

**Ephesians 2:1-10**  
**November 6, 2022**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Imagine you are having lunch with a friend who is not a believer. Your friend has decided to risk with you and ventures to ask you a spiritual-related question. Suppose your friend says, “I know you’re a Christian, but I don’t really understand this whole sin thing. I think I’m a pretty good person, but I hear that I am supposedly going to hell because I’m “not saved.” Is that really true?

How will you respond to your friend? [Let people engage]

**Transition:** Paul clearly describes the spiritual condition of an unsaved person. But he also gives us a glorious picture of a loving God who has made salvation available in Christ Jesus for anyone who will accept Him. Let’s just read verses 1-10 for today and see how the Spirit leads. Would someone volunteer to read it out loud?

**BOOK:**

**Made Alive in Christ**

**2** As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup> All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature (our flesh) and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. <sup>4</sup> But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup> And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— <sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

**Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn’t understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

### **LOOK:**

Salvation cannot be “of works” because the work of salvation has already been completed on the cross. This is the work that God does *for* us, and it is a finished work (John 17:1–4; 19:30). We can add nothing to it (Heb. 10:1–14); we dare take nothing from it. When Jesus died, the veil of the temple was torn in two, from the top to the bottom, signifying that the way to God was now open. There is no more need for earthly sacrifices. One sacrifice—the Lamb of God—has finished the great work of salvation. God did it all, and He did it by His grace.

### **Close in Prayer**

### **Commentaries for Today’s Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 2, pp. 17-21)*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

## **GET OUT OF THE GRAVEYARD**

*Ephesians 2:1–10*

Having described our spiritual *possessions* in Christ, Paul turns to a complementary truth: our spiritual *position* in Christ. First, he explains what God has done for all sinners in general; then he explains what God did for the Gentiles in particular. The sinner who trusts Christ has been raised and seated on the throne (Eph. 2:1–10), and believing Jews and Gentiles have been reconciled and set into the temple (Eph. 2:11–22). What a miracle of God’s grace! We are taken out of the great graveyard of sin and placed into the throne room of glory.

Perhaps the easiest way for us to approach this long paragraph is to see in it four specific works.

**Sin’s Work against Us (Eph. 2:1–3)**

A publisher asked me for a full-length portrait that they could “blow up” and use as a life-size display at their convention booth to promote my tapes. A friend of mine took the picture, and it was a new experience for me. I had been accustomed to sitting for head-and-shoulder photographs, but standing for a full-length photo was something new. I had to watch my posture, the feet had to be placed just right, and the arms and hands—usually forgotten—had to be in just the right position. Fortunately, my photographer friend is an expert, and we managed to get a decent picture in a short time. In these three verses, Paul gives us a full-length picture of the terrible spiritual condition of the unsaved person. Note his characteristics:

***He is dead (v. 1).*** Of course, this means spiritually dead; that is, he is unable to understand and appreciate spiritual things. He possesses no spiritual life, and he can do nothing of himself to please God. Just as a person physically dead does not respond to physical stimuli, so a person spiritually dead is unable to respond to spiritual things. A corpse does not hear the conversation going on in the funeral parlor. He has no appetite for food or drink; he feels no pain; he is dead. Just so with the inner man of the unsaved person. His spiritual faculties are not functioning, and they cannot function until God gives him life. The cause of this spiritual death is “trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). In the Bible, *death* basically means “separation,” not only physically, as the spirit separated from the body (James 2:26), but also spiritually, as the spirit separated from God (Isa. 59:2).

The unbeliever is not sick; he is dead! He does not need resuscitation; he needs resurrection. All lost sinners are dead, and the only difference between one sinner and another is the state of decay. The lost derelict on skid row may be more decayed outwardly than the unsaved society leader, but both are dead in sin—and one corpse cannot be more dead than another! This means that our world is one vast graveyard, filled with people who are dead while they live (1 Tim. 5:6).

