

**Jim's Notes**  
**September 5, 2007**  
**The Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians**  
**Ephesians 2:1-10**

**Ephesians 2:1**

**Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):**

Death is understood in two ways. The first is the familiar definition, when the soul is separated from the body at the end of life. The second is that, while abiding in that same body, the soul pursues the desires of the flesh and lives in sin. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.1-2)

**St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):**

There is a distinction between the death of the body and the death of the soul. There is no reproach in the death of the body as such and hence no moral danger since there is no reproach. The body's death is merely a matter of nature, not of choice. This death had its origin in the transgression of the first human being, and thereafter it has had its subsequent effect on nature. Its release will be swift. But the death of the soul is the result of free choice. Hence it entails reproach, from which there is no easy release. It is a much weightier task to heal a deadened soul than to raise a dead body, as Paul has already shown. Yet this is what has now happened, incredible as it may be. (Homily on Ephesians 4.2.1-3)

**Ephesians 2:2a**

**Tertullian (AD 155 – 230):**

"Once you followed the course of this world." World here is completely distinguishable from God. For the creature is unlike the Creator, the artifact unlike its Maker, the world unlike God. Similarly when Paul speaks of those who "follow the prince of the power of the air" he is referring not to the one God who holds sway over all the ages. For the one who presides over higher authorities is never classified by reference to one lower. (Against Marcion 5.17.7-8)

**Ephesians 2:2b**

**Ambrosiaster [pseudo-Ambrose] (about A.D. 370):**

He indicates that the prince of power, that is, the devil, has corrupted the understanding of the world to make it depart from the one God and conceive a belief in many gods. In this way the devil made them associates in his own conspiracy, seeing that they were found to exhibit the same impiety in their denial of the one God. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.2.1-3)

**St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):**

Do you see Paul's gentleness, how he everywhere soothes his hearer and avoids burdening him? For having said that they had arrived at the extreme consequence of evil (for what else does "being dead" mean?) . . . he provides them with a collaborator, so that they themselves will not be held accountable alone for their plight but share responsibility with a powerful accomplice, the devil.

Why does he call the devil the ruler of this world? Because virtually the whole of humanity surrendered to him. All are his voluntary and willing slaves. Few pay any heed to Christ, who promises unnumbered blessings. Rather they follow after the devil, who promises nothing but leads them all to hell. He rules in this age, where he has . . . more subjects than God, more who obey him rather than God. All but a few are in his grasp on account of their laxity. (Homily on Ephesians 4.2.1-3)

**Ephesians 2:2c****Theodoret (AD 392 – 457):**

Long ago, before the Fall, a certain authority was primordially entrusted to the devil. But falling from this through wickedness he became a teacher of impiety and wickedness. Yet he does not have power over all but only over those who do not receive divine revelation. These Paul calls sons of disobedience. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.1-2)

**Ephesians 2:3a****Ambrosiaster [pseudo-Ambrose] (about A.D. 370):**

He is speaking of a great deception when he brings to mind the "passions of the flesh." For the pleasure of the flesh means being delighted by the visible, so that it gives the name of gods to the elements that God appointed as his means of ordering the world. But this name [God] belongs rightly to the one and only God, from whom everything derives. . . . If anyone imagines that the "passions of the flesh" mean anything else, let him reflect on how the apostle led a pure life. He lived without blemish according to the righteousness of the law. But because he had persecuted the church he includes himself in the "we" – "we lived in the passions of our flesh." For every sin, according to Paul, has something to do with the deception associated with living according to the flesh, which is the mother of all corruption. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.1-2)

**St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):**

Paul encourages them by including himself with them. "Among these," he says, "we all once lived." All are included. It is not possible to say that anyone is exempted. (Homily on Ephesians 2.3)

**St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):**

So that he would not appear to have exempted himself through pride when he said, "your sins in which you walked," he now adds "in which we also lived." However, the

one who says he has lived confesses past, not present, transgressions. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.1)

### **Ephesians 2:3b**

#### **St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):**

There is a difference between sin of the flesh and sin of the mind. The sin of the flesh is indecency and profligacy and whatever might act as instrument to its lusts. The transgression of the mind pertains to doctrine contrary to truth and to the baseness of heretics. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.1)

### **Ephesians 2:3c**

#### **Tertullian (AD 155 – 230):**

As a Jew Paul had been one of the “children of unbelief” in whom the devil was at work, especially when he persecuted the church and the Christ of the Creator. On this account he says, “We were by nature children of wrath.” But he says by nature so that a heretic could not argue that it was the Lord who created evil. We create the grounds for the Creator's wrath ourselves. (Against Marcion 5.17.9.9-10)

