

Discussion Guide on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians
Our New Position Individually (Ephesians 2:1-10)

1. Before bringing us to the magnificent mercy and grace of God in salvation, Paul highlights our history before becoming a Christian and shows us our spiritual biography. What benefit is there in remembering our former way of life (Eph. 2:1-3)?
2. Compare 2 Cor. 4:4 with Eph. 2:1 and Rom. 11:15. Do you see any relationship between these verses?
3. Before becoming a believer who/what were you really following (Eph. 2:2)? The “ruler” is clearly Satan who, as a spirit being, presides over or dominates the dominion or “atmosphere” (read “air”) of evil. It is in this “dominion of darkness” where Satan rules and where you used to live before being rescued (see Col. 1:13). How does this impact you as you think of relatives and loved ones who do not know Christ?
4. Whereas verse 2 says there are forces outside of us that pull us in the wrong direction, verse 3 indicates we are lured wrongly by internal forces such as our “desires and thoughts.” The demands of the “flesh” (NASB) are not merely physical but non-physical (see Gal. 5:19-20). Read 1 John 2:15-17 and James 1:13-15. Do you see John and James saying something similar as Paul in Eph. 2:2-3? What does this tell you about the nature and scope of sin (see Rom. 8:7)?
5. Read Rom. 3:9-18. Lest we think that some unbelievers have a better standing before God than others, Paul insists that no one is beyond sin’s reach by adding “all of us also lived among them at one time.” Since everyone is under sin’s reign before being born again, how does this highlight God’s grace in salvation?
6. When Paul writes “we were by nature objects of wrath,” from whom did we inherit such judgment (see Rom. 5:12, 18 and also Psalm 51:5; 58:3)?
7. The most important phrase in the Bible is in Eph. 2:4, “But God” (NASB). Were it not for God our entire existence would truly be hopeless (Eph 2:12). God is characterized as being rich in mercy (so too in the OT; see Ex. 34:6; Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:31; Mic. 7:18). How might this characterization motivate you to evangelism?
8. Compare Luke 15:24 and John 5:24 with Eph. 2:5. What literally happened to you when you became a Christian (see also, 2 Cor. 5:17)?
9. Look at the tense of the verbs in Eph. 2:6. Paul is so certain about what God has accomplished in our salvation that we already are in heaven (see Rom. 8:30 and Philip. 3:20)! As citizens and occupants of heaven, how might this realization impact your present life? Your self-image/identity?
10. According to Eph. 2:7, why did God save us? How does this define your purpose in life?
11. Meditate on Eph. 2:8. Quite plainly, if salvation were on the basis of *any* human merit/works, grace would no longer be grace (see Rom. 11:6). Likewise, the “faith” through which we are saved must also be a gift of grace. Although salvation is conditioned upon believing, all those who are saved are enabled to do so. We are recipients, not causal agents in salvation. It is not true that a person has the ability to believe but refuses. If this were so, then salvation depends upon humans believing and not on God who grants the ability to believe. “And this,” although referring to our salvation as a whole, does not exclude the faith by which it is received. Meditate on John 1:12; 6:44, 65; Rom. 9:16-18.

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12. Compare Rom. 4:2, 16 with Eph. 2:9. Wherever God's grace is present, human merit is necessarily excluded. Therefore, no one can take credit for their salvation. In what/whom should we boast (1 Cor. 1:31)?
13. All those who have received God's gracious gift of salvation are characterized by "good works," which cannot earn salvation but *are* the fruit of it. Although we are not saved *from* works we are saved *for* works. Works are not a *condition of* but a *consequence from* salvation. Read Luke 6:35-36 for some indicators that God is at work in your life. How are you doing in these areas?
14. Read John 15:1-5 and Col. 1:29. Just as we are saved by grace, we are also sanctified by grace. The ability to perform any "good works" is enabled by God's Spirit (Rom. 8:4). What areas of your life need God's creative handiwork and what can you do to yield to his enabling grace?