

The Immeasurable Greatness of God's Power

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. I think it's fitting for us to begin with a word of prayer. Heavenly Father, You are good and wonderful.

Thank You for these songs and these reminders today of Your goodness to us in Christ. God, I would just pray now that You would give us a spirit of wisdom and of revelation and knowledge of You that You would make known the immeasurable greatness of Your power to Your church today. I ask it in Christ's name and for His glory alone. Amen. I think as human beings we are a little bit awed by power.

A tree fell on our house a couple years ago and I was able to acquire a chainsaw. I was pretty impressed by the power of this thing to just slice through this hard wood.

I think of the athletic competitions and the power displayed by a defensive lineman as he sheds the double team and gets into the backfield to trample on the quarterback.

[1 : 12] Or Usain Bolt, the fastest man in the world as he wins yet another gold medal in a sprint at the Summer Olympics. I think of the power that's demonstrated in nature.

Waves crashing against the shoreline of Lake Michigan. Thunderstorms. The electricity of the lightning, if you've ever been close enough to experience that. The rumbling of thunder itself. And then there's times when nature kind of even acts in a stronger way and it devastates creation with earthquakes and tornadoes.

But this passage that we're looking at today in Ephesians chapter 2, there's an even greater power on display. One that just trumps all natural types of power imaginable.

In fact, you could combine them all together and you still wouldn't even begin to touch on how great a power this is. It's a supernatural power. It's a spectacular power. And it's worth considering together again this morning.

[2 : 17] Of course, I'm talking about the power of God. And the way that the Apostle Paul is going to set this out for us today, I believe, is ultimately to drive at this.

If you could take away one belief, if you could leave here with one thought, it would be this. That salvation is the display of the immeasurable greatness of God's power exercised for you.

It's God's spiritual muscle flexing for us. It's a display of unimaginable strength. Salvation is the immeasurable greatness of God's power exercised for you.

So let me read this for us. If you haven't turned there, we're going to be in Ephesians 2, verses 1 to 10. This is God's word to us. Paul writes, And we're by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

So just to give us a little bit of context about where we find ourselves, of course, Mike preached through this book a couple years ago, and you may be wondering, well, why are we back in Ephesians today?

[4 : 49] It seemed good to us to, in the midst of some hard passages of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, talking about the exceeding sinfulness of sin, to be reminded this morning of our great salvation.

And so, Paul starts out his letter by affirming his apostolic authority, and then he goes right into these spiritual blessings. In fact, we have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

That's how chapter 1 starts, and he outlines them. The Father is at work. The Son is at work in redemption. The Holy Spirit sealing us until our inheritance is possessed by us.

And then he starts praying for this church in Ephesus, and the height of his prayer, he's saying, God, give this church, give this people a spirit of wisdom and of revelation and knowledge of you.

Enlighten the eyes of their hearts. And then he says, so that they know the hope to which they're called, that they know the glorious inheritance, and then this one here in verse 19, what is the immeasurable greatness of God's power toward us who believe.

[5 : 59] And he unpacks that by talking about Jesus and his resurrection and his ascension, his lordship over all dominions and authorities, his headship over the church, and then in further description of the great immeasurable power of God, we come to our chapter 2, verses 1 to 10.

That's why I say that God wants us to see that salvation is the immeasurable greatness of his power extended to us. And so Paul is going to be very clear in this passage.

There's three parts to his argument. We're just going to follow straight down the page and see them all, hopefully very clearly this morning. So part one is the powerlessness of man in our hopeless condition.

We see that in the first three verses. We see immediately in verse 1, and you are dead. It's worse than we could have ever imagined, friends. There's no apparent way forward.

There's no recovering from this. Dead. Corpses. Spiritual corpses. Not dying. Not sick. 100% dead.

[7 : 17] In trespasses and sins. Paul's redundancy in speaking of it this way is to outline the comprehensive moral evil in which humanity finds ourselves.

