
The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON XI : GOD MAKES ALIVE / RAISES UP DEAD SINNERS BY GRACE (2:4-10)

God Makes Alive / Raises Up Dead Sinners by Grace (2:1-10)

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 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. (KJV)

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 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. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 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. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (NIV)

Also you — being dead in the trespasses and the sins, in which once ye did walk according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all did walk once in the desires of our flesh, doing the wishes of the flesh and of the thoughts, and were by nature children of wrath — as also the others, and God, being rich in kindness, because of His great love with which He loved us, even being dead in the trespasses, did make us to live together with the Christ, (by grace ye are having been saved,) and did raise [us] up together, and did seat [us] together in the heavenly [places] in Christ Jesus, that He might show, in the ages that are coming, the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus, for by grace ye are having been saved, through faith, and this not of you — of God the gift, not of works, that no one may boast; for of Him we are workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God did before prepare, that in them we may walk. (Young’s Literal Translation)

Form and Structure

Paul begins a new sentence (vv 1-7) but is broken, the subject and verb is not given until vv 4,5 where the sentence begins again

¹ And you being dead in the trespasses and sins —

having mentioned sin, Paul digresses into the depravity of man before continuing his original thought

² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience — ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

he now continues his original intent by repeating how he began

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses,

made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved —

⁶ and raised us up with him

and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Paul now begins the second sentence (vv 8-10) providing a summary of the nature of the salvation achieved by God

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

OVERVIEW — “In the thanksgiving period [Eph 1:15-23] the writer had told his readers that his prayer for them was that they might know the surpassing greatness of God’s power toward them as believers. Now he plays his own part in helping them to gain such knowledge by reminding them how God’s power has affected their lives and what an immense change it has wrought. His reminder takes much of its force from the parallel he draws between the supreme demonstration of God’s power in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ (1:19-21) and his activity on behalf of believers. *He wants them to realize that just as Christ was physically dead but God raised and exalted him, so they were spiritually dead but God raised and exalted them with Christ.* The dramatic change that such an action produced is set out by means of a contrast schema which can be found elsewhere in the NT. It compares the pre-Christian past (‘then’) with the Christian present (‘now’) and could well have recalled for the readers much of what their baptism signified. The writer’s statement of the significance of what God has done for his readers employs and elaborates on language from Col 2:10-13, and takes up characteristic Pauline themes from elsewhere, particularly from Rom 3:24-28 in vv 8, 9. His statement falls into three parts: a description of the readers’, and in fact of all humanity’s, sinful past in vv 1-3, which syntactically do not form a complete sentence; an assertion in vv 4-7 of God’s loving initiative in delivering humans from their plight through their relationship with Christ; and an elaboration on the gracious nature of the salvation that has been accomplished in vv 8-10.

“Throughout the pericope it is primarily from the vantage point of what God has done in Christ that the writer views humanity. This applies not only to the new humanity, whose destiny is seen as incorporated in that of Christ, but also to the old humanity. By contrast to their present enjoyment of resurrection life, the pre-Christian existence of his readers can only be regarded as death. As one who has experienced deliverance from it, the writer has the ability to recognize and describe the pre-Christian situation in all its tragic seriousness. *He reminds the readers, therefore, that at one time they were already experiencing in this life that exclusion from a living relationship to God through Christ that will eventually involve physical death and final judgment. This living death was characterized by trespasses and sins, which also brought it about, and tied up with the trespasses and sin are the forces of the world, the devil, and the flesh. The readers’ sinful deeds were dictated by the norms of ‘this world-age,’ human activity in this age and this world organized in opposition to the will of the Creator. In more mythological language, behind these sins was ‘the ruler of the realm of the air.’ An ultimate personal center of evil (the devil; cf. 4:27; 6:11) is seen as influencing this age, particularly through the rebellious spirit still at work in disobedient humanity. This explanation of sin does not, however, do away with human responsibility, for in the next breath the writer can say that not only the readers, but all believers, were at one time those who chose not to obey, who instead gave their consent to the inclinations of the flesh, and who therefore fully deserved God’s wrath. Their existence was dominated by the flesh, life lived in pursuit of one’s own ends, and controlled by their corrupt thoughts. Left to their fallen natural condition, they were, just like all humanity, deserving of and liable to God’s righteous judgment.*

“Having depicted the readers’ past as characterized by death, bondage, and condemnation, the writer now turns to God’s decisive action which reversed that condition. The mood changes from one laden with doom to one of exultation. The mention of God’s wrath has shown how seriously he takes human sinfulness. But against the background of the real possibility of God’s wrath, his mercy and his love shine out in all their radiance. God’s initiative to deal with the human plight was launched, not on the basis of some potential within the condition of humanity, but on the basis of his rich mercy and great love. The divine reversal involved making men and women alive with Christ, raising them up and seating them with Christ in the heavenly realms. What God did for Christ, therefore, he has also done for believers. This rescue act is not simply parallel to the events of Christ’s triumph, however. It takes place through them. For what God accomplished for Christ in those events, he accomplished for him as representative of a new humanity, seen as included in him. The writer’s perspective on what has been achieved for humanity is in line with Pauline thought about union with Christ in his death and resurrection, but here the death aspect of that relationship has been omitted, and there is a stronger emphasis on the present status of believers resulting from the relationship. Union with Christ is extended to a union with him in his exaltation to heaven, sharing his triumph over the cosmic powers, and such a notion is the most developed formulation of realized eschatology in the Pauline corpus. It serves to remind the readers that they have been transferred to a new dominion inaugurated by Christ’s resurrection and exaltation, in which they can experience new life and liberation from the powers which previously held them enslaved. *This whole rescue procedure was designed to show God’s grace. The writer senses that what has happened to believers is the supreme demonstration of the overwhelming richness of that grace, a demonstration which will continue to be effective into the coming ages, and which in the limitless future will be recognized by all for the marvel that it is.*

“Already this statement about God’s decisive action on behalf of believers has been interrupted in v 5b by the writer’s impassioned assertion that the salvation which God had provided for the readers, and which had a continuing effect in their lives, was brought about by grace. Now, in the last section of the pericope, this assertion is expanded in a summary of the nature of salvation. By this grace the readers have been saved through faith. What God has done in Christ is seen as a still-effective deliverance, liberation, or rescue from their previous state and one that is provided freely, as a gift, for undeserving rebel subjects. *With grace as its ground and faith as its means, this salvation can have nothing to do with any notion of merit. That it is ‘by grace’ means that it has not originated from a human source but comes from God as a gift. That it is ‘by faith’ means the exclusion of human effort and, therefore, of any pride or boasting in the presence of God. The writer wants his readers to be absolutely clear that it is God, and not humans, who is to be given the credit for salvation, and that means the whole of salvation, including believers’ good works. The notion of ‘the self-made man’ is totally out of place in such a perspective on Christian existence. In fact, believers can be said to be made by God, his work, his new creation, the goal of which is the life of goodness which was the Creator’s original design for humanity.* This new way of walking completes the contrast with the walk in trespasses and sins mentioned at the beginning of the pericope. The powerful and gracious activity of God operative on behalf of believers finds its completion, as regards human lives, in a goodness that is expressed in specific works. The writer attempts to

make doubly sure that even these do not become the ground for boasting by describing them as objects of God's advance preparation. They were already prepared as part of God's sovereign purpose and therefore must be attributed solely to grace.

