

# Saved By Grace Through Faith – Part 1

## Introduction

### a. objectives

1. subject – Paul outlines the central tenet of the gospel message: salvation by grace through faith
2. aim – to cause us to understand the core of the gospel message and its power in our lives
3. passage – Ephesians 2:1-10

### b. outline

1. The Predicament in Our Salvation (Ephesians 2:1-3)
2. The Power in Our Salvation (Ephesians 2:4-7)
3. The Purpose in Our Salvation (Ephesians 2:8-10)

### c. opening

1. the **continuing** thought into **chapter 2**
  - a. note the problem with chapter breaks in the Bible *artificially* dividing thoughts where no such division *may* have been intended (unlike works written *explicitly* around chapter breaks)
    1. here, the implication of an entirely new point (**e.g.** preaching often *starting* here)
  - b. the chapter begins with “and” – a transition word from the previous thought
    1. the KJV starts with “and you hath he quickened [*made alive NKJV*]”
    2. an “addition” indicating the KJV authors understood a connection to what had come
  - c. specifically, continuing the thought of him wanting the Ephesians to experience the power of God
    1. overview of **chapter 1** (as an extended greeting):
      - a. the spiritual blessings that have come upon us in Christ (**i.e.** the divine decree) →
      - b. a sense of sheer gratitude to God for his provision of the Ephesians in that decree →
      - c. a prayer that they would grow in knowledge leading to wisdom and revelation, and
      - d. that they would come to fully experience 1) the hope of their calling, 2) the riches of their future place in God’s grace, and 3) the power of God, which is →
      - e. a power that raised Christ, seated him at the right hand of God, gave him a glorious name, invested him with all authority in creation, put all things under him, and established him as the head of the institution through which the power of God would flow (**i.e.** the church)
  - d. now, explaining how this power of God is at work in the lives of the Ephesians
    1. or, the power that raised Jesus from the dead is the same power that works in us today
    2. and, Paul’s prayer is that we fully **understand** it, **embrace** it, and **live in** it (**experience it**)
    3. **or, Paul would have us see our natural predicament, the power of God over it, and the practical purpose of that power in our everyday lives**
2. the **theological** thought into **chapter 2**
  - a. **Ephesians 2:1-10** sets forth (like nowhere else?) the **central** tenet(s) of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: *sola gratia – sola fide – solus Christus* (the Latin “slogan” at the center of the Reformation)
    1. that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone
      - a. and, as found in Scripture alone to the glory of God alone (although not primary here)
    2. that salvation is entirely of grace, and not of human choice or human desire
    3. that salvation is entirely of faith, and not of human action or human religiosity
    4. that salvation is entirely of faith in Christ, and not of faith in systems or “churches”
    5. note that Paul *strategically* uses the phrase “by grace through faith” in both **vv. 5, 8**
  - b. **however:** to truly understand these central tenets, it is *imperative* that we first understand the natural spiritual condition of the human race *in its fallen condition*
    1. **assertion:** most soteriology today goes awry because it first fails to properly grasp the natural spiritual condition of the race
      - a. **or, if you get this wrong, you will never fully grasp the concepts of grace & faith**
    2. **e.g.** most Baptists today *reject* the implications of the doctrine of original sin, particularly the aspect that we are born **guilty** of Adam’s sin and are under a “death sentence” for it
      - a. the result(s) include bizarre and unbiblical assumptions about what salvation is all about
    3. grace, faith, and faith in Christ become **malleable** concepts when we get this wrong

