

Ephesians Bible Study Lesson Three

Directions

You will need a study group for this Bible Study on Ephesians. Pick a few people with whom you can get together and go over the lessons. You may need to compare notes with one another to find the answers.

The answers to all the questions will either be in Notes On The Ephesians 2019 Edition by Dr. Thomas Constable (<https://planobiblechapel.org/constable-notes/>)

You will need a journal or notebook or means of writing down what you are learning and how it is impacting your life as a result.

Ephesians 2:1-10

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Ephesians Bible Study (Ephesians 2:1-10)

1. According to verses 1-2, what is the state of people prior to conversion?

2. On page 42 of Dr. Constable's notes, what contrast is drawn about man in verses 1-10?

3. According to Matthew 13:19, 2 Corinthians 4:4 and 1 John 5:19 what does the god of this world do?

4. According to 1 John 2-4 what advantage does our position in Christ provide us?

5. In verse 3-6 what three things has God done for us?

6. Read Chapter 1:20, 2:6 and Colossians where has God seated us already?

7. In verse 7 why has God done this?

8. Why are we not able to boast about our salvation?

9. How were we saved?

10. According to verse 10, and the explanation of it on Dr. Constables Notes page 10, why were we saved?"

of Christ, probably in the sense that He fills for Himself (middle voice in Greek) the church with blessings (cf. 4:10-11). Other views are that the church completes Christ,¹ or that Christ fills the church with Himself.² Jesus Christ, who fills all things with all things (i.e., with blessings), is filling the church with blessings. The church could not come into existence until Jesus Christ had ascended into heaven to become her Head.³

After showing that believers have received all spiritual blessings (vv. 3-14), Paul prayed that believers might come to know God intimately (v. 17). This is necessary so we might better appreciate our past calling to salvation, which gives us: hope (v. 18), the future inheritance that we constitute for God (v. 18), and the present power of God available to us (v. 19). God manifested this power in the past at Christ's resurrection and ascension (v. 20-21). He will manifest it in the future by making Jesus Christ the Head over all creation (v. 22). He is now manifesting this power in Jesus Christ's headship over the church (vv. 22-23).

3. The motive: grace 2:1-10

Paul proceeded to conclude his revelation of the Christian's individual calling in Christ (1:3—2:10). He began this section of the epistle by explaining the purpose of our calling (i.e., the glory of God, 1:3-14). He then expounded the means whereby we appreciate our calling (i.e., knowledge given by the Holy Spirit through God's revelation, 1:15-23). Finally, He enunciated the motive for our calling (i.e., the unmerited grace of God, 2:1-10).

These verses continue the theme of redemption (1:7). This pericope is a condensation of Paul's exposition of redemption in Romans. Whereas we were once dead to God (vv. 1-3), we are now alive in God (vv. 4-10).

"... what Paul does in this passage is to paint a vivid contrast between what man is by nature and what he can become by grace."⁴

¹Robinson, pp. 42-44. See also this writer's study of the meaning of *pleroma* ("fullness"; pp. 255-59).

²See Stott, pp. 61-64, or Hoehner, *Ephesians*, pp. 294-301, for discussions of the views.

³See Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, "Israel and the Church," in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, p. 117.

⁴Stott, p. 69.

"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."¹

Once dead to God 2:1-3

These verses are really preliminary to Paul's main point. They describe the Christian's condition as an unbeliever, before God justified him or her. In the Greek text, verses 1-7 are one sentence. The subject of this sentence is "God" (v. 4). The three main verbs are "made alive" (v. 5), "raised up" (v. 6), and "seated" (v. 6). The object is "us," and the prepositional phrase "with Christ" describes "us." The main point then is that God has made believers alive, raised them up, and seated them with Christ. Everything else in verse 1-7 is of subordinate importance.

2:1 Before their regeneration, believers were spiritually "dead," separated from God, and unable to have fellowship with Him (cf. 4:18; John 17:3). We were living in the sphere of rebellion against God (cf. v. 2). "Transgressions" (false steps, cf. 1:7; 2:5) and "sins" (acts of missing the mark) describe deliberate offenses against God.