"It is worth standing back from the flow of thought and underlining the completeness of the contrast between pre-Christian past and Christian present which shapes the major part of the pericope. The movement from then to now is a movement from death to resurrection life, from a lifestyle characterized by trespasses, sins, sensual indulgence, and disobedience to one characterized by good works, from this present world-age to the heavenly realms, and from bondage to the forces which rule this world to victory with Christ above hostile powers. It is a movement from the sphere of selfish autonomy to union with Christ, from domination by the devil to a life controlled from start to finish by God, from what humanity is by nature to what it becomes by grace, and from liability to God's wrath to experience of his mercy, love, kindness, and grace." [Lincoln, 116ff]

v. 4 — COMPLETING THE THOUGHT BEGAN IN VERSE ONE — but God being rich in mercy, — ὁ δὲ θεὸς πλούσιος ὢν ἐν ἐλέει, [ho de theos plousios ōn en eleei.] "But" introduces God's actions towards sinners in contrast to their plight in vv. 1-3. The contrast is actually with v. 1 because vv. 2,3 are only relative sentences further describing what was stated in v. 1. "Finally, after the digression which describes the sinners' plight, God is introduced as the grammatical subject and the subject of the gracious act of redemption. The rest of the verse describes this gracious God. He is rich in mercy." [Hoehner, 325] "Here the writer begins to return to the thought begun in v 1 but interrupted by his expansion on what it means to be dead through trespasses and sins in vv 2, 3. He has seen clearly the hopeless condition of humanity in sin and painted it in dark colors. Yet the explanation for the overall mood of the first part of the letter being one of praise and thanksgiving to God rather than despair is summed up by the eloquent little phrase at the start of v 4, 'but God...'" [Lincoln, 99f]

the power which raised Christ from the dead ...

^{19b} according to the working of his great might

²⁰ that he worked in Christ *when he raised him from the dead*

and *seated him at his right hand* in the heavenly places (1:19b-20)

... is the power at work in the believer

¹ And you being dead in the trespasses and sins — ⁴ God,

descriptive of God: being rich in mercy,

the reason for the mercy of God: because of the great love with which he loved us,

parallel comparison with Christ's resurrection

⁵ *made us alive together with Christ* — by grace you have been saved —

⁶ and *raised us up with him*

and *seated us with him* in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (2:4-6)

RICH IN MERCY — "This initiative is launched because God is a God not only of righteous wrath (v 3) but also of mercy.... God's mercy is his overflowing active compassion and is freely exercised, excluding all ideas of merit on the part of its object. It is noticeable that the notion of God's mercy is a prominent present element in several examples of the contrast between the pre-Christian past and the Christian present (cf. Rom 11:30-32; 1 Tim 1:13; Titus 3:3-5; 1 Pet 2:10). It plays an important part in the apostle Paul's thinking about God's relationship to humanity in Rom 9-11 in particular (cf. 9:15, 16, 18, 23; 11:30, 31, 32)." [Lincoln, 100] *"If unbelievers were once dead in sin, under the power of evil supernatural beings, controlled by their own wicked desires and subject to God's wrath, they could expect no mercy from God, yet surprisingly, that is not so for God is rich in mercy.... The new position of believers is a result only of the nature and activity of God."* [Best, 213]

rich = πλούσιος [plousios] = wealthy, abounding in material resources, abounding, abundantly supplied. God is not miserly in his mercy but rich. God is frequently characterized in this way: he 'abounds in mercy' (Exod 34:6; Ps 103:8; Jonah 4:2) and 'delights in mercy' (Mic 7:18).

"... The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exod 34:6)

"The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy." (Ps 103:8)

"The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy." (Ps 145:8)

"... for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil." (Jonah 4:2)

"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy." (Micah 7:18)

mercy = ἐλέει [eleei] *Aristotle states this is "an emotional concern for those who undeservedly suffered some calamity. Those who have suffered or think they might suffer the same disaster are most likely to feel the pity or mercy."* The word is used in the NT 27x. The best known illustration of this word is the mercy shown by the Good Samaritan's action (Luke 10:37). *"In the present context it is God's compassion or pity on the sinners who are suffering the calamity of sin. In this instance, the*

calamity of sin is not something undeserved, yet God extends his mercy toward sinners because he loves them and knows that they are helplessly entrapped in their own snare. They have nothing to commend them to God.” [Hoehner, 326f] Hoehner continues by taking Aristotle’s statement and making application to God who understands our plight because Christ became human and suffered the consequences of sin in our behalf. While this might make good preaching, it should be noted God had mercy on sinners *prior* to the incarnation of Christ, not *because* of the incarnation. The NT therefore takes this and greatly elevates it in its application to God.

Aristotle

mercy is “an emotional concern for those who undeservedly suffered some calamity.”

the God of Scripture

God extends his mercy toward sinners because he loves them and knows that they are helplessly entrapped in their own snare. They have nothing to commend them to God.

because of his great love with which he loved us, — δια τὴν πολλὴν ἀγάπην αὐτοῦ ἣν ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, [dia tēn pollēn agapēn autou hēn ēgapēsen hēmas] This clause states the cause for this demonstration of mercy; i.e., the love of God. dia = “because of, on account of”, thus **“in order to satisfy His great love.”** Love = agapē love, self-sacrificing love, the love of Calvary (John 3:16) “As Paul has stressed the riches of God’s mercy, so he now asserts the greatness of his love. God’s love for his people in Christ is a particular thrust of Romans (cf. 5:5, 8; 8:39). And as in Romans 5:8, so here God’s love is focused on the love of Christ, which led to his giving himself up as a sacrifice on behalf of his people.” [O’Brien, 166] ***Mercy may feel misery but love compelled God to act; “God who has abundant mercy, on account of His love”***

“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom 5:6-8)

“Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom 8:39)

“This love of God is so great that it defies all definition. We can speak of it as his intense concern for, deep personal interest in, warm attachment to, and spontaneous tenderness toward his chosen ones, but all this is but to stammer. Those, and those only, who experience it are the ones who know what it is, though even they can never fully comprehend it (3:19). They know, however, that it is unique, spontaneous, strong, sovereign, everlasting, and infinite (Isa. 55:6,7; 62:10-12; 63:9; Jer. 31:3, 31-34; Hos. 11:8; Mic. 7:18-20; John 3:16; 1 John 4:8, 16, 19). It is ‘the love that has been shed abroad in our hearts’ (Rom 5:5), ‘his own love toward us’ (Rom 5:8), the love from which no one and nothing ‘will be able to separate us’ (Rom 8:39).” [Hendriksen, 117]

with which he loved us — ἣν ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς [hēn ēgapēsen hēmas] According to Hoehner this is a “constative aorist” which views the entire action without reference to its beginning, its progress or its end.

v. 5 — even when we were dead in transgressions — καὶ ὄντας ἡμᾶς νεκροὺς τοῖς παραπτώμασιν [kai ontas hēmas nekrous tois paraptōmasin] this is basically a restatement of v. 1 with the only differences being a change from “you” (v. 1) to “we” (v. 5) and the dropping of “and sin” which was most likely just being used synonymously for transgressions. “God’s mercy and love caused him to act on behalf of men and women and to do what was necessary for them, even when they were in such a condition (cf. the similar thought in Rom 5:8, where God is said to show his love for us in Christ’s death ‘while we were yet sinners’).” [Lincoln, 101] “There are two parallel phrases here, ‘God being wealthy in the sphere of mercy,’ and ‘we being dead with respect to our trespasses.’ The entire translation is, ‘But God being wealthy in the sphere of mercy, on account of His great love with which He loved us, and we being dead with respect to our trespasses, hath quickened us together with Christ.’” [Wuest, 65f]

made us alive together with Christ, — συνεζωοποίησεν τῷ Χριστῷ, [sunezōpoiēsen tō christō] ***Having introduced the subject (God), Paul describes what God does by using three main verbs, all of which are extremely rare.*** “Our identification with Christ in His death broke the power of indwelling sin. Our identification with Him in His resurrection resulted in the impartation of divine life.” [Wuest, 66]

made us alive together = συνεζωοποίησεν [sunezōpoiēsen] is not used in classical literature or the LXX but only in Eph 2:5 and Col 2:13. The word is created from two words, “with” + “to make alive.” The root word is much more common, being used in classical literature to refer to the birth of animals or the growth of plants. It is used 11x in the NT. Except for an illustration of the seed dying and coming to life (1 Cor 15:36), it is always used in the NT of one of the Trinity who has the ability to make alive. “This phrase ‘making alive together with Christ’ has reference to spiritual life and not the physical resurrection of the believer. Christ died physically, we were dead spiritually. Christ was raised physically (1:20), we were raised together with Christ spiritually. We were dead spiritually and now he made us alive spiritually. Paul was fond of relating the believer’s identification with Christ, as seen in Rom 6 where the believer died spiritually, was buried, and was raised with Christ. There is a difference in Eph 2:5, however, for in this passage Paul emphasizes the fact that we were dead in trespasses instead of the fact that we have died with Christ. Nevertheless, the concepts are not altogether different. In Romans, Paul states that we died with Christ as he died to pay the obligation of our sins and in this identification with his death, we were also buried with him, raised up to the newness of life, and will be united with him in the future resurrection (Rom 6:3-11). Ephesians states that we were dead in our trespasses but were made alive with Christ to the newness of life. However, our identification with Christ does not end in the newness of life but

continues until the time that we are resurrected with him (1 Thess 4:14, 17; Phil 1:23; cf. 2 Cor 5:8). In John 5:21-24 Jesus asserts that as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he wills; whoever believes in the Son has eternal life presently and will not come into judgment but is passed from death to life. This new life occurred at the time of our conversion for in the immediate context there is mention that salvation is by grace and the means is by faith and not works (vv. 5b, 8-9). Chrysostom said if Christ the first-fruits lives, so do we, for God has quickened both Christ and us.” [Hoehner, 330f] **“Dead people cannot bring themselves back to life and so the first step here, and the following two, come from God. We can arrange neither to be born nor to be reborn.”** [Best, 215]

