INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW AND KEY VERSE OF THE LESSON
Key Verse: Eph 2:5
Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary
Commentary from The Bible Expositor and Illuminator

LESSON INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND
From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

LOVE WHILE DEAD IN SIN (Eph 2:1-3)
Dead in trespasses (1)
Dead in trespasses because of being separated from the life of God (Eph 4:18)
Dead in trespasses because of living for pleasure (1 Tim 5:6)
Dead in trespasses because of not loving (1 John 3:14)
Dead in trespasses because of wicked deeds (Rev 3:1)
Satanically influenced (2)
Satanic influence through false teachings (2 Peter 2:1-3)
Satanic influence through spiritualism (Col 2:18-19)
Satanic influence through hypocrisy (Matt 7:15)
Satanic influence through a different gospel (Gal 1:6-7)
Satanic influence through fine-sounding words (Col 2:4)
Satanic influence through lies (Jer 23:32)
Satanic influence from within (Acts 20:30)
Under God’s condemnation (3)
Condemnation for those who exploit others (2 Peter 2:3)
Condemnation for preaching a false gospel (Gal 1:7-9)
Condemnation for those who have not believed the truth (2 Thess 2:12)
Condemnation for those who deceive (2 Cor 11:15)
Disbelief that could lead to condemnation (Mark 16:16)
A consequence of unbelief is condemnation (John 3:18)

LOVE THAT ENABLES LIFE IN HEAVENLY PLACES (Eph 2:4-7)
Beloved by God (4)
Beloved by God because nothing can separate us from His love (Rom 8:37-39)
Beloved by God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 John 4:15-18)
Beloved by God because love is one of the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22)
Beloved by God because the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of love (2 Tim 1:7)
Beloved by God because God’s love is always before us (Ps 26:3)
Beloved by God because God gives comfort through His love (Phil 2:1-2)
Beloved by God because He provided Jesus as our sacrifice (John 3:16)
Beloved by God expressed in mercy (1 Tim 1:15-16)

Alive with Christ (5)
Alive in Christ because it pleased Jesus (John 5:21)
Alive in Christ through the Holy Spirit (John 6:63)
Alive in Christ through baptism in Jesus (Rom 6:4)
Alive in Christ in a mortal body (Rom 8:11)
Alive in Christ because of living by faith (Gal 2:20)

Exalted with Christ (6-7)
Exalted with Christ in the heavenly realms (Eph 1:3)
Exalted with Christ in glory (Col 3:2-4)
Exalted with Christ that was predestined (Rom 8:30)
Exalted with Christ because our citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3:20-21)

LOVE THAT PROMPTS TO DO GOOD WORKS (Eph 2:8-10)
Gift of grace (8-9)
Gift of grace that saves (Acts 15:11)
Gift of grace that guarantees the promises of God (Rom 4:16-17)
Gift of grace that provides access to God (Rom 5:1-2)
Gift of grace that belongs to a remnant (Rom 11:5-6)
Gift of grace to teach (Rom 12:5-7)
Gift of grace that makes one work harder (1 Cor 15:10)

God's creative work (10)
Creator of things both visible and invisible (Col 1:16)
Creator through being the Word (John 1:1-3)
Creator through whom all things live (1 Cor 8:6)
Creator through whom all things were made (Heb 1:2)
Creator who built everything (Heb 3:3-4)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM BOB DEFFINBAUGH
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY
PRACTICAL POINTS FROM THE BIBLE EXPOSITOR AND ILLUMINATOR COMMENTARY
Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson teaches how to get a clearer understanding of the nature of God's Overflowing Love. The study's aim is to realize that God's overflowing love moved Him to provide salvation for us. The study's application is to thank God daily for including us in His salvation plan.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Eph 2:5

