

Session 1

THE NEW HAS COME

Ephesians 2:1-10; 2 Corinthians 5:17

Memory Verse

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!

– 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17, CSB



The New Has Come

THEOLOGICAL THEME: Apart from God, we are all dead in our sins, “but God, who is rich in mercy” (Ephesians 2:4) desires something better for us: a relationship with Him. He sent Jesus to the cross to die for our sins because He loves us deeply. When we accept this gift of salvation, our old life of bondage passes away, and a new life in Christ begins. We are new creations!

CALL TO ACTION: How have you changed since walking out of your “tomb”—since accepting Christ? What beliefs, thoughts, actions, and habits are different? Which ones are not?

After Jesus’s earthly ministry, Jewish religious leaders banded together to stop the spread of what they believed to be heresy. They believed Jesus was heretical and must be stopped, which led to His crucifixion. Their quest, which they believed to be righteous, led to physical violence, wrongful death, and unjust imprisonment for first-century believers trying to spread the good news of Jesus.

Though few of us have a story like Paul’s, the radical turnaround in his life is one all believers experience when we accept the gift of salvation: the old passes away and we begin a new life. It’s no wonder Paul wrote about this concept so frequently. His story is a beautiful example of the transformation believing in Jesus brings to our lives.

We’ll look at some of Paul’s writings on this concept and discuss it more fully in our study today.

? What does it mean to be transformed by Jesus? How would you describe the transformation Paul experienced?

? What other stories in the Bible can you think of that show how a person's life was transformed after he or she came to believe in and follow Jesus?

Session Summary

Apart from Jesus, we live a life of bondage. We are slaves to our sin, ruled by the desires of our flesh, influenced by the enemy, and deserving of God's wrath. This is the reality for everyone who doesn't know Jesus. We all sin and are in need a savior.

But God wants a relationship with us. God, who is merciful, offers us salvation in place of the wrath we deserve. Because His love for us is so great, God sent Jesus to die for our sins. When Jesus died on the cross for our sins, all our sins (past, present, and future) were forever and freely forgiven. This gift of salvation is free to anyone who would reach out and accept it. It's not something we can earn, but something God offers us in His kindness. We are saved through God's grace because of our faith in Jesus.

When we accept this gift of salvation, our old lives characterized by sin and bondage pass away, and real living begins. We become new creations in Christ! This new life is infinitely better than the old, unfulfilling one we lived before we knew Jesus. The old is gone, and the new is ushered in.

1. Dead in Our Sins (Ephesians 2:1-3)

? What does it mean to be "dead in your trespasses and sins" (v. 1)?

? How does this describe our lives before Jesus?


The heading before this section of Ephesians in the CSB translation says it all: “From Death to Life.” When we accept the gift of salvation that Jesus freely offers, this is the transformation we all undergo. The first three verses in this passage describe our reality before we know Jesus. It’s rather bleak, isn’t it?

Paul described our state as dead because of our sin. Sin simply means to miss the mark, or fall short, and, as believers, the benchmark we should all aim for is to be Christlike. Scripture always talks about our relationship with sin as being one of bondage. In the gospel of John, Jesus said everyone who sins is a slave to sin (John 8:34); and James 1:15 teaches that sin leads to death. This desperate state is the one we all live in apart from Jesus.

Though we had physical life, we were spiritually dead and therefore unable to truly experience life. When we are dead in our trespasses, we miss out on the goodness of life that God designed and wants for us.


Before we knew Jesus, we did what we deemed to be right according to worldly wisdom. We were the captains of our own ships, and we openly let the enemy influence and lead us (v. 2). We were disobedient. Our priority was our own sinful, “fleshly desires” (v. 3). The enemy wants us to believe living this way brings a life of freedom, but when we read Scripture, we see this for the lie it is. This life is one of bondage, and sin, and death. When we live this way, we deserve God’s wrath (v. 3).

Apart from Christ, we are all sinners (Romans 3:23). This is the old self, but it doesn’t have to be the final answer. We were dead, but the gift of life is freely offered to all who will accept it, and it changes everything.

 **Application:** These verses describe the state of anyone who doesn’t know Jesus. What are some ways you could begin to share the good news of Jesus with someone who doesn’t yet know Him over the next month?

2. Made Alive (Ephesians 2:4-10)

 What do we learn about God in this passage?

 What does it mean to be made alive and raised up with Christ (vv. 5-6)?

Great hope is found in the first two words of this passage: “But God” (v. 4). Everything in verses 1 through 3 is true. This has been our reality, but God doesn’t want it to stay that way. He desires more and better for us. His plan for us is better than a life of bondage. He wants us to live a life of freedom that is only available through a relationship with Him.

