

THE CREATION OF A CHRISTIAN

GRACE NOTEBOOK

The Creation of a Christian

By Ruth Paxson

An Exposition of Ephesians 2:1-10

We may go on into [Ephesians] 2:4-10, where we see the sinner becoming a saint through the mighty operation of God's mercy, love and grace. The process in the creation of a Christian is given here with a clarity and beauty found nowhere else in the Word. The passage falls naturally into a three-fold division: -

The sinner in his sins (2:1-3);

- The way of salvation (2:4, 8-10).

- The saint in Christ (2:5-7);

Let us study the process of transition from the old position to the new.

The Sinner in Sin

Ephesians 2:1. " And you ... who were dead in trespasses and sins. "

"And you" - This "you" refers to Gentiles; the "we" of 2:2 to Jews; so in this category of sinners is included every human being without a single exception. It means you, your family, your country, your race, and every man of every race. All are now, or once were, sinners.

This "you" refers also to Gentile Christians. Paul is writing of what they were "in time past." He is allowing one backward look, that their hearts may be quickened into deeper gratitude, greater love and fuller appreciation of the exceeding riches of God's grace toward them in Christ. Oh! that your heart and mine might be thus quickened as we read this book is my most earnest prayer!

" Were dead in trespasses and sins." - "Trespasses" indicate the element in which the sinner lives; one of rebellion and refusal of obedience to divine authority and law. The noun being in the plural gives the impression that the breaking of God's law is the habit of the sinner. "In sins" - which are the fruit of sin; the outward manifestation of the inward nature. There are many kinds and degrees of sins, and the sinner is capable of committing any or all of them, for the seed of sin is in him, and no one can forecast what fruit it will bear. The sinner may be held in restraint by personal pride; public opinion; selfish interest; or fear of consequences; but by nature he is still a child of disobedience, and is at heart opposed to God's will and purpose. Every sinner has preferred to follow the devil rather than God. He is therefore a spiritual outcast.

" Dead. " - Let the word stand by itself. I beg of you, do not trifle with this word; do not ignore it, evade it, or whittle it down to anything less than its Scriptural significance. It describes as no other one word can the sinner's broken relationship to God. Sin severed the cord that bound the human spirit to God, and so entirely "alienated him from the life of God" (4:18) that he is henceforth in a state of spiritual death. The sinner is not merely morally degraded or diseased; he is spiritually dead. Unless he is saved by grace through faith, his present spiritual death will end in "the second death" (Rev. 20: 14), which is eternal separation from the presence of God.

The sinner is a helpless, hopeless derelict; a powerless bankrupt, with no resources within himself for spiritual recovery. As a dead man his first need is life, but he has no way to generate it and no access to

the One who can. Left to himself, he can do nothing, and faces his destiny as a child of wrath, having no hope. What a direful, pitiable position is his!

His position determines his condition. The sinner belongs to the underworld of sin, where there is but one walk possible.

2:2, 3. "Ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, in the lusts of the flesh." " Ye walked " according to the direction of the world, the dictation of the Devil, and the domination of the flesh.

" By nature - the children of disobedience and wrath. " Every sinner is born with a nature inherently hostile to God and opposed to doing His will. If he refuses the Saviour he thereby hardens himself in his enmity toward God, and so by his own deliberate choice continues to be a child of disobedience. He is therefore under divine displeasure, and is a child of wrath. If the love of God manifested in Christ is rejected, then the wrath of God must be revealed.

So we see that the sinner is wholly out of adjustment with God. If he is set right, it must be with God first. But in 2:1-3 there is not one ray of light or one gleam of hope. Unless God intervenes and takes the initiative, the sinner will forever remain in his sins.

The Way of Salvation

Ephesians 2:4, 5. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love where with he loved us, even when we were dead in sins."

"But God." Oh! if you have not encircled and underlined these words in your Bible, do it now. Here is a floodlight on the sinner's path; a signpost which marks a movement of God toward the sinner. Though our sin is inconceivably repulsive to His holiness, yet our soul is inconceivably precious to Him. So He will open a way of reconciliation for every sinner that he may be delivered from that awful pit.

" Who is rich " - God did not lack in resources for such a task, nor did He have to go outside of Himself to perform the miracle of regeneration. Out of His own inherent riches He met our abject poverty and transformed us from spiritual bankrupts into spiritual multimillionaires. God draws upon the riches of His mercy. He looks in pity upon the sinner utterly undone, and His great heart of love is moved to take the initiative in providing a way of salvation.

