



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

When Eternity Fires upon You (Ephesians 2:1-10)

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Capitol Commission state directors are pastors/missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. These Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. The love and grace of God compels us to proclaim the truth of the Gospel with a heartfelt compassion for the Capitol community, to faithfully teach and apply the Word of God, and it is our desire to build meaningful relationships that bear fruit for an eternity to come.

Bible studies are held Tuesday mornings at 7:15am for legislators, lobbyists, and staff. All Senate and House Members—all Democrats and all Republicans—are invited for a time of study and prayer on Tuesday mornings. The weekly Bible study is nonpartisan and non-denominational. The study for the 2011 General Assembly is the Book of Ephesians. I pray that this study will be edifying to you. I am here to serve you and to be a resource for prayer and counsel. Please accept my study in the Word of God, as an evidence of my desire to be serving you.

With the Bible as our foundation and authority, the mission of Capitol Commission is obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) within the Capitol communities of the world. We are not a lobbying group attempting to garner votes or reform society. Our mandate is to see the hearts and lives of elected officials transformed with the Word of God. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through the verse-by-verse teaching of Scripture. In the Bible, we see God's great love for the world, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you.

The church is instructed to submit and to honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and to pray for their eternal salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). The desire of Capitol Commission is to witness God transform the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four major areas of making disciples: (1) *evangelize* those who have not experienced saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to grow in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.

Introduction

Winston Churchill famously stated, "There is nothing more exhilarating than being shot at and missed."¹ As one who was spiritually dead in "trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1), I cannot help thinking how relevant Churchill's statement is. Christians are those who have been "shot at and missed." All humanity is affected by sin, and its effects are found in every aspect of life. Spiritual death fires upon all humanity, but God has provided deliverance. Spiritual death may not be eternal because we can receive new spiritual life in Christ.

Personal trespasses and sins are the cause for being in the state of spiritual death. According to Ephesians 2:2, this position and practice is "according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." Those who are spiritually dead operate under the control of "the lusts of the flesh" (2:3). The only escape from this cosmos is to be regenerated (born again).

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love" causes those who "were dead" in their "transgressions" to be made "alive together with Christ," and to be "seated" with Him "in the heavenly places" (2:4-6). The purpose of salvation, therefore, is to demonstrate the lavishness of God's grace (2:7). His grace is certainly sufficient. The origin of salvation is not "a result of works," but it is "the gift of God" (2:8-9). God will not share His glory with another (cf. Isa 42:8). He has ordained that "His workmanship" should "walk" in the cosmos of "good works" (Eph 2:10).

BIBLICAL TERMS	
Trespasses (Gk. <i>paraptōma</i>)	Literally, "to stumble"; therefore, the primary idea is "a false step" (e.g. straying from the right direction, or failing to comprehend [unintentional] and/or to deviate from the truth [premeditated])
Sins (Gk. <i>hamartia</i>)	Literally, "to miss the mark" (an archery term); the failure to attain the target of God's holiness; it is not merely criminal or evil activity but failure to do the good we ought to do (cf. Rom 3:23; 7:18)

"When we realize what sin is, we come to see that it is not something which theologians have invented. It is something which is found in every aspect of life. It is the failure in any sphere of life to be what we ought to be and could be."²

THE IMPUTATION (TRANSFER) OF SIN	
Pelagianism	No one affected
Semi-Pelagianism	Humanity is weakened
Arminianism	Humanity affected partially
Calvinism	Humanity affected entirely

WANTED: DEAD OR ALIVE!

WHAT HAS CLAIMED YOU:

THE DOMAIN OF DARKNESS OR THE KINGDOM OF JESUS CHRIST?

(2:1-10) Having explained “every spiritual blessing” that God’s people experience in Christ, the next aspect of the believer’s new life to be explained is how the Lord effected salvation. Chapter 2 begins with the remarkable statement that humanity was born in spiritual death. When the spirit is separated from the body, physical death occurs. When the spirit is separated from God, spiritual death occurs. Death is separation. Eternal death (the second death) occurs when both the spirit and the body are separated from God.

