

Ephesians 2:1-10 is a text from the New Testament and remains within Paul's Letters. These are the groups which Paul wrote to, the Corinthians, the Thessalonians, and the Romans. His purpose was to spread the word of God and Good News of Jesus.

In Ephesians 2:1-10 Paul speaks about the unity that Jews and Gentiles should be in because of the sacrifice of Christ and the responsibility as Christians to live as servants to Christ. **The Letter is being written to the people of Asian Minor, since Paul had travelled through this area and connected with the Gentiles, he wanted to re-emphasise what he had preached about.** The title of the letter is directed to the Ephesians and it is directed at this community, but as previously stated it does regard a wider community and addresses situations that many people will understand, no matter where they are from. **The text's literary form is an Epistle, a letter, and is one of Paul's three captivity writings. Also the text was possibly written from prison in Rome, where Paul was being held.**

Verses 1-3 talk about how "before they heard and accepted the gospel the Gentile Christians were dead in their sins as Christ was in his grave before he was raised by God" (Swain, L. 1980). Paul's first line writes, "You were dead through the trespasses and sins". "You" refers to the Gentiles, **Colossians 2:13** talks about the Gentiles being sinful. **The word "dead" is the result of sin which man was born into from the very beginning, a reference to original sin created in the Garden of Eden. It means that humans cannot save themselves from sin, only by God's grace.**

The second verse continues "following the ruler of power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient". **According to MacDonald, M.Y.** "the ruler of the power of the air is the devil". Paul is suggesting that the Gentiles are influenced and ruled by the devil. Spiritual deadness is a condition, which finds its source in Satan.

The third verse states, "All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh". The Greek word "sarx" means "flesh" which is talking about the sinful state of human beings. Paul changes from using "you" in verse 1 and 2 to using "we" in verse 3 ("we" refers to the Jews, as Paul himself was a Jew) because he wanted to make the point that all man has the potential to sin, however he believed Gentiles did more than Jews. This is talked about in **Galatians 2:15** where it is discussed how the Jews are better than the Gentiles because the Jews were born better as opposed to the sinners who lived among the Gentiles.

Verses 4-7, **Swain, L.** focuses on how God is rich in mercy and says, "according to Paul our salvation is not a matter of making "reparation" for sin, of "satisfying" the demands of God's justice, of "placating his anger". However, he instead says "It is purely and simply a matter of God's love". **He means that it is God's love, his grace that saves us, not a matter of reparation for your sins.** Verse 4 reads "But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love which he has loved us". The words "But God" indicate a beginning of salvation, "great love" is referring to the reason why God saved humanity. **An underlying message that can be seen through this verse is that man should thank God for his help.** The fifth verse states, "even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ".

According to MacDonald this verse means "That God, in raising and exalting Jesus has also raised and exalted us with him". Together with Christ humans were raised out of sin.

In **Psalms 103:12**, it talks about God removing us from sinning when it said, "as far as East is from West". Verse 6 states "and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus". "Raised us up" is an illustration of the resurrection, this is salvation because mankind is going to be reborn. In **Romans 6:5**, it says that through being united in death and resurrection, mankind will be saved. **A message to gather from this verse should be that God did not help us to flatter mankind but instead to glorify himself.**

Verse 7 states "he might show the immeasurable riches toward us in Christ Jesus". According to Swain, Paul is meaning in this verse that "extends the manifestation of salvation that has taken place in the exaltation of Christ, into the infinite future". God's salvation of mankind will continue into the future. "Immeasurable riches"

refers to the unending love that God had for the world, as in **Romans 2:4** where it says that through God's kindness and patience, will mankind receive repentance and salvation.

Verses 8-10, **Kieck, L.** discusses how "salvation is entirely God's gift, not the result of human effort". This quote almost requires no explanation as it is very clear in its message that salvation is gifted to us by God and can't be achieved through human means. Verse 8 states "For by grace you have been saved through faith".

The word "for" shows that this is where God is explaining the primary purpose of sending his son, not to produce happiness for the sinners, but to show the grace of God for all eternity. In **Romans 9:14-23** it says that God is both glorified by punishing the wicked and is the saviour of those he makes righteous.

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Verse 9 states "not the results of works, so that no one may boast".

In this verse Paul is referring to the fact that salvation is not of man's doing but of God's. Or as **Swain** puts it, "it is not humanity's work but God's and just as much a grace as a salvation". **It doesn't matter how hard you try you cannot achieve salvation without the grace of God.**

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Verse 10 states "For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life". According to **Kieck** this "introduces the image of Christians as God's special creation". **Paul is trying to tell his audience that they are created in the image of Jesus Christ, which can also be found in Corinthians 5:17.**

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"God prepared beforehand" means that God has prepared us a way of life and all must simply do is follow Jesus in order to fulfil it.

From a Historical Interpretation of the letter there can be different meanings attained. Throughout the letter Paul talks about the sin that people lived in and how through the grace of God the sin was taken away from them, they were freed from sin. If we look at Paul's situation round this time it is deemed probable that he was writing these letters from prison. Therefore a connection can be made between how he was trapped in prison and how he was writing to the Gentiles explaining the sin which once entrapped them.

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He explained to them "you have been saved through faith". **Consequently, a link can be made that just as they were freed from sin Paul was referring to his own situation, and how he would one day be freed from prison through his own faith and God's grace.**

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The wider implications of this are an understanding of how the word of God was understood by its first recipients and is a testament to its endurance over time as modern Catholics can still relate to it by embracing the same idea of freedom from sin due to God's grace and personal faith.

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A Literal Interpretation of the letter provides differing meanings. Literally mankind was spiritually dead through their sins, with no salvation at hand humans were destined for a terrible afterlife. Where Paul talks about "following the desires of the flesh" this literally means that humans were blindly following their animalistic desires with no notion of a moral compass. Further on in the text he goes on to discuss the "immeasurable riches" of God's grace. **This quite simply means that humans are not able to comprehend or measure the gifts or blessings that God has bestowed upon us.**

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The New Testament text regards salvation. However, there is one overruling idea and that is Jesus' sacrifice led humanity to salvation and through God's grace were given salvation. In Paul's letter, Jesus is our key to salvation, Jesus' self-sacrifice brought back our freedom and liberated us from sin. This was solely due to God's grace for us; we wouldn't exist without him. Paul says at the start that we are spiritually dead, we had lost the war of virtue to our vices but Jesus recreated us and we were reborn due to his death. We will always struggle to fully deserve and appreciate what God has done for us but we can try our hardest to be faithful and understand God's original intentions for the human race.

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