
Grace As The Basis Of Salvation In Ephesians 2:1–10: Exegetical Theological Analysis And Its Implications For The Formation Of The Contemporary Christian Faith

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Abstrak

Kajian ini berangkat dari adanya keragaman penafsiran teologis mengenai relasi antara kasih karunia, iman, dan perbuatan, yang dalam praktiknya berpotensi memengaruhi pemahaman iman, etika Kristen, dan kehidupan gereja masa kini. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengkaji secara eksegetis-teologis pemikiran Rasul Paulus tentang kasih karunia dalam karya keselamatan sebagaimana tertuang dalam Efesus 2:1–10, serta menelaah relevansinya bagi pembentukan iman orang percaya dalam konteks Kristen kontemporer. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan analisis eksegetis-teologis, yang mencakup kajian konteks historis penulisan surat Efesus, analisis struktur literer perikop, serta penelaahan istilah-istilah teologis kunci yang berkaitan dengan dosa, keselamatan, iman, dan perbuatan baik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa menurut Paulus, kondisi manusia sebelum menerima keselamatan adalah mati secara rohani karena dosa dan pelanggaran, berada di bawah murka Allah, serta tidak memiliki kemampuan untuk menyelamatkan diri sendiri. Keselamatan sepenuhnya merupakan inisiatif kasih karunia Allah yang dinyatakan melalui karya penebusan Kristus dan diterima oleh manusia melalui iman. Perbuatan baik bukanlah dasar atau syarat keselamatan, melainkan merupakan buah dan konsekuensi dari keselamatan yang telah dianugerahkan Allah. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa kasih karunia Allah tidak meniadakan tanggung jawab etis orang percaya, tetapi justru menjadi dasar transformasi hidup yang berkelanjutan. Orang percaya yang hidup dalam kasih karunia dipanggil untuk hidup dalam kekudusan, melakukan pekerjaan baik yang telah dipersiapkan Allah, serta bertumbuh menuju kedewasaan iman. Dengan demikian, kasih karunia berfungsi tidak hanya sebagai dasar

soteriologis, tetapi juga sebagai fondasi pembentukan iman Kristen yang dinamis dan kontekstual. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada kajian teologi biblika dan soteriologi Paulus dengan memperjelas relasi antara kasih karunia, iman, dan perbuatan, serta menawarkan kerangka teologis yang relevan bagi pemahaman dan praktik iman Kristen dalam konteks gereja dan masyarakat kontemporer.

Keywords :

Grace; Safety; Ephesians 2:1–10; Theological Exegesis; Formation Of The Christian Faith.

Abstract

This study departs from the diversity of theological interpretations of the relationship between grace, faith, and deeds, which in practice have the potential to influence the understanding of faith, Christian ethics, and church life today. The purpose of this study is to examine exegetically-theologically the Apostle Paul's thinking on grace in the work of salvation as stated in Ephesians 2:1–10, and to examine its relevance to the formation of believers' faith in the contemporary Christian context. This study uses a qualitative method with an exegetical-theological analysis approach, which includes the study of the historical context of the writing of the Ephesians, the analysis of the literary structure of the passages, and the study of key theological terms related to sin, salvation, faith, and good works. The results of the study show that according to Paul, the condition of man before receiving salvation is that of spiritual death because of sin and transgression, being under God's wrath, and not having the ability to save himself. Salvation is fully an initiative of God's grace revealed through Christ's redemptive work and accepted by man through faith. Good deeds are not the basis or condition of salvation, but are the fruits and consequences of the salvation that Allah has bestowed upon them. These findings confirm that God's grace does not negate the ethical responsibility of believers, but rather forms the basis for a sustainable transformation of life. Believers who live in grace are called to live in holiness, to do the good works that God has prepared, and to grow toward maturity of faith. Thus, grace serves not only as a soteriological basis, but also as a foundation for the formation of a dynamic and contextual Christian faith. This research contributes to the study of Paul's biblical theology and soteriology by elucidating the relationship between grace, faith, and works, and offers a relevant theological framework for the understanding and practice of the Christian faith in the context of the church and contemporary society.



