

Exegetical Examination of Ephesians 2:1–10 on Salvation by Grace through Faith Alone

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Abstract

The study conducts an exegetical analysis of Ephesians 2:1–10 to interrogate the relationship between salvation by faith and works in Paul’s soteriology. Salvation is an important doctrine in Christian faith that builds on hamartiology. The study provides insight into the relationship between work and faith in salvation, showing that good works are the fruit of true faith in salvation. The grammatical-historical exegetical method is applied to analyze the meanings of Greek words such as χάριτί (grace), πίστις (faith), ἔργα (works), and ποίημα (workmanship). Salvation is achieved by grace through faith alone, and human good works stand as the result of new life in Christ.

Keywords: Ephesians 2:1–10, Salvation by Grace Alone, Salvation by Grace through Faith, Salvation through Works

Introduction

Salvation is an important doctrine in Christian faith that has received special attention over the years. The Bible reveals that God is righteous, while all people are sinners and need to be saved by faith in Christ. Accordingly, the relationship between God and people is characterized by three propositions: God is righteous, man is a sinner, and God saves people.¹ The concept of salvation through faith is one of the most fundamental doctrines in Christian faith, yet it raises many contradictions among theologians. The main question here is how God saves people. Is it because of works or faith alone?

¹ Allister E. McGrath, *Justitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, electronic resource, 3rd ed (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 5.



Accordingly, Ephesians 2:1–10 serves as the foundation for understanding the means of salvation. Since it focuses on answering the question of whether God offers salvation to people based on their work and faith alone or faith alone. The passage describes humanity’s state before God intervenes in verses 1-3, namely, spiritual death caused by sin and transgression. Also, states the condition of humankind after God intervenes in verses 4-7, which is associated with the grace of God through faith. And lastly, in verses 8-10, the passage shows how new life in Christ is supposed to be.² Human work is described as the outcomes that humankind is supposed to produce in the new life in faith.³ Salvation is not earned; it is received by faith in Christ.

Background Information on Ephesians

Genre

The book of Ephesians was written to address the church in Asia Minor. In this section of the book, Paul addressed the human condition before salvation, God’s intervention, and the hope found in Christ. This section is one of the first parts of the letter described by Paul from chapter 1:3 to chapter 3:21. According to Charles, the book of Ephesians is identified as an epistle, or letter, which specifically identifies theological teaching for believers in the early church.⁴ It is an epistle because it addresses a specific issue to the church; all epistles were specific in addressing specific issues to the church.

Authorship

Different scholars have discussed the authorship of the book of Ephesians. Others support Pauline authorship, but others have rejected it. Many contentions regarding the authorship of the book of Ephesians were identified. Milton, in his book, argues that the historical, linguistic, stylistic, and literary arguments arise in identifying the authorship of this book.⁵ He emphasized that internal and external evidence prove that Paul is the author of the book of Ephesians. According to Milton, two examples of internal evidence indicating that Paul was the author are Ephesians 1:1 and 3:1. The early church recognized Pauline authorship of the book.⁶

² Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Baker Academic, 2002), 305.

³ Anthony A. Hoekema, *Saved by Grace* (Grand Rapids: William B, 1989), 144.

⁴ Charles H. Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians, Paideia : Commentaries on the New Testament* (Baker Academic, 2007), 53–56.

⁵ C. Leslie Mitton, *The Epistle to the Ephesians: Its Authorship, Origin, and Purpose* (Wipf and Stock, 2002), 25.

⁶ C. Leslie Mitton, *The Epistle to the Ephesians: Its Authorship, Origin, and Purpose*, 28.



Some opponents of Paul’s authorship of Ephesians cite the following reasons: First is the different style and flow of thoughts that is used in this book, and second is that the author who wrote this book seems to be not familiar with the recipients, as shown in 1:15, 3:2, and 4:21.⁷ Other scholars suggest that “the style and vocabulary of Paul applied in the book of Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians serve as the benchmark for pointing to Paul as the author of the book of Ephesians.”⁸ The salutation or greeting style, the content style, and the conclusion style are the major points that seem similar across all the above-mentioned books written by Paul, which also support the letter of Ephesians being accepted as written by Paul.

In addition, Baugh suggested the following as the main reasons for denying Pauline authorship. This includes “the vocabulary used in the books, the interests of the theology of the epistles, the objective attitude of the epistle, the Ephesians’ relationship to Colossians, the Ephesians’ style in Greek compared to other Pauline epistles like Galatians and Romans.”⁹

Hoehner notes that “fifty percent of the words written in the book of Ephesians are not found in the four letters mentioned above, which were anticipated to be the typical determinant described by several scholars.”¹⁰ Regardless of the ongoing scholarly debate over authorship, the research agrees that Paul is the author. The researcher focuses on internal evidence, as described in Ephesians 3:1, which mentions Paul as the author of the letter. Also, “the early church proved the book of Ephesians as canonical, which recognizes the authorship of Paul.”¹¹ These reasons also lead researchers to continue agreeing with Paul’s authorship of the book of Ephesians.

