

Blessings in Christ - Purpose (Part 3)

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[0 : 0 0] Well, I was a little bit concerned that I might not get some notes for you, you know, so! you can kind of fill in your little blanks. I had two doctor appointments today and one! of them I shared with you, the other one had to do with my eyes, totally unrelated.

But I was pressed for time, but I got them done and there they are. If you see some major misspellings or some weird thing on there that just doesn't make any sense, you just understand that it was a rush job and I got it there for you. Now, I want to go ahead and begin as I think I have done about every time, and that is to read the full text again. Because I want to keep these in our minds and the passage here so that we can really begin to think about these verses and some of the truths that Paul was sharing with us out of the second chapter of Ephesians. So let me go ahead and read verses 1-10. That's the larger text that we've been looking at now. I guess this will be the third Wednesday and we'll finish it tonight, believe it or not. Well, shouldn't have any trouble doing that. There's not much left. But what's left is pretty heavy stuff. So anyway, let me go ahead and read it. It started with verse 1 chapter 2.

And you he made alive. And I always want to mention that he made alive is not in the original text. It's not there, but it comes later. Now we'll read it as it is printed here in the New King James. You he made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins. And that part is in there. That's the important part.

In which, that is in these trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, and we know that's Satan, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, children deserving of wrath, literally, just as the others, everybody else.

But God, who is rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, and then parenthetically, by grace you have been saved, and raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

[3 : 2 4] So, tremendous passage of scripture, and we've already looked at quite a bit of it, and again, as I said a while ago, we'll finish that up tonight. But remember, we divided the passage, these ten verses, into two parts.

I didn't contrive that division. It's very clearly divided into these two parts. And that is, first of all, what we once were. First four verses, or three verses rather, clearly are referring to what we once were.

That is, B.C., before Christ. And again, just by way of review, and this just comes right out of the text. There isn't anything complicated about this. I mean, we do need to study in depth the meaning of these, and we hopefully have done that. But here's what we once were. We were spiritually dead. Dead. We were dead in trespasses and sins. We were, secondly, enslaved to the powers of evil. And I say powers, remember, plural, because Paul mentions three of them here. The world, the prince of the power of the air, that's Satan, and the flesh, our flesh, our own flesh. Those are the three enemies we face every day of our lives. And the most powerful enemy, of course, I think, is the flesh. Powerful in the sense that that's what we deal with. But now that we're talking about not what we're dealing with now, we still face these enemies now. But he's talking about being actually enslaved by these enemies. And that's what we once were. So, spiritually dead, we were enslaved

by the powers of evil. And then third, as a consequence to these two, we were objects of God's wrath.

And we're the objects of his wrath. And verse 3 says, We were by nature children of wrath. And again, I always insert this, children deserving of God's wrath.

Fully deserving of it, just as the others. All right, so what we once were. Now, second then, and we started to look at this last week, in fact, got about halfway through it, what we now are.

[5 : 46] What we now are. And verse 4, again, I want to kind of highlight this because it's such a profound thing and wonderful thing. Verse 4 begins with, But God. What a perfect way to move from what we once were to what we now are. But God, but God, I called it the grace conjunction. I thought that up myself.

Now, I'll probably be reading someday and see if somebody else already thought that. Because it highlights the grace of God. But God, so God moves in. Here's the problem. Here's, you know, what we were. And we can't do anything about it. And left ourselves, we would remain there.

And deservingly. But God, but God, and so this is a, it just highlights a gracious response to what we once were. All right, so God's grace brought us then from what we once were to what we are now. And what we, what are we, excuse me, we are what we now are because of regeneration.

That's the subject here. Regeneration. Now, you can insert the word salvation. Regeneration is just a much more specific term. And it is certainly points to something that God did. No one else has done.

And we cannot help in or do anything to, to bring this about. This is God's work, the work of regeneration. That is, the new birth. Birthing us. Birthing us into his kingdom. Birthing us into something new.

[7 : 47] Something he has been creating. A new society. A redeemed society. So, we're talking about redemption. Or, excuse me, regeneration. So, we are what we are now because of regeneration. New birth.

And Paul says four things about regeneration in verses 4 through 10. We covered the first two last time, but here they are again by way of review. Now, you don't have to worry about your notes until we get to the third one, okay? So, if you're looking for a blank to fill in, we're not there yet.

All right, so, first Paul gives, remember, the why of regeneration. The why. And, again, I'm using the word why here to convey the idea of for what reason. For what reason. You know, why can point in two directions. You can use the word why to point forward and ask the question for what purpose.

