

Ephesians 2:1-10

Saved Brent Schlittenhart

Saved! We use the word saved in several contexts. For example, I saved \$20 on that purchase. My wife saved the last cookie for me. That last test saved my grade. I saved my work on my computer. I saved my information in the cloud. The seat belt and airbag saved them from serious injury in that accident. The lifeguard saved that person from drowning. That medical person saved his or her life. All of these are good things, and some are more important than others. The most important thing that we can be saved from is our sin. The Bible emphasizes that Jesus came to earth to reveal God and his nature. The New Testament emphasizes that Christ came to save us from sin. John 3:16 says that God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. Paul says in 1 Timothy 1:15 that Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and all of us are sinners. And in Ephesians 2:1-10 Paul emphasizes God's work of salvation through Jesus Christ.

2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.⁸

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.¹⁰ For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.¹

1. Saved From Spiritual Death to Spiritual Life (2:1-5)

This passage emphasizes that we are saved from spiritual death to spiritual life. When the Bible speaks of death it speaks of death in three ways. One of the ways that death is spoken about in the Bible is physical death. We understand that concept of death well because it happens when our body physically dies. Another way that the Bible speaks of death is spiritual death. Spiritual death is the condition of our sin separating us from God. All of us are spiritually dead until we are brought to spiritual life by the love, grace, and mercy of God bringing us to spiritual life through Jesus Christ. The third way the Bible speaks of death, is the second death or eternal death. This is the condition of those who die a physical death while still being spiritually dead. They are eternally cut off from the blessing and relationship that God desires with them because of their sin. James Montgomery Boice says that “In their opposition to God, men and women are walking corpses. They are the living dead.”² I have seen advertisements of a popular TV series in the last few years called “the walking dead” whereby people are trying to survive attacks from zombies. Of course, we know that zombies really do not exist. Jon Courson says that “Spiritually, we were like zombies—alive

¹ [*The Holy Bible: New International Version*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), Eph 2:1–10.

² James Montgomery Boice, [*Ephesians: An Expositional Commentary*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library, 1988), 47.

physically, but because we had no sensitivity toward the Lord, we were dead spiritually.”³ People are physically alive but spiritually dead and many are not even aware of it. Darrell Bock writes that their “walk and its choices in life were directed by forces outside of themselves which they followed: *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*. The ‘walk’ further refers to the ethical dimensions of a person’s life, and it was dipped deep in sin.”⁴ Paul indicates that all of us lived in this sinful condition. Klyne Snodgrass notes how “The picture the text paints is bleak. Because of sins, humans are the living dead. They live in keeping with a world order that ignores God and in keeping with a tyrant who works to cause disobedience. In their enslavement they follow desires and distorted reasonings that leave God out of the picture and, therefore, they are under God’s wrath. But, the main point of Ephesians—and especially of 2:1–10—is that *God will not stay out of the picture*.”⁵

God’s grace and power intervenes to make us spiritually alive. Darrell Bock writes that “God is the one who, out of his own initiative, made us alive when we were powerless to do anything. The result was new life, or what other texts call ‘being born again’ or ‘new creation’. It is faith in Jesus the Messiah that triggers these benefits.”⁶ Paul writes in Colossians 2:13-15 that “¹³ When you were

³ Jon Courson, [*Jon Courson’s Application Commentary*](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 1233.

⁴ Darrell L. Bock, [*Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), ed. Eckhard J. Schnabel, vol. 10, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2019), 62.

⁵ Klyne Snodgrass, [*Ephesians*](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 99.

⁶ Darrell L. Bock, [*Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), ed. Eckhard J. Schnabel, vol. 10, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2019), 65–66.

dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,¹⁴ having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” Through the grace of God, we are saved from spiritual death to spiritual life.

2. Saved From Condemnation to Being Raised With Christ (2:3-7)

This passage also teaches us that we are saved from condemnation to being raised with Christ. When our sins are not forgiven, we stand under condemnation. Peter O’Brien writes that “The verb to save includes God’s acts of making us alive, raising us up, and seating us with Christ. It describes a rescue from death, wrath, and bondage and a transfer into the new dominion with its manifold blessings.”⁷ “In raising and exalting Christ God demonstrated the *surpassing* greatness of his power; in raising and exalting us he has also displayed the *surpassing* riches of his grace.”⁸ Colossians 1:13-14 says that God has “rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” Bruce Barton notes how believers “share with Christ in his victory *now*. This view of our present status should help us face our work and trials with greater hope! Believers, as heirs of the Kingdom along with Christ, are spiritually exalted from the moment of salvation. We have a new

⁷ Peter Thomas O’Brien, [*The Letter to the Ephesians*](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 169.

⁸ Peter Thomas O’Brien, [*The Letter to the Ephesians*](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 172.

citizenship—in heaven, no longer just on earth: The power that raised and exalted Christ also raised and exalted his people because we are one with him. That same power works daily in believers, helping us live and work for God during our time in the world.”⁹ While the sinful nature still exists in the lives of Christians, when we submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit we can have victory over that sinful nature. It is God who provides the victory. Through the grace of God, we are saved from the condemnation of our sin to being raised with Christ.