even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

In chapter 1 Paul discussed God’s eternal plan in choosing those who are predestined to sonship and the fact that all believers on earth and in heaven will be brought together under Christ the Head of the church. Chapters 2-3 explain the execution of this eternal plan by showing how God makes sinners saints and then places them into the church, Christ’s body. In 2:1-10 Paul discussed how sinners who deserve nothing but God’s wrath can become trophies of His grace. At the outset it should be noted that the grammatical subject of this long sentence (vv. 1-7) in Greek is “God” (v. 4) and the three main verbs are “made... alive with” (v. 5), “raised... up with” (v. 6), and “seated... with” (v. 6). The object of each of these verbs is “us,” that is, believers (vv. 5-6). Thus the main assertion in verses 1-7 is that God has made believers alive, raised them up, and seated them with Christ. All the other clauses in these verses are subordinate to this main assertion. This is not really clear in the NIV which has included three additional verbs (one in v. 1 and two in v. 3) as well as the three, already mentioned, in verses 5-6.

Verses 1-3 depict the condition of unbelievers before God transformed them.

2:1. Unregenerate persons are dead in... transgressions (cf. v. 5) and sins (Col. 2:13). This death is spiritual, not physical, for unsaved people are very much alive physically. Death signifies absence of communication with the living. One who is dead spiritually has no communication with God; he is separated from God. The phrase “in your transgressions and sins” shows the sphere of the death, suggesting that sin has killed people (Rom. 5:12; 7:10; Col. 2:13) and they remain in that spiritually dead state. 

“Transgressions” (parapiōmasin, “false steps”; cf. Eph. 1:7; 2:5) and “sins” (hamartiais, “acts of missing the mark”), though slightly different in their root meanings, are basically synonymous. Both suggest deliberate acts against God and His righteousness and thus failure to live as one should. The plural of these two nouns signifies people’s repetitious involvement in sin and hence their state of unregeneration.

2:2-3. Mankind’s unregenerate condition is further delineated in three ways: (1) The unregenerate follow the ways of this world. Unbelievers follow the lifestyles of other unbelievers; they experience the world’s peer pressure. “This world” (kosmos) is the satanically organized system that hates and opposes all that is godly (cf. John 15:18, 23). (2) The unsaved follow the ruler of the kingdom of the air, that is, Satan. “The whole world is under the control of the evil one” (1 John 5:19), also called “the god of this Age” (2 Cor. 4:4). In the middle of the Tribulation he will be cast down to the earth, no longer to rule the world or have access to God’s presence (Rev. 12:9). The unsaved are now in the clutches of this “ruler” and follow in his opposition to God. (3) The additional description, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient, may be a further elaboration of the distant antecedent, “ways of this world,” but this seems too remote. Some (e.g., NIV) suggest that it refers to “the ruler,” meaning that Satan personally works in sons of disobedience. However, it seems that “the spirit” is the same as “the kingdom (exousias, lit. ‘authority’) of the air.” This is the nearest antecedent and makes sense grammatically. This “spirit” then refers to the impersonal force or atmosphere, which is controlled and directed by Satan (1 John 5:19). This spirit is presently “at work” (energountos) in unbelievers. “In those who are disobedient” is literally, “in the sons of disobedience.” The word for sons (huiois) has the idea of a distinctive characteristic. “A son of disobedience” is one who is a distinctly disobedient person. The Greek word translated “disobedience” and “disobedient” is used several times in the New Testament (Rom. 11:30, 32; Eph. 2:2; 5:6; Heb. 4:6, 11). It suggests conscious and active rebellion and opposition against God. However, the unconverted not only are under the pressure of the world system and Satan’s control but they also enjoy it. All of us also lived among them at one time is Paul’s reminder to his Gentile readers that the Jews (“all of us”) also joined in this disobedience. The word “lived” (anestraphēmen; “conducted themselves”) differs from “used to live” (periepatešaste) in Ephesians 2:2. The conduct of the unsaved is in the sphere of the cravings of their sinful
nature, in which they follow the desires and the thoughts of the flesh. “Sinful nature” translates “the flesh” (sarkos), which is unregenerated nature. This nature can manifest itself in a respectable form as well as in disreputable pursuits. The “thoughts” (dianoëōn, here pl., but usually sing.) suggest that even unbelievers’ reasoning processes (or calculations formed by a thinking mind) are perverted. Such false reasoning directs their wills and acts (cf. Rom. 1:21). Like the rest, we (i.e., both Jews and Gentiles) are by nature (naturally and innately) the objects (lit. “children”) of wrath. Tekna, the word for “children,” suggests a close relationship to one’s parents (in contrast with huioi, “sons,” which speaks of distinctive characteristics). Unbelievers have a close relationship, not with God, but with His wrath! Disobedience and unbelief lead to the wrath of God (Rom. 1:18-2:29; John 3:36). Ephesians 2:1-3 presents a hopeless picture of an unregenerate person who deserves nothing but God’s wrath.