In other words, he's talking about, cumulatively, the intentional boundary crossings, the misstepping of God's laws. He's talking about falling short of God's standard in spite of our best efforts.

He's talking about our active wrongdoings and our passive misgivings. He's talking about the sins that we commit and the goods that we omit.

All-inclusive. This deadness he speaks of is a spiritual alienation from God. Severed relationship with our Creator.

But there's more. In verse 2 and 3, we see that not only are we dead in sins, but we're enslaved to this evil's triple threat.

[8 : 21] The world, Satan, and the flesh. If you look in verse 2, we see that we were once walking in these trespasses and sins, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.

This walking Paul speaks of is not a pleasant stroll, and it's not as if we've got this nice, spick-and-span clean outfit, and we're kind of tiptoeing through a bunch of sin, trying not to get dirty. No, we're immersed in it. This is our lifestyle, apart from Christ. Marching in step with a corrupt world, living life according to society's moral failure, arrogance, mockery of God, indifferent to sin, promoting self, trying to preserve self, trying to exalt self.

It's, of course, marred by evil. And it seems most likely that Paul connects this purposefully to this prince of the power of the air, found at the end of verse 2 there.

Of course, this is Satan, and it's probably best not to think so much of his power here, but of his domain. It's the territory of the air that this demonic angel is ruling over.

[9 : 51] This realm of the air, it's a little bit tricky to understand, but basically what it seems like Paul is saying is that he's not a tangible body on earth, but he's neither in the heavenly places in authority, but he's in kind of this in-between world of spiritual darkness, and it's impacting directly everything that takes place on this earth.

Notice that Paul says, now at work. And I think we can extend that now up to today, obviously, without much question.

Satan still roams and rules over those who are apart from Christ to this day. But just to make sure that we're not the unwilling victims in this situation, Paul continues in verse 3, that we once lived in the passions of our flesh.

Notice that he's no longer saying just you, Ephesians, but now we. Paul begins including himself in this depraved situation because it's true not just of the immoral, but of the religious elites as well. Again, Paul needs to be understood here that when he says lived, in verse 3, he's not talking about just being simply in a proximity with these sons of disobedience, but again, conducting our lives in a manner corresponding to their current manner of living.

[11 : 36] We were lusting after the fleshly passions, actively carrying them out in corrupt desires, body and mind, thoughts and actions. Verse 3 here rejects the notion of being an innocent victim in this game of sin.

And it puts all of the ultimate responsibility upon us. It portrays dead people in step with a fallen world and enslaved to the devil.

I think it's probably, of course, easy for us to see this reality when we think of the big sins, right, and the ways that sin just is rampant. It's violence, adultery, drunkenness, drug abuse, theft, murder. But it raises a question for us. How can Paul then, this Hebrew of Hebrews, this one who says under the law is blameless and really means that in Philippians, how can he include himself in this? As I think about it, I realize that Paul as easily condemns moralism and religion as he does blatant, outright, immoral behavior.

[12:57] See, moralism, religion, they don't save either. And they're equally condemning for a man. Think of Jesus addressing the Pharisees in any place in the Gospels and how quickly he points to their lack of righteousness, even though they're the expert law keepers.

Think of even the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus says, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Well, no, these religious elites have this mentality that no savior is required for me.

My works speak for themselves. It's self-righteousness, self-justification, and ultimately pride, which, interestingly enough, is the downfall of this prince of the domain of the air.

Tim Keller is really helpful in kind of unpacking this for us in a book that he wrote on the parable of the prodigal son.

And he writes how it should probably be more of the parable of the prodigal sons, plural, because both of these young men are equally corrupt and debased before their father.

[14:19] The young son squanders his inheritance and runs off. The elder brother stays close by. Listen to what Tim Keller writes about this older brother.

What did the older son want? If we think about it, we realize that he wanted the same thing as his brother. He was just as resentful of the father as was the younger son.

He, too, wanted the father's goods rather than the father himself. The older brother stayed close and never disobeyed. That was his way to get control.

