



Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Ephesians 2.1-10

Prepared by Rev. Curtis A. Bronzan, ThM  
curtis@gspc.org | 562/493.2553 x115

I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue our fall series Welcome Home, engaging the Apostle Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus, seeing that God has brought us from death to life in order that we might experience his grace and live a transformed life of good works.

II. Connecting With One Another

When have you experienced someone doing something for you that you could not do for yourself? How did that make you feel? What was your response?

III. Study the Text

a. Read Ephesians 2.1-2.

Paul uses strong language to describe our spiritual state prior to being welcomed home. While it's often helpful to engage numerous English translations to understand a word's full range of meaning, here there is little variation. In verse 1, the translations agree: Before being welcomed home, we were dead. *Dead!*

Jesus uses similar language in John 5.24-30, Paul explores this further in Romans 6.1-14. Why do you think they used such strong language to describe our previous spiritual state? Can you look back upon times in your own spiritual journey where you were *dead!*?

b. While Paul has previously written about "us" and "you" (in all probability, referring to the Jews and Gentiles), the beginning of this chapter is emphatic: "As for *you, you* were dead in *your* transgressions and sins, in which *you* used to live when *you* followed the ways of this world..."

Read that sentence aloud, emphasizing the "you's" and "your's." Why do you think he does this? What purpose does it serve?

One author writes that "in order for the recipients, especially those who were Gentiles (*you*), to understand the meaning and significance of their new spiritual life, he must speak bluntly about their previous state of spiritual death."

Paul is writing to a community of Christians. Is this how we should communicate with non-believers, too? Why or why not?

c. Verse two is literally translated, "walked according to the age of this world," engaging both temporal and spatial dimensions. Taken together, they describe a godless culture and society. Though he is writing nearly 2,000 years ago, his phrase

fits 21st century America perfectly. How do people "walk according to the age of this world" today?

- d. Reread Ephesians 2.1-2, then continue on to verse 3.

Notice that Paul now shifts from "you/your" to "us/our." Why do you think he does so, now including both Jews and Gentiles?

Let's get real: How did *you* "live among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of your flesh and following its desires and thoughts"?

- e. The New Testament commonly uses the term flesh to describe negative ethical content (for instance, see Romans 7-8 and Galatians 5-6).

While through the ages some Christians have thought of the body itself as sinful, Paul sees our bodies as instruments which can be used either sinfully or righteously (see Romans 6.13). Why is this an important distinction to remember?

- f. What's more, Paul states that "we were by nature deserving of wrath" (see also Romans 3.5). Do you agree? Why or why not?

The phrase "objects of wrath" points to a common Semitic idiom, "children of wrath," indicating that wrath was someone's destiny. How does previously being a "child of wrath" prepare us for the good news of our adoption into the family of God?

- g. Read Ephesians 2.4-5.

The conjunction "But" is used in an antithetically - that is, it introduces a contrast. If you've been around church for a while, you might think that the "But" is followed by "you realized you were sinning so you stopped and now everything is okay!"

Why is that *not* what Paul writes? Why do you think that idea (that we just need to clean up our act) has become so prevalent?

- h. The "But" in verse 4 recalls Habakkuk 3.2: "in wrath remember mercy." In so doing, Paul again returns to the metaphor of wealth: God is *rich* in mercy!

He continues with an awkward-sounding Greek idiom, literally translated, "his love which he loved us." This is in an effort to show that "God's love is active, not merely abstract. It is also undeserved." Have you ever experienced love like that? An active, undeserved love? How would you describe it?

Read Deuteronomy 7.7-9 for another example of God's "love which he loved us."

- i. In the first century, the word *grace* had a wide range of meanings, each of which expressed "the idea of a capable person voluntarily doing something for the well-being of a less capable person." While we commonly think of salvation as something we will experience in the future, first-century Jews would have been reminded of the countless interventions of God *in the present*: "People were saved from military defeat, from other threats to personal health, from danger of various sorts and from spiritual ruin."

When have you experienced God's salvation *in the present*? Has God ever used you to help bring about his salvation to someone else *in the present*?

j. Read Ephesians 2.6-10.

Speaking of God's prevenient grace introduces both anticipation and responsibility. While modern translations vary the wording for the sake of style, the original Greek uses the clause "in order that..." in verses 7, 9, and 10.

See if you can find the three *in order thats...* following verse 6 (look for phrases like "so that" and "which" for clues):

God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus...

in order that \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 6)

in order that \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 9)

in order that \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 10)

How does this add to your understanding of *why* God raised us up with Christ?!

k. Speaking of "God rais[ing] us up with Christ," what do you make of that phrase in verse 6? How do you understand it?

It's been written that "the believer [has] not only been given life with Christ but has been linked with Christ in his ultimate exaltation at God's right hand... This typically Pauline expression serves here to emphasize the union experienced by the believer and Christ in their exalted position."

What do you make of this statement? How does it transform your understanding of following Jesus here on the earthly plane!? What does it declare about our victory over the sin and brokenness of the world? What does it assert about our actual home?

l. Reread Ephesians 2.8-10.

One bible commentator writes, "There are few verses both more important and more misunderstood that 2.8-9. This is partly because verse 10 is not quoted along with them."

Do you agree? Why or why not?

What do you think of verse 10, bringing together themes of doing good works and predestination!?

IV. Pray

- a. Thank God for the riches of his mercy, lavished on us through Jesus our Savior and Lord,
- b. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the good works He has prepared in advance for you to do,
- c. Ask Jesus to guide you in living humbly, not boasting, but instead walking in the light of God's love,
- d. Lift up - by name - those you know who have not experienced and accepted God's grace.