
JAMIE WILLIAMS

As I sit here staring at the blank screen to write my personal story, I realize looking backward can be scary. Reflecting on the person I once was and remembering and wrestling with the disobedience that once characterized my life was something that weighed me down.

Original sin has marred our true identities which were created in the image of God. Sin destroys our relationship with God and our relationships with others. As a young woman, my identity was wrapped in the “passions of my flesh.” This false identity was woven into every aspect of my life as I dishonored my parents, my body, and God. By the time I was twenty years old, I was a single mother. The choices and patterns of my life up to that point left me feeling I was completely lost and alone. Little did I know the God of the universe was writing my story, and He wasn’t done with me yet!

My favorite phrase in the Bible is “but God.” But God had other plans for me! They were plans to give me life, forgiveness, healing, and restoration. His plan was to make me His daughter. He had plans to seal me with the Holy Spirit, the One who testifies to the truth so I won’t believe the lies of Satan any longer. Even when I was dead in my trespasses, He made me alive in Christ! As I remember my true identity (God’s treasure, loved, fearfully and wonderfully made, Christ’s inheritance, declared righteous, forgiven), looking back doesn’t seem so scary anymore. I can see God’s handiwork through gospel lenses. I see His kindness and His mercy even when I was an enemy of God. I see my life as part of His story from Genesis to Revelation. Now I see the mercy and grace of the gospel interwoven in the darkest and saddest parts of my story, and I see how God uses those parts to serve Him and others for His glory!

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WEEK THREE

Ephesians 2:1-10

SHEA PATRICK

When I was young, my dad did not go to church. My mom said when they were dating, he went “religiously”—she was the daughter of the pastor, after all. By the time my brother and I came along, my mom and dad were struggling in their marriage. I remember my grandparents counseling my parents when they fought. My dad was wonderful, but he did not show any interest in spiritual things.

When I was in college, I went to the beach for the summer with a Christian group. My parents came down for the weekend, and my dad heard the gospel presented. We never talked about it, but my dad was a different person. The change was most evident in his loving relationship with my mom. He began reading his Bible and being involved in church.

My dad died suddenly in an accident at the age of 60. I have no doubt he is with Jesus because I had seen the way my dad had been dead in his trespasses and sin and then was made alive together with Christ.

Paul’s discussion from the end of Ephesians 1 about the power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him at the right hand of the Father continues in Chapter 2. This *same power* also brings believers from death to life. Chapter 2 begins with a powerful portrayal of who we are before God intervenes to open blind eyes and unstop deaf ears. Paul continued to explain how the interplay between grace, faith, and works informs how we walk in our daily lives as “new creations” (2 Cor. 5:17). The unmerited work of God in our salvation elicits our glorious praise to our God.

*PAUL FIRST PLUMBS
THE DEPTH OF
PESSIMISM ABOUT MAN,
AND THEN RISES TO
THE HEIGHTS OF
OPTIMISM ABOUT GOD.¹*

John Stott

MEMORY VERSE:

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved. ~ Ephesians 2:4-5

OPENING PRAYER:

God, grip our hearts anew with the marvelous work of salvation You have done through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Cause us to repent of believing we had any merit that caused You to save us. Help us to trust in Christ alone and to trust the same power that saved us will also sanctify us as a gift of Your grace.

DAY 1: Ephesians 2:1-3

Underline the words or phrases that stand out to you.

¹And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in 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—³among 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.

1. Who was Paul addressing in verse 1 of chapter 2? Use chapter 1 to help find the answer.

2. Paul told the Ephesians, “you were dead.” Read the following verses to elaborate on our spiritual condition apart from Christ. (This death is spiritual and means alienation/separation from God.)

Read	Spiritual Condition
Jeremiah 23:10	
John 6:44	
Romans 3:9-12	
Romans 6:17-18	
1 Corinthians 2:14	
Ephesians 2:5	
Colossians 2:13	

3. According to Scripture, we have three great enemies: the world, our natural desires and inclinations (the flesh), and the devil. Use the chart below to write your reflections on these three verses.

<p>List our condition before Christ (v. 1-3).</p>	
<p>How do the ways this passage describes us before we were in Christ correspond to our enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil?</p>	
<p>Read the first three chapters of Romans and write how they expand our understanding of Ephesians 2:1-3.</p>	

HINGED MIND: THINKING BIBLICALLY

I enjoy being the center of attention. Consider how much time we spend detailing our lives on social media! Paul squarely placed mankind at the center of the story in the beginning of Ephesians chapter 2 but this is not a good thing.

