

Ephesians

Lesson 4 Ephesians 2:1-22

Leader Guide

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Lesson 4

Ephesians 2:1-22

God's Wonderful Grace

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves,
it is the gift of God. *Ephesians 2:8*

Prayers

Introduction

Salvation by God's grace through faith in Christ is the central truth of the gospel. It is so profound that it sparked a revolution in the church – the Reformation. Martin Luther “rediscovered” the message of salvation by grace during his study and lectures on Romans in 1513-1516 AD. Luther said that the discovery of salvation by faith and God's grace was “as if the very gates of heaven had opened before me.” Before understanding salvation by grace, Luther tried to earn God's favor through harshly disciplined works as an Augustinian monk. The life of a monk was hard. Luther awoke at 1:45 AM for worship (one seven during the day), reading and prayer (three times a day), work, eating three quick meals, and retiring at 8 PM. Luther wrote, “If I had kept on any longer, I should have killed myself with vigils, prayers, reading, and other work.” Luther was tormented by his inability to atone for his sins through his disciplined life as a monk. The more he worked, the more distant he felt from God.

In this lesson, we look at God's plan of salvation – a life in Christ through faith and God's grace.

Read Ephesians 2:1-10, Made Alive in Christ.

^{Eph 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 flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving 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 is 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 handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

1. The first ten verses of the second chapter contrast life before Christ and new life in Christ. How does Paul describe life before Christ in verses 1-3?
 - a. Verse 1 **Dead**
 - b. Verse 2 **Disobedient**
 - c. Verse 3 **Craving sinful desires**
2. Verse 4 begins with “But,” meaning God has undone all the sin in your life before you knew Christ and has given you a new life in Christ. Because of your new life in Christ, how would you complete the first three verses?

- a. Dead in sin, but God (Verse 2:4) **made me alive in Christ.**
 - b. Dead in disobedience, but God (verse 1:4) **chose me to be holy and blameless.**
 - c. Dead in sinful desires and thoughts, but God (Verse 1:8) **is working to transform my mind.**
3. Most Americans believe salvation and eternal life in heaven are gained by “doing and being good” (Barna Research, 2020). Do you think the Ephesians 2:1-3 refer to everyone or only to some “really bad” people?

^{Eph 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 flesh^[a] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

Paul is referring to everyone because everyone sins and is dead in their sin without Christ. No one is perfect or holy in themselves. If it were possible to please God by living a perfect and holy life, there would have been no need for Christ’s suffering and death. Paul wrote in Romans 3:23, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Everyone needs Christ as their savior and righteousness.

4. A dead person is totally helpless to make himself well – because they are dead! Paul says in verse 4 that we were spiritually dead in our sins before God saved us by his grace. We are totally in God’s hands. What does God do to rescue us from spiritual death to give us new life?
- a. Verse 5 **Makes us alive in Christ.**
 - b. Verse 6-7 **Gives us a new life by raising us up in Christ**
 - c. Verse 8 **Gives us faith in Christ**
5. Verses 8 and 9 emphasize what God has done for us, saving us from sin by his grace and giving us faith in Christ. How do God’s gifts of grace and faith give you complete assurance of your salvation rather than by “doing and being good”?

If I trust in God for my salvation, I have the assurance he can do what he promises- make me alive in Christ, give me a new life, and give me faith in Christ for my salvation.

If I trust in myself for my salvation, where is my assurance? I can do good sometimes, but not always. My thoughts are never totally pure and holy. How do I make up for my failures when I fail to live to God's perfect standards of holiness? I need Christ.

6. Paul writes we are God’s workmanship in only two places in the New Testament, Romans 1:20 and Ephesians 2:10. The word for workmanship means “masterpiece.” How is your salvation and life in Christ, God’s masterpiece?

Our salvation is God’s masterpiece in us because he has done it all – while we were spiritually dead. God made plans for our salvation, sent his Son to accomplish our salvation, gave us faith to believe in Christ, and put his Spirit in us so that we might understand his plan for our salvation. We are his workmanship because he has given us every spiritual blessing.

Read Ephesians 2:11-22, Jew and Gentile Reconciled Through Christ.

^{Eph 2:11} Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)— ¹² remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

^{Eph 2:14} For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

^{Eph 2:19} Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

7. Sometimes we have difficulty letting go of something, even if something new holds more promise. Circumcision was an issue like that, and it divided the early church. Read Genesis 17:1-14 and discuss why it was so difficult for Jewish Christians to forego the practice of circumcision or to accept others who were not circumcised.

^{Gen 17:1} When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. ² Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.”

³ Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, ⁴ “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. ⁵ No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. ⁶ I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. ⁷ I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. ⁸ The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.”

⁹ Then God said to Abraham, “As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. ¹⁰ This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹ You are to undergo

circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹² For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring. ¹³ Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴ Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

An impassable gulf separated Jews and Gentiles in the early days of the church. A Jew could not drink milk drawn by Gentiles or eat their food. Jewish physicians could not attend to non-Jewish patients. No Jew would have anything to do with a Gentile because Jews believed Gentiles had no part of God’s covenant. The Son of God descended from heaven to give a New Covenant from God, a covenant of salvation by faith through God’s grace instituted through Christ’s body and blood. Instead of division, the New Covenant brought unity between Jews and Gentiles in the church - which is the body of Christ.

