

Ephesians 2:1-7 (NIV)**Made Alive in Christ**

2 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.

Footnotes:

- a. [Ephesians 2:3](#) In contexts like this, the Greek word for *flesh* (*sarx*) refers to the sinful state of human beings, often presented as a power in opposition to the Spirit.

Ephesians 2:1-7 (HCSB)**From Death to Life**

2 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins² in which you previously walked according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler who exercises authority over the lower heavens,^[a] the spirit now working in the disobedient.^[b]³ We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also.⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love that He had for us,^[c]⁵ made us alive with the Messiah even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace!⁶ Together with Christ Jesus He also raised us up and seated us in the heavens,⁷ so that in the coming ages He might display the immeasurable riches of His grace through His kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Footnotes:

- a. [Ephesians 2:2](#) Lit ruler of the domain of the air
b. [Ephesians 2:2](#) Lit sons of disobedience
c. [Ephesians 2:4](#) Lit love with which He loved us

Holman Christian Standard Bible - Study Bible¹
Ephesians 2:1-7

2:1-6 Paul's point in these verses was to draw contrasts between the human condition described in [verses 1-3](#) and the new life pictured in [verses 4-6](#).

Old Life (vv. 1-3)

We were Dead Now

We were Enslaved

We were Objects of Wrath

We walked Among the Disobedient

We were Under Satan's Dominion

New Life (vv. 4-6)

We Are Alive

Now We Are Enthroned

Now We Are Objects of Grace

Now We Fellowship with Christ

Now We Are in Union with Christ

2:1 Dead in your trespasses and sins: "Trespasses" are lapses; "sins" are shortcomings. Apart from Christ, people are without authentic spiritual life. In this state the most vital part of the human personality is dead; thus people cannot by their own efforts or ingenuity experience fellowship with God or meet His requirements.

2:2 Walked according to the ways of this world: "This world" is associated with the realm of Satan. The way of life without Christ is in accordance with Satan's ways.

2:3 Previously lived among them in our fleshly desires: The Greek word translated "lived" is a different term from the one in [verse 2](#) translated "previously walked," though the idea is similar. "Lived" means to turn to and fro and behave in accordance with certain principles. Apart from Christ, people are dominated by "fleshly desires," which refers to an orientation away from God toward selfish concerns. The plural suggests multiple unredeemed urges in our life apart from Christ. The unredeemed person is completely at the mercy of the tyrannical self and its lustful impulses.

By nature children under wrath: The fall into sin described in [Genesis 3](#) was not merely a moral lapse but a deliberate turning away from God in rejection of Him. Sin's entrance brought about a sinful nature in all humanity. Men and women are "by nature" hostile to God and estranged from Him. While functioning as free moral agents, sin always negatively influences human decisions and actions. People do not genuinely repent or turn to God apart from divine enablement ([Eph 2:5](#)).

2:4 But God: Over against the human rejection of God, Paul painted a picture of the new life manifested in God's gracious acceptance of sinners because of Christ. The strong contrast points to God's answer to people's dreadful situation.

Rich in mercy: "Mercy" is God's compassion for the helpless that relieves their situation. While grace involves God giving believers what they do not deserve, mercy means that God does not give what is deserved.

2:5 Made us alive... even though we were dead is Paul's extension of his thoughts in [verse 1](#), which are viewed in retrospect from the vantage point of redemptive history. Because of God's great love, He "made us alive" **with the Messiah**.

1. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Ephesians 2".

2:6 Together with Christ Jesus: God's loving mercy not only makes new life possible, but by it God has made us alive, raised us up, and seated us with Christ. God's great power has enthroned us with Christ in the heavenly places, even as Christ was exalted to God's right hand following the resurrection.

2:7-10 The work of reconciliation in these verses is described with four key terms:

- (1) "kindness" God's loving tender action;
- (2) "grace" God's free favor toward ill-deserving people (a favorite term of the apostle, used over 100 times in his letters);
- (3) "faith" the instrument that brings us empty-handed to God (*see* [Rm 10:12](#)); and
- (4) "saved" equated with new life, forgiveness of sins, deliverance from the plight described in [verses 1-3](#), liberation, and resurrection

2:7 The salvation of men and women is a display of divine grace. God did all of this in Christ with a single goal in view: to **display the immeasurable riches of His grace**, the exhibition of His divine favor for all of history to see, including angels as well as people ([1Pe 1:10-12](#)).

English Standard Version - Study Bible²
Ephesians 2:1-7

2:1-10 Salvation by Grace through Faith. This section, like [1:3-14](#) and [1:15-23](#), is a single sentence in the original Greek. The overarching theme is that God lavishes his grace on Christians through his saving initiative. There are two subsections: [2:1-3](#) and [2:4-10](#).

2:1-3 Hopelessness and Helplessness without Christ. “God helps those who help themselves” is not from the Bible but from the ancient Greeks. As Paul emphasizes in this section, the truth is the exact opposite: God helps the helpless! Even more, he helps his enemies who have transgressed his holy law.

2:1 you were dead. Human beings as sons and daughters of Adam enter the world spiritually dead. They have no inclination or responsiveness toward God and no ability to please God. Paul begins with this phrase then breaks off with other thoughts until he returns to it again in [v. 5](#). **trespasses.** Violations of divine commandments. **sins.** Offenses against God in thought, word, or deed.

