

Ephesians Study 3

Prayer: Give me the Spirit of wisdom and revelation that I may know you better.

Reading and Reflection

Read the prayer of Ephesians 1: 15-23 as if it were your prayer, put your own personal pronoun into it. As you read it, ask God to reveal to you His power.

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

Paul describes our separation from God (vs.1-3). The word translated as disobedience is associated with listening or hearing (“to hear intelligently” in Hebrew and “to hear under” in Greek).

The understanding of obedience (or disobedience) for Paul, would have not only implied doing what you were told, but would have to do with the quality of your hearing, of hearing intelligently, wisely. A posture of listening which has everything to do with communication and relationship.

In your own heart, what are you listening to? What are you listening for? What are you truly hearing?

How are you hearing or not hearing God’s grace?

In vs. 4,5 Paul writes that we were dead – we incapable to do anything and grace is what made us alive.

Have you had any absolute Grace moments? Was there a situation where you were given a new way forward that was absolutely undeserved and even unasked for? Where you were completely unable to figure it out on your own but a way forward was provided for you. What did that feel like?

Read vs. 6-9 aloud. Write down the words that catch you.

Let’s talk about grace. How easy or difficult is it for you to receive grace? Eugene Peterson writes, “Grace is difficult for self-made people to receive.” How do you see this in your own life?

This reminds us of the beatitudes. Blessed are the meek, the poor, the miserable –they will get it, because they are not self-made. They are unable to be great and successful – and so they will be able to receive, and live in, this grace.

In what ways does our culture damage our ability to know grace? Self-help? Emphasis on technology and success? A pervasive attitude of looking down on people because they aren’t strong enough to make their lives better?

In light of this passage on free grace, what is the nature of our separation from God? Not hearing his grace? Not seeing where he always is and always is working? Thinking we can, and have to, do it on our own? Thinking we have to figure out how to live perfectly and good, be our best? Thinking we have to look out for ourselves, fight for resources, defend what we have at the expense of others?

Reflect on this: What story are you living out of? One of God's grace or one of your self-made-ness.

Read vs 10 What is the difference between our works and us being God's handiwork created to do good works?

Remember Ephesians 2:7. We are given this life in a beautiful, created world to live fully showing God's grace expressed in kindness.

Eugene Peterson writes that what we do (good works) is like the "bucket" that holds God's grace.

What is something that you consider a good work?
How does that good work bring God's "grace expressed in the kindness of Jesus" to the world?

I wonder if you can be holding as many buckets as possible, but if its not free grace expressed in the kind of kindness that Jesus showed in those buckets, then they are empty. (1 Corinthians 13). Even in what we "do" as good works, the point, the focus, the reason we do them, is about God's free grace.

Responding to the Text

How does the work of Jesus Chapter 2 illuminate "all things being brought into unity" of chapter 1. How is your life a work of art showing God's grace expressed in the kindness of Jesus? What is your honest response to this question? Invite Jesus into your response.