His unspoken demand is, I have never disobeyed you. Now you have to do things in my life the way I want them to be done. I hope you hear in that the sense of entitlement, the attempt to manipulate a sovereign God and the desire to control the outcome by doing good things.

Paul seems to say here that this is the depraved and reprehensible motivation behind all religious effort. It's not as obvious, perhaps, as the eat and drink and be merry, but it's equally condemnable before God.

[15:41] Unfortunately, the situation gets worse before we move on to the good news. We see the last statement of verse 3 that we not only were dead and enslaved, but by nature were children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

This is a huge concept to try and unpack in a really brief moment, but basically, we need to consider a couple of things here. What Paul is saying is, as naturally as eagles soar and as lions roar, part of our spiritual DNA as Adam's descendants is incurring wrath by our nature.

Romans 5 sort of unpacks this in verses 12 to 21. The basic idea is that sin comes in through Adam, through one man, death through that sin, and then death spreads to everyone because everyone has sinned.

One trespass, one trespass leads to death for all people. I don't know about you, but I tend to take offense at this statement that by my nature, from my first breath to my last, I deserve wrath.

This is terribly offensive, yet it's biblical. It's right here. By our nature, we are deserving of God's righteous anger and judgment for sin.

[17:16] We are active rebels, substandard performers, and we deserve wrath. So let me encourage you this morning, don't get caught up trying to see who the better dead guy is.

This isn't an opportunity to say, well, better than that guy over there. This isn't a, you know, that's what religion does, right? That's what morality does. Paul's leveling it.

Like everyone. Universal human condition. It's right in front of us here. This is intended to sober us, and it's intended to humble us.

That, brother, sister, your spiritual condition, apart from Christ, it's hard to admit and even more impossible to reconcile, but we are hopeless, dead men and women awaiting judgment.

enslavement, enslaved by the triad of evil, heaping up wrath for ourselves. But God.

[18:30] But God. Amazingly, Paul does not leave us there, and even more amazingly, neither does God. Most importantly, neither does God.

The beginning of verse 4 begins the second section of this chapter, of these verses, and probably begins with my two favorite words of the Bible.

But God. It seems here that Paul knows right at the outset of verse 4 that he needs to ward off any objections to what he's about to say before getting to what God does.

So, he gives two reasons for why God does what he does. See that in verse 4? But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us.

If we continue there just to the beginning of verse 5, even when we are dead in trespasses. This mercy is a concept that he's talking about this kindness expressed towards someone in need.

[19 : 37] It's kind of simplifying a little bit considering what we just read, but that's the mercy that Paul's writing about and the thing that is so sweet to me about it is how unexpected this mercy is.

Great love for enemies, rebels, and failures. A mercy expressed to those in need. Paul says, hold on. Wrath is not the whole image of my God.

let me tell you about his compassion and his love. He's rich in mercy. He does not wish that any should perish. He's loving, he's enough loving of his enemies to take action for them.

Friends, isn't this why we worship him and adore him and gather here to sing his praises? Because he's a merciful God, a loving God. God. So then Paul, after giving these reasons, goes on to talk about the activity of God when he forgave us the end, right?

No. What does he say in verse 5 and 6? Made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

[21 : 00] Forgiveness. Salvation is no less certainly than forgiveness, but oh, it is so much more. It radically changes our entire position before a holy and righteous God.

From children of wrath to made alive, new spiritual birth in Christ, raised with him and exalted into the heavenly places, positioned with him and John Stott remarks that certainly that means that there's thrones for us to be seated in.

And you notice how what Paul says here, it undoes the effects of verses 1 to 3. It undoes the deadness. Dead people made alive, got that one checked off.

In this worldly realm, this course of an evil world, under the influence of a demonic spirit of the air, done away with, exalted to the heavenly places, above that domain of the air, no more satanic power over us.

Enslavement? Nope. Thrones in heaven. And certainly, no wrath when we are united with the sinless Son of God. It's a new existence, a new identity, a new domain.