***He is disobedient (vv. 2–3a).*** This was the beginning of man’s spiritual death—his disobedience to the will of God. God said, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17). Satan said, “Ye shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4), and because they believed this lie, the first man and woman sinned and experienced immediate spiritual death and ultimate physical death. Since that time, mankind has lived in disobedience to God. There are three forces that encourage man in his disobedience—the world, the devil, and the flesh.

The world, or world-system, puts pressure on each person to try to get him to conform (Rom. 12:2). Jesus Christ was not “of this world” and neither are His people (John 8:23; 17:14). But the unsaved person, either consciously or unconsciously, is controlled by the values and attitudes of this world.

The devil is “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” This does not mean that Satan is personally at work in the life of each unbeliever, since Satan as a created being is limited in space. Unlike God, who is omnipresent, Satan cannot be in all places at one time. But because of his demonic associates (Eph. 6:11–12), and his power over the world system (John 12:31), Satan influences the lives of all unbelievers, and also seeks to influence believers. He wants to make people “children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2; 5:6). He himself was disobedient to God, so he wants others to disobey Him too.

One of Satan’s chief tools for getting people to disobey God is lies. He is a liar (John 8:44), and it was his lie at the beginning of human history, “Ye shall not surely die,” that plunged the human race into sin. The unsaved multitudes in today’s world system disobey God because they believe the lies of Satan. When a person believes and practices a lie, he becomes a child of disobedience.

The flesh is the third force that encourages the unbeliever to disobey God. By *the flesh* Paul does not mean the body, because of itself, the body is not sinful. *The flesh* refers to that fallen nature that we were born with, that wants to control the body and the mind and make us disobey God. An evangelist friend of mine once announced as his topic, “Why Your Dog Does What It Does,” and, of course, many dog lovers came out to hear him. What he had to say was obvious, but too often overlooked: “A dog behaves like a dog because he has a dog’s nature.” If somehow you could transplant into the dog the nature of the cat, his behavior would change radically. Why does a sinner behave like a sinner? Because he has the nature of a sinner (Pss. 51:5; 58:3). This sinful nature the Bible calls “the flesh.”

Is it any wonder that the unsaved person is disobedient to God? He is controlled by the world, the flesh, and the devil, the three great enemies of God! And he cannot change his own nature or, of himself, overcome the world and the devil. He needs outside help, and that help can come only from God.

***He is depraved (v. 3b).*** The lost sinner lives to please the “desires of the flesh and the wishes of the mind” (literal translation). His actions are sinful because his appetites are sinful. When you apply the word *depraved* to the unsaved person, you are not saying that he *only* does evil, or that he is incapable of doing good. You are simply saying that he is incapable of doing anything to merit salvation or meet the high standards of God’s holiness. Jesus said that lost sinners do good to each other (Luke 6:33), and to their children (Luke 11:13), but they cannot do anything spiritually good to please God. The natives on Malta who kindly assisted Paul and his friends after the shipwreck certainly did good works, but they still needed to be saved (Acts 28:1–2).

***He is doomed (v. 3c).*** By nature, children of wrath! By deed, children of disobedience! The unsaved person is condemned already (John 3:18). The sentence has been passed, but God in His mercy is staying the execution of the sentence (2 Peter 3:8–10). Man cannot save himself, but God in His grace steps in to make salvation possible. “But God!”—what a difference those two words make! This leads to the second work.

### **God’s Work for Us (Eph. 2:4–9)**

The focus of attention now is on God, not on sinful man. “Salvation is of the Lord” (Jonah 2:9). We are reminded of four activities that God performed on behalf of sinners to save them from the consequences of their sins.

***He loved us (v. 4).*** By nature, “God is love” (1 John 4:8). But God would love even if there were no sinners, because love is a part of His very being. Theologians call love one of God’s attributes. But God has two kinds of attributes: those that He possesses of Himself (intrinsic attributes, such as life, love, holiness), and those by which He relates to His creation, especially to man (relative attributes). For example, by nature God is *truth*; but when He relates to man, God’s truth becomes *faithfulness*. God is by nature *holy*; and when He relates that holiness to man, it becomes *justice*.