3. Saved From Legalism to Receiving God’s Grace (2:8-9)

This passage also teaches us that God has saved us from legalism to receiving God’s grace. Legalism and works can never save us. We can never be good enough. Klyne Snodgrass writes that “Works refers to any human condition or accomplishment by which one thinks to gain status or privilege before God.”¹⁰ “Grace is the key ingredient and by necessity comes first; everything else flows from and builds on a theology of grace. Grace means the completely undeserved, loving commitment of God to us. For some reason unknown to us, but which is rooted in his nature, God gives himself to us, attaches himself to us, and acts to rescue us. Though wrath should have come, saving grace comes instead. This action is rooted in God’s very nature.”¹¹ I love the story of a little boy discussing how he was saved. “The deacons were interviewing a little boy for

⁹ Bruce Barton, Philip Comfort, et al., [*Life Application New Testament Commentary*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 810.

¹⁰ Klyne Snodgrass, [*Ephesians*](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 106.

¹¹ Klyne Snodgrass, [*Ephesians*](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 103.

membership in their church. They asked, “How did you get saved?” The boy answered, “God did his part, and I did my part.” The deacons were not so sure what the boy meant by that answer, so they questioned further. The boy explained what he meant by his answer: “God did the part of saving, and I did the part of sinning. I ran from God as fast as I could, and God took out after me until he finally ran me down.”¹²

Clinton Arnold writes that while God opposes our sin, God “is also rich in mercy, full of love, abounding in grace, and possessing a heart of kindness. In Christ Jesus, he made a way of escape from the compelling influence of the forces of evil and has bestowed new life upon us. This is entirely a gift of his grace rooted in his kindness. Because of our deadness and bondage to sin, there is no initiative, merit, or effort on our part to acquire this precious gift. It is simply received by faith.”¹³ It is a gift that we receive through faith by trusting in God and his provision through Jesus Christ. Klyne Snodgrass emphasizes that this “*Faith is relational*, describing reliance on a reliable God. Faith is a *covenant* word, expressing the commitment and trust that bind two parties together.”¹⁴ I am so thankful that our salvation is not based upon our performance but rather is based on the grace of God applied to us through faith in Jesus Christ. We are saved from legalism to receiving God’s grace.

4. Saved From Meaningless Life to Purpose (3:10)

¹² Michael Hodgin, [*1002 Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking: Fresh, Timely, Compelling Illustrations for Preachers, Teachers, and Speakers*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010).

¹³ Clinton E. Arnold, [*Ephesians*](#), Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 144.

¹⁴ Klyne Snodgrass, [*Ephesians*](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 105.

This passage also teaches that we are saved from a meaningless life to purpose. Purpose in life is so important. Lynn Cohick believes that “Paul cannot imagine a new creation without its attending purpose. The purpose gives value and makes sense of the created entity. A new creation without an attending purpose would be like having a golf ball with no clubs.”¹⁵ Klyne Snodgrass emphasizes how “The purpose of God’s creative activity is not merely to have a people, as if he were constructing a work of art. Rather, this new creation is to be active and productive like the Creator. Christians are “to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”¹⁶ He writes that “God saves people so that they might live productive lives in keeping with what God intended for humanity. With “good works” Paul was not thinking about “do-goodism,” but about a life reflective of God’s love.”¹⁷ Clinton Arnold writes that “*God has made it possible, and indeed expects us, to live a virtuous life.* Because he has broken the power of the various forces inclining us to do evil, God has called us to live out our daily lives in a manner consistent with his holy and righteous character. In fact, he designed us to live a lifestyle of “good works.” This includes demonstrating love to others in the same way that he has loved us. It entails eradicating shameful and impure practices in our lives and appropriating all of the virtues of Christ.”¹⁸

¹⁵ Lynn H. Cohick, [*Ephesians*](#), New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 69.

¹⁶ Klyne Snodgrass, [*Ephesians*](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 107.

¹⁷ Klyne Snodgrass, [*Ephesians*](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 121.

¹⁸ Clinton E. Arnold, [*Ephesians*](#), Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 145.

Sin has made humans spiritually dead, separating us from the grace and love of God. Fortunately, God does not give up on us but pursues us with his love and grace. God desires to save us, and he has done all the work necessary through the life, sacrificial death, and resurrection of Jesus. Our debt of sin has been cancelled when we receive God's grace through faith. John R. W. Stott in his book *The Cross of Christ* writes that in sin humans substitute themselves for God. In salvation God substitutes himself for humans. Because of the great lovingkindness, mercy, and grace of God, Christians are saved from spiritual death to spiritual life; saved from condemnation to being raised with Christ; saved from legalism to receiving God's grace; and saved from a meaningless life to purpose. If you have not been rescued from your sin by the grace of God, you can trust in him today. Talk to our pastor, myself, Jeff, or another Christian. If you have received this gift of God's grace through faith live in gratitude for what God has done for you. We need to think of the ways we can serve God and live for his purposes in our lives as we do the good works he wants in our lives to make a difference in this world, which God loves.