



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

EPHESIANS LESSON 2

In the first chapter of Ephesians, Paul focuses on salvation from God's point of view. He reminds us of all the spiritual blessings we have in Christ, and that one day all things will be subject to Him. Here in chapter 2, Paul moves from showing us the possessions we have in Christ, to our position before God. This is an amazing chapter because it contrasts our old and new nature so vividly. Paul points out that without Christ, we were "living dead," or, like John Gerstner describes it, "walking zombies." Those of us who are guilty of watching horror movies remember zombies quite well. A zombie is a person who is dead but still walking around, their grave clothes hanging off them. They are not only dead, but usually decayed. Gerstner said, "They are an offense to God's nostrils. These decaying corpses stink." Paul paints us a great picture, doesn't he? I pray that as we take a look at what we once were, we will be even more grateful of the position we now have in Christ. Remember Cinderella? She was destined to a life in the dungeon, but because the prince loved her, she went from rags to riches. Because our Prince loved us, you and I are also a "rags-to-riches" story, with a happy ending. Halleluia!

First Day

1. Read Ephesians 2:1-22. Observe and list the facts you find. Are there any new thoughts? Are there any promises? Commands? Challenges? Repeated words?

2. Give this chapter a title that reflects the main thought.

3. What would you say is the key verse or verses?
4. What doctrines are taught in this chapter? (Hint: read verses 4-10 and 19-22.)
5. In this chapter, how does Paul describe a person "without Christ"? (What is their spiritual condition?)
6. How does he describe those who are "in Christ"?
7. Do you find any thoughts that are contrary to what our world is teaching today?
8. How does this chapter speak to your heart?
9. What do we learn about God from this chapter?
10. What do we learn about ourselves?

That's it for today. Isn't God's love incredible? We deserve death and hell, "but God." Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. That's a "**Reason to Rejoice.**"

Memory Verse of the Week: "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ." Ephesians 2:13

Second Day

Study your memory verse. What does it mean to you?

1. Let's begin today by reading Ephesians 2:1-3. (It is said that these three verses summarize the first three chapters of the book of Romans.) How does Paul describe our old condition?

Paul tells us that we are "dead" without Christ. There are three kinds of death discussed in the Bible. Physical death (1 Corinthians 15:21-22; Hebrews 9:27), spiritual death (Ephesians 2:1, 4:18; 1 John 5:12), and eternal death (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 2 Thessalonians 1:9). Paul is talking about "spiritual death," or the separation of the spirit from God.

2. There are three basic views on the nature of man. (1) **Man is well**, (2) **Man is sick**, (3) **Man is dead**. Can you explain the difference between the three? Which view does our chapter support?

3. Romans 3:10 tells us that "there is none righteous, no, not one." Ephesians 2:3 says that we are, by nature, children of wrath. Why? Read Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-24, and Romans 5:12-16 to help with your answer.

4. We were dead, but through Christ, what has been done for us? Why?

In verse 1, the word sin is from the Greek word "hamartia" which is a shooting term that means to miss the mark, or a failure to hit the target. Although through Christ we have been "made alive," unfortunately, we still deal with the issue of sin. Romans 3:23 tells us that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." 1 John 1:8 tells us that "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." We are guilty every day of missing the mark, aren't we? Even though we are "new creatures in Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:17), our old man continues to try to resurrect itself like a zombie. Thank God, that because of the death and resurrection of Christ, we can confess our sins, and "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

5. Here's a personal question for you ... Are there any zombies in your life? Are you struggling with anything from your old nature that just keeps hanging on? What should you do?

6. Are you presently "missing the mark" in any area of your:

- a. marriage?
- b. parenting?
- c. friendships?
- d. singleness?

These verses show us that we are constantly drawn away by our flesh, the world, and the devil. "World" or "kosmos" is used 186 times in the Greek New Testament and always has an evil connotation attached to it. This word can also mean "age" (Galatians 1:4) and refers to the social and value system of this present evil age. It points to the fleeting character of life's riches and pleasures and the folly of making them of central importance of life (Matthew 16:26). "Flesh" refers to man's human lusts and desires that war against the spirit. The devil ... well, do we really need to define him?

Kent Hughes, in his book Mystery of the Body of Christ said this: "The dead, those without Christ, are dominated by the world, the devil, and the flesh. The world dominates from without, the flesh from within, and the devil from beyond. These are the terrible dynamics of spiritual death."

7. How do these verses describe satan?

- a. John 12:31
- b. Matthew 9:34
- c. 2 Corinthians 4:4

8. Can you explain why there is a spiritual struggle for the soul of man?

9. Can you explain how unbelievers are controlled by the values and attitudes of this world? (If we have been "made alive," why do we, as Christians, still struggle with this at times?)

10. Do Christians still struggle with fulfilling the desires of the mind? How? What can we do to gain victory in this area?

Warren Wiersbe said, "We have moved from the graveyard of sin into the throne room of glory." I like that! I pray that each of you have made a decision for Christ, and are now "made alive"! I pray that our flesh will be "crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20) and that we will beat down those old zombies! Let's not entertain them by living in the graveyard, but walk in the Spirit and live in the throne room of glory!

Third Day

What's your verse?

1. Today let's read Ephesians 2:4-10. What is the significance of those precious two words, "But God"?

Paul's attention now moves from the sinner to God Himself. God saved us by His grace and mercy. The Vine's Expository Dictionary defines mercy as "the outward manifestation of pity; it assumes need on the part of the one who receives it and resources adequate to meet the need on the part of the one who shows it. It is used of God, who is rich in mercy, and who has provided salvation for all men." **Mercy is not giving us what we do deserve, and grace is giving us what we don't deserve.** We deserve death and hell, but because He is rich in mercy, we don't get it. We don't deserve Heaven, but because of His grace, we get to sit with Christ in the Heavens. Doesn't really make sense to me, but that's okay. I certainly am grateful!

