

TEACHING OUTLINE

Main Point: Salvation is entirely a work of God's sovereign grace—rescuing spiritually dead sinners through faith in Christ and recreating them to walk in God-ordained good works.

1. HUMANITY'S UNIVERSAL SPIRITUAL CONDITION APART FROM CHRIST (EPHESIANS 2:1–3)

- **Scripture:**

"AND you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." (vv. 1–3)

- **Commentary:** Apart from divine intervention, every person is spiritually dead—not merely weak or sick. In this state, humanity lives under three enslaving influences: the cultural system of the world, the spiritual bondage of Satan ("the prince of the power of the air"), and the internal desires of fallen human nature ("the flesh"). Consequently, all human beings are by nature subject to God's righteous wrath.

2. GOD'S GRACIOUS INTERVENTION AND ELEVATION IN CHRIST (EPHESIANS 2:4–7)

- **Scripture:**

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." (vv. 4–7)

- **Commentary:** The pivot of salvation is rooted entirely in God's character ("rich in mercy") and His love, not human initiative. While sinners were dead, God made them alive ("quickened"), resurrected them, and seated them spiritually with Christ in heavenly places. The ultimate purpose of this elevation is to display the boundless riches of His grace throughout eternity.

3. SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH, NOT HUMAN MERIT (EPHESIANS 2:8–9)

- **Scripture:**

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (vv. 8–9)

- **Commentary:** Salvation is received entirely as an unearned gift (grace) through the instrument of faith. Human effort, ritual, or good works contribute nothing to justification, entirely eliminating any ground for human self-reliance or pride.

4. THE RESULT OF GRACE: GOD'S NEW CREATION PREPARED FOR GOOD WORKS (EPHESIANS 2:10)

- **Scripture:**

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

- **Commentary:** While good works cannot produce salvation, true salvation inevitably produces good works. Believers are God's masterpiece ("workmanship"), spiritually recreated in Christ. God has pre-arranged a path of righteous living ("good works") for His people to walk in as the fruit of their transformation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Observation:** According to verses 1–3, what three forces governed our lives before God made us alive in Christ?

2. **Observation/Reflection:** Verses 4–5 contrast our helpless state with God's response. What attributes of God are highlighted as the motive for saving spiritually dead sinners?
 3. **Reflection:** Paul emphasizes in verses 8–9 that salvation is "not of works, lest any man should boast." Why is understanding salvation as a completely unearned gift so vital to our relationship with God and with other believers?
 4. **Reflection:** Verse 10 calls believers God's "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." What is the difference between doing good works *to be saved* versus doing good works *because we are saved*?
 5. **Application:** In verse 2, Paul speaks of how we "walked" in our former life, and in verse 10, he speaks of the good works God ordained for us to "walk in." What is one area of your daily life where you can more deliberately walk in God's ordained good works this week?
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NOTES FOR THE TEACHER

This passage contains foundational doctrines regarding soteriology (the doctrine of salvation) that different Christian traditions interpret differently. As a teacher, you should be aware of where class participants may hold differing views:

1. HUMAN INABILITY AND SPIRITUAL DEATH (VV. 1, 5)

- **Reformed/Monergist View:** Interprets "dead in trespasses and sins" as total spiritual depravity/inability. In this view, a spiritually dead person cannot choose God or exercise faith until God sovereignly regenerates (quickens) them first.
- **Synergist/Arminian/Non-Calvinist Views:** Interpret spiritual death as separation from God and spiritual condemnation. They hold that God bestows grace (prevenient grace) on all people, enabling the human will to freely accept or reject the offer of salvation through faith.

2. THE ANTECEDENT OF "IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD" (V. 8)

- **Reformed Reading:** Asserts that the phrase "and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" refers to the entire salvation package—including faith itself—meaning faith is directly gifted by God to the elect.
- **Alternative Readings:** Other traditions and Greek scholars argue that "it" (a neuter pronoun in Greek) refers to the entire concept of salvation by grace, or to the system of salvation through faith, rather than stating that faith itself is specifically the gifted element, thereby preserving the view of faith as a free human response to God's revelation.

3. DIVINE FOREORDINATION OF WORKS (V. 10)

- **Calvinistic Reading:** Sees "before ordained" as God's sovereign, eternal decree appointing both the specific good works and the individual's walk in them.
- **Other Traditions:** See this as God preparing the pathway, sphere, or general plan of Christian living beforehand for the corporate church to walk in, rather than a deterministic foreordination of every specific individual deed.