

4 FROM DEATH TO LIFE WITH CHRIST

EPHESIANS 2:1-10

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.
Ephesians 2:8

**MEMORIZE
THE TRUTH**



EPHESIANS 2:1-2 | OUR PAST WITHOUT CHRIST

1. According to Paul, when people are dead in sin, what happens?

2. Read Romans 5:12-14.
 - a. How did sin and death enter the world?

 - b. What background do Genesis 3:1-7 and 3:17-19 provide about this?

 - c. What is at least one way you see the consequences of sin in the world today?

3. Ephesians 2:2 refers to the “prince” or “ruler” of the air—otherwise known as Satan or the devil. Satan works in the “sons of disobedience.” Read Colossians 3:5-7 and describe what these children of disobedience are like.

EPHESIANS 2:3-5 | BUT GOD INTERVENED

4. What did God do for people who were spiritually dead, and why did He do it?

5. People sometimes think they need to get all the sin out of their lives before God will accept them. What does verse 5 along with Romans 5:8 say to disprove that idea?

6. Read Ephesians 2:1-3 again and contrast it to 2:4-5. What words describe people before God intervened? What words describe them after?

If you have put your trust in Jesus, you are no longer dead in sin. But sometimes we can all still feel like we are trapped in a pattern of sin. For example, we might find ourselves repeatedly lying, cheating, taking things that do not belong to us, talking badly about other people, or indulging in things that displease God. Ask God to help you identify patterns of sin in your own life. What tempts you to sin? How could you respond differently? Ask God to set you free from destructive sin habits in your life.



EPHESIANS 2:6-7 | RAISED UP AND SEATED WITH CHRIST

7. Verse 5 says that God made His children alive again, together with Christ.
- From verse 6, what else did He do?
 - Review 1:20-21. What do you learn about this place where Jesus is right now?
 - If you are a follower of Jesus, what impact does knowing this have on you?
8. According to verse 2:7, why did God do this for His children?

EPHESIANS 2:8-9 | AMAZING GRACE

9. From what you know already, how would you describe God's grace?
10. From 2:5 and 2:7, as well as today's verses, what are some reasons God's grace is amazing?
11. How do John 3:16-18 and Romans 5:1-2 help explain what this salvation by grace through faith means?

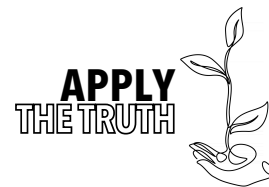
12. Some people believe that God saves them based on how good they are and how many good works they do. How does the Bible respond to that wrong idea in
- a. Isaiah 64:6?

 - b. Titus 3:4-7?
13. How does knowing that we can do nothing to earn our salvation keep us from boasting? And why is this important?

EPHESIANS 2:10 | GOD'S MASTERPIECE

14. Paul used the Greek word *poiema* to describe believers in Christ. It has been translated many ways, including "handiwork," "workmanship," "masterpiece," and "creation." What does the word "masterpiece" bring to mind? What are some examples?
15. What did God create His people—His masterpiece—to do? Share some examples of what this might include.
16. We have already seen that good works cannot save anyone. But what can they do, according to Matthew 5:16?
17. What does it mean to you that God made you and that He made you for a specific purpose?

Ephesians 2:1-10 shows us how to go from death to life. Have you taken the step to cross over? If so, how is this new life better than when you simply followed the ways of the world? If you have not taken that step, what is preventing you? Talk to God about it. When you are ready, tell Him you would like to take Him up on His offer of grace. Plan to talk about this in your small group.



MEET WITH YOUR GROUP

LEARN MORE LESSON 4
**FROM DEATH
 TO LIFE
 WITH CHRIST**
 EPHESIANS 2:1-10

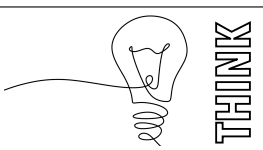
Christ's gift to us is amazing. Jesus made it possible for people who had been dead to come alive again!

ALIVE BUT DEAD

EPHESIANS 2:1-3

Sin leaves us walking around like dead people. It causes us to be spiritually dead even while remaining physically alive. It is true that we still breathe. Our hearts still beat. But sin causes our souls to disconnect from the God of life. Without Him we have no purpose or power. That is the profound dilemma Paul addressed in this passage. Thankfully, there is a remedy. But first, Paul explained how serious our situation is without Christ.

Paul described the three influences that cause this spiritual deadness. The apostle John referred to them as the world, the flesh, and the devil (see 1 Jn. 2:16). First, people without Christ are trapped in the hopeless ways and values of the world. The culture of the world teaches us bad ways of thinking. And wrong thinking leads us into sin and despair. That is why Romans 12:2 tells us not to conform to the ways of the world. Instead, it says to let God transform and renew our minds so that our thinking aligns with His.



Think about how the world influences our thinking. God's values are different from the world's. People who want to follow Him must measure their values and beliefs against His, not the world's. Are you willing to do the work of renewing your mind (see Rom. 12:2) through reading, meditating on, and obeying Scripture? Will you stand against the wrong values and ideas the world tries to sell you? Are you willing to think God's way, even if it means you clash with the world?

