

Ephesians 13-11-10b

Let's pick up our study in Ephesians chapter 2. The big idea here as we move forward from chapter 1 is in Christ the power of God is available. It's a power we don't have, quite obviously, although we like to be convinced that we are God or we are gods or we are our own deity and our own savior. This is the message of the world.

Science will deliver us, science will cure diseases, science will give us a better world through technology. I had an interesting discussion with someone a year or two back of the atheistic, secular humanist persuasion, talking about how much happier we are now than people were in ancient times or medieval times. We are happier through technology.

Superficially, this seems like, well, of course, we don't die from the common cold and fever, we take an aspirin, and so through the palliatives and the provisions and the advances that we have in technology and medicine and so on, everybody is just happier. I said, no, we are not. Of course, this immediately created all sorts of sweat grenades going off in every direction and people saying, oh, what do you mean, how can you say that? If you think about it, all you have to do is look at a three-legged dog.

This is my three-legged dog argument. You look at a three-legged dog. The dog is missing a leg, but the dog doesn't sit around saying, oh, boo-hoo, I'm a three-legged dog.

Have you ever owned or seen a three-legged dog? Three-legged dogs just hop along. They're just as happy. They're just as anxious to chase a squirrel.

It's like, dog, don't you know you're three-legged? Why aren't you morose? Why aren't you sort of apathetic? And why don't you sort of howl and groan when you see other dogs running around on four legs? And why don't you make yourself... Dogs, you can do all kinds of things. A dog can be blind in one eye and lose all of its teeth and be gimpy. And when their master comes home, they're just as happy as any healthy dog.

When you feed them, they enjoy their food just as much as any other dog. When they get petted, they'll roll over and stick their feet, whatever's left of them, in the air just as much as any other dog. You know, dogs and animals in general are just, they seem to be oblivious.

They just live in the moment. And if it's a happy moment, they're happy. If it's a scary moment, they're scared.

But they don't, you know, ongoing circumstances don't really seem to wear them down unless they are in ongoing actual pain. You know, when they're on their last legs, when they're going out and they've got cancer or their organs have failed, of course, they can't get happy. But something that is missing or something that's gone that the pain of it's in the past, they just, they don't seem to know.

People in every generation from ancient times to the present have had their joys and their sorrows, their hopes and their dreams, their fears, their pleasures. And the level of technology, do you seriously think that on average, people in medieval days were just miserable and people on average today are just happy because we have iPhones and they don't? We have television and they don't? We have the movies and they don't? They had their pleasures. They had their ups and downs.

You think about when you were a child and you had toys. Now you're an adult and you have adult toys. You had child responsibilities and chores if you were raised right.

When you grow up, you have responsibilities and chores. And people say, oh, you know, for the days of my childhood. It's the same.

We adjust just like your threshold of pain. You've got a certain level of sensitivity in your finger. You wrap a Band-Aid on it for two or three days.

What happens? Your body sensitizes the nerves to feel through the Band-Aid. If you wear that Band-Aid long enough, you get to where you don't even notice it because that finger will become as sensitive as if there was no Band-Aid. Then when you take the Band-Aid off, for many hours afterward, that finger is super sensitive because your nerves have adjusted.

Generally speaking, unless we get into extremis or we have some really difficult issue, we adjust. We find a balance point and we go up into happiness and we go down into depression or unhappiness. We have joys and hilarity.

We have soberness and, you know, morose moments. We adjust. So the notion that we are somehow going to be lifted into a new realm by circumstances is an illusion.

This is why incredibly rich people aren't incredibly happier than incredibly poor people. Incredibly rich people make themselves miserable, evidence misery, wipe themselves out in their expensive cars. I was smiling because Elizabeth and I went up and ran a little errand.

I like to exercise our classic sleek German racing machine on weekends, the 77 Volkswagen bus with its glorious and ever-growing coating of rust on top. So I pulled in next to this red Viper sports car. I thought, I don't want to make the guy feel bad, but, you know, that he's got to limp around in this red Viper while I have a 77 Volkswagen Champagne Edition bus, but I'm going to park next to him anyway.

And I told Elizabeth, you know, I kind of feel bad for him because he's not any happier than I am. He's not any happier in his Viper. He's got to be a lot more careful.

I really don't care if he opens his door into me, but I promise you he would care if I opened my door into him. So there is a truth that we often forget, that improving your circumstances is not

going to improve your intrinsic happiness. Happiness depends on other things.