The wrath of God, however, is not the entire story. Its dark background contrasts with the glorious exhibition of God’s grace toward the unregenerate. Verses 4-10 set forth the grace of God which works on some unbelievers and gives them life (vv. 4-5), raises them (v. 6a), and seats them in heavenly realms with Christ (vv. 6b-10).

2:4-5. The conjunction but introduces God’s actions toward sinners, in contrast with their plight in verses 1-3. In the Greek text God immediately follows “but,” thus placing it in an emphatic position. “God” is the subject of the whole passage. Great differences are suggested by the words “But God”! He is described as rich in mercy. (Cf. the “riches” of God’s grace [1:7; 2:7], of God’s glorious inheritance [1:18], of Christ [3:8], and of His glory [3:16]). In the Septuagint “mercy” (eleos) translates the Hebrew ḥesed, (“loyal love”). In the New Testament eleos means “undeserved kindness” toward sinners. Thus God, who is rich in exhibiting this undeserved kindness, acts on behalf of sinners because of His great love for us. The noun for “love” (agapē) comes from the verb agapaō that means “to seek the highest good in the one loved.” Since sinners are spiritually dead toward God, they have nothing to commend them to God. This is why Paul described this love as being “great.” God’s love has done three things: (a) made us alive with Christ, (b) “raised us up with Christ” (2:6), and (c) “seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” (v. 6). An unbeliever, spiritually dead, is “made... alive” by God “with (in association with) Christ” (cf. Col. 2:13). The “us” includes both Jews and Gentiles (cf. “us” in Eph. 2:3-4). The only way a spiritually dead person can communicate with God is to be made alive, and that must be done by the One who is Himself alive. He is the living God, “who gives life to the dead” (Rom. 4:17). God is fully aware of the unbelievers’ state. It was clearly described in Ephesians 2:1-3 and is repeated here: even when we were dead in transgressions (cf. v. 1). This act of God in making the unregenerate alive is an act of grace: it is by grace you have been saved. Paul elaborated on this last statement, which is actually parenthetical, in verse 8. The verb “have been saved” is in the perfect tense which expresses the present permanent state as a result of a past action. Because believers have been “made alive” spiritually with Christ, they have been and are saved.

2:6a. Besides being made alive, former unbelievers also have been raised... up with Christ. This speaks of their being positionally resurrected. Christ’s post-resurrection state was new, powerful, and unique. So too Christians, in whom Christ dwells, have a new, powerful, and unique life and position. This new life, power, and position demand that believers have a new set of values, as Paul stated in his companion letter to the Colossian believers: “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your heart on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things” (Col. 3:1-2).

2:6b. Not only has God made alive and raised with Christ many who had been unbelievers, but He has also seated them with Christ in the heavenly realms (cf. 1:3; 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12) in Christ Jesus. Believers are positioned spiritually in heaven, where Christ is. They are no longer mere earthlings: their citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). He is the exalted Son of God, and they are exalted sons and daughters of God. These actions of God toward unbelievers are similar to what God did for Christ: “He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 1:20). Whereas Christ had died physically (1:20), unbelievers were dead spiritually (2:1-3). While Christ was raised physically (1:20), unbelievers are made alive and raised with Christ spiritually (2:5-6). Christ is seated in the heavenly realms physically (in His resurrected, ascended body; 1:20), but believers are seated with Christ in the heavenly realms spiritually (2:6). This divine power that can make an unbeliever have life, be raised, and exalted with Christ is the same power that presently operates in believers.

