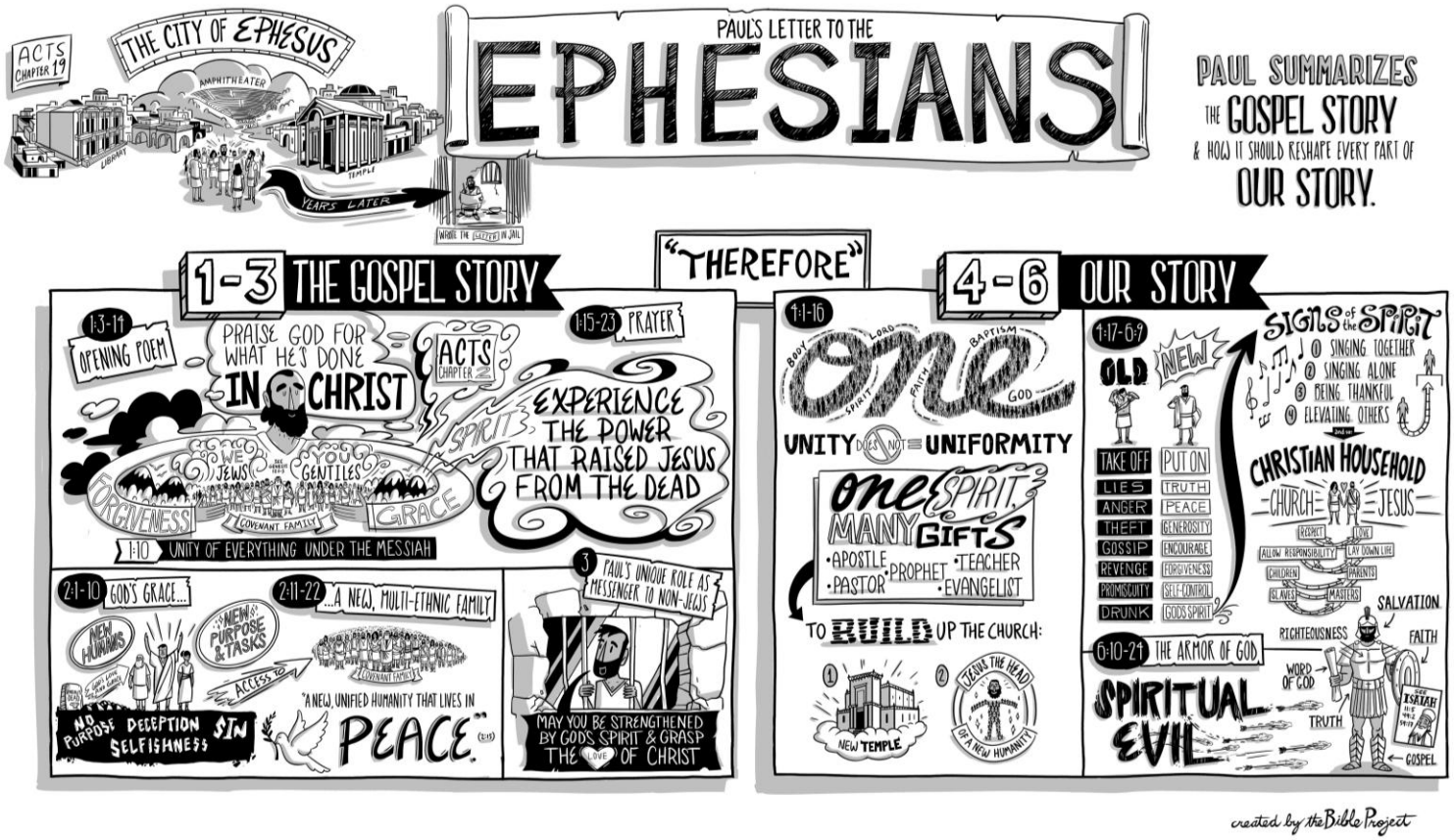
GRACE ALONE

Discipleship in Ephesians 2:1-10 November 1, 2026

But God, being rich in mercy,
because of his great love with which he loved us,
even when we were dead in our trespasses,
made us alive together with Christ –
by grace you have been saved . . . .
Ephesians 2:4

The gospel story

1. We are now in "Panel 2" of the Bible Project poster: The Gospel Story.
2. Commentators suggest two passages that Paul may have been relying on in Ephesians 2: the theology of Romans 1-8 and the narrative in Luke 15, especially the "lost son" parable.
3. Doug's working translation of the text suggests changes in two verses:
   -- in 2:4, the difficult perfect passive participle "you have been saved"
   -- in 2:8, the antecedent to "this" which is the gift from God