Love is one of God’s intrinsic attributes, but when this love is related to sinners, it becomes *grace* and *mercy*. God is “rich in mercy” (Eph. 2:4) and in “grace” (Eph. 2:7), and these riches make it possible for sinners to be saved. It comes as a shock to some people when they discover that we are not saved “by God’s love,” but by God’s mercy and grace. In His mercy, He does not give us what we do deserve; and in His grace He gives us what we do not deserve. And all of this is made possible because of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. It was at Calvary that God displayed His hatred for sin and His love for sinners (Rom. 5:8; John 3:16).

**He quickened us (v. 5).** This means He made us alive, even when we were dead in sins. He accomplished this spiritual resurrection by the power of the Spirit, using the Word. In the four Gospels, it is recorded that Jesus raised three people from the dead: the widow's son (Luke 7:11–17), Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:49–56), and Lazarus (John 11:41–46). In each case, He spoke the Word and this gave life. “The Word of God is quick [living] and powerful” (Heb. 4:12). These three physical resurrections are pictures of the spiritual resurrection that comes to the sinner when he hears the Word and believes (John 5:24).

But our spiritual resurrection is much greater because it puts us in union with Christ: God “made us alive together with Christ.” As members of His body, we are united to Him (Eph. 1:22–23), so that we share His resurrection life and power (Eph. 1:19–20).

**He exalted us (v. 6).** We are not raised from the dead and left in the graveyard. Because we are united to Christ, we have been exalted with Him and we are sharing His throne in the heavenlies. Our physical position may be on earth, but our spiritual position is “in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Like Lazarus, we have been called from the grave to sit with Christ and enjoy His fellowship (John 12:1–2).

**He keeps us (vv. 7–9).** God's purpose in our redemption is not simply to rescue us from hell, as great a work as that is. His ultimate purpose in our salvation is that for all eternity the church might glorify God's grace (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). So, if God has an eternal purpose for us to fulfill, He will keep us for all eternity. Since we have not been saved by our good works, we cannot be lost by our bad works. Grace means salvation completely apart from any merit or works on our part. Grace means that God does it all for Jesus' sake! Our salvation is the gift of God. (The word *that* in Eph. 2:8, in the Greek, is neuter; while *faith* is feminine. Therefore, *that* cannot refer to *faith*. It refers to the whole experience of salvation, including faith.) Salvation is a gift, not a reward.

Salvation cannot be “of works” because the work of salvation has already been completed on the cross. This is the work that God does *for* us, and it is a finished work (John 17:1–4; 19:30). We can add nothing to it (Heb. 10:1–14); we dare take nothing from it. When Jesus died, the veil of the temple was torn in two, from the top to the bottom, signifying that the way to God was now open. There is no more need for earthly sacrifices. One sacrifice—the Lamb of God—has finished the great work of salvation. God did it all, and He did it by His grace.

Sin worked against us and God worked for us, but the great work of conversion is but the beginning.

### **God's Work in Us (Eph. 2:10a)**

“For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus.” The Greek word translated “workmanship” is *poiema*, from which we derive our English word “poem.” It means “that which is made, a manufactured product.” In other words, our conversion is not the end; it is the beginning. We are a part of God's “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17), and God continues to work in us to make us what He wants us to be. His purpose is to make us more like Christ (Rom. 8:29).

But how does God work in us? Through His Holy Spirit, “both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). Christ finished His work of redemption on the cross, but He arose from the dead and returned to heaven. There He carries on His unfinished work of perfecting His church (Eph. 4:7–16; Heb. 13:20–21). Christ is equipping us for our walk and our work here on earth. To do this, He uses three special tools: the Word of God (1 Thes. 2:13), prayer (Eph. 3:20–21), and suffering (1 Peter 4:11–14). As we read God's Word, understand it, meditate on it, and feed on it, the Word goes to work in our lives to cleanse us and nourish us. As we pray, God's

Spirit works in us to release power. And as we suffer, the Spirit of God ministers to us. Suffering drives us back to the Word and prayer, and the cycle is repeated.