2:7. In the future eternal state, God will show all His Creation the incomparable riches of His grace. “Show” is endeixētai, which means “display or demonstrate” (cf. Rom. 2:15; 9:17, 22; 2 Cor. 8:24; Titus 2:10; 3:2). This display will be seen in His redeemed ones. The “riches of His grace” has been mentioned in
connection with believers’ redemption which brought them forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7). These “riches of His grace” are expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. This refers to salvation. The word “kindness” (chrēstotēti) basically means what is “appropriate or suitable.” (The word is also used in Rom. 2:4; 3:12 [“good”]; 11:22; 2 Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22; Col. 3:2; Titus 3:4.) The appropriate expression of God’s love to those who are spiritually dead is to give them life—this is “the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness.”

2:8-9. These verses explain “the incomparable riches of His grace” (v. 7), expanding the parenthetical statement in verse 5. It is by grace you have been saved, and adding that the means of this salvation is through faith. Hence the basis is grace and the means is faith alone (cf. Rom. 3:22, 25; Gal. 2:16; 1 Peter 1:5). Faith is not a “work.” It does not merit salvation; it is only the means by which one accepts God’s free salvation. Paul elaborated. And this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God. Much debate has centered around the demonstrative pronoun “this” (tou). Though some think it refers back to “grace” and others to “faith,” neither of these suggestions is really valid because the demonstrative pronoun is neuter whereas “grace” and “faith” are feminine. Also, to refer back to either of these words specifically seems to be redundant. Rather the neuter tou, as is common, refers to the preceding phrase or clause. (In Eph. 1:15 and 3:1 tou, “this,” refers back to the preceding section.) Thus it refers back to the concept of salvation (2:4-8a), whose basis is grace and means is faith. This salvation does not have its source in man (it is “not from yourselves”), but rather, its source is God’s grace for “it is the gift of God.” Verse 9 reinforces this by showing that the means is not by works since its basis is grace (Rom. 3:20, 28; 4:1-5; 11:6; Gal. 2:16; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5), and its means is faith (Rom. 4:5). Therefore since no person can bring salvation to himself by his own efforts, no one can boast (cf. Rom. 3:27; 1 Cor. 1:29). Their boasting can only be in the Lord (1 Cor. 1:31).

2:10. This verse, beginning with For, tells why this salvation is not from man or by his works. The reason is that salvation is God’s workmanship. The word “workmanship” (poiēma), used only here and in Romans 1:20 (where the NIV renders it “what has been made”) denotes a work of art or a masterpiece. It differs from human “works” (ergōn) in Ephesians 2:9. Believers are God’s workmanship because they have been created (a work only God can do) in Christ Jesus (cf. “in Christ Jesus” in vv. 6-7). The purpose of this creation is that believers will do good works. God’s workmanship is not achieved by good works, but it is to result in good works (cf. Titus 2:14; 3:8). In the clause, which God prepared in advance for us to do, the word “which” refers back to the “works” in the previous clause. “For us to do” is literally “in order that we might walk in them.” The purpose of these prepared-in-advance works is not “to work in them” but “to walk in them.” In other words, God has prepared a path of good works for believers which He will perform in and through them as they walk by faith. This does not mean doing a work for God; instead, it is God’s performing His work in and through believers (cf. Phil. 2:13). This path of good works is discussed by Paul in Ephesians 4-6.

In conclusion, 2:1-10 demonstrates that though people were spiritually dead and deserving only God’s wrath, God, in His marvelous grace, has provided salvation through faith. Believers are God’s workmanship in whom and through whom He performs good works.

