

## STUDY GUIDE

**PLEASANT RIDGE BAPTIST CHURCH**  
**BUILDING HIS CHURCH**  
**ALIVE IN CHRIST**  
**EPHESIANS 2:1-10**  
**02/11/2018**



### MAIN POINT

God is so loving and merciful, that even when we were helpless sinners, He gave us new life in Jesus.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What is your best story of a time when you felt like you were in a dangerous situation?**

**What happened? How did you get out of that situation?**

**How did you feel once you realized you were safe?**

Whether we recognize it not, all of humanity is in great danger. That's because there is no middle ground when it comes to our spiritual lives. Either we are dead in sin, or we are alive in Christ. Until we see how bad our situation was without Christ, we will never appreciate how good the news of the gospel really is.

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ EPHESIANS 2:1-10.**

---

**How do verses 1-3 help us understand what sin is? How do they show us that sin is not just a bad choice, but a condition in which we live?**

**Why is it important that we understand humanity, apart from Christ, to be dead and not just bad?**

**How does that understanding change the way we view the good news of the gospel?**

Sin is the default condition of the human heart. This frames our understanding of the gospel because it helps us see that Jesus didn't come to make bad people a little better; He came to give life to those utterly without hope in their deadness.

**Paul referred to his audience in past tense terms because this was how they once were. Why, even as Christians, is it helpful for us to remember our sinful condition before Christ?**

**How does doing so change the way we view others apart from Christ?**

Paul was not morbid; nor was he obsessed with bad news. It's a healthy practice for us as Christians to revisit who we were before Christ. Then we can look on others not in judgment, but in mercy, knowing that apart from the grace of God we, too, would still be dead in our sin.

**Look back at verses 4-7. What attributes of God do you see in this passage?**

**What is your "but God" moment? The moment when everything changed spiritually for you?**

**How is your life different now than it was before Christ?**

**Focus now on verses 8-10. Why is important to know that God didn't just save us from something, but to something?**

**How can we guard against being prideful in doing the good works that God has saved us for?**

**Why do you think God wants us to know that we are His workmanship? Is it difficult for you to believe this about yourself? Why or why not?**

What matters most about us is not what the world tells us, how people around us see us, or even how we see ourselves. Our identity is determined by what God says about us. While apart from Christ we were dead and hopeless, in Christ we are alive, and we will never be dead again. When we begin believing what God says about us, we can find the freedom to walk inside the good works He has planned for us.

## **APPLICATION**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What is one way you can remind yourself of who you were before Christ without feeling a sense of judgment or condemnation?**

**Who is someone in your life that you have judged but instead need to look on with mercy?**

**What is one good work God has planned for you this week?**

## **PRAY**

Thank God that in His mercy, He made you alive with Christ when you were dead in sin. Pray that you would have a greater appreciation of what Jesus has done and a greater compassion for others as you look deeply into the truth of the gospel.

## COMMENTARY

### EPHESIANS 2:1-10

---

2:1. In chapter 1, Paul enumerates God's spiritual blessings for us and then prays that we might be able to comprehend them. One of those spiritual blessings was forgiveness of sins and redemption by Christ. In chapter 2, Paul explains that great truth more specifically: we were spiritually dead, separated and alienated from God, because of our transgressions and sins. Later in the chapter, he talks about the consequences of this spiritual death, but for now he just establishes it as fact.

2:2. Paul describes the way we lived while we were in this spiritually alienated condition. We followed the ways of this world. That is, we lived according to the non-Christian value system. This value system is created and energized by Satan (the ruler of the kingdom of the air). This does not mean that non-Christians realize that their values are created and energized by Satan. In fact, most would probably deny it. Nevertheless, Satan, in his craftiness, places the things in front of us that we, in our sinful condition, find attractive, and, therefore, pursue as though they were our ideas. The spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient is probably not the ruler of the kingdom of the air as the NIV translation suggests but rather an impersonal atmosphere created and energized by the ruler. Satan's kingdom encourages us to have ungodly values, attitudes, and actions, much the same way a spirit of enthusiasm at a ball game might encourage us to embrace the attitudes and actions of a sports fan. We cheer, yell, jump up and down, and otherwise act in ways that we would not if we were not under the influence of the spirit of enthusiasm. Under the spirit of Satan's kingdom we act in disobedient ways we would not normally follow.

2:3. Specifically, our Satanically energized value system motivated us to gratify illicit desires. As a result, we were objects of wrath, meaning God's wrath, just like all other non-Christians.

The wrath of God comes on us in this life in two ways. At times we receive the natural cause-effect consequences of violating God's principles. Galatians 6:7 tells us that we reap what we sow. For example, if we are sexually immoral, we may contract a sexually transmitted disease. If we are violent or angry, we may receive the hatred and resistance of those around us. At other times God may bring his wrath on us specifically, in direct divine judgment. Such instances would be difficult to prove, but examples of such temporal judgment can be found in the Bible (Rom. 1:18-27; Acts 5:5; 1 Cor. 11:30).