Date

There have also been debates about dating, with some scholars suggesting a date around AD 70. Talbert suggests “the letter of Ephesians was written when Paul was in Rome, as explained in the book of Acts 28.”¹² The researcher disagrees with the above suggestion because, if the date were that, there could be some references regarding the damage to the temple. The researcher agrees with a date around AD 60–62, when Paul was imprisoned in Rome, as explained in Eph. 3:1, 4:1, and 6:20. External evidence indicates that all letters were written during the early period of

⁷ Ibid., 25–36.

⁸ Ibid., 36.

⁹ Steven M Baugh, *Ephesians*. (Lexham Press, 2016), 42.

¹⁰ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 7.

¹¹ Ibid., 60.

¹² Charles H. Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians, Paideia : Commentaries on the New Testament*, 11.



Christianity. Whereby the church fathers support it, such as Tertullian, Irenaeus, and Clement of Alexandria. “The letter of Ephesians was one of the letters that was well-known and used in the early period.”¹³

Recipients

The book of Ephesians was written to the church of Ephesus, as explained in Ephesians 1:1. Some scholars argue that it was not intended for a single church but for several churches in Asia Minor. Westcott suggests that “it was written purposefully to Gentile believers, as explained in Eph. 2:11–13.”¹⁴ The researcher argues that the letter was written specifically to all believers in Asia Minor in Ephesus because the author, in the first part of the greeting, did not mention any specific individual or church to whom he was addressing. This proves that the letters were written to all believers.

Purpose

Generally, the book of Ephesians was written to address the truth about God’s redemptive plan for his people through Jesus Christ. In this book, Paul emphasizes the unity of the church that we receive in believing in Christ. This shows the new identity Christians obtain in Christianity after redemption. Hoehner suggests that “Paul wrote this book purposefully to emphasize the unity between believers and God that is achieved through believing the finished work of Christ. Sin separated man from God, but through Jesus there is restoration of the unity again in our life.”¹⁵ And through faith in Jesus Christ, the unity of the church is attained. Paul began chapter 2 by describing the nature of human life before God’s intervention: we were dead in our sins. But God, through his mercy and great love, restored our relationship. Therefore, the researcher agrees with Hoehner’s view that a book should be written deliberately to describe the unity in Christ that results from God’s intervention in people’s lives through his death and resurrection.

Since Paul wrote, “to emphasize the unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ, the spiritual blessings in Christ, and the believer’s responsibility to live considering their calling, Ephesians 2:1-10 specifically highlight salvation by grace through faith and the transformation it brings.”¹⁶

¹³ Simon Austen, *Teaching Ephesians, from text to message*: London, (Proclamation Trust Resource, 2012), 18

¹⁴ Brooke Foss Westcott, *Epistle to the Ephesians: Christian Classics Reproductions* (2024), xxiii.

¹⁵ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 97.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 100.



Though the thesis did not end the debate among scholars and theologians about the authorship, date, and recipients, it was irritating to provide the biblical grounds for the letter's truth. This research supports the view that Paul wrote the letter in Ephesians to all believers in Asia Minor around 60–62 AD. The Asia Minor churches included both Gentiles and Jews, which sometimes challenged the church.

The Exegesis of Ephesians 2:1–10

Historical and cultural context

The city of Ephesus was best known as an important city in Western Asia Minor (now Turkey) because it had a harbor opening into the Cayster River. The people of Ephesus were very known for pagan worship, in which they worshiped Artemis as their god.¹⁷ This city was also a commercial center, an intersection of major trade routes. The way of life in Ephesus shows that they used to worship the Roman goddess called Diana in a dedicated pagan temple. When Paul wrote this letter, he had a good understanding of the god they worshiped; thus, in his writing, he started by helping them recognize their identity in Christ, not in the goddess Diana.

Paul, during his mission, made Ephesus a center of evangelism for approximately three years, as explained in Acts 19:10. The church fathers supported the notion that the letter was written to the churches in Ephesus. However, in some manuscripts, the term “Ephesus” is not mentioned. Therefore, the city of Ephesus was mentioned as one of the earliest cities where Christianity was introduced. In Acts 19:1–2, Luke, the author of Acts, describes how Paul traveled to Ephesus during his missionary journey and asked the Ephesians whether they had received the gift of the Holy Spirit. The church of Ephesus was founded only on believing in Christ and baptism, but they did not receive the power of the Holy Spirit.

During his missionary journey in Ephesus, Paul helped the church receive the power of the Holy Spirit. Then the church flourished, comprising both Jewish and Greek believers. Also, according to Revelation 2:1–7, the church of Ephesus faced many challenges, including the worship of the goddess Diana, for which the revelator warned them. The city of Ephesus, home to many different ethnic groups, was one reason the church turned from true worship to worshipping the goddess Artemis.