Commentary from The Bible Expositor and Illuminator

“But wait, there is more! Not only will you get—” How many times have you heard that? It usually is spoken by someone trying to sell something. The deal seems too good to be true. There is an offer of something free or some savings if you buy what is being sold right away. The tactic is used to convince us to buy the item. Most of the time we find out that the deal was not as good as we were told. We find out that the offer applies only if you buy multiple quantities or pay a certain way. Otherwise, the special “deal” does not apply. Somewhere in the fine print, the deal too good to be true was precisely that. We find that it was all a gimmick. Sadly, many Christians treat the Lord’s love like a gimmick. They believe that they have been saved. They tell you that they will spend eternity in heaven with the Savior. After all, Scripture clearly tells us that. However, some followers behave as though we should not expect more than that. This attitude is sadly mistaken. In fact, God promises even more for His children. Our redemption is just the beginning of it all. He tells us that we, as His children, are given an unfathomable inheritance (cf. Heb. 9:15). We have a place in His kingdom prepared in advance (John 14:2). God has specifically designed that place for each individual who follows Him. How can we be certain of this? We can be certain because God promised it, and He cannot lie (Num. 23:19). What He promises He will deliver in His good timing. He is not like us. His Word does not perish; it is permanent (Isa. 40:8). Because His Word is forever and His promises are true, we do not need to wonder whether His grace is real or just another hoax. What is great about God’s plan is that we do not have to do anything to earn it. There is nothing we can do to earn it (Eph. 2:9). Our
inheritance comes to us through Christ alone. God handpicked us for His workmanship, choosing to lavish His love upon us even before we had a relationship with Him (vss. 5-6). Because of Jesus, we have been elevated from being God's enemy to being His beloved children. What does this mean? We serve a God of abundant generosity. How many people do you know who would purposely prepare something wonderful for an enemy? That is what He has done, though. His love reaches to every part of the earth and beyond (Ps. 36:5). There is no place His love cannot penetrate. God knows us more intimately than we know ourselves (Ps. 139:16), yet He still blesses us. Our response should be twofold. First, we need to be praising God for every instance of His love in our lives. Remember, He chooses to love us despite our unworthiness. That alone should draw us to our knees. Second, we need to be willing to extend God's love to others around us. When we choose to love others, our own blessings will only multiply (Luke 6:38). What a blessing it is when God's love is spilling over in our lives!

**Lesson Introduction and Background**

*From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary*

Some years ago, my father and I had a disagreement that was almost fatal. We were traveling together in a borrowed car across a high mountain pass in the dead of winter. It was a bright, blustery day, but the temperature was well below freezing, and there was lots of snow on the ground. Unbeknownst to us, the car we were driving had a defective fuel gauge, and we ran out of gas. There was no cell phone coverage in this remote place. We both knew we were in trouble, for the next town with services was miles away. My father knew that the state patrol made regular rounds on this highway, so we would eventually be spotted, but I was impatient. After about 30 minutes, I decided to walk to a service station. My father protested, advising that I would freeze to death before I reached help, but I stubbornly refused to listen. I had walked about 50 yards when I felt him bear-hug me from behind. When I turned and saw the look of panic in his eyes, I was persuaded to return to the car. Soon a truck driver with gas stopped, shared it, and followed us to the gas station. As we drove, I realized it was farther than I had thought. I doubt I would have made it. People like me seem to be programmed to think we can always save ourselves, that we can fight our way out of any problems, that we don’t need help. How foolish we are! When this is applied to our relationship with God, the foolishness is magnified many fold. We are doomed to destruction if we seek to save ourselves. But God has made a way we can be saved from eternal destruction—a way that does not depend on our own efforts. Today’s lesson looks at one of the great texts of the New Testament in that regard.

Paul’s letter to the Ephesians is considered one of his “prison epistles,” because he speaks of physical confinement as he writes (see Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; 6:20). He does not mention the location of his imprisonment, but Rome is likely. This would be the house arrest situation where we find Paul at the end of Acts, awaiting his hearing before the Roman emperor (see Acts 28:16), and therefore dates the letter to about AD 63. Ephesus in Paul’s day was a commercial hub and a Roman government administrative center, one of the largest cities. It was (in)famous for its massive temple to the Greek goddess Artemis, known as Diana to the Romans. This temple was one of the so-called Seven Wonders of the Ancient World (see Acts 19:27). Ephesus had a synagogue where Paul preached successfully for a time (Acts 19:8-10). Paul’s ministry in Ephesus was one of his longest (19:10; 20:31). Jews of the day had a long history of despising Gentiles. But this fact didn’t seem to be nearly the problem in Ephesus that it was in other places regarding church unity. Even so, Paul took care to show that Christ had removed any necessary division between Jew and Gentile, resulting in a single body of the people of God (see Ephesians 2:12-18; 3:6; 4:3-6). Salvation for neither Jew nor Gentile was earned through keeping the Jewish law, but found in the grace of God. In Ephesians 1:15-23, which precedes today’s text, Paul celebrated the implications of the resurrection of Christ. He reminded readers that the raising of Christ from the dead was a display of great power (1:19, 20) and that the risen Christ reigned in Heaven with his Father. Following that, he shifted the focus to the letter’s readers.
Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Love While Dead in Sin (Eph 2:1-3)