WHEN WERE BELIEVERS “MADE ALIVE TOGETHER WITH CHRIST”? — When did this happen? Ernest Best states *there is a sense in which believers came alive with Christ when Christ, as a representative or inclusive figure, was raised*; Best states the aorist “loved us” in v. 4 could refer to the Christ-event and therefore supports this view. But Best concludes the better interpretation is to take this as *happening at the believer’s conversion*. [Best, 214]

by grace you are saved — χάριτί ἐστε σωσμένοι [chariti este sesōmenoi] a parenthetical outburst Paul will repeat in v. 8. “Grace” provides salvation for sinners through the sacrificial death of Christ as well as enables believers to live acceptably before God. “By grace” is a dative of means, instrument or cause, expressing salvation is “through grace” or “on the basis of grace.” “The statement is parenthetical here: it anticipates the fuller assertion of v. 8. **But that people who were dead in sin should be granted a share in Christ’s resurrection life is such a demonstration of divine grace that it calls for an immediate tribute to that grace.**” [Bruce, 286] Note grace used 3x in v 5-8, contrast wrath in v3 — they co-exist with no conflict: wrath is man viewed alone as sinners; grace is man viewed in respect to God’s work on his behalf.

BELIEVERS ARE IN A “SAVED STATE” — **saved** = perfect past participle; it has the basic sense of “*deliverance or rescue from danger*” and is used as deliverance from dangers at war, sea, disease or the wrath of gods in classical Greek literature. It occurs 291x in the LXX and 106x in the NT. In the NT it is used for both physical (Matt 14:30; Acts 27:2) as well as spiritual deliverance (John 10:9; Rom 10:9; 1 Thess 2:16). The context here demands a spiritual deliverance. “The passive voice is labeled by some grammarians as a divine passive where God clearly is the subject. Sinners are being saved by God’s gracious act. **The perfect tense expresses a completed action with continuing results in the present time. The completed action occurred at the moment of their salvation....** Although it could be translated ‘you have been saved’ (ASV, RSV, NASB, TEV, JB, NIV, NJB, NRSV), the translation ‘you are saved’ (AV, NEB) better conveys the continuing results of being saved. In other words, **God, by his grace, initially saves, but by that same grace he keeps believers safe or saved from God’s wrath and from sin’s grip of death from which they are delivered.**” [Hoehner, 333] “We have here in the Greek what is called a periphrastic construction. This is used when the writer cannot get all of the details of action from one verbal form. So he uses two, a finite verb and a participle. The participle here is in the perfect tense, which tense speaks of an action that took place in past time and was completed in past time, having results existent in present time. The translation reads, **‘By grace have you been completely saved, with the present result that you are in a saved state of being.’ ... The unending state of the believer in salvation could not have been put in stronger or clear language.**” [Wuest, 66] “‘To save’ here is an inclusive term characterizing God’s act of making alive, raising up, and seating with Christ as a deliverance from the plight of the old situation to all the benefits of the new. The perfect tense draws attention to the continuing effects of that rescue act for the present, is in line with the surrounding aorists and the realized eschatology of vv 5, 6, and will be balanced by the future perspective of v 7.... For Paul salvation does have past, present, and future aspects.” [Lincoln, 104f]

GOD’S SOVEREIGN FREEDOM FROM OBLIGATION — “It is an impassioned underlining of what the confessional statements he is making should mean for his readers. It draws their attention to the divine initiative, the definite accomplishment and the continuing reality involved in having been made alive together with Christ. Their new situation has been brought about by grace.... **The reality and generosity of grace is appreciated all the more after a statement which shows how seriously God takes human sinfulness, deeming it to be deserving of his wrath (v 3). And from the human standpoint, the necessity of an intervention of grace is underlined when set in contrast to the bankruptcy and doom of a humanity left to itself, left to what it is ‘by nature’ (v 3). ‘By grace you have been saved’ draws the readers’ attention to God’s sovereign freedom from obligation to save them.**” [Lincoln, 102ff] “Mercy pities. Grace pardons. But it does more than that. It saves all the way, delivering men from the greatest woe (everlasting damnation), and bestowing upon them the choicest blessing (everlasting life for soul and body). Being saved by grace is the opposite of being saved by merit, the merit that supposedly accrues from inherent goodness or from strenuous effort. Cf. 2:8,9. The expression clearly indicates that the ground of our salvation lies not in us but in God.” [Hendriksen, 117]

v. 6 — **and raised us up with him** — καὶ συνήγειρεν [kai sunēgeiren] this word is used 2x in the LXX where it refers to someone assisting another to raise something heavy (Ex 23:5) and of Sheol arousing the spirits of the dead (Isa 14:9). It is only used here and Col 2:12; 3:1 where it speaks of being raised with Christ. While our physical resurrection is yet future, this speaks of a past (spiritual) resurrection in conjunction with Christ’s physical resurrection. “This new resurrected life demands new values. It is summed up well in Col 3:1-2 which says, ‘If therefore you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God; set your mind on things above, not on things on earth.’” [Hoehner, 334]

and seated us with him — καὶ συνεκάθισεν [kai sunekathisen] This word is used 4x in the LXX and twice in the NT. Besides here, it is used in Luke 22:55 where it speaks of those who sat down together in the high priest’s courtyard after Christ was arrested. In the present context, not only has God made us alive with Christ and raised us up together with Christ but believers are also seated together with Christ.

“MADE ALIVE / RAISED / SEATED” DESCRIBE A SINGLE EVENT — Some (Hoehner, J. R. W. Stott) considers this the second of the three main verbs while others (Lincoln, Best, O’Brien) considers this as further describing the single main verb of “made us alive.” “[T]he two verbs of v. 6 do not follow chronologically on the being made alive of v. 5. It is better to regard all three verbs as aspects of the same act of God, made alive, raised, seated. ‘Made alive’ comes first because nothing can happen without the dead being made alive.” [Best, 217f]

BELIEVERS HAVE ACCESS TO THE RISEN CHRIST — “Believers are seen as included in Christ, so what God accomplished for Christ he accomplished for him as the representative, the head of a new humanity.... Through his resurrection Christ now lives to God, and since they are ‘in Christ Jesus’ and identified with Christ in both his death and his resurrection life, believers are also to consider themselves alive to God. Unless the apostle thought of believers as already having been identified with Christ in his resurrection, this would simply be make-believe.” [Lincoln, 105f] “[T]here is no other theological construct which could so effectively and vividly communicate to the readers their access to the authority and power of the risen Lord.” [C. E. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, 148; q.v. O’Brien, 171]

A DIVINE MYSTERY: “TOGETHER WITH” — “σύν- [sun-] compounds or expressions using the preposition σύν [sun] are frequently found in eschatological contexts referring to living with Christ at the Parousia or after death and to sharing his glory (1 Thess 4:14, 17; 5:10; Rom 6:8; 8:17; 2 Cor 4:14; Phil 1:23; Col 3:4). A relationship with Christ is in view which affects believers’ future destinies because it involves sharing in Christ’s destiny. Yet, characteristic of Paul’s thought is that a sharing in Christ’s glory and resurrection life is conditional on a sharing in the other aspect of his destiny, his death. ‘With Christ’ language is found in connection with two aspects of sharing that death — sharing in it as an event of the past, a death to the old order and its powers, sometimes with explicitly baptismal overtones (cf. Rom 6:4, 5, 6, 8; Gal 2:19; Col 2:12, 20; 3:1), and sharing in its aspect of present suffering (cf. Rom 8:17; Phil 3:10).” [Lincoln, 101f] “God’s love in the death of his son is a part of his merciful attitude towards people which reaches its climax in that death, so that through that death those who are dead in sin are made to live. The new life of Christians is then related directly to God’s action in Christ rather than to his nature as merciful.” [Best, 214] Not: “we are quickened as He was” but “we are quickened together with Him”