Obviously, momentarily, if you handed me the keys to that Viper, I might be thrilled until the first time I had to change an air cleaner and find out that that part cost more than the engine in my other car. But we obviously, there are moments of stimulation, moments that you can achieve if you've got a lot of money that you can spend on stuff, but we very soon settle back into whatever our native state of happiness is. This is why God works on the inside of us and not the outside.

This is why he saves us inside long before he saves us outside. We're going to get saved outside. We're going to be raised, we're going to be glorified, transformed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

We're going to be taken to a much better environment. We are going to live and be part of the oversight of a tremendous kingdom followed by an even exponentially greater kingdom. And there is something to be said for those circumstances.

But scripture tells us our happiness now and our happiness then is not dependent on those external circumstances. Don't grind along thinking, well, everybody will be happy over there. You're going to be as happy there as you are here.

Build your happiness now by cultivating those things on the inside that you carry forward as your base level of happiness and satisfaction and enjoyment. And it isn't going to come from the fashion of this world that is passing away. It is going to come from what God builds on the inside.

God builds the kingdom in us before he ever takes us to the kingdom he has built on the outside. That's the message of this section of scripture. In Christ, the power of God is available.

And God has a purpose. The availability of God's power to us isn't so that we can be happy. God didn't just look down and say, oh, look at those poor, pitiful, unhappy people.

I'll put them in Christ, make some power available, then they'll be happy. That's really my purpose. All I want to do in the universe is just make these poor, wormy humans happy.

Just want to lift them up a little out of the muck. Have a good time. That's my purpose.

Just, you know, come on. Cheer up. Chin up.

Put on a happy face. Smile. When you're feeling... I saw a beautiful guitar rendition of Smile.

Some guy figured out a beautiful fingerstyle rendition of Charlie... Did Charlie Chaplin write that, Smile? You know, smile when your heart is breaking. That's just the most pathetic thought. Your heart is breaking and you're trying to work the corners of your mouth up and tears are streaming down and they're laying your dog to rest.

You're just trying to smile. Smile when you're... God gives us genuine power and it will result in

our fulfillment and our happiness. But that's not the purpose.

That's why we... That's why Paul in chapter 1 and into chapter 2 says, in Christ, here is God's purpose, so that... And his purpose is not... It encompasses and provides for our incredible happiness, incredible fulfillment like no other. But that's not the purpose. That's a concomitant.

It's a side benefit. So that, verse 7, in the ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Without the in Christ Jesus, the rest of it evaporates.

It only exists in Christ Jesus. Now, do you live in the world or do you live in Christ Jesus? Do you live in the invisible power of the air or do you live in Christ Jesus? Do you live in the lust of your flesh, in self-gratification, or do you live in Christ Jesus? You are either in, surrounded by, lifted up by, enabled and empowered by God's strength, God's glory, or you have bypassed all of that to be just as bad as any of the worst of believers you can name. Swept downstream, fooled, and self-indulgent.

How pathetic is that? No excuse. Verse 8, for by grace you have been saved through faith. You're different.

You are separate. You are not of those who fall away unto perdition. You are of those who, by grace and patience, inherit the promises.

We mentioned in the beginning of the first session this morning that this letter traveled in the same pouch with Colossians. We studied the book of Colossians a few years ago, and you may recall, or if you like, you can turn briefly to Colossians chapter 1. You see a strong similarity to the section we are now looking at, beginning in verse 9. For this reason we also, since the day we heard of it, am I in Ephesians? No, I'm in Colossians. Colossians chapter 1, verse 9. For this reason we also, since the day we heard of it, do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

That's Colossians 1, 9. How similar to that is what we've been looking at the last few weeks? But it's virtually identical. Since we heard of your faith, go back to verse 4, we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all the saints. Am I in the right book? Colossians chapter 1, verse 4. We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you ever since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all the saints, because of the hope that is laid up for you in heaven.

Verse 9. For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Doesn't this help clarify what kind of a spirit is it? Is he praying that they get the spirit of wisdom and revelation and the full knowledge of him? No. Paul says, I pray that you will be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

Verse 10. So that, what is the purpose? So that you may be happy, so that you may be ecstatic, so that you may wake up with a song in your heart and a word of praise on your lips. What is the purpose? That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

As you walk, as you are pleasing, as you are fruitful, as you increase in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might according to his glorious power. All of those words we saw in Ephesians chapter 1. Energeo, iskuos, krateo, dunamis, dunameo. Those four great Greek words for power.

Energy, dynamite, kratas, krateo, iskuos, strength, operative, lifting the weight strength. Strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, according to the standard of. How strong will you be? How much power is available to you? Stop and think, what's the power for? What's the power for? What are our three enemies? It's the world, the flesh and the devil, right? The course of this world, prince of the power of the invisible and the lust of our flesh.