# I. The Predicament in Our Salvation (Ephesians 2:1-3)

## Content

### a. the ways of understanding the human condition

1. the **apathetic** view: that the spiritual condition of mankind is irrelevant to life
  - a. the view of the natural man (the reprobate) – having a focus *purely* on the “material” world, the reprobate ignores (suppresses) his spiritual fallenness – he does not care!
  - b. he inherently *knows* that he is broken from his Creator (**Romans 1:21**), but his hardened heart is blinded by the god of this world to his own spiritual need
  - c. **note**: this is the condition that *all of us* were in at one time (**see below**)
  - d. the following views are those proposed within so-called “Christian” camps (and the first two are, in many ways, simply *extensions* of this view by reprobate men “masquerading” as believers)
2. the **Pelagian** view (**quite rare**): that our spiritual condition is just fine *by itself*
  - a. Pelagius was a late 4<sup>th</sup>-early-5<sup>th</sup> C. ascetic who asserted:
    1. that the fall of Adam did not affect his progeny (denying original sin and guilt)
    2. that what God commands, human beings *must* be able to accomplish (in the fairness of God)
    3. that human free will (and ability) is able to keep the law unto righteousness before God
  - b. Pelagianism asserts that human beings are *not* spiritually corrupted (inasmuch as they allow) and are able to accomplish the righteousness that God demands in his law *without divine aid*:
    1. the grace of God is simply to grant us the law – to show us what we should do
    2. the work of Christ is exemplar – to show us what perfect obedience looks like
    3. faith is simply to trust that God will accept our self-borne righteousness, as he accepted Christ’s
  - c. Pelagius was opposed directly by Augustine of Hippo (**see below**), and his views were condemned as heresy at the Council of Carthage in 418AD
    1. ironically, Roman Catholics are (very much) Pelagians in their soteriology
3. the **semi-Pelagian** view (**very popular**): that our spiritual condition is mostly fine *with help*
  - a. although the *extreme* position of Pelagianism is mostly rejected (**i.e.** that we can keep the law),
    1. a view that embraces *much* of what he taught as the *de facto* standard in the church
    2. a view that has flourished (largely) under the “rugged individualism” of the West
    3. a view that largely *denies* original guilt while attempting to hold some form of Adamic corruption
      - a. depravity (spiritual corruption) is *pervasive* and *strong*, but not *total*
      - b. genuine Arminianism holds to total depravity, but embraces a view of *prevenient* grace
    4. a view also known as **synergism** (although subtle differences can be found)
      - a. synergism = the work of two or more forces towards a common goal; a cooperation of strength to accomplish a singular purpose; a “working together” between God and man
      - b. **e.g.** in the 100 steps between us and God, we take 1, God takes 99
    5. a view which denies that regeneration is essential (or is prior to) the exercise of faith
      - a. **IMO**: which links this position to Pelagianism – that “regeneration” is nothing more than a change of *position* in regards to our fallen state rather than an *actual change* of heart
  - b. semi-Pelagianism asserts that while human beings have been corrupted by the Fall (in varying degrees), they still retain the natural spiritual ability to **cooperate** with God’s assistance to bring themselves to salvation:
    1. the grace of God is (only!) to help us work with him towards the goal of salvation (his part!)
    2. the work of Christ is to make salvation *possible* – he created the conditions we need
    3. faith becomes a trust that we have completed the task, specifically in our *choice* of Christ
      - a. “decisionism” or “decisional regeneration” become hallmarks of this view
      - b. evangelism twists the gospel into something “appealing” to our sense of well-being
4. the **Augustinian/Pauline** view (reformed): that our spiritual condition is one of being *dead*
  - a. Augustine pushed back against Pelagius by driving to the **heart** of the matter:
    1. that the fall of Adam corrupted every part of the *Imago Dei* in humanity (**Gen. 5:1b-3**)  
“When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man [Adam]. When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son *in his own likeness*, after *his image*, and named him Seth.”
      - a. certainly in the *mortal*, but (more profoundly!) in the *immortal* – our spiritual nature
    2. **total depravity** = the biblical belief that every aspect of the *Imago Dei* has been corrupted, so much so that our spiritual nature is now dead in regards to righteousness and seeks *only* after that which is sinful (“*you were dead in ...*”; **v. 1 – the concept of a zombie**)
      - a. so much so that we are *unable* (and *unwilling*) to: understand our fallenness, love the law of God, seek righteousness, cooperate with God in our rescue from the curse of the law, or comprehend the wrath of God’s justice over us

- b. the Augustinian/Pauline view of human fallenness and our spiritual condition is:
  1. that the grace of God (his choice) is the *only* way anyone can be rescued (*sola gratia*)
  2. that the work of Christ utterly satisfies God's righteous requirements (*solus Christus*)
  3. that faith is a *radical trust* that although we are corrupt and spiritually unable, Christ has completed our redemption and sent his Spirit to complete it in us (*sola fide*)
- c. **here:** Paul asserts that this spiritual deadness appears in specific forms of *necrosis* throughout our reprobate lives (*i.e.* as evidences of inadequate sustenance) – he *describes* total depravity:

**b. the reality of the human condition**

1. the reprobate is characterized by utter sin and rebellion against God's law (**vv. 1-2a**)
  - a. the downward spiral of sin in **Romans 1:18-32** is the devastating picture of this reality
2. the reprobate is dominated by an evil worldview perpetuated by the devil (**v. 2b**)
  - a. "prince of the power of the air" = a reference to the devil, the one who controls the "airwaves," the one who rules generally over the hearts and minds of those in opposition to God
  - b. not a *direct* individual influence (*i.e.* the devil is finite) – rather the "spirit now at work" = the spirit of the age, a worldview that sees no need for God or his law, a sense of utter self-reliance and self-determination, and a belief that anyone seeking after God is foolish and is to be silenced
3. the reprobate is overcome by the passions and lusts of the flesh (**v. 3**)
  - a. a sense of the "immediate" – the need for instant and constant gratification
    1. and, because we are created as sexual beings (*i.e.* male and female), this reprobation manifests itself most strongly in the arena of sex and sexuality (*e.g.* why the moral revolution is mostly a sexual revolution)
4. the spiritual deadness of humanity is best summarized in **Romans 3:10-18**:  
*"None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes."*