We'll get to that a little bit later at the end of my outline. The other way, of course, points backward and asks for what reason. And that's what I'm talking about here. And this is where Paul began. So, first, Paul gives us the reason God saves us. The reason. The reason he birthed us into his kingdom. And so, here is the why of regeneration. God's mercy, his love, and his grace. His mercy, love, and grace. All right, so, because, verse 4, God is rich in mercy.

That's why he regenerated us. That's why he saved us. He's rich in mercy and great in love, Paul said there, verse 4. And also because, verse 7, and not just in 7, but really three places in the text, we have the idea of grace. But in verse 7, it says, God is rich in grace.

[9 : 38] So, his mercy, his love, his grace. And see, none of that is something we contribute to. It's not, none of that speaks of anything on our side of the ledger. It's all on God's side. And so, the why of salvation or regeneration, if you want to use the more specific term, his mercy, his love, and his grace. Second, Paul gives us the what of regeneration. And again, by way of review, we're talking about the nature of regeneration. And we looked at this last time, Paul uses three expressions to describe what God has done for the believer. Verse 5, he made us alive together with Christ. This is the what of regeneration. In fact, that helps us understand when we use the term or the expression, the new birth or being born again. That's regeneration and that's life coming back into us. God infusing life in us, made us alive together with Christ. And then verse 6, the second expression, raised us up together with Christ. So, life came back into us, came into us, and then he raised us so that we can live that new life. And then verse 6 really points out way out into the future. Verse 6 made us to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

All right, so that's the what of regeneration. All right, now we're up to speed. We're ready to move forward. Third, Paul gives us the how. The how of regeneration. The how, or to put it in more maybe accurate terms, the means. The means of regeneration. The means that is by which the believer comes into his or her new position in relationship with God. The how, the means. All right, and then Paul says two things about this. Two things. And first, our spiritual union with Christ.

Our spiritual union with Christ. Here's the how of regeneration, or the means of regeneration. God does it through spiritual union, a spiritual union with Christ. And this kind of goes back to something I pointed out last week. The believer is united with Christ in his death and burial and resurrections as if we were actually there with him. In him. At least in the mind of God. You see, in the mind of God, we were there in Christ when he died upon that cross and was raised and walked out of that tomb. We were in the mind of God. We were there in Christ. He, to put it more accurately, he was our representative. We could even use the word head. He is our head. Our head. And so, remember, these three times we have the word together. I pointed this out. And this, you know, this has implications for the water regeneration, but also for the how of it. We have together appearing three times in verses five and six. Let me remind you again. Made us alive together with Christ. Verse six raised us up together with Christ. Now, with Christ is not in the text, but it's implied. Together with Christ. And then verse six also made us to sit together in Christ or by Christ. Together, together, together. The idea is to have regeneration is our union with him, our spiritual union with him. But this union with Christ actually goes back even further than the cross and the resurrection. And so, I want to kind of step out of the text for a moment and bring into place some other truths in scripture that we should understand about the believer's union with Christ. It's a very important doctrine. It's a very important doctrine, though it's not talked about very much. For one reason, it's difficult to explain. This union with Christ. And actually, we can think of our union with Christ. I'm talking about the believer. Our union with Christ in three aspects.

[14:13] First, through election. I know we've already covered this for some troubling doctrine. We covered that in chapter one of Ephesians. But this union with Christ should be understood through election. And I think I put this down here, but let me read it. In the mind of God, I know this is important. In the mind of God, we are united to Christ in terms of the Father's sovereign decision to elect individual fallen sinners and redeem them through his Son. We are in union with him through election. Eternity past. We were as much united with Christ united with Christ in eternity past as we are now. But it's a spiritual union.

And let me go forward and then I'll explain what I mean by a spiritual union. Second, through representation.

So our union with Christ should be understood in three aspects. Through election, chosen before the foundation of the world. Through representation. And this is what Paul is talking about here in Ephesians 2, in the very passage we're looking at right now. And here's how we ought to understand it. In Christ's earthly ministry, everything that he did, everything, he did in behalf of us.

Everything he did, he did in behalf of us. His bride, his church. We were united in him in his earthly ministry. And we weren't actually there. We hadn't even been born yet. We're talking about in the mind of God.

Everything Christ did, he did in our behalf. When he was baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist, which was a baptism of repentance, he was not confessing his own personal sin.

[16:25] Was he? He had no sin. Not confessing his own. He was, rather, he was there as my and your representative. Our head.

He was acting in our behalf. And that's just the beginning of it. The same is true of his fulfillment of every jot and tittle of the law. He did that in our behalf.

And you can add to that his, his, in his suffering. In his perfect suffering. In his resurrection. In his, his crucifixion. In his resurrection.

In his ascension. Everything that Christ did was representative. That is, he did it in our behalf. He is our head. That's how we ought to understand this union with Christ, this aspect of it.

