

# THE PATH GOD PREPARES FOR US

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## JER 29:10-14 NLT-SE

<sup>10</sup> This is what the LORD says: “You will be in Babylon for seventy years. But then I will come and do for you all the good things I have promised, and I will bring you home again. <sup>11</sup> ***For I know the plans I have for you,***” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. <sup>12</sup> In those days when you pray, I will listen. <sup>13</sup> If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me. <sup>14</sup> I will be found by you,” says the LORD. “I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes. I will gather you out of the nations where I sent you and will bring you home again to your own land.”

## THE TEXT: EPHESIANS 2:1-10 NLT-SE

<sup>1</sup> Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. <sup>2</sup> You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. <sup>3</sup> All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God’s anger, just like everyone else.

<sup>4</sup> But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, <sup>5</sup> that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God’s grace that you have been saved!) <sup>6</sup> For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. <sup>7</sup> So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. <sup>9</sup> Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. <sup>10</sup> For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

## LINE-BY-LINE:

<sup>1</sup> Once **you were dead** because of your **disobedience** and your many **sins**.

- This is what the bible calls, those who are **“dead in transgressions and sin.”** This death is spiritual, not physical. If you are dead, you have no communication with God. You are separated from him.

➡ You were dead because of your **sins** and because your **sinful nature** was not yet cut away. Then **God made you alive** with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. (Col 2:13 NLT-SE)

- **Disobedience** (Transgressions ~ “false steps”) and **Sins** (“Acts of missing the mark”) are very similar in the meaning. Both suggest deliberate acts against God and his righteousness.

<sup>2</sup> You used to **live in sin**, just like the rest of the world, obeying **the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world**. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God.

- We demonstrated our **unregenerate condition** in 3 ways:

- (1). The unregenerate/unbeliever **follows the ways of the world**. **“The world,”** a satanically inspired system that hates and opposes anything that is godly and uses peer pressure to manipulate people to follow its lead.
- (2). The unsaved actually **follow** the leader of this world, **Satan** himself, whether they realize it or not.

➡ We know that we are children of God and that **the world around us is under the control of the evil one**. (1 John 5:19 NLT-SE)

- (3) “The spirit at work” is the same as “the kingdom of the air.” This “spirit” then refers to the **impersonal force or atmosphere, which is controlled and directed by Satan.**

<sup>3</sup> **All of us** used to live that way, following the **passionate desires** and **inclinations of our sinful nature**. By our very nature we were subject to God’s anger, just like everyone else.

- There is no doubt of who this message is addressed to...all of us! **We all used to live this way.** We not only join in a participants, but we were passionate about it; we literally **enjoyed** or **craved** it.
- **Unbelievers have a close relationship, not with God, but with His wrath/anger!** Disobedience and unbelief lead to the wrath of God.
  - ➔ Anyone who believes in God’s Son has eternal life. Anyone who doesn’t obey the Son will never experience eternal life but **remains under God’s angry judgment.**” (John 3:36 NLT-SE)

<sup>4</sup> But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, <sup>5</sup> that even though we were dead because of our sins, he **gave us life** when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God’s grace that you have been saved!)

- **BUT...**The page turns at this point of Paul’s message from a focus on the **wrath** of God, to the **grace** of God. It is a shift from the plight of sinners, to God’s actions toward them. Because the word “God” immediately follows the word “But,” **God becomes the focus** of the entire passage.
- God is described as being “rich in **mercy**.” In the OT, mercy is translated “loyal love.” Mercy in the NT mean “undeserved kindness” towards sinners. God is also **rich in demonstrating this undeserved kindness**, acts on our behalf because of His great love for us. The noun for “love” comes from the verb, that means “to seek the highest good in the one loved.”
- **God’s love** has done three things:
  - (1). **Gave us life** when he raised Christ from the dead. (2:5)
  - (2). **Raised us up** with Christ. (2:6)
  - (3). **Seated us with Christ** in heavenly realms. (2:6)
- He is the living God who **gives life to the dead**.
  - ➔ That is what the Scriptures mean when God told him, “I have made you the father of many nations.” This happened because Abraham believed in the **God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing.** (Rom 4:17 NLT-SE)
- The act of God making the unregenerate person come back to life is an **act of grace**: “It is only by God’s **grace** that you have been saved!”

<sup>6</sup> For he **raised us** from the dead along with Christ and **seated us** with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus.

- This means that we are **positionally resurrected**. Jesus’ **post-resurrection state** was new, powerful, and unique. In the same way, **Christians**, in whom Christ dwells, **have a new, powerful, and unique life and position**. This new life, power, and position require us to have a **new set of values**, which is what Paul wrote to the Colossian believers:
  - ➔ <sup>1</sup> Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God’s right hand. <sup>2</sup> **Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth.** (Col 3:1–2 NLT-SE)
- Believers are also **positioned spiritually in heaven**, seated with Christ in the heavenly realms. We are no longer mere earthlings; our true citizenship is in heaven.
  - ➔ We are **citizens of heaven**, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. (Phil 3:20 NLT-SE)
- Jesus is the exalted son of God and we are exalted **sons** and **daughters** of God because we are in Christ!
  - ➔ These actions of God toward unbelievers are **similar to what God did for Jesus**: He “raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God’s right hand in the heavenly realms.” (Eph 1:20 NLT-SE)

- While Christ was raised **physically**, we were given life and raised with Christ **spiritually**. 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.

