

How To Explain Salvation?

Ephesians 2

Evangelicals talk about being saved. We are saved from an eternity separated from God to an eternity with God.

Evangelicals talk about having a relationship with God; how does that start?

Does a relationship/salvation with God happen automatically, or is there a process to salvation?

What Does The Bible Say?

2:1 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. (Ephesians 2:1–3 ESV)

Paul describes how we lived our lives (2:3) before Christ:

- **We satisfied the lusts of our flesh (emotional depravity).**
- **We satisfied the desires of the flesh (physical depravity).**
- **We satisfied the desires of the mind (rational depravity).**

We lived for ourselves. It was all about us.

Verses 4-7 explain God's mercy towards us.

8 God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. (Ephesians 2:8–9 NLT)

These two verses mean God initiated and completed our salvation and gets all the credit.

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reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. (Ephesians 2:8–9 NLT)

When we believe God loved us, Jesus died on the cross and rose again to pay for our sins. He gives us salvation and a relationship with Him.

Is belief just acknowledging a Christian truth, or is there more to it?

Do you trust God enough to put your life in His hands?

10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. (Ephesians 2:10 NLT)

We are God's masterpiece. But what does it mean to be His masterpiece?

Nature radiates the glory of God, but nature isn't His most significant accomplishment.

God's most significant accomplishment is taking a spiritually dead person and making him alive in Christ.

How Can You Obey?

10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. (Ephesians 2:10 NLT)

When we were spiritually dead, we lived for ourselves; now, we live for Him.

Additional Notes:

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at www.crosswaveschurch.com/host. Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

Additional Notes:

This week's Talking Theology is inspired from Philip Graham Ryken, *Written in Stone: The Ten Commandments and Today's Moral Crisis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 107-116.

Explore:

Some scholars view this epistle as encyclical, a circular letter to be distributed to several undesignated local churches in the province of Asia or some other area. This is supported by two observations: (1) the words "in Ephesus" (1:1) do not appear in three early Alexandrian Greek manuscripts, and (2) it is strange for Paul not to mention by name any of the individuals in a

church where he had lived and worked for three years (Acts 20:31).

Harold W. Hoehner, “Ephesians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 613.

Explore:

Ephesus was a leading center in the Roman Empire. Paul had spent a short time in Ephesus on his way back to Antioch from his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19–22). On his third missionary journey he stayed in Ephesus three years (Acts 20:31). Several remarkable things happened in Ephesus. Paul baptized a dozen of John the Baptist’s followers (Acts 19:1–7). He had discussions in the hall of Tyrannus (19:8–10). Unusual miracles occurred (19:11–12), strange events took place (19:13–

16), sorcerers were converted (19:17–20), and the city rioted over silversmith Demetrius’ loss of business because of people who turned to Christ from worshiping the great Ephesian goddess Artemis (19:23–41). On Paul’s return to Jerusalem from his third missionary journey he gave a moving farewell address to the Ephesian elders at the coastal town of Miletus (20:13–35). That was his last time to see them (20:36–38), unless Paul visited Ephesus after he was in Rome (cf. 1 Tim. 1:3 with 3:14).

Harold W. Hoehner, “Ephesians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 613–614.

Explore:

Since Ephesians gives no hint of his release from prison, as do Philippians (1:19–26) and Philemon (v. 22), it is reasonable to think that he wrote it in the early part of his stay, or about a.d. 60. This would have been when Paul was kept under guard in rental quarters (Acts 28:30). Following his release he traveled, wrote 1 Timothy and Titus, was arrested again, wrote 2 Timothy, and was martyred in Rome.

Harold W. Hoehner, “Ephesians,” in *The Bible Knowledge*

Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures, ed. J. F.

Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985),

614.

Explore:

On the return from his third missionary journey Paul told the Ephesian elders at Miletus (a.d. 57) to beware of evil teachers from without and of professing believers within who would

teach perverse things (Acts 20:29–30). From Revelation one can see that the Ephesian church had succeeded in keeping out the false teachers (Rev. 2:2) but had failed to maintain the vibrancy of their first love for Christ (Rev. 2:4). This is substantiated in 1 Timothy 1:5, when Paul wrote from Macedonia to Timothy at Ephesus (ca a.d. 62) that the goal of his instruction was “love which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” Thus the theme of love needed to be stressed for the saints at Ephesus.