¹⁷ Clyde E. Fant and Mitchell Glenn Reddish, *A Guide to Biblical Sites in Greece and Turkey* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 177.



Literary Context

Hoehner suggests that the letter of Ephesians is divided into mainly four parts: the opening part (1:1–2); the second is the main body part of the book, which consists of two parts: the first section from 1:3 to 3:21 and the second section from 4:1 to 6:20. The last part is from 6:21 to 24.¹⁸ Before the main part of this study, Paul, in Ephesians 1:15–23, offers a prayer for believers in the church of Ephesus. According to Hoehner, this is the main section, which presents Paul’s teaching to believers in Ephesus, both Gentiles and Jews, on salvation by faith alone.¹⁹ Within the selected passage in chapter 2:1–10, Paul introduces the sinful state of humankind before and after God’s intervention, and the expectation of new life for humankind in Christ. In the next section, Paul speaks about the unity of Christ, emphasizing the unity of the people of Christ, unity and peace with God, and the implications of Christ’s unity and peace. Therefore, “the paretic basics are highly identified, which are mostly connected with the first part of the book of Ephesian.”²⁰

Analysis of Ephesians 2:1–10

Ephesians 2:1–10 presents a basic understanding of the doctrine of salvation. According to Austin, “the passage is one of the most wonderful and shocking ever written in the scripture”.²¹ This is because it describes the experience of people’s old life, caused by sin and transgression, resulting in spiritual death and the inability of the human being to redeem himself. Then God, rich in his mercy and great in his love, intervened in the life of the human being to bring salvation. So, salvation is a gift of God obtained by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ, which requires the human being to produce a good work that was ordained beforehand. The portion of scripture provides a deep theological revelation of salvation through faith in the finished work of Christ. It describes the essential idea of human life transformation from death to divine life initiated by God through the sacrifice of Christ.

The Sinful State of Humankind before God’s Intervention (verses 1–3)

In verses 1 to 3, Apostle Paul insists on the original nature of people caused by ἁμαρτία “sin” and παραπτώμα “transgression”. “The original sin caused spiritual death to all people. Total depravity is one of the outcomes of sin and transgression that killed the ability of human beings to fight

¹⁸ Harold W., *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2002), 62.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 305.

²⁰ Michael Allen, *Ephesians (Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible)* (Brazos Press, 2020), 65.

²¹ Simon Austen, *Teaching Ephesians, from text to message*: London, (Proclamation Trust Resource, 2012), 67



against sin.”²² Hoehner wrote that the condition of spiritual death among people denotes the total inability to save themselves. He emphasized that the spiritual death due to sin and transgression causes people to look on God alone as the one who can redeem and save them from sin, and it is their outcome. If God doesn’t take the initiative in salvation, people cannot save themselves.²³

Paul describes the condition of Gentiles—and by implication all humanity—before God’s intervention as one of spiritual death. He employs the expression *Καὶ ὑμεῖς ὄντας νεκροὺς τοῖς παραπτώμασιν καὶ ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν* (“and you were dead in your trespasses and sins” NIV) to define the human condition apart from God. This “death” does not refer to physical death but to spiritual alienation, marked by the loss of communion with God as a result of human rebellion.

In this regard, Paul in verse 1 uses the terms “sin” (*ἁμαρτία*) and “transgression” (*παράπτωμα*) to describe complementary aspects of human fallenness. The term *ἁμαρτία* “Sin” emphasizes humanity’s failure to meet God’s righteous standard—literally, “missing the mark”—while *παράπτωμα* “transgression” highlights active deviation or violation of God’s will. Thus, transgression underscores the willful and rebellious dimension of human disobedience, revealing that alienation from God is not merely a condition of weakness but also one of culpability. Together, these terms capture the full extent of humanity’s estrangement from God. Comfort in his book says that the terms “transgression” and “sin” are synonyms that portray human thoughtless actions against God and his justice, resulting in subsequent failure to live a holy life.²⁴ Clinton mentioned that “due to sin and transgression human beings are spiritually dead and incapable of redeeming themselves.”²⁵ Paul’s argument makes clear that salvation cannot originate from human effort or obedience to moral or religious demands. Rather, spiritual death necessitates divine initiative.

Then, in verse 2, Paul states the human conduct that followed the ways of the world. He uses the term “Age” (*αἰών*) and the term “world” (*κόσμος*), which are overlapping terms.²⁶ Paul used both terms to define a kind of culture and society that is not under God’s control but godless. Both terms are primarily time-based and spatial, respectively.²⁷ Human beings walked in a fallen

²² Clinton E. Arnold, Frank S. Thielman, and Steven M. Baugh, *Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Zondervan Academic, 2016), 32.

²³ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 311.

²⁴ Philip Comfort, Peter Davids, and Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, Philemon*, Vol. 16 (Tyndale House, 2017), 415.