But it is not only the world that leads us down a deadly path. We also have an invisible enemy—Satan. Paul called him the prince of the power of the air. Satan twists people's thinking and blinds their minds (see 2 Cor. 4:4). Distorted thinking and spiritual blindness lead to sinful behavior. Paul called people under the devil's influence the *sons of disobedience*. These are people who rebel against God and His purposes on earth. They are deceived and trapped in spiritual darkness. They are stuck on a path to destruction unless God steps in to light a different way. And He did! As extensive as Satan's influence is, Christ's rule and authority are far greater than his.

Finally, there is a third influence working against us—our own sinful desires. Unlike the other two influences, this one is internal. Our own "flesh" leads us to want to act in the sinful ways described in Galatians 5:19-21. Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, and sorcery are on the list. The list also includes things like hatred, anger, rivalries, dissension, envy, and drunkenness. These passions and desires overtake us when we live for ourselves instead of for God. We get angry when people offend us. We envy what other people have. We slander others to make ourselves look better. We try to escape pain by doing whatever feels good.

Paul called people who live according to their wrong desires children of wrath. In our natural state, all humans are doomed to God's judgment. We are born "dead"—separated from God and bent on defying Him with our distorted instincts. Such a path destines us for painful consequences. Thankfully, the story does not end this way.

RAISED TO LIFE IN CHRIST

EPHESIANS 2:4-6

Paul said the God who rescued us is rich in mercy. He has the heart of a loving Father and loves us greatly. He is so tender that He cannot help but act when His children need help. God's mercy—and nothing we do ourselves—is the only power that can move us from death to new life with Christ.

How did God accomplish His children's rescue? Paul said He made them "alive together with Christ." The idea of being made alive together with Jesus is the central message of 2:1-10. So what does it mean to have life with Christ? Sometimes people think of salvation as a future event. They think of it as the time when God judges the world and believers escape that terrible judgment. And that is part of it. But here Paul used the past tense—saved—to celebrate what had already happened. He said that believers have been saved by grace. Christ-followers have already been rescued from a life of separation from God. This means they have renewed desires and new motivations. They do not have to give in to the world, the flesh, or the devil any longer.

So we see that believers have been saved in the past. But they are also saved in the present. Paul described the new life we can find together with Christ right now. God has "raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places." How is this possible? Jesus died and rose again a long time ago—so how are we united with Him? He is seated in the heavenly places—how can we who live on earth be with Him now?

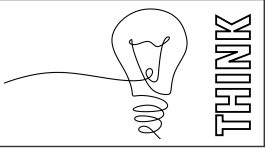
It is a mystery, certainly. But it is a mystery that Paul frequently celebrated (for example, see Rom. 6:3-11; Col. 2:12-13). Romans 6:4 says that we were buried with Jesus by baptism into His death. It goes on to say that just as God raised Christ from the dead, we too are raised to walk in "newness of life." Those who trust in Christ will be physically resurrected in the future. But they are also raised from spiritual death into "newness of life" now, even before physical death. That means believers are spiritually united with Him where He is, in the heavenly places.

HOW GRACE WORKS

EPHESIANS 2:7-9

Why did God free believers, through Christ, from forces threatening to destroy them? Because He wanted everyone to see His lavish kindness that He extended to us in Christ Jesus. God saved sinners to show everyone His grace and goodness. Paul highlighted the extravagant grace of God in three ways. First, it is so great it cannot be measured. Second, God has an abundance of it. And third, it reflects His kindness. To make sure we would understand, Paul repeated himself, reminding us that we can be saved only by grace. There is nothing for us to boast about. God has opened a way out of our sin-earned oppression because that is who He is. He helps people who do not deserve it.

Paul started every letter he wrote by praying that people would grasp God's grace. He highlighted grace as one of the major blessings Christ-followers receive in Him. Grasping God's amazing grace helps us appreciate Paul's enthusiasm throughout the book of Ephesians. The only part we play in receiving this gracious gift of spiritual life is to trust in Jesus. This means believing that Jesus died and rose from the dead—for you—and trusting Him as Lord of your life (see Rom. 10:9). We are saved by trusting Jesus. Nothing we do could ever set us free from the misery of sin. Salvation is the gift of a gracious God. It is not something humans can do for themselves, no matter how good their deeds. They cannot take credit; they can only give thanks. Followers of Christ are simply sinners to whom God has given an undeserved second chance to experience life.



Think about how you picture God. If you see an angry God who is waiting to punish you for your next mistake, you will live in fear and shame. If you see a kind God who is creating ways for you to be free, you will feel gratitude and joy. Paul's joy and excitement did not come from how well he performed. It came from his understanding of the immeasurable grace God had given him. Do you want to move from fear and shame to a life of gratitude and joy? Then start seeing God for who He really is—a kind Father who uses His power to give you life and love.

WHY ARE WE HERE?

EPHESIANS 2:10

God did more than save believers from His wrath. He made them His workmanship, His masterpiece. Artistic masterpieces bring the artists glory and acclaim. Similarly, when God's human creations live according to His design, they bring Him glory and acclaim. They do this by doing—walking in—the good works that God created them to do. In 2:1-2, Paul wrote about how the Ephesians had previously walked in sins. But he ended this section by telling them to walk, instead, in the way God designed for them. Believers in Jesus move from death to life, from oppression to freedom, from lostness to walking the path God intended for them. He has destined them to “be holy and blameless before him” (1:4), a reality achieved only “in Christ Jesus.”

How has your understanding of God's grace grown through this study so far? How would you explain His grace to someone else? How would you say it has affected your life?

PERSONALIZE
THE TRUTH