Too many Christians think that conversion is the only important experience, and that nothing follows. But this is wrong. We can use the resurrection of Lazarus as an example. After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He said, “Loose him, and let him go” (John 11:44). In other words, “This man is now alive. Get him out of the graveclothes!” Paul has this concept in mind in Ephesians 4:22–24 when he writes, “That ye put off concerning the former conversation [behavior] the old man, which is corrupt . . . and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Colossians 3:1 has the same message: “[Since] ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.”

The same resurrection power that saved you and took you out of the graveyard of sin can daily help you live for Christ and glorify Him. At great expense to Himself, God worked for us on the cross. And today, on the basis of that price paid at Calvary, He is working in us to conform us to Christ. God cannot work in us unless He has first worked for us, and we have trusted His Son. Also, He cannot work through us unless He works in us. This is why it is important for you to spend time daily in the Word and prayer, and to yield to Christ during times of suffering. For it is through the Word, prayer, and suffering that God works in you.

The Bible shows many examples of this principle. God spent 40 years working in Moses before He could work through him. At the beginning of his ministry, Moses was impetuous and depended on his own strength. He killed an Egyptian and had to flee Egypt, hardly a successful way to start a ministry. But during those 40 years as a humble shepherd in the desert, Moses experienced God’s working in his life, a working that prepared him for forty more years of magnificent service.

There are other examples. Joseph suffered for thirteen years before God put him on the throne of Egypt, second to Pharaoh. David was anointed king when he was a youth, but he did not gain the throne until he had suffered many years as an exile. Even the Apostle Paul spent three years in Arabia after his conversion, no doubt experiencing God’s deeper work to prepare him for his ministry. God has to work in us before He can work through us; and this leads to the fourth work in our passage.

### **God’s Work through Us (Eph. 2:10b)**

We are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” We are not saved by good works, but saved unto good works. The famous theologian John Calvin wrote, “It is faith alone that justifies, but faith that justifies can never be alone.” We are not saved by faith plus good works, but by a faith that works. The basic Scripture on this theme is James 2, where the writer points out that saving faith always results in a changed life. It is not enough to say that we have faith; we must demonstrate this faith by our works.

The Bible speaks of many different kinds of works. There are “the works of the Law” which cannot save (Gal. 2:16; 3:11). There are also “the works of the flesh” which are listed in Galatians 5:19–21. Paul spoke of “works of darkness” (Rom. 13:12; Eph. 5:11). The “dead works” in Hebrews 6:1 seem to be “works that lead to death,” since “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). The “works of righteousness” in Titus 3:5 refer to religious works, or other good deeds, that sinners try to practice as a means of salvation. Isaiah declared that “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in His sight” (Isa. 64:6). If our righteousnesses are filthy, what must our sins look like!

The “works” Paul writes about, in Ephesians 2:10, have two special characteristics. First, they are “good” works, in contrast to “works of darkness” and “wicked works.” If you contrast Ephesians 2:10 with Ephesians 2:2 you will see that the unbeliever has Satan working in him and therefore his works are not good. But the believer has God working in him, and therefore his works are good. His works are not good because he himself is good, but because he has a new nature from God, and because the Holy Spirit works in him and through him to produce these good works.

It is too bad that many believers minimize the place of good works in the Christian life. Because we are not saved by good works, they have the idea that good works are evil; and this is a mistake. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). We do not perform good works to glorify ourselves, but to glorify God. Paul desired that Christ would be magnified in his body, even if it meant death (Phil. 1:20–21). We should “abound to every good work” (2 Cor. 9:8) and be “fruitful in every good work” (Col. 1:10). One result of a knowledge of the Bible is that the believer is “thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:17, NASB). As believers, we are to be “zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14). Our good works are actually “spiritual sacrifices” that we offer to God (Heb. 13:16).

It is important to note that we do not manufacture these good works. They are the results of the work of God in our hearts. “It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). The secret of Paul’s good works was “the grace of God” (1 Cor. 15:10). Our good works are evidence that we have been born again. “Not everyone that saith unto Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21). Our good works are also testimonies to the lost (1 Peter 2:12). They win us the right to be heard.