²⁵ Clinton E. Arnold, Frank S. Thielman, and Steven M. Baugh, *Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 33.

²⁶ Walter L. Liefeld, *Ephesians*. Vol. 10. InterVarsity Press, 1997, 57

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 57



condition before God intervened in their lives, being influenced by the power of the prince of the air, who is the spirit that worketh now in the sinful people. Paul uses the term power” (ἐξουσία) to denote not the use of force but in the sense of an individual impact by which a superior controls others. And he uses a phrase “prince of the power of air” (κατὰ τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος) to represent the ruler of darkness who is given an influence to impact or leads human beings into evils with the invisible power or spirits.²⁸ Individuals who follow the influence of the prince of the air, Paul calls “sons of disobedience” (οἱ υἱοὶ τῆς ἀπειθείας) to signify people categorized by disobedience. The same spirit that controls people’s lives nowadays.

In verse 3, Paul continued a previous conversation with a phrase “among whom” (ἐν οἷς) which could also be translated as “in which” whereby both terms are indistinguishable in Greek.²⁹ Using a term “among whom” instead of using “in which” is necessary because it is almost inevitable. Also, in this verse Paul uses a phrase “we also” (καὶ ἡμεῖς) to speak about all people including himself. sin and transgression deprived the spirit and flesh of all human being and caused them to walk under the “desire and thoughts of the flesh” which is the “physical passion of the body.”³⁰ In this verse, Paul describes the state of all human beings, including himself, which invites God’s appropriate anger, not just because of a definite sin but because of their nature of wrath. Thus, from verses 1–3, Paul describes the original sinful state of humankind, in which God intervened to bring salvation to all human beings.

The State of humankind after God’s Intervention (verses 4–7)

In verses 4–7, Paul speaks about God’s intervention in human life. Regardless of people’s previous nature, God, due to his “mercy” (ἐλέει) and “love” (ἀγάπην), intervened in their lives. Eadie suggests that “the fact of the mercy of God and his love portrays a picture of the guilt and misery of humankind”.³¹ Whereby the conversion from the last section to the current section is well indicated with the particle δὲ.

In this respect, Paul, in verse 4, introduces a new conversation with the expression ὁ δὲ θεὸς (“but God”), which emphasizes God as the source of salvation.³² The term “but” in this verse

²⁸ Ernest Best, *Ephesians: a shorter commentary*, (T&T Clark Ltd, 2003), 67

²⁹ John. A Muddiman, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*. A&C Black, 2001, 105

³⁰ Walter L. Liefeld, *Ephesians*. Vol. 10. InterVarsity Press, 1997, 58

³¹ John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Christian Classics Reproductions, 2024), 195.

³² Andrew T. Lincoln et al., *Ephesians*, Vol. 42 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 1363.



is used to contrast between “wrath” mentioned in verse 3 and “mercy” described in verse 4.³³ This term creates a space for focusing on God alone as the author of salvation, who intervened in human distress. Paul mentions the term “mercy” as the means by which God intervenes in the lives of sinful people to bring redemption. Also, the term “Mercy” is used to illustrate God’s kindness toward people, which encompasses the ability of persons. To make the exclusivity of the entitlement that was vital.³⁴ God himself appropriated the initiative to redeem people from sin. These were unexpected events that occurred to human beings because of their past nature of wrath, as mentioned in the previous verse.³⁵ The character of God mentioned in this verse of mercy generated another character of love from God, which was extended to sinners to ensure that God alone initiates salvation in humans, not on the basis of their work but on his grace towards them.

Then in verse 5, Paul gets rid of his focus from gentile Christians when using the term “ὐμᾶς” (you) to the inclusion of Jews and gentiles when using the term “ἡμᾶς” (us). The phrase “Even when we were dead” (καὶ ὄντας ἡμᾶς νεκροὺς) specifies the idea that Christians in Ephesus were in the condition of spiritual death before they were converted to Christ. The term “dead” (νεκροὺς) is the metaphor that describes the separation of humans from God due to sin.³⁶ Paul highlights that this condition left them desperate and unable to convert themselves. The death was due to their “transgression,” signifying their acts that violated the law of God and his standards, which caused them to rebel against the will of God. Then, the phrase “Made us alive” (συνεζωοποίησεν) refers to the kind of new life believers have received through faith in Christ. Hoehner comments that the term “made us alive” is a multiple-verb phrase that emphasizes Christians’ union with Jesus Christ. The phrase “together with Christ” emphasizes the union between Christians and Christ, the one who is the author of new life for humanity.³⁷

Also, Paul uses the phrase “by grace you have been” to emphasize that salvation is a past action that has already occurred in the lives of believers. It gives a reference to the means by which Christians obtain salvation. The term “grace” describes the means by which believers receive salvation. It refers to the unmerited favor extended to believers that gives them salvation.³⁸ So, believers have been given new life through faith in Christ, who is the author of salvation.

