



NG Study Guide: Ephesians 2:1-10 :: “In Christ You Are Alive” [4.28.24]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Regularly review the notes at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis: In this section we have a vivid picture of what humanity is by nature, and what you can become by God’s grace. Today, we discover how to experience spiritual life in Christ and how to live that life by God’s grace.

Subject: Spiritual life in Christ

Object: Live your new life by grace

Context: In 1:3-23 Paul reveals spiritual blessings of adoption into God’s family, redemption, their inheritance, and the Holy Spirit as a guarantee; and then prays for believers to understand God’s greatness and goodness. Here, this section reveals how good and great God is.

A. Your condition apart from Christ (1-3)

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³ among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

1. Spiritually dead (1)

Until you receive Christ, you are *dead in trespasses and sins*. In essence, you are non-responsive to God’s spirit, and separated from spiritual life with God. Spiritual life with God is distinct from physical life. An unbeliever’s life is characterized by rebellion to God whether it is in ignorance or intentional (*trespasses and sins*). Sin is universal in nature it doesn’t need to be taught.

There is a parallel between this section of Ephesians and the Creation account in Genesis. (Genesis 1:2) “The earth was without form and void; and darkness on the face of the deep.” Similarly, prior to Christ your relationship with God is characterized by darkness, void and chaos.

This section of Ephesians also harkens back to Genesis 2:17 where God warns that Adam that in the day that he eats of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he will surely die. Adam continued to physically live after he rebelled and ate of the tree, but his relationship with God changed. Adam, and all of his descendants were now separated from God (spiritual death).

2. Controlled by the influence of this world, the devil, and the flesh (2-3)

a. The world (2): Unbelievers *walk or live according to the course of this world* (2). Their values are shaped by the secular culture or world system. The sense of “good and bad” or “right and wrong” are shaped by the culture rather than God’s revelation (Romans 12:1-2).

b. The devil (2): Apart from Christ people live *according to the prince of the power of the air* (2) a reference to Satan or the devil and his influence in the spiritual realm (Ephesians 6:11-12). Satan is a created being, and thus not equivalent with God. Satan’s authority is like a prince rather than a king. Satan’s influence was introduced by

Adam and Eve's rebellion or disobedience in the Garden (Genesis 3). That same *spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience* (2). Apart from Christ, people declare their refusal to obey God.

c. The flesh (3): *among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.* The flesh is a reference to the physical body unyielded to God and prone to rebel against God in actions and attitudes.

As C.S. Lewis observed, "No one knows how bad they are until they try very hard to be good."

3. The judgment (3) *and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.* The idea is that they are deserving of the *wrath* or judgment of God. The thrust is akin to Romans 1-3 that compels the conclusion that all humanity is deserving of God's judgment.

Yet, just as Jesus was dead, and the story did not end in the grave, there is hope.

B. God's Intervention (4-7)

⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

1. Made alive with Christ (5):

But God signals not only words of contrast, but words of hope as you consider His intervention. When Joseph confronted his brothers, after they had sold him as a slave, and God had elevated him as second in authority in Egypt, he declared, "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive" (Genesis 50:20).

God has made us who were dead to Him *alive together with Christ*. As soon as you receive Jesus, your sins are forgiven, and you are given spiritual life and are joined with Christ.

Again, there is a parallel with the Creation account in Genesis: God's Spirit intervenes in the midst of darkness and chaos and brings life and beauty (Genesis 1:2, et. seq.).

a. Because of His mercy (4), love (4) and grace (5)

God is *rich in mercy* meaning we don't get the punishment we deserve. Jesus took the punishment we deserve to prove God's mercy and justice. His *great love with which He loved us* is revealed at the cross, but also by the reality that He wants to give us life and reconcile us to Himself. "God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). We will see more fully that our *salvation* is not by merit but *grace*.

2. Raised with Christ (6)

And raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. We have not only been made alive, but we are elevated or exalted such that our present position is that we commune with Christ. In John's gospel, Jesus gave life to Lazarus and then they dined together at a feast (John 11-12). As the apostle James observes, "Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up" (James 4:10).