But we have learned that all sinners are children of wrath. They have incurred the displeasure of the infinitely righteous and holy One, and are deserving of the full penalty for their sin. Then how will God's mercy and love operate to satisfy the righteous demand of His holiness and at the same time meet the need of rebellious sinners?

2:5. "By grace ye are saved."

The first movement in salvation is not from men to God, but from God to men. This wondrous redemption was planned and executed in the heart of God in the eternity of the past, before even the world was. There and then a way to save to the uttermost was wrought out in the counsels of the triune God.

In what way and through whom would God's grace work to provide for sinful men a Mediator between God

and them? For this is the sinner's greatest need if he is to be brought to the place of reconciliation. Who could act both as God's representative and the sinner's?

Just here let us look to the Holy Spirit for His own divine light and love to be poured into our inmost being, that we may not only apprehend more fully, but may also appreciate more deeply the worth and work of our adorable Saviour.

The Saint in Christ

2:1. " You [were] dead. " 1:20. " Christ [was] dead."

"You [were] dead." - How can a dead man be made a live? "Christ [was] dead." What an amazing answer! Christ, the source of all life, even life itself, dead! This is the almost unthinkable thing that grace has done. It has put Christ, the sinless One, in the sinner's place. "The wages of sin is death"; "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" [Rom. 6:23; Ezek. 18:4,20]. The penalty must be paid, and there was no other way to do it. He bore the sinner's sins by taking the sinner's place.

2:5. "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ."

Believing upon Christ as his Saviour and receiving Him into his heart, the sinner becomes the possessor of eternal life and is made one with Christ. Shall a live man remain in a grave?

1:20. "Christ raised from the dead."

2:6. "And hath raised us up together with him."

The grave could not hold Him that was alive. Neither can it hold the quickened sinner. The grave of sin is no place for a saint. An evangelist said in a meeting, "We shall never be anything but sinners saved by grace, with one foot in sin and one foot in grace." *Never*, oh! never, according to Ephesians. If 2: 1-10 teaches anything, it is the exact opposite of such a statement. True, the sinner is saved by grace, and by grace alone, and this fact should ever be kept fresh in his memory, that he may forever praise God for His wondrous goodness. But it is equally true that through God's grace the believer in Christ has left forever the old position in sin, and has come into a totally new position in Christ. Indeed *the sinner has become a saint*. God lifted him altogether out of that awful pit of sin and placed both feet on the solid rock "in Christ" wherein he is to walk in the future, as in times past he walked "in sin." How could a saint walk worthily (4:1) with one foot in sin and one foot in grace? It is just such teaching and such practice that excuses the and inconsistent walk of many a Christian. Being raised together with Christ, the saint is now to walk in newness of life. To do this Christ must become the Life of his life.

But God's grace is not yet exhausted, nor His redemptive plan completed. Wherever Christ is the Christian must be, for he is now bound together with Christ for all time and eternity. Christ and the Christian are eternally one. The earth could not hold the risen Christ any more than the grave could retain the dead Christ, for His redemptive work demands something more.

1:20. "He set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."

2:6. "He made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

Dare we believe this glorious truth that He who went down to the very deepest depths of sin for us now

carries us up to the very highest heights of glory with Him? That is hardly the way to put the question. Dare we not believe it? God has written both of these truths in His Word and, if we do not believe the latter, we do not really believe the former. God has said it, and to disbelieve is to make God a liar.

"Made us sit together." - Seated; how restful and relaxed it sounds! Yet how many of us are most of the time anything but that, but rather buzzing around in a fretful, feverish fashion which is far more earthly than heavenly in the impression it makes upon the world about us.

"In the heavenlies in Christ." - Yes, at home in the heavenlies, where our citizenship really is (Phil. 3:20). Not visiting this glorious place from time to time as trial, sorrow and conflict drive us to a higher plane, but settling down in the heavenlies in possessive and permanent occupancy as our abiding-place.

Paul was in a Roman prison when he wrote this epistle, but one would never know it. There is no smell of a prison in Ephesians. As you open the book it is just like going into some vast, open expanse and breathing the fresh air of heaven. There is no clank of prison chains to be heard, for Paul is not bound in spirit. He is there as the prisoner of Rome, but this he will not admit, and claims to be "the prisoner of Jesus Christ." What is the secret of such victorious otherworldliness? Paul's spirit is with Christ in the heavenlies though his body languishes in that foul Roman prison.

To whom did Paul write this epistle and to whom is it addressed? He wrote it to the saints at Ephesus, but addressed it to the faithful in Christ. Their temporary residence was at Ephesus, which was the centre of idolatry, superstition, luxury and vice. The shrine of Diana was there, the place of the midnight darkness of paganism. Yet their real abode was in Christ, which was to them the centre of worship, light, life and holiness. It was at the right hand of the throne of God, the place of the midday light of Christianity.