³³ John. A Muddiman, Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians. A&C Black, 2001, 105

³⁴ Adrienne Von Speyr. Letter to the Ephesians. Ignatius Press, 2012. 52

³⁵ Walter L. Liefeld, Ephesians. Vol. 10. InterVarsity Press, 1997, 59

³⁶ Sinclair B. Ferguson, Let's Study Ephesians. Banner of Truth Trust, 2005, 75.

³⁷ Ibid., 2005, 74.

³⁸ John. A Muddiman, Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians. A&C Black, 2001, 107



In verse 6, Paul continues the previous conversation by connecting it with the conjunction “καὶ” (and). He used the conjunction to relate the declarations of Jesus Christ mentioned in chapter 1, verse 20, to communicate with believers about the extension of the divine activity.³⁹ Paul described two main things that happened after God intervened in people’s lives, making us alive with Christ. This includes an action of being “raised up with Christ” (συνήγειρεν) and “seated” (συνεκάθισεν) “together with Christ” (ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις) “in the heavenly realm in Jesus Christ” (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). Paul emphasizes that believers were raised from the spiritual death the same as Christ was raised from the dead by the power of God. Thus, Paul used the phrase “raise up together with him” which is in the passive voice to indicate that it is God alone who is acting and not otherwise. Christians are raised from spiritual death to a new life by faith.⁴⁰

Bruce argues that the resurrection of Jesus Christ indicates an experience of not only a future hope to Christians but also a present transformation, which is guaranteed by the death of Jesus Christ.⁴¹ This idea emphasizes that believers are not raised from the dead by their own power or work, but that it is God’s work alone. “Seated together with Christ” signifies the union action received by believers after the experience of victory attained by Christ through his death. The term “seated” (συνεκάθισεν) is the verb that conveys the idea of being seated in the position of power and authority with Christ. Also, the phrase “heavenly realms” (ἐπουρανίοις) that Paul uses in this verse emphasizes the spiritual position that Christians occupy after the resurrection of Christ, a location rather than a physical one. Believers are seated in the spiritual location, not the physical place. They are forgiven their sin and positioned together with Christ in the spiritual realms, not in a physical location. Then, the phrase “with Christ” indicates the union of believers with Christ, not just a spiritual or metaphorical connection but a real one through his resurrection.

Verse 7 of the passage reveals the purpose of God’s plan. Paul uses the phrase “in the age to come” to indicate the future time that is far beyond the existing age and the previous age. The plan of God is not limited to the present era but extends into eternity, revealing his endless nature and purpose.⁴² In the preceding phrase, “He might show the exceeding riches of his grace,” the term “He” refers to God the Father, who initiates the believer’s salvation and has revealed his grace to people. The greatness and abundance of the grace of God are revealed by the phrase “exceeding

³⁹ Ernest Best, *Ephesians: a shorter commentary*, (T&T Clark, 2003), 68

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 68

⁴¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 283.

⁴² Simon Austen, *Teaching Ephesians, from text to message*: London, (Proclamation Trust Resource, 2012), 53



riches,” which is far beyond all human understanding. Also, in the last part of this verse, Paul uses the phrase “kindness” to convey awareness of the generous favor and love shown to human beings.

Therefore, in verses 4-7, Paul expresses the mercies and love of God for all people as the driving force behind his salvation, which led him to intervene in the lives of sinners by his grace alone. The role of the grace of God in the means of salvation is to invite all people into the great love of God, regardless of their former nature.⁴³ The richness of God’s mercy and his greatness in love covered sinners without looking at their efforts. This makes believers be raised together with Christ and seated in the heavenly realms, waiting for the age to come where all the promises will be fulfilled. The finished work of Jesus will be fulfilled in the coming age. The grace of God in his kindness is extended to all people. Consequently, salvation is a gift from God, received by grace through faith, and not an outcome achieved by people through good works. Paul underlines that the entire means of salvation is the total work of God, accompanied by his mercy in our lives.⁴⁴ The love of God has caused people to be seated and raised together with Christ. Also, his mercy is essential to redeeming people from a sinful nature and bringing them into new lives in Christ.

God, through his mercy and love, saves people’s mind and emotions by restoring them from the nature of death caused by sin. His love, which is unconditional love, renews and recreates the sinful nature of people to the will of God. As Bruce commented, God, who hates sin, is loving sinners rather than hating them. Because of his love and mercy, he saves people by faith alone.⁴⁵ Bock recommends that the resurrection of Jesus Christ has made believers alive in Christ and transformed the sinful nature of people, who are spiritually dead, to a new life. He emphasizes the means of salvation, which God entirely initiates.⁴⁶ In this section, Paul is showing God as the initiator of salvation. “The part of human being in receiving salvation is by considering his grace and love to receive salvation as a gift by faith alone in Christ.

