, with his sleeves rolled up and His muscles flexed. Dr. McGee based that upon a wonderful passage in Isaiah 52. Listen to verse 10.

^{NIV} **Isaiah 52:10**...The LORD will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

I love that. It puts things in their proper perspective. If you doubt Paul as seeing the power used in raising Christ from the dead and the power used in God's salvation of sinners as being connected, I ask you to look at the next few verses with me again. Start with the last half of verse 19.

^{NIV} **Ephesians 1:19**...and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰ which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. ^{NIV} **Ephesians 2:1** As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² 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 who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in

Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Do you get Paul's point? He is saying that God displayed His full, regal power when He raised Christ from the dead. How wonderfully awesome was that act. But Christ was not the only one He raised from the dead. Paul is connecting Christ's resurrection and ours to the same awesome power of God. If I could paraphrase, it would go something like this:

This wonderful strength of His power is clearly demonstrated in His raising Christ from the dead and He has now given Christ all of the rightful status and glory He so richly deserved. But don't forget, you were also dead, but you were dead in your own trespasses and sin. But God has made you alive in much the same way He did Christ in order to show everyone something of the extraordinary grace He has showered on us in Christ.

But, you can see, I think, that modern Christians don't really like to think of themselves as having been spiritually dead. They like to think that instead there was some small measure of life in them that could respond to the gospel. That is why modern Christians don't quickly accept the biblical doctrine of election. They view themselves as having the ability to respond. They think of themselves as spiritually sick not spiritually dead. But reformed theology and even more importantly the Bible teach that the natural man is unable to respond to the gospel. We need the life-giving Spirit. We need to be saved because in our sin we are helpless or as Paul says here, we are dead. But this is not a unique doctrine to Ephesians. Paul says the same thing in Romans.

^{NIV} **Romans 8:7**...the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

^{NIV} **Romans 5:6**...You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Peter says the same thing in 1 Peter.

^{NIV} **1 Peter 3:18**...For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit,

Jesus, Himself, says the same thing in John.

^{NIV} **John 6:44**..."No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.

And, of course, Paul says the same thing Ephesians.

^{NIV} **Ephesians 2:4**...But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved.

You see we didn't need encouragement to come to Christ. We didn't need help. We needed a miracle. We needed to be raised from our own sorry state of spiritual death. We needed to be made alive. The Bible calls this idea of being made alive "**regeneration**". It calls it being "**born again**". We must be "**made alive**" before we have the ability to believe. When we are made alive by the

regenerating work of the Spirit, and only then, we will believe. That's what John means when he says:

NIV John 1:1...Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

Now think of how that frees us up to share the gospel. We need to share the gospel and do so often. But we don't need to change the gospel to make it palatable. We need to make sure that people understand their plight under the law of God and how God provided Christ as a sacrificial atonement to cover men's sins and we need to pray for men's conversion but we no longer need to beat ourselves up for being unable to bring the lost to Christ. Our job, indeed our duty, is to witness clearly and often but it is God's business to change men's hearts.

That is why the most successful missionary movements in history were Calvinistic. Men were driven to go to the uttermost parts of the world to proclaim the gospel knowing that God would be faithful to draw out His elect from all nations whenever and wherever the gospel was faithfully proclaimed. When you read stories of men like William Carey, or Adonirum Judson, or George Whitefield, or John Paton you find that they were men driven to preach the gospel because they knew God had a people to redeem.

That is one of the reasons why we ought to recommit ourselves to the proclamation of the gospel. One of the charges that has often been made toward Reformed churches is that they are not as evangelistic as they ought to be. It

certainly was not true in the past and if it is true now is a sign of our sloth and indolence; it is not a sign that the truth of God's grace in election is false.

But returning to our passage, we find that not only were we "**dead in trespasses and sin**" but also that we were "**enslaved in sin**" and even "**condemned in our sin**".

These last two ideas come from verses 2 and 3.

^{NIV} **Ephesians 2:2**... 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 who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

The idea of being enslaved to sin is contained in the phrase about having "**formerly walked**" in our sins and trespasses. Whenever you see the phrase "**walked**" in the Bible it usually refers to pattern of life. What Paul is saying is that not only were we dead in our sins but also lived the core of our lives in the selfish pursuit of our lusts. You can see, I think, how that will lead to Paul's talking about laying aside our own self-interests for the benefit of the church.

Finally Paul talks about how being dead in our sins and how living a life of sinful self-absorption put us under the wrath of God. He says by using the phrase "**children of wrath**". What Paul means by that is that when we were unbelievers we were under God's judicial wrath. It is the same concept he uses in Romans. So, before we were converted we were dead in our sins, slaves to our sinful lusts, and condemned as God's mortal enemies.

But something wonderful happened. Paul says:

^{NIV} **Ephesians 2:4**...But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

“But God”. How I love that phrase. I once read a wonderful sermon just based on the places in the New Testament where that phrase is used.

Do you see what Paul is arguing? He’s arguing that whatever blessing we have are the result of what God has done for us in Christ. He made us alive and raised us up to sit in heavenly places with Christ and He had a very specific reason for doing so. He did it to demonstrate to all the ages to come the kindness of His grace toward us in Christ Jesus.

So you get a sense now of what Paul is praying for. He is praying that the Ephesians, in fact all Christians of all times, will get a sense of the wonderful blessing we possess in Christ Jesus. He is asking God to convince us, in a way that is similar to the truck driver and fisherman, that the foundation of Christ on which we rest is not only adequate, it is rock solid. He is asking God to burn those truths in our mind knowing that once we understand rightly what Christ has accomplished on our behalf we will be moved rightly to live a life of heartfelt gratitude. That certainly is what Calvin had in mind when he wrote at the end of his commentary on this section:

Now let us cast ourselves down before the majesty of our good God with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to make us so to feel them that it makes us not only confess three or four of them, but also go back even to our birth and acknowledge that there is nothing but sin in us, and that there is no way for us to be reconciled to our God, but by the blood, death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And therefore as often as we feel any regrets to turn aside from the grace of God, and to cite us before His judgment seat, let us desire Him to remedy it by His Holy Spirit, which is the means that He has ordained to make us partakers of all His gracious gifts. And let us so continue in the same that we may be an example to others and labor to draw them with us to the faith and unity of doctrine, and by our life and good conversation show that we have not in vain gone to so good a school as that of the Son of God. (*Calvin: Sermons on Ephesians*)

Let's pray.