

Community Group Discussion Guide

February 11, 2024

Ephesians 2:1-10 | Salvation by Grace

MOTIVATE

Starter Question:

- ⇒ *Can you describe a time when you needed saving from something? How did you feel toward the person who saved you?*

Optional Activity: Enlist a few people to share parts of their salvation story, focusing on these two questions:

- ⇒ *When did you realize you were sinful and in need of a Savior?*
- ⇒ *What caused you to want to place your faith in Jesus?*

Ephesians 2:1-10 contains one of the clearest descriptions of salvation in the New Testament and holds the theological ideas on which the rest of Paul's letter will build. In the original Greek, these ten verses are one long single sentence, bringing together Paul's teaching about grace, faith, and the Christian life. (See Ephesians Overview for additional information.)

Paul's theme is that God lavishes His love on believers through His plan for our salvation. Verses 1-3 describe our hopelessness and helplessness without Christ, whereas verses 4-10 show the life-giving hope we have through salvation in Christ. Paul contrasts a life of sin and alienation from Christ with a life of faith in Christ.

Salvation involves three notions: rescue, renewal, and restoration. We see this pattern displayed in the physical salvation for the nation of Israel throughout the Old Testament, as well as in the foreshadowing of our spiritual salvation to come. It is most perfectly displayed in the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. This passage gives us a clear picture of our rescue, renewal, and restoration through the mercy and grace of our loving God.

DISCUSS

Ephesians 2:1-3 *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins **2** 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.*

As children of Adam and Eve, we have inherited the wrath they brought upon themselves after deliberately turning from God (Genesis 3:1-19). This means we enter the world physically alive but spiritually dead, with no inclination to turn toward God or ability to please Him. We arrive eternally and spiritually separated from God:

- In our trespasses: Failing to take the right road; wrong steps taken; or a deliberate breaking of the law.
 - In our sins: Sin is an archery term that literally means, “a missing of the mark.” Sin is the act of choosing our own way and failing to hit the target of God’s holiness.
- ⇒ ***What evidence do we have that we enter the world spiritually dead, separated and alienated from God?***

Not only have we inherited this spiritual death, but we have also actively chosen it. We choose to follow our own desires and the negative influences of our inherited sin. We walk according to the ways of this world and we live according to a non-Christian value system—a system created and energized by Satan. He tempts us to have ungodly values, attitudes, and actions. Our disobedience is rooted in our own sinful desires involving both the physical body and the mind. Without God, our desires are in control.

Because of sin, humans are the living dead. In this state, apart from Christ, we are disobedient children, estranged from God. In our enslavement we follow selfish, sinful thinking that leaves God out of the picture and, therefore, we are under His wrath. There is no escaping our spiritual death without a new birth or a new creation.

- ⇒ ***How do you see yourself falling prey to your flesh and the disobedient spirit that is at work in you?***
- ⇒ ***Why do people choose evil instead of the loving God who created them?***
- ⇒ ***Why is a moral life or good works not enough to change our spiritual condition?***

The wrath of God is an important Bible theme. The word means “a righteous response.” It is one of His eternal attributes, the complement to His love and His necessary and just response to sin. In the Old Testament, God’s wrath against sin was expressed through His judgments. Biblical prophets predicted a coming day in which the wrath of God would be fully and finally poured out (Isaiah 13:9; Zephaniah 1:14-15). In the New Testament, the wrath of God against sin has already been revealed toward those who reject Jesus. Yet, those who believe in Him have already been promised to be spared the experience of God’s wrath.

- ⇒ ***Why is it vital we speak of the coming of God’s wrath against sin with certainty as if it has already happened?***
- ⇒ ***Discuss this quote: If God does not have wrath, salvation is not needed. – Author Unknown***

Ephesians 2:4-7 *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.*

Paul contrasted the plight of humanity without God with the privilege of humanity with God. Against the backdrop of the hopelessness of the non-believer, Paul presented good news. Because of God’s great love for us and mercy toward us, He refrains from punishing us even

though we are sinners deserving of punishment. These words signal God's intervention into our hopeless, sinful condition.

We are God's enemies because we have transgressed, meaning we have violated His divine commands. Yet, God responds to our disobedience with mercy by not giving us what we deserve. He rescues us out of the overflow from His loving heart. Mercy and love are revelations of God's being, not a response to something that merits love and mercy in the individual. God acts in mercy because He is that kind of God. Apart from God's mercy, no hope exists for mankind.

Through Christ's Resurrection, those who believe in Him are given new spiritual life now and will be renewed eternally when He returns. Like Christ, we are raised up to new life. Not only does God restore us, but He gives us a place of honor and allows us to share in Christ's authority. God has lavished His love on us and openly displayed it by showing us favor and kindness that we do not deserve.

