

GENESIS ROAD PRESENTS...

A scroll of aged parchment with the word "Ephesians" written in a decorative, calligraphic font. The scroll is unrolled, showing the texture and color of the parchment, which is a mix of light tan and brown tones. The word "Ephesians" is written in a black, elegant script with flourishes, particularly on the 'E' and 's' characters. The scroll is set against a plain white background.

Ephesians

a look at the picture of God
in every chapter of
the 49th book of the Bible

Chapter 1

GOD CHOSE YOU.

So now we've come to the "predestination" chapter—that part of the Bible notorious for spawning arguments over the character of God. Does He play favorites, arbitrarily designating some for salvation and others for destruction? Are we just pawns in a big cosmic game He's playing?

Of course not!

Here's what Paul said: "Even before the world was made, *God chose us for Himself* because of His love. *He planned that we should be holy and without blame* as He sees us. *God already planned to have us as His own children.* This was done by Jesus Christ. In His plan God wanted this done. . . We were already chosen to be God's own children by Christ." (vs 4-5, 11)

Even though many Christians have implied this through the years, there is nothing in these verses to suggest that God chose *some* people for His children and not others. The only thing Paul says is that God chose us—all of us!—for Himself because He loved us so much.

Unfortunately, the Bible suggests that many of God's own children will reject Him. Even though *He* has chosen *them*, they will choose not to remain in the family. It's not that God only chooses *some* to be His children and not others. It's that only *some* of God's children will choose to live with Him.

But if we reject Him, does He reject us? Certainly not!

If you have children, ask yourself just what your children could do to make *you* disown *them*. Is there *anything* they could do to make you stop loving them, to make you get rid of them, to make you kick them out of the family? For me, there answer is no. No matter what my children do, I will *always* love them, and they will *always* be my children.

God chose *you*. He planned for you to be His child. He predestined you to live forever with Him. No matter what *you* do, this will always be His desire for you and His stance toward you.

If you miss out on an eternity with God, it will *not* be because God shut you out. It will be because *you* chose something different for yourself. For even before the foundation of the world, God chose *you*, and *He is still choosing you*. He loves you, and He wants you to be with Him forever.

Nothing, nothing, *nothing* will ever change that.

Chapter 2

GOD HAS A BIG BUT.

For today's blog, let's revisit a few verses from the opening of this chapter: "We also all once lived in the lust of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. *But God*, being rich in mercy, for his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ." (vs 3-5)

Did you notice the two little words in there that changed *everything*?

But God.

How many times does this phrase appear in the Bible? Every time—whether in the midst of a story big or small—it marks *God's* action in human history. It reminds us that no matter how things seem to be going (whether "good" or "bad"), everything can change when God intervenes with His big *but*.

Paul continues with this thought a few verses later: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, *and that not of yourselves*; it is the gift of God, not of works, *that no one would boast*." (vs 8-9) Paul wants to make sure we remember that everything good in our lives—including, and *especially*, salvation!—was not *our* idea, but *God's* idea. It is not *our* doing, but *His*.

If He wasn't the initiator and finisher of our faith, we'd be way up a creek without a paddle. The *only* reason we are blessed is because *God* has determined to intervene in our lives over and over

again, bringing good where there was once only evil, bringing joy where there was once only sorrow, and bringing peace where there was once only fear.

We may think we know where our lives are headed, *but God* has a big *but*, and He is *not* afraid to use it! So just when you think things couldn't get any better, remember these two little words: but God.

They are a game changer.
Every. Single. Time.

Chapter 3

GOD IS A FRACTAL.

In this chapter, Paul once again turns to the topic of God's love, and he describes it by saying there is no way to describe it: "Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the *endless treasures available to them in Christ*. . . And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, *how wide, how long, how high, and how deep* his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, *though it is too great to understand fully*." (vs 8, 18-19)

As I read this description of God's love, I immediately thought of fractals. A fractal is a never-ending pattern that repeats itself at different scales. Fractals are infinitely complex. We can "zoom in" on them *forever*, and the pattern simply keeps going. It *never* stops. (For an incredible example of this, google "Mandelbrot set" and prepare to be amazed!)