1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,
2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,
3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

Dead in trespasses (1)

*Dead in trespasses because of being separated from the life of God (Eph 4:18)*

18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

*Dead in trespasses because of living for pleasure (1 Tim 5:6)*

6 But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.

*Dead in trespasses because of not loving (1 John 3:14)*

14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.

*Dead in trespasses because of wicked deeds (Rev 3:1)*

3 "To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.

Satanically influenced (2)

*Satanic influence through false teachings (2 Peter 2:1-3)*

2 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them — bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2 Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. 3 In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

*Satanic influence through spiritualism (Col 2:18-19)*

18 Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. 19 He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

*Satanic influence through hypocrisy (Matt 7:15)*

15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

*Satanic influence through a different gospel (Gal 1:6-7)*

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.

*Satanic influence through fine-sounding words (Col 2:4)*

4 I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments.
Satanic influence through lies (Jer 23:32)

32 Indeed, I am against those who prophesy false dreams," declares the Lord. "They tell them and lead my people astray with their reckless lies, yet I did not send or appoint them. They do not benefit these people in the least," declares the Lord.

Satanic influence from within (Acts 20:30)

30 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.

Under God's condemnation (3)

Condemnation for those who exploit others (2 Peter 2:3)

3 In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

Condemnation for preaching a false gospel (Gal 1:7-9)

7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! 9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!

Condemnation for those who have not believed the truth (2 Thess 2:12)

12 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

Condemnation for those who deceive (2 Cor 11:15)

15 It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

Disbelief that could lead to condemnation (Mark 16:16)

16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

A consequence of unbelief is condemnation (John 3:18)

18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

Love That Enables Life in Heavenly Places (Eph 2:4-7)

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,
5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),
6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,
7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Beloved by God (4)

Beloved by God because nothing can separate us from His love (Rom 8:37-39)

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Beloved by God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 John 4:15-18)

15 If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. 16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. 17 In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. 18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

Beloved by God because love is one of the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22)

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Beloved by God because the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of love (2 Tim 1:7)

7 For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

Beloved by God because God's love is always before us (Ps 26:3)

3 for your love is ever before me, and I walk continually in your truth.

Beloved by God because God gives comfort through His love (Phil 2:1-2)

2 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.

Beloved by God because He provided Jesus as our sacrifice (John 3:16)

16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Beloved by God expressed in mercy (1 Tim 1:15-16)

15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the worst. 16 But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

Alive with Christ (5)

Alive in Christ because it pleased Jesus (John 5:21)

21 For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.

Alive in Christ through the Holy Spirit (John 6:63)

63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.

Alive in Christ through baptism in Jesus (Rom 6:4)

4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Alive in Christ in a mortal body (Rom 8:11)

11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

Alive in Christ because of living by faith (Gal 2:20)

20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
Exalted with Christ (6-7)

Exalted with Christ in the heavenly realms (Eph 1:3)
3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Exalted with Christ in glory (Col 3:2-4)
2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Exalted with Christ that was predestined (Rom 8:30)
30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Exalted with Christ because our citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3:20-21)
20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Love That Prompts to do Good Works (Eph 2:8-10)
8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Gift of grace (8-9)

Gift of grace that saves (Acts 15:11)
11 No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”

Gift of grace that guarantees the promises of God (Rom 4:16-17)
16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring — not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. 17 As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed — the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.

