

THE BELIEVER'S LIFE BEFORE CONVERSION: LIFE WITHOUT CHRIST EPHESIANS 02:01–03

DIVISION OVERVIEW: Life of Believers (Ephesians 02:1–22)

This chapter is one of the most important chapters in the Bible. It focuses upon the life of the Christian believer. It discusses his past, present and future. It shows what life was like before Christ came and what it is like since He has come. It discusses what God has done for man in the *work of His mercy* and the *gift of His grace*. It also paints six pictures of the church. It is a chapter that should be lived in; it should be studied and taught time and again.

- A. The Believer's Life Before Conversion: Life Without Christ (2:1-3).
- B. The Believer's Conversion (Part 1): The Work of God's Mercy (2:4-7).
- C. The Believer's Conversion (Part 2): The Work of God's Grace — Salvation (2:8-10).
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Introduction (Ephesians 02: 01–03)

The believer's life — what was it like before conversion? What was the believer's life like before he came to know Christ? When God looks down upon a man who is unconverted, how does God see him? What is the picture in God's mind of a man who is unsaved? William Barclay descriptively titles this passage, "Life without Christ." Well, what is it like — this life without Christ? What kind of life did the believer live before conversion?

- I. A life of death (v. 1).
- II. A life of transgressions and sins (vv. 1-2).
- III. A life spent with the disobedient of the world (v. 3).
- IV. A life under God's wrath (v. 3).

I. Ephesians 02:01 Death

Before conversion man lives a life of death. Note the words "you were dead." How can a man be living and yet be dead? To answer this question, we must understand what death means. The basic meaning of death (nekros) is *separation*. Death never means extinction, annihilation, non-existence or inactivity. Death simply means that a person is separated, either separated from his body or from God or from both. H.S. Miller says, "Death is the separation of a person from the purpose or use for which he was intended" (quoted by Lehman Strauss, *Devotional Studies in Galatians and Ephesians*, p. 137). Man was created to know, fellowship, worship and serve God; but man does not do it. If he worships at all, he worships his *own ideas and concepts of God*, creating a god to suit his own notions — a god that will allow him to go ahead and live as he wishes.

The point is this: man does not fulfil his purpose on earth, not the purpose for which he was created. He has little if anything to do with God. He is *separated from and dead* to God. The Bible speaks of three deaths.

1. Physical death: the *separation* of a man's spirit from his body. This is what men commonly call death. It is when a person ceases to exist on this earth and is buried.

1 Cor 15:21-22 *For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.*

Heb 9:27 *Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.*

2. Spiritual death: the separation of a man from God while he is still living and walking upon earth. This is the *natural state* of a man on earth without Jesus Christ. Man is seen as still in his sins and dead to God.

=> A person may walk in life *without God and Christ*, rejecting, rebelling and cursing God. The man is spiritually *separated* from God; he is *dead* to God.

=> A person may walk in life as a religious person, worshipping a god of his own thoughts and notions, rejecting the only living and true God who was revealed by Jesus Christ. The religious person is spiritually separated from God; he is dead to God.

Spiritual death speaks of a person who is dead while he still lives (1 Tim. 5:6). He is a natural man living in this present world, but he is said to be dead to the Lord Jesus Christ and to God and to spiritual matters.

- a. A person who wastes his life in wild living is spiritually dead.

Luke 15:32 *“But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”*

- b. A person who has not partaken of Christ is spiritually dead.

John 6:53 *Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.”*

- c. A person who does not have the spirit of Christ is said to be spiritually dead.

Rom 8:9 *You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.*

- d. A person who lives in sin is said to be spiritually dead.

Eph 2:1 *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.*

Col 2:13 *When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.*

- e. A person who is separated from God is said to be spiritually dead.

Eph 4:18-19 *They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.*

- f. A person who sleeps in sin is spiritually dead.

Eph 5:14 *For it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."*

- g. A person who lives in sinful pleasure is dead even while she lives.

1 Tim 5:6 *But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.*

- h. A person who does not have the Son of God is dead.

1 John 5:12 *He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

- i. A person who does great religious deeds but does the wrong deeds is dead.