HOW ARE BELIEVERS “WITH” CHRIST? – NOT A SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE BUT A CHANGE OF STATE — “It still needs to be asked what is meant when it is said of believers who are still in their mortal bodies and still on earth that God has raised them up with Christ and seated them with Christ in the heavenly realms. When Paul used the language of dying and rising with Christ in Rom 6 and Col 2 and 3, he had in view not primarily some subjective religious experience on the part of believers but rather thought of believers as having been Christ’s partners in the events of past redemptive history. For him, Christ’s death was a death to the old order, to the powers of this age, including sin, and his resurrection was a coming alive to a new order, in which he functioned as Lord with the power of God. Christ’s death and resurrection changed the power structures in history. For believers to have died and been raised with Christ was the equivalent of having been transferred from the old dominion to the new, because in God’s sight they had been included in what had happened to Christ. The fact of temporal distance created no major problem for Paul because he did not think of individuals as isolated from the power sphere in which they existed, but rather viewed present existence as continuing to be determined by the events on which it was founded. He saw the new dominion as a whole as participating in those events of Christ’s death and resurrection through its representative head. Similarly, when the writer to the Ephesians says God has raised believers up with Christ, he too means they have been assigned to the new reality introduced by Christ’s resurrection. He extends the range of events in the history of salvation in which believers are to see themselves included, by the reference to having been seated with Christ in the heavenly realms. As 1:20-22 make clear, Christ’s exaltation involved his triumph and rule over hostile cosmic powers. A new situation in regard to these powers was inaugurated in history by Christ’s victory. That God has seated believers with Christ means therefore that they are part of the new dominion’s superiority over the old, participating in its liberation from the powers and its restoration of harmony to the cosmos.... Both the parallel with 1:20 and the depiction of the past in 2:2 as being under the control of the ruler of the realm of the air make clear that this picture of the present involves sharing Christ’s victory over such powers. In continuity with categories drawn from apocalyptic writings, the past is seen as under the dominance of this age, this world, and its ruler, while present salvation involves enjoying the life and the rule of the age to come made available already in heaven where Christ now is.” [Lincoln, 108f] “[One scholar] suggests that the use of [‘together with’] compounds may well speak of corporate solidarity between Christ and the believers. This is similar to the Semitic understanding of the one and the many usually discussed under the rubric of a corporate personality. Our resurrection and being seated with him in the heavenlies is a present reality, even though it must not be seen as a fully realized eschatology. As mentioned above, there is a future aspect of our salvation. It is similar to Rom 8:15 where we have received the spirit of adoption and 8:23 where we eagerly await for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.” [Hoehner, 336] “This does not mean merely that we are quickened as he was, that there is an analogy between his resurrection from the grave, and our spiritual resurrection; but the truth here taught is that which is presented in Rom. 6, 6. 8. Gal. 2, 19. 20. 2 Cor 5, 14. 1 Cor 15, 22. 23, and in many other passages, viz. that *in virtue of the union, covenant and vital, between Christ and his people, his death was their death, his life is their life, and his exaltation is theirs.*” [Hodge, 113] “It can best be understood as a statement of God’s purpose for his people — a purpose which is so sure of fulfillment that it can be spoken of as having already taken place: ‘whom he justified, them he also glorified’ (Rom 8:30).” [Bruce, 287]

WHAT ARE WE THEREFORE TO THINK OF WHEN WE CONSIDER BELIEVERS ARE “RAISED / SEATED TOGETHER WITH CHRIST”? — The question could be asked, “what exactly does it mean to be made alive / raised / seated together with Christ? I am not sure any of us fully understands the answer to that question. In some mysterious way, believers are united and identified with Christ and this seems to be more than just a reality which exists in the mind of God only. Scriptures speak in such a manner to imply a true, mystical union between the believers and Christ. Verses which should have some bearing

on our thinking concerning this include the following:

Jesus spoke of His death and resurrection in a word-picture of a grain of wheat being planted, this as multiple grain grows from a single seed, so are believers with Christ: “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*” (John 12:24)

Rom 5:12-21 teaches us that God views us as in Adam or in Christ = identification, headship. “*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*” (1 Cor 15:22)

John 15:1-6 teaches us that the Lord Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. “*I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*” (John 15:5)

Rom 6:1-13 teaches us that we are dead in Christ therefore we are to mortify sin. “*Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*” (Rom 6:6)

Gal 2:20 teaches us that we are crucified with Christ yet we live. “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*” (Gal 2:20)

And our text Eph 2:4-6 teaches us we are made alive, raised and seated together with Christ.

I think there is a deep, divine mystery to all this that we are yet to understand. What are we to think of when we consider being raised / seated together with Christ?

- authority, rule
- freedom, liberty
- surety of completion (“in God’s eyes, it is already accomplished”)
- covenantal and vital union to Christ
- access to the power and authority of Christ
- power which raised Christ from the dead is the power at work in believers
- being transferred to a new dominion, a new order; a change in the state of the believer

DELIVERANCE FROM SIN A PRESENT REALITY — in the heavenly realms — ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις [en tois epouraniois] “*The transfer of believers from the death of sin and the realm of the devil is expressed more strongly in v. 6 than elsewhere in the NT when it is said that believers have sat down with Christ in the heavenlies.* In other places their reign is set in the future (2 Tim 2.12; Rev 3.21; 5.10; 20.4; 22.5; cf. 1 Cor 6.2f; 1 Pet 2.9; Mt 13.43; Rom 8.17, 30). Believers are distinguished from Christ in that they are not said to sit at God’s right hand.” [Best, 219] “***Believers live simultaneously in two spheres, earth and heaven....*** [The heavenly realms] are not the perfect heaven of later Christian thought, but a place where evil powers still fight to maintain their position (6.10ff). AE does not then see believers who sit in the heavenlies as freed from the struggle with evil and sin, and in the second part of his letter he has much advice and exhortation to give to them for this struggle.... Within the course of church history groups have appeared from time to time claiming to be perfect, an assertion which amounts to much the same as the claim to be already in heaven.... ***What does AE mean by sitting in the heavenlies? In 1.20 Christ’s seat in the heavenlies implies his superiority to the powers; in the heavenlies he occupies a position of authority, he reigns. We should expect the same to be intended of Christians; they reign, or rather, to be more precise in view of the use of σύν [sun, ‘with’], they participate in Christ’s reign.*** Yet it is not said that believers are exalted to the right hand of God as was Christ. Their position in the heavenlies is not then identical with his. Perhaps a little more can be learned from 3.10 where a cosmic role is given to the church. In 6.10ff believers are offered equipment for exercising authority over evil spiritual powers, for, unlike Christ, Christians so long as they live are still threatened by these powers.... [Believers tend to undervalue the importance of ‘being seated with Christ’, for example,] Origen appears to regard what is said as signifying no more than an attitude of mind; Thomas Aquinas, recognising the past tenses, speaks of the certitude of hope; Chrysostom writes round the problem by speaking of the body of Christ which goes to heaven with Christ its head.... The problem is not new to Christianity for no one supposes that when in Ps 110.1 the king is said to be at God’s right hand he was actually sitting there, yet it is basic to the description of the Christian life; ***on the one hand believers are still plagued by sin; on the other they already reign (Rom 5.17) in a new type of existence. AE is faithful to both sides of this paradox but throughout the letter he tends to stress its second element and 2.6 taken out of the context of the letter is open to serious misunderstanding. Those who stress the first element also look forward more consistently to a future eschatological realisation of the second. The future is not stressed by AE but it has not full disappeared*** (e.g. 1.14, 18; 2.21; 4.4, 15f, 30; 5.5, 16, 21).” [Best, 220ff] “From this position the believer derives every spiritual benefit. Hence, the position of being seated with Christ in the heavenlies gives the believer a heavenly status with heavenly power to overcome the power of sin and death.” [Hoehner, 334] “Throughout this epistle the expression ‘heavenly places’ means heaven. But the latter phrase has in Scripture a wide application. It means not only the atmospheric heavens in which the clouds have their habitation; and the stellar heavens in which the sun, moon and stars dwell; and the third heavens, i.e. the place where God specially manifests his presence and where the glorified body of Christ now is, but also the state into which believers are introduced by their regeneration. ***In this last sense it coincides with one of the meanings of the phrase ‘kingdom of heaven.’ It is that state of purity, exaltation and favour with God, into which his children are even in this world introduced. The opposite state is called ‘the kingdom of Satan;’ and hence men are said to be translated from ‘the kingdom of darkness***