Harold W. Hoehner, “Ephesians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F.

Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 614.

Explore:

Pagan deities were marked by supposed great power, moral imperfection (to say the least!), and inscrutable, arbitrary decisions about who would obtain their favor. Jehovah God is not at all like such false gods. His power is great, yes, but He exercises it with absolute moral perfection. He is not arbitrary in His determination of who will and will not receive His favor. It has been determined since . . . forever! Those who through faith are in Christ will receive with Jesus the full inheritance reserved for the sons (legal heirs) of God. Nor will God capriciously change His mind on this as the pagan deities so often were said to do. The Holy Spirit Himself acts as the seal, the guarantee that God will keep His word.

Explore:

Our being dead in sin before trusting in Christ illustrates how sin brought death and destruction into the world. Encourage parents and grandparents to talk with family members about this.

Explore:

In Paul's day, many believed that evil spirits or demonic forces were active primarily in the air, or the space between earth and sky. Paul's language says more about the ruler of unholy spiritual activity than it does precise demonic geography.

Wherever and however they are at work, we can know for sure that they follow a ruler who is the enemy of our loving God and those whom He has redeemed. We do well to avoid

sensationalism in discussions about satanic activity, certainly.

Nevertheless, we should not kid ourselves—it is real, personal, and unrelenting until Satan's defeat. Dr. Robert Picirilli

comments: "...the Bible does not give us enough information

about the domain of Satan and the personal forces associated

with his dominion to enable us to bring other passages to bear

on this one The point of the passage is clear anyway, even if

our curiosity about the precise meaning of “of the air” is not satisfied. What is sure is that there are real, personal powers at hand, ready to influence and hinder us” (The Randall House Bible Commentary, Galatians through Colossians, “The Letter to the Ephesians,” p.153).

Explore:

Paul’s reference to predestination often provokes needless and fruitless quarrels. Many Christians believe Paul meant that from eternity past, God chose in advance who would be saved and who would be lost. His choice, they say, involved nothing more than the mystery of His own will. However, if that interpretation is valid, what then are we to make of the Bible’s teaching that God loved the world so much that He gave Jesus to save whosoever believed (John 3:16)? Other Christians believe that God’s predestination involved adopting as “sons” (adult heirs)

those who are in Christ—believers. In this interpretation predestination does not determine who would believe and who would not. Instead it was a pre-destination that all who believed would become part of God’s marvelous family (Romans 8:17). God knew in eternity past who would believe and who would not. That is not the same thing as to claim that God determined in eternity past who would believe and who would not. We are wise to stay within the bounds of what Scripture says: that God determined long before this world was made that belief in Christ would be the key to the salvation He intended to bring about. The duty of faithful mature believers on both sides is to speak the truth in love and to treat those with another viewpoint as Christian brothers and sisters.

Explore:

It is through the Church that the great spiritual truth, power, and reality of the gospel break out into this world. The Church lives in the hope of God's promise. By definition, that means the Church will have difficult times, for it is only in difficult times that people need hope. We will not understand true hope without difficulty. The Church will often incur the suspicion, jealousy, or wrath of the world's powers. What those powers do not know, however, is that their opposition to the Church is opposition to Christ, its head.

Explore:

As we saw in our previous study, Paul used some very long sentences in his letter to the Ephesians. Our translations typically break them up into several more manageable sentences. In chapter 2, verses 1-10 contain another mega-sentence. The passage speaks about our spiritual past and future expectation.

All People Are Spiritually Dead Apart From Christ

(Ephesians 2:1-3)

Verses 1-3 form one long sub-section that focuses on the common spiritual plight of unbelieving Jews and Gentiles alike.

You were dead in sin and transgression. Paul did not try to sugarcoat his language. The spiritual vitality of unbelievers is that of a dead person.

Verse 2 tells us these transgressions and sins were not mistakes or anomalies. They were the very pattern of the lives of Gentile unbelievers. They followed the ways of the world. As unbelievers, they were not neutral participants. Instead, they followed a leader, a ruler, Satan himself whom Paul described as the ruler of the kingdom of the air. Satan's work continued

among those who still rejected the faith after the conversion of the Ephesian believers.