2. When did Jesus do this for us? (Ephesians 2:5, Romans 5:8)
3. What word is repeated in verses 5-6? Why is that significant?
4. How did He show us kindness? Also read Titus 3:4-6.

5. Because God shows us mercy, we are called to also be merciful (Mathew 5:7). What does that practically mean? Is there someone in your life that needs you to show them mercy? Maybe someone has wronged you, or your husband has let you down one more time. Ask the Lord to fill you with His love for the person and the grace to show them mercy.

6. Let's make sure we understand this. What is our position in Christ? (Also read Romans 8:17.)

We tend to think we have to wait for Heaven to enjoy our inheritance, but we don't. Christ gave us an early inheritance to enjoy right now. We can experience His love, joy, peace, hope, and much more every day as we trust in Him. As we spend intimate time with Him and abide in His love, our minds and hearts are taken to the Heavens. Philippians 3:20 tells us that our citizenship is in Heaven. Our passport is stamped "Heaven" as soon as we accept Christ. Our focus should be different. Our actions should be different. Our hearts are now in Heaven.

7. Read Colossians 3:1-4. What is Paul's exhortation to us?

8. Name some "earthly" things that draw our minds away from the Heavens.

9. We are citizens of Heaven. We live in Christ, but we also live here on earth. How can we "dwell" here on earth, but "live" in Heaven?

10. What occupies most of your thoughts? (Are you Heavenly or earthly minded?)

That's it for today. May you seek those things that are above. May you have your feet planted in Christ, and not in this world. I pray that we all have the heart of a pilgrim that's just passin' through.

Fourth Day

Work on your verse. Spend some time thanking God that you were made new by the blood of Christ.

1. Read Ephesians 2:8-10 and John 1:12-13. Answer the following questions:
 - a. Is salvation a gift or a reward?
 - b. How do we get it?
 - c. What two things don't "get it" for us?
 - d. What, then, is our responsibility?

2. Why would we be tempted to boast if salvation was a result of works?

3. Although salvation is a free gift to us, there was a price to pay. What do John 17:1-5, 19:30, and Hebrews 10:10-18 tell us about the work of Christ?

The word "workmanship" is from the Greek word "poiema." This is where we get our English word "poem." The word means "that which has been made, or a work in making." We are God's poem; His work of art. We are His masterpiece. Isn't that awesome? He is working in us to conform us into the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). We are His beautiful creation.

There are times when we doubt our worth. We are full of guilt and cannot believe that God would see any beauty in us. We must take heart! We are a work in progress! He is the Potter and we're the clay, and He's molding and shaping us.

4. Do you see yourself as God's masterpiece? How should knowing we are God's poem affect how we live?

5. God uses many tools to shape us. (He uses His Word, the Holy Spirit, difficult people, trials, and Godly men and women who serve as examples to work in us.) What tool is He using on you right now?

Paul tells us that we were created to do good works. As His workmanship, we must work. Remember that Paul is not saying that we are saved by our works, but if we are saved, there will be works. (Also read James 2:14-26 to review the relationship between faith and works.)

F.F. Bruce said, "No one more wholeheartedly than Paul repudiated good works as a ground for salvation; no one more strongly insisted on good works as a fruit of salvation." Real believers do works for God.

6. Read Titus 2:14, 3:8; Matthew 5:16; 2 Corinthians 9:8; and Colossians 1:10 and list what is said about "good works." Are you walking in good works? Think about it. Can you name any "good works" in your life?

7. Read Ephesians 2:11-18. Paul now specifically deals with the work of Christ for the Gentiles. What were the Gentiles "without"? What does that mean? (Why is Paul contrasting them with the Jews?)

The *Gentiles* were Christ-less, stateless, friendless, hopeless, and godless. That's a good description of us before we accepted Christ.

8. Do any of your friends or family members fit the above description? What can you do about it? Are you planting the seeds of the Gospel so they too may be reconciled to God? Choose an unsaved person in your life and spend some time praying for the salvation of their soul, and seek His will in how you can be a part of sharing the Good News.

9. What changed everything? How were the *Gentiles* and the *Jews* reconciled, or "brought near"?

10. What was Jesus' goal in reconciling the *Jew* and *Gentile*, according to verses 15 and 18?

Through Christ, not only were the *Jews* and *Gentiles* reconciled (13-15), sinners were reconciled to God as well (16-18). Isaiah prophesied that "peace, peace, to those far and near" would be preached (Isaiah 57:19). Jesus is called the "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6), the angels sang about peace when Christ was born (Luke 2:14), and Jesus told His disciples "Peace I will leave you" before He died (John 14:27). Jesus is the peace, who has broken down every wall. I pray that you have made your "peace" with God. My heart still grieves over family members that have died, still being "afar off." May our loved ones realize that they can be near to God through His Son, Jesus Christ.

11. Read Ephesians 2:18. What is the role of the Trinity in our salvation?

See you tomorrow, ladies! Praise God for bringing us close to His heart!

Fifth Day

Write your verse from memory.

1. Let's read Ephesians 2:19-22. In chapter 1, the church was likened to a body, with Christ as the head. What does Paul liken the church to in these verses?
2. No longer are Jews and Gentiles living as neighbors, but as _____.

For years, the temple in Jerusalem had been the focus of God's people. God had dwelt with His people first in the tabernacle, then in the temple. Now God would dwell in the church, the temple of God. He dwells in our hearts when we are reconciled to Him (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

3. What is the purpose of a cornerstone?
4. Who is the cornerstone of God's holy temple? What do the following verses teach us about the cornerstone? Isaiah 28:16, Psalm 118:22, Matthew 21:42, and Acts 4:11-12.