Rev 3:1 *"To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds: you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead."*

3. Eternal death: the separation of man from God's presence forever. This is the second death, an eternal state of being *dead to God*. It is spiritual death, separation from God that is prolonged beyond the death of the body. It is called the "second death" or eternal death.

Rom 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Rom 8:6 *The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.*

2 Th 1:9 *They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power*

James 5:20 *Remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.*

Rev 2:11 *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.*

Rev 21:8 *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.*

Ezek 18:20 *The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him.*

Thought 1. Everyone who has not trusted Christ is spiritually dead — dead to God, dead even while he lives upon this earth. This was the life of the believer before he was converted.

II. *Ephesians 02:01–02 Transgressions and Sins*

Before conversion, man lives a life of “transgressions” and sins. Note that it is transgressions and sins that separate men from God, that place him in a *state or process of death*. It is while men are living in transgressions and sins that they are dead (separated from God).

The word *transgressions* (paraptoma) means to fall, slip, blunder, deviate, turn aside or wander away. It is a person who...

- falls from the right way
- blunders and fails
- turns aside from what is right
- slips from doing what he should
- deviates off the right road
- wanders away from God and righteousness

Rom 4:25 *[Christ] He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

2 Cor 5:19 *That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.*

Eph 1:7 *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.*

Eph 2:1 *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.*

Col 2:13 *When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.*

The word *sins* (hamartia) means to miss the mark. W.E. Vine points out that sin is the term most often used to describe man's fallen condition. It is what is meant by falling *short of the glory of God*. Man should live in a state of God's glory, but it is evident that he does not. There is no glory — no glow, splendour, brilliance or light shining out from his body. And there is certainly no glory or light emanating from his behaviour. Listening to any newscast on any given day is clear evidence of man's *inglorious behaviour*.

The point is this: God is perfect but man is imperfect. And imperfection is as different from perfection as day is from night. Imperfection is short — totally and absolutely short — of perfection. Man is ever so short of God's perfect glory:

=> man does not measure up to God.

=> man is not on the same level as God.

=> man does not reach up to God.

Man sins; he misses the mark of life. He does not live a perfect life. He may be respectable, but he is imperfect. He is never all he could be.

=> No husband or wife is free from selfishness and disturbance all the time — not perfectly.

=> No father or mother treats his child like they should all the time — not perfectly.

=> No child obeys his or her parent all the time — not perfectly.

=> No workman is diligent in his labour every minute of every day — not perfectly.

=> No neighbour is as good and kind and helpful as he should be all the time — not perfectly.

=> No person disciplines his body in eating, exercising and sleeping all the time — not perfectly.

=> No person controls his mind from impure and selfish thoughts all the time — not perfectly.

=> No person uses his mind fully, to the maximum all the time — not perfectly.

Man is not perfect; he is short of perfection — short of God's glory — short of the purpose for which God created him. This is what is meant by sin. Sin separates man from God. Man is dead (separated) in transgressions and sins. He is dead because he blunders and falls short of God.

Rom 3:23 *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

Rom 5:12 *Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.*

Rom 6:12 *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.*

Now, note a significant fact; the man who sins is said to be following after three things.

1. The sinner follows after the “ways of this world [or age, aion, Greek].” This simply means he follows the world in its...

- opinions
- speculations
- selfishness
- popularity
- purposes
- possessions
- standards
- values
- life
- pleasures
- positions
- honour
- technology
- science
- religion

Mat 16:26 *“What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”*

Luke 21:34 *“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap.”*

James 4:4 *You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.*

1 John 2:15 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

2. The sinner follows under the power of Satan. Note that Satan is called the “ruler of the kingdom of the air.” Man was never created to be evil or to do evil. Evil originated with an alien force, an alien force that exists in another world, the spiritual world or dimension of being. The Bible calls that evil force a person and he is named Satan or the devil. The spiritual world has access to this world and can influence the spirit of man. What has happened is that man, who has free will, has chosen to follow the evil way of Satan. When Satan tries to influence the spirit of man to sin, man often listens and sins. This is exactly what Scripture declares:

John 8:44 *“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”*

John 13:2 *The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus.*

2 Cor 4:3-4 *And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

Eph 6:12 *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

Heb 2:14 *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil.*

1 Pet 5:8 *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*

1 John 3:8 *He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.*

1 John 3:10 *This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God: nor is anyone who does not love his brother.*

3. The sinner follows in disobedience. Very simply, he refuses to obey God, refuses to do what God says. He chooses to do what he wants instead of what he should do. And note: he is classified by God as one of those “who are disobedient.” He is a follower of disobedience; that is, he is in the family of disobedience, not in the family of God.

