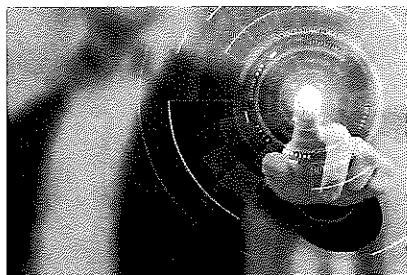


Saved to Work



Topic

Saving grace

Theme

Salvation is by grace through faith for good works.

Desired Response

The learner will pursue good works while depending on God's enabling grace.

Materials

- Visuals 12, 13.
- Paper and markers.
- Drinking glass.
- Clear mixing bowl.
- Pitcher of water.

Scripture Focus

Ephesians 2:1–10

Summary

Both Gentiles and Jews are spiritually dead and separated from God and must be saved by grace. God enables believers to lead godly lives and do good works also by His grace.

Outline

I. Separation from Christ (Eph. 2:1–3)

- A. Gentile separation (2:1, 2)
- B. Jewish separation (2:3)

II. Union with Christ (Eph. 2:4–6)

- A. God loved us through Christ (2:4)
- B. God gave us life in Christ (2:5, 6)

III. Purposes of Union with Christ (Eph. 2:7–10)

- A. To portray grace (2:7–9)
- B. To produce good works (2:10)

Memory Verse

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

GETTING STARTED

Grand Plans

ASK: When have you bought a new item with grand plans to use it but without any follow through? (Q1)

ASK: Why didn't you follow through on your plans? (Q2)

God purchased you through the blood of Christ. He paid a high price for you, and He has grand plans to use you. This lesson will challenge you to follow through on God's plans to use you to accomplish His will.

Illustrations of the Old and New

Distribute a sheet of paper and a marker to each learner. Instruct half of the class to draw a picture of an object that represents a person's old, unsaved life. The other learners should draw a picture of an object that represents a person's new life in Christ. Give the learners three minutes to work on their sketches. Then invite volunteers to show and explain their sketches to the rest of the class. If your class is small, take time to post the sketches at the front of the room.

Paul wrote about a believer's change from being dead in sin and being alive in Christ. When a person trusts in Christ as Savior, he or she leaves a life that offends God and embarks on one that honors Him.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

I. Separation from Christ (Eph. 2:1–3)

Before they trusted in Christ, the Jews and Gentiles were separated from God and from each other by sin.

A. Gentile separation (2:1, 2)

The word "you" holds the key to understanding the first two verses of Ephesians 2. It indicates that Paul was addressing the Gentile readers. The clause, "who were dead in trespasses and sins" (2:1), conveys a sense of the dreadful condition of the unsaved Gentiles.

ASK: What are some effects of being dead in trespasses and sins? (Q3) *Unable to please God; can't understand spiritual things; following the world's pattern for living.*

Just as dead people can't help themselves, so unsaved persons can't do anything to improve their spiritual condition. There is no self-help book for getting saved.

In their natural state, the Ephesians had lived according to a twofold standard. First, they had lived "according to the course of this world" (2:2).

READ: Ephesians 2:2. **ASK:** What does physical walking involve? (Q4) *Purpose; direction; path; methodical motion.*

ASK: What does it mean to walk “according to the course of this world”? (Q5)

To live according to the world's values and attitudes. The world system is characterized by an emphasis on self (humanism), a lust for material things, and rampant immorality.

The Ephesians led sinful lives, following the flow and compelled by their natural desires.

The Ephesians’ second standard for life was Satan’s domination. They had walked “according to the prince of the power of the air” (2:2).

ASK: What significance is seen in Satan’s name, the “prince of the power of

the air”? (Q6) *Satan is the ruler of his demonic force and the world's system. The “air” refers to the atmosphere and points to his domain as earthly.*

Paul further identified Satan as the “spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” Satan either personally or indirectly through his demonic agents carries out his own sinful, wicked, perverse plans in the lives of the unregenerate.

ASK: Why can’t unbelievers, called “children of disobedience,” rightfully claim they are free in this life? Explain. (Q7) *Unbelievers are not free to obey and please God. They are bound to obey and please Satan and excluded from eternal life. Everything they do is leading to an eternal incarceration.*

Before becoming Christians, the Ephesians had been dead in sin, governed by the world, energized by the Devil, and separated from spiritual life. We, too, were in such dreadful shape until God saved us. All who have not trusted in Christ are still in this condition.

B. Jewish separation (2:3)

Like the Gentile believers, the Jewish believers had once been separated from Christ in their former unsaved state. In Ephesians 2:3 Paul reminded the Jewish believers, “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past.” The Jewish believers in Ephesus had once lived in disobedience to God and in separation from Him.