[22 : 24] This is Paul unpacking what Colossians 1.13 says so succinctly, that he has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.

No longer children of wrath. A new nature in Christ, adopted sons and daughters of the King.

Friends, make no mistake, this is a current spiritual reality.

If you're in Christ, this is now currently true. So this, of course, changes how we view ourselves and one another.

Positionally found with Christ now, forever, for all eternity. This is what's most true about us. And not only should it change how we view ourselves and each other, but it should make us long for the future when God fulfills this once and for all.

Notice in these verses that four times Jesus is mentioned. In verse 5 and 6, made us alive together with Christ.

[23 : 47] Verse 6, raised us up with Him, seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. This assumes some things about our Savior. He's alive, He's exalted, He's reigning over all rule and authority, and He's our only hope.

Paul's not quite done describing God's actions. Verse 7 gives us the purpose behind them. This is so amazing.

Look at it. So that in the coming ages, He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

God purposes to save us in this grand scale, epic salvation so that in the coming ages, the immeasurable greatness of His power would manifest itself in the immeasurable riches of His grace toward us.

It's aimed at us forever. What do we do with this? I mean, we don't just get to witness the grace of God.

[25 : 04] We're the recipients, the goal of His grace for eternity. Dead, enslaved, and destined for wrath, usurped by God's mercy, love, grace, and kindness in Christ.

Thanks be to God. One final move in Paul's argument here, verses 8-10. Kind of think of these as the contractual terms of this salvation.

I imagine a businessman who's just heard the Apostle Paul kind of outline this salvation, the great things that Christ has done, the great power that God has demonstrated in resurrecting Him and us with Him, seating Him and us in the heavenly places, and asking, kind of like that, Paul.

It sounds pretty good. You know, reach in for his pocketbook. How much do I owe you? You know, do you have a payment plan? What do I got to do to get this? Paul's at, shh, grace.

Grace. Grace. Grace. Grace. Grace. Grace. Grace. Grace. Grace. Grace. You want to know the terms of the contract? Grace. If you're asking today, how do you get it?

[26 : 20] How do you get the salvation? It's by grace. It's by accepting the gift of God. No other way. There's no other terms. There's no fine print.

There's no clean yourself up and then come get the grace. Just receive it. Receive it. Ephesians 2, 8, and 9 are a couple of my first ever, you know, memory verses as I was growing as a Christian and I think that's great.

They're so good, right? But it hasn't been until recently that I've started seeing how they function in Paul's argument in this passage. These verses, 8 through 10, are really supporting what's come before it in verses 4 to 7.

They're strengthening Paul's argument as he talks about salvation. And I think they do it in this way that they're trying to ward off the questions that seem to be looking to make salvation too good to be true.

I mean, how can salvation really truly exist? How can this be the way it is for children of wrath? Paul says, grace. By grace you've been saved through faith.

[27 : 35] This is not a result of works. It's not your own doing. It's the gift of God. Not a result of work so that no one may boast for his workmanship. I love what Charles Spurgeon says.

He writes simply that where grace exists, it reigns. It rules. It owns. It has no rivals. It reigns.

That's why Paul goes there. He intends to silence the doubters and humble the recipients. Notice back in verse 5 that he already interjected this grace into his tale of salvation.

He can't contain himself. It's just this outburst of joy to say, it's all grace. It's all grace. And now he comes back to it in these final three verses.

Let's make sure we're clear on what this grace is. It's freely given unmerited favor. It's not earned.

[28 : 44] It's not purchased. It can't be bartered for. It's gifted to undeserving people. And it's not an abstract, warm, and fuzzy kind of thing like we tend to apply to terms today.

I love pizza. No. Concrete, objective, historical reality. The grace of God here points to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

salvation, friends, is not just the reality of our union with Jesus, our being raised with him and seated with him, but it's because of his work on behalf of sinners.

Jesus becoming a man. We sang this song. Thanks, brother. We sang this song. Perfect obedience to the Father. No shortcomings, no failures, no missteps, no nothing, but perfect obedience.