"There are three outstanding schools of moral pathology traceable throughout the centuries. Pelagianism asserts the convalescence of human nature. Man merely needs teaching. Semi-pelagianism admits his ill-health, but affirms that the symptoms will yield to proper treatment, to a course of tonic drugs and a scrupulous regimen. But Biblical Christianity probes the patient to the quick. Its searching diagnosis pronounces that mortification has set in and that nothing less than infusion of fresh lifeblood can work a cure. Nostrums and palliatives aggravate rather than allay the disease. Sin is an organic epidemical malady, a slow devitalizing poison issuing in moral

¹Wiersbe, 2:17.

necrosis; not a stage of arrested or incomplete development, but a seed-plot of impending ruin."¹

"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."²

"The only place where all men meet on a common level and share the same position is in their natural birth in sin."³

2:2 The apostle further described, in three ways, the sphere in which unbelievers live. First, it is a lifestyle in which people follow the ways of the "world." The philosophy that seeks to eliminate God from every aspect of life dominates this lifestyle (cf. John 15:18, 23). This is "the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience," not an angelic spirit but "the ruling principle of unbelievers."⁴

"The Jews called their laws of conduct *Halachah*, which means 'Walking' (cf. Mk. vii. 5; Acts xxi. 21; Heb. xiii. 9, RV mg.)."⁵

Second, the unsaved follow the person who is promoting this philosophy, namely: Satan. As "prince of the power of the air," Satan received temporary freedom to lead this rebellion against God (cf. 1 John 5:19; 2 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 12:9). The "spirit" now working probably refers to the "power" or "kingdom" (lit. authority) of the air, since that word is its nearest antecedent.

"... by speaking of the devil's authority as 'in the air', Paul was not necessarily accepting the current notion of the air being the abode and

¹Simpson, p. 46.

²Wiersbe, 2:18.

³Paxton, p. 52.

⁴Jamieson, et al., p. 1283.

⁵Foulkes, p. 69.

realm of evil spirits. Basically his thought was of an evil power with control in the world (see on vi. 12), but whose existence was not material but spiritual."¹

"... the cults are as busy as termites, and with the same results. False religionists put us to shame in their zeal. Satan is energizing them."²

"Sons of disobedience" is a way of referring to people characterized by disobedience, as a son bears the traits of his parent. Unbelievers resemble Satan in their rebellion.

2:3 Third, not only does the philosophy of the world guide unbelievers, and Satan control them, but they also "indulge the flesh." The term "flesh" (NASB, Gr. *sarkos*), when used metaphorically as here, refers to the sinful nature that everyone possesses. It is our human nature that is sinful.

"Here is the essential meaning of the doctrine of *original sin*."³

The unbeliever characteristically gives in to his or her fleshly desires and thoughts, whereas the believer should not and need not do so (cf. Rom. 7—8).

"The Greek word for 'nature' [*phusis*] is a neutral word. It simply means the natural constitution of a thing, or the thing in itself apart from anything that may come to it from outside. As a rule it has a good meaning rather than a bad: thus 'according to nature' is good, 'contrary to nature' is bad; compare Rom. xi 21 ff., and Rom. i 26."⁴

"Children of wrath" and "sons of disobedience" (v. 2) are both phrases that describe unbelievers. "Children" (Gr. *tekna*) highlights the close relationship between a child and his or her

¹Ibid. See also Eadie, p. 129.

²McGee, 5:231.

³Salmond, 3:287.

⁴Robinson, p. 50.

parents. It also indicates that we were sinners by generation, not just by adoption, as "sons" might suggest.¹ "Sons" (Gr. *huioi*) stresses the distinctive characteristics of the parents that the child displays. Unbelievers have a close relationship to God's wrath because of their rebellion against Him (cf. Rom. 1:18—2:29; John 3:36).

