

# St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups May 3rd 2009

## More love...More power! Agents of Grace and Change

### Ephesians 2: 1-10



#### Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

Over the past 2 Sundays Paul Bryer has reminded us how we have been listening to God and exploring our new vision over the past few months. In Ephesians 1 we see that we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ, we are uniquely chosen and called, as the church we are integral to the outworking of God's plan for the world, and we have a glorious inheritance, not just in terms of future heavenly glory but also here and now.

We have recognised that as a church we are called to be a loving community and we do this quite well. But there seems to be, at least at times, a lack of *power* in the expression of our prayer and work, possibly blockages caused by sin. We have taken steps corporately and as individuals to look at this and to repent. It seems that God has great things in store for us here in Dorking. We need now to look at the implications for each of us. In order to become the most effective agents of grace and change that God is calling us to be, bringing change to our world, our town and our communities, the change has to happen first with us – we need to allow God to change us: *we are where the change starts.*

Eph 2:1-3 reminds us again that we have often gone astray by following the ways of society rather than of God. Some modern-day developments and attitudes that may seem life-giving and wholesome may in fact, in Spiritual terms, or in God's eyes, be dead. So when, as individual Christians and as a church, we look afresh at the blockages that sin in our lives might be causing to the powerful work of the Holy Spirit, each of us needs to continually examine our assumptions, our life-styles and our actions and listen to what God may be saying. We need to be prepared for God to challenge and then change us. But we are called to be and are able to be agents of grace and change because *God* has provided the solution. (vv 4 & 8). God has done it, not us.

Why did God do this? We have the answer in John 3:16 *for God so loved the world*, but for further clarification look at v. 7. The implications of these few words are amazing: Jesus' saving work shows afresh in each age God's kindness and grace. But not only that, we are also part of the riches of God's grace. God's kindness to us in sending Jesus as our Saviour means that *we are able*, as forgiven and born again people, to be the outworking of His grace in the world.

Last Sunday, Nick White reflected on our "3 Loves" Vision statement (see termly booklet). He said that he realised he perhaps lacked the depth of feelings that these statements imply. Could he really say he had a *passion* for God? Was he really *committed* to our church community? Was he convinced of the *urgency* of loving, serving and witnessing to others? I wonder how we feel about these statements. Are we equally challenged? Or do we accept these words in our heads but fail to fully *know* them, to *experience* the depth of meaning of these words in our lives? No wonder then that the next question might seem to be: where is the *power* of the Holy Spirit in what we do as a church?

The key verse of this passage is v 10: In the NRSV translation, this sentence reads *For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.* Our good works are to be our *way of life*. They are not a bolt-on extra. Each of us has a specific and unique status and calling in Christ and God has already prepared good works for us to do. God has gone before us, there is stuff He is already doing in Dorking, in our work places, in our families and schools, that he wants us to join in with. To be the church in Dorking, our good works should be our way of life. And we need to be prepared to be changed by God's Holy Spirit ourselves, to become passionate, committed and urgent, so that we can be the agents of change that as Christians we are meant to be. Let's pray that each of us would be prepared, particularly over the next few weeks, to listen afresh to what God is saying to us; to be honest about where we might need His Holy Spirit to change us or grow new fruit in our lives; and that we will all have the courage to respond to God's prompting as we re-assess our priorities and commitments so that doing God's good works becomes our way of life.



#### Witness: questions to discuss:

1. What do you think life would be like for you at present if you were not a Christian? What decisions might you make/have made differently? Are there particular modern-day developments or attitudes that you think are spiritually dead?
2. Looking to vv 4-7, can you summarize in your own words what Christ has done and why?
3. The idea that salvation is God's gift and we cannot do anything to earn it might present difficulties to our self-sufficient, "I did it my way" society. How can we help those we meet to understand this concept?
4. How might you know what the good works are that God plans for you to do? What might stop you personally from doing them? What might prevent us as a church?
5. What new areas of God's good works might we as a church move into? *Please feed back any ideas to the leadership team/wardens/PCC.*
6. In 2's or 3's pray about the changes that God might want to bring about in you personally and in St Paul's as a church.
7. Challenge yourself to learn v. 8 and/or v.10 from memory!