

06–08–2020 Ephesians 2.1–10 Bible Study

Read Ephesians 2:1–10 in your favorite translation. I will print the NET–2 translation.

2:1 And although you were dead in your offenses and sins, 2 in which you formerly lived according to this world's present path, according to the ruler of the domain of the air, the ruler of the spirit that is now energizing the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom all of us also formerly lived out our lives in the cravings of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath even as the rest...

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, 5 even though we were dead in offenses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you are saved!— 6 and he raised us up together with him and seated us together with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 to demonstrate in the coming ages the surpassing wealth of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 it is not from works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are his creative work, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works that God prepared beforehand so we can do them.

COMMENTS:

Chapter 1 of Ephesians is dominated by the theme of praise and thanksgiving. In verses 3–14 the apostle utilizes a redemptive eulogy to praise God for all the spiritual blessings that he has bestowed upon the believer.

These blessings are mediated through the Son and are confirmed in the believer through the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. The use of baptismal themes suggests that the hymn may have been connected with the celebration of baptism in the early church.

From doxology, he turns to a prayer in which he expresses the wish that his readers personally understand and appropriate the blessings that he has just enumerated. Consequently, there are many verbal and doctrinal similarities between these two sections.

In the prayer, the apostle asks that the believers might increasingly know the hope to which God has called them (1:18a) and the richness of God's blessing (1:18b) and that they will see God's power as manifested in Christ's resurrection, exaltation, and headship over all things, including the church (1:19–23).

The context makes it apparent that the mention of Christ's resurrection and exaltation provides the background for the thoughts that he develops in 2:1–10 and in 2:11–22. The apostle wants to demonstrate that the mighty power of God that was at work in Christ is also at work in the believer; what is true of Christ is also true for each believer in Christ.

The Greek text permits one to appreciate the hymnic nature of this section because verses 1–7 form one sentence, and the first main verb does not occur until verse 5 (he made us alive). From 1:3–2:7 we only have 3 sentences. Thank God Paul didn't write this way all the time.

In chapter 2, the apostle develops two specific themes that he has already mentioned: In 2:1–10, he picks up redemption and forgiveness (1:7) and applies it to the reconciliation of sinful humanity by God.

Our reading today starts with the reminder that we are by nature spiritually dead. Someone once asked, how much weight do you have to place on a dead man before he feels the weight of sin. The simple truth is that the dead no longer feel anything.

The only one who has ever felt the full weight of sin is the one who never sinned, Jesus. We are told in Isaiah 53:6. “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

It was the weight of the sin of the whole world for all time laid on Jesus that make him say on the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46) Our death in sin is revealed by our offenses and sins.

The idea behind the word offenses is the word trespasses. It means that we have crossed a line, challenging God’s boundaries. The idea behind the word sins is that we have missed a mark, the perfect standards of God. Offenses speak of humans as rebels and sin speaks of humans as failures.

Because of the Fall into sin, this is where we all start spiritually. We are born alive physically, but dead spiritually. That is why Paul can say to those Christians in Ephesus, that is where you were. You walked the world’s path under the rule of the prince of this world. He is the one who energizes all the sons of disobedience.

Note how Paul includes himself by saying (v. 3) “among whom all of us formerly lived. We were then like the rest of the world, children of wrath. The good news is that God is rich in mercy and the power which raised Jesus from the dead is the same power at work in us who are made alive by the Spirit.

Why did this happen? We who believe were resurrected by the power of God’s Holy Spirit. We did not become spiritually conscious on our own. I have read instructions on the internet of what I can do if I feel myself choking to death or what I can do if I feel a heart attack killing me. There may be self-administered Heimlich Maneuver and CPR, but only while alive.

There is no self-administered Heimlich Maneuver or CPR by one who is dead. Someone or something else is going to have to make you alive. I frequently told my Confirmation Class that if I collapsed on the floor and was not breathing, I didn’t want them to gather around me and call out, “Breath pastor, breath.” That was worthless. Call 911 or do CPR.

And then in v. 6 the Father promises that we will sit on the throne with Jesus. And v. 7 this is a demonstration of the value God’s love for us through Jesus. Who gets the credit? God does, v. 8, because we are saved by what God does for us, not what we do for ourselves. It is always a gift from God and that is why we can never boast about believing.

Even our faith is a gift of God. He has re-created us fallen creatures and even prepared good works for us to do. Our good works are never the cause of our salvation. They are the fruit of our salvation. The blessing of God working in us and then through us.

REFLECTION QUESTION: What is the first question every slave asks when he/she arises? Master, what do you want me to do today? That is our question to God since we know he has prepared good works for us. What is the difference between saying, “I have faith” and “I believe.” When I say I believe I am acknowledging the truth of what has been said. When I say, “I have faith,” I am declaring I trust the one who spoke to me and I am going where he sends me. Is your daily destination determined by you or by God??