The Fountainhead of our salvation, Ephesians 2:1-10

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins [2] *in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—* [3] *among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.* [4] *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,* [5] *even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—* [6] *and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,* [7] *so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.* [8] *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,* [9] *not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* [10] *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

Doug's working translation:

And you

being dead in the trespasses and sins in which you one walked around,

following the course of this world,

following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience

among whom we all once lived in the passion of our flesh

carrying out the desires of the body and the mind

and were by nature objects of wrath, like the rest of mankind

But God "made us together alive" with Christ

being rich in mercy,

because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses

-- BY GRACE YOU ARE BEING SAVED –

[And God] "raised us together" and "seated us together"

in those same heavenlies with Christ Jesus

so that in the coming ages he might demonstrate the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For according to grace you have been and are being saved through faith

and this [is] not from you

from God this gift (of being saved by grace through faith) [is]

not out of works so that not any may boast.

For of him we are [his] workmanship

created in Christ Jesus toward good works,

those which God prepared beforehand
in order that in those good works we should walk.

Ephesians 2 sounds like Dr. Luther

1. Being "in sin" is the natural condition of every human being

   But what, then, is original sin? According to the Apostle it is not only the lack of a good quality in the will, nor merely the loss of man's righteousness and ability. It is rather the loss of all his powers of body and soul, of his whole outward and inward perfections. In addition to this, it is his inclination to all that is evil, his aversion against that which is good, his antipathy against light and wisdom, his love for error and darkness, his flight from and his loathing of good works, and his seeking after that which is sinful. Thus we read in Psalm 14:3: "They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one"; and in Genesis 8:21: "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Actual sins essentially consist in this that they come from out of us, as the Lord says in Matthew 15:19: "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." But original enters into us; we do not commit it, but we suffer it. We are sinners because we are the sons of a sinner. A sinner can beget only a sinner, who is like him.

   Martin Luther, Commentary on Romans

   He sees us miserable, damned, and utterly lost, and it is that that stirs Him up to do good, and to provide the remedy not only for our diseases but also for our death. For if we were but corrupted with sin and vice, the malady were already incurable. But, besides that, there is death, even a spiritual death, which cannot be corrected by all the means and nostrums of the world. God has to put forth His hand, and that mightily, so that it may be known that He saves us by miracle.

   John Calvin, Commentaries on Ephesians 2

2. "But God" is the sign that God is taking the initiative to save!

   20 And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. 23 And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

   Luke 15

3. Saved through faith, the "aqueduct" of God's grace

   Q21: What is true faith?

   A: True faith is not only a sure knowledge whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word, but also a hearty trust which the Holy Spirit works in me by the Gospel, that not only to others, but to me also, forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness, and salvation are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits.

   Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 7

Faith occupies the position of a channel or conduit pipe. Grace is the fountain and the stream; faith is the aqueduct along which the flood of mercy flows down to refresh the thirsty sons of men. It is a great pity when the aqueduct is broken. It is a sad sight to see around Rome the many noble aqueducts which no longer convey water into the city, because the arches are broken and the marvelous structures are in ruins. The aqueduct must be kept entire to convey the current; and, even so, faith must be true and sound, leading right up to God and coming right down to ourselves, that it may become a serviceable channel of mercy to our souls.

Spurgeon's "By Grace Through Faith" (Be read until the last paragraph!)

4. "Walking around" is how we find that "good work" which God has prepared for us!

   6 *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

   Philippians 1 (See also Paul's encouragement in 2 Corinthians 9:8)

5. Defining grace: _____

   I THINK IT WELL to turn a little to one side that I may ask my reader to observe adoringly the fountain-head of our salvation, which is the grace of God. "By grace are ye saved." Because God is gracious, therefore sinful men are forgiven, converted, purified, and saved. It is not because of anything in them, or that ever can be in them, that they are saved; but because of the boundless love, goodness, pity, compassion, mercy, and grace of God. Tarry a moment, then, at the well-head. Behold the pure river of water of life, as it proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb!

   Spurgeon's "By Grace Through Faith"

Grace for disciples today

1. Don't apologize, the *evangel* begins with a call to repentance

   14 *Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,* **15** *and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."*

   Mark 1

2. From the story to my story:

   16 *And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.*
   17 *"But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger!* **18** *I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.* **19** *I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants." '* **20** *And he arose and came to his father . . . .*

   Luke 15

3. *Ecclesia reformata et reformanda secundum Verbum Dei*

   If, then, I am not convinced by proof from Holy Scripture, or by cogent reasons, if I am not satisfied by the very text I have cited, and if my judgment is not in this way brought into subjection to God's word, I neither can nor will retract anything; for it cannot be either safe or honest for a Christian to speak against his conscience. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.

   Luther's defense against Cardinal Jerome Aleandar at Diet of Worms