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INTRODUCTION

Salvation by grace is at the core of biblical truth that affirms that man's condition after the fall is in total helplessness before God. Man not only experiences a relational separation from God, but also loses the spiritual capacity to restore that relationship independently. The consequences of sin described as death (Rom. 6:23) are understood by contemporary theologians as an existential and spiritual reality that puts man in a state of total depravity, that is, a total inability to save himself. Therefore, salvation cannot be achieved through human morality, law, or religious effort, but rather depends solely on the sovereign initiative of God (Boangmanalu et al., 2024).

God's love that took the initiative to save man reached its climax in Christ's redemptive work on the cross. John 3:16 affirms that salvation is born of God's love, not of human demand or effort. Christ's death is theologically understood as an atonement that replaces the position of sinful man, so that the punishment that man should bear is transferred to Christ. Modern theologians affirm that the cross is not merely a symbol of sacrifice, but rather a juridical and relational act of God that restores man's relationship with Him through grace (Zalukhu, 2024).

Differing interpretations of the concept of grace in salvation have given rise to a long and complex theological debate. These differences are not only academic, but also have a direct impact on the life of the faith of the congregation and ecclesiastical praxis. Contemporary theological studies show that conflicts between monergistic and synergistic approaches to salvation often result in theological confusion at the congregational level, and even potentially undermine faith growth. When grace is not understood in a balanced way, the church can get caught up in the extremes of legalism or spiritual permissiveness (Mutual Nurture, 2025)

Church history records the classical debate between Pelagius and Augustine as the foundation of the formulation of the doctrine of salvation by grace. Pelagius emphasized man's moral ability to choose the good and gain salvation through obedience, while Augustine asserted that man's will had been corrupted by sin and could only be restored by God's grace. Augustine's view later became the basis of Western theology of salvation that emphasized the primacy of God's grace. Recent patristic studies have shown that this conflict still influences the soteriological debate to this day (Cross, 2021)

The conflict between Martin Luther and the Roman Catholic Church underscores fundamental differences in understanding the relationship between faith, grace, and works. Luther emphasized the doctrine of *sola gratia* and *sola fide*, which states that salvation is entirely the work of God without the contribution of human works. In contrast, the Catholic Church maintains the view that good deeds play a role in the process of maintaining salvation. Contemporary ecumenical studies show that this conflict is not only doctrinal, but also pastoral and structural in the life of the church (A. E. McGrath, 2023).

The debate between John Wesley and George Whitefield at the time of the spiritual awakening highlights the tension between God's grace and human response.

Wesley developed the concept of prevenient grace, which is the grace that precedes and enables man to respond to salvation, while Whitefield affirms salvation as a fully moneristic work of God. Contemporary Wesleyan theological studies consider that this debate opens up space for dialogue between God's sovereignty and human responsibility in the Christian faith (Collins, 2021).

The Hyper Grace Movement or Grace Revolution emphasizes the finality of Christ's work through the concept of tetelestai – "finished". Salvation is understood as an absolute gift that cannot be supplemented by any human act. Recent theological research shows that although these teachings have helped many people out of religious legalism, there is a risk of a reduction in Christian ethics if grace is detached from the call of holy life. Therefore, the church needs to be critical and pastoral in responding to this movement (Prince, 2023).

The polarization between the church that is considered legalistic and the church that teaches radical grace reflects the crisis of soteriological understanding in the modern era. Studies of pastoral theology show that this kind of theological labeling often hinders healthy dialogue and narrows the congregation's understanding of salvation intact. Salvation by grace should result in a transformation of life, not just doctrinal freedom without spiritual growth (Carson, 2021).

The lack of a biblical understanding of grace has a direct impact on the quality of the church's faith. Ecclesiastical research shows that churches that do not understand the balance between grace and the responsibility of faith tend to experience spiritual stagnation. Faith became lukewarm, Christian ethics weakened, and spiritual discipline was neglected. Therefore, the doctrine of salvation needs to be delivered in depth, contextual, and responsibly (Foster, 2022a).

Based on this background, the study of Ephesians 2:1–10 becomes very relevant to explore the concept of grace according to Paul. This passage affirms that salvation is begun, worked out, and perfected by God, while faith is a means of acceptance, not a human contribution. Contemporary biblical studies consider that this text offers a balanced theological framework between grace and life transformation, making it particularly relevant to the faith building of believers today (Wright, 2013).

