

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. **ESV**

Surely there are saved people who have been misled about how salvation comes to them. They are still babies in their understanding. They made a "decision" for Christ, but was that decision the cause or the effect of their salvation? If God saves a person because that person makes a "decision," then the grace of God must wait on that person to decide to accept Christ. In that system, faith becomes a work and God is reduced to a helpless bystander. The Bible teaches us that a person has absolutely no ability to make any move towards God until and unless God first makes them alive spiritually. {Cf. John 6:44-45; 65-66.}

That said, a person must put their faith in and hope of eternal life in the person and work of Jesus Christ. That is an objective faith, nothing subjective, only Christ.

This passage before us, {2:1-10} could not be any clearer on the cause of salvation and also on the effect of salvation. A person is not saved by works, but neither are they saved unless good works accompany their salvation. Good works are the evidence of being justified by grace through faith alone.

1. OUR LIFE in the PAST:

We Were the Objects of God's Wrath 2:1-3

The Holy Spirit did not inspire Paul to use the metaphor of being **dead** if He intended to teach that unregenerate people were only ill. Most of today's so-called evangelism would have you sick, but able to take the medicine offered if you would only exercise your free will. How many dead people do you know who have the ability to do anything?

The unregenerate person "walked." The term "walked" means a manner of life. They were not dead physically, in fact, they enjoyed being part of the world order being ruled by Satan or his demons.

A spiritually dead person is not necessarily immoral or outwardly wicked. A "nice" person who behaves but simply eats a meal without thanking God is dead!

The Ephesian saints and the Vineland Park saints were all dead and walked (lived) according to their sinful nature. They were all headed for hell. Where else do you think the "objects (children) of wrath" are going to end up?

2. OUR LIFE in the FUTURE:

We Will Be Exhibits of God's Grace 2:4-7

Who are the objects of God's "great love?" They were those He made alive in Christ. The dead are made alive! And that spiritual resurrection was by grace. The purpose for this grace is that in the coming ages those so saved will be exhibits of the kindness of God.

John Newton got it right when he wrote,

"When we've been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun;
We've no less days to sing God's praise, Than when we first begun."

3. OUR LIFE in the PRESENT:

We Have Been Created to do Good Works 2:8-10

The Roman Catholics and the Arminians both talk about grace. The Romanists redefine grace to mean something dispensed by the church as a result of a person being baptized into the church and keeping the sacraments of the church. "Grace," according to the Romanists, is not the unmerited favor of a sovereign God. But then if the Scripture is not the only source of your authority, you can make words mean anything you choose.

The Arminian argues for free will as the first cause of salvation. To be consistent, they have to make the "great love" of verse 4 mean the entire human race and faith becomes a work that causes God to give grace.

A lot of words have been used to argue about whether the "this" in verse 8 refers to "faith" or "grace." There are some technical arguments from the Greek to say that "this" is neuter and therefore cannot refer to the nearest preceding noun "faith," because "faith" is feminine. According to my Greek references, even in classical Greek, neuter demonstrative pronouns often refer to feminine nouns.

Besides verse 9 makes the entire argument moot.

It is not enough to be orthodox regarding the cause of salvation and then ignore, or worse, deny the necessity of good works. A person, no matter how correct they may be about the sovereignty of God, has no Scriptural basis for assurance of salvation if good works are not consistently part of their daily life.

{Cf. James 2:17, 20}

Faith and works are like a candle flame. You can intellectually separate light and heat, but remove either and you have no flame.

UNITED IN CHRIST

Ephesians 2:11-22

11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— **12** remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. **13** But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. **14** For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility **15** by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, **16** and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. **17** And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. **18** For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. **19** So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, **20** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, **21** in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. **22** In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

ESV

PREJUDICE IS SIN. The idea of one man created by God assuming some innate superiority over another man is wicked. Especially when a person claims to belong to Jesus Christ and there is still prejudice, the salvation of that person harboring racial pride should be doubted. How can any person who has taken their place as a beggar for mercy before a holy God think that they are somehow better than someone else? "Well, that's just the way I was raised."

Well, Christ doesn't raise bigots!

For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you glory as if you had not received it? 1 Corinthians 4:7

The Jews were especially prejudiced against the Gentiles [non-Jews]. The Gentiles felt the same hatred for the Jews. This passage lays aside any excuse for racial prejudice. Anyone who is reconciled to God in Christ must be reconciled to anyone else who belongs to Christ.

1. JEWS and GENTILES:

United Through the Blood of Christ 2:11-13

God had indeed blessed the Jews by choosing them from among the nations of the earth to reveal Himself. God also revealed why He chose them, Deut 7:7. Yet, the Jews came to despise other people as though they were racially superior.

They took the sign of God's covenant, viz. circumcision, and used it to flaunt their pride. They called the Gentiles "the uncircumcised."

What was true of the aliens to God's promises when Paul wrote this letter is just as true today. This truth applies to all those without Christ.

In its context, this applies to the Jew/Gentile prejudice at Ephesus. The first believers in Jesus were Jews but the church was growing and Gentiles were being saved. The blood of Christ is powerful enough to save Jews and Gentiles and to make them all members of the same family.

2. JEWS and GENTILES: United in Access to the Father 2:14-18

What had once been a "wall" between Jews and Gentiles was destroyed on the cross. The rules and regulations that had become a source of pride were all abolished in the death of Jesus the Christ. {Cf. Colossians 2:11-17}

What had once been a distinction between Jews and other people are done away with in Christ. In Romans 2:28-29, Paul tells us who the true Jews are.

Verse 18 tells us how the Trinity causes salvation.
"Him," Christ; the Father, and the Holy Spirit.

3. JEWS and GENTILES:

United as a Dwelling for the Holy Spirit 2:19-22

There were, of course, Gentiles who believed in the True God. The Scripture tells us of a few of them. But even though they worshipped God the Jews for the most part never accepted them as having an equal status with them.

Ah but, if they are of the same building, how can there be hatred among them?

God's building is described. Jesus Christ is the Chief Cornerstone. The apostles and prophets are the foundation as they build on what Christ taught them. The building grows as believers are added by the Holy Spirit's indwelling.

"Since the building is not merely its foundation, but has walls, rooms, and a roof, and since the apostles are the foundation and not the roof, the implication is that there are no apostles today. The offices of prophet and apostle are things of the past. No Christian since A.D. 100 has inherited any such office. No one today receives any new revelations from God. The canon is closed. Hence the claims of the Pope and the Pentecostals are false."