

p 25 WEEK 4: THE DEAD ALIVE BY GRACE

Ephesians 2:1–10

The Place of the Passage

Believers' spiritual blessings come with access to the power of the sovereign ruler of the present and future ages. These blessings include riches that make earthly wealth pale in comparison. Such a lofty position could create a temptation to boast about these blessings or one's role in acquiring them. In Ephesians 2:1–10, Paul will abolish all cause for human boasting in salvation, leaving all the glory for salvation to God alone.

The Big Picture

God's merciful turning of the believers' depravity into salvation through Christ glorifies the workmanship of God. The passage moves from a description of the depravity of all people to the working of God's mercy in Christ, concluding with a reminder of why our salvation is no cause for boasting.

p 26 Reflection and Discussion

Read through the complete passage for this study, Ephesians 2:1–10. Then review the questions below concerning the way Paul describes salvation and write your notes on them. (For further background, see the *ESV Study Bible*, pages 2264–2265; available online at www.esvbible.org.)

1. Total Depravity (2:1–3)

“Dead” describes believers' moral and spiritual condition prior to salvation. Based on the description of this diagnosis in 2:1–3, what is the extent of this type of death?

Paul ties the Ephesians' pre-salvation behavior to the present world system. “The course of this world,” “the prince of the power of the air,” and “the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience” are universal spiritual evils, the latter two referring to Satanic activity. How do these terms add to our understanding of our spiritual status before we came to faith in Christ?

Paul will also relate the description “dead” to one's bodily passions. All people in the history of the world are included in this category (“all once lived”; “the rest of mankind”). According to Ephesians 2:3, how do unbelievers set goals p 27 and make decisions? Prior to Christ, what hope is there for the dead “sons of disobedience,” whom Paul calls “children of wrath”?

2. Interception of Mercy (2:4-7)

Paul's sentence that spans these four verses places the main verb behind several modifying clauses. "Being rich in mercy," "because of the great love with which he loved us," and "even when we were dead in our trespasses" speak to God's character and motivation in salvation. How do the modifying terms embellish the contrast between 2:4 and 2:1-3? What does 2:4 say about the relationship between being "made alive" and the work of Christ in his earthly ministry?

Based on the contrast between 2:4 and 2:1-3, why would Paul conclude in 2:5 that he is describing a work of grace?

The description of salvation as raising and seating believers connects 2:5 to God's raising Christ from the dead and seating him at his right hand "in the heavenly places" (1:20). How does this connection magnify the working of [p 28](#) grace in the process of salvation? In contrast to the eyes of people, what glory does this give to the church in the eyes of God?

Paul describes some of God's goals of salvation in "the coming ages." What do these goals indicate about the inheritance of believers?

3. A Beautiful Workmanship (2:8-10)

Paul now mentions "grace" for the third time in chapter 2, and for the sixth time in the letter (1:2, 6, 7; 2:5, 7, 8). He previously introduced the role of faith in salvation in 1:13, 15 and 19. How does the whole of Ephesians 2:1-8 help us see the relationship between grace and faith in the believer's salvation?

Grammatically, "this is not of your own doing" refers to the entire clause containing "grace" and "faith." Both grace and faith come as gifts from God. Since faith is also a gift, what should believers conclude about their significance in their own salvation?

[p 29](#) If salvation, including faith, "is not a result of works," how does this limit the boasting of the believer with respect to salvation?

The terms in 2:10 indicate that the "good works" of believers are wholly of God: believers are "his workmanship," things "prepared beforehand" by God and "created in Christ Jesus." What encouragement does this offer to Christian living—to the "walk" of believers, also mentioned in 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15? In what ways does 2:10 reveal that the gospel must be an integral part of the daily walk of believers and of the ministry of the church?

Read through the following three sections on *Gospel Glimpses*, *Whole-Bible Connections*, and *Theological Soundings*. Then take time to consider the *Personal Implications* these sections may have for you.

Gospel Glimpses

THE SINFULNESS OF MAN. The starting place of Christian belief is our recognition that we are spiritually dead before God. This death entered mankind at the disobedience of Adam (Gen. 3:8; Hos. 6:7; Rom. 5:12). Although great humanitarian and philanthropic efforts often mask mankind's depravity, all people lack the spiritual and moral ability to please God. Instead of seeking after God, every man's natural inclination follows the working of Satan and base appetites that are contrary to God's will. Therefore, as Paul concludes in a metaphor of fatherly discipline, by nature all people stand in jeopardy of God's eternal wrath.

p 30 THE RICHNESS OF GRACE. God characterizes himself in one of his earliest covenantal revelations to the nation of Israel as "the LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious" (Ex. 34:6). This revelation shines most brightly in the incarnation of Christ (John 1:16–17). God's grace in Christ stands between the believer and the wrath of God. Grace operates in the whole of salvation and all that attends it, including the faith of believers.

Whole-Bible Connections

THE WORLD, THE FLESH, THE DEVIL. Mankind is subject to the influence of three great enemies: the greater cultural worldview, one's natural desires and inclinations, and the Evil One (Gen. 3:1–7; 4:7, 23–24; 6:5; 11:4). All three work in harmony to keep mankind in happy disobedience to the Creator. As unbelievers, we seek the approval of other people, prefer our will to God's, and live as those deceived by Satan about sin and its penalty. These dispositions guide us toward greater personal and social destruction. Only the power of grace in Christ breaks into these arenas to bring a new view of the world, holy desires, and the truth.

Theological Soundings

UNION WITH CHRIST. Paul's head-body imagery inherently includes concepts of authority and submission. The imagery also manifests the mysterious union Christ has with his church. "In Christ" (Eph. 1:1, 3), "in him" (1:4, 7, 10, 11, 13), "through him" (1:5), "with Christ" (2:5), and other such terms elucidate the nature of this union. Christ is so united with believers that whatever he accomplished in salvation was accomplished in us; whatever he inherits as sovereign Lord, believers inherit with him. Through this union that began in election (1:4), the believer accomplishes work for God.

MONERGISM. The idea that God alone rescues sinners runs throughout this passage: 1) Unbelievers have no spark of spiritual life with which to search for God and find him; 2) God is the one who intervenes into a life dead in trespasses; 3) God makes the dead alive together with Christ; 4) grace saves and will be on display for all eternity; 5) grace and faith are gifts from God;

and 6) we are the workmanship of God: “It is not of your own doing,” notes the apostle. While Paul will call believers to walk before God toward maturity, even this must be God’s doing. Therefore, it is right to speak of salvation—justification, sanctification, glorification, and more—as first to last a work of grace, even as believers act upon God’s commands to do his will.

p 31 Personal Implications

Take time to reflect on the implications of Ephesians 2:1–10 for your own life today. Consider what you have learned that might lead you to praise God, repent of sin, and trust in his gracious promises. Make notes below on the personal implications for your walk with the Lord of the (1) *Gospel Glimpses*, (2) *Whole-Bible Connections*, (3) *Theological Soundings*, and (4) this passage as a whole.

1. Gospel Glimpses

2. Whole-Bible Connections

3. Theological Soundings

4. Ephesians 2:1–10

p 32 As You Finish This Unit ...

Take a moment now to ask for the Lord’s blessing and help as you continue in this study of Ephesians. And take a moment also to look back through this unit of study, to reflect on some key things that the Lord may be teaching you—and perhaps to highlight and underline these things to review again in the future. Think, too, of memorizing the key verse to the book: Ephesians 2:10.