2:2 prince... spirit. This refers to Satan as he dominates his human subjects, here called **sons of disobedience**, a Hebrew-inspired phrase like “sons of this world” in contrast to “sons of light” ([Luke 16:8](#)). They belong to the family of those who rebel against the holy and true God.

2:3 by nature. To be sons and daughters of Adam is to be born into a fallen state ([Ps. 51:5](#)) and subject to God’s condemnation as **children of wrath**. To escape this hopeless imprisonment requires nothing short of a new birth or a new creation ([Eph. 2:10](#)).

2:4-10 Hope in Christ. In contrast to the hopeless state of the nonbeliever, Christians exult in hope because of God’s incredible grace and free salvation. Paul accents this grace in contrast to the pre-Christ hopelessness analyzed in [vv. 1-3](#).

2:4 But God. No hopeless fate looks any grimmer than that which awaits the forlorn company of mankind marching behind the “prince of the power of the air” ([v. 2](#)) to their destruction under divine wrath. Just when things look the most desolate, Paul utters the greatest short phrase in the history of human speech: “But God!” **rich in mercy.** God’s mercy on his helpless enemies flows from his own loving heart, not from anything they have done to deserve it.

2:5 when we were dead. Paul resumes his original thought, which began with “you were dead” in [v. 1](#). **made us alive.** That is, God gave us regeneration (new spiritual life within). This and the two verbs in [v. 6](#) (“raised up” and “seated with”) make up the main verbs of the long sentence in [vv. 1-10](#). Since Christians were dead, they first had to be made alive before they could believe (and God did that **together with Christ**). This is why salvation is **by grace** alone (see notes on [v. 8](#); [vv. 9-10](#)).

2:6-7 Raised us up with him means that, because of Christ’s resurrection, those who believe in him are given new life spiritually in this age (regeneration). They will also be given renewed physical bodies when Christ returns (future resurrection). **seated us with him in the heavenly places.** God has allowed his people even now to share in a measure of the authority that Christ has, seated at the right hand of God (cf. [1:20-22](#); [6:10-18](#); [James 4:7](#); [1 John 4:4](#)), a truth that would be especially important in Ephesus with all of its occult practices (see [Introduction: Purpose, Occasion, and Background](#); also note on [Eph. 1:18-19](#)). **Verse 7 of ch. 2** answers the question of why God lavished such love upon his people: so that they will marvel for all of eternity over the incredible kindness and love of God. It will take all of eternity to fathom God’s love, and those who are saved will never plumb the depths of it.

2. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Ephesians 2".

NLT Life Application Study Bible³

Ephesians 2:1-7

2:1, 2 Immediately after his prayer, Paul reminds the Ephesians of the reality of personal sin. Like them, we must never forget our past, the condition from which Jesus saved us. Those memories are the best fuel for our gratitude to Christ for all he has done in our behalf.

2:2 Paul describes Satan, the devil, as "the commander of the powers in the unseen world." Paul's readers believed that Satan and the evil spiritual forces inhabited the region between earth and sky. Satan is thus pictured as ruling an evil spiritual kingdom—the demons and those who are against Christ. In the resurrection, Christ was victorious over the devil and his power. Therefore, Jesus Christ is the permanent ruler of the whole world; the devil is only the temporary ruler of the part of the world that chooses to follow him.

2:3 The fact that all people, without exception, commit sin proves that without Christ we have a sinful nature. We are lost in sin and cannot save ourselves. Does this mean only Christians do good? Of course not—many people do good to others. On a relative scale, many are moral, kind, and law abiding. Comparing these people to criminals, we would say that they are very good indeed. But on God's absolute scale, *no one* is good enough to earn salvation ("dead because of your disobedience and your many sins," [2:1](#)). Only through being united with Christ's perfect life can we become good in God's sight. "Subject to God's anger" refers to those who are to receive God's wrath because of their rejection of Christ.

2:4 We were dead in our sins, *but God...* We were rebels against him, *but God...* We were enslaved by the devil and our sinful natures, *but God...* These may be the two most welcome words in all of Scripture: "but God." God could have left us spiritually dead, in rebellion against him and in bondage to our sins. *But he didn't.* He did not save us because of, but rather in spite of, what he saw in us. In addition to thanking him for what he has done for us, we should also show humble patience and tolerance for others who seem unworthy or undeserving of our love and compassion. They may be spiritually dull, rebellious, and even antagonistic toward God. So were we; *but God loved us anyway.* Can we do less for fellow sinners?

2:4, 5 In the previous verses Paul wrote about our old sinful nature ([2:1-3](#)). Here Paul emphasizes that we do not need to live any longer under sin's power. The penalty of sin and its power over us were miraculously destroyed by Christ on the cross. Through faith in Christ we stand acquitted, or not guilty, before God ([Romans 3:21, 22](#)). God does not take us out of the world or make us robots—we will still feel like sinning, and sometimes we will sin. The difference is that before we became Christians, we were dead in sin and were slaves to our sinful nature. But now we are alive with Christ (see also [Galatians 2:20](#)).

2:6 Because of Christ's resurrection, we know that our body will also be raised from the dead ([1 Corinthians 15:2-23](#)) and that we have been given the power to live as Christians now ([1:19](#)). These ideas are combined in Paul's image of sitting with Christ in "the heavenly realms" (see the note on [1:3](#)). Our eternal life with Christ is certain because we are united in his powerful victory.

3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 2002.