

The God Who Is

Leader's Guide

Gracious and Merciful Father

Ephesians 2:1-10

Background

Ephesians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the church located in the city of Ephesus. We learned previously that Paul was a devout Jew until God converted him into the greatest Christian missionary in all of time. Paul helped establish the church in Ephesus while he was on one of his missionary trips. Ephesus was a leading city in the Roman Empire, and is located in present day Turkey. Paul writes this letter while he is in another city serving a prison sentence for sharing the gospel, in or around the year 60 AD. Many scholars also believe that Ephesians was a "cyclical letter", sent on to other churches in the area for their instruction.

Read Ephesians 2:1-10.

What things were true of us before we became Christians (vv.1-3)?

v.1 *We were dead (spiritually) in our sins*

v.2 *We followed the world and Satan (he's who "the ruler of the kingdom of the air" is)*

v.3 *We gratified the cravings of our flesh—we had no other choice than to live out of selfishness*

v.3 *Because of who we were (sinners) in our very make-up, we were deserving of God's wrath*

***In summary, we were dead, ruled by Satan, slaves to our sinful nature, and God's wrath was upon us—we were in a very bad way!*

After outlining how gross *we* were in vv.1-3, Paul begins v.4 with the contrast, "But God..."

What three aspects of God's character do we learn about in v.4?

He has great love for us, is rich in mercy, and is full of grace. Explain that we looked closely at "love" two weeks ago, so this week we'll be looking at "mercy" and "grace".

WORD STUDIES: Mercy ("eleos") and Grace ("charis" in the original Greek)

The words "mercy" and "grace" are similar—they reflect two flip sides of God's expression of love toward us. Mercy may be best explained as *not* getting something we *do* deserve (punishment), while grace is *getting* something that we *don't* deserve (eternal life). Webster's defines mercy as "compassion shown to an offender or one in distress; a compassion that does away with punishment even when justice demands it". The root word for grace is the same root for the word "gift"—something given that is not earned. Webster's says it is "unmerited divine assistance given to man".

So now, after receiving God's mercy and grace to become Christians, what things are true of us (v.5-6)?

v.5 *We are alive (spiritually)*

v.5 *We are saved (ask them "From what?" The answer is "From God's wrath"—see v. 3)*

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Ephesians 2:1-10

v.6 *We have been raised up, or resurrected, with Christ*

v.6 *We are actually seated (present tense) with Christ in heaven*

In vv.4-9, Paul describes how we got from Point A (dead in our sins) to Point B (alive in Christ). Read these verses to determine:

1) What was God's part?

He makes us alive

He raises us up with Christ

He shows us grace

He expresses kindness

>>>*All of this is "a gift of God!"*

2) What was our part?

Trusting in Jesus to forgive our sins by **faith** (v.8)

In vv. 8-9, Paul states that we are not saved by our works, but in v.10 he says we were created to do good works. How do you explain this?

Good works do NOT earn us salvation (even in part!), but good works are always a RESULT of salvation (see the book of James). We aren't saved BY works, but FOR works. It's not FAITH + WORKS = SALVATION, but FAITH = SALVATION + WORKS.

In v.10, Paul says that "we are God's workmanship". The Greek work for "workmanship" is "poema", where we get the English word for "poem". How does it make you feel that you are "God's poem"—an original creation, unlike any other?

Passages For Further Study:

Ephesians 1:3-14

2 Timothy 1:8-11

Titus 2:11 - 3:8

1 Peter 1:3-5

Matthew 18:8-11

Questions for personal reflection

1. Paul says in v.9 that because salvation is totally a gift from Him, not based on anything we do, there shouldn't be any boasting. What *should* our response be?
2. What do you think are some of the good works God has "prepared in advance" for you to do?
3. Reflect on all the ways God has been gracious to you. Then pray and ask God to bring to mind someone you can "grace" today.
4. Luke 6:36 says, "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful". Who do you need to show mercy to? How does realizing how merciful God has been to you allow you to be merciful to others?

"There is a God we want, and there is a God who is—and they are not the same God.

The turning point of our lives is when we stop seeking the God we want and start seeking the God who is."

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