Mat 7:26-27 “But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

1 Pet 2:25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

2 Pet 2:15 [The disobedient] They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness.

Prov 21:16 A man who strays from the path of understanding comes to rest in the company of the dead.

III. *Ephesians 02:03 Cravings and Lusts*

Before conversion man lives a life with the disobedient of the world. Note the words, “among them.” They refer to those who are disobedient mentioned in the previous verse. Note that the major stress of the disobedient is the desires and thoughts of the sinful nature. When most persons think of desire or craving, they think of the acts of the flesh or of the sinful nature such as:

=> illicit sex => laziness => overeating

=> pornography => intoxication

But note: the mind also desires and craves. Some sinful lusts of the mind would be:

=> immoral thoughts => idolatry => anger

=> envy => unbelief => false beliefs

The point is this: the unconverted man lives to fulfil the desires of his sinful nature, of his flesh and thoughts. In reality, he has nothing else for which to live. He knows nothing but this world and its appeals; therefore, he seeks as much of the world as he can possess and enjoy. His life is self-centred, not God-centred; world-centred, not heaven-centred; selfish, not giving; banking and hoarding, not sacrificial — not meeting the needs of a world reeling in desperate need and death. The unconverted man spends his life with the disobedient of the world living after the desires of the flesh, of the sinful nature and thoughts.

Mat 5:28 “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Mark 4:19 “But the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.”

Rom 1:26-27 Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

Rom 7:5 For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death.

Gal 5:16-17 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

Col 3:5 Put to death, therefore, whatever [fleshly desires] belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

1 Th 4:4-5 That each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honourable, not in passionate lust [immorality] like the heathen, who do not know God.

James 1:15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

James 4:1-4 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

1 Pet 2:11 Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.

1 John 2:16 For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world.

IV. Ephesians 02:03 The Wrath of God

Before conversion, man lives under the wrath of God. Note the wording of this statement: “Were by nature objects of wrath.”

- => The unconverted man acts against God; he does not act for God.
- => The unconverted man rejects God; he does not receive God.
- => The unconverted man ignores God; he does not confess God.
- => The unconverted man denies God; he does not acknowledge God.
- => The unconverted man curses God; he does not praise God.
- => The unconverted man serves religion: he does not serve God.
- => The unconverted man honours a personal idea; he does not honour Christ, the very Son of God.

Man acts in wrath against God: he is an object of wrath, not a child of God. Therefore, he will reap what he has sown. What he has measured to God will be measured to him. The wrath of God will fall upon him.

John 3:36 *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”*

Rom 1:8 *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.*

Eph 5:6 *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient.*

Rom 2:8 *But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.*

2 Th 1:7-8 *And give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*

Heb 2:2-3 *For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. ■*

THE BELIEVER'S CONVERSION (PART I): THE WORK OF GOD'S MERCY EPHESIANS 02:04–07

Introduction

The most astounding interruption in human history is the word “but” in this passage. Man is dead in transgressions and sins, but God is rich in mercy. He has intervened in the destiny of man; He has interrupted the doom of death and judgment. God has had mercy upon us!

- I. God has quickened, made us alive with Christ (vv. 4-5).
- II. God has raised us up with Christ (v. 6).
- III. God has made us sit in heavenly places — in Christ (v. 6).
- IV. God had one great purpose: to show us the riches of His grace in the ages to come (v. 7).

I. *Ephesians 02:04–05 God's Mercy and Love*

The work of God's mercy is to quicken us, make us alive with Christ. We were dead in transgressions and sins, but God has made us alive. Note three significant points.