Gift of grace that provides access to God (Rom 5:1-2)
5 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Gift of grace that belongs to a remnant (Rom 11:5-6)
5 So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. 6 And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

Gift of grace to teach (Rom 12:5-7)
5 so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. 7 If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach;
God’s Overflowing Love


gift of grace that makes one work harder (1 Cor 15:10)

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them — yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

God's creative work (10)

Creator of things both visible and invisible (Col 1:16)

16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

Creator through being the Word (John 1:1-3)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Creator through whom all things live (1 Cor 8:6)

6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

Creator through whom all things were made (Heb 1:2)

2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

Creator who built everything (Heb 3:3-4)

3 Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. 4 For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

The passage before us sets before us the glorious difference between what we once were, apart from Christ, and what we now are, in Christ. The good news of the gospel is that we need not remain dead in our transgressions and sin, separated from God and destined for wrath. God has provided a way of salvation—one way—by which sinners can become saints. And this “way” is Jesus Christ:

6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:6).

Christ died for our sins, so that we need not suffer the penalty of death. Christ rose from the dead and was ascended to the right hand of the Father. In Christ, we too are assured of our resurrection from the dead, and of our position with God in the heavenlies. All we must do is to agree with God concerning our condition, as outlined in Ephesians 2:1-3, and to receive Jesus Christ as God’s provision for our salvation, as explained in verses 4-6. In Christ we cease to be what we once were, and we forever continue to be what Christ is.

If you are a Christian, this text should serve as a reminder of what you once were, and of what you now are, in Christ. It should produce both humility and gratitude. It should stimulate you to love and good deeds, knowing that even the good works which you do are those which God has accomplished in and through you, for His glory.

If you cannot rejoice in these truths, then now is an opportunity for you to receive them for yourself. Verses 1-3 make it clear that you are no worse and no better than any other sinner. Apart from Christ, you are dead in your sins, without life or hope. But in Christ, you enter into the blessing of eternal life. You cease to be the pawn of your own fleshly desires, the world’s pressure, and Satan’s power. If you acknowledge verses 1-3 as an apt descriptive of your own condition, and if you trust in Christ as God’s provision for your salvation, you will come to experience God’s grace personally. I pray that today will be your day of salvation.
Ephesians 2:1-10 presents us with the gospel as a God-centered gospel. It contains no opportunity for human boasting, but only the grace of God, resulting in the glory of God. It presents a salvation which is all of God. The words of the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 11 are surely fitting, as related to God’s salvation:

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen (Romans 11:36).

As clear as it is in Scripture that salvation is God-centered, that it begins with, is achieved through, and is for the glory of God, this point continues to be one that is lost to some Christians. We sing of this salvation as though it was initiated by man, and not by God. We sing that the “Savior is waiting … for us to open our hearts,” and that if “we take one step toward the Savior, we’ll find His arms open wide.” This gives men too much credit, and God too little.

Worse yet, contemporary Christian songs paint a very different picture of man’s condition in sin. God says we are dead in our transgressions and sins; some Christians believe that we are only sick. Other Christians seem to have gone even further. They cease to portray man as dead, desperately in need of God, and speak of God as though He were desperately in need of man. And so we hear these words being sung:

Could it be that God would really rather die than live without us?

Imagine it, God needs us, apparently more than we need Him. And if God can’t have us, He’d really rather die? What is this? Where does this come from? Surely not from Ephesians, or from the Scriptures. How easily we project our weaknesses on God.

The gospel, as summed up in Ephesians 2:1-10, unites Jews and Gentiles. The Jews, like the Gentiles, are dead in their sins. Both are lost and without hope, apart from Christ. Neither can be saved on the basis of works. All men, regardless of race or “religion” or status in life, are sinners, in need of God’s saving grace in Christ. Apart from faith in Christ, they are hopeless, doomed for an eternity in hell.