#### **St. Gregory of Nyssa (AD 335-394):**

When [Scripture] speaks of “sons of men” or “sons of rams” it indicates an essential relation between the one begotten and the source of his begetting. But when it speaks of “sons of power” (as at I Sam14:52) “or children of wrath,” it asserts a connection made by choice. (Against Eunomius 3.1.116)

#### **St. Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430):**

We speak of "nature" in two ways. When we are speaking strictly of nature itself we mean the nature in which humanity was originally created after God's own image and without fault. The other way we speak of nature refers to that fallen sin nature, in which we are self-deceived and subject to the flesh as the penalty for our condemnation. The apostle adopts this way of speaking when he says, “for we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest.” (On Nature and Grace 81)

What then is meant by this wickedness of the natural man and of those who . . . “by nature” are children of wrath? Could this possibly be the nature created in Adam? That created nature was debased in him. It has run and is running its course now through everyone by nature, so that nothing frees us from condemnation except the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. (On Marriage 2.20)

## **Ephesians 2:4**

### **Ambrosiaster [pseudo-Ambrose] (about A.D. 370):**

These are the true riches of God's mercy, that even when we did not seek it mercy was made known through his own initiative. . . . This is God's love to us, that having made us he did not want us to perish. His reason for making us was that he might love what he had made, seeing that no one hates his own workmanship. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.4)

God made us in Christ. So it is through Christ once again that he has formed us anew. We are his members; he our Head. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.5)

## **Ephesians 2:5b**

### **Theodoret (AD 392 – 457):**

Since he rose we hope that we too shall rise. He himself [by his rising] has paid our debt. Then Paul explains more plainly how great the gift is: "You 'are saved by grace." For it is not because of the excellence of our lives that we have been called but because of the love of our Savior. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.4.5)

### **St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):**

The sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the future glory that will be revealed in us (see Romans 8:18). If so, we are saved by grace rather than works, for we can give God nothing in return for what he has bestowed on us. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.1)

## **Ephesians 2:6a**

### **Origen (AD 185 – 251):**

What Paul is saying then is: If you believe that Christ is risen from the dead, believe also that you too have risen with him. If you believe that he sits at the Father's right hand in heaven, believe that your place too is amid not earthly but heavenly things. (Commentary on Romans 5.8)

### **St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):**

Above he said that God raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand . . . Some may ask how God who has saved us and raised us with him has also made us sit with Christ. A simple response would be indeed that, in the light of God's foreknowledge, Paul is speaking of what is to come as though it had already been done. . . . One who understands the resurrection and the kingdom of Christ spiritually does not scruple to say that the saints already sit and reign with Christ! Just as a person may become truly holy even in the flesh, when he lives in the flesh and has his conversation in heaven, when he walks on earth and, ceasing to be flesh, is wholly converted into

spirit, so he also is seated in heaven with Christ. For indeed “the kingdom of God is within us” (Luke 17:21). (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.1)

**Theodoret (AD 392 – 457):**

If Christ the Lord did not share our human nature, he would have been falsely called our first fruits. If so his bodily nature was not raised from the dead and did not receive its seat at the right hand in heaven. And if none of this occurred how can it be said that God has raised us and seated us with Christ, that is, if we have nothing by nature that belongs to him? (Eranistes 1)

**Ephesians 2:6b**

**Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):**

He did not make us deserving, since we did not receive these things by our own merit but by the grace and goodness of God. . . . But all this, as he often asserts and I insist, is in Christ. For in him is the whole mystery of the resurrection, both ours and of all others. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.7)

**Ephesians 2:7**

**St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):**

Do not be disbelieving. You have received a proof from former events, from the head and from his desire to manifest his goodness. For how otherwise could there be a revelation to us if this does not happen? This will be demonstrated in the ages to come. What now seems nonsense to unbelievers then will appear as fully sensible to everyone. We will sit with him. Nothing is more trustworthy and worthy of praise than this revelation. (Homily on Ephesians 2.7)

**Ephesians 2:8a**

**St. Ambrose of Milan (AD 339 – 397):**

Do not rely on your own efforts but on the grace of Christ. “You are,” says the apostle, “saved by grace.” Therefore it is not a matter of arrogance here but faith when we celebrate: We are accepted! This is not pride but devotion. (On the Sacraments 5.4.19)