The Expectation of New Life in Christ (verses 8-10)

This is the last section of the passage; the entire passage describes the work of grace in people after God’s intervention and God’s expectation of humanity.⁴⁷ Paul, in verse 8, introduces a new

⁴³ Andrew T. Lincoln et al., *Ephesians*, Vol. 42, 1364.

⁴⁴ Lynn H. Cohick, *Ephesians: A New Covenant Commentary* (2013), 68.

⁴⁵ Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (Eerdmans, 2020), 347.

⁴⁶ Darrell L. Bock, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, Vol. 10 (InterVarsity Press, 2019), 62.

⁴⁷ Andrew T. Lincoln, David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and Bruce M. Metzger. *Word biblical commentary*. Word Books, 1990. 82



conversation to show that the salvation believers have received is not of their efforts but by grace. He resumes the preceding conversation with the term “for” (γάρ), which is the conjunction linking the previous statement and showing what has been explained in the previous verse. The term “grace” (χάριτι) denotes the undeserved favor and kindness of God given to humanity. In this setting, the term “grace” signifies the unmerited gift of salvation. Grace, in this context, indicates the foundation of salvation, attained through faith in Christ.⁴⁸

O’Brien describes the phrase “you have been saved” (σεσωσμένοι) as a perfect tense that emphasizes the past completed action of salvation and its ongoing outcomes. This indicates that salvation is the completed and finished work of God, to be received by faith, not an ongoing process. So, the phrase “through faith” (διὰ πίστεως) indicates the means by which people receive salvation. The term “faith” does not mean that human effort helps receive salvation, but rather a receptive response to God’s grace. O’Brien mentions that faith in the means of salvation serves as the root or foundation for receiving salvation, in which the grace of God is received.⁴⁹ In the last part of the verse, the phrase “this is not your own doing” denotes a self-generated, self-sufficient effort to achieve salvation.

In contrast, it affirms the completeness of the work of salvation, a gift from God and not the outcome of human works.⁵⁰ Salvation is a gift of God; human effort has no part in it. People have no reason to boast about their salvation, because it is a gift from God. The special tool necessary for receiving salvation as a gift of God is faith alone. This is not the source of salvation but the means of achieving the gift. Thus, no one should boast or glory in salvation, because salvation is not the reward of works but a gift of God.

In this regard, verse 9 is the second part of the section that balances the passages of the previous verse by emphasizing grace alone as the primary factor in salvation, not human effort. The phrase “not a result of works” contrasts the concept of salvation through human works with the reality of salvation through the gift of God. Paul excludes the effort of people in the means of salvation and renders all works to God. This passage reminds both Jews and Gentiles not to boast, since salvation is God’s work alone. This contrasts with the Jewish emphasis on observing laws as the basic aspect of salvation, which is contrary to faith. Roberts argues “that Christians are God’s

⁴⁸ Gerald F. Hawthorne, *New Testament Greek and Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Gerald F. Hawthorne*. (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), 104.

⁴⁹ Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 175.

⁵⁰ Clinton E. Arnold, Frank S. Thielman, and Steven M. Baugh, *Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 145.



workmanship, created by him for the purpose of doing good works ordained for them before creation.”⁵¹ These good works are not the foundation of salvation but the outcome that believers can walk in.

Thus, Paul emphasizes the actual looking unto God as the source of salvation. The phrase “so that no one may boast” in this context serves as an instruction warning against the action of pride or a self-sufficient attitude. Salvation is a gift from God; if it were a product of human effort, people would have reasons to boast about their own efforts or actions. Paul clearly conveys to readers that salvation is the entire work of God, received by faith alone by all people. He excluded the room for man being boastful because to boast is to take the glory or honor of God and trust in yourself.

In verse 10, Paul emphasizes that salvation is not the end of God’s work in humanity but the beginning of new life. He indicated that believers are identified as the “workmanship” (ποίημα), a term that describes them as creations of God or masterpieces. Believers are God’s creation, created for the purpose of doing good works. Stott argues that “Works stand as the results of salvation and not the foundation of it.”⁵² He emphasized that in the means of salvation, human works are totally excluded but included as the effect. Then, the phrase “created in Christ Jesus” underlines the transformative work of God in salvation. This makes believers not the same as they were before they received salvation. And the phrase “for good works” shows that the definitive purpose of salvation is not just individual salvation but the demonstration of the character of God.

Then, God and other people surrounding believers expect to see the demonstration of God’s character, such as love, faithfulness, kindness, and mercy, as a sign of faith in Christ. Ferguson writes that “Human works are the fruits of salvation and not the basic foundation of salvation.”⁵³ In John 1:12, believers are called children of God, and their lives are intended to be divinely initiated and fulfilled. Paul’s concept of recreation, also known as regeneration, refers to the redemption of man from his original sinful nature to a new life renewed by Christ. Talbert argues that through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ; salvation is freely attained by all believers by faith in Christ.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Mark D Roberts, *Ephesians* (Zondervan Academic, 2016), 78.

