

EPHESIANS STUDY

STUDY TWO: Ephesians 2:6-3:6

Study Two, Part One

⁶And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹not by works, so that no one can boast.

2:6&7 – You are seated in a high place. **Are you living according to where you are seated? If you say that you are doing well “under the circumstances,” what are you doing under the circumstances?** You should be on top of the circumstances! After all, you are seated in heavenly places. That should provide you a better “view” of what’s going on. This means that no matter what is happening in your life, you should have perspective and victory, for you at least have the knowledge that God is in control.

In some ways, God is showing off. What He does, He does to show coming ages His incomparable love. Therefore, we should help God show off by giving testimony to His wonderful kindness. I thank God today for His kindness toward my family and me. He treats me much better than I deserve. We are also to “magnify” the Lord. That means we take the smallest thing He does and “blow it out of proportion” so that everyone can see it.

O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together (Psalm 34:3 NAS).

I will praise the name of God with song and magnify Him with thanksgiving (Psalm 69:30 NAS).

How and to whom can you give a testimony today about God’s goodness to you?

2:8&9 – We are saved by faith through grace. We did not work for our salvation, nor can we work for our blessings. They are grace! The Galatians didn’t understand this, do you?

I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? (Galatians 3:2-3).

Are you trying to attain your blessings through your own strength? Evidence that you are is that you are regularly tired and fatigued. Jesus said that His yoke is easy and burden light. **If your yoke is heavy, then whose yoke are you carrying?**

“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:29-30).

Study Two, Part Two

¹⁰For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. ¹¹Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)—¹²remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

2:10 – How do you know what works were created for you to do? First, it requires that you know your purpose, which will give you an indication of the general area you works will be in. Then you need to be aware and not self-absorbed. In other words, pay attention to the needs of others as expressed through what they are saying. That means you have to deal with your selfishness and put your focus on other people, even at times when you don't feel like your own needs are being met.

It is an awesome thing to think that God prepared the works for you to do and then helps you do them. This is how much God wants you to succeed and please Him. He is involved at every level of your spiritual walk and development. God prepared my good works beforehand for me to do. What a great planner God is! And that means that you have an important role to play in the economy of God. He has set up things for you to do and He is counting on you to do them! God can't do these good works alone. He sets them up and we do them.

Are you cooperating with His plan? Are your good works being done with excellence and enthusiasm?

Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him (Philippians 2:12-13 NLT).

2:11&12 – Paul urged the Ephesians to remember that once they weren't part of God's family. Once they were apart from the plan of God, but then they were adopted as sons and daughters. This was the focus of Paul's ministry: to bring the Gentiles into the same covenant relationship that was once only available to Jews. Now you and I have that same privilege. **Do you realize what God has done for you? Do you realize that what was true for the Ephesians is also true for you? Are you grateful for what God has done, or do you take it for granted?**

What has God done for you in the past that you need to remember today? Why not write those things done as part of your journal for this study. How can you establish more effective memorials to the work of God in your life?

One of them [ten lepers who were healed], when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" (Luke 17:15-18).

Study Two, Part Three

¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

2:13 – Paul continued to highlight the work of Christ on behalf of the Gentiles. This time he mentioned the blood of Christ that brought them near to God. It seems that Paul was concerned lest anyone would think they have earned the right to be called a child of God. It is a free privilege that was paid for by Jesus. He wanted no one to miss this essential truth.

We know from what John wrote about the Ephesians in Revelation that they were a church known for their strong deeds. **Do you think Paul knew from his contact with them that they had a tendency to rely on their own work, thus making them a bit self-righteous and self-reliant? Do you or your church have these tendencies?**

2:14-16 – Jesus tore down all dividing walls between all peoples, but especially between the Jews and Gentiles. Peace between groups does not depend on what they have in common or their ability to agree on certain issues. Their peace is in Christ. **Is there any people group against which you have a bias?** Let Christ tear down that wall in your own heart! You cannot reach out with the love of God to a group or person where there is a wall between you and them.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's

behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

Jesus did away with the law in His flesh, along with all its requirements and regulations. **What does this mean? Do you not have to follow the law?** That is correct! Don't jump to conclusions, however. You now follow the law of the Spirit and that is far more demanding than the law itself. Jesus talked about this in Matthew. The current standard can only be fulfilled by a people who have died to the old law and live in resurrection life, empowered to follow the new law in Christ. In some ways, the old law was easier. In that law, I could not kill. Under the new law, I cannot even call my brother a fool!