A pastor friend told about a Christian lady who often visited a retirement home near her house. One day she noticed a lonely man sitting, staring at his dinner tray. In a kindly manner she asked, “Is something wrong?”

“Is something wrong!” replied the man in a heavy accent. “Yes, something is wrong! I am a Jew, and I cannot eat this food!”

“What would you like to have?” she asked.

“I would like a bowl of hot soup!”

She went home and prepared the soup and, after getting permission from the office, took it to the man. In succeeding weeks, she often visited him and brought him the kind of food he enjoyed and eventually she led him to faith in Christ. Yes, preparing soup can be a spiritual sacrifice, a good work to the glory of God.

But these works are not only good; they are also “prepared.” “Good works which God hath before ordained [prepared] that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). The only other time this word is used in the New Testament is in Romans 9:23: “vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory.” The unbeliever walks “according to the course of this world” (Eph. 2:2), but the believer walks in the good works God has prepared for him.

This is an amazing statement. It means that God has a plan for our lives and that we should walk in His will and fulfill His plan. Paul is not talking about “kismet”—an impersonal fate that controls your life no matter what you may do. He is talking about the gracious plan of a loving Heavenly Father, who wills the very best for us. The will of God comes from the heart of God. “The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations” (Ps.

33:11). We discover God’s exciting will for our lives as the Spirit reveals it to us from the Word (1 Cor. 2:9–13).

It would be helpful to close this chapter with a personal inventory. Which of these four works are you experiencing? Is sin working against you because you have not yet trusted Christ? Then trust Him now! Have you experienced His work *for* you—in you—*through* you?

Are you wearing the “graveclothes” or the “grace-clothes”? Are you enjoying the liberty you have in Christ, or are you still bound by the habits of the old life in the graveyard of sin? As a Christian, you have been raised and seated on the throne. Practice your position in Christ! He has worked *for* you; now let Him work *in* you and *through* you, that He might give you an exciting, creative life to the glory of God.

**Hoehner, H. W. (1985). *Ephesians*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 624-625) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books**

#### D. *New position individually (2:1–10)*

In chapter 1 Paul discussed God’s eternal plan in choosing those who are predestined to sonship and the fact that all believers on earth and in heaven will be brought together under Christ the Head of the church. Chapters 2–3 explain the execution of this eternal plan by showing how God makes sinners saints and then places them into the church, Christ’s body. In 2:1–10 Paul discussed how sinners who deserve nothing but God’s wrath can become trophies of His grace.

##### 1. THE OLD CONDITION: DEAD TO GOD (2:1–3)

At the outset it should be noted that the grammatical subject of this long sentence (vv. 1–7) in Greek is “God” (v. 4) and the three main verbs are “made ... alive with” (v. 5), “raised ... up with” (v. 6), and “seated ... with” (v. 6). The object of each of these verbs is “us,” that is, believers (vv. 5–6). Thus the main assertion in verses 1–7 is that God has made believers alive, raised them up, and seated them with Christ. All the other clauses in these verses are subordinate to this main assertion. This is not really clear in the NIV which has included three additional verbs (one in v. 1 and two in v. 3) as well as the three, already mentioned, in verses 5–6.

Verses 1–3 depict the condition of unbelievers before God transformed them.

##### a. The condition described (2:1).

**2:1.** Unregenerate persons are dead in ... transgressions (cf. v. 5) and sins (Col. 2:13). This death is spiritual, not physical, for unsaved people are very much alive physically. Death signifies absence of communication with the living. One who is dead spiritually has no communication with God; he is separated from God. The phrase “in your transgressions and sins” shows the sphere of the death, suggesting that sin has killed people (Rom. 5:12; 7:10; Col. 2:13) and they remain in that spiritually dead state. “Transgressions” (*paraptōmasin*, “false steps”; cf. Eph. 1:7; 2:5) and “sins” (*hamartia is*, “acts of missing the mark”), though slightly different in their root meanings, are basically synonymous. Both suggest deliberate acts against God and His righteousness and thus failure to live as one should. The plural of these two nouns signifies people’s repetitious involvement in sin and hence their state of unregeneration.



b. *The condition delineated (2:2–3).*

2:2–3. Mankind’s unregenerate condition is further delineated in three ways: (1) The unregenerate follow **the ways of this world**. Unbelievers follow the lifestyles of other unbelievers; they experience the world’s peer pressure. “This world” (*kosmos*) is the satanically organized system that hates and opposes all that is godly (cf. John 15:18, 23).