Paul offered specific characteristics of the Jews’ separation from Christ. He wrote that the Jewish believers had formerly lived “in the lusts of our flesh.” They had lived according to the strong desires of a corrupt human nature. They had been “fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.” Before salvation, they had been carrying out the wishes of their lower, sensuous nature, their “flesh,” and of their thinking and reasoning, their “mind.” Both were utterly corrupt.

Furthermore, before God’s grace reached them, the Jews “were by nature the children of wrath.” “Children of wrath” is an idiom meaning “worthy of wrath.”

READ: Ephesians 2:3. **ASK:** Why was the phrase “by nature the children of wrath” important for the Jews to hear? (Q8) *It demonstrated that being Jewish had nothing to do with their salvation. They were as lost and worthy of God's wrath as the Gentiles believers had been.*

By birth, in their natural state, the unsaved are subject to the wrath of God. The Jews may have been more religious than other people, even being called God’s

People, but they were no better than the rest of the world's people groups. The Jews believed their religious good deeds made them acceptable to God, but they were by nature subject to His wrath "even as others."

God will cast Jew and Gentile alike into the Lake of Fire at the end time. There they will suffer under His wrath for eternity (Rev. 20:12–15).

ASK: What three words would you use to describe living separated from Christ? (Q9) *Perhaps desperate, disillusioned, and doomed.*

II. Union with Christ (Eph. 2:4–6)

Believers are safe from God's wrath because they are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1).

A. God loved us through Christ (2:4)

In the flow of describing Gentiles' and Jews' separation from God, Paul abruptly introduced a contrast that begins with the words "but God" (Eph. 2:4). God brought about a dramatic change in the lives of those who were dead in trespasses and sins. Before Paul described this change, he declared God "is rich in mercy." If God had employed justice without mercy, sinners would have received the eternal condemnation they deserved, and neither Jew nor Gentile would have been saved. God, by His mercy, gave us what we did not deserve—eternal salvation.

Why did God act on behalf of lost mankind? It was "for his great love where-with he loved us" (2:4). Mercy is the desire to help those in need. One can have mercy on a sick person, though, and dispense medicine to him or her without loving that person. Love goes deeper than mercy. It reaches out to an individual with unconditional caring. Where there is love, there is interaction and emotion. Because God loved us with a great love, He acted on our behalf. He gave His Son for us. When Jesus shed His blood for our sins, He portrayed the full dimensions of God's love for us.

The "us" in verses 4–6 is significant, for the apostle Paul used it to include both Jewish and Gentile Christians. In verses 1 and 2 he used "you" in addressing Gentiles. In verse 3 he used "we" in addressing Jews. Next, in verse 4 he used "us" to address both Jews and Gentiles united in Christ.

B. God gave us life in Christ (2:5, 6)

ACTIVITY: Tell the learners to pull up on their phones a picture of someone they love. Have them turn to a person next to them and tell him or her why they love the person in the photograph. **ASK:** Whose pictures do you think God would keep on His phone? *Pictures of everyone—including notorious people.*

God chose to show His love toward us "even when we were dead in sins" (2:5). There was nothing lovely about us. No one merited His love or offered anything to Him He found appealing or attractive.

The word "even" (2:5) shows the wonder of God's rescuing sinners from such a lost and hopeless condition. God, by grace, took those who were dead in sin from birth and made them alive "together with Christ."

ASK: Why was the message of salvation "by grace" particularly important

for the Jews to hear? (See Romans 2:17–24.) (Q10) *They were prone to put their faith in their ability to keep the Old Testament law.*

According to Ephesians 2:6, God “hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” The repeated word “together” shows that believers, both Jews and Gentiles, are united to Christ.

Since God has made us “sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” our salvation is forever secure. No one, including ourselves, can remove us from our heavenly place in Christ.

ASK: How should being secure in salvation affect our service for the Lord? (Q11) *We should serve God willingly and wholeheartedly out of gratitude for our security in Christ.*

III. Purposes of Union with Christ (Eph. 2:7–10)

A. To portray grace (2:7–9)

God raised us from spiritual death so “in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:7). He saved us so He might manifest the exceeding riches of His grace both in this present dispensation, in the times following it, and into eternity. By saving us, God displayed His kindness “through Christ.” It is only through Christ that we are saved. If it had not been for Christ’s sacrificial death on Calvary, our salvation would have been impossible.

READ: Ephesians 2:7. **ASK:** Why is it important that the riches of God’s grace toward us now are “exceeding”? (Q12) *Nothing could happen to a believer that God’s grace couldn’t help him or her overcome.*

OBJECT LESSON: Set a drinking glass inside a clear mixing bowl. Explain that the glass represents the learners’ lives. Use a pitcher to pour water into the glass until the water overflows and begins to fill the mixing bowl. Relate the water to God’s grace in our lives. It exceeds our needs and overflows in us.