We get a beautiful glimpse at God’s character in verse 4:

God is rich in mercy. Mercy means we don’t get something we deserve. Remember the reality of verses 1 through 3? We were living as slaves to sin. We deserve God’s wrath, but in His mercy, He instead gives us the gift of salvation thanks to Jesus’s redemptive work on the cross.

God loves us. God is rich in mercy, and He loves us. God’s love is plain to see on the pages of Scripture and in the workings of our lives:

“But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” —Romans 5:8

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” —John 3:16-17

“The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”
—1 John 4:8

Even though we were dead in our sins, through Jesus's death on the cross we receive the gift of life! This was God's loving plan all along. We were dead, but Jesus's loving sacrifice takes us from death to life.

Paul went on to emphasize that we are saved by grace alone. Mercy is when we don't receive something we deserve (like God's wrath), and grace is when we get something we don't deserve. In this case, the thing we get from God that we absolutely don't deserve is salvation. We can never earn salvation, no matter how many "good" deeds we check off our list. Paul made this point in Galatians 2:21: If we could earn our own salvation, then there would have been no need for the cross. The rightful result of our sin is death, but God's gift of salvation brings eternal life (Romans 6:23).

We only receive salvation through grace. It is a gift, freely given by God. When we place our faith in Jesus and follow Him, we accept that gift of grace. How does this work, exactly? Scripture teaches that we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus:

"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." —Romans 10:9

"For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." —Romans 10:13


That "everyone" includes you and anyone else who calls on the name of Jesus. If you haven't made this decision yet, a simple prayer you can pray is: "Dear God, I know I'm a sinner. I ask you to forgive me of my sins. I believe you are the Son of God, and I want to follow you. Amen."


Paul also wrote that we have been raised up to a new life with Jesus. We are no longer citizens of the world, but citizens of God's heavenly kingdom! God's display of kindness to us brings Him glory.

Paul then said we are God's workmanship (v. 10). He created us to bear the fruit of good works that He prepared ahead of time. We aren't saved because of our good works, but they are evidence of the Holy Spirit's work within us.

? **Application:** What does it mean that we are created for good works (v. 10)? How can we devote ourselves to intentionally living this way?

3. New Creation (2 Corinthians 5:17)

 What does it mean to be a “new creation” in Jesus?

 What does it mean for the old to pass away and the new to come?

In our passage in Ephesians, Paul explained the transformation we go through when we believe in and follow Jesus. In our “old” life, we were slaves to sin, rebelling against a holy God and living in opposition to our Creator. But because of His great love for us, God offers the gift of salvation. We are saved by God’s grace through faith in Jesus.

In this verse in 2 Corinthians, Paul wrote further on the transformation that all believers undergo:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ”: If anyone has accepted the gift of salvation God offers, he or she will undergo the transformation Paul described.

“He is a new creation”: When we believe in and follow Jesus, we are made new. Our old life was defined by following the ways of the world, being slaves to sin, being influenced by the enemy, and rebellion against God. This is the “old” Paul referred to in this passage. When we receive salvation, we become new creations. Where we were previously citizens of the world, now we are citizens of heaven! Our purpose in life changes. We no longer live for ourselves but for Jesus.

“The old has passed away”: Remember, our old life was full of things that bring destruction (sin, trespasses, bondage). Our old life led to slavery and death, but salvation brings freedom from that life. In Christ, this old life passes away and is replaced by something so much better.

“And see, the new has come”: Once we follow Jesus, our old life passes away, and a new life begins. In Jesus, we undergo an amazing transformation.

So, what does it mean to live as new creations? Part of this transformation is the gift of the Holy Spirit. God comes to live and walk with us in our lives! We are never alone. When the Holy Spirit comes, He brings spiritual gifts that God uses for His glory and for the benefit of the body of believers; we use these gifts to perform the good works Paul mentioned in our passage in Ephesians. Everyone's gifts are different, but can include things like leadership, administration, hospitality, and teaching. Another aspect of living as a new creation is our priorities shift. Where we once were ruled by our own desires, now we aim to live for Jesus. He becomes our number one priority.

Our old life brought death, but our new life brings great joy and fulfillment in Jesus.

? Application: How do we continue to put away the “old self” and actively put on the “new self” in our lives each day?

Conclusion

? How would you summarize the transformation that Paul described in this passage in Ephesians? How has that been your personal reality?

? What role does the church play together in living the new life in Christ?

? What type of picture does Ephesians 1:1-3 paint of the lives of the people who know who do not yet know Jesus? Who is one friend you could share these truths with this week?

Memorize

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