Dying on a cross on behalf of sinners. Taking the wrath of God that we deserve by our very nature on himself. Raised from the dead. Exalted to God's right hand.

[30 : 03] Now the ruling and reigning king over all the powers that be in the whole universe. That's the grace Paul's getting at here. That's his way of saying, Jesus, you're saved.

By grace, you've been saved. Paul keeps a source before us, right? Verse 8, Not you, God. Those words butt up against each other in the original.

Not you, of God the gift. That's kind of how it reads. It's his gift. And it's not a result of works. It's not general, morally upright behavior that earns this salvation or accomplishes it in any way.

That's why there's no boasting, right? When we're rightly contrasting verses 1-3 with verses 4-7, boasting is done away with.

There's no room for it. God initiates, and God works from beginning to end to accomplish salvation for us in Christ. So God wants the credit he deserves.

[31 : 16] Dead people aren't working for salvation. They're working for wrath. So boasting in anything other than in Jesus shows a radical misunderstanding of what this gospel is about.

Maybe you're asking yourself, what about faith? I see that. Verse 8, you've been saved by grace through faith. Here's how that faith comes into play.

It's taking the objective, historical reality of God's grace in Christ and receiving it personally for yourself. It's taking what is objectively true and saying, I believe that and I hope in that and I trust in that forever and ever.

That's how faith works alongside the grace of God. Faith saves insofar as it clings to Jesus and trusts in God's grace.

and finally we see verse 10. This is so good. Paul writes, yet another strengthening point to prove what he has just said in verses 8 and 9.

[32 : 31] We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. It's Paul's last and final effort here in this passage to communicate God did it.

We are his work. This word is beautiful. It talks of the NIV if you have that in front of you it talks about handiwork. Think of craftsmanship but more importantly it's creation.

God is taking something that has no form no substance no goodness and making something new. We see that, right?

Created in Christ Jesus. Created. Not sort of just not just resurrected not just made new created. This is the 2 Corinthians 5.17 notion that whoever is in Christ is a new creation.

This is like a spiritualized Genesis 1. In the beginning of salvation God created alive spiritual men and women who were once dead in their trespasses and sins.

[33 : 56] Jesus here is seen as the craftsman's tool. It's his salvific work that creates the new and living people of God.

So Christian if you're here today and you're looking for purpose here it is. This verse tells us created in Christ for good works. For good works.

It's why we are made alive with Christ. It's why we were raised from the dead given new life saved for good works. not works that save us but works that carry out God's new purpose for living people in Christ.

If you want to study kind of what these look like I invite you to read over chapters 4, 5, and 6. If you remember Mike made a great point as he was going through this book on the number of times that you see walk, walk, walk.

Because that's how this passage in chapter 10 ends that we should walk in them. Chapter 4, the beginning, it doesn't give us specific good works but it tells us how they should be characterized, what kind of heart should be applied to these.

[35 : 16] Humility and gentleness, patience, bearing with one another in love, and eager to maintain the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace. There's good works for each and every one of us in this room who is a Christian.

God's prepared us for them. I love this last word, walk, because it adequately bookends this section.

It illustrates how far as the people of God we have come. Following a hopeless course of the world, enslaved by Satan, living for fleshly desires, rejecting God and awaiting judgment, walking in all of that, made alive in Christ, rescued by objective, historical grace, unexpected kindness shown to us, transferred into the kingdom of Jesus Christ and created anew for good works.

grace. So now, we walk not in sin, but in good works, not to earn our salvation, but in gratitude for God's free and gracious gift.

Brothers and sisters, this is your salvation. This surely is the immeasurable greatness of God's power extended to us.

[36 : 48] Let's pray. God, it is impossible to overstate the goodness of this word.

I pray for all of us that it would season our lives in a way that's pleasing to you. God, would you help us by faith to receive this, rejoice in this each and every day?

Would you help us to walk in the good works you have for us? Thank you for this morning. Thank you for your word. We praise your name through Jesus. Amen.