

Welcome to Promise Land Bible Church
We're glad you're here!



An open Bible is shown from a low angle, looking up at the pages. The pages are filled with text, and the background is a bright blue sky with some clouds. The text is overlaid in a large, bold, black font.

Get out of the Graveyard

Scripture text: Ephesians 2

Ephesians 2:1–10

Having described our spiritual possessions in Christ, Paul turns to a complementary truth: **our spiritual position in Christ.**

First he explains what God has done for all sinners in general; then he explains what God did for the Gentiles in particular.

The sinner who trusts Christ has been raised and seated on the throne (Eph. 2:1–10), and believing Jews and Gentiles have been reconciled and set into the temple (Eph. 2:11–22).

What a miracle of God's grace! We are taken out of the great graveyard of sin and placed into the throne room of glory.

Perhaps the easiest way for us to approach this long paragraph is to see in it four specific works.

- 1. Sin's Work against Us**
- 2. God's Work for Us**
- 3. God's Work in Us**
- 4. God's Work through Us**

Sin's Work against Us (Eph. 2:1–3)

Could you imagine if you had to take a full-length photo of yourself to promote a product, book, etc.

What would the photo look like ... would you want to have retakes?

Would you want to photo shop any portion of it?

In these three verses, Paul gives us a full-length picture of the terrible spiritual condition of the unsaved person.

Note his characteristics:

A. He is dead (v. 1).

Of course, **this means spiritually dead**; that is, he is unable to **understand and appreciate spiritual things**. **He possesses no spiritual life**, and he can do nothing of himself **to please God**. Just as a person physically dead does not respond to physical stimuli, so a person spiritually dead is unable to respond to spiritual things.

A corpse does not hear the conversation going on in the funeral parlor. He has no appetite for food or drink; he feels no pain; he is dead.

Just so with the inner man of the unsaved person.

His spiritual faculties are not functioning, and they cannot function **until God gives him life**. The cause of this spiritual death is “**trespasses and sins**” (Eph. 2:1). “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). In the Bible, death basically means “separation,” not only physically, as the spirit separated from the body (James 2:26), but also spiritually, as the spirit separated from God.

Isaiah 59:1 -2 Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but **your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God**, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

The unbeliever is not sick; he is dead! He does not need resuscitation; **he needs resurrection.**

All lost sinners are dead, and the only difference between one sinner and another is the state of decay. The lost derelict on skid row may be more decayed outwardly than the unsaved society leader, but both are **dead in sin**—and one corpse cannot be more dead than another!

This means that our world is one vast graveyard, filled with people who are dead while they live (1 Tim. 5:6).

1 Timothy 5:1-6 Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity. Honor widows who are truly widows. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, but **she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives.**

B. He is disobedient (vv. 2–3a).

This was the beginning of man’s spiritual death—his disobedience to the will of God. God said, *“for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die”* (Gen. 2:17). Satan said, *“You will not surely die”* (Gen. 3:4), and because they believed this lie, the first man and woman sinned and **experienced immediate spiritual death and ultimate physical death.**

Since that time, mankind has lived in disobedience to God. There are three forces that encourage man in his disobedience—**the world, the devil, and the flesh.**

The world, or world-system, puts pressure on each person **to try to get him to conform** (Rom. 12:2). Jesus Christ was not “of this world” and neither are His people (John 8:23; 17:14).

But the unsaved person, either consciously or unconsciously, **is controlled by the values and attitudes of this world.**

The devil is “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” This does not mean that **Satan** is personally at work in the life of each unbeliever, since Satan as a created being **is limited in space.**

Unlike God, who is omnipresent, Satan cannot be in all places at one time. But because of his demonic associates (Eph. 6:11–12), and his power over the world system (John 12:31), **Satan influences the lives of all unbelievers**, and also seeks to influence believers. **He wants to make people “children of disobedience”** (Eph. 2:2; 5:6). He himself was disobedient to God, **so he wants others to disobey Him too.**

One of Satan’s chief tools for getting people to disobey God is lies. **He is a liar** (John 8:44), and it was his lie at the beginning of human history, “Ye shall not surely die,” **that plunged the human race into sin.**

The unsaved multitudes in today's world system **disobey God because they believe the lies of Satan.** When a person believes and practices a lie, **he becomes a child of disobedience.**

The flesh is the third force that encourages the unbeliever to disobey God. By the flesh Paul does not mean the body, because of itself, the body is not sinful. The flesh refers to **that fallen nature that we were born with, that wants to control the body and the mind and make us disobey God.** An evangelist friend of mine once announced as his topic, "Why Your Dog Does What It Does," and, of course, many dog lovers came out to hear him.

What he had to say was obvious, but too often overlooked: **“A dog behaves like a dog because he has a dog’s nature.”** If somehow you could transplant into the dog the nature of the cat, his behavior would change radically. Why does a sinner behave like a sinner? **Because he has the nature of a sinner.**

Psalm 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Psalm 58:3 The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray from birth, speaking lies.

This sinful nature the Bible calls “**the flesh.**”

Is it any wonder that the unsaved person is disobedient to God? He is controlled by the world, the flesh, and the devil, the three great enemies of God! And he cannot change his own nature or, of himself, overcome the world and the devil.

He needs outside help, and that help can come only from God.

C. He is depraved (v. 3b).

The lost sinner **lives to please the “desires of the flesh and the wishes of the mind”** (literal translation).

His actions are sinful because his appetites are sinful. When you apply the word depraved to the unsaved person, you are not saying that he only does evil, or that **he is incapable of doing good. You are simply saying that he is incapable of doing anything to merit salvation or meet the high standards of God’s holiness.**

Jesus said that lost sinners do good to each other (Luke 6:33), and to their children (Luke 11:13), but **they cannot do anything spiritually good to please God.** The natives on Malta who kindly assisted Paul and his friends after the shipwreck certainly did good works, **but they still needed to be saved.**

Act 28:1-2 After we were brought safely through, we then learned that the island was called Malta. The **native people showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all,** because it had begun to rain and was cold.

