

# ***FPFWC Christian Development***



## **We Are God's Artwork**

November 2022

Fall Quarter

**November 19, 2022**

**Lesson #3 – We Are God’s Handiwork**

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Ephesians 2:1-10

**ICE BREAKERS-**

1. Why was your position hopeless before becoming a believer in Christ?
2. How important is it to express thankfulness?

***Key Verse: “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***

**LESSON BACKGROUND –**

Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians as a prisoner of the Roman Empire (see Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; also Lesson Context of lesson 10). If he wrote during his imprisonment in Rome mentioned in Acts 28:30–31, then he was living in his own rented house and could receive visitors, both his fellow Christian workers and those interested in hearing about Jesus. He was not in a dark dungeon, as we might imagine a prisoner to be.

However, his situation still was not pleasant. Being a prisoner meant he could not move about as he pleased. It meant that he faced the threat of a judgment against him that could even mean his execution. Confinement, worry, shame—these were his experience.

But Paul’s prison letters do not suggest that the misery of Paul’s condition dictated his outlook. Even as a prisoner, Paul repeatedly emphasized that Christians have an exalted place in God’s plan. Being a prisoner might seem like death, but Paul could only speak of being *raised* from the dead.

Paul’s readers, though not prisoners, were also in a difficult position. Their new faith put them at odds with the world around them. Many of their familiar relationships had been cut off: Christians of Jewish background were sometimes no longer welcome in the synagogue; Christians of Gentile background were no longer to participate in the worship rites of paganism. Each group was under additional scorn for associating with the other. Christians were suspected of wanting to undermine the foundations of their communities.

Paul’s message to the Ephesians emphasizes a different perspective, the perspective of God. From God’s throne, Christians are not downtrodden but victorious. They are not rebels against the community but God’s agents of renewal for the world. Despite rejection by neighbors or even those in authority, Christians—then and now—are the grateful recipients of everything God has done. We’re already experiencing God’s eternal blessings and anticipating a still greater future when Christ returns. We live together as God’s temple (Ephesians 2:11–22). And Paul himself, proclaiming the gospel despite his confinement, exemplified what the lives of his audience were truly like (3:1–19).

But this status was not something they deserved or had earned. The work was all God's. They needed God's work in Christ to rescue them from the helpless state of death and make them alive to all that God had for them.

## **LESSON COMMENTARY**

### **Regeneration—From Death to Life (2:1–10)**

**2:1–3.** The first of God's purposes is to transform those who are spiritually dead to become alive in Christ. At the outset, Paul gives the bad news. Life without Christ is separation from God (death) caused by sins. This sinful life is called a way of walking and is in keeping with the influence of three things. First, the **world** (v. 2) has to do with society's ungodly attitudes and practices. Second, the **prince** (v. 2) is Satan, the evil one (6:16) who works in those who disobey God (v. 2). The **air** is another way of talking about "heavenly places"—the unseen spiritual world (see 1:3, 20; 3:10; 6:12). Third, the **flesh** (v. 3) refers to self-centered human nature that craves (lusts for) wrong things (cf. 1Jn 2:16, and the comments on Rm 7:5–6). Each person **dead** in sin (v. 5) is heading for God's holy anger against and punishment of sin.

**2:4–7.** In contrast to the above, here is the good news. God has *both* holy anger against sin *and also* merciful **love** for sinners (v. 4). Sinners' conversion, described here, contrasts massively with vv. 1–3. Salvation is transfer from death in sin to life in Christ. Note that, first, new life happens purely by God's **grace** (v. 5) and entails rescue from wrath. Second, all happens because of Christ's prior work and exaltation and because God unites believers to Christ (v. 6). Thus, vv. 4–7 look back to 1:20–23. As Christ was raised and seated, so the believer gains a wholly new position of approval and security. Third, as there was a future to sin (wrath), so there is a future to saving grace—yet more grace **in the ages to come** (v. 7).

**2:8–10.** This section harks back to v. 5, reiterating and expanding on salvation by grace (cf. Rm 3:24). The phrase **and that not of yourselves** (v. 8) refers to the whole preceding statement: a grace-by-faith salvation does not originate with people; it is God's **gift**. Since it is by **faith**, it is not by human effort (**works**, v. 9; cf. Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). God's goal is to eliminate human boasting (cf. Rm 3:27).

In contrast, while works do not produce salvation, salvation does produce good works (v. 10; cf. Php 1:11). Believers are God's creation (**workmanship**, *poiema*, means "something that is made" and appears elsewhere in Rm 1:20), being created for this purpose: that we do (lit., **walk in**) good works. Without Christ we walked in sin (v. 1); with Him we walk in good works that God predestined (**prepared beforehand**; cf. Rm 9:23).

**LESSON NUGGET** – Our lesson reminds us of four activities that God performed on behalf of sinners to save us from the consequences of our sins. He loved us (v. 4). He gave us life (v. 5), even when we were dead in sins. He accomplished this spiritual resurrection by the power of the Spirit, using the Word. He seated us with Christ (v. 6). We are not raised from the dead and left in the graveyard.

Because we are united to Christ, we have been exalted with Him and we are sharing His throne in the heavenly realms. He keeps us (vv. 7–9). God’s purpose in our redemption is not simply to rescue us from hell, as great a work as that is. His ultimate purpose in our salvation is that “in the ages to come” we are examples of God’s grace.

**Sources: *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, Wiersbe Study Bible and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary***