

# Day 1 – Introduction to the Text

## Ephesians 2:1-7

In his commentary on Ephesians, James Montgomery Boice recalls the time when he was serving as pastor at Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. At the time, he and his team had grown discouraged by the lack of solid theological material in their Sunday school curriculum, so they made the decision to produce their own. They designed a curriculum that followed a three-year cycle with the first year covering basic doctrines such as sin, salvation, Bible study, etc. In the second year, the curriculum covered the same material as the first, but from the standpoint of the church and how a person becomes a member of it. Finally, in the third year, they taught about God’s plan in history and the believer’s place in that plan. Boice tells this story to illustrate what Paul appears to be doing in his letter to the Ephesian Christians.

Boice writes, “In Chapter 1 Paul looked at salvation from God’s point of view, showing how he has blessed us with all blessings in Christ and how one day all things shall be subjected to Christ. In chapter 2 he talks about salvation from the perspective of the individual Christian. He shows what we were before God’s work in calling us to Christ, what God did for us in Christ, and what we are now to become and do as the result of that working. Chapter 1 gives us the past, present, and future of God’s great plan of salvation. Chapter 2 gives us the past, present, and future of the persons Christ saves.” (Boice, 45-46).

Similar to the two previous passages we’ve study, Ephesians 2:1-7 is one long sentence in the Greek. Also, from a grammar perspective, the passage is very choppy. Paul begins his thought in verse 1, uses verses 2 and 3 to explain what he means in verse 1, and then finishes the thought with verses 4-7.

As you study the passage this week, try to notice the connections between chapters 1 and 2, particularly in what God did for Christ and what He has now done for us. Additionally, take some time to meditate on the implications of where we were spiritually before God acted on our behalf in Christ Jesus. Finally, spend some time reflecting on God’s grace, and mercy, and love, and kindness toward us believe.

Scripture Memory: Ephesians 2:4-5

## Day 2 – What Does the Text Say?

### Read Ephesians 2:1-7

1. What was the spiritual condition of the Ephesians before their conversion (v1)?
2. What three things were the Ephesians influenced by prior to their conversion (v2)?
3. What was Paul and his companions' spiritual condition before conversion (v3)?
4. Why did God make those who were dead, alive with Christ (vv4-5)?
5. What position has God given Christians in Christ by His divine power (v6)?
6. What will God show in the future eternal state (v7)?

## Day 3 – What Does the Text Mean?

Read Ephesians 2:1-7 again

**Verse 1: *dead in your trespasses and sins...*** “[Paul] employs the adjective *dead* figuratively to describe the state of being lost or under the dominion of death. . . . It is sometimes called spiritual death and denotes a state of alienation or separation from God. This wretched and culpable condition has been caused by their transgressions and sins. . . . The plural *transgressions* draws attention to individual acts of sin, while the addition of the synonym *sins* helps to form one concept (a hendiadys), which gives a comprehensive account of human evil. It conveys the idea of the fullness and variety of the readers sinful past. As a result, they had no hope, were far from God (cf. 2:12), and were alienated from his life (4:18)” (O’Brien, 156-157).

**Verse 2: *...course of...*** “they lived according to the *aiōn* [‘course’] ... of this *kosmos* (GK 3180, “world”). *Aiōn* usually has a time reference, as in this age or the age to come, but it was also used of deities. Paul probably intends a temporal sense, as in 1:21 and 2:7, i.e., they followed the values and ways of the present evil age of this world (cf. Ro 12:2; 1 Co 1:20; 2:6, where age’ occurs with a negative meaning). Paul often uses *aiōn* synonymously with *kosmos*. . .” (Klein, 65).

**...this world...** “a supernatural power having some particular role in controlling the destiny and activities of human beings” (Louw and Nida, 12.44).

**...of the air...** “According to the ancient world-view, the air formed the intermediate sphere between earth and heaven. It was the dwelling place of evil spirits (as the magical papyri and the literature of Judaism attest), not an atmosphere of opinion with ideas, attitudes, and the like, which is a more recent Western understanding” (O’Brien, 160).

**Verse 3: *...of our flesh...*** “Writers use [flesh] to denote the human inclination to sin, our human sinful bias. Though difficult to define precisely, ‘flesh’ portrays the principle of sin, as well as the seat and instrument of sin within a person. It describes our propensity to sin through which sin in all its manifestations overcomes and possesses us. It is the power center opposed to the Spirit. So ‘flesh’ used in this sense depicts humans apart from and opposed to God” (Klein, 66).

**...by nature...** “Paul speaks elsewhere of Peter and himself as Jews ‘by nature,’ which can only mean ‘by birth’ (Gal. 2:15)” (Bruce, 284).

**Verse 4: ...rich in mercy...** “‘Mercy’ (*eleos*, GK 1799), also translated as ‘compassion’ or ‘pity,’ occurs seventy-eight times in the NT, twenty-six of those in Paul’s letters. In the [Septuagint] it dominantly translated the Hebrew *hesed* (GK 2876)—God’s covenantal faithfulness to his undeserving people. In the Gospels the sick appeal to Jesus for mercy—that he show kindness by healing (e.g., Mk 10:47–48 par.). This unmerited, compassionate commitment motivates God’s rescue effort for his disobedient, wayward creatures (cf. Tit 3:5). God has decided to have mercy on all people, Jews and Gentiles (cf. Ro 11:32)” (Klein, 67).

**Verse 5: made us alive together with...** “The verb to make alive, give life to was used as a simple synonym for the verb to raise when speaking of the eschatological raising from the dead (cf. 1 Cor. 15:22 with Rom. 8:11). Only in Colossians 2:13 and Ephesians 2:5 is the compound verb make alive, together with, to be found. Paul’s readers have come to life with Christ, who was dead and rose again” (O’Brien, 167).

**...you have been saved...** “Here and in v. 8 Paul employs the perfect tense of ‘save,’ the most heavily marked Greek tense (and rarely used for ‘save’ elsewhere and never by Paul; see Mk 5:34 par.; 10:52 par.; Lk 7:50). In so doing, he emphasizes the ongoing consequences in the present of God’s action to save” (Klein, 68).

**Verse 6: raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him...** “The additional element in Ephesians, which goes beyond anything mentioned elsewhere in Paul, is that God has seated them with Christ in the heavenly realms. This fresh point, however, is simply making explicit what was implied in Colossians 3:1–3, where believers are said to share Christ’s risen life in the heavenly realm, and on the basis of which they are exhorted to seek the things above. Not only do the readers participate in Christ’s resurrection life; they also share in his exaltation and consequent victory over the powers” (O’Brien, 171).

**Verse 7: in the ages to come...** “The ages to come’ is a more general conception than ‘the coming age’ of Eph. 1:21, which reflects the traditional division of time into two ages (the present age and the resurrection age). It implies one age supervening on another like successive waves of the sea, as far into the future as thought can reach. Throughout time and in eternity the church, this society of pardoned rebels, is designed by God to be the masterpiece of his goodness” (Bruce, 288).

## Day 4 – What Difference Does the Text Make?

Read Ephesians 2:1-7 again

1. Describe a time when you showed mercy to a person who deserved to be punished. What happened? What motivated you to show mercy?
2. What were you like before you became a Christian?
3. When did you receive the gift of new life?
4. Why do you think it is important to remember what our condition was before God saved us?



# Bibliography

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from the New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update.

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- Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene Albert Nida. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1996.
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