1. Why has God quickened us, makes us alive? Because of His very nature. God does not have a nature like most men picture: distant, disinterested, unconcerned, vengeful and fearful.
 - a. God is full of mercy (*eleei*): feelings of pity, compassion, affection, kindness. It is a desire to succour, to tenderly draw unto oneself and to care for. Two things are essential in order to have mercy: seeing a need and being able to meet that need. God sees our need and feels for us (Eph. 2:1-3). Therefore, He acts; He has mercy upon us...
 - God withholds His judgment.
 - God provides a way for us to be saved.
 - b. God is love; He is full of love (*agape*): a selfless and sacrificial love; a love of the mind, of the reason, of the will as well as of the heart and affections. It is the love that goes so far...
 - that it loves a person even if he does not deserve to be loved.
 - that it loves the person who is utterly unworthy of being loved.
 - that it is compelled to sacrifice itself for its enemies (Rom. 5:8, 10).

John 3:16 *“For 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.”*

Rom 5:6 *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.*

Rom 5:8 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Rom 5:10 *For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!*

2. When did God quicken and make us alive to Him? When we were dead in sins. This refers back to the former passage (see Eph.2:1-3).
3. How did God quicken and make us alive? By making us alive *together with Christ*. Christ is alive; He is in heaven face to face with God right now. God quickens or regenerates and makes us alive with Christ. How does He do this? This is the discussion of the next two major points. As they are discussed remember that it is by God's grace that we are saved. Salvation is all of Him; none of it is of us. We are saved by the act of God and God alone.

II. Ephesians 02:06 Man Raised Up with Christ

The work of God's mercy is to raise us up with Christ. Note a crucial fact. Scripture plainly declares that God has raised up believers *together with Christ*. How is this possible when Christ was crucified and raised up thousands of years ago? What does Scripture mean? It means this: God raised Jesus Christ for three reasons.

1. Jesus Christ lived a sinless and perfect life. God loved man and wanted to save man but He had a problem. Man had already sinned. Righteousness and perfection had already been lost and only perfection can live in the presence of God. However, there was one hope. If a man could live a perfect and ideal life, that man could secure the perfect, ideal righteousness. And then the ideal man could stand for and cover all men who would trust Him. This is what Jesus Christ did. He came to earth as a Man and lived a perfect and sinless life. He never broke the law nor went against God's will — not even once. He secured perfect righteousness. He was the Ideal and Perfect Man. Therefore, He did not deserve to die; He deserved to live eternally with God.
2. Jesus Christ died for man. God loved man and wanted to save man but He had a problem. Man had *already sinned* and broken the law; he had already committed rebellion against God. Therefore, the penalty of death had *already been enacted and pronounced*. Man had to die. However, there was one way out of the dilemma. If the Perfect and Ideal Man would bear the penalty of sin for man, then His ideal death could stand for and cover any man who really trusted Him. This is exactly what Jesus Christ did. He was the Ideal and Perfect Man who loved God with all His heart. Therefore, when God willed Christ to bear man's penalty and judgment for sin, He surrendered and sacrificed Himself. He died for man; He bore man's penalty and punishment for sin. He was perfectly obedient to God the Father *even in death*. Therefore, He did not deserve to die; He deserved to live forever with God.

3. Jesus Christ was raised up from the dead. He was the Ideal and Perfect Man; therefore, His resurrection can stand for and cover any person who truly trusts Him.

Now, how does God raise up the believer together with Christ? By belief — trust — faith. When a person truly believes in Jesus Christ, God loves His Son so much that He *counts* the person's faith as his identification with Christ. God sees the persons' faith and love for Christ, and He honours his faith and love by doing the very thing the person believes. The person believes and loves Christ for His righteousness, death and resurrection; therefore, God counts the person as *being together* with Christ in His righteousness, death and resurrection. God counts or credits the persons' faith...

- as his having already died and been raised with Christ.
- as his having been placed in the death and resurrection of Christ.
- as his having been identified in the death and resurrection of Christ.
- as his having been made a partaker in the death and resurrection of Christ.
- as his having been in union with the death and resurrection of Christ.
- as his having been bound together with the death and resurrection of Christ.