Grace is God’s unmerited favor. We did not deserve to be saved, nor was God obligated to save us. But He extended unmerited favor to us in saving us. Our salvation is therefore an act of God, without which we would be doomed to eternal punishment.

Yet salvation comes to us only “through faith” (2:8). To be saved, a person must believe in the death and resurrection of Christ and receive Him as Savior (Rom. 10:9; John 1:12). But our believing does not “earn” our salvation. Paul insisted salvation is “not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:9). A person cannot earn, buy, or manufacture salvation. The redeeming blood of Christ purchased our salvation, and by faith a person simply receives it as a gift of divine grace.

READ: Ephesians 2:1–3, 9. **ASK:** What is true of all the works of those who try to earn salvation? (Q13) *They are dead. They can’t do anything to bring a sinner closer to a right standing with God.*

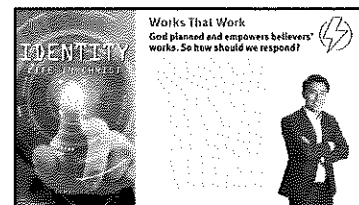
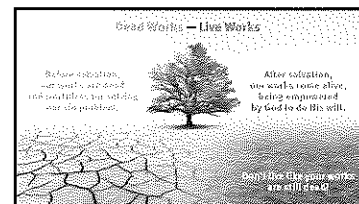
B. To produce good works (2:10)

Paul announced in Ephesians 2:10 that we are God's workmanship. The word order in the Greek New Testament places an emphasis on the word "his." The order is actually "his workmanship are we." We cannot boast even in our own good life; it is only by the grace of God that we are what we are, for we are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works." At salvation we were re-created unto a life of holiness. God ordained ahead of time that we should walk in good works, and each child of God, when yielded to Him, experiences the outworking of God's purpose in his or her life.

DISPLAY: Visual 12—Dead Works, Live Works. Emphasize that before salvation, our works are dead and worthless for solving our sin problem. After salvation, our works come alive, being empowered by God to do His will. Don't live like your works are still dead!

DISPLAY: Visual 13—Works That Work. **ASK:** God planned and empowers believers' works. So how should we respond? (Q14) *Make serving a priority; prepare to serve; pray about serving; train others to serve; serve with enthusiasm; appreciate those who serve well; evaluate your service in order to improve it.*

Our salvation is entirely God's gift to us, but a godly life is our gift to Him. A life that honors Him also witnesses to others. When our unsaved friends, family members, and coworkers see our conduct, they should see God's workmanship in us.



MAKING IT PERSONAL

Evidence of Faith

ASK: If a judge were to look at recordings of your life from the past week, would he or she find enough evidence (good works) to conclude you are a believer? What evidence would he find? (Q15)

ASK: If you were to stand before a judge one week from now, what good works could you compile between now and then as evidence of your salvation? (Q16)

Working for the Right Reason

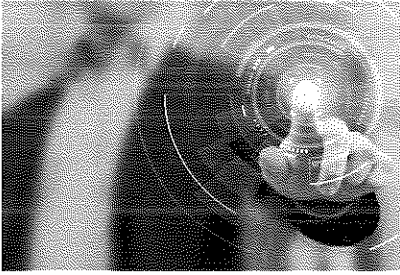
ASK: Why should you serve God? (Q17) *To glorify God, to accomplish His will, to help others, as a means of expressing thanks to God for salvation.*

ASK: Why will you serve God? (Q18)

Memory Verse

Encourage your learners to memorize Ephesians 2:10. Give them an opportunity to say the verse in class next week.

Building Unity in Christ



Topic

Unity in Christ

Theme

God made believers, including Jews and Gentiles, one in Christ to accomplish His mission on earth.

Desired Response

The learner will strive for unity in the local church.

Materials

- Visual 14.

Scripture Focus

Ephesians 2:11–22

Summary

This lesson focuses on God's work of breaking down the wall that separated Jews and Gentiles so that all who are in Christ are also one with one another. Saved Jews and saved Gentiles have equal access to God.

Outline

I. Gentile Separation from Christ (Eph. 2:11, 12)

- A. Heathen (2:11)
- B. Without Christ (2:12)
- C. Strangers (2:12)

II. Union in Christ (Eph. 2:13–22)

- A. Person of peace (2:13, 14)
- B. Program for peace (2:14–18)
- C. Pictures of peace (2:19–22)
 - 1. Fellow citizens (2:19)
 - 2. Family members (2:19)
 - 3. Building blocks (2:20, 21)
 - 4. Holy temple (2:21, 22)

Memory Verse

"For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us" (Ephesians 2:14).