Based on the background and theological data that have been presented earlier, it appears that the doctrine of grace as the basis of salvation is still a central issue that is understood in various ways in the life of the church and contemporary Christian theology. Differing interpretations of the relationship between God's grace, faith, and human actions have given birth to a wide spectrum of understanding, ranging from views that emphasize the exclusive role of God's grace to approaches that leave significant room for human response and responsibility. This diversity often causes theological confusion and has an impact on the church's faith proxy, both in the form of legalism, antinomianism, and a superficial understanding of faith. Therefore, a serious and responsible study of the biblical texts that form the primary basis of the doctrine of salvation, especially Ephesians 2:1–10, is needed in order to obtain a

complete and balanced understanding of the concept of grace in salvation according to the apostle Paul.

In this regard, the main problem in this study is formulated in the question: how grace functions as the basis of salvation in Ephesians 2:1–10 is reviewed through exegetical-theological analysis, and how this understanding has implications for the formation of the contemporary Christian faith. This study aims to examine in depth the meaning of the text of Ephesians 2:1–10 in its historical, literary, and theological context, in order to reveal Paul's emphasis on God's initiative, the role of faith, and the position of works in salvation. Furthermore, the results of this study are expected to be able to make a constructive theological contribution to the church today, especially in building the faith of the congregation that is rooted in God's grace, grows in obedience, and is manifested in a mature and responsible Christian life in the context of modern times.

Through this research, the author hopes to provide significant benefits both theoretically and practically for the development of theology and the life of the faith of the church. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the theological understanding of the author and the congregation of the apostle Paul's concept of grace, especially as expressed in Ephesians 2:1–10, so that the doctrine of salvation is not only understood in partial or extreme terms, but in a whole, biblical, and responsible way. This study also aims to dig deep into the Bible's spiritual richness of grace as a saving initiative of God, rooted in Christ's work and received through faith. Practically, the results of this research are expected to be an archetype or theological reference for the development of believers' faith, help the congregation to live God's grace correctly in daily life, and encourage the growth of mature, balanced, and fruitful faith in obedience and authentic Christian life in the context of the church and society today.

METHODS

In this study, the author uses a qualitative research method with a library research approach and document investigation. This method was chosen because the focus of the research lies in the analysis of the biblical text and the theological study of the concept of grace in the epistle to Ephesians, especially Ephesians 2:1–10. Literature studies allow authors to search, compare, and evaluate various relevant primary and secondary sources, in order to gain a comprehensive and systematic understanding of the subject of research. According to (Creswell, 2014), literature-based qualitative research is particularly effective for theological and biblical studies because it emphasizes the analysis of meaning, interpretation of texts, and the synthesis of scholarly thought. The primary sources in this study are the Bible, especially the New Translation Bible of the Indonesian Bible Institute (LAI) in 1974 and the Indonesian Everyday Bible (BIS–LAI) in 1985, while secondary sources include books of Ephesians commentary, soteriological works, and relevant theological literature of Paul.

Furthermore, in the investigation of the biblical text, the author applies the biblical method of exegesis to Ephesians 2:1–10 with the aim of unearthing the original meaning of the text as intended by the biblical author in its historical, grammatical, and theological context. Exegesis is carried out by taking into account the historical background of the Ephesian church, the literary structure of the passages, the analysis of key words (such as *charis*, *pistis*, and *erga*), and the inter-sectional relationships in Paul's argument. This approach is in line with the principle of biblical interpretation which emphasizes that the meaning of the text should be drawn from within the text itself, not forced from outside (Fee & Stuart, 2014). Thus, the results of the exegesis are expected to present a biblical and theological understanding of the concept of grace as the basis of salvation according to Paul, as well as a basis for reflection and theological implications for the formation of the contemporary Christian faith (Wright, 2013).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Grace in Salvation in Ephesians 2:1–10

The Greek word grace is *charis*, which theologically refers to a gift that is free, unconditional, and not based on the eligibility of the recipient. In the context of Ephesians 2:1–9, the *charis* affirms that salvation is a unilateral act of God given to man who is spiritually dead as a result of sin and transgression, without the contribution of human works. Paul clearly places grace as the foundation of salvation that comes from God's great and sovereign love, not from human effort, so that there is no room for spiritual pride (Eph. 2:8–9). This grace culminated in Christ's atoning work, where through His death on the cross, God broke down the wall of separation between God and man and restored the relationship that had been damaged by sin (Eph. 2:13–14). Thus, grace is not just an abstract concept, but a historical act of God in Christ that brings about true salvation and atonement (Ferguson, 2021a).