into the kingdom of God's dear Son.' It is in this sense of the word that we are said, Phil. 3, 20, to be the citizens of heaven. We, if Christians, belong not to the earth, but heaven; we are within the pale of God's kingdom; we are under its laws; we have in Christ a title to its privileges and blessings, and possess, alas! in what humble measure, its spirit. Though we occupy the lowest place of this kingdom, the mere suburbs of the heavenly city, still we are in it. The language of the apostle in the context will appear the less strange, if we apprehend aright the greatness of the change which believers, even in this life, experience. They are freed from the condemnation of the law, from the dominion of Satan, from the lethargy and pollution of spiritual death; they are reconciled to God, made partakers of his Spirit, as the principle of everlasting life; they are adopted into his family and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God both in this life and in that which is to come." [Hodge, 114f]

ALTHOUGH BELIEVERS ARE SEATED WITH CHRIST, HIS POSITION IS STILL UNIQUE — “[In Col 3:1] the believer is exhorted to seek ‘the things above,’ because Christ is above and the believer’s life is hidden with Christ in God. In Col 3:1 the realm above is closely related to the sphere of resurrection existence, for those whose whole concern is to be the things above, where Christ is, are those who already share his resurrection life. Since resurrection life is heavenly life, by being united with Christ in his resurrection believers participate in the life of the realm above, and the imperatives in [Col] 3:1, 2 can be seen to be based on indicatives. The writer of Ephesians has grasped this thought clearly and here spells out its significance boldly. If believers have been given a share in Christ’s resurrection life, they can also be said to share in the triumph of its heavenly aspect. Again the desire to complete the parallel with [Eph] 1:20 dictates the formulation, ‘and seated us with Christ in the heavenly realms,’ and the Colossians background opens the way for the thought behind it. *It should be observed that along with the parallel between believers and Christ there remains a distinction. The phrase ‘at his right hand,’ in 1:20 is reserved for Christ and not repeated in the case of believers in 2:6. Although believers share in Christ’s exaltation, his position in the heavenly realm and his relationship to God are unique.*” [Lincoln, 106f]

“SEATED IN THE HEAVENLIES” DOES NOT ELIMINATE ALL EARTHLY STRUGGLE — *“The new dominion into which believers have been initiated is firmly anchored within history. The writer is under no illusion that sharing in Christ’s victory brings removal from the sphere of conflict. The rest of the letter provides ample evidence that those who have been seated with Christ in the heavenlies are at the same time those who must walk in the world (cf. 2:10; 4:1,17; 5:2, 8, 15) and stand in the midst of the continuing battle with the powers (cf. 6:11-16).”* [Lincoln, 109]

in Christ Jesus — ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, [en Christō Iēsou] This is not redundant because it underscores the reason we are seated in the heavenlies with Christ, because we are in him. It is our union with Christ that gives us the right to be in the heavenly realms.

v. 7 — PURPOSE OF GOD’S GRACE — in order that he might demonstrate — ἵνα ἐνδείξηται [hina endeixētai] This is called a “purpose clause,” Paul now giving the reason God made us alive / raised us / seated us together with Christ. “Through the ‘in order that,’ this clause concludes the flow of thought begun in v 4 by indicating the purpose of the divine activity that has been depicted. What God has done in making believers alive with Christ, raising them up with him and seating them with him in the heavenly realms, he has done not only for their sake but also as part of the larger purpose of displaying the richness of his grace. Such a thought is familiar from the *berakah* of 1:3-14, where the ultimate goal of salvation was seen as the glory of God (cf. 1:6, 12, 14). In particular, 1:6 expressed the goal of believers’ predestination to be sons and daughters of God as ‘the praise of the glory of his grace.’” [Lincoln, 109] *“God does not raise believers to the heavenlies merely for their own good but that he might exhibit, or prove, the wealth of his grace.”* [Best, 223]

demonstrate = ἐνδείξηται [endeixētai] means “to show, to demonstrate.”

“AGES” = PLURAL — in the coming ages — ἐν τοῖς αἰῶσιν τοῖς ἐπερχομένοις [en tois aiōsin tois eperchomenois] This indicates the time when God will demonstrate his kindness. “Ages” is plural and could be taken in several manners: (1) it could refer to the ages beginning with the first century up to the second coming of Christ; or (2) it could refer to the age(s) after the return of Christ; or (3) it could be a combination: beginning in the first century and all throughout eternity. “[L]iterally, ‘in the ages that are coming one upon another,’ that is, in the eternal ages that roll in, one after another in the future eternity after the universe is returned to its pristine glory.” [Wuest, 68] “The writer’s thought is that God has accomplished the resurrection and heavenly session of believers with Christ in order to show the immensity of his grace in a future in which age succeeds age. The significance of this assertion is threefold.

- First, *the new order which has begun has a future.* The writer knows himself to be in the decisive period of God’s redemptive activity, which was inaugurated by Christ’s resurrection and exaltation, but which is yet to reach its consummation in the coming ages.
- Second, *the divine activity on behalf of believers was of such a finality that it will continue as the display of his grace into those coming ages.*
- Third, *what God has done is now a reality for believers, but only in the coming ages will it be fully shown for what it is.* Only then will it become evident to all what an abundance of grace and kindness God has bestowed on his people through Christ.” [Lincoln, 111]

“The plural ‘ages’ is not simply a stylistic variation of the singular, but a more general conception, implying ‘one age supervening upon another like successive waves of the sea, as far into the future as thought can reach.’ In the light of this meaning it may thus be claimed: ‘Throughout time and in eternity the church, this society of pardoned rebels, is designed by God to be the masterpiece of his goodness. When he brings into being the reconciled universe of the future, the church will provide the pattern after which it will be modeled.’” [O’Brien, 173; Bruce, 288] “Why should God wish to make his grace

known in the age to come, when almost by definition that is the age when no one will doubt it? If the plural is to be taken as a genuine plural, then it is better to understand it as suggesting that the future consists of a number of periods of time. The aeons would be the future history of this age and of the age to come.... It would however be wrong to attempt to identify the aeons as particular periods of history or as implying the rise and decay of civilisations. God, by what he had done for the writer and readers of the letter, is able to exhibit or prove his grace to future ages.... [T]he verse suggests that AE sees a cosmic significance in Christian salvation; God is concerned with more than the salvation of individuals or even of the church as a whole.” [Best, 223f]

the surpassing wealth of his grace — τὸ ὑπερβάλλον πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ [to huperballon ploutos tēs charitos autou] “*Huperballon*” is the same word as discussed in 1:19 and could be translated “*surpassing, extraordinary, exceeding.*” The word is only used by Paul. O’Brien quotes several Greek authorities that understand the word “surpassing” as an “expression of degree... implying comparison” and the word “wealth” as a “high degree of something.” He states an appropriate rendering is “*his very, very great grace*” [O’Brien, 172] “[I]n light of the parallels between 1:19-21 and 2:4-7 already underlined, it can be said that if the raising of Christ from death to sit in the heavenly realms was the supreme demonstration of God’s surpassing power, then the raising of believers from spiritual death to sit with Christ in the heavenly realms is the supreme demonstration of God’s surpassing grace.” [Lincoln, 110]

in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus — ἐν χρηστότητι ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. [en chrēstotēti eph’ hēmas en Christō Iēsou] This is a cluster of three prepositional phrases: “*in kindness*” + “*toward us*” + “*in Christ Jesus*”

kindness = χρηστότητι [chrēstotēti] is used in the LXX 15x and is always translated from the same word to mean “*good, goodness.*” It is used 10x in the NT, only by Paul and only here in Ephesians. In the NT it has the sense of “*goodness, kindness, generosity.*” It carries the connotation of that which is appropriate or fitting; therefore “*God will demonstrate the wealth of his grace in the sphere of that which is his goodness or kindness appropriate to God.*”

toward us = ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς [eph’ hēmas] shows direction, indicating the kindness is directed toward us.