I think of God (and particularly His love) as a fractal, for no matter how much time we spend contemplating, studying, or experiencing His love, we will *never* exhaust its depths. It is wider, longer, higher, and deeper than we could ever imagine or explore. It will literally take an eternity of time to get to know God, because there is *always* something new in Him to discover.

That's why Paul said that, in Christ, the *endless treasures* of God are available to us, and that His love is *too great to understand fully*. A mathematical fractal

(which is apparently a stunningly *simple* equation) produces something so complex that even *it* blows the mind. How, then, could we ever begin to grasp the limitless depths of God's love?

No wonder the prophet Isaiah said that anyone who trusted in God would find endless strength: "Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint." (Isa 40:30-31)

This kind of strength only comes from *one* place—an *unlimited, never-ending* Source. When we rest in God, when we "plug in" to Him, we encounter a love that literally *never* quits. When we come to the end—whether it's the end of ourselves, the end of our world, or the end of our wits—God's love is still going strong. He knows no end, and that's why those who put their trust in Him *also* know no end.

Paul agreed, summing it up this way: "Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. *Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong*." (vs 17) Imagine if someone discovered a never-ending source of energy somewhere on the planet. Or if someone invented a self-sustaining car engine that would never require refueling and would never stop running. How we would *flock* to that kind of power!

God's love has *that* kind of power. It is infinitely complex. It never stops, never runs out, never dries up. And that's because God Himself is infinite, eternal, self-sustaining, and never-ending.

In short, He is a fractal.

We can live and move and have our being in Him *forever*, and we will have only just begun.

Chapter 4

GOD SPECIALIZES IN FORGIVENESS.

At the close of this chapter on Godly living, Paul implores the Christians in Ephesus to get as good at forgiving as God is: “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, *just as in Christ God forgave you.*” (vs 32) This sounds simple enough—forgive *as you have been forgiven.*

But do we ever stop to think about *how* we’ve been forgiven? It’s one thing to use that word. It’s quite another thing to take a step back and understand *all* that is encompassed in God’s brand of forgiveness. It’s much more than saying the words:

- God actively *reaches out* to those who are His enemies.
- God *always* forgives, even if we’re uninterested in His forgiveness.
- God forgives us, though He knows we will often do the very same thing(s) again.
- God forgives so completely that He works to rehabilitate former offenders.
- God forgave in such a way as to personally *bear* our sins Himself.
- God forgives immediately, with no probationary period.
- God not only forgives, but loves, adopts, associates with, and *honors* those who once wronged Him.

It’s obvious: Forgiving others “just as God forgave us” is a pretty tall order. In fact, I’m quite sure that *nobody* can out-forgive God. He’s got it down to an absolute science! But we can certainly make a start in that direction.

I’m convinced that the key to that request is in the final part—remembering how God forgave us. When we perceive ourselves as “in” with God (and we surely are!), it’s often easy to forget just how much God has forgiven *us* for. Spiritual pride begins to creep in, and before you know it, we’re subconsciously thinking of ourselves as some sort of perfect saint without a sinner’s past.

It’s humbling to remember (and admit to ourselves) just how gracious God has been to us, and this is the first step in extending grace to someone else who has wronged us. As Jesus Himself said, “Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. *But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.*” (Lk 7:47)

How much have you been forgiven?

Chapter 5

GOD SUBMITS TO US.

Well, here we are at another one of those Bible passages that a lot of people, particularly women, don't like: "*Submit to one another* out of reverence for Christ. *Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands* as you do to the Lord. . . Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and *gave himself up for her.*" (vs 21-22, 25)

I'm not sure why some women chafe at these verses. I suppose in our 21st-century, independence-riddled culture, we don't much like the idea of submitting to *anyone*. But there is no reason for women to feel as though they're being demeaned or slighted or asked to do something different from their husbands in these verses.