Paul said, “We are dead, belly-ruled, world-following, devil worshippers.”² Paul gave evidence of how man apart from God is dead, enslaved, and condemned by his very nature.

Dead

Paul very clearly stated we are “dead in trespasses and sins.” People either believe 1) mankind is good and does not need God, 2) mankind is sick but can still respond to God, or 3) we are dead. We cannot respond to God apart from the Spirit’s intervention. Dead means no doctor, no magic elixir, absolutely *nothing* can bring life.

A *trespass* involves a deviation from the right path, while *sin* is missing the mark.³ These two words emphasize both the presence of evil and the lack of righteousness: sins of commission and omission. These words together give a comprehensive account of human depravity. The consequence of sin and trespasses is separation from a holy God. While people appear to be alive, they are dead. They are as unresponsive to God as a walking corpse.⁴

Slaves

People celebrate their autonomy and freedom. Poet W.E. Henley wrote: “/ am the master of my fate: / am the captain of my soul.”⁵ Those without Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit are neither free nor autonomous. They are controlled by the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The World

First John 2:15-16 says, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.”

The Flesh

Flesh refers both to our sinful desires and wicked thoughts. The flesh is comprised of more obvious types of sin: gluttony, laziness, lust, greed, etc. The flesh also includes sins of the mind: pride, envy, discontent, among others—sins we may not even recognize apart from the revelation of the Holy Spirit. We are powerless against these sins.

The Devil

Satan rules over those apart from Christ and enslaves them. Jesus said in John 8:43-44, “Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father, the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires.” The world is the domain of Satan and subject to his power. Satan works in the sons of disobedience by keeping them from seeing the glory of Christ (2 Cor. 4:3-4).

Condemned

Ephesians 2:3 says mankind is inclined to evil by nature, and his depravity goes back to the Fall. Genesis 6:5 says the intention of the thoughts of man’s heart was only evil continually. “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God” (Rom. 3:10-11). Because of our sin, we are condemned and subject to God’s wrath.

4. Paul emphasized we all were by nature children of wrath. How does this affect the way we live together as Christ’s body, the Church?

HINGED HEART: LIVING COVENANTALLY

The more we see we have a big problem with evil, the more we will see we have a great Savior. We are all in the same spiritual condition without Christ. This truth should cause us to share the gospel freely and boldly, trusting God to draw men and women to Himself.

DAY 2: Ephesians 2:4-7

Underline the words or phrases that stand out to you.

⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

- 1. Paul described four key words for the origins of God’s activity: love, mercy, grace, and kindness. These words are used to describe God’s character throughout the Old and New Testament.**

Read	Record God’s Character
Exodus 34:6-7	
Psalm 86:15	
Micah 7:18-20	
Romans 5:8	
1 John 4:10, 19	

2. Paul discussed in Ephesians 2:5 how we have been made alive with Christ. How have we also been “raised up with Him” and “seated with Him in the heavenly places”? Read and write your response to the following verses.

- Romans 6:4-5

- Ephesians 1:19-20

- Colossians 3:1-3

HINGED MIND: THINKING BIBLICALLY

Our first foster placement was a five-week-old baby boy we received six years ago. My husband felt the Lord leading him away from his job, but if we moved away, we would lose the placement of our foster son. God provided another job for my husband close enough so we could keep our son whom we later adopted. Without God intervening, our story would have been different.

“But God” these two words contain the whole of the gospel. Paul’s commentary moves from the “desperate condition of fallen mankind to the gracious initiative and sovereign action of God.”⁶ God has intervened and made us alive in Christ. Our salvation experience is similar to Jesus’s friend, Lazarus—we were also dead. Like Lazarus, we have heard the Lord calling us to “come out” (John 11:43). Look at the wonderful contrast in Ephesians 2:4-7 against verses 1-3:

- We were dead but have been made alive.
- We were objects of wrath but are now recipients of mercy.
- We were in bondage to evil powers but are now seated with Christ in heavenly realms.

Paul’s words make clear Who is acting in our salvation: God (subject) made alive (verb) us (direct object). Our union with Christ gives us the right to be in the heavenly places with Him. We have heavenly status and heavenly power to overcome the power of sin and death.

The second chapter of Ephesians also explores *why* God intervened in this way in verses 4-7. Paul gave reasons that are found in the attributes of God and are a part of His character.

Love

“. . . because of the great love with which he loved us” (v. 4). Love was both the motivation and driving force of His actions. Even when we were dead in our sins, He loved us. First John 4:10 says, “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

Mercy

“. . . being rich in mercy” (v. 4). Mercy means we don’t get what we deserve. Psalm 103:10 reads: “He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.” We do not receive the wrath we deserve because of God’s mercy.