3. Reveals His grace (7)

That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For eternity, the church declares the glory of God's grace that He shows us in Christ Jesus. It always was, is, and will be about His grace, unmerited favor, working in and through us to show His goodness and greatness.

C. Your new life (8-10)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

1. Saved by grace through faith (8-9)

a. Grace is unmerited favor: Salvation is the *gift of God* (8). It is *not of works* (9). Thus, no saved person can *boast* (9). You cannot earn salvation through any works of your own: being a highly moral person, being an altruistic person, being a very generous person, being a very loving, kind and compassionate person, being highly disciplined, church attendance, sacraments, ritual observance or baptism (which we will discuss more later today). Thus, the Pharisees were constantly confronted by Jesus, because they believed that their performance of God's commands could make them right with God without the need to humble themselves to receive their Savior.

Salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus and the work He completed on the cross (John 19:30). The only "work" on man's part is to believe (John 6:29). In essence, you choose to respond to the gospel message and the work of the Holy Spirit by yielding to Jesus and choosing to follow Him.

2. His workmanship (10)

Jesus' followers *are His workmanship*. The Greek term is *poiema* from which we derive poem, and is also translated as work of art. The transforming work that God works to conform us to the image of Christ reveals His grace (See, v.7).

Again a parallel with the Creation account. As God looks upon His workmanship He declares that it is very good (Genesis 1:3-31). Similarly, God looks upon you, His poem and work of art, and declares, "Very good in Christ!"

3. Created for good works (10)

Created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

You are His workmanship, created for *good works*. You are not saved by good works, but genuine saving faith results in good works (James 2, Titus 2:14). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). We are to reflect Jesus' light (John 8:12) in such a way that people see our good works and glorify God (not us). We are to *walk* in these good works, in contrast to walking opposed to God (2).

God *prepared* these good works *beforehand* is the idea that prior to Your existence God had prepared certain works for you, which is a remarkable idea. So, how can you discover what they might be and do them?

a. The Holy Spirit (Philippians 2:13) God works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. God is seeking to direct and empower us, by His Spirit, in regard to who, what, where, and how to do.

b. The Bible (2Timothy 3:16-17) The Bible instructs us how to be spiritually mature and equipped for every good work.

c. God's grace (2Corinthians 9:8) "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all may have an abundance for every good work." God provides abundant grace of sufficient resources of time, talent, and treasure to accomplish all the good that He has prepared for you to do. So, live your new life by grace.

Study Guide Qs:

Q1. How might you try to explain to someone that apart from Christ they are spiritually separated from God?

Q2. Review the section "God's Intervention" (4-7). What was particularly noteworthy to you?

Q3. How does it make you feel that you are God's workmanship (poem or work of art)?

Q4. God uses the Holy Spirit, Bible and His grace to help us to know and do His good works. Describe an experience where God directed and enabled you in a good work.

“Disciples Who Dig Deeper” (optional or alternative study)

1. Here is a brief video overview of Ephesians: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/ephesians/>
2. Here is a helpful study about growing in grace: <https://www.gotquestions.org/grow-in-grace.html>

Love your neighbors (inside + outside the group) better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors inside or outside the group?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbors inside or outside the group?

Disciples who make disciples:

1. Who would like to share how they recently sought to make disciples?
2. Here is a disciple making idea to consider for the weeks ahead:
[Invite a neighbor, where you live, work, study, play or worship, to visit your Neighborhood Group or join you for church services.](#)

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Notes:

1. **Preparation and participation:** Group participants should read the teacher's notes contained in this study guide prior to your meeting and be prepared to discuss the content. Remember the purpose of preparation and participation is to accelerate growth as disciples who loves God supremely, loves neighbors like self, and make other disciples who do likewise. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
2. **Consider what about the passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?**
If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.
3. **The “Disciples Who Dig Deeper” section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the “Disciples Who Dig Deeper” section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
4. **The “Love your neighbors” section encourages participants to love neighbors inside and outside the group better.** As a leader, discuss this section frequently.
5. **The “Disciples who make disciples” section provides a helpful idea, and encourages participants to be disciples who make disciples.** Leaders should regularly encourage the group to review and discuss this section.

Next week's passage:

Ephesians 2:11-22 :: "In Christ You Are United"