

Weekly Scripture and Sermon Study: History & Context Guide  
Ephesians 2:1-10

History, Culture, & Context

In this section of Ephesians, Paul discusses how we become separated from God because of our sin but are united with Him through His grace. Note the style in which this section is written, through the use of contrasting what is before and what is to come. For example, vv. 1-3 discuss “You were dead through the trespasses and sins...”, and then vv. 4-10 discuss “...even when we were dead through our trespasses (God) made us alive together with Christ...”



In verses 1-3, Paul depicts the nature of unbelievers before God’s transforming grace takes hold of them. “You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world...” These verses highlight spiritual death as being separated from God due to our sins. The “ruler of the air” and “the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient” refers to Satan. The phrase “sons of disobedience” is a phrase for disobedient people.

In verses 4-7, we see that God wants to save us and demonstrate His love and grace to us. We have been “made alive” with Christ in a spiritual sense and become saved.

In verses 8-9, we read that “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is a gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast.” The NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible explains, “Already in the OT, God did not choose his people because they were righteous (Deut. 9:5-6). He redeemed them before instructing them how to live (Exodus 20:2); sincere righteousness flows from a transformed heart (Deut. 5:29; 30:6, 14). Although God’s salvation in Christ is greater than this, it clearly reflects the heart of the same God who lavished love on his people from the beginning.”

Verse 10 concludes this section with “For we are what he made us, created in Christ for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.” In other words, salvation does not come from the doing of humans or our works, but from God and God alone!

Questions to Consider

1. What is “grace”? How would you describe grace to someone unfamiliar with the term?
2. Read James 2:14-17. How does this reconcile with Ephesians 2:1-10? Does it?
3. What does verse 10 tell us about our purpose and the source of our salvation?