

The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON XXIV : 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 He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,

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

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.

he now continues his original intent by repeating how he began

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.

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 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. (Eph 2:1-10 NKJV)

v. 8 — 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 to 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. But this is not necessarily a fatal flaw; see below. Another obvious objections is that ‘grace’ by definition is unmerited favor given by God, therefore it would be pointless and redundant for Paul to say ‘and [grace] is not of yourselves.’
- **“this” refers to the entire preceding portion (the complete act of salvation)** — many 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]
- **“this” refers to “faith”** — 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). The objection to this is that “faith” is feminine and the pronoun “this” is neuter. But many of the commentators 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.’).” [Moule, 73, italic emphasis his]

REASONS WHY SOME BELIEVE ‘THIS’ IS NOT REFERRING TO SALVATION IN GENERAL:

(1) THERE WOULD BE NO ADVANCEMENT IN PAUL’S ARGUMENT — *“[To state this refers to salvation as a whole] 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.”* [Hodge, 119] “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.” [Moule, 73, italic emphasis his]

(2) OTHER VERSES PRESENT FAITH AS A GIFT — This is not as obvious in some versions as others but let us look at Phil 1:29, ‘For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake’ (NKJV). “‘Has been granted’ is from charizō, which is from the same root as the noun charis (grace) and literally means ‘to give, render, or grant graciously.’ **In His sovereign grace, God not only gave believers the marvelous gift of faith to believe in Him, but also the privilege to suffer for His sake.**” [MacArthur, Philippians, 95] Ralph Martin translates it as follows: ‘For God has graciously given you the privilege both of believing in Christ and of suffering in His stead.’ “The idea of suffering and suffering ‘for Christ’ is preeminent here. But it should be noted in passing that **Paul incidentally says that the act of believing in Christ is also a gift from God.**” [Martin, Philippians, 76] Gordon Fee agrees: “About the text, two things stand out: Paul’s choice of the verb ‘graciously given,’ and its striking Christocentric character. Thus Paul begins with an emphatic, ‘because to you has been graciously given.’ Your salvation which comes from God, Paul explains, graciously given you through Christ, also includes another extension of grace, namely to suffer on his behalf.... Paul’s point is easy enough to see. The God who has graciously given them salvation through Christ (‘not only to believe in him’), has with that salvation also graciously given them ‘to suffer on his behalf.’” [Fee, Philippians, 170f] In like manner repentance, the other side of the coin with faith, is said to be a gift:

‘Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.’ (Acts 5:31)

‘When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.’ (Acts 11:18)

‘And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth’ (2 Tim 2:24, 25)

“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 mind’ which *includes* faith.” [Moule, 73, italic emphasis his]

‘SALVATION IN GENERAL’ OR ‘FAITH’ – DOES IT MATTER? — 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 ὑμῶν [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 ceremonial 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 — WORKS UNQUALIFIED = “ALL HUMAN EFFORTS” — not of works, — οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων, [ouk ex ergōn,] — **works** = *“The apostle says works, without qualification or limitation. It is not, therefore, ceremonial, as distinguished from good works; or legal, as distinguished from evangelical or gracious works; but works of all kinds as distinguished from faith, which are excluded. Salvation is in no sense, and in no degree, of works; for to him that worketh the reward is a matter of debt. But salvation is of grace and therefore not of works lest any man should boast. That the guilty should stand before God with self-complacency, and refer his salvation in any measure to his own merit, is so abhorrent to all right feeling that Paul assumes it (Rom. 4:2) as an intuitive truth, that no man can boast before God. And to all who have any proper sense of the holiness of God and of the evil of sin, it is an intuition; and therefore a gratuitous salvation, a salvation which excludes with works all ground of boasting, is the only salvation suited to the relation of guilty men to God.”* [Hodge, Ephesians] *“In these three phrases, — not of yourselves, — it is the gift of God, — not of works, — he embraces the substance of his long argument in the Epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians, that righteousness comes to us from the mercy of God alone, — is offered to us in Christ by the gospel, — and is received by faith alone, without the merit of works. This passage affords an easy refutation of the idle cavil by which Papists attempt to evade the argument, that we are justified without works. Paul, they tell us, is speaking about ceremonies. But the present question is not confined to one class of works. Nothing can be more clear than this. The whole righteousness of man, which consists in works, — nay, the whole man, and everything that he can call his own, is set aside. We must attend to the contrast between God and man, — between grace and works. Why should God be contrasted with man, if the controversy related to nothing more than ceremonies? Papists themselves are compelled to own that Paul ascribes to the grace of God the whole glory of our salvation, but endeavor to do away with this admission by another contrivance. This mode of expression, they tell us, is employed, because God bestows the first grace. It is really foolish to imagine that they can succeed in this way, since Paul excludes man and his utmost ability, — not only from the commencement, but throughout, — from the whole work of obtaining salvation. But it is still more absurd to overlook the apostle’s inference, lest any man should boast. Some room must always remain for man’s boasting, so long as, independently of grace, merits are of any avail. Paul’s doctrine is overthrown, unless the whole praise is rendered to God alone and to his mercy.”* [Calvin, Ephesians]