Gen 15:6 *Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*

Acts 13:39 *Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.*

Rom 3:23-24 *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

Rom 4:3 *What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."*

Rom 4:24-25 *But also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness — for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

Rom 5:1 *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Rom 5:9 *Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!*

Rom 6:7 *Because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.*

Rom 8:11 *And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.*

Rom 8:33 *Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.*

1 Cor 6:11 *And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

Gal 2:16 *Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.*

Gal 3:6 *Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."*

Gal 3:24 *So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.*

Phil 3:9 *And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.*

III. Ephesians 02:06 Heaven, Salvation

The work of God's mercy is to sit us in heavenly places in Christ. Note two facts.

1. "Heavenly realms" should read "in the heavenlies." The believer is said to be *in Christ*. Christ is said to be "in the heavenlies." Therefore, the believer is in the heavenly realm of experience with Christ. True, the believer physically lives on earth, but spiritually he has already been placed "in the heavenlies." The believer is of both realms. He belongs to two worlds. He has two addresses: *in Ephesus* and *in Christ*. He maintains two relationships: one to earth and one to heaven (cp. Heb. 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:11).
2. The believer's salvation, his resurrection and exaltation, is an accomplished fact. In the words "raised us up with Christ" (*synegeiro*) a profound truth is unfolded.
 - a. God's unsurpassing power is said to have raised Christ from the dead and made Him to sit at God's right hand in the heavenly realms (Eph. 1:20).
 - b. Believers are said to have been raised *with Christ* and are urged to "set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God..." (Col. 2:12; 3:1, 3).
 - c. It is said that believers are already raised from the dead *with Christ* and already seated *with Christ* at the right hand of God. The words "made us alive" and "raised" and "seated" are all in the Greek aorist tense. They express what God has already done for His children in Christ. Christ has already died and been raised and exalted to live in heaven with God forever. God sees all things as they really are. Therefore, He sees believers as having already been raised and exalted to live eternally with Him — all because He sees them in Christ Jesus. He sees their faith and counts them — considers them, looks upon them — as being in Christ (cp. Acts 1:10-11; Ph. 2:9; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10).

Rom 8:11 *And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.*

Rom 8:17 *Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

Rom 8:18 *I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*

2 Cor 4:17 *For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.*

Phil 3:21 *Who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

Col 3:4 *When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

Rev 5:10 *“You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”*

2 Tim 2:10 *Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.*

1 Pet 5:1 *To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed:*

Rev 3:21 *To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.*

Rev 22:5 *There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.*

Psa 91:14 *“Because he loves me,” says the Lord, “I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.”*

Dan 12:3 *Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.*

IV. Ephesians 02:07 Salvation, Purpose

The work of God's mercy has one great purpose — to show believers the riches of His grace throughout all the ages to come. Very simply stated, God's one great purpose is...

- to show the riches of grace toward us demonstrated in Christ Jesus.

God has done so much for us through Christ Jesus that it will take an eternity to show it all off. “Ages” (aiosin) literally means in the ages that are coming one upon another; that roll in one upon another. It means an eternity of ages. Grasping the verse is helped by breaking it up like this...

- the incomparable riches
- of His grace expressed in His kindness
- to us
- in Christ Jesus

God is going to be eternally glorified for His grace and kindness toward us. All creatures will live in *stark amazement* at God's wondrous mercy shown to men — all in Christ Jesus (see Eph. 3:10).

Mat 13:43 *“Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.”*

Rom 2:4 *Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?*

Eph 1:7 *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.*

Eph 2:7 *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.*

1 Tim 1:14 *The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ■*

THE BELIEVER'S CONVERSION (PART II): THE WORK OF GOD'S GRACE – SALVATION EPHESIANS 02:08–10

Introduction

This passage is one of the great evangelistic summaries of the Bible. As F.F. Bruce points out, this passage is the watchword for reformation theology: “By grace alone, through faith alone, to God alone be the glory” (*sola gratia, sola fida, soli deo gloria*) (F.F. Bruce. *The Epistle to the Ephesians*. Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1961, p. 51.) If a man wants to be saved, these verses tell him how to be saved. Salvation is the work of God, of God's grace and of God's grace alone. It is not of man, not to any degree whatsoever.

=> Salvation is a free gift of God. It is by grace alone that man is saved. Man can do nothing whatsoever to save himself. He cannot earn, win or merit salvation. All man can do is accept the fact that God says He will save him, accept as true the free offer of salvation (Rom. 11:6).