in Christ Jesus = ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. [en Christō Iēsou] could give the idea of “*in connection with,*” but preferably gives the location of the action of kindness. “The work of kindness located in Christ Jesus is the wonderful salvation wrought by him and not by us. Because we are located in Christ we were made alive with him, raised with him, seated with him in the heavenlies, hence the kindness of God toward us. Our own efforts would have been rejected by God, but we are accepted because we are in Christ.” [Hoehner, 339] “*Since God’s action and purpose are never unrelated to Christ the sentence is rounded off by referring to him. While this might be taken as a reference to the corporate Christ (God exhibits his grace towards those who are in Christ) it is much easier to see Christ as the place where, or means whereby, God’s grace is exhibited. There is nothing vague about God’s grace; it is anchored in Christ.*” [Best, 225]

v. 8 — **for by grace you are saved through faith,** — τῇ γὰρ χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι διὰ πίστεως. [tē gar chariti este sesōsmenoi dia pisteōs;] these are the same words as the parenthetical statement in v. 5 with a couple exceptions: first, it begins with an explanatory “*for,*” second, there is a definite article before “*grace,*” and third, the addition of “*through faith.*”

for by grace = τῇ γὰρ χάριτί [tē gar chariti] could literally be translated “*for by the grace,*” the possible reference being back to the grace which was aforementioned in v 5.

you are saved = ἐστε σεσωσμένοι [este sesōsmenoi] as noted in v. 5, denotes a completed action with continuing results.

THE IMPORTANT THING IS THE OBJECT OF THE FAITH — **faith** = “*trust, reliance, confidence*” in either people or gods. It is used 243x in the NT. “*Faith is always faith in someone or something;* its object is not here defined but in 1.13, 15; 3.12 it is Christ and we may assume it is the same here.” [Best, 226]

“THROUGH” FAITH BUT NEVER “BECAUSE OF” FAITH — **through faith** = διὰ πίστεως [dia pisteōs] this phrase (lit, “through faith,” found in Rom, 2 Cor, Gal, Eph, Phil, Col and 2 Tim) is used 14x in the NT while a similar phrase (lit, “out of grace,” found only in Rom and Gal) is used 21x. Its use in Rom 3:20 and Gal 2:16 proves the terms are synonymous. **It is important to note that Paul always says we are saved “through” faith or “out of” faith but never “because of” faith. While faith is the channel or human instrument used to appropriate salvation, the grounds or basis of our salvation is the objective death of Christ on the behalf of sinners. We are never to say we are saved because we believe; we are saved because of the actions of Christ, not our faith.... This is more than an intellectual acknowledgment; the main elements of faith is (1) a firm conviction, fully acknowledging the truth of God’s word; (2) a personal surrender to Him; and (3) conduct inspired by such surrender.** “AE uses the genitive and not the accusative in the phrase διὰ πίστεως [dia pisteōs] for *believers are saved not because of their faith but through it; it is their response to what God has done; it represents their openness to his activity; it is not something which combined with that activity produces salvation. God’s activity and human receptiveness are two sides of one coin.*” [Best, 226]

A DIVINE MYSTERY: IS FAITH A PRODUCT OF SALVATION? — *It is proper at this point to emphasize the mystery involved in the work of salvation. I realize we are students of theology and many, many great men of God believe God regenerates and faith is the first cry of a newborn infant Christian. I personally tend to lean that way but I also believe it would be wrong to wipe away verses which speak to the contrary-wise. I think it a great err to believe we have all the answers to these deep mysteries of God. An example might be found in this verse which states our salvation is through the means of faith. How do we reconcile this with our “regeneration brings about faith”? While there are those who would ignore this paradox and read into this verse their own theology, I think it right to ask ourselves the question: do we trust God enough to allow the Bible*

to speak or do we need to compress and twist certain verses to make them fit into our pre-arranged theological system? If we must alter this or any other verse to make it fit our theology, then do we really believe in the authority of Scripture? Better to allow the scripture to say what it says and then step back in humility and confess our finiteness to God. “There is, at times, a tendency to minimize faith as the means of salvation. Some scholars believe that regeneration precedes faith, but that goes against the present context. There is nothing in this context to indicate that regeneration is the means of salvation and in some way faith follows.” [Hoehner, 341]

FAITH IS NOT A “WORK” ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE — It should be also noted faith is never considered a work in scripture. This verse is a good ground for that teaching because Paul states salvation is “through faith” but immediately adds “not of works lest any should boast.” Another example is Abraham: Paul states, “And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness” (Rom 4:5 ESV), the illustration being that of Abraham. But in the preceding verse Paul states that if salvation was by works, it would be something God owed the sinner and not by grace: “now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due” (Rom 4:4). “In Paul’s thinking faith can never be viewed as a meritorious work because in connection with justification he always contrasts faith with works of the law (cf. Gal 2:16; 3:2-5, 9, 10; Rom 3:27, 28). Faith involves the abandonment of any attempt to justify oneself and an openness to God which is willing to accept what he has done in Christ. The same applies here in regards to salvation. Faith is a human activity but a specific kind of activity, a response which allows salvation to become operative, which receives what has already been accomplished in Christ.” [Lincoln, 111]

WHAT EXACTLY IS “THE GIFT OF GOD” ? — *and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God* — καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ἑμῶν, θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον [kai touto ouk ex humōn, theou dōron;] The general sense is obvious: “this” is not a product of human effort but by the grace of God. The debate centers around the question of what does “this” refer?

- “this” refers to “grace” — the objection to this is that “grace” is feminine and the pronoun “this” is neuter.
- “this” refers to “you are saved” — the objection to this is that the verb is masculine and the pronoun “this” is neuter.
- “this” refers to “faith” — the objection to this is that “faith” is feminine and the pronoun “this” is neuter.

It is more popular among some (especially early) commentators to connect “this” with the nearest preceding noun, “faith” (e.g., Chrysostom, Augustine, Jerome, Beza, Bengel, Hodge, Moule, Westcott, E. K. Simpson). As with the preceding objections, “faith” is feminine and the pronoun “this” is neuter. Many of the commentators however admit “that the difference in gender is not fatal to such a view” because there are examples in the Greek where a neuter pronoun is used in conjunction with a feminine noun. Moule argues for this as follows: “[T]he phrase ‘and that’ (lit., ‘and this’) is familiar in NT Greek to introduce an *addition of thought*, enforcing or heightening what has gone before. See 1 Cor vi. 6, 8; ‘and that before the unbelievers;’ ‘and that, your brethren;’ Phil i. 28; Heb xi. 12, (A.V., ‘and him, &c.’). But if it here refers only to the general previous idea, gratuitous salvation, it is hard to see what *new force of thought* it adds to the words ‘by grace.’ If on the other hand it refers to the last special statement, ‘through faith,’ there is a real additional point in the assertion that even the act of believing is a gift of God; for thus precisely the one link in the process where the man might have thought he acted alone, and where therefore, in St Paul’s sense, he might claim to ‘boast,’ is claimed for God. Let the clauses, ‘and that, not of you; God’s is the gift,’ be taken as a parenthesis, and the point of the interpretation will be clear; while the Greek amply admits the arrangement. That ‘faith’ is a matter of Divine gift is clear from e.g. 2 Cor iv. 13; Phil i. 29. Not that a new faculty of trust is implanted, but gracious manifestations — of the soul’s need and the Saviour’s glory — prevail upon the will to choose to repose trust in the right Object. The ‘gift’ of faith is but one phase of the Divine action which (Phil ii. 13) ‘worketh in us to will.’ And it may be said to be one aspect of the ‘gift of repentance’ (Acts v. 31; 2 Tim ii. 25), for repentance is no mere preliminary to faith; it is the whole complex ‘change of

tautological — adj: needless repetition of the same sense in different words; redundancy; for example, the phrase ‘a beginner who has just started’ is tautological.