Furthermore, the grace in Ephesians 2:1–10 must be understood as a divine plan of salvation that comes entirely from the initiative of God the Father and is made manifest through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Paul affirms that grace is the absolute "mercy of God" (*eleos*), which works beyond the logic of human justice and cannot be supplemented or perfected by human works. In this perspective, grace serves as a divine means that is "invisible", yet manifest in its impact, through which God provides an unexpected way of salvation for sinful man. This understanding rejects both legalism—which emphasizes human effort and antinomianism that ignores the transformation of life—and places grace as the foundation of a new life that produces good works as the fruit of salvation, not as a condition of salvation (Eph. 2:10). Therefore, God's grace in Ephesians not only saves, but also shapes the identity and ethical calling of believers in contemporary Christian life (Chan, 2021).

1. Sinful Human Nature

Sin, according to the Bible's testimony, existed before man's creation, because the fall of Satan as a creature in rebellion against God preceded the fall of man. In the

narrative of Genesis 3, Satan appears as a tempter who persuades man to break God's commands, so that sin enters human experience not as a mere moral error, but as a rebellion against divine authority. Thus, sin has a cosmic and spiritual dimension, in which man is involved in a broader conflict between obedience to God and rejection of His will. The Christian theological tradition understands this event as the starting point of man's downfall that has a profound impact on man's existence before God (Ferguson, 2021a).

The first humans, Adam and Eve, were placed by God in the garden of Eden in good condition and given the freedom to enjoy all creation, except for one clear prohibition, not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 3:2–3). This prohibition is not intended as an arbitrary restriction, but as a test of obedience and covenant relations between God and man. However, Adam and Eve's disobedience to God's commands showed a conscious choice to put one's own will above God's. It is this act that in Christian theology is understood as original sin, which not only affects the first perpetrator, but is also inherited as the spiritual condition of humanity collectively (Bonner, 2022).

The impact of sin on fallen man is profound and comprehensive. The Bible states that sinful man has a tendency to be hostile to God, as Paul affirms that "the lust of the flesh is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7). This fall results in the destruction of all aspects of man's existence of reason, will, and feeling, so that man experiences spiritual darkness and inability to understand and do God's will (Eph. 4:18). Paul also affirms that in sinful man there is no true goodness capable of bringing about spiritual restoration independently (Rom. 7:18). This condition is known in theology as total depravity, not in the sense that man is as evil as possible, but that sin has polluted man's entire existence and paralyzed his spiritual faculties. (Schreiner, 2021).

The consequence of man's disobedience is a just divine punishment. Because man fails to meet God's standard of holiness, he is under righteous condemnation based on God's justice. The Bible consistently states that the wages of sin is death, not only in the sense of physical death, but also spiritual separation from God (Rom. 6:23). In this condition, man is no longer able to live in holiness and holiness as God intends, so he needs divine intervention to obtain salvation. This reality becomes an important theological background for the understanding of grace, for without an acknowledgment of the depth of sin and the punishment that accompanies it, the meaning of salvation by grace becomes blurred and loses its weight (Bonhoeffer, 2023).

The terminology in this study refers to a systematic attempt to dig into biblical truth in order to understand Paul's thinking about the concept of grace in the doctrine of salvation as written in Ephesians 2:1–10, and to actualize it in the life of the church today. The focus of this study is not only theoretical, but also pastoral and practical, with the aim that believers are aware of the condition of their sinfulness, understand salvation as a gift of God alone, and experience real growth of faith in life and ministry. With this approach, the doctrine of grace is expected not to stop at the conceptual level,

but rather to form a solid, mature, and firmly rooted faith in Christ in the midst of the challenges of the contemporary church (Willard, 2021).

2. The Importance of Safety

As a direct consequence of sin, man is in a state of separation from God and therefore needs salvation as the most basic spiritual need. The Bible consistently testifies that sin leads man to spiritual destruction and death, so that without salvation man has no true hope. Therefore, both newly converted and long-time believers need the assurance of faith regarding their status of salvation in Christ. In the context of the contemporary church, this need for the assurance of salvation is often responded to with a variety of teachings that are not always balanced, causing confusion, doubt, and even fear among the congregation about their own salvation. This situation shows how important it is to have a biblical and theological understanding of salvation so that believers' faith is not shaken by false or extreme teachings (A. E. McGrath, 2023).