(2) The unsaved follow **the ruler of the kingdom of the air**, that is, Satan. “The whole world is under the control of the evil one” (1 John 5:19), also called “the god of this Age” (2 Cor. 4:4). In the middle of the Tribulation, he will be cast down to the earth, no longer to rule the world or have access to God’s presence (Rev. 12:9). The unsaved are now in the clutches of this “ruler” and follow in his opposition to God.

(3) The additional description, **the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient**, may be a further elaboration of the distant antecedent, “ways of this world,” but this seems too remote. Some (e.g., NIV) suggest that it refers to “the ruler,” meaning that Satan personally works in sons of disobedience. However, it seems that “the spirit” is the same as “the kingdom (*exousias*, lit. ‘authority’) of the air.” This is the nearest antecedent and makes sense grammatically. This “spirit” then refers to the impersonal force or atmosphere, which is controlled and directed by Satan (1 John 5:19). This spirit is presently “at work” (*energountos*) in unbelievers. “In those who are disobedient” is literally, “in the sons of disobedience.” The word for sons (*huios*) has the idea of a distinctive characteristic. “A son of disobedience” is one who is a distinctly disobedient person. The Greek word translated “disobedience” and “disobedient” is used several times in the New Testament (Rom. 11:30, 32; Eph. 2:2; 5:6; Heb. 4:6, 11). It suggests conscious and active rebellion and opposition against God.

However, the unconverted not only are under the pressure of the world system and Satan’s control but they also enjoy it. **All of us also lived among them at one time** is Paul’s reminder to his Gentile readers that the Jews (“all of us”) also joined in this disobedience. The word “lived” (*anestrophēmen*; “conducted themselves”) differs from “used to live” (*periepatēsate*) in Ephesians 2:2. The conduct of the unsaved is in the sphere of **the cravings of their sinful nature**, in which they follow the **desires and the thoughts** of the flesh. “Sinful nature” translates “the flesh” (*sarkos*), which is unregenerated nature. This nature can manifest itself in a respectable form as well as in disreputable pursuits. The “thoughts” (*dianoion*, here plural) suggest that even unbelievers’ reasoning processes (or calculations formed by a thinking mind) are perverted. Such false reasoning directs their wills and acts (cf. Rom. 1:21).

**Like the rest, we** (i.e., both Jews and Gentiles) are **by nature** (naturally and innately) the **objects** (lit. “children”) **of wrath**. *tekna*, the word for “children,” suggests a close relationship to one’s parents (in contrast with *huios*, “sons,” which speaks of distinctive characteristics). Unbelievers have a close relationship, not with God, but with His wrath! Disobedience and unbelief lead to the wrath of God (Rom. 1:18–2:29; John 3:36).

Ephesians 2:1–3 presents a hopeless picture of an unregenerate person who deserves nothing but God’s wrath.

2. THE NEW POSITION: ALIVE IN GOD (2:4–10)

The wrath of God, however, is not the entire story. Its dark background contrasts with the glorious exhibition of God’s grace toward the unregenerate. Verses 4–10 set forth the grace of God which works on some unbelievers and gives them life (vv. 4–5), raises them (v. 6a), and seats them in heavenly realms with Christ (vv. 6b–10).

