

Alive in **CHRIST**

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ”

- Ephesians 2v 4-5



Session #2: The Wonder of God's Workmanship

Ephesians Chapter 2 verses 1-22

Sladebrook Evangelical Church

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Introduction and Aim of this Teaching Series:

In 6 chapters, the book of Ephesians reveals some of the richest truths in Scripture. The Apostle Paul, who wrote the letter to the Christians in Ephesus, could, it seems, barely contain his excitement as he told them all about the wonders of what God has done in Christ. Blending high spiritual realities with practical ways in which Christians are called to live them out, the Ephesian letter exhorts Christians throughout history to look again at what it really means to be alive in Christ.

The New Testament scholar, F. F. Bruce said about Ephesians; “it sums up in large measure the leading themes of the Pauline writings... but it does more than that; it carries the thought of the earlier letters forward to a new stage.” It is as though Paul’s appreciation of the gospel that so radically transformed his life has scaled new heights: So that even within the confines of his roman captivity, the apostle is able, under inspiration, to transcend his circumstances and celebrate all that God has provided for him within the heavenly realms.

As we look at this letter, the aim is not only to understand more of its contents, but to apply its teachings to our own lives. With topics ranging from the spiritual reality of heavenly blessings and the importance of church unity, to effective Christian witness and spiritual warfare, Ephesians touches on essential areas of the Christian life.

We must learn to engage with these heavenly themes if we are to understand what it means to be alive in Christ. The more we learn to appreciate the great truths that underpin our salvation, the more we learn to appreciate Jesus and just how much He loves us. Once we realise what Christ has done for us, we can look beyond our own struggles and circumstances and hold on to everything that God, in His rich mercy and because of His great love, has forever blessed us with.

Alive in Christ #2: The Wonder of God's Workmanship

In Chapter 1, Paul reminded the Ephesians of everything they had in Christ: Spiritual riches in the heavenly realms bestowed upon them for the purpose and pleasure of God. According to Paul, everything is headed in His direction: a wonderful new world order that is to come brought about by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1v9-10)

If chapter 1 introduced us to the heavenly blessings that we now have in Christ, chapter 2 explains how they came about. Paul starkly lays bare the human condition: "*dead in transgressions*" (v5) and under the sway of the "*ruler of the kingdom the air.*" (v2) Paul states that human beings are naturally given to feeding their own selfish desires (v3) and are, as a result, "*objects of wrath*" in the eyes of a holy God. (v3) However, the phrase, "*But because of his great love for us...*" (v4) shines divine light into the darkness.

At this point, one of the Bible's great truths is introduced: Grace. Overwhelming; disarming, unearned, life giving grace. Grace is something we could never earn, yet can freely receive. Despite ourselves, God sent Jesus to save us. He did it so we can stand amazed, as the happy recipients of such an undeserved gift. Indeed, Paul calls us God's workmanship: a prized possession that He has skilfully brought into being and continues to shape for His glory.

What has God done and how does this workmanship show itself? Paul explains: Racial and religious barriers are no more. Jews and Gentiles need saving from their sin and Jesus offers peace for those "*who were far away and peace to those who are near.*" (v17) All who come to the cross can be reconciled to God and each other.

The same God whom we had alienated ourselves from because of our sin, now invites us into His presence: "*we both have access to the Father, by one Spirit.*" (v18) As a consequence of all Christ has done, says Paul, we are no longer far off, but are "*members of God's household.*" (v19) In an incredible, cosmic turnaround, the work of God turns one time objects of wrath into a holy temple, where God Himself dwells by His Spirit. (v22). May we be moved to worship this life giving, sin conquering God all the more as we, with the Ephesians, seek to come to terms with what He has done for us.

Read: Ephesians Chapter 2 verses 1-22

God's Workmanship: *the wonder of redemption* - Ephesians 2v1-10

Paul states the problem with humanity and God's remedy in Christ

God's Workmanship: *the wonder of reconciliation* - Ephesians 2v 11-18

The peace Jesus brings means that we've been brought near to God

God's Workmanship: *the wonder of relationship* - Ephesians 2v 19-22

Paul prays that the Ephesians will understand what God has done

Alive in Christ:

Discuss:

Paul is stark in how he describes the human condition. Would you be comfortable to share in this way? (2v 1-3)

Do you think we actually explain the full gospel when we talk about what Jesus has done and why? What are we prone to leave out?

What do you think Paul wanted the Ephesians to learn about grace? In what ways do we still struggle to understand grace?

How can we demonstrate our oneness in Christ? How do you think 2v 21-22 looks in practice?

Describe your relationship with Jesus: How does it look?

Pray:

Ask the Lord to give you an ever increasing understanding of what the gospel is: that you might genuinely grasp grace for yourself and extend it consistently to others.

Respond:

Think about how you would try and explain the things Paul talks about to a friend today. How would you describe some of the concepts he mentions here faithfully, yet relevantly?