Oh! my friend, where do you live? "At" or "In"? Do you just live down on earth as a Christian all wrought up into a frenzy of anxiety over life's perplexities and problems; its trials and tribulations; its sufferings and sorrows? You will surely have them, for they are permitted, even intended by God for your discipline, growth and training. Or do you daily take afresh by faith your position in Christ in the heavenlies and there find His peace, joy and rest; yes, and the courage and strength to bear and to endure victoriously?

Still one further thought out of "together with Christ:" Where is He? "Far above all." Ponder these words until they sink into your innermost consciousness and become a very part of you. Where are we? In Christ. Then we, too, are "far above all" in God's purpose, sharing fully in all the conquest, victory and power of that exalted position. In Christ we are as far above the power of Satan as Christ is; therefore we may be more than conquerors, always triumphing in Christ (Rom. 8:37; II Cor. 2:14). Is it any wonder that through all the ages to come we shall be praising God for the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus?

The saint in Christ is God's workmanship; a creation of God's own. Man's works have no part in this wondrous miracle. Good works will be the fruitage of his life as a Christian, but they had no part in making him one. God was the sole Creator of the Christian, who was created through union with Christ.

[2:8-10 "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,

which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."]

An excerpt from *The Wealth, Walk, and Warfare of the Christian* [an exposition of the book of Ephesians], 1939

Bracketed content added

"Ruth Paxson lived from 1889-1949. Ruth Paxson was Bible teacher, missionary, and author whose writings are classics today. Born in Manchester, Iowa, she dedicated her life to Christ while she was young. After graduating from the State University of Iowa, she attended Moody Bible Institute... She sailed for the mission field in China in 1911, sponsored by the YWCA. Before long she left for health reasons and began to teach Bible in Europe and the United States and continued to do so, with writing, until her death... *Life on the Highest Plane* is the book that has received the most acclaim." -

<http://www.sarahsministry.org>

Grace Fellowship International News - May, 2019

John is scheduled to present a one day "**Navigating the Recovery Journey**" seminar on Saturday, June 4, 2019. The venue will be Oakwood School, 7210 Braddock Rd, Annandale, VA 22003. To register, please contact Ray Kruse at 571-332-7596 raytruebilt@msn.com.

A GFI photo album of Spring, 2019 activities is now online at gfiworld.shutterfly.com/pictures

John and Linda's May, 2019 prayer letter is online here: www.gracenotebook.com/pg/71.html

A 7th course has been published at our online course platform: *Discipleship Basics*, by Dr. Phil Jones. To take this free course at your own pace, sign up at <http://gfi.thinkific.com>

GraceNotebook.com is the online archive of Grace Notes. This web site will be undergoing a complete revision in the coming weeks. Let's pray for Dan Parkes as he works on this project (dan@digitaldan.ca).

Honorable Mention

Operation World (book, DVD and web site) is the definitive research and prayer guide for every nation. www.operationworld.org/

Grace Notes editor: Dr. John Woodward

email: john@gracenotebook.com

The purpose of Grace Notes is to highlight the dynamics of abundant living as summarized in Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (NKJV).

Hundreds of articles are available online to freely use for personal ministry, newsletters, etc. To find an article by topic, author, or key word, click "Grace Notes"/search at www.GraceNotebook.com. Please pray for God's blessing on this internet ministry.

Grace Fellowship is an international discipleship, counseling, and training ministry. If you would like to support this ministry, please visit the Donate page at <http://GraceFellowshipInternational.com> or contact GFI by phone. In Canada, personal support is handled by associates at Crossways to Life, 79 Weber St. E., Kitchener, ON. N2H 1C6 <http://www.CrossWaystoLife.org>.

To request resources or to inquire about hosting a seminar or workshop, please contact us.

Grace Fellowship International

Founder: Dr. Charles Solomon

P.O. Box 368, Pigeon Forge, TN 37868 USA.

GFI Phone: 865-429-0450 Fax: 865-429-0144

Ministry home page: <http://www.GraceFellowshipInternational.com>

Coaching: <http://www.ELCmatters.org>

Online video channel: <http://www.YouTube.com/gracefellowshipintl>

GFI Bookstore: GFI web site / Store (or by order by phone)

Grace Notes is published by Grace Notebook. Grace Notebook is an Internet ministry to Christians who yearn for the abundant life that Christ promised: 'I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly' (John 10:10).

You may subscribe to receive Grace Notes by visiting <http://www.gracenotebook.com>.