For what Paul reveals, here, is not that women are subordinate to men, but that *submission* is the way of love.

That's right. Even though Paul uses the word "submit" as the command for wives and "love" as the command for husbands, are they not both the same thing? If the definition of love is other-centeredness, then one *cannot* love *without* submitting oneself to others. In fact, the Greek word—*hupotasso*—translated "submit" was a Greek term meaning "a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden."

If that's not a definition of *love*, I don't know what is.

In fact, if that's not a definition of the very life of Christ Himself, I don't know what is! And that's really the astonishing thing about this passage. Paul is telling wives to submit to their husbands, and he's telling husbands to submit to their wives, and he's saying the supreme example of this is Christ, *who gave Himself up for us.*

That's right. In this great, grand universe, even the *Creator* of every single thing *submits Himself* to His own creation. That's what love means! And when God chose to make intelligent creatures with the power to choose so that the free exchange of love could be a possibility, He *also* chose at that moment that He would submit Himself to our choices.

This is a beautiful picture of how love works—with everyone submitting to everyone. A wife submits to her husband and to the Lord. The husband submits to the wife and to the Lord. And the Lord submits to the husband and the wife. It is only in this cycle of mutual submission and other-centeredness that life flourishes.

So, I don't know why we women bristle at this idea of submission. I suppose, in a way, it betrays just how far we still have to come in our understanding of what it means to love as God does. For He certainly rules in power—but it is the power of submission. And it's the very same power available to us!

Chapter 6

GOD IS ALL YOU NEED.

I have always loved the ending of the book of Ephesians. I particularly like how it is rendered in *The Message*: “God is strong, and he wants you strong. So take everything the Master has set out for you, well-made weapons of the best materials. And put them to use *so you will be able to stand up to everything* the Devil throws your way.

“This is no afternoon athletic contest that we’ll walk away from and forget about in a couple of hours. *This is for keeps*, a life-or-death fight to the finish against the Devil and all his angels. Be prepared. *You’re up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it’s all over but the shouting you’ll still be on your feet.* Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation are more than words. Learn how to apply them. You’ll need them throughout your life. God’s Word is an indispensable weapon. In the same way, prayer is essential in this ongoing warfare. Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other’s spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out.” (vs 10-18)

I think what I love so much about this is the *epic* feeling it conveys. Who doesn’t get goosebumps when they contemplate “a life-or-death fight to the finish”? That’s the sort of stuff Hollywood execs and reality TV producers salivate over.

But this is no media pitch. It’s real. Look around you, and it won’t take long to realize that—on many fronts—this old world is in dire straits. And,

for many of us, it hasn’t even *begun* to get bad yet. But we know it will. And, as Paul says, it’s only going to intensify until “it’s all over but the shouting.”

Contemplating all the different ways pure evil can manifest itself in this world could have us shaking in our boots. But that’s when we see the true *epic-ness* of this passage: As awful as the evil is and will be, there is a way to ensure that we will stand firm through it. Even though we’re up against far more than we could ever handle on our own, there is a way to ensure that we can endure it all.

And, of course, that way is God. He is *the Way*. There is no other port in this storm. There is no other refuge to be had. If we do not stand with God in the midst of the evil, we will ultimately not stand at all.

But if we *do* stand with God, we will find that, no matter what comes, He is *all* we need. We don’t need to have the storm quieted. We don’t need to have the attacks of the Devil supernaturally removed from our lives. We don’t have to fear what will happen to us in this epic battle. If we stand with God, when it’s all over but the shouting, we’ll still be on our feet.

God is strong, and He wants you strong.

The only place to find that strength is in Him.
Today, tomorrow, and forever: He is all you need.