

Life Group Study Guide

Ephesians—carefully, reverently, prayerfully considered-- will change our lives. This study is based on a sermon preached Sunday morning at WEFC entitled: *Up from the Grave We Arose* and reflects on **Ephesians 2:1-7**.

Before you begin: Take some time as a group to *pray* that God would be at work in your minds and hearts. There is a real difference between knowing and understanding something intellectually and having a heart that is deeply affected by the truth. Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you to *understand* God's word, *welcome* it into your heart, and then *apply* it faithfully to your lives.

Study Guide:

Ephesians chapter 1 contained an extended celebration where Paul set out his understanding of redemption as the basis for praising God. Then Paul expressed his thankfulness to God for the Ephesian's faith and his desire for God to help them grow deeper in it. In **chapter 2**, we begin to enter the heart of Paul's theological presentation of the gospel. He begins in a place we no longer go; he begins where the gospel begins, with the fallen, desperate, even hopeless condition of all people everywhere apart from Jesus Christ. Have someone from your group volunteer to read **Ephesians 2:1-3** aloud:

"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."

1) We Were Dead (v.1)

"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins"

Paul is referring to a state of real and present death, experienced by all unbelievers. The world is full of smart, creative, busy, active, engaging, passionate, beautiful people made in the image of God. In what sense are they "dead"? What are they not alive to? (cf. **1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:4**)

Corpses do crawl out of their caskets. Lazarus was not merely *resistant* to getting up. (see **John 11:38-44**) How hopeless is "dead"? Do lost people need spiritual resuscitation or something more...miraculous?

Telling people they are dead and deceived and under God's wrath seems really harsh. Should we be skipping the bad news and going straight to the good news? Is it "loving" to preach or talk about this subject? Would a doctor be more loving if he kept difficult diagnoses to himself?

God is HOLY, and he will not abide sin. That's who God is. And this is who we are: we are DEAD in our trespasses and sins. Why do all sinners need to hear those truths?

2) We Were Deceived

Paul talks about three forms of corrupting and enslaving influence that we were under while we were dead. He talks about *the world, the devil, and the flesh*. These are our three masters, and they hold us bound in chains of darkness and death.

He says concerning the world that before Christ, we were: "*following the course of this world*" (v.2). "*Bound by the Spirit of the age*" would also be a correct translation. That is to say; before Christ, we were held captive to thinking like everyone else in contemporary culture. We went with the flow. What beliefs and practices considered culturally sensible in our day and age point to this reality?

Paul says concerning our bondage to the devil that before coming to Christ, we were: "*following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.*" Who is he talking about? (cf. **1 John 5:19; Acts 26:18; Matt. 9:34, 12:24, 26 Rev. 2:13; John 12:31**). How should the knowledge that people are subject to this power and influence affect our prayers (**Eph. 6:12**)?

Thirdly Paul mentions that we are in bondage to *our flesh* and to "fleshly ways of thinking" He says in v. 3 that prior to Christ we: "*all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind.*" In **Galatians 5:19-21**, Paul gives us a detailed list of what he's referring to. What, on that list, are desires of the body, what are of the mind? Christians struggle with things on this list as well. How is our condition and experience different from the unbelievers? How can Paul say, we all "*once*" lived this way? (cf. **Eph. 4:22-24; Rom. 7:21-8:11; 1 Jn 1:8-9, 2:1, 3:6-10**)

Christians understand the world (our environment), demonic influence, and our sinful appetites all work together to deceive and produce sinful human behaviour. Those are three heavy chains. It is rarely, if ever, just one or the other. It's like the world, the devil, and the flesh collude to climb on top of your spiritual corpse and tie three more blindfolds around your already blind eyes, just in case. How hopeless is dead *and* deceived?

3) We Were Children of Wrath

v. 3 *"and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind"*

What does Paul mean when he says *"by nature"*? (Hint: It has to do with our lineage. We were (v.2) *"sons of disobedience."*) Are we sinners because we sin, or do we sin because we are sinners? Discuss what it means to be born into the situation of warranting God's wrath; to be born pointed in the direction of rebellion against God. Why do we warrant God's wrath? (see **John 3:19**). How hopeless is "dead," deceived, and deserving of God's just wrath?

How much do you think you contributed to your salvation? How does what we have learned in this study so far strike at our pride? How does the bad news prepare us for the good news?

4) But God...

⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

What is your story of coming to Jesus? What do you think God saved you from? Not too much? Terrible conduct? How does **Eph. 2:1-3** show us our lostness was way more dreadful than we realized? In what way is every testimony the same (**Eph. 2:4-5**)? What's wrong with a testimony that's all about me and the choices I made?

Only in Christ, when your spiritual eyes are opened, when the chains of sin and death are cut, and you are filled with the Holy Spirit are you free. **2 Cor. 3:17**: *"Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom"* and nowhere else!

Why did God save us? Was it because we deserved it? (cf. **Eph. 2:4-5** and **Titus 3:4-7**)

Why does Paul interject *"—by grace you have been saved—"* into his sentence? What does he want us to see?

This passage takes us from the bottom of the deepest valley to the top of the tallest mountain. With spiritual *resurrection* came spiritual *ascension* to the heights of heaven:

⁶and he [God] raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Why would he want to show that? Why display us in heaven as objects of his kindness? (see **Eph. 1:6, 12, 14**). Close by reading and discussing **Ezekiel 37: 1-6**.