8. What did Jewish Christians need to understand about their covenant relationship with God?

Jews understood their old covenant relationship with God was through faith in God, and obedience to the law. Circumcision was a sign of their covenant. God’s promise to Abraham was fulfilled in Christ, making the Old Covenant through Abraham and Moses obsolete.

9. Does circumcision (or uncircumcision) hold any relevance today? Refer to the following scriptures.

Genesis 17:14 “Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

Galatians 2:24 So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. ²⁶ So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Romans 2:28 A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. ²⁹ No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person’s praise is not from other people, but from God.
Romans 2:28-29

**Circumcision was a sign of God’s everlasting covenant with Israel to be their God. In the New Testament, baptism replaces circumcision as the sign of belonging to God. The covenant of circumcision was part of the Old Testament Law that is superseded by faith in Christ. Consequently, we are God’s children by faith, not circumcision. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”
Ephesians 2:8-9**

10. At its beginning, the church was deeply divided between Jewish and Gentile believers. That is why every one of Paul's letters stresses unity among believers. What kind of things divide church congregations today? What is always the basis of unity in the church (verses 14-22)?

The most common threats to church unity are finances, issues with the pastor or leadership, or corruption. Christ is our unity. In Ephesians 2, Paul uses the imagery of the body of Christ being built into a holy temple. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, Paul used the imagery of believers joined as one body of many parts. We are joined as one body of many parts, each with a unique role.

11. Circumcision and temple worship were like shadows of worship in heaven under Christ. Refer to the passages below and discuss how the imagery of Old Testament worship has been replaced in the New Testament.

1. Foundation of the Temple, 1 Kings 5:17-18

¹⁷At the king's command they removed from the quarry large blocks of high-grade stone to provide a foundation of dressed stone for the temple. ¹⁸The craftsmen of Solomon and Hiram and workers from Byblos cut and prepared the timber and stone for the building of the temple.

New Testament Revelation, Ephesians 2:19-22

¹⁹Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²²And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. Ephesians 2:19-22

The massive stones used to build the temple in Jerusalem illustrate the Christ's church, built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles with Christ as the cornerstone. We are joined with Christ as his church, a dwelling place for God's Spirit.

2. Precious stones and gold, 1 Chronicles 29:3-5

³Besides, in my devotion to the temple of my God I now give my personal treasures of gold and silver for the temple of my God, over and above everything I have provided for this holy temple: ⁴three thousand talents of gold (gold of Ophir) and seven thousand talents of refined silver, for the overlaying of the walls of the buildings, ⁵for the gold work and the silver work, and for all the work to be done by the craftsmen. 1 Chronicles 29:3-5

New Testament Revelation, 1 Corinthians 12:27

[Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 1 Corinthians 12:27](#)

You are precious in God's sight, more precious than gold or silver.

3. God's presence, Exodus 40:34-35

³⁴Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁵Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Exodus 40:34-35

New Testament Revelation 1 Corinthians 3:16

¹⁶ Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? 1 Corinthians 3:16
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The Holy Spirit lives in us and we have become God's dwelling place. We are his temple.

4. High Priest, Exodus 30:10

Once a year, Aaron [the High Priest] shall make atonement on its horns. This annual atonement must be made with the blood of the atoning sin offering for the generations to come. It is most holy to the LORD."

New Testament Revelation, Hebrews 4:14-15

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are —yet he did not sin. Hebrews 4:14-15

Christ is the High Priest of our faith. He made ultimate sacrifice for us, atoning for our sins for all time. He knows all of our weaknesses and temptations so that he can intercede for us and strengthen us through his Spirit.

5. Chosen People, Deuteronomy 7:6

For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

New Testament Revelation, Colossians 3:11-12

¹¹ Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. ¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Colossians 3:11-12

All who come to faith in Christ are his chosen people. Christ fulfilled God's promise to Abraham, to bless all nations and to make his people as numerous as the stars in the sky. Denominational differences do not change our unity in Christ and we will all praise him through eternity.

6. The priesthood of Levites, Numbers 8:18-19

I have taken the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the people of Israel. ¹⁹ And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among the people of Israel, to do the service for the people of Israel at the tent of meeting and to make atonement for the people of Israel, that there may be no plague among the people of Israel when the people of Israel come near the sanctuary." Numbers 8:18-19

New Testament Revelation, 1 Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 1 Peter 2:9

Just as Christ is our High Priest, we are joined with him as a holy priesthood, serving both God and mankind – our neighbors.

7. Animal Sacrifice

²⁷ “If any member of the community sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD’s commands, when they realize their guilt ²⁸ and the sin they have committed becomes known, they must bring as their offering for the sin they committed a female goat without defect. ²⁹ They are to lay their hand on the head of the sin offering and slaughter it at the place of the burnt offering. Leviticus 4:27-29

New Testament Revelation, Hebrews 7:27

Heb 7:27 Unlike the other high priests, he [Christ] does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. Hebrews 7:27

The sacrificial system of the Old Covenant Law is gone; perfected in Christ’s one sacrifice for all sin, for all time.

8. Redemption, Exodus 6:6-7

'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. ⁷ I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. Exodus 6:6-7

New Testament Revelation, 1 Peter 1:18-19

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 1 Peter 1:18-19

Just as God redeemed the Israelites from the bondage of slavery, God redeemed us from the bondage of sin through the precious blood of his Savior. We are free in Christ.

Closing Prayer

1 Take my life and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to thee.
Take my moments and my days;
let them flow in endless praise.

5 Take my will and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne.

6 Take my love; my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee.

Frances R. Havergal, 1874