In Christ, all men are equal as well. Because it is not of our doing, but of God’s doing, there is no privileged class in the body of Christ. The only basis for boasting is in the work of Christ. And so the gospel destroys the myth that Jews are better than Gentiles. This is the teaching of the Apostle Paul in Romans:

9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; 10 as it is written, “There is none righteous, not even one; 11 There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; 12 All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one. “ 13 “Their throat is an open grave, With their tongues they keep deceiving,” “The poison of asps is under their lips”; 14 “Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness”; 15 “Their feet are swift to shed blood, 16 Destruction and misery are in their paths, 17 And the path of peace have they not known. “ 18 “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; 20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; (Romans 3:9-24).

This equality is the reason why the New Testament writers are so opposed to discrimination. James will have none of it, and condemns its practice in the church (see James 2:1-13). And when Paul finds discrimination in the church, he reacts strongly, insisting that it is a denial of the gospel, which makes all men equal, whether in their sins or in Christ (see Galatians 2:11-21). Let us not only acknowledge the equality of all men in Christ, let us also practice it, to the glory of God.

Our text has something to teach us in the matter of deliverance from the “addictions” of sin. There are many Christians who seem to think that secular deliverance systems really work. As I understand it, my sinful “addictions” (I really don’t like this term) can only be remedied in Christ. The one thing these addictions share in common is that they all originate with the flesh. Only my death, burial, and resurrection in Christ can deliver me from the domination which sin has over my flesh, and only walking in the Spirit gives me the power to live righteously (Romans 6-8). The best that human deliverance (for example, “12 step”) programs can do is to convert one form of addiction which is socially unacceptable to one which is acceptable. Christ is the answer to sin, to only answer. Not a program plus “God as you know Him,” but God as revealed in Christ.
In our text, I find Paul dealing with the past in a way that is quite different from the approach which is common today. In the first place, Paul does not allow his readers to think of themselves as victims. While there are many factors beyond the control of the individual, the fact is that the desires of the flesh and of the mind are involved, too, for which the individual must take responsibility. I do not do well to seek other explanations for my sin which are beyond my control, but to take responsibility for decisions I have made and actions I have done. My guilt is forever removed by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. As long as I focus on the guilt of others, I will ignore and avoid the grace which God has provided for my own.

Finally, I believe that our text has something to say in relationship to the current “lordship” controversy. Can one be saved without understanding the Jesus Christ is Lord of all, and accepting Him as such? I am sure that few grasp all that they could at the point of their conversion. Nevertheless, in our text it is difficult to see how, in Paul’s mind, one can be truly delivered from their bondage to their own flesh, the world, and Satan, if Jesus is not Lord of all. It is the power and authority of Christ which delivers us from the dominion of darkness. If people fail to understand this at the moment of their conversion, it may be because we have chosen to play down His sovereignty. In my opinion the only form of grace which God bestows is sovereign grace. To preach God’s grace apart from His sovereignty is to preach less than the whole truth.

(Adapted from URL: https://bible.org/seriespage/8-guilt-men-and-grace-god-part-1-ephesians-21-10)

**Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

Having interacted with Bible college students for over 30 years, I often find them questioning their purpose in life. In counseling, we discuss life’s big questions: Who am I? Why am I here? What should I do? All of these are wrapped up in purpose. Here are the Bible’s answers: **Who am I?** You are a beloved child of God who has disobeyed him through your sin. Yet you are now saved from the consequence of sin and from spiritual death by God’s grace. **Why am I here?** You are not an accident of genetics. You are created by God to serve him and glorify his name. **What should I do?** Having made peace with God through Jesus, you are ready to give your life back to him in service and love. Sin causes us to be spiritually dead. God’s merciful grace gives us spiritual life in order that we might properly serve him in good works. If we submit to his will, he will use us in mighty ways, and our purpose in life will be clear.

**Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary**

1. Thinking about the disobedience from which God has delivered us should humble us (Eph. 2:1-2)
2. Remembering our lives before Christ should make us thankful to be free from guilt and rescued from God’s wrath (vs. 3)
3. God’s love has given us new lives in Christ (vss. 4-5)
4. By releasing believers from their bondage to sin, God demonstrates His love to the world (vss. 6-7)
5. Through His grace, God has provided everything we need to believe and to be saved (vss. 8-9)
6. God has saved us to have a relationship with Him, to have freedom from condemnation, and to spread His love through good works (vs. 10)