He is doomed (v. 3c).

By nature, children of wrath! By deed, children of disobedience! **The unsaved person is condemned already** (John 3:18). The sentence has been passed, but God in His mercy is staying the execution of the sentence (2 Peter 3:8–10).

Man cannot save himself, but God in His grace steps in to make salvation possible. “But God!”—what a difference those two words make! This leads to the second work.

John 3:17-21 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world **might be** saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but **whoever does not believe is condemned already**, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And **this is the judgment**: the light has come into the world, and **people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil**. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

2 Peter 3:8-10 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but **is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.** But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

2. God's Work for Us (Eph. 2:4–9)

The focus of attention now is on God, not on sinful man. “Salvation is of the Lord” (Jonah 2:9).

We are reminded of four activities that God performed on behalf of sinners to save them from the consequences of their sins.

A. He loved us

B. He quickened us

C. He exalted us

D. He keeps us

A. He loved us (v. 4).

By nature, “God is love” (1 John 4:8). But God would love even if there were no sinners, because **love is a part of His very being**. Theologians call love one of God’s attributes. But God has two kinds of attributes: those that He possesses of Himself (intrinsic attributes, such as life, love, holiness), and those by which He relates to His creation, especially to man (relative attributes). For example, by nature **God is truth; but when He relates to man, God’s truth becomes faithfulness**. God is by nature holy; and when He relates that holiness to man, it becomes justice.

Love is one of God's intrinsic attributes, but when this love is related to sinners, it **becomes grace and mercy**. God is "rich in mercy" (Eph. 2:4) and in "grace" (Eph. 2:7), and these riches make it possible for sinners to be saved. It comes as a shock to some people when they discover that we are not saved "by God's love," but by God's mercy and grace. In His mercy, **He does not give us what we do deserve**; and in His grace He gives us what we do not deserve. And **all of this is made possible because of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross**. It was at Calvary that God displayed His hatred for sin and His love for sinners (Rom. 5:8; John 3:16).

Romans 5:6-10 For while we were still weak, **at the right time Christ died for the ungodly**. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die--but **God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us**. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For **if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life**.

B. He quickened us (v. 5).

This means He made us alive, even when we were dead in sins. He accomplished this spiritual resurrection by the power of the Spirit, using the Word. In the four Gospels, it is recorded that Jesus raised three people from the dead: the widow's son (Luke 7:11–17), Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:49–56), and Lazarus (John 11:41–46). In each case, **He spoke the Word and this gave life.** “The Word of God is quick [living] and powerful” (Heb. 4:12). These three physical resurrections are pictures of the spiritual resurrection that comes to the sinner when he hears the Word and believes (John 5:24).

John 5:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

But our spiritual resurrection is much greater because it puts us in union with Christ: **God “made us alive together with Christ.”**

As members of His body we are united to Him (Eph. 1:22–23), **so that we share His resurrection life and power** (Eph. 1:19–20).

C. He exalted us (v. 6).

We are not raised from the dead and left in the graveyard. Because we are united to Christ, **we have been exalted with Him and we are sharing His throne in the heavenlies.**

Our physical position may be on earth, but our spiritual position is “in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” **Like Lazarus, we have been called from the grave to sit with Christ and enjoy His fellowship (John 12:1–2).**

John 12:1-5 Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, **where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.** So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and **Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table.** Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, "**Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?**"

Discipline

Duty

Desire

Devotion

D. He keeps us (vv. 7–9).

God's purpose in our redemption is not simply to rescue us from hell, as great a work as that is. **His ultimate purpose in our salvation is that for all eternity the church might glorify God's grace** (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14).

So, if God has an eternal purpose for us to fulfill, He will keep us for all eternity. Since we have not been saved by our good works, **we cannot be lost by our bad works.** Grace means salvation completely apart from any merit or works on our part.

Grace means that God does it all for Jesus' sake! **Our salvation is the gift of God.** (The word that in Eph. 2:8, in the Greek, is neuter; while faith is feminine. Therefore that cannot refer to faith. **It refers to the whole experience of salvation, including faith.**) **Salvation is a gift, not a reward.**

Salvation cannot be “of works” **because the work of salvation has already been completed on the cross.** This is the work that God does for us, **and it is a finished work** (John 17:1–4; 19:30). **We can add nothing to it** (Heb. 10:1–14); we dare take nothing from it.

When Jesus died, the veil of the temple was torn in two, from the top to the bottom, **signifying that the way to God was now open.** There is no more need for earthly sacrifices.

One sacrifice—the Lamb of God—**has finished the great work of salvation.** God did it all, and He did it by His grace.

Sin worked against us and **God worked for us, but the great work of conversion is but the beginning.**

3. God's Work in Us (Eph. 2:10a)

“For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus.” The Greek word translated “workmanship” is *poiema*, from which we derive our English word “poem.”

It means **“that which is made, a manufactured product.”** In other words, our conversion is not the end; **it is the beginning.** We are a part of God’s “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17), and God continues to work in us to make us what He wants us to be. **His purpose is to make us more like Christ** (Rom. 8:29).

But how does God work in us? Through His Holy Spirit, “both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). Christ finished His work of redemption on the cross, but He arose from the dead and returned to heaven. **There He carries on His unfinished work of perfecting His church (Eph. 4:7–16; Heb. 13:20–21).**

Christ is equipping us for our walk and our work here on earth. To do this, He uses three special tools: the Word of God (1 Thes. 2:13), prayer (Eph. 3:20–21), and suffering (1 Peter 4:11–14).