<sup>7</sup> God can **point** to us in **all future ages** as examples of the incredible wealth of his **grace** and **kindness** toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.

- We are the **evidence** (God points to us) of God's incredible **grace** and **kindness**.
- We are already united in Christ. **Why are we working so hard to earn what is already ours?**
- “**Show**” is **endeiknymi**, which means “display or demonstrate.”
  - ➔ They **demonstrate** that God's law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right. (Rom 2:15 NLT-SE)
  - ➔ For the Scriptures say that God told Pharaoh, “I have appointed you for the very purpose of **displaying** my power in you and to spread my fame throughout the earth.” (Rom 9:17 NLT-SE)
- The “**incredible wealth of his grace**” is referring to salvation. The word kindness, **chrestotes**, means what is “appropriate or useful.”
  - ➔ Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his **kindness** is intended to turn you from your sin? (Rom 2:4 NLT-SE)
  - ➔ Notice how God is both **kind** and severe. He is severe toward those who disobeyed, but **kind** to you if you continue to trust in his **kindness**. But if you stop trusting, you also will be cut off. (Rom 11:22 NLT-SE)
- The **appropriate expression of God's love** to those who are spiritually dead is to **give them life**.

<sup>8</sup> God **saved you by his grace** when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a **gift** from God.

- Verses 8 and 9 explain the “incredible wealth of his grace.” You've got to remember, **salvation** for the gentiles is something that was **COMPLETELY UNIMAGINABLE**. It **TOOK** the incredible wealth of his grace to make it a reality!
- The **basis** (*underlying foundation*) for salvation is grace and the **means** (*the system by which salvation gets done*) is faith alone. Faith is not a “work” and salvation is not the reward for good behavior.

<sup>9</sup> **Salvation is not a reward** for the good things we have done, so none of us can **boast** about it.

- This verse reinforces the truth that **you cannot work your way into salvation**. Because salvation's source is in grace and not the works of man, no one can boast of their accomplishments they believe lead to salvation.
  - ➔ And since it is through God's kindness, then it is **not by their good works**. For in that case, God's grace would not be what it really is—free and undeserved. (Rom 11:6 NLT-SE)
  - ➔ For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, **not because we deserved it**, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time—to **show us his grace** through Christ Jesus. (2 Tim 1:9 NLT-SE)

<sup>10</sup> For we are **God's masterpiece**. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, **so we can do the good things** he planned for us long ago.

- Here, Paul switches gears. The focus now moves from the **gift** God has given, to the **impact** of it being given.
- The gift of salvation is **not a “transaction”** between God and man, but **more a creative act** on God's part that is displayed in all its beauty in the life of man.
- The key descriptor here is the Greek word **poiema**, which means “that which is made or done, a work, workmanship, or creation.”
  - ➔ For ever since the world was **created**, people have seen the earth and sky. Through **everything God made** (*poiema*), they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God. (Rom 1:20 NLT-SE)
- This powerful verse reveals the truth that **you can actually see who God is by looking at what he creates!**

- The NLT translation adds a deeper value to the word, calling the work “**God’s masterpiece** (workmanship, handiwork).”
- The phrase “so we can do” literally means, “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.**
  - ➔ For God is working in you, giving you the **desire** and the **power** to do what **pleases** him. (Phil 2:13 NLT-SE)
- Take a look at verse 10 in the **Passion Translation**...
  - We have become His poetry, a recreated people that will fulfill the destiny He has given each of us, for we are joined to Jesus, the Anointed One. **Even before we were born, God planned in advance our destiny and the good works we would do to fulfill it!**

## SOME THOUGHTS ON THE “PLANS” GOD HAS FOR US:

1. **This is a corporate message...**Almost every reference to “us” in the book of Ephesians is a corporate, not individual message. Yet, most of us apply these words to our lives in an exclusively individual way. What sets apart a “masterpiece” from every other work is the message the whole picture sends.
  - ➔ All of you together are Christ’s body, and each of you is a part of it. (1 Cor 12:27 NLT-SE)
2. **That said, the hope of the world is *not* the church...**One of the hardest spiritual truths for us to swallow is that it’s not all about us! The “spirit of the age” has been preaching this message with a vengeance since the early 1960’s. Fifty years later, the message has settled into the foundation of our culture and is bearing much fruit. The message is clear: You are what *really* matters! You are ALL that matters! The great deception in the church today is the message that says WE are the Good News, not Christ.
  - ➔ He must become greater; I must become less. (John 3:30 NIV)
  - ➔ Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead. So he is first in everything. (Col 1:18 NLT-SE)
3. **It is *not* our responsibility to “find our path”...**We don’t create the “Masterpiece,” it creates us. God has created a path for us to walk on (actually, in). It’s not our path, we are simply aligning our lives with the path he has for us and following his leadership moment-by-moment as we journey together into the future.
  - ➔ Stay on the path that the LORD your God has commanded you to follow. Then you will live long and prosperous lives in the land you are about to enter and occupy. (Deut 5:33 NLT-SE)
4. **The plans God has for us, will work through us...**His plans are actually **works**. They are works we share as his Body. Every member of the Body of Christ has works that have been created for them, specifically. Our “destiny,” is not a destination we arrive at, but the result of our willingness to accomplish the things that have been prepared for us in the beginning. When this happens, God’s “Masterpiece” goes on display for all to see.
  - ➔ The LORD has demonstrated his holy power before the eyes of all the nations. All the ends of the earth will see the victory of our God. (Is 52:10 NLT-SE)