



Growth Group Questions
September 27, 2026
“Grace and Works”

CONTEXT

In chapter 1 of Ephesians Paul talked about the power of God that is revealed in the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus. As Paul begins chapter two, he turns to humanity’s condition apart from God’s mercy. Paul says the issue is more than just making bad decisions. The reality is that we are dead in our transgressions and unable on our own to generate a new and transformed life.

Sin is not just an individual issue. Paul writes about how the “ways of this world,” “the ruler of the kingdom of the air,” and the desires of our own flesh shape our lives. Sin needs to be seen as personal, but also communal and cosmic. Sin distorts our desires and relationships, and the way God intended his creation to function.

Verse 4 is the major transition in these verses. We read that because of God’s mercy and love those who had been dead are now made alive with Christ. We are raised with Christ and seated with Christ. Paul says what God has done for Jesus becomes the pattern for what God is doing in the lives of those who follow Jesus. The “old” creation was marked by sin and death, but God has done something new in Jesus, and we are now a part of that new creation God is bringing about.

This salvation is completely rooted in grace. It is God’s gift. It has nothing to do with human effort or striving or works or achievement. Our calling is simply to receive what God has already accomplished through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. There is no personal boasting because God is the one who is the author of our salvation.

As Paul concludes in verse 10, he makes it clear, though, that grace is not passive. We are God’s “handiwork.” This Greek word here is where the English word “poem” comes from. Paul is painting a picture and saying followers of Jesus are the creative work that God produces. God’s grace creates a new kind of people whose lives begin to reflect God’s purposes in the world.

SCRIPTURE AND QUOTES

Ephesians 2:1-10

¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in 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. ³All of us also lied among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC*

The grace of God means something like: "Here is your life. You might never have been, but you are, because the party wouldn't have been complete without you. Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid. I am with you. Nothing can ever separate us. It's for you I created the universe. I love you."

2 Corinthians 5:17

¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come; The old has gone, the new is here!

Genesis 2:7

⁷Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Genesis 2:17

¹⁵The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Isaiah 64:8

⁸Yet you, Lord are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.

Jeremiah 29:4-7

⁴This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵"Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. ⁷Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

QUESTIONS

1. In Ephesians 2:8, the Apostle Paul says, “For it is by grace you have been saved. . . .” How would you describe God’s grace?
2. If we cannot be saved by good works, what role do works play in the life of a Christian?
3. Why is it important that we understand how grace and works are interrelated?
4. What does it mean that a Christian is a “new creation”? (2 Corinthians 5:17)
5. Carefully read Ephesians 2:10 and then paraphrase the meaning into your own words, reflecting what you believe God is saying to you in this verse.
6. How could Ephesians 2:10 transform the everyday mundane or boring tasks in your life to be more meaningful?
7. How does viewing yourself as God’s masterpiece impact the way you see your value and purpose in life?
8. How does God continue to mold and shape us into becoming the kind of people He wants us to be?
9. Pastor Paul used the phrase “Bloom Where You Are Planted” to describe the fact that God has created each of us to make a difference. What does that phrase say to you?

PASTOR PAUL’S SERMON QUESTIONS

1. What can I do this week to make a difference in the lives of those around me?
2. Prayer Practice – Gratitude: Begin or end each day with three things you are grateful for.