Those who live contrary to the revelation of God’s Word do so because they reject the Author (God) of Scripture. Moralizing individuals will not help because if there is any change, it will be from one lifestyle that displeases God to another that equally does so (Rom 8:8; 1 Cor 2:14-16). Until an individual receives spiritual life (rebirth) in Christ (by grace through faith), he or she is spiritually dead, which means there will be a lack of response to spiritual things. God, however, who is “rich in mercy,” provides spiritual life resulting in “the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:4, 7).

THOSE WHO LIVE CONTRARY TO THE REVELATION OF GOD’S WORD DO SO BECAUSE THEY REJECT THE AUTHOR (GOD) OF SCRIPTURE.

Those who are blessed and chosen by God (1:3-10) “were by nature, children of wrath, even as the rest” (2:2). Those who do not trust Christ will experience eternal death (the ultimate wrath of God). God’s love—motivated by holy mercy and grace—was demonstrated in providing the means in which something could be done in response to the guilt of those who are spiritually dead, yet without them bearing the punishment of eternal wrath. The response is the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. He took the punishment of the guilty. By grace through faith, believers are regarded as having died with Christ and being raised to newness of life with Him.

Verse 3 describes the manner of living in a spiritually alienated condition. Life values are determined “according to the course of this world,” which is created and energized by “the prince of the power of the air” (Satan). Satan’s kingdom encourages ungodly (non-biblical) actions, attitudes, and values. The ungodly energized value system motivates the gratification of illicit desires. Consequently, the wrath of God abides upon those who indulge “the desires of the flesh and of the mind” (cf. Rom 1:18-27; Acts 5:5; 1 Cor 11:30; Gal 6:7;

Heb 9:27; 2 Pet 3:7). Verse 3 is teaching the truth that those who are separated from God live according to their feelings. Non-biblical living is defined as being emotionally oriented and motivated—satisfying one’s own desires and impulses (which is often hidden by a logical and nonchalant exterior).

The responsibility of the believer is not to live “according to the course of this world,” but to pursue “good works, which God prepared beforehand” (2:10). There is a divine standard to distinguish good works from the desires and lusts of the flesh. There is no need to guess because God has given His Word. The power to accomplish those good works is also given by God: believers are “His workmanship.” The ministry of the Word is the means for sanctification. Believers are holy through Christ and are called to continue growing and striving for holiness by cooperating with the indwelling Holy Spirit until complete conformity to Christ is attained.

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD IS THE MEANS FOR SANCTIFICATION.

God’s motivation for His mercy toward those who were “dead” in “transgressions” was to demonstrate “His great love” and “the surpassing riches of His grace” (2:4-5, 7). Salvation is by God’s grace through faith; “*it is* the gift of God” (2:8); not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (2:9). “Pride *goes* before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling” (Prov 16:18). “He who gives attention to the word will find good, and blessed is he who trusts in the LORD” (16:20). Ephesians 2:1-10 provides one specific manner to eliminate boasting: be reminded that God raises the believer from spiritual death, and grants new life and faith.

SALVATION IS BY GOD’S GRACE THROUGH FAITH. . .

Verses 1-10 teach that those who were spiritually dead and objects of God’s wrath have been delivered. Motivated by His great love, God extends mercy and grants deliverance from wrath by His grace, through faith. God accomplished this redemption without help. Consequently, believers are His workmanship, and the good that is accomplished in this life is determined by God and is accomplished by His enabling. Join me in praising God for His gracious gift, studying and fellowshiping in the ministry of the Word for our spiritual growth, and letting God display His glory through our lives.

¹ As quoted in the *Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the 109th Congress First Session* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 2005) 93.

² William Barclay, *The New Daily Study Bible: The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002) 110.