⁵² John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians* (InterVarsity Press, 2021), 82.

⁵³ S. B. Ferguson, “The Grace of God in Salvation: Biblical and Systematic Perspectives,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, 341–360, 2021a, 20.

⁵⁴ Charles H. Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians, Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament*, 80.



In the matter of salvation, faith and works work together to ensure that believers enjoy the new life in Christ. Calvin, in his book, mentions that believers are justified by faith, while the faith that justifies is not alone.⁵⁵ This means that the faith is maintained by producing good works. In the order of salvation, faith is the fundamental aspect of salvation, while works are its fruits. The misunderstanding of the relationship between faith and works arises when works are emphasized as the aspect of salvation or neglected in the life of salvation. Paul, in Ephesians 2:1–10, separates the source or cause of salvation from its results. Faith is the cause of salvation, while works are its effects.

Therefore, in this section, four key words in Christians' faith are emphasized: grace, salvation, works, and faith. He emphasizes that the ideas of faith and grace are free gifts from God, not human works. In verses 1-3, Paul explained the fundamental aspects of salvation. The term "salvation" here is explained as the deliverance of sinful man's life from spiritual death, the wrath of God, and slavery to a new life in Christ. The work of salvation is totally accomplished by God alone through his grace. Together with him, we are made alive, raised from the dead with him, and seated in the heavenly realm with him. This shows that salvation is more than the forgiveness of sin attained by faith alone in the finished work of Christ. "Salvation is a gift offered by God to all people through his mercy, love, and grace."⁵⁶ So, faith and Human works are very important in the Christians life. Faith stands as the cause of salvation received by grace, while works act as the evidence, effects, fruits, or results of sincere faith in Christ.⁵⁷ Salvation is by faith alone, but the faith which brings salvation is no longer alone; it yields good works as evidence.

Application of Ephesians 2:1–10

The message of this study is highly applicable to the lives of people and to ministry. In the context of personal life, this passage's message helps believers focus on the finished work of God rather than on individual ability or performance. Because the study's message is applicable in life, it helps us understand the core foundation of salvation. People cannot save themselves, but they need a savior, Jesus Christ. Salvation is the total work of God; it doesn't require any human effort. It is the responsibility of believers to reflect the grace they have received from God by living and presenting good works.

⁵⁵ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 3.11.20.

⁵⁶ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 345.

⁵⁷ John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 83.



By understanding that salvation is the total work of God, given to us as a gift, all believers are called to reject a focus on laws and to rely on God as the source of salvation. In the Christian faith, many preachers and teachers of the gospel emphasize good works as the means of God's approval, who loved them before they loved him and who forgave them before they asked for forgiveness. The study assures us that salvation is God's gift to us by his grace, received by people through faith alone. Salvation is a gift, not earned through good works. Equally, Hoehner wrote that the grace of God leads all people to live a life of gratitude and worship, not a life of pride.

The study's message helps believers live a life of gratitude by doing good works through faith in Christ. Paul, in verse 10, suggests that good works were already ordained by God to be observed by all believers as the fruits of faith. He emphasized that Christians are created to do good works in Jesus Christ. It signifies a life of determination, service, and holiness.

In the case of the ministry, it can be applied by emphasizing the church's need to focus more on the message of grace rather than on human ability to achieve salvation. Also, the ministry needs to describe the relationship between good works in the process of salvation and faith as the core major foundation for receiving salvation. The study's message is used to encourage believers in the ministry to walk in the transformed life as the fruits of faith. The ministry, which is grounded in the doctrine of grace, conducts every program in the church under grace.⁵⁸ In today's world, many churches emphasize legalism over the doctrine of grace.

Also, for the ministry, the study gives hope and confidence to ministers. The research presents several messages to readers, such as grace, love, and kindness. By understanding that Christ raised all believers from the dead and made them alive in Christ, all believers also give confidence to all Christians. The same power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that dwells in all believers. Being in Christ gives us boldness to preach the gospel to all people without fear. Snodgrass, in his book, wrote that the mercy and love of God that intervene in people's lives are beyond imagination and can change them from spiritual death to life.⁵⁹

Another application of the message in the ministry is the motivation for the mission of God through the spirit of gratitude. Emphasizing the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone encourages ministers of the gospel to share the gospel with a heart of gratitude, recognizing that it

⁵⁸ Fatieli Zai, Henriete Lydia, and Sabarani Waruwu, "Grace as the Basis of Salvation in Ephesians 2: 1-10: Exegetical Theological Analysis and Its Implications for the Formation of the Contemporary Christian Faith," *Jurnal Sains, Sosial, Dan Studi Agama* 2, 355-372, no. 2 (2026): 15.