a. *God made them alive (2:4–5).*

2:4–5. The conjunction **but** introduces God’s actions toward sinners, in contrast with their plight in verses 1–3. In the Greek text **God** immediately follows “but,” thus placing it in an emphatic position. “God” is the subject of the whole passage. Great differences are suggested by the words “But God”! He is described as **rich in mercy**. (Cf. the “riches” of God’s grace [1:7; 2:7], of God’s glorious inheritance [1:18], of Christ [3:8], and of His glory [3:16].) In the Septuagint “mercy” (*eleos*) translates the Hebrew *hesed* (“loyal love”). In the New Testament *eleos* means “undeserved kindness” toward sinners. Thus God, who is rich in exhibiting this undeserved kindness, acts on behalf of sinners **because of His great love for us**. The noun for “love” (*agapē*) comes from the verb *agapaō* that means “to seek the highest good in the one loved.” Since sinners are spiritually dead toward God, they have nothing to commend them to God. This is why Paul described this love as being “great.”

God’s love has done three things: (a) **made us alive with Christ**, (b) “raised us up with Christ” (2:6), and (c) “seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” (v. 6). An unbeliever, spiritually dead, is “made ... alive” by God “with (in association with) Christ” (cf. Col. 2:13). The “us” includes both Jews and Gentiles (cf. “us” in Eph. 2:3–4). The only way a spiritually dead person can communicate with God is to be made alive, and that must be done by the One who is Himself alive. He is the living God, “who gives life to the dead” (Rom. 4:17).

God is fully aware of the unbelievers’ state. It was clearly described in Ephesians 2:1–3 and is repeated here: **even when we were dead in transgressions** (cf. v. 1). This act of God in making the unregenerate alive is an act of grace: **it is by grace you have been saved**. Paul elaborated on this last statement, which is actually parenthetical, in verse 8. The verb “have been saved” is in the perfect tense which expresses the present permanent state as a result of a past action. Because believers have been “made alive” spiritually with Christ, they have been and are saved.

b. *God raised them (2:6a).*

2:6a. Besides being made alive, former unbelievers also have been **raised ... up with Christ**. This speaks of their being positionally resurrected. Christ’s post-resurrection state was new, powerful, and unique. So too Christians, in whom Christ dwells, have a new, powerful, and unique life and position. This new life, power, and position demand that believers have a new set of values, as Paul stated in his companion letter to the Colossian believers: “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your heart on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things” (Col. 3:1–2).

c. *God seated them (2:6b–10).*

2:6b. Not only has God made alive and raised with Christ many who had been unbelievers, but He has also **seated them with Christ in the heavenly realms** (cf. 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12) **in Christ Jesus**. Believers are positioned spiritually in heaven, where Christ is. They are no longer mere earthlings; their citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). He is the exalted Son of God, and they are exalted sons and daughters of God. These actions of God toward unbelievers are similar to what God did for Christ: “He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 1:20). Whereas Christ had died physically (1:20), unbelievers were dead spiritually (2:1–3). While Christ was raised physically (1:20), unbelievers are made alive and

raised with Christ spiritually (2:5–6). Christ is seated in the heavenly realms physically (in His resurrected, ascended body; 1:20), but believers are seated with Christ in the heavenly realms spiritually (2:6). This divine power that can make an unbeliever have life, be raised, and exalted with Christ is the same power that presently operates in believers.

2:7. In the future eternal state, God will **show** all His Creation **the incomparable riches of His grace**. “Show” is *endeixētai*, which means “display or demonstrate” (cf. Rom. 2:15; 9:17, 22; 2 Cor. 8:24; Titus 2:10; 3:2). This display will be seen in His redeemed ones. The “riches of His grace” has been mentioned in connection with believers’ redemption which brought them forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7). These “riches of His grace” are **expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus**. This refers to salvation. The word “kindness” (*chrēstotēti*) basically means what is “appropriate or suitable.” (The word is also used in Rom. 2:4; 3:12 [“good”]; 11:22; 2 Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22; Col. 3:2; Titus 3:4.) The appropriate expression of God’s love to those who are spiritually dead is to give them life—this is “the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness.”

2:8–9. These verses explain “the incomparable riches of His grace” (v. 7), expanding the parenthetical statement in verse 5, **It is by grace you have been saved**, and adding that the means of this salvation is **through faith**. Hence the basis is grace and the means is faith alone (cf. Rom. 3:22, 25; Gal. 2:16; 1 Peter 1:5). Faith is not a “work.” It does not merit salvation; it is only the means by which one accepts God’s free salvation.