It's the world, the flesh and the devil. What's the power for? Strengthened with all might, according to the standard of, to the measure of, to the extent of, his glorious power for the purpose of exhibiting, exercising, having all patience and all long-suffering endurance with joy. It's one thing to suffer long and be miserable.

It's something else to suffer long and be patient and have joy. Did you ever go visit somebody that's down, somebody that's in the hospital, somebody that's in a bad way, and you think, well, I'll go cheer them up. You know, they could use a visit.

They're facing really tough circumstances. I'll try to go and, you know, be a blessing of some kind, be a comfort, be an encouragement of some sort. But when you get there, this person winds up infecting you with their optimism and their energy and their viewpoint, and you come away being the one that got blessed.

You ever had that experience? Those people are the ones who have tapped into the power according to the mighty power of God. They're operating on something well beyond themselves and beyond anything that we humans can generate or give to each other. We tend to, our mode is commiserate.

When we get together, the con part goes with misery, and we commiserate. The people of God get together, and it's like nuclear fission. The more nuclear material you put in the same place, the more power there is.

And when the presence of God in you gets together with the presence of God in that person, the potential energy greatly increases. You know, this is how a nuclear bomb works. You increase the mass enough, and the thing creates incredible expressions of energy.

That's what he says here in Colossians chapter 1, verse 11, strengthened with all might according to his glorious power for the purpose of having with a view toward unto patience and longsuffering, not with grim perseverance, not with, you know, hard shell scrabbling through the muck and the dust and the mire, with joy, giving thanks to the Father. Why? He has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. How much of that inheritance do you see right now? It's invisible.

Do you want to be in the grip of the invisible prince, or do you want to be looking forward to that future inheritance in light? Both invisible, but what a difference. He has delivered us, verse 13, from the power of darkness and conveyed us, transferred us into the kingdom of the son of his love in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. He, Jesus Christ, is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

By him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, visible and invisible, thrones, dominions, principalities, powers. He created them, therefore he is over them, beyond them, can control them and can eliminate them and their power. He created thrones, dominions, principalities, powers.

All things were created through him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things consist. And, blessed be God, he is the head of the body, the church, the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he might have preeminence.

Pleased him that in him all the fullness should dwell. And by him to do what? This is where we are in Ephesians chapter 2. By him to reconcile all things to himself. By him were the things on earth or things in heaven.

One of the most fascinating little glimpses. It says that God in Christ is reconciling things in heaven to himself. Pop quiz, books closed, eyes open, piece of paper and a pencil.

What is Jesus Christ reconciling to God that's in heaven? If it needs reconciling, it's not currently reconciled, right? God is reconciling something in heaven to himself through Christ. What is it? Would you gamble your salvation on the answer? Would you gamble any amount of money that you get this answer right? Do you know what it is in heaven? Scripture says God in Christ is reconciling all things to himself, including things in heaven. What is unreconciled in heaven that requires the work of Christ to be reconciled? If you know any people who purport to be theologians, ask them that question and see what they say.

Don't ask me. If I'm the theologian you know, don't ask me. I can tell you what I suspect, but I don't know.

What is unreconciled in heaven that is being reconciled through Christ? You can say, well, maybe it's the trial of the angelic conflict. This says something in heaven is unreconciled. I'll tell you what my guess is.

Genesis 6. Angels who fell but are not condemned with Satan. They're disobedient. They disobeyed in the days.

It doesn't say they rejected and rebelled. They disobeyed. There was an angelic disobedience that fell short of the open rebellion and outright exit with Satan.

The one third that went with Satan. His tail swept them out of heaven and they are the demons. They are the principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this age.

Different group. These spirits are segregated. They are quarantined.

The Lord Jesus went during the time of the cross and preached to these spirits in prison. Doesn't say he preached to Satan and doesn't say he preached to the demons. He speaks to these spirits in prison.

Who are they? Well, they erred. They disobeyed. They sinned.

They goofed. But apparently they do not partake of the open rebellion and rejection that Satan and the fallen angels do. It's a different group.

Well, that's something that needs reconciling and in some way. And you get into a lot of politics thinking about it because one of the reasons Jesus is our perfect sacrifice is he is the God-man. It doesn't say he's the God-man angel.

So is he the propitiation for their sins? I don't know. You get this in the advanced class, maybe during the millennium. But there's a little teaser here, there's a little clue that there's more going on that meets the eye in the work of Christ.

It goes beyond reconciling man and saving mankind. There is an effect in heaven. There is a reconciliation that goes on in heaven.