In general, safety is often understood as being safe or free from physical danger. However, from a biblical perspective, salvation has a much broader and deeper meaning. The Greek word for "salvation" is *sōtēria*, which comes from the root *sōzō*, meaning to save, liberate, or restore. This term parallels the Hebrew word *yasha* or *yasha* in the Old Testament, which means liberation from bondage, pressure, or threat, as well as the provision of space and spaciousness. Thus, salvation refers not only to liberation from physical harm, but especially to spiritual liberation from the power of sin, death, and condemnation. Biblical salvation includes the restoration of man's relationship with God and the overall transformation of life (Ladd, 1993).

Salvation is the core and center of the Christian faith, and is the main doctrine that distinguishes Christianity from other religions. In the Christian faith, salvation is not centered on human ethical systems, rituals, or efforts, but rather on the person and work of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The Bible affirms that salvation exists only in Christ, and that everyone who believes in Him has the assurance of eternal life (Acts 4:12; Yoh. 14:6). This assurance of salvation is not based on the stability of man's faith, but on God's faithfulness and Christ's perfect redemptive work. Therefore, the doctrine of salvation not only provides a theological basis for the faith of believers, but also becomes a source of hope, certainty, and constancy for Christian life in the midst of the challenges of the modern world (Keller, 2022a).

God's Principle in Salvation

The Bible states that in God's relationship with humans who have fallen into sin, there are two basic principles that apply, namely the principle of grace and the principle of law. These two principles are not in conflict with each other, but show God's justice and love in a balanced way. The principle of law affirms God's justice against sin, while the principle of grace expresses God's love and mercy that provides the way of salvation. In Paul's theology, especially in the epistle to the Ephesians, these two principles are understood in the light of Christ's redemptive work, in which God's justice is satisfied and God's grace is fully revealed (Eph. 2:1–10). Understanding these

two principles is essential so that the concept of salvation is not reduced to just love without justice or, on the contrary, justice without love (Schreiner, 2021).

a. Principle of Award

Throughout the history of salvation, God saved man solely by his grace, not by man's merit or effort. Ephesians 2:8–9 emphatically states that salvation is by grace through faith, and that it is the gift of God, not the work of man, so that no one may boast. Charis describes God's active and loving action in accepting sinful man, even though he is unworthy of receiving it. In Paul's theological framework, grace is not just an attitude of God, but a saving power that works in Christ to free man from sin and death. Thus, the basis of salvation lies entirely in God's love and not in human response or achievement (Ferguson, 2021a).

Furthermore, the principle of grace emphasizes that salvation is relational and restorative. God took the initiative to reconcile Himself to man through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, so that the relationship damaged by sin was restored. This grace not only saves man from the penalty of sin, but also elevates man to a new status as a new creation and member of God's family. Therefore, grace is not only the starting point of salvation, but also the basis for the life of the believer who continues to grow in faith and obedience. This principle eliminates all forms of spiritual pride and affirms man's total dependence on God (Keller, 2022b).

b. Legal Principles

On the other hand, the Bible also affirms the principle of law as a consequence of human sin. Romans 6:23 states that the wages of sin is death, which shows that sin brings the consequences of God's just punishment. In the principle of law, sinful man stands before God as a transgressor of His law and is objectively worthy of eternal punishment. Paul affirms that no one is justified by the deeds of the law, because through the law man knows his sin (Rom. 3:20). Thus, if Allah merely applies the principle of law without grace, then no human being can escape His punishment (Stott, 2006).

Spiritual blindness and the power of sin make man incapable of freeing himself from the demands of God's law. In this condition, man is in a state of helplessness and bound to divine punishment. The principle of law reveals man's total inability to save himself and at the same time affirms the absolute need for God's grace. In Christ, the principle of the law is not abolished, but fulfilled, because the penalty of sin is borne by Christ through His death on the cross. Thus, Christian salvation shows how God's justice and love meet perfectly in Christ's redemptive work (Rom. 3:24–26) (Horton, 2022).