lest anyone should boast — ἵνα μή τις καυχῆσεται. [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.’”* [Lincoln, 113]

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

v. 10 — for we are his workmanship, — αὐτοῦ γάρ ἐσμεν ποιήματα, [autou gar esmen poiēma,] — this tells us why salvation is not of human origin or human works. “The connexion is, ‘works are not the antecedent, but the consequent, of your acceptance in Christ; for the true statement of the case is, that you were re-made, re-born, *in order to work the will of God.*” [Moule, 74]

“HIS” IS EMPHATIC — 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] “αὐτοῦ [autou, ‘his’] is emphatic by position and stresses God’s initiative in salvation; the salvation itself is described as his ‘making.’” [Best, 229]

PAUL IS NOT TRYING TO PLAY ON WORDS — workmanship — ποιήματα [poiēma] “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.” [Best, 229] 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.**” [Hoehner, 347] Friberg’s Lexicon defines it as follows: “*what has been made, work; in the NT only of the works of God as creator; ‘creation, things made, workmanship’ (RO 1.20); figuratively, of Christians as God’s handiwork; ‘workmanship, product, what he has made’ (EP 2.10).*” [Friberg’s Lexicon] Liddell-Scott Lexicon defines it as “*anything made or done; hence, (1) a work, (2) a poetical work, poem, (3) a deed, act.*” [Liddell-Scott Lexicon] Here is how Paul uses it in Romans:

‘For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse’ (Rom 1:20)

“When he says, that ‘we are the work of God,’ this does not refer to ordinary creation, by which we are made men. We are declared to be new creatures, because, not by our own power, but by the Spirit of Christ, we have been formed to righteousness. This applies to none but believers. As the descendants of Adam, they were wicked and depraved; but by the grace of Christ, they are spiritually renewed, and become new men. Everything in us, therefore, that is good, is the supernatural gift of God. The context explains his meaning. *We are his work*, because we have been *created*, — not in Adam, but *in Christ Jesus*, — not to every kind of life, but to *good works*.” [Calvin, Ephesians]

THE “POEM” OF OUR LIFE? — 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 poēma, 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. But 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] “The English ‘making’ is a good rendering since it is as colourless as the Greek ποιήματα [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 [Paul] 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; see also Salmond, Expositor’s GK Testament, 289] Others build upon this emphasis; for example, Michael Card: “**The Bible tells us that we are God’s masterpieces (Greek poiēma); 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 (καινὸν 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]

“In Christ Jesus – *The third occurrence of these words within five verses.*” [Moule, 74]

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 WORKS IS EVIDENCE OF THE NEW BIRTH — “Union with him is a source of a new life, and a life unto holiness; and therefore it is said created *unto good works*. Holiness is the end of redemption, for Christ gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. Titus 2, 14. ***Those therefore who live in sin are not the subjects of this redemption.***” [Hodge, Ephesians, 120f]

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:

“What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory” (Rom 9:22,23 NKJV)

“[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? ... [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 [Paul] 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] "[Paul] follows up the doctrine which he had begun to illustrate, that salvation does not proceed from ourselves. He says, that, before we were born, the good works were prepared by God; meaning, **that in our own strength we are not able to lead a holy life, but only so far as we are formed and adapted by the hand of God. Now, if the grace of God came before our performances, all ground of boasting has been taken away.**" [Calvin, Ephesians] Alford comments, "[W]e might say of the trees, — they were created for fruits which God before prepared that they should bear them: i.e. defined and assigned to each tree its own, in form, and flavour, and time of bearing. So in the course of God's providence, our good works are marked out for and assigned to each one of us." [Alford, 95] **All of this goes to show that who we are, both in our salvation and in our service, is all attributed to God. No glory belongs to any person but all belongs to our Lord.** For who are we, except products of the grace of God (again, not only in our salvation but in our service as well)? Paul said it like this:

"For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" (1 Cor 4:7 NKJV)

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]

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED? — *And you also, as the Father's power was manifested when He made our Lord Jesus Christ alive physically after the crucifixion, raising Him physically from the dead and sitting Him at His right hand in heaven, that same power was manifested in making you alive spiritually, raising you from the dead spiritually and sitting you together with Christ spiritually in the heavenly places. But before discussing this, allow me to explain more fully your spiritual condition prior to your salvation.*

As for you, you were not spiritually ill or in a weakened condition but you were spiritually dead, separated from God, unable to respond to God spiritually, without hope, unable even to understand spiritual truths. You hated God and were at war with Him. You were incapable of doing anything spiritually pleasing to God, you had no fear of Him and were enslaved and captive to Satan. You were therefore not even willing to seek after the things of God. This was not a condition that came upon you slowly but you were spiritually dead from birth. This spiritual death was in part brought about by your transgressions, your willful and conscious straying from the ways of God, and your failing to live up to the standards of God.

Your everyday life and conduct was habitually lived in these trespasses and sins. You lived after the leading of, conformable to, and in accordance with this world-age. You were not oriented to the age to come and the heavenly realm but your life was dominated by this present evil age. Your sinful activities were according to the temporal values of this world which is hostile to God, His attitudes and His manner of thinking.

Not only were your standards that of this world which is alienated from God and is passing away, but you also lived in accordance with and were under the control of Satan, the ruler of his evil realm, domain, kingdom located locally in our atmosphere. Satan's wicked demonic spirits is all around and near you, and at that time you willfully allowed them to lead you into temptation and rebellion against God. Even though the devil no longer has his control over you, he is even now at work in all those outside of Christ, those whose essential character is one of unbelief and disobedience to God.

All of us at one time conducted our lives as one who distrusted God. We did not believe His record of truth, we were defiant and rejected all the Lord had been pleased to reveal to us. We lived according to the appetites, the impulses, the intense desires that came from our fallen nature and not according to the will of God. We not only had those intense desires but we were habitually performing, continually carrying out and fulfilling those cravings and passions of our fallen nature and our sinful reasoning processes. These were not occasional lapses of our thoughts but were rather continual, deliberate and premeditated.

That being so, we were under a continued state of the wrath of God. This was not something we obtained slowly or something acquired because of our environment or circumstances, but rather we were under the wrath of God from birth, it was inherent, something peculiar to our very existence, a permanent condition prior to our coming to Christ, even as the rest of humanity.

But God, abounding in and abundantly supplying His overflowing, active compassion, freely exercised on we who are undeserving and having nothing to commend ourselves to God, in order to satisfy and on account of His great agape-love, His

wilful, self-sacrificing love with which He loved us; even when we were held fast in the state of inexorable death, helpless, hopeless, without strength to come to God — and satisfied to be in that condition! — even when we were in that state, God spiritually made us alive together with Christ (through or on the basis of grace you have been saved in past time completely, with the result that you are in a state of salvation which persists through the present time), spiritually raised us up together, and spiritually seated us together in the heavenly kingdom with Jesus Christ, a foretaste of our future dignity and life which belongs to us now yet awaits to be fulfilled in its fullest sense (although we share in His exaltation, we are always reminded His position and authority at the right hand of God the Father is unique and belongs only to Jesus Christ). You were saved in order that He might show, He might demonstrate for His own purpose and for His own glory, in the ages that are coming one upon another, the eternal ages that roll in, one after another like successive waves of the sea, the surpassing, extraordinary, exceeding wealth of His grace in His kindness and goodness in the direction towards believers since we are positioned in Christ Jesus.

For it is through or on the basis of the afore-mentioned grace you have been saved in past time completely, with the result that you are in a state of salvation which persists through the present time, appropriated by believing, by trusting, by the firm conviction which fully acknowledges the truth of God's Word, producing a heart of surrender and conduct inspired by such surrender. This life-changing belief and conviction does not find its source of origin within yourselves but is a gift given by God to you; not on the basis of any human efforts, without qualification or limitation, in order that no one can boast about their own efforts. For we are His work, His creation, His work of art, His poem, created by God in Christ Jesus with the purpose or goal of doing the good works that He prepared in eternity past for us to perform. Not only is our initial reception of salvation but the whole of our lives is part of the outworking of God's purpose. As we used to walk in conformity with the world's standards, God has predestined these good works for us who are now His children to walk therein.

APPENDIX A: Overview of Ephesians 2:1~10

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]