=> Salvation is received by faith (Rom. 3:27; 4:2, 5; 1 Cor. 1:31). Man must believe just what God says and accept His Word, accept His free offer of salvation. And when he accepts the fact that God says He will save him, God takes him and creates him into a “new person”, “a new self”, “the new man”, or “a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:24; 1 Pet. 1:23; 2 Pet. 1:4).

I. You are saved (vv. 8-9).

II. You are God's workmanship (v. 10).

I. *Ephesians 02:08–09 Salvation is God's Grace*

You are saved by God and by God alone. This is the major stress of this passage.

1. You are saved by God's grace. Grace means the favour and kindness of God, but there is a uniqueness about God's favour and kindness. His favour and kindness are given *despite the fact that it is undeserved and unmerited*. God has done a thing unheard of among men: God has given His grace to men...

- despite their cursing Him
 - despite their rebelling against Him
 - despite their denial of Him
 - despite their half-hearted commitment to Him
 - despite their worship of religion instead of Him
 - despite their false worship
 - despite their transgressions
 - despite their rejecting Him
 - despite their hostility toward Him
 - despite their neglect of Him
 - despite their idolatrous worship
 - despite their sins
-

Grace is giving, but it is giving to people who do not deserve the gift. What is the gift that God has given? Jesus Christ. God has given His Son, Jesus Christ, to save men. He did not have to give His Son. God could have wiped man from the face of the earth. Man deserved it, but this is God's grace. God is full of mercy and love and kindness — by His very nature He is full of these glorious qualities. Therefore, God was *bound* to shower His grace upon man. God was bound to send His Son to save man.

God is not off someplace in the distance, far removed from man, disinterested and unconcerned with man's sufferings and death. God is gracious, full of mercy, love and kindness for man; therefore, He has reached out through His Son Jesus Christ to help man. How?

=> By giving His Son to die *for man*. When Jesus Christ hung upon the cross, He was *taking our sins* upon Himself and bearing the punishment for our sins. We had committed high treason against God: rejected and rebelled against Him. The penalty for high treason is death; we are condemned to die. But Christ took our penalty and condemnation upon Himself. He died for us — in our place, in our stead, as our substitute. This is what Scripture means when it says that Christ died *for us*.

Rom 5:6 *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.*

Rom 5:8 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Rom 5:10 *For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!*

Note that the people for whom Christ died did not deserve His sacrificial love. They were men who were...

- “powerless” (Rom. 5:6)
- “ungodly” (Rom. 5:6)
- “sinners” (Rom. 5:8)
- “enemies” (Rom. 5:10)

This is the grace of God — God's grace that showered itself upon sinful men who were lost and condemned — God's grace that gave the greatest gift possible to men — the gift of His Son to save the world. (See *Salvation*, Eph. 2:6; *Justification*, Gal. 2:15-16; *Faith vs. Works*, Gal. 2:16; Gal. 2:19-21.)

Rom 3:24 *And are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

2 Cor 8:9 *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*

Eph 1:7 *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.*

Eph 2:4-5 *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved.*

2. You are saved through faith. What does it mean to be saved through faith? Simply this: Jesus Christ died *for us*. He bore our sin and punishment upon the cross. When we believe, really believe, that Jesus Christ died for us, God does a wonderful thing. God takes our faith and counts it as the death of Jesus Christ *for us*. That is, when we honour God's dear Son by believing in Him so much that we give all we are and have to Him. God takes the death of Jesus Christ and applies it to us.

The point is this: it is our faith that causes God to look upon us as having been in Christ when He died. It is our faith that causes God to credit us with salvation. (See *Salvation*, Eph. 2:6; *Justification*, Gal. 2:15-16; *Faith vs. Works*, Gal. 2:16; Gal. 2:19-21.)

Jesus Christ is God's gift to us. Salvation through Christ has been wrapped up as a gift and God hands it over to us. But note: a gift is not ours until we believe it is ours and we take and receive it. Suppose I hand you my Bible and say, "Here, this is yours. I give it to you as a gift. It is yours; take it." What is necessary for the Bible (the gift) to become yours? You have to believe it is yours and reach out and receive it. You could say, "No thank you..."

