

# **LifeWay Explore the Bible Series for September 19: God's power changes people**

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One of the great blessings we enjoy on Galveston Island, Texas, and the southern United States from spring through most of the fall, is refrigerated air conditioning. Between the humidity and the high temperature readings, refrigerated air keeps us comfortable.

However, on those extremely rare days when the electrical power is down, we remember how blessed we are when we do have power. Whether we are without it a couple of hours or two weeks, as we were after Hurricane Ike, once the power is reconnected, our air conditioners are working, and we feel the cool, conditioned air, we promise never to take this blessing for granted again. We then promise ourselves we will never complain about the cost of the power again.

Over the next four weeks, the Apostle Paul will be sharing about a greater life changing power than electricity or any other. He writes to his readers about God's power to change the lives of individuals. Through Ephesians 2:1-10, he shares how one experiences the power of God in salvation. This is a great passage where believers find assurance in their salvation through faith in Christ and are encouraged to share their faith with others.

In 2:1-3, Paul gives a very dark picture of what his readers experienced before they discovered the power of God's salvation. They experienced spiritual death—a Christ-less life. He says spiritual death is experienced in "transgressions" and "sins." The word for transgressions in the original language is used to describe one losing his way and straying from the right

road. It also can describe one who fails to grasp and/or slips away from the truth.

The word translated “sins” speaks of “missing the mark.” In the spiritual context, it refers to missing and falling short of God’s standard. In this spiritual death, nonbelievers are driven and influenced by the powers and spirit of the ungodly and disobedient.

When one is under the power and influence of “the ways of the world,” he finds sin kills his innocence, his ideals and, finally, his will. Without the power of God’s grace in salvation through Christ, one has no hope, no purpose and no desire.

Paul shares in Romans 3:23, “... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Sin is an affront to God. It is an addiction that destroys the spiritual and physical lives of all who do not have a faith relationship with Jesus.

In the original language, verses 1 through 7 are one sentence whose subject is God. In the bleakness of the first three verses, we find God is not mentioned because he is offended by sin. Sinners live in ways that leave God out of the picture.

However, there is hope. In verse 4, we read “but God ... .” Although God is left out of the first three verses, the main point of Ephesians is that he will not stay out.

God has a tremendous love for people who are tainted by sin. He demonstrated this through his power of grace bringing believers into a relationship with himself through Christ. He has brought those who were dead in their sins back to life through his grace and their faith (v. 5). Through his powerful grace, God not only has given us new life, he has “raised us up ... and seated us with him in the heavenly realms” (v. 6).

Notice the verb tense. Paul speaks of these events as complete. Ephesians teaches that believers in Christ not only have the promise of being raised and ruling with him in heaven in the future, but we share with Christ in his victory now. This should bring us hope right now in the midst of our frustrations and struggles as we serve Jesus in the present.

In verse 7, we are given the definitive reason for God's initiative on the behalf of sinners. Paul says it is God's desire to continually demonstrate the product of his work, which is his church, as evidence of his grace and kindness as demonstrated in Jesus to an unbelieving world.

In verses 8 through 10, we find Paul proclaiming that God saves sinners by his grace through our faith in Jesus Christ, his Son. Since no one who ever has lived deserves a relationship with God, it is only through his grace that we find it. We only can have this offered salvation by believing in Jesus as our Savior and Lord. We cannot work for it. We cannot buy it. We cannot be good enough to have it rewarded to us. It is only by God's grace that it is offered to us. It is only by his power that this grace is made available. Therefore, we cannot brag about it.

In verse 10, Paul shares with his readers that believers are the finished product of God's saving power. The reason he has created us and completed us in him is so we can produce the good works he has saved us to do.

He saved us for a purpose. He empowered us to fulfill his calling upon our lives. God has a specific purpose for which he has gifted us through the Holy Spirit. It is our responsibility to find out where God is working and join him there.

As I started this study speaking of electric power and its advantages, I want to remind all of us, there is no greater advantage in fulfilling God's call upon our lives than by living out his purpose for us in the gracious way he

has called us. In doing, so we will lift Jesus up, and he will draw all men to him. That is the power of God's grace.