In addition to the wrath of God coming on non-Christians in this life, the wrath of God will certainly come on them after death. Hebrews 9:27 says, "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment." For the non-Christian, this is a terrifying thing. Second Peter 3:7 reads, "The present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." Ephesians 2:1-3 presents a hopeless picture for the non-Christian.

2:4. Against this bleak backdrop of the hopelessness of the non-Christian, Paul presents heartening news. God's mercy restrains his wrath. He refrains from punishing us even though we are sinners. Why? This mercy flows out of his great love for us. He desires to do good for those he loves, not evil. As a result he has done three things for us.

2:5. First, he made us alive with Christ. Our sins had made us spiritually dead. They separated us from God. The resurrected Christ overcame death. God lets us share in Christ's life. In so doing he caused us no longer to be spiritually alienated from himself. Why give us life when we deserved death? Because we earned it? Surely not! We deserved the death we got. We are alive because of God's grace, a concept we will explore further in verse 8.

2:6. Second, he raised us up with Christ. Life in Christ came because we experienced Christ's resurrection in the spiritual realm. We were raised up from our sin death and given opportunity for new life. Still facing life on earth where Satan reigns, we live with Christ as part of his kingdom.

Third, he seated us with him in the heavenly realms. That is, he has made possible and certain our resurrection from the dead and has mysteriously positioned us in heaven where Christ dwells (see 1:20). To be seated with Christ in the heavenlies is a figure of speech meaning God considers us worthy and destined to be seated with Christ in heaven when we get there. God has decided to do it, and it is as good as done. We just have to wait for a few years until it happens. The significance of being seated with Christ is much the same as being seated at the head table of a banquet where there are many important people. It is a privilege and honor, and it marks you as one of the important people. We will be important in heaven.

How will we be important? We will share with Christ in his rule as king. We will be seated on thrones (see Rev. 3:21). In fact, we already exercise power with Christ over the powers of this age. We can live lives reflecting Christ's kingdom, not Satan's. We are no longer dead in trespasses and sin. We are alive in Christ, sharing his power and authority, representing him in the battle with Satan where victory is assured through the resurrection.

2:7. God's intention in this, in addition to the natural response of love which he has for us (v. 4), is to show for eternity the magnitude of his grace toward us. The word show actually means "display." In the same sense that an artist might display his canvasses to reveal his skill, so God displays his redeemed children to the universe to demonstrate his grace. The grace shown in his children seated in heavenly realms is the same grace or kindness shown in the death and resurrection of Christ. Once supremely in Christ, God showed his loving attitude to the world. From now on he continues to show that attitude in the lives of his people whom he has delivered from the ways and ruler of this world and given protection and power in the heavenly realms.

2:8. In verse 5, Paul made the parenthetical statement, it is by grace you have been saved. Now, in verse 8, he picks up that idea and elaborates on it. Grace carries with it the idea of benevolence being bestowed on someone without that person having merited it by his actions. God was not required to offer us salvation. He would be justified in condemning all people to eternal separation from himself. In spite of the fact that our actions bring deserved judgment upon ourselves, God offered us an escape. He didn't have to, but because he loved us, he wanted to. That is grace, and that is what saved us, or delivered us, from eternal judgment. God's escape belongs to him and to his initiative alone. No part of it can be credited to you. The whole of salvation, the grace as well as the faith, is a gift of God.

He chose to make salvation possible in this way. He handed salvation to you. You did nothing but stick out a hand and accept the gift. Faith is exactly that. It is trustfully accepting from God what he has provided without totally understanding what you are receiving. Faith is giving up on being able to provide what you need for yourself and letting God give what he alone can provide.

2:9. Paul stressed this point almost redundantly. You have done absolutely nothing to earn salvation by being or doing "good." God's plan of salvation by grace places all humans on the same footing. No one may boast or point with pride to personal accomplishments in the realm of salvation. No person has done anything in this arena. God has done it all.

2:10. As we, his children, stand on display throughout eternity, we will be recognized as God's workmanship. "Workmanship" (*poiema*) is not just a result of effort or labor. It is a result of artistic skill and craftsmanship. If we could earn salvation by our own good works, we would not be a work of God but a work of our own selves. That cannot be and will not be. We were created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God determined before we were ever born. God has prepared a path of good works for Christians which he will bring about in and through them while they walk by faith. This does not mean that we do a good work for God. It means that God does a good work through us as we are faithful and obedient to him. God is at work. In faith we join him in that work to the praise of his glory (see 1:6, 12, 14).

In summary, we were spiritually dead and the object of God's wrath. God, motivated by his love, extended mercy to us and allowed us to be delivered from his wrath by grace, through faith. God has accomplished this without our help; therefore, all the good that is done through us will be recognized as his work and not our own.

Max Anders, Galatians-Colossians, vol. 8, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 110–113.