"... '*children of wrath*' is a Hebraism for 'objects of wrath' ..."²

These verses (1-3) picture the hopeless unbeliever as a part of the world system, controlled by Satan, indulging the flesh, and destined to experience God's wrath. When an unbeliever trusts in Jesus Christ: the world, the devil, and the flesh become his or her three-fold enemy.

Now alive in God 2:4-10

The wrath of God on the unbeliever (v. 3) contrasts with the grace of God on the believer (vv. 5, 7, 8). God's special grace toward some unbelievers gives them life (vv. 4-5), raises them up (v. 6), and seats them in heavenly realms with Christ (vv. 6-10).

2:4 Paul introduced the contrast between the condition of the unbeliever and that of the believer with "But." God, the subject of this passage (vv. 1-7), makes all the difference. "Mercy" (Gr. *eleos*, the word the Septuagint translators used to render the Hebrew *hesed*, loyal love) means undeserved kindness. God's "great love" (Gr. *agape*) sought the highest good in the objects of His choice, even though we were rebellious sinners.

"If *mercy* is God's attitude to sinful men, *love* is His motive in all that He does with them; and as the mercy is 'rich' so the love is 'great'."³

2:5 Unbelievers are spiritually "dead" in their "transgressions" and sins (cf. v. 1). However, God has given new life to believers. The only way a dead person can have any fellowship with the living God, is for God to give him or her new life (cf. Rom. 4:17).

¹Jamieson, p. 1283.

²Robinson, p. 51.

³Salmond, 3:287.

Regeneration (getting "saved") is an act of God in "grace." Regeneration results in the commencement and continuation of new spiritual life.¹ "Have been saved" is in the perfect tense in Greek, indicating an ongoing permanent condition.

"Being saved by grace is the opposite of being saved by merit, the merit that supposedly accrues from inherent goodness or from strenuous effort."²

2:6 God has, second, "raised us up with" Christ. This describes our spiritual, not physical experience. He will yet raise us physically, but spiritually He has already raised us to a new type of life (cf. Col. 3:1-2). Like our Lord's resurrection life, ours is also powerful and eternal.

Third, God has "seated us ... in the heavenly *realms*" with Christ (cf. 1:20). That is where our heavenly citizenship lies (Phil. 3:20), and where our final home is. What Christ did physically (i.e., died, arose, and took His seat in heaven), God has already done for the believer spiritually. The fact that God enabled Christ to do these things, physically, should help us believe that He has done these things for us spiritually.

"Of the immediate spiritual blessings which are wrought for the individual at the moment he believes, some are to be classified as *possessions*, and some as *positions*. Likewise some are wrought *in* him, and some are wrought *for* him. These distinctions occur in verses 5 and 6 ..."³

"Christian life does not begin with walking [4:1]; it begins with sitting."⁴

¹See R. Bruce Compton, "The *Ordo Salutis* and Monergism: The Case for Faith Preceding Regeneration, Part 3," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 175:699 (July-September 2018):284-88.

²Hendriksen, p. 117.

³Chafer, *The Ephesian ...*, p. 73.

⁴Watchman Nee, *Sit. Walk. Stand*, p. 1.

"Christianity begins not with a big DO, but with a big DONE."¹

2:7 God's ultimate purpose is to glorify Himself. The "ages to come" include all future ages. God will use the regeneration of believers to demonstrate the wealth and richness ("riches") "of His grace" (cf. 1:7). Specifically His "kindness toward believers (us)," as displayed in all that we have "in Christ," is in view. We especially see God's kindness in His giving life to those who were dead in sin.

"The kindness of God in Christ Jesus is a phrase expressive of the *manner* in which grace operates."²

Note that verses 1-3 describe what we were in the past, verses 4-6 what we are in the present, and verse 7 what we shall be in the future.

2:8 Verses 8 and 9 explain the "surpassing riches of God's grace" (v. 7), and elaborate the parenthetical statement in verse 5.