Grace

“. . . by grace you have been saved” (v. 5). Grace is the favor displayed toward men and women in contrast to what they deserve. Grace is getting far more than you deserve.

Kindness

“He might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness” (v. 7). What could be kinder than God’s dealing with His people: loving them with a great love and not giving them what they do deserve. He also gives them rich blessings of grace they don’t deserve.

Scripture makes clear that sin and the wrath of God are real. God steps into this bleak image with love, mercy, grace, and kindness. He gives life where there has been death, freedom for slavery, and a future to those who had been condemned. He has intervened and made all the difference!

*WE MUST REMIND OURSELVES THAT
GOD LOVES US, NOT BECAUSE WE
ARE LOVEABLE, BUT BECAUSE
WE ARE IN CHRIST, AND THE
LOVE WHICH THE FATHER HAS
FOR HIS SON FLOWS OVER TO US
BECAUSE WE ARE IN HIM.⁷*

Jerry Bridges

3. How does it (and should it) affect our daily lives that our citizenship is in heaven since we have been raised up with Christ?

4. Look back at your week. How do you see Christ at work in you, changing your wants and desires to make them more like His?

HINGED HEART: LIVING COVENANTALLY

From beginning to end, we see God intervening to save and rescue His people. Paul immediately pointed from the desolate situation of mankind in verses 1-3 to God's glorious actions in verses 4-7. He has made us alive, raised us, and seated us in Christ. We fight for obedience while resting in the fact that God has given us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). What hope to know that Christ is with us now and keeps us until the day we will be with Him.

DAY 3: Ephesians 2:8-9

Underline the words or phrases that stand out to you.

*NO CONDEMNATION NOW I DREAD;
 JESUS, AND ALL IN HIM, IS MINE!
 ALIVE IN HIM, MY LIVING HEAD,
 AND CLOTHED IN RIGHTEOUSNESS
 DIVINE,
 BOLD I APPROACH TH' ETERNAL
 THRONE,
 AND CLAIM THE CROWN, THROUGH
 CHRIST MY OWN.
 AMAZING LOVE! HOW CAN IT BE
 THAT THOU, MY GOD,
 SHOULDST DIE FOR ME.⁸*

Charles Wesley

⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,
⁹not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

1. Read these parables and explain how Paul's teaching on grace can be illustrated in them.

Parable	How is Paul's teaching on grace illustrated?
Prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32)	
Pharisee and tax collector (Luke 18:9-14)	
Laborers in the vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16)	

2. How does Ephesians 2:1-8 explain the interplay of grace and faith in salvation? Consider these other verses to help explain:

- Romans 3:21-28

- Romans 9:16

- Titus 3:3-5

HINGED MIND: THINKING BIBLICALLY

After discussing the bleak state of mankind apart from God and God’s intervening work to make us alive in Christ, Paul then addressed the mechanics of our salvation. We have been saved by grace through faith.

Salvation

This salvation is more than just forgiveness of sin; it is deliverance from death, slavery, and wrath. Salvation includes the totality of our new life in Christ. The wrath of God has been appeased; our sins have been atoned for by the death of the perfect sacrifice on our behalf.

We have received an alien righteousness. We are also counted righteous because of Christ. We were brought from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light.

Grace

Paul stated *twice* that it is by grace we have been saved. God’s grace has made us alive in Christ. “Because God is gracious, therefore sinful men are forgiven, converted, purified, and saved. It is not because of anything in them, or ever can be in them, that they are saved; but because of the boundless love, goodness, pity, compassion, mercy and grace of God.”⁹

Faith

Salvation is by grace but *through* faith. Faith includes both knowledge and a heart response to the gospel. It includes the idea of casting ourselves on Christ. Faith is the means by which salvation is obtained. Salvation is a gift: something received without merit, not earned (then it would be a wage), not deserved (then it would be a reward). Paul stated this fact both negatively and positively: negative (not from yourselves) and positive

(is a gift from God). The exclusion of our effort also excludes our boasting. This ensures all the glory goes to God and His grace. The only proper boasting is in Galatians 6:14: “But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” God desires to show His power and His mercy and His grace so people will find Him glorious. The ultimate goal of salvation is the glory of God.¹⁰

HINGED HEART: LIVING COVENANTALLY

3. Consider your response to this gift of salvation.

- Are you showing forth the incomparable riches of His grace?

- Are you basking in the gospel of grace daily?

- Are you resting on the present value of Christ’s shed blood as your only source of power to please God and live an obedient life before Him?

4. How do we boast in what Christ has done for us?

DAY 4: Ephesians 2:10

Underline the words or phrases that stand out to you.