**St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):**

Paul says this in case the secret thought should steal upon us that “if we are not saved by our own works, at least we are saved by our own faith, and so in another way our salvation is of ourselves.” Thus he added the statement that faith too is not in our own will but in God's gift. Not that he means to take away free choice from humanity . . . but that even this very freedom of choice has God as its author, and all things are to be referred to his generosity, in that he has even allowed us to will the good. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.8-9)

**St. Fulgentius (AD 468 – 533):**

The blessed Paul argues that we are saved by faith, which he declares to be not from us but a gift from God. Thus there cannot possibly be true salvation where there is no true faith, and, since this faith is divinely enabled, it is without doubt bestowed by his free generosity. Where there is true belief through true faith, true salvation certainly accompanies it. Anyone who departs from true faith will not possess the grace of true salvation. (On the Incarnation 1)

**Ephesians 2:8b**

**St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):**

So that you may not be elated by the magnitude of these benefits, see how Paul puts you in your place. For “by grace you are saved,” he says, “through faith.” Then, so as to do no injury to free will, he allots a role to us, then takes it away again, saying and this not of ourselves . . . Even faith, he says, is not from us. For if the Lord had not come, if he had not called us, how should we have been able to believe? For how, he says, “shall they believe if they have not heard?” (Romans 10:14). So, even the act of faith is not self-initiated. It is, he says, “the gift of God.” (Homily on Ephesians 2.8)

**Ephesians 2:9a**

**Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):**

The fact that you Ephesians are saved is not something that comes from yourselves. It is the gift of God. It is not from your works, but it is God's grace as God's gift, not from anything you have deserved. Our works are one thing, what we deserve another. Hence he distinguishes the two phrases not from yourselves and not from works. Remember that there are faithful works that ought to be displayed daily in services to the poor and other good deeds. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.9)

**St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):**

God's mission was not to save people in order that they may remain barren or inert. For Scripture says that faith has saved us. Put better: Since God willed it, faith has saved us. Now in what case, tell me, does faith save without itself doing anything at all? Faith's workings themselves are a gift of God, lest anyone should boast. What then is Paul saying? Not that God has forbidden works but that he has forbidden us to be justified by works. No one, Paul says, is justified by works, precisely in order that the grace and benevolence of God may become apparent! (Homily on Ephesians 4.2.9)

## **Ephesians 2:9b**

### **Ambrosiaster [pseudo-Ambrose] (about A.D. 370):**

All thanksgiving for our salvation is to be given only to God. He extends his mercy to us so as to recall us to life precisely while we are straying, without looking for the right road. And thus we are not to glory in ourselves but in God, who has regenerated us by a heavenly birth through faith in Christ. (Ephesians 2.10)

## **Ephesians 2:10a**

### **St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):**

We are his creation. This means that it is from him that we live, breathe, understand and are able to believe, because he is the One who made us. And note carefully that he did not say “we are his fashioning and molding” but “we are his creation.” Molding starts with the mud of the earth, but creation from the outset is “according to the image and likeness of God” (Genesis 1:26-27). (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.10)

### **Theodore of Mopsuestia (AD 350 – 428):**

Here he is speaking not of the first but of the second creation, wherein we are recreated by the resurrection. Completely unable as we are to mend our ways by our own decision on account of the natural weakness that opposes us, we are made able to come newly alive without pain and with great ease by the grace of the One who recreates us for this purpose. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.10)

### **St. Cyril of Alexandria (AD 375 – 444):**

Human beings choose their own way of life and are entrusted with the reins of their own intelligence, so as to follow whatever course they wish, either toward the good or toward the contrary. But our [original, created] nature has implanted in it a zealous desire for whatever is good and the will to concern itself with goodness and righteousness. For this is what we mean by saying that humanity is “in the image and likeness of God” (Genesis 1:26), that the creature is naturally disposed to what is good and right. (Doctrinal Questions and Answers 2)

## **Ephesians 2:10c**

### **Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):**

Does Paul mean “good works” in the future tense or those which we now perform? Taken either way they are good for us to walk in. They are witnesses to Christ's working in us. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.10)

### **St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):**

He does not say, “so that we might begin” but “so that we should walk – all the way. For walking is a metaphor that suggests continuance, extending to the end of our lives. Suppose we had to walk a road that leads to a royal city, but after having gone almost

all the way we grow faint almost at the end and stop. We would then have no profit. Instead Paul says we are created “for good works.” (Homily on Ephesians 4.2.9)