All of us—Jew and Gentile alike—lived that way (verse 3). In Jewish ways and in Gentile ways, everyone sought to please their sinful nature with its ungodly desires and ways of thinking.

God's wrath was not something we deserved because we had somehow slipped up momentarily. It is humanity's natural, default condition. We all, by nature, deserve God's wrath. We do not deserve salvation, but God loved us so much that He sent His Son to save us. This is why God's grace amazes us so—we do not deserve it!

We too often leave phrases such as total depravity to theologians, but we should not. Some speak of a “divine spark” residing within us. The Bible speaks instead of God's image within us, which has been marred by sin beyond our ability to repair. Apart from Christ we were totally dead spiritually and

unable and unwilling to do anything to restore the broken relationship. We must understand that we were slaves to sin until God redeemed us from it.

Explore:

People Are Saved By Grace Through Faith in Christ and Are Given Divine Purpose (Ephesians 2:4-10)

The old phrase start with the end in view really helps in this passage. Remember that these verses are all part of one incredibly long phrase in the Greek text. What is the end in view? That God has been preparing us to do good works as God's own workmanship. We will understand the passage better if we look at everything through that lens.

We were completely unsuitable to be such workmanship (see the previous section, verses 1-3), but God's love and mercy did their work (verse 4). God began by making us spiritually alive in

Christ— delivering us out of our own rebellion (verse 5). He issued a reminder that it is God's grace that has saved us— because we were spiritually dead!

God also raised believers and seated them with Christ (verse 6).

Now how is that, seeing that we are all still here on earth? We can interpret it in two ways. One is that Paul is speaking spiritually: our new spiritual life is as far above what we had while dead in sin as Jesus' resurrection and ascension are above His experience of death in the tomb. A second is that Paul is speaking effectively. In other words, it is all as good as done. Christ was the first raised from the dead in this manner, but He will not be the last. In the same way, our ascension and reign with Him are just as certain.

Verse 7 takes us closer to the end in view. God determined to use His kindness to us in Christ to display just how rich His grace is. This will become more obvious in the coming ages. In

other words, our little blip on the radar of human history has a place in showcasing God's grace deep, deep into the future.

Believers will display this grace because it is through God's grace that they can belong to God at all. Of our salvation, we can all say, "We didn't build that!" No works or good deeds—Jewish nor Gentile—can procure our place in God's eternal heavenly display of grace. It is God's gift (verses 8-9).

Believers do not work to get into Heaven. We work because the God of Heaven created us for it. Believers' good works are part of God's purpose for us. Like a carefully prepared art exhibit, we are on display, performing the good works God has intended and prepared us for all along (verse 10). Good works have a place in the life of a Christian—not in becoming right with God, but as a result of being right with God. Our joy at such deliverance should motivate us and empower us to do good just because we want to please God.

Explore:

Paul writes several of his letters from prison. Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon all seem to have been written in these circumstances. We know from the book of Acts that Paul is in prison in Caesarea for two years (Acts 24:27) and, later, under house arrest in Rome. The most popular theory is that Paul writes these letters from Rome, while he is waiting to be tried before Emperor Nero. This is in the years between ad 60 and 62.

For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all those who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 28:30–31).

Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide*, 1st Augsburg books ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 614.

Explore:

All Who Trust in Christ Are United as Part of God's Household (Ephesians 2:11-22)

Good works will build unity, which is what Paul began to address in the remainder of this chapter. Again, he reminded the Gentile Ephesian believers that they used to be complete aliens and foreigners to God's people. Jews would have referred to them with the derogatory term uncircumcised. They had no voting rights, no privileges. The expected Messiah was not considered to be theirs. They were therefore without hope and without God (verses 11-12). Yet God brought the estranged Gentiles close to Himself through the blood of Christ (verse 13). Christ is the theme of verses 14-18. He obtained our peace; even more, He is our peace, removing the old Jew-Gentile division. Abolish in verse 15 means to make powerless, to put out of action, or bring to a standstill. The law of Moses, in spite of its

value, is powerless for making us right with God. Christ takes Jewish and Gentile believers, and forms of them something entirely new, new persons. Removal of the barrier is not what makes these new persons possible. It is rather the reconciliation that comes as Jew and Gentile alike embrace Christ at the foot of the cross (verse 16). Peace involves reconciliation, not merely stopping the fight.