¹⁰For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

*I WILL NOT BOAST IN ANYTHING,
NO GIFTS, NO POWER, NO WISDOM;
BUT I WILL BOAST IN JESUS CHRIST,
HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION.
WHY SHOULD I GAIN FROM HIS REWARD?
I CANNOT GIVE AN ANSWER;
BUT THIS I KNOW WITH ALL MY HEART—
HIS WOUNDS HAVE PAID MY RANSOM.¹¹*

Stuart Townsend

1. Paul wrote negatively about works in (v. 9) and then talked about good works (v. 10). What is the difference between the use of the term “work” in each verse, and how could Paul say both things without being contradictory?

2. Paul argued for the role of good works in the life of the believer. Read the following verses discussing our works. Write your reflections below.

- 2 Corinthians 9:8

- 1 Corinthians 15:10

HINGED MIND: THINKING BIBLICALLY

I used to struggle with how faith and “good works” worked together. When I was younger, I felt I was no longer a Christian when I fell into sin. Condemnation kept me from turning to the Lord in my struggle. When I was in law school, I had a pastor who strongly emphasized grace. There was nothing I could do to cause God to love me more or to love me less. He was not surprised or shocked by my sin. I could approach Him in confession and repentance. I was then freed from this position of finding security in acts of service and obedience.

We Are God’s Workmanship

Workmanship in the Greek is *poëima*, meaning “his work of art, his masterpiece.”¹² Second Corinthians 5:17 states, “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” Paul explained not only are we a new creation, but we are created for good works.

Created for Good Works

Paul emphasized our works do not save us. We are saved (re-created) *for* good works. We belong to Christ, and it should make a difference in how we spend our time, money, etc. God has saved us because He loves us (John 3:16) and so that His name will be praised (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). What is God’s purpose in creating us in Christ? Good works are the goal and purpose (Rom. 8:28). Good works are not the ground, basis, or cause of salvation—they are the fruit. Faith alone saves. But saving faith is never alone. Faith without works is dead (James 2:17).

Walking in a New Way

Chapter 2 begins with our walking in trespasses and sins and ends with our walking in good works. The only explanation for this shift from being citizens of the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light is the intervening work of God. He has saved us and re-created us and set before us good works to walk in.

HINGED HEART: LIVING COVENANTALLY

3. Write three ways we can walk in good works as suggested by this verse?

Our salvation is not an end to itself. In Genesis 12, God told Abram He had blessed Abram so he would be a blessing to others. God wants to show His grace to others and uses us in the process. Our good works are created by Him and are a response to the work He is doing in our hearts.

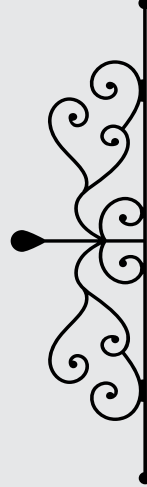
***OUR OBEDIENCE IS NOT
THE GROUNDS OF OUR
RELATIONSHIP (WITH JESUS)
BUT THE
OVERFLOW OF IT.¹³***

Jared Wilson



CLOSING PRAYER:

God, thank You that this passage we have studied naturally lends itself to Your praise and worship. Remind us of our salvation from death, slavery, and condemnation. Remind us of Your grace and mercy that made us alive. This is a gift. You have saved us, and we can rest in the finished work of Christ. Cause us to repent from trying to earn Your favor and help us to walk in obedience through the good works you have prepared for us. We trust You to complete the work You have started.



END NOTES

- ¹ John Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1979), 69.
- ² Jared Wilson, "The Gospel, Fathoms Deep" <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/jared-c-wilson/the-gospel-fathoms-deep/>, December 2014.
- ³ Stott, 71.
- ⁴ James Boice, *Ephesians, An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 47.
- ⁵ William Henley, *A Book of Verses* (London: D. Nutt, 1888), 56-57 (emphasis added).
- ⁶ Stott, 79-80.
- ⁷ Jerry Bridges, *Who am I? Identity in Christ* (Adelphi, MD: Cruciform Press, 2012), 51.
- ⁸ Charles Wesley, "And Can It Be That I Should Gain," *Trinity Hymnal* (Atlanta: Great Commission Publications, Inc., 1999).
- ⁹ Boice, 65.
- ¹⁰ Stuart Townend, "How Deep the Father's Love for Us," ThankYou Music, 1995.
- ¹¹ Stott, 84.
- ¹² Jared C. Wilson, *The Imperfect Disciple* (Grand Rapids: MI: Baker, 2017), 78.



Journaling Space