Now, people would probably say, well, this is just God's record book of man's sin that's kept in heaven and he's going to set the record straight and eliminate man's sin in the judgment books in heaven. This is the record keeping in heaven. Maybe.

I don't find that a compelling explanation. Something else is going on. But just remember, we cannot fathom the greatness of God's grace and the unique and inexpressibly great power of what God did when he not only gave his son as a sacrifice for our sins, but when he raised him from the dead.

We are incapable of even beginning to understand the mighty gulf that God spanned, the mighty thing that God did in accomplishing our salvation. Angels are astonished by this and they thought they had seen everything. They participated in creation.

They saw God scatter the galaxies and bring man forth from the dust of the ground, put him in the garden. Angels saw that. When they saw what Christ did on the cross, they were dumbstruck.

The angels celebrated the glory of God at his birth. Where is the celebrate? They were dumbstruck. There is no angelic noise of any kind made at the cross.

Why? I think they're speechless. There's no record that the angels said or did anything at the greatest moment in human history. Why? What can you say? It speaks beyond what any created creature's voice could express.

I think they just stood at attention and stared, trying to take it in. The greatness of what God did. What is Paul telling us here? That is the level of power available to you and available to me when we come up against the course of the world, the influence of the invisible prince of the air, and the pull and drag of our corrupt flesh.

Do you have a solution? Do you have an antidote? Do you have something that will neutralize it and enable us to go in a right direction and do something valuable and permanent that will build into eternity and reflect the glory of God for all time? Yes, we do. There is enough power available to do that because it's the same power that raised Christ from the dead. It is according to the power of God.

According to His glorious power for all patients and long-suffering with joy. We give thanks to the Father. Qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance.

This is verse 12, Colossians 1. Qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance. What qualifies you and me to partake of anything in heaven on our own? How qualified are we? You know what we're qualified for? Like a fire. That's what we're qualified for.

That's what we're good for. We can be a momentary puff of flame, a little fuel for the fire. God has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints and the light.

He has delivered us from the power of darkness, conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love in whom, God the Son, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. Even when we continue to fail, there is a remedy, there is an antidote, there is a solution, a cleansing, a removal, a taking away and leaving behind of those sins. He, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

By Him all things were created, there in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, all things created through Him and for Him. Notice the context of things in heaven is given to us here in verse 16. The Lord Jesus was the instrumentality by which all things in heaven were created, visible and invisible, whether thrones, dominions, principalities or powers, all things created through Him and for Him.

Then in verse 20, it pleased God by Him to reconcile all things to Himself by Him whether things on earth or things in heaven having made peace through the blood of His cross. Something happened at the cross that reconciles the invisible things in heaven that were detailed in verse 16 to God the Father. It's one of the as yet unrevealed mysteries.

Maybe that's something that the seven thunders speak during the tribulation. Whatever it is, we are not yet to know it. We have our hands full understanding what has been revealed.

To you who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, now He has reconciled. How closely does this track with Ephesians? Is it understandable that Paul wrote these letters at the same time and said, you guys read each other's letters because they complement, reinforce and three-dimensionalize each other. They cover the same ground in just slightly different ways.

It turns the gem just a little bit in the light so you can see additional facets. You who were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works. Enemies in your mind.

This is our flesh. This is our corrupt nature made us enemies and our wicked works carried along by the course of the world participating in it, being a part of it. He has reconciled in the body of His flesh.

The word became flesh and dwelt among us. John 1 14, through death in order to, another purpose statement, in order to present you holy, blameless and above reproach in His sight. Now, here's my question.

How can you and I be holy, blameless and without reproach when we face the course of this world, the invisible prince of darkness in the air and our own fallen corrupt ever deceiving hearts. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can understand it? Who can grasp that their heart is fooling them? This is the tremendous tragedy of Alzheimer's.

Your brain, your mind betrays you. You rely on your memory. Your memory doesn't function.

We are sociable. We tell each other anecdotes and stories and little things during the day. Something happens to me at work.

I come home. I tell my family, wow, this is what happened at work today. How did it go today, dear? Well, you'll never guess.

There's what happened. Somebody came by a few weeks back, a few months back now. Billy Graham's pastor came by and visited the Sermon Library and went back and talked to Billy Graham.

When he told Billy Graham about the Sermon Library, Billy Graham said, I want to get down on my knees right now and pray for those people at the Sermon Library. Billy Graham and his pastor

got down on their knees and prayed for us. It's, wow, you know, if any prayer is going to get through, I'm thinking that one might make it.