⁵⁹ Klyne Snodgrass, *The NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 107.



is the grace of God that has given us the ability to share the good news. Most of the people who emphasize human effort ignore the role of grace in the means of salvation. They preach on condemnation rather than the love and mercy of God.

The message of this study helps believers to rely on looking unto Jesus, the only author and finisher of our faith. Christians who are not aware of this research topic mostly rely on their strength as the means of receiving salvation. The study offers a new understanding of salvation as by grace received through faith. This knowledge helps all believers focus on looking unto Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate sacrifice for humanity. Believers are encouraged to focus on Jesus Christ because, by our own strength, we cannot serve ourselves. Salvation is entirely the work of God from the beginning to the end.⁶⁰ Human works are the fruits of salvation, not its basic foundation.⁶¹

Conclusion

The study examines the idea of salvation by grace through faith as explained in Ephesians 2:1–10. The passage gives one of the great lessons in the Christian faith. Understanding the concept of salvation by grace through faith helps one grasp the Christian faith as a whole. Also, the passage helps us understand the love, mercy, and grace of God toward humanity, regardless of their former nature. It shows the basic way to receive salvation: through faith in the finished work of Christ. By exploring the historical, theological, cultural, and literary contexts, the following key finding was discovered, summarized below.

First, the concept of salvation is well grounded in the grace of God rather than in human effort. The passage upholds that salvation is the entire work of God given to us as a gift. Salvation is not earned, but it is given to us. In verses 8 and 9, Paul emphasizes that, by the grace of God, we have been saved through faith alone. If salvation is given and not earned, there is no need for anyone to boast. Understanding that salvation is founded in the divine grace of God excludes human effort as a means of salvation.

Second, faith is the basic tool for receiving salvation, while grace is the foundation for attaining it in our lives. The study suggests that faith serves as a means of receiving salvation, not

⁶⁰ Fatieli Zai, Henriete Lydia, and Sabarani Waruwu, “Grace as the Basis of Salvation in Ephesians 2: 1–10: Exegetical Theological Analysis and Its Implications for the Formation of the Contemporary Christian Faith,” 10.

⁶¹ S. B. Ferguson, “The Grace of God in Salvation: Biblical and Systematic Perspectives,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, 341–360, 2021a, 20.



the source of salvation. The term “through faith” denotes the channel of salvation, not the source of justification. Paul, in his writings to the churches in Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, presents the idea of faith as the means of receiving salvation, not as the root of salvation. Therefore, the critical Examination of the concept of salvation by faith alone in Ephesians 2:1-10 describes faith as the channel, not the root, of salvation.

Third, the concept of salvation is closely connected to that of regeneration and unification with Christ. The study describes salvation as the legal declaration of sinners’ righteousness in God’s eyes. The declaration is based solely on God’s work through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, not on human effort. The passage describes the way God made us alive and raised us together with Christ. Being made alive and seated together with Christ has brought us into union with him. In that sense, there is a connection between the concepts of salvation and regeneration, which relate to being in union with Christ Jesus.

The study indicates the condition of people before salvation. In verses 1 to 3, Paul emphasizes total depravity, the condition of people before God intervened in their lives. People were dead spiritually due to sin, which caused them to be under the wrath of God. This condition separated human beings from God and necessitated God’s intervention in their lives. The study shows how God is rich in mercy to humankind. Regardless of the old nature of humankind, which is sin and trespasses that resulted in spiritual death, God decided to intervene in the lives of people to rescue them from the consequences of sin. It is because of God’s great love that we receive salvation, not because of human effort. So, this shows that salvation is the work of God alone, not human effort. God is the one who came to redeem man from sin; there is no need for us to boast about anything.

Good work is the outcome of salvation and not the root of salvation. The study emphasizes living a life characterized by doing good deeds out of faith in Christ. God ordained good works to be followed by all believers as proof of faith in Christ. Because believers are God’s workmanship, created already for doing good works. Sanctification is essential in the life of a Christian, as the outcome of salvation by faith alone.

Therefore, the passage insists on grace alone, through faith alone, and evidenced by living a life with good works as the outcomes of good faith in Christ. Salvation is the complete work of God attained by grace through faith alone. According to the discussion above, we conclude that people, through their strength and deeds, can achieve salvation. People are supposed to rely



entirely on God. God sent Jesus Christ as the only substitute for human death. Sin and transgression caused spiritual harm to humanity. A human being is totally dead, meaning that they have no power to redeem themselves. Salvation requires the grace of God, which is received through faith in the finished work of Christ.

Hence, all believers and readers are supposed to note that human works are the fruits or outcome of salvation and not the basic foundation of salvation. Any person who is saved is totally saved by the grace of God through faith alone. All works are standing are the gratitude of a gratitude to the almighty God. By our own effort, we can do anything to please God, so that he may be pleased by our actions. To receive salvation, humankind is required to look unto and rely on Jesus Christ, who is the author and finisher of our faith. So, salvation is the entirely work of God alone.

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