- I do not believe you.
- I deny its existence.
- I don't want it.
- I don't have the time to use it."

If this is your attitude, what happens to the gift? It never becomes yours. In my mind I gave it to you, but you never received it. You either did not believe it or did not want it.

This is what is meant by faith. If you believe, really believe that Jesus Christ died *for you*, you will reach out and receive the gift of God's grace.

John 3:16 *"For 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."*

John 5:24 *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."*

John 20:31 *But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

Rom 10:9-10 *That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

3. You are not saved in and of yourselves. God is perfect, and to live in His presence, a person must be perfect. This is the great problem of man. Man is not perfect; therefore, he can never live in God's presence — not in and of himself. Even if man could be good enough and do enough good to become perfect (he cannot, but even if he could) he would not be acceptable to God. Why? Because he has already transgressed and become imperfect. He already stands imperfect, corruptible, aging, dying and decaying. If man is ever to be acceptable to God — if he is ever to be perfected and have his past wiped clean — it will not be by his own hands. He cannot save himself. Salvation is not of man.

2 Cor 10:12 We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.

Gal 6:3 If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

Prov 20:6 Many a man claims to have unfailing love, but a faithful man who can find?

Prov 28:26 He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe.

Prov 30:12 Those who are pure in their own eyes and yet are not cleansed of their filth.

Oba 1:3-4 "The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rocks and make your home on the heights, you who say to yourself, 'Who can bring me down to the ground?' Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down," declares the LORD.

4. You are saved as a gift of God, not of works. There are at least seven reasons why salvation must be a free gift. (Note: some of these were stirred by thoughts from William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, P. 121f.)
- a. Man cannot make God owe him. Man cannot put God in debt for work performed. A man who works puts his employer in debt for his services (Rom. 4:4). God is completely independent. He cannot be put in debt to any man. God cannot be made to owe anything or to be obligated for anything. God does not save man because He is obligated to man or owes man, but because He loves and wills to save man.
 - b. Man cannot bring perfection to God. God is perfect, incorruptible and permanent. Man and everything about man is imperfect, corruptible, and decaying (see *Forgiveness*, Eph. 1:7). Man cannot offer and cannot give anything to God that will satisfy His perfection. Any offer or gift from an imperfect man to a perfect God is ever so short and inadequate. God accepts man's offer of himself not because man merits acceptance, but simply because God loves and wills to accept man.

- c. Man cannot make God forgive him. Man is the one who has done wrong, offended and hurt God. It is man who has broken off the friendship and relationship with God (Rom. 3:23; 8:6-8). Therefore, man is the one who is to apologize and ask forgiveness, and God is the One who is to have mercy and do the forgiving. If God chooses to have mercy, it comes from a heart of grace, not because man deserves it.
- d. Man cannot heal God's heart. Man's sin breaks the heart of God (Rom. 5:6, 8, 10). Therefore, man's offense is primarily against love; it is primarily against God's very nature of love, mercy and peace. Since man's main offense is breaking the heart of God, he can only cast himself upon the love of God, apologize and ask forgiveness, trust God to forgive. This is the glorious message of salvation. If man turns to God and asks forgiveness, God forgives and accepts man back into His glorious grace.
- e. Man cannot save himself (Eph. 2:8-9). No matter what law or work was chosen to be the channel for salvation, there would be some men who could never keep that particular law or perform that particular work. If salvation were by law and works, man could never be saved. There are always many who are totally unable to work and earn their way: the deformed, the poor, the sick, the weary, the underprivileged, the disadvantaged, the oppressed, and many, many others. However, the needy are always before God's keen eyes, and He counts them precious. Therefore, He has made provision for salvation by grace and by grace alone.
- f. Man cannot make God love him (Tit. 3:4-7). If salvation were by law and works, the love of God could never be known. God would be forced to save and bless us because He owes us, not because He loves us. Our works would forever require Him to pay our wages. He would not be free to do something for us freely simply because He loved us. We would never know what it is to be loved by God. We would know only what it is to be paid by God for work done.
- g. Man cannot set himself free and bring about liberty of conscience (see *Forgiveness*, Mt. 26:28). If we are saved by law and works, liberty and freedom of spirit and conscience would never be experienced. We constantly fail and come short. This eats and gnaws away at us. If God does not forgive us simply because He loves us, then what can remove the guilt and aggravation of failure from our hearts? The law? No, for the law only points out our failure, and once we have failed we have failed, and the gnawing away of conscience begins (see Rom. 3:21-22). The only way for the gnawing and guilt of conscience to be removed is for God to forgive us for failing and to convince us of His forgiveness. This He has done by grace — His grace.