The Importance of Grace

Grace, also called grace, is a gift from God that is completely unworthy of being accepted by sinful people. In the perspective of the Bible and Christian theology, grace affirms that salvation is not the result of human effort, morality, or goodness, but

rather the initiative of a sovereign God. In contrast to mercy, which means that Allah does not give punishment that man should receive, grace actually states that Allah gives something that is not at all worthy of acceptance, namely salvation and eternal life. Thus, mercy is related to the removal of punishment, while grace is related to the giving of new life and the restoration of a relationship with God. These two concepts are inseparable, yet grace occupies a central place in the doctrine of Christian salvation (A. McGrath, 2023).

Grace is God's act rooted in His love to save people who have fallen into sin. The symbolic image in Genesis 3, when God made clothing out of animal skins for Adam and Eve, shows that from the beginning of human history, forgiveness and the closure of sin have always involved sacrifice. This principle is perfectly fulfilled in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God who took the sin of man. John 3:16 affirms that God's love is expressed through the gift of His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. Thus, grace is not just an abstract concept, but a historical and redemptive act of God in Christ (Stott, 2006).

Further, grace is provided by God the Father freely as the only way of salvation for man. Ephesians 2:8 affirms that man is saved by grace through faith, and that salvation does not come from man, but from the gift of God. This shows that grace is absolute, final, and effective in bringing man out of a state of spiritual death into a new life in Christ. The importance of grace lies in the fact that without grace, man would remain under the power of sin and death. Therefore, grace is the solid foundation of the Christian faith, providing the assurance of salvation, and forming an attitude of humbleness, gratitude, and obedience to God in the lives of believers today (Ferguson, 2021b).

Paul's Soteriology

Soteriology is a branch of systematic theology that discusses the doctrine of salvation, especially God's work in saving sinful humans. In Paul's theological anthropological framework, man is understood as a creature who has fallen completely into sin, sinned before God, and is under the penalty of death. This condition is not only moral, but also existential and spiritual, so that man does not have the ability to save himself. Therefore, salvation must be understood as God's initiative bestowed through Jesus Christ and effectively applied by the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life (Rom. 3:9–24; Eph. 2:1–5). Thus, Paul's soteriology always departs from the reality of human sin and the sovereignty of God's grace (Moo, 2021).

In Paul's writings, soteriology does not speak only of God's actions in the abstract, but of the historical facts of the work of salvation fulfilled in Christ. This is evident in 1 Corinthians 15:3–5, where Paul emphasizes Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and appearance as the real events that underlie the Christian faith. In this context, soteriology differs from kyriology, because soteriology emphasizes the reality of salvation experienced and lived by humans. The essence of Paul's soteriology is the

unity between man and God in Christ, in which Christ's solidarity with man is the basis for the restoration of that relationship. This unity is expressed through Paul's main metaphors, reconciliation, redemption, and justification, which together illustrate the fullness of God's work of salvation (Ridderbos, 1975).

Ephesians

The Epistle to Ephesians is one of Paul's most prominent theological reflections and occupies a unique position among the New Testament epistles. Unlike many other Paul's letters written in response to specific doctrinal or pastoral issues, the epistle of Ephesians is more declarative and doxological, revealing God's eternal purpose in Christ broadly and profoundly. Many interpreters see this letter as the result of Paul's intense meditation and prayer, so that the contents of the letter are rich in themes such as divine election, redemption, church unity, and new life in Christ. Paul wrote this letter while in prison for the gospel, most likely in Rome, as some internal references indicate (Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20) (Hoehner, 2002).

Historically, there have been strong similarities between the letters of Ephesians and the Colossians, both in terms of language, theme, and theological structure. This suggests that the two letters were likely written in close time periods and were brought by Tychicus as Paul's messenger (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7). Many scholars argue that the letter to the Ephesians was not addressed exclusively to the Ephesian church, but served as a circular letter to the churches in Asia Minor. This view is reinforced by the textual indication in Ephesians 1:1 and Paul's reference to the "letter from Laodicea" in Colossians 4:16, which some scholars identify with the letter of Ephesians (Bruce, 2018).

1. Research Objectives of the Epistle to Ephesians

Paul's primary purpose in writing the Ephesians is clearly implied in Ephesians 1:15–17, where he expresses his prayer and desire for the readers to grow in faith, love, and the true knowledge of God. Paul not only wanted to provide doctrinal understanding, but also encourage a real transformation of life, so that believers live according to their calling in Christ (Eph. 4:1–3; 5:1–