But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell" (Matthew 5:22).

The old law came in part to convince those who tried to follow it that they could not do it. They were to cry out to God for help. The Jews, however, made every effort to follow that law in their own strength and opposed Jesus on the basis of that law. Now the followers of Christ are dead to that old law and alive to a new one, which is total obedience to Christ. Hallelujah! **Where are you still following the old law and have yet to submit to the new?** Ask God to show you where you are walking under law and not grace. **Where are you walking under law and not by the Spirit?**

Study Two, Part Four

¹⁷He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

¹⁹Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

2:17&18 – Christ came and preached peace. **What is real peace?** In this context, it seems that it is access to the Father by one Spirit. If one is estranged from God, then there can be no real peace. If one is in Christ, then one can know peace. On another note, Paul spent quite a bit of time writing about his life purpose, which was to take the gospel to the Gentiles. **Do you know your purpose? What is it that you were created to do?**

Christ came to preach peace to those “who were near,” namely the Jews. Even though they had a religious system that was based on the Old Testament and thought they had peace, they did not have true peace. **Do you have a religious system that tries to control and understand God, or do you have peace with God?** Don't be in a hurry to answer, for the correct response may surprise you. The Jews certainly would have been surprised to find out even though they knew *about* God, they were not at peace *with* God.

2:19 – This was written to the Ephesian Gentiles, who were once foreigners to God’s kingdom with no access to God. At this point when Paul wrote, they were one with God’s people, the Jews. While this was good news for them, we know it made the Jews, even Jewish believers, angry to think that Gentiles were suddenly equal in the sight of God. This message is the reason that Paul was not liked in Jerusalem. Jesus said, “Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets (Luke 6:26).” Paul was fulfilling his prophetic calling and it offended some people, but God and Paul did not apologize. You should also not apologize when you

I have a theory: if all people speak well of you, you are not fulfilling your purpose in life. Your purpose gives you insight into certain situations that others don’t have, just like Paul, and when you walk in that insight, it makes some people uncomfortable, even angry. **Are you in trouble with anyone, not for doing wrong, but for doing right?** If so, you should be happy. If not, you should ask, “Why not?”

2:20 – Paul likened the Church to a building where Christ is the cornerstone and the apostles and prophets are the foundation. Many today are talking of apostolic Christianity and there is a strong move to accept and honor the prophetic voices of our generation. This is good. This becomes “bad,” however, when Christ the Cornerstone isn’t emphasized enough. For my taste, I hear too much in some circles about the apostles and prophets and not enough about the Cornerstone, Jesus. For every message on the apostolic or prophetic, perhaps there should be three messages on Jesus so that we stay “balanced.”

Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone’ the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’ Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit” (Matthew 21:42-43).

Study Two, Part Five

²¹In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²²And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

2:21 –Yesterday I suggested the “one to three” rule, because while the apostles and prophets are mentioned in one verse, Jesus is mentioned in three verses. So we should talk about Jesus three times as much as we do church leadership. After all, it is in Him that the whole building rises and is held together. We cannot presume it is obvious that Christ is all in all, and go on to talk about other topics. We must continually preach Christ and Him crucified on our behalf!

But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles (1 Corinthians 1:23).

For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Is Christ your all in all? Do you focus more on Him or on the doctrines about Him and His Church? He is what joins us all together and is the builder of the Church.

2:22 – In Him (there’s that reference to where we live again), we are being built together. There are many movements that emphasize spiritual family and the reality of our relationships. This is good. When the relationships blur the fact that we are together “in Him,” then the relationships appear to be what is building the Body, a place where He dwells. We are built together by Him and in Him. The relationships are a result of the work He does in the Church. No relationship can ever become more important than your relationship with the Cornerstone that holds it all together.

Yet this building is a living organism where Christ chooses to dwell. That is how important the Church is to God and His plan. While I understand how many have been hurt in church situations, the reality is that God’s plan is still to build His Church!

“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the **gates** of Hades will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:18).