The *basis* of our salvation is God's "grace" (unmerited favor and divine enablement; cf. Rom. 3:22, 25; Gal. 2:16; 1 Pet. 1:5). The *instrument* by which we receive salvation is "faith" (i.e., trust in Christ). Faith is not an act or work that earns merit with God, which He rewards with salvation. When a person puts out his hand to take a gift that someone else offers, he or she is doing nothing to merit that gift. The giver gets credit for the gift, not the receiver. Likewise faith is not a meritorious work.³

"Grace springs from His [God's] sovereign will, not from His essential nature. It is not an attribute which must always manifest itself, but a

¹Ibid., p. 2.

²Eadie, p. 148.

³See Morris, p. 104; and René A. López, "Is Faith a Gift from God or a Human Exercise?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 164:655 (July-September 2007):259-76.

prerogative that may either be exercised or held in abeyance."¹

"It is the uniform doctrine of the New Testament, that no man is saved against his will; and his desire to be saved is proved by his belief of the Divine testimony."²

To what does "that" or "this" refer? Since it is a neuter pronoun it evidently does not refer to "grace" or "faith," both of which are feminine in gender in the Greek text. Probably it refers to the whole preceding clause that describes salvation (cf. 1:15; 3:1).³ *Salvation* is "the gift of God."⁴ Eadie described "that" as "this condition of safety."⁵

"If we breathe, it is because life has been breathed into us; if we exercise the hearing of faith it is because our ears have been unstopped. We are born from above. Spiritual life is not of the nature of a subsidy supplementing dogged exertion or ruthless self-flagellation, but a largess from the overflowing well-spring of divine compassion, lavished on a set of spiritual incapables."⁶

"Look at salvation in its origin—it is 'by grace.' Look at it in its reception—it is 'through faith.' Look at it in its manner of conferment—it as a 'gift.'"⁷

2:9 Salvation is by "grace," so it is not of us. It is through "faith," so it is not by "works." And it is God's "gift," so it is not of

¹Eadie, p. 149.

²Ibid., p. 150.

³See Henry, p. 1850.

⁴See Roy L. Aldrich, "The Gift of God," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 122:487 (July-September 1965):248-53; and Gary L. Nebeker, "Is Faith a Gift of God? Ephesians 2:8 Reconsidered," *Grace Evangelical Society News* 4:7 (July 1989):1, 4.

⁵Eadie, p. 152.

⁶Simpson, p. 55.

⁷Eadie, p. 153.

man's origination.¹ "No one" will be able to "boast" that he or she has done something that earned him or her salvation. All the glory will go to God for accomplishing salvation.

"Since we have not been saved by our good works, we cannot be lost by our bad works."²

2:10 Here Paul gave the reason salvation is not from man or by works. Rather than salvation being a masterpiece that we have produced, regenerated believers are a masterpiece that God has produced. "Workmanship" (Gr. *poieme*, from which we get the word "poem"; cf. Rom. 1:20) means a work of art, a masterpiece. The Jerusalem Bible translated it "work of art" here. As a master worker, God has created us in Christ Jesus. The word translated "created" here (Gr. *ktizo*) describes only God's activity, and denotes something He alone can produce.

"Good works" are not the roots from which salvation grows, but the fruit that God intends it to bear. God has not saved us because of our works (vv. 8-9), but He has saved us to do good works (v. 10). God saves us by faith for good works. Good works are what God intended for us to practice, with His divine enablement. He intended that we "would walk in them," as a pedestrian walks along a path, before He saved us (cf. 1:4). This verse reveals that God is ultimately responsible for our good works (cf. Rom. 9:23; Phil. 2:13). Paul developed the idea of walking in good works further in chapters 4—6.

"... 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 ..."³

However, this verse does not say that Christians will inevitably "walk" in the "good works" that God has freed us from sin's penalty and power to pursue. God has saved us so we can do works that are good in His sight, but this is obviously only part

¹Ibid., p. 154.

²Wiersbe, 2:19.

³Hoehner, "Ephesians," p. 624.