mind’ which *includes* faith.” [Moule, 73, italic emphasis his] “The reasons in favour [of ‘this’ referring to ‘faith’] are, 1. It best suits the design of the passage. The object of the apostle is to show the gratuitous nature of salvation. This is most effectually done by saying, ‘Ye are not only saved by faith in opposition to works, but your very faith is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.’ 2. The other interpretation makes the passage tautological. To say: ‘Ye are saved by faith; not of yourselves; your salvation is the gift of God; it is not of works,’ is saying the same thing over and over without any progress. Whereas to say: ‘Ye are saved through faith (and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God), not of works,’ is not repetitious; the parenthetical clause instead of being redundant does good

service and greatly increases the force of the passage. 3. According to this interpretation the antithesis between faith and works, so common in Paul’s writings, is preserved. ‘Ye are saved by faith, not by works, lest any man should boast.’ The middle clause of the verse is therefore parenthetical, and refers not to the main idea *ye are saved*, but to the subordinate one *through faith*, and is designed to show how entirely salvation is by grace, since even the faith by which we apprehend the offered mercy, is the gift of God. 4. The analogy of Scripture is in favor of this view of the passage, in so far that elsewhere faith is represented as the gift of God. 1 Cor. 1, 26-31. Eph. 1, 19. Col. 2, 12, *et passim*.” [Hodge, 119f]

- “this” refers to the entire preceding portion (the complete act of salvation) — many of the commentators take this view (e.g., Calvin, Alford, Abbott, Robinson, Bruce, Lincoln, Best, O’Brien, A. T. Robertson, Wuest). If this be the case,

“this” would refer back to the 2:4-8a and more specifically 2:8a. Paul uses “this” in such a fashion elsewhere in Ephesians: in 1:15 “this” refers back to 1:3-14; in 3:1 it refers back to 2:11-22; and in 3:14 it refers back to 3:1-13. **“A new aspect of the meaning of grace is also drawn out here; in v. 7 it was related to [the kindness, goodness of God]; now it is seen as God’s gift, freely given and not called forth in any way by what the recipients have said or done, or by any quality or talent that lies within them, or by anything which results from their natural powers. God alone is the cause of salvation and it is a gift.”** [Best, 226f]

B. H. Carroll brings out the point that it doesn’t matter whether ‘this’ refers to ‘faith’ or ‘salvation’ as a whole: **“True, it is fairly questioned that the ‘gift’ here is grammatically limited to faith. This matters nothing, since it includes faith; elsewhere most unequivocally faith itself is reckoned as a grace, a gift. Like repentance (Acts 11:18) faith is a gift of grace before it is a human exercise, being a fruit of the regenerating Spirit (Phil 1:29; 2 Peter 2:1; Acts 13:48).... Let us note particularly that the whole paragraph on salvation by grace is clothed with the imagery of creation, with an evident comparative reference to the Genesis creation. Creation is the bringing into being without the use of pre-existing material, so that ‘what is seen hath not been made out of the things which appear,’ and so ‘if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation.’ This imagery absolutely excludes and forbids the idea of any antecedent good or merit in the subjects of grace.”** [Carroll, 108f]

not of yourselves = οὐκ ἐξ ἑμῶν [ouk ex humōn] the preposition denotes “origin, source, cause” [O’Brien, 175] and therefore **“salvation is not of yourselves, it does not find its origin, source or cause in yourself, salvation does not come out of yourselves.”**

gift = in classical literature this word refers to “votive gift, offering, present” given as tribute or a bribe. It is used in the LXX 158x, most often of a cultic offering but also of gifts given between people or gifts offered to God, as well as tributes paid to foreign nations. It is used 19x in the NT and only here by Paul. “[T]he ‘gift’ is that which is outside of ourselves and is to be received. Therefore, the gift of salvation has its origin in God, its basis is grace, and it is received by means of faith.” [Hoehner, 344]

v. 9 — not of works, — οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων, [ouk ex ergōn,] – **works** = Paul uses the general term here rather than the more defined “works of the law” since his audience was mainly Gentile believers.

lest anyone should boast — ἵνα μή τις καυχῆσθαι. [hina mē tis kauchēsētai] – “Hina” [ἵνα] could be purpose, “in order that no one should boast,” or result, “so as that no one may boast.” Hoehner makes the comment that it is difficult to choose between the two because when God is involved, “what God purposes will result.” **“God’s purpose in providing a salvation that is not based on human effort or performance is to exclude boasting.... Paul had claimed in Rom 3:27 that his gospel of justification by faith left no room for boasting. Boasting accompanies works because they become the ground for self-congratulation and pride in the presence of God (Rom 3:27; 4:2), and drag in the notion of merit, or earning one’s reward (Rom 4:4). It was vital to Paul’s perspective on salvation that men and women should not be in the position to claim even the least degree of credit for their acceptance by God. Instead, the common denominator in Paul’s objection to righteousness by law in Romans and his objection to human wisdom in 1 Corinthians (cf. 1:28-31) is that both involve ‘boasting.’** His gospel with its focus on the cross effectively deals with both the predominantly Jewish and the predominantly Greek forms of self-assertion. To boast is to glory in, to put one’s confidence in, the flesh (cf. Gal 6:13; Phil 3:3). Boasting perverts human autonomy by making it the object of trust. Paul’s gospel brings a new orientation which enables one instead to boast in the Lord (cf. 1 Cor 1:31; 2 Cor 10:17; Rom 5:11; Phil 3:3), particularly in the cross of Christ (cf. Gal 6:14), to recognize that whatever one possesses one has received as a gift (cf. 1 Cor 4:7), and to glory in one’s weakness and suffering as the opportunity for the display of God’s power (cf. 2 Cor 11:30; 12:9; Rom 5:2, 3).” [Lincoln, 113] “There is a legitimate boasting in God and what he had done (e.g. Rom 5.2, 11; 1 Cor 1.31) and in the Christian success of one’s converts (e.g. 2 Cor 7.14; 9.2), but there is also an illegitimate boasting in works and activity (e.g. Rom 4.2; 2 Cor 11:16; Gal 6.13) and in the Law (Rom 2.23); the Law itself may be the content of such boasting (Rom 3.27; 4.2, 4; 1 Cor 1.28-31). In v. 9 boasting is clearly wrong.... **Boasting about themselves and their religious activities is excluded for those who depend on grace for their salvation.”** [Best, 227] “A person is not to boast about his or her efforts (1 Cor 1:29; 3:21) but only in God (Rom 5:11; 1 Cor 1:31; 2 Cor 10:17; Phil 1:26; 3:3) or the cross of Christ (Gal 6:14). Certainly, if one could obtain salvation from within oneself or by one’s own works or efforts, there would be a lot of boasting (Rom 4:2).” [Hoehner, 345]

boast = is used in the NT 37x as a verb and by Paul 35 of those times.

v. 10 — for we are his workmanship, — αὐτοῦ γὰρ ἔσμεν ποιῆμα, [autou gar esmen poiēma,] – this tells us why salvation is not of human origin or human works. The “his” is placed first in the sentence for emphasis: **“for we are his workmanship...”** The sense is, **“His workmanship are we.”** **“Just as humans contributed nothing to their own creation so also they contributed nothing to their new creation; both are God’s work.”** [Lincoln, 114]

“HIS” WORKMANSHIP IS EMPHATIC — αὐτοῦ [autou, ‘his’] is emphatic by position and stresses God’s initiative in salvation; the salvation itself is described as his ‘making.’ The translation of this as ‘workmanship’ in many EVV is unfortunate since it suggests a play on ἔργα [erga, ‘work’]; there is no facile connection between our works and God’s work. The English ‘making’ is a good rendering since it is as colourless as the Greek ποιῆμα [poiēma], a word applied to a wide range of action stretching from work on physical material to the composing of poetry; nothing here however suggests AE regards believers as God’s ‘poem’! The word appears in only one other place in the Pauline tradition (Rom 1.20) where it is applied to the original creation of the universe.” [Best, 229]