All the Trinity was involved in this project: God the Son brought peace to Jew and Gentile alike, so we can all in one Holy Spirit have access to God the Father (verses 17-18).

The result is a new citizenship for Gentile believers (verses 19-22). They were not part of God's household, but now they are. God's messengers in both Old and New Testaments (apostles and prophets) form the foundation, and Jesus Christ is the stone that keeps everything in line and joined together. On that foundation, the Holy Spirit is building up all believers into

the new temple. This is the body of Christ—those believers from around the world in whom God is now pleased to dwell.

Explore:

Far and near, in verses 13 and 17, take on more than a geographical significance. Jews often used the terms to describe where a place (or a person) was in relation to Jerusalem, the site of God's Temple, His special presence on earth. Gentiles were far away, while Jews were near. Jews were near in that they had a special revelation of God that Gentiles did not have. Through Christ, God intended to bring the far and the near together into a new body, the Church. Many scholars believe when Paul spoke of the barrier and wall of hostility in verse 14, he envisioned the barrier that divided the court of the Gentiles at the Jerusalem Temple from the inner area where Jews could go. A wall about four and a half feet (1.4 meters) high divided the two sections.

Explore:

Dr. Robert Picirilli wrote about what it means to be seated with Christ in the heavenly places in this way: “I should emphasize that this seating of us in the heavenly realms in Christ is now positionally true in Christ. We are already, in Him, seated at God’s right hand. Indeed, we are now citizens of Heaven (Phil. 3:20). Even so, in our present conscious experience, this exaltation is not fully realized” (The Randall House Bible Commentary, Galatians through Colossians, “The Letter to the Ephesians,” p.157). We live in an already, but not yet kind of moment. We are already made alive in Christ and raised with Him, part of God’s kingdom. Still, that existence is not yet as extensive as it will be. We have not yet arrived at God’s intended destination, but we are underway, and the flight will arrive on time.

Explore:

KEY TRUTHS:

1. All People Are Spiritually Dead Apart From Christ.
2. People Are Saved by Grace Through Faith in Christ and Are Given Divine Purpose.
3. All Who Trust in Christ are United As Part of God's Household.

HOW IT FITS: Where This Lesson Fits in the Story of the

Bible: Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians while under house arrest in Rome around AD 61 or 62. In this section of the letter, Paul wrote about the great blessings believers enjoy in Christ and about his prayers for the Ephesian believers.

Explore:

Christianity is about more than going to church and living a good moral life. Being a Christian is about having a vibrant

personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Every Sunday School teacher or Bible study leader should want to see each of his or her learners enter into this relationship—their eternal destiny depends on it. As you work toward this goal, keep the following in mind:

Following Christ is about more than a mere decision; it is about a lifelong relationship. Jesus called us to make disciples, not mere decision-makers. Aim for long-term faith, not momentary emotion.

Salvation is a matter of grace, not works. Our works do not save us (Ephesians 2:8-9), nor do they keep us (Galatians 3:2-6).

Good works are a product of salvation, not a prerequisite to it.

Don't confuse sanctification with salvation. Holiness follows salvation; it doesn't precede it. Don't try to impose "Christian" expectations on men and women who don't know Christ.

- Keep it simple. Being born again is not complicated. Here's a simple way to explain it:

- Acknowledge your sinfulness and your need for a Savior (Romans 3:10, 23).

- Trust in Christ's sacrifice for your sins and in His resurrection (Romans 10:9-10).

Surrender your life to God's transforming power (Romans 12:1-2).

Most of all, remember that your job is to tell the truth in a way

others can understand, answer their questions, and give them an opportunity to respond. If you do that faithfully, some will respond and join the band of Christ- followers. When they do, Heaven will rejoice!

Question 1 of 5

Which view do you hold about the beginning of the Sabbath? Do you believe it started at Creation or on Mt. Sinai?

Question 2 of 5

How can a group of people on a sports team or a military unit set aside differences and work together as a unit? Why are those people able to set aside differences and work together?

Question 3 of 5

Many people believe they can earn their way to Heaven by doing good works. How does Scripture refute that?

Question 4 of 5

What does it mean that in Christ we are created for good works?

Question 5 of 5

How can we set aside non-essential differences to focus together on building God's kingdom?