- ⇒ Can a spiritually dead person believe in Christ? Where does the ability to have faith come from?
- ⇒ What is the difference between mercy and grace?
- ⇒ How do we see God's great love and immeasurable grace displayed in our salvation?

Ephesians 2:8-9 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.

Grace refers to God's undeserved favor upon us as sinners and to the power by which we are saved. God's grace offers us salvation and secures it. Salvation is a transfer from the worldly realm to the heavenly realm—from the realm of death to the realm of life.

Our salvation is secure because we did not do anything to earn it, so we cannot lose it. The phrase "have been saved" is in the perfect tense, meaning that it is something already accomplished in the past that continues to have result in the present and into the future.

In the original Greek, the sentence structure of verse eight indicates that both salvation and faith are a gift from God. It's not that faith is our part and grace is God's--all of salvation is God's doing. God's part in salvation is grace and even the faith to believe is a gift of grace. Without faith, we cannot be saved. The emphasis is always on Christ, the object of faith, not on the amount of faith of the individual.

- ⇒ ***What is faith and what is its role in our salvation?***

Salvation cannot be of our works, because the work of salvation has already been completed on the cross. We can add nothing to it and take nothing from it. Salvation coming from God alone means He gets all of the glory.

Paul is very clear: salvation is not from our works. "Works" can be defined as any human condition or accomplishment by which we think we can gain status or privilege before God. No one is good enough to earn salvation. Only through being united with Christ's perfect life can we become good in God's sight. No one can boast or point with pride to personal

accomplishments in the realm of salvation. God has done it all. We cannot claim credit that is His.

- ⇒ ***What is the significance of our salvation being a gift?***
- ⇒ ***Discuss how this Henderson Hills' value applies to our salvation: Desperate Dependence: We rely on the Holy Spirit to empower our lives and the church as we humbly abide in Jesus, recognizing that we can do nothing apart from Him.***

Ephesians 2:10 *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

- ⇒ ***Discuss this quote: The basis of salvation is God's grace, the means of receiving salvation is faith, and the result of salvation is good works.***
- ⇒ ***Why is there such a tendency to fall back into good works as the way to earn salvation or God's favor? What truth can we anchor ourselves to in order to combat this lie?***

Salvation is not from works, but it is for works. The Greek word translated "workmanship" is *poiema*, from which we derive the English word poem. It is the result of artistic skill and craftsmanship. The literal translation is "that which has been made." It refers to the work of God as Creator.

We know that we have been made in His image, but we have also been made for good works. Paul used two words to describe these works: good and prepared. Our works aren't good because we are good, but because we have a new nature from our good God. By our works being prepared beforehand, this means that God has a plan for us. He is a personal God, deeply invested in our lives. Because of the great love with which He has loved us, He has restored our relationship with Him, therefore we respond with good works as the evidence of our restoration.

- ⇒ How does being made in God's image, intentionally as His workmanship, change your perspective of yourself? How does it change your perspective of others?

TRANSFORM

1. Make application: Many people live moral lives, but it is not enough to change our spiritually dead condition. This condition is inescapable and eternal. The only way to be spiritually alive is by being made new through the work of Jesus. Jesus gives us the ability to believe in Him and to be made alive in Him. Our faith and our salvation are gifts from God. We respond to our salvation through gratitude, praise, and joy.

- ⇒ ***As you think about your standing before God, how do you know if you are still dead in your trespasses or if you have been made alive in Christ?***
- ⇒ ***What good works has God prepared for you?***
- ⇒ ***Has God called you to a specific profession, given you a passion, or placed you in a unique season? How can you walk in these in a way that honors the gift of salvation God has given you?***

2. Pray: Acknowledge that you were once alienated from God, but that in His great mercy He rescued you from your sin. Thank God for renewing your spiritual life through the death and Resurrection of Jesus. Praise Him for restoring your relationship with Him. Ask God to show you how to live out your salvation in gratitude, character, and actions.

STUDY

Resources used, compiled from, and quoted:

- *Wiersbe New Testament Bible Commentary (2007), pages 591-594.*
- *NIV Life Application Study Bible (1997), pages 2132.*
- *CSB Study Bible (2017), pages 1873.*
- *ESV Study Bible (2008), pages 2475-3476.*
- *Blue Letter Bible Online, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g4161/esv/mgmt/0-1/>, accessed 1/13/2024.*
- *Henderson Hills Baptist Church, <https://www.hhbc.com/mission>, accessed 1/13/2024.*