Paul elaborated, **And this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God**. Much debate has centered around the demonstrative pronoun “this” (*touto*). Though some think it refers back to “grace” and others to “faith,” neither of these suggestions is really valid because the demonstrative pronoun is neuter whereas “grace” and “faith” are feminine. Also, to refer back to either of these words specifically seems to be redundant. Rather the neuter *touto*, as is common, refers to the preceding phrase or clause. (In Eph. 1:15 and 3:1 *touto*, “this,” refers back to the preceding section.) Thus, it refers back to the *concept* of salvation (2:4–8a), whose basis is grace and means is faith. This salvation does not have its source in man (it is “not from yourselves”), but rather, its source is God’s grace for “it is the gift of God.”

Verse 9 reinforces this by showing that the means is **not by works** since its basis is grace (Rom. 3:20, 28; 4:1–5; 11:6; Gal. 2:16; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5), and its means is faith (Rom. 4:5). Therefore since no person can bring salvation to himself by his own efforts, **no one can boast** (cf. Rom. 3:27; 1 Cor. 1:29). Their boasting can only be in the Lord (1 Cor. 1:31).

2:10. This verse, beginning with **For**, tells why this salvation is not from man or by his works. The reason is that salvation is **God’s workmanship**. The word “workmanship” (*poiēma*), used only here and in Romans 1:20 (where the NIV renders it “what has been made”) denotes a work of art or a masterpiece. It differs from human “works” (*ergōn*) in Ephesians 2:9. Believers are God’s workmanship because they have been **created** (a work only God can do) **in Christ Jesus** (cf. “in Christ Jesus” in vv. 6–7). The purpose of this creation is that believers will **do good works**. God’s workmanship is not achieved by good works, but it is to result in good works (cf. Titus 2:14; 3:8).

In the clause, **which God prepared in advance for us to do**, the word “which” refers back to the “works” in the previous clause. “For us to do” is literally “in order that we might walk in them.” The purpose of these prepared-in-advance works is not “to work in them” but “to walk in them.” In other words, God has prepared a path of good works for believers which He will perform in and through them as they walk by faith. This does not mean doing a work for God;

instead, it is God's performing His work in and through believers (cf. Phil. 2:13). This path of good works is discussed by Paul in Ephesians 4–6.

In conclusion, 2:1–10 demonstrates that though people were spiritually dead and deserving only God's wrath, God, in His marvelous grace, has provided salvation through faith. Believers are God's workmanship in whom and through whom He performs good works.

***Dockery, D. S. (1998). The Pauline Letters. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (p. 577). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.***

### **REDEEMED BY GRACE (2:1–10)**

Chapter 2 continues Paul's thoughts about God's eternal purposes in Christ. In 2:1–10 Paul discussed how sinful people who deserve nothing but God's wrath can be redeemed by His grace.

Paul described the human condition in 2:1–3. He explained how people were “dead in transgressions and sins,” cut off from the life of God and controlled by their own selfish desires. Beyond this they were ensnared by the power of Satan. As a result men and women apart from Christ are without life, without freedom, and without hope.

By His grace He has granted new life to believers. The basis for the new life is God's great love and mercy. Believers have been united with Christ in His resurrected life. Formerly people apart from Christ were dead, enslaved, and objects of wrath. In Christ believers are now alive, enthroned, and objects of grace.

God's purpose for believers is spelled out in 2:7–10. He has restored us, “expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” The memorable words in verses 8–9 express a central idea in Paul's theology. He declared that the nature of God is to give freely because of His own love. God does not deal with people on the level of human achievement but on the level of their deepest needs.

He provides salvation as His gift to men and women. He then creates a disposition of faith within them so that they may receive His gracious gift. Salvation is completely God's achievement, a pure gift of God. Salvation is His workmanship. We are saved to live a totally different life “to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do”.

***The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Ephesians 2). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.***