

# Small Group Study Guide

August 15, 2010

*Peace about Your Future Is Possible*

*Ephesians 2:1-10*

## Leader's Notes

**PLEASE NOTE:** These "Leader's Notes" are a resource to the Small Group Leader to help you in preparing for this study. They are meant to be supplemental. You do not need to cover all the information in these notes with your group. They are simply provided as a resource to you.

### Welcome and Introduction:

- Encourage group members to bring their study guide with them that they use on Sunday to take notes on the sermon, but also have extra copies available in case they forget.
- Open with prayer.

### A Closer Look:

The following notes are to help you better understand the passages you will be looking at in this study.

Notes from ESV Study Bible on Ephesians 2:1-10:

**Eph. 2:1 you were dead.** Human beings as sons and daughters of Adam enter the world spiritually dead. They have no inclination or responsiveness toward God and no ability to please God. Paul begins with this phrase then breaks off with other thoughts until he returns to it again in v. 5.

**trespasses.** Violations of divine commandments. **sins.** Offenses against God in thought, word, or deed.

**Eph. 2:1–10** Salvation by Grace through Faith. This section, like 1:3–14 and 1:15–23, is a single sentence in the original Greek. The overarching theme is that God lavishes his grace on Christians through his saving initiative. There are two subsections: 2:1–3 and 2:4–10.

**Eph. 2:1–3** Hopelessness and Helplessness without Christ. "God helps those who help themselves" is not from the Bible but from the ancient Greeks. As Paul emphasizes in this section, the truth is the exact opposite: God helps the helpless! Even more, he helps his enemies who have transgressed his holy law.

**Eph. 2:2 prince ... spirit.** This refers to Satan as he dominates his human subjects, here called **sons of disobedience**, a Hebrew-inspired phrase like "sons of this world" in contrast to "sons of light" (Luke 16:8). They belong to the family of those who rebel against the holy and true God.

**Eph. 2:3 by nature.** To be sons and daughters of Adam is to be born into a fallen state (Ps. 51:5) and subject to God's condemnation as **children of wrath**. To escape this hopeless imprisonment requires nothing short of a new birth or a new creation (Eph. 2:10).

**Eph. 2:4 But God.** No hopeless fate looks any grimmer than that which awaits the forlorn company of mankind marching behind the "prince of the power of the air" (v. 2) to their destruction under divine wrath. Just when things look the most desolate, Paul utters the greatest short phrase in the history of human speech: "But God!" **rich in mercy**. God's mercy on his helpless enemies flows from his own loving heart, not from anything they have done to deserve it.

**Eph. 2:4–10 Hope in Christ.** In contrast to the hopeless state of the nonbeliever, Christians exult in hope because of God's incredible grace and free salvation. Paul accents this grace in contrast to the pre-Christ hopelessness analyzed in vv. 1–3.

**Eph. 2:5 when we were dead.** Paul resumes his original thought, which began with "you were dead" in v. 1. **made us alive**. That is, God gave us regeneration (new spiritual life within). This and the two verbs in v. 6 ("raised up" and "seated with") make up the main verbs of the long sentence in vv. 1–10. Since Christians were dead, they first had to be made alive before they could believe (and God did that **together with Christ**). This is why salvation is **by grace** alone (see notes on v. 8; vv. 9–10).

**Eph. 2:6–7 Raised us up with him** means that, because of Christ's resurrection, those who believe in him are given new life spiritually in this age (regeneration). They will also be given renewed physical bodies when Christ returns (future resurrection). **seated us with him in the heavenly places**. God has allowed his people even now to share in a measure of the authority that Christ has, seated at the right hand of God (cf. 1:20–22; 6:10–18; James 4:7; 1 John 4:4), a truth that would be especially important in Ephesus with all of its occult practices (see Introduction: Purpose, Occasion, and Background; also note on Eph. 1:18–19). Verse 7 of ch. 2 answers the question of why God lavished such love upon his people: so that they will marvel for all of eternity over the incredible kindness and love of God. It will take all of eternity to fathom God's love, and those who are saved will never plumb the depths of it.

**Eph. 2:8 By grace** refers to God's favor upon those who have transgressed his law and sinned against him. But grace may also be understood as a "power" in these verses. God's grace not only offers salvation but also secures it. **Saved** refers to deliverance from God's wrath at the final judgment (Rom. 5:9); "by grace you have been saved" is repeated from Eph. 2:5 for emphasis. The verb form for "have been saved" (Gk. *sesōsmenoi*, perfect tense) communicates that the Christian's salvation is fully secured. **through faith**. Faith is a confident trust and reliance upon Christ Jesus and is the only means by which one can obtain salvation. **this**. The Greek pronoun is neuter, while "grace" and "faith" are feminine. Accordingly, "this" points to the whole process of "salvation by grace through faith" as being **the gift of God** and not something that we can accomplish ourselves. This use of the neuter pronoun to take in the whole of a complex idea is quite common in Greek (e.g., 6:1); its use here makes it clear that faith, no less than grace, is a gift of God. Salvation, therefore, in every respect, is **not your own doing**.

**Eph. 2:9–10 Salvation is not by works.** If it were, then those who are saved would get the glory. **created ... for good works**. Salvation is not based on works, but the good works Christians do are the result and consequence of God's new creation work.