THE “POEM” OF OUR LIFE? — **workmanship** = ποιῆμα [poiēma] We get our modern day word for “poem” from this Greek word, as shown by this dictionary entry: **“A literary composition written with an intensity or beauty of language more**

characteristic of poetry than of prose; a creation, object, or experience having beauty suggestive of poetry.” According to this dictionary, it comes from the French word poème, from the Latin poëma, from Greek poiēma. [American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition; published by Houghton Mifflin Co.] While this is not the major emphasis of the word, it would not be out of order since a poem is something crafted by a poet. In classical literature this word is used for the work of a craftsman, such as making a crown. It is used 28x in the LXX (20x in Ecclesiastes), all but one of those times being translated by a single word meaning “*deed, work, work of art.*” In the NT it is only used here and Rom 1:20 where it refers to God’s creation. “The first reference [Rom 1:20] speaks of the physical handiwork of God and the second [Eph 2:10] refers to the spiritual recreation of God in the individual believer’s life. Both of these passages speak of the crafted work of God. God’s masterwork or ‘his workmanship’ is a good translation. This workmanship of God differs from human works in verse 9.” [Hoehner, 347] Some have difficulty with this connection; for example, Bruce admits our English word “poem” finds its source in this word but writes “but this provides no basis for the fanciful rendering ‘we are his poem.’” [Bruce, 290] Others build upon this emphasis; for example, Michael Card: “The Bible tells us that we are God’s masterpieces (Greek poiema); not only creatures, but His creations, His poems (Eph 2:10). We are living epistles (2 Cor 3:3). And so, our lives are meant to be listened to, because it is God who is speaking into and out of and through them, through the parable of each day, the symphony of the years, and the masterpiece of a lifetime. If He is speaking through our lives, then nothing else matters but listening to Him.” [Michael Card, Poiēma CD]

*Life is a song we must sing with our days
A poem with meaning more than words can say
A painting with colors no rainbow can tell
A lyric that rhymes either heaven or hell
We are living letters that doubt desecrates
We’re the notes of the song of the chorus of faith
God shapes every second of our little lives
And minds every minute as the universe waits by*

CHORUS:

*The pain and the longing
The joy and the moments of light
Are the rhythm and rhyme
The free verse of the poem of life*

*So look in the mirror and pray for the grace
To tear off the mask, see the art of your face
Open your earlids to hear the sweet song
Of each moment that passes and pray to prolong
Your time in the ball of the dance of your days
Your canvas of colors of moments ablaze
With all that is holy
With the joy and the strife
With the rhythm and rhyme of the poem of your life*

[Michael Card, The Poem of Your Life, song from Poiēma CD]

having been created in Christ Jesus — κτισθέντες ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ [ktisthentes en Christō Iēsou] – **created** = κτισθέντες [ktisthentes] is used in the NT only of God’s acts of creation, both physical (Matt 19:4; Rom 1:25) and spiritual (Eph 2:10, 15; Col 1:16; 3:10). **The word is passive, indicating the believer is the recipient of the action.** “In 2 Cor 5:17 Paul states that if anyone is in Christ Jesus, he or she is a new creation (καινὴ κτίσις, kainē ktisis). In Gal 6:15 Paul states that the important thing is not that one is a Jew (circumcised) or a Gentile (uncircumcised) but a new creation (καινὴ κτίσις, kainē ktisis). Paul states in Eph 4:24 that the new person (καὶνὸν ἄνθρωπον, kainon anthrōpon) has been created (κτισθέντα, ktisthenta) in righteousness and holiness of truth.” [Hoehner, 347] “[G]od’s action of making believers alive with Christ, of raising them up and exalting them with Christ, provided a new start within the world’s history. It was more than simply a restoration of conditions before the fall; it involved, rather, the creation of a new humanity as men and women were brought to that destiny God had purposed but which before Christ had not been reached. The new creation, which in its widest sense includes the summing up of all things in Christ (cf. 1:9, 10), has already begun as a movement in history in the lives of men and women. These lives are to be characterized by good works.” [Lincoln, 114] “Perhaps Findlay is correct in stressing that there are not two creations, only one; salvation is creation reaffirmed; there has been no change in God’s original plan; rather it is now carried fully into effect; we have here the completion of God’s creative activity.” [Best, 230]

for good works which God prepared beforehand, — ἐπὶ ἔργοις ἀγαθοῖς οἷς προητοίμασεν ὁ θεός, [epi ergois agathois hois proētoimasen ho theos,] – this expresses purpose or goal, thus the goal of being created in Christ Jesus is for good works.

good = ἀγαθοῖς [agathois] this word usually has a moral as well as a beneficial connotation. “In other words, we are created in Christ Jesus for works that are morally and beneficially good for us, for those around us, and for God.” [Hoehner, 348]

prepared beforehand = οἷς προητοίμασεν [hois proētoimasen] this word is only used in the NT here and Rom 9:23, both times having God as the subject. “[G]od prepared those good works before the believer was created in Christ Jesus, most likely as a part

of his plan in eternity past. This corresponds with 1:4 where it states that God ‘chose us in him before the foundation of the world in order that we might be holy and blameless before him in love.’ Hence, God not only chose his own before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blame, but he also prepared beforehand good works for them.” [Hoehner, 349] “But how can good works be said to exist in advance of their being done? ... [I]t is the good works themselves that God has prepared beforehand.... [The sense is probably], as the majority of commentators hold, that the prefix indicates that God’s preparation precedes not simply the believer’s works but also the foundation of the world. In its only other use in the Pauline corpus ‘prepared beforehand’ is employed of God’s predestination (Rom 9:23), and we have already seen in the *berakah* that the writer to the Ephesians puts the origins of believers’ experience of God’s blessing back into preexistence (1:4, 5, 11, 12). ***What God has purposed can be thought of as already existing with him. If believers are God’s work, then their ethical activity must also proceed from God and so can be thought of as already prepared in God’s counsel. Not just their initial reception of salvation, but the whole of believers’ lives, including their practical ethical activity, is to be seen as part of God’s purpose. The thought of 2:10 is that the good works were already there, and when, through his grace, God made believers alive, raised them up, and seated them with Christ, he created them for these works. This formulation is an emphatic way of underlining the ethical dimension already present in the assertion of 1:4 that God chose believers before the foundation of the world, in order that they might be holy and blameless before him in love. To say that God has prepared the good works in advance in his sovereign purpose is also to stress in the strongest possible way that believers’ good deeds cannot be chalked up to their own resolve, but are due solely to divine grace. It is grace all the way. Even the living out of salvation in good works is completely by grace.*** But this is not a total determinism. God has prepared the good works in advance ‘in order that we might live in them.’ The human activity of ‘walking’ is still necessary; the actual living out of God’s purpose in the world has to take place.” [Lincoln, 115f] “Before our new creation these works were in the purpose of God prepared to be our attendants, in the midst of which we should walk.” [Hodge, 121]

in order that we might walk in them — ἵνα ἐν αὐτοῖς περιπατήσωμεν. [hina en autois peripatēsōmen] – this is another purpose clause, showing the reason why God (re-)created us. “Since God never acts purposelessly, he creates believers ‘with a view to’ the good works which they will perform, not that his original creation did not have this end in view. ***In so far as people exist they exist to carry out God’s will, and though they may be dead in sins (v. 1) it cannot be said that God created them to be dead in this way; he created them, whether as believers or unbelievers, to ‘walk’ in good works. The same word is used here as in v. 2, perhaps deliberately, to bring out the contrast. The lifestyle of the believer has changed from one of sins under the power of Satan to one of good works. The plural ‘good works’ corresponds to the plural ‘trespasses and sins’.***” [Best, 230f]

walk = περιπατήσωμεν [peripatēsōmen] closes this section as it began: ***as unbelievers we “walked in the course of this world” but as believers we “walk in God’s pre-ordained good works.***” Note as well that believers are not to “work” in them but “walk” in them. “God has prepared beforehand good works for believers that he will perform in and through them as they walk by faith in his power. It is not doing a work *for* God but God doing a work *in* and *through* the believer (Phil 2:13).” [Hoehner, 349] This verse also justifies the expectation that someone who professes faith in Christ should have the good works as evidence of that faith.