Mat 7:22-23 *“Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”*

Rom 3:20 *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.*

Gal 2:16 *Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.*

Eph 2:8-9 *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.*

Titus 3:4-5 *But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.*

5. The reason salvation is by grace and not by works is to prevent men from ever boasting. God is the Supreme and Majestic Being of the universe. He is the Creator of all that is in heaven and earth. God is the One who dwells in the ultimate of light and holiness and who deserves all the worship and glory of eternity. The honour and glory due His name are not to be shared with anyone. If man was saved by some effort of his own, he would be due some credit, some boast, some honour. This God cannot allow. His very nature forbids it. As God, He is the Supreme glory of the universe, and as the Supreme Being, He is to receive the supreme glory – that is, all glory and praise. His Supremacy – His being God – demands it.

Thought 1. How small we are and how glorious God is!

Rom 3:19 *Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced [from boasting] and the whole world held accountable to God.*

Rom 3:27 *Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith.*

II. ***Ephesians 02:10 Salvation: Man Created Anew in Christ Jesus***

You are God's *workmanship* (poiema). Note two points.

1. We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. The believer experiences two creations, both a natural birth and a spiritual birth. The spiritual birth is the point of this verse. When a man believes in Jesus Christ, God *creates him in Christ*. What does this mean?
- ⇒ It means that God *quickens the spirit* of the believer and makes his spirit alive. Whereas the believer's spirit was dead to God, God creates it anew and makes it alive to God.

Eph 2:1 *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.*

Eph 2:5 *Made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved.*

=> It means that God causes the believer to be *born again spiritually*.

John 3:3, 5, 6 *In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."*

1 Pet 1:23 *For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.*

1 John 5:1 *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.*

=> It means that God actually places His *divine nature* into the heart of the believer.

2 Pet 1:4 *Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

=> It means that God actually makes a *new creation* of the believer.

2 Cor 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

Gal 6:15 *Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.*

=> It means that God actually creates a *new person* out of the believer.

Eph 4:24 *And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Col 3:10 *And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

=> It means that God *renews the believer* by the Holy Spirit.

Titus 3:5 *He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.*

2. We are created to do good works. God saves man *for good works* not by good works. F.F. Bruce points out that the believer is God's *workmanship* (*poiema*), God's work of art, God's masterpiece (*The Epistle to the Ephesians*, p. 52). God fashions man and creates a masterpiece. God's workmanship is always a work of art. The believer does not create the beauty, the art that shows in the canvas of his life. The believer just shows that he is God's workmanship by the life he lives and displays. Works are an evidence of salvation. Those who walk in transgressions and sins (Eph. 2:1-2) show that they are not God's workmanship no matter what profession they make. God's people give ample evidence of the *power of a new life* which operates in them.

Note that God has *prepared in advance* for us to walk in good works. Doing good works is not an option for the believer; it is the very nature of the believer. If a man has been created in Christ — if God has truly worked in him — the man does good works. His very nature dictates it. He cannot do otherwise. He is not perfect, and he fails; but he keeps coming back to God and falling upon his knees, believing, asking forgiveness, and getting back up to go forth once again to do all the good he can. As stated, it is his nature. He is a new creation created to do good works. Therefore, he does them. Just like a tree, he bears the fruit of his nature.

Mat 5:16 *“In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”*

Col 1:10 *And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.*

1 Tim 6:18 *Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.*

Titus 2:7 *In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness.*

Titus 3:8 *This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.*

Heb 10:24 *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.*

James 2:17-18 *In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.*

1 Pet 2:12 *Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*

1 John 1:7 *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. ■*