Just because the gates of hell will not prevail does not mean they won’t try to prevail. If the gates can mar the church, then God’s glory will be tarnished and His effectiveness through the Church limited. **Do you see how important the Church is to God and His work? If the Church is the apple of God’s eye, so to speak, is it yours as well?**

For this is what the Lord Almighty says: "After he has honored me and has sent me against the nations that have plundered you—for whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye" (Zechariah 2:8).

Study Two, Part Six

¹For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—
²Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly.

3:1 - Paul was a prisoner of Jesus on behalf of the Gentiles, because of and for the sake of his purpose, which was to take the gospel to the nations beyond Israel. Paul probably wrote this letter while imprisoned for his ministry to the Gentiles. In a manner of speaking he was also a prisoner of his purpose. He could not *not* do what he was created to do. He was a prisoner to his purpose more than to the Romans. **What is your purpose? Are you compelled to fulfill it? Are you a “prisoner” to it, in a good sense of the word?**

Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. **Woe** to me if I do not preach the gospel! (1 Corinthians 9:16).

Paul was a prisoner of Jesus, not of the Romans. He was in jail because that is where God had him at that moment in his life. He used that “moment” to write four letters, this being one of them. He went with the flow of his life and didn’t seem to be overly concerned that he was in jail. Many great men and women in history have been in jail for God’s work. They were prisoners of Jesus. I want Jesus to be my jailer!

3:2 – The word for administration in this verse is the word *oikonomia*. It is where we get our English word “economy.” Paul offered an economy of God’s grace for the Gentiles. He was preaching a whole new system of life, an economy so to speak. An economy speaks of a system and Paul was instrumental in preaching, establishing and pioneering a whole new system in God for those who lived outside Israel.

We cannot overestimate how dramatic this was for a conservative Jew like Paul to open the way to God for the Gentiles. It was so controversial that Paul had a group of Jewish believers, referred to as the Judaizers, who followed him wherever he went to try and ruin his “economy” by telling his converts that they had to follow the law of Moses! What would you do if you had a group actively seeking to undo all that you did? Yet Paul kept moving and working, trusting God for the results, working with urgency before the door closed in the Roman Empire to the work he was doing.

3:3 – I wonder if Paul was writing indirectly to the Jews as well as directly to the Gentiles. He was reiterating to his Jewish brethren who opposed him, both believing and non-believing Jews, what his message was in Christ and of Christ.

When you think of it, you have a special administration of God’s grace too. It isn’t as radical as Paul’s perhaps, but your purpose gives you something unique that no one can else can do or see like you can. **Do you know what that is? Are you giving your all to it? Are you trusting in God’s grace to fulfill it?**

Study Two, Part Seven

⁴In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. ⁶This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

3:4&5 – Paul knew that He had received something special from the Lord and was numbering himself among God’s apostles and prophets. He knew he wasn’t the only apostle and prophet, but he knew he was one of them. There is something that I call “false humility.” It is denying what you are or can do for fear of what others will think, or out of fear that your admission will open the door to pride. Whatever the reason you have it, false humility is based in fear. **Who are you?** You can say it and not get in

trouble with God. Not saying who you are causes confusion in your mind and in the mind of others.

Who are you in Christ? State it without saying “maybe,” “sort of,” or “I think.” **Who are you?**

I wonder, too, if Paul was writing to clarify and see on paper what he truly believed. Sometimes when you write something, it forces you to use exact words and to be clear. That is why you should write out your purpose statement.

3:6 – Paul was restating what he had already written so that there could be no confusion as to what his message was. This message was shocking to a Jew! The Gentiles were heirs together with Israel. The residents of Jerusalem didn’t like Paul. When he arrived there in Acts 21, they were cordial but bluntly told him,

"You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come (Acts 21:20-22)."

The leaders in Jerusalem were concerned for Paul because so many believing Jews did not like him. Yet they were not ready to speak on his behalf. They advised him to undertake a “public relations” campaign to try and prove that he was still a Jew! What nonsense!

Don’t try to please your enemies. It is a futile effort. Be who God made you to be. Don’t look back or be mean to those who don’t like or understand you. Be who God made you to be.

Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets (Luke 6:26).

"I do not accept praise from men, but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?" (John 5:41-44).