You know, we always hold up these faithful servants of God and assign them special notice. Well, I come home and tell somebody that story. Well, now, what if five minutes later I tell you that same story again? What if I'm up here trying to teach the Word of God and I use the same illustration over and over in the same sermon? Now, I'm guilty of using them over and over in different sermons, but I know I'm doing it.

But what if I tell you the Billy Graham story again five minutes from now and five more minutes from now? A, not only will we be well over, but B, my memory betrays me. It's the saddest thing to see people falling into senility and into Alzheimer's who no longer recognize the family, no longer recognize the spouse they've been married to for decade upon decade, no longer recognize their children. Your life is your memories.

Who we are is who we remember ourselves to be. We are the sum total of our experiences in so many ways. And if your mind betrays you and takes those things to a place where you can't find them, who am I? Who are you? I don't recognize you even though you're an intimate part of my life.

You're my spouse. You're my child. I don't know you.

I don't think I've ever known you. And I don't know where I am. Where are my car keys? I need to go find myself and my life.

It's so tragic. Listen, Jeremiah 17.9 The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. The corruption of our hearts does to us spiritually what the Alzheimer's brain does to us socially and experientially.

It takes us away from reality and blinds us. It is desperately wicked. What is the deliverance? Who wouldn't instantly do anything to have a cure for Alzheimer's? Take this pill with a half a glass of water tomorrow morning.

Fully functional. Your mind completely restored. Get this injection of mouse-derived vaccine.

We worked it on mice and their brains all came back. Which, by the way, they are in the early stages. They're finding some things that work.

They can reverse, not just stop, but reverse Alzheimer's. They've had some early success in this. And they're working with animals.

Give it to me. Give it to me now. I want it for my loved one.

I want it for myself. Who wouldn't go for that? Hear me closely. We have a far worse problem

from the course of the world, the invisible prince of the air, and the power and drag of our corrupt nature.

And we have a better antidote. But we've got to use it. It would be senseless to have Alzheimer's or have a loved one with Alzheimer's, have the cure, and not administer it.

How stupid is it to have a corrupt heart, to have a fallen nature, to be opposed by the smartest creature ever to come from God's hand, and to have the whole course of the world flowing against us and not use the antidote? The power is infinite. It is according to the power that raised Jesus from the dead. It is the power of creation itself.

He created all things. You and I have been given this antidote. And Paul's prayer is that we'll use it.

That's what he prays. He says, I pray that you will come to know this power and that you'll use it, that you will walk worthy of your calling. It pleased the Father to put the fullness in Jesus Christ and then to put us into that fullness, to give all power to the Lord Jesus Christ.

All authority has been given to me in heaven and earth. Without him was not anything made that was made, and we are in him. What power do we lack? What excuse do we have? What excuse are we going to proffer at the judgment for not persevering, for not enduring and having patience with joy? What's going to be our excuse? What did we lack? What did God not give us in Christ? There's going to be no more pathetic sight than those of us at the judgment, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, given these tremendous gifts that the Old Testament saints would have literally killed to have.

We have them. And we're like the rich guy with the Maserati. Well, it was fun when I first got it, but it's been in the driveway three or four years, and I hardly ever take the thing out now.

I just take it for granted. We get inured. Things become a commonplace.

They no longer thrill. They no longer compel. They no longer, and Paul says, I pray that you will never lose your awe and your appreciation for the grace of God and the mercy of God in Christ in giving us these things, because this isn't just a toy.

This isn't just an experience or a circumstance. This is eternity that has been placed within our grasp. It is dwelling in the heavenlies with the Creator God and our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, in a useful, meaningful, functional way.

That's what's been given to us in Christ. That's the level of power that is available to us to live this life. What are we doing with it? That's the question that these Scriptures, these verses force us to ask.

What are we waiting for? What are we exchanging for the glory of God? Four-footed beasts?

Temporary stimulation? What are we swapping? What is our mess of pottage that we're gaining and trading away this birthright? That's the question of this first part of both Ephesians and Colossians. And we'll pick up this study next time, but we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for our so great salvation.

In your grace, you have saved us. The only condition being faith. It isn't anything that we contributed.

We could have never produced any system or any mechanism for being saved. It is from you. It is by you.

It is enabled by the tremendous sacrifices that the Lord Jesus Christ made on our behalf and for you. And we pray that even as he is lifted up and seated at your right hand, that we will see the greatness of this gift and the tremendous potential that it confers upon us. And that we will live in its light.

We will be motivated and encouraged. We will fulfill this great prayer that the Apostle Paul prays on our behalf so that we reflect your glory and the glory of the Lord Jesus now, every day that remains to us in this life and in all of the ages to come. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen.