



**OASIS: WHO, OR WHAT, CAN SAVE US?
DONE IN SYNC WITH
THE “EN CHRISTO” SERMON JOURNEY**
The Passage – Ephesians 2:1-10

Preface: Welcome to our third LC Bible study in our new sermon series “En Christo.” These LC studies will complement the sermons, often using the same biblical texts, and will help your LC go deeper in personal understanding and application. These italicized portions are meant to resource and help you in leading.

Leader Notes: The first 3 chapters of Ephesians are theologically dense but beautiful passages. You are encouraged to take your time in these studies and limit the number of questions in favor of creating thoughtful discussions while keeping the big ideas in mind.

Study’s BIG Idea: It is only through the grace of Christ, that we can know what it means to be truly saved and fully alive.

Opening Question/Transition:

(During Oasis, the suggestion was raised that for groups who either know each other very well or have spent too much time in conversation before the study to skip the opening questions and “jump right in the text.” I thought it was a helpful piece of feedback to pass along.)

What do you think of when you hear the term “saved?”

What thoughts come to your mind when you hear the term “grace?”

Grace is perhaps a lofty, abstract over-used term throughout the Christian faith. Our study will aim to contextualize its profound meaning as we look at Eph. 2:1-10.

Ephesians 2:1-10 (NIV © 2011)

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh^[a] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.¹⁰ For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

O – From the first 3 verses of Chapter 2, what would you say Paul is trying to communicate to the reader?
(*Humanity is fallen and in need of redemption that only God can give.*)

I – The words “transgressions” (*paraptomata* in Greek) means “lapses” and “sins” (*hamartiai*) are “shortcomings” or “what misses the mark” literally. Paul tends to use these interchangeably to describe humanity’s shortcomings and need of forgiveness and redemption. Why do you think Paul insists on telling the reader that they “are dead” because of these trespasses?
(*Paul is creating the context of why redemption is needed in the first place. Furthermore, Paul is using a similar argument that he uses in Romans by articulating that the redemption of God is what makes it possible for humanity to be brought from death to life. Consider this part of Ephesians as “Romans the lite version.”*)

I – Verse 2 – The word he uses for “to live” (*peripateo*) actually means to “to walk about.” He uses this a couple of times (2:10, 4:17, 5:2). What insights can you draw from the idea of “walking about” as opposed to “living”?
(*More than simply existing or breathing, Paul is trying to convey a very active and intentional acting out of our desires and practices. He wants us to feel the responsibility for our actions, for our transgressions. He wants us to acknowledge our need/desire for redemption.*)

I – The words “operating” and “at work” are to further demonstrate that there is a cosmic and human rebellion against God. Humanity exhibits its refusal to believe, to obey, to surrender to its Creator and there are spiritual forces that are in opposition to the will of God (Paul will later bring this spiritual battle up in Ephesians 6). What is Paul setting up here?
(*God’s great act of salvation in Christ extended to humanity through His grace.*)

A – If we got stuck on these first three verses, we could end up thinking that God has a very low view of humanity which is completely the opposite of what this passage (2:1-10) wants. But before we move too quickly, what can we gain from acknowledging our personal and collective transgressions and therefore our need for redemption?

O – What do you see happening in verses 4-5?

I – Verse 4 begins with Paul proclaiming that God is motivated by His great love for us. Paul lumps all of humanity together for bad (we are all dead in our transgressions) and for good (God loves us all). What does this state about Christian salvation?
(*Among many answers: It is universal to all who accept the gospel of Jesus.*)

A – It’s interesting to note that God loves all of humanity. The idea of love is generally not found outside our families and trusted friends (and sadly not all of our families and friendships are sources of love). Institutions, corporations and governments have power throughout our society but we do not expect love from them; conversely, God, who is most powerful, is described as loving and forgiving. Yet humanity generally looks for salvation more from these institutions than from God. Why do you think this is so?

O – Verses 5 & 6 include these 3 phrases:

“made alive with Christ”
“raised up with Christ” and
“seated with him.” What phrase interrupts the progression?
(*“by grace you have been saved”*)

I – Christianity is so interesting because in one moment you go from being dead in your transgressions to being made alive in Jesus and seated in his throne room. Martin Luther once said, “Grace is given to heal the spiritually sick, not to decorate spiritual heroes.” Paul states that grace is

a gift from God. Contrast this with how the chapter began. Why does Paul begin this way (“dead in our transgressions”) and end this way (“it is the gift of God”)?
(To appreciate the profound meaning of grace, we have to understand what we are being saved from.)

O – What is your favorite part of verses 6-10?

I – There has been great debate between grace, faith and works from these verses Eph. 2:8-10 and James 2:14-17 (and surrounding context). By including verse 10 in the conversation, how is the debate of grace, faith and works reconciled?
(Paul rejects the idea that good works create the righteousness which will stand up in God’s judgment. Rather, he describes the moral conduct that God expects as good work as an out-working resulting from our salvation. We see this in other passages like Rom. 2:7, Col. 1:9-10.)

A – Because we are saved by God’s grace and not because of anything we could have done to self-achieve our salvation, how should we live as a new creation, as God’s “workmanship”?

Key: O – Observation. I - Interpretation. A – Application

- a. **Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single night.** Take some time and select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your LIFE Community group. Certain questions work better for certain groups. You are encouraged to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best.
- b. Complement OIA questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?).
- c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage their participation. And avoid answering your own questions!
- d. Timing/pacing: allocate your time and move forward gently, with a steady pace.
- e. Application: Pace the study to conclude with “difference making” application.
- f. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching,” rather than facilitating. It can cause people to feel distracted or de-powered.