So, through election, that takes us back, way back to eternity. Before eternity. Now, eternity passed. Through election.

[17:25] Then through representation. That still passed for us. We're talking about when Christ walked this earth. He did everything in our behalf. And in the mind of God.

We were in him. He is our representative. He is our head. Alright, now. These first two aspects of the union with Christ. Come under the heading of spiritual union.

I don't want to confuse us. As we kind of follow the outline there. But these first two aspects of union with Christ. Are spiritual. It's a spiritual union.

Why? Because the union exists only in the mind of God. It's only in the mind of God. Which is just as sure as if it had already taken place.

Okay. You know, sometimes things are true in our own minds. And it doesn't turn out that way. But with God. When God's mind has been settled on a certain thing.

[18:25] It's a sure thing. Alright, so in the mind of God is the same as saying. This is true. As if it had already happened. But this is spiritual union.

A spiritual union. It has occurred before we were born. It occurred before we repented and believed in Christ. But there is a third aspect of the believer's union with Christ.

And it is the second thing Paul says about the how of regeneration. We could call it through salvation. Or if you want to use the word regeneration. That's what we're talking about here.

Alright, so. Then getting to that second thing that Paul says about regeneration. First we have our spiritual union with Christ. And then our personal union with Christ.

This is a term that most theologians, a lot of theologians use. But there are some other terms that are used to refer to this aspect of our union with Christ.

[19:25] Some theologians call it the mystical union. A mystical union. Others call it a vital union. I really prefer that. A vital in the sense that it's living.

It's actual. The union with Christ then becomes, this is important, becomes vital. It becomes personal.

It becomes actual. Through what? Faith. Through faith. And this is the second thing Paul says about the how of regeneration.

Faith is critical to this. Faith. Verse 8. For by grace you have been saved through faith. Now, here's where there's some misunderstanding.

Faith is not the cause of salvation. Your faith did not cause you to be saved. Faith is not the basis of salvation.

[20:33] God bases salvation on your faith. You have faith? Okay, I'll give you salvation. It's not the cause or the basis. What is? The mercy, love, and grace of God, remember.

So, rather than that, faith is the instrument of salvation. Now, these are difficult, difficult concepts. Faith is the means of salvation.

Faith is the means of salvation. And that is what the preposition through, through faith, is telling us. Faith does not save you. Faith does not save you. The merciful, and merciful, loving, and gracious God saves you. See, and he does it by means of faith.

Or through the instrument of faith. And we also notice this. I don't know if I put this in your notes, you can just jot this down. But faith is as much a gift as the grace.

[21:31] Verse 8. It is the gift of God. It is the gift of God. I like the ESV at this point.

And let me just read it to you. For by grace, you have been saved through faith. That part is the same as it is in nearly every translation.

Then, the next part is worded this way. And this is not your own doing. What is not your own doing? The grace you have been saved by faith, or through faith, is not your own doing.

The whole thing is not your own doing. Being saved by grace through faith is not your own doing. None of it is.

It is the gift of God. Being saved by grace through faith is the gift of God. So the grace and faith is the gift of God. If any part of your salvation is your own doing, even if it's faith, what does that make faith?

[22:42] It makes it work. It makes it work. If any part of your salvation is of your own doing, then even if it is your response to the gospel, then some measure of it would be counting on works.

But Paul says, very clearly in verse 9, what? Not of works. Let that, so that no one may boast. I don't have anything to boast about when it comes to salvation.

At all, because it's all the gift of God. It's the gift of God. Alright? Alright, so first then, Paul gives us the why of regeneration, reason for it, God's mercy, love, and grace.

Second, Paul gives us the what of regeneration, or the nature of it. Made us alive together with Christ. Raised us up together with Christ. Made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ.

Third, Paul gives us the how of regeneration, our spiritual union with Christ, our personal union with Christ. And then finally, Paul gives us the why of regeneration.

[23:50] The why. You're possibly remembering from last week that the first point was the why of regeneration. How can you have two points in an outline that say the same thing?

You know, the why of regeneration, that was point number one. And now we're back to the why of regeneration. Well, remember, I've already reminded you of this tonight, but let me remind you

again.

There are two ways to use the word why. I'm justifying my own outline. There are two ways. One way it points backward, remember, and asks what?

For what reason? For what reason has this happened? It points backward. And that is the way I use the first why in my outline.

The other way it points forward. And it asks, for what purpose? For what purpose? And so that's the idea here. Paul now points us forward to the purpose of regeneration.

[24 : 54] Why God? The purpose for which God regenerated us, saved us, birthed us into his new redeemed society of people. the why.

And so we could name them as follows. I think it's twofold. There is the eternal purpose, and there is the practical purpose.

All right? The first one is the eternal why. The eternal why, or purpose, of regeneration. creation. The new birth of believers.

The eternal why of this creation of a new society. And we find this in verse 7. That in ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace and his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Now this is good. The ages to come. See that phrase there? The ages to come. That literally, refers literally to the limitless future.

[26 : 01] The limitless future. And it is synonymous really with the concept eternity. Eternity. God, all right, so God is saving us in order to show something.

That what the passage says, to show something in those ages to come. In the limitless future. To show something. And we can say, it's to show something now, but to show this something for ages and ages all the way out into eternity without end.

To show something in those ages to come. And what is God going to show through his saving us? The exceeding riches of his grace. All right, so okay, well so what?

You know what that means? Did I put this in your notes? That this present age is not sufficient time for God to reveal the riches of his grace.

In fact, we can't even see how great it is in this life. Our vision is, you know, today I went to see Dr. Lee and Marsha helped me and he checked my eyes and I discovered that they're even worse than they were before.

[27 : 26] You know, they just keep getting worse. You know, and I just can't, and he flashes up, you know, read that line or can you read this line or does this line, is this clear or the second one clear?

You all had a blurry and but I can actually, and this is my confusion and I know Dr. Lee just, is it this idiot?

Yeah, he'll ask me, is this one better or is the second one better? And I'll say, well, you know, I can still tell what it says but it's real blurry. And that's kind of the idea here.

You know, I know, I know the grace of God, the riches of his grace. I mean, that's the very impetus for worship, true worship, to know the riches of his grace.

But I just don't know all of it. I don't even know, I guess, a fraction of it. And it's because it's so huge and so wonderful that it takes all of eternity to display it.

[28 : 31] And that's, that's the idea. He, he redeemed us. Here's his purpose. Of course, we could actually pare this down to just one word, glory, to reveal his glory.

But this, this is his purpose. This age is not sufficient time for God to reveal the riches of his grace. Only eternity will suffice to completely display the exceeding riches of his grace.

All right, so that's the, what I would call the eternal why. And then there's the practical why. Or purpose of regeneration.

Verse 10. It is very practical for we are his workmanship workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in that.

All right. I've heard it said many times, in fact, Brother Tom mentioned it not too long ago, maybe it was on a Monday night, that we have a tendency to leave this verse off. Well, we, we memorized verse 8 and 9 and it's one of those key passages that we often use in sharing the gospel.

[29 : 36] and for by grace you've been saved through faith and that not of yourselves the gift of God not works lest any man should boast. It's a tremendous passage but then we get, we just leave verse 10 on.

And there's a purpose for God, for God to grace us, save us and it's good works. To good works.

And that's the practical why of regeneration to do good works. We don't just, you know, sit on our blessed assurance. You know, let go, let God and all the other kind of expressions that have been out there.

But there's several things that we need to see here with this. And some of them are very evident and, you know, you could say, well, I see that. But salvation, first of all, is a work, the workmanship of the creator.

Salvation is a workmanship of the creator. Salvation is something radical. Transformative. The believer is not just made better.

[30 : 50] The believer is made new. Brand new. We're a new creation. Now some remnant of the old still exists there.

And we struggle with that. But that's not who we are. We're brand new. And praise the Lord, one day, either after we die and when we're resurrected, or Jesus comes, and I'm hoping for that one, and we're, you know, translated, then all that old will be gone too.

But we are new. We're brand new. This is the workmanship of the creator. More, really, more awesome than even the creation of this universe.

In all of its hugeness and complexity. Also, we should know that good works are part of God's eternal plan for the believers.

This is an important aspect of the passage. God didn't save you and then say, well, let's see, what can I have you do? You know, you're not worth a lot, but they're eternal, which God prepared beforehand, beforehand, that we should walk in there.

[32 : 16] Beforehand with God always means eternity past. You know, God never comes to a place where he makes a plan. That's why it's so difficult for us to understand.

We have to put things in terms that, you know, that we understand in our own language and we're locked in with our own language. You know, plan, we refer to God's plan of salvation, but it's not a plan in the sense that at some point he developed it.

It's eternal. And we can't conceptualize that. And so when you talk about God doing something beforehand or deciding beforehand or preparing something beforehand, it's always eternity past.

So he had a plan for us in eternity. And then finally, and this I think is implied in the text, and we don't really think of this very often, but these works that he has prepared beforehand that we should walk in, do, are both present, that is in this life, but also future.

Future in the next life, we think of in those terms, in eternity. That is, God has prepared works for us in eternity. God's purpose in regeneration is first and foremost, chiefly, his glory, the glory of his grace.

[34 : 10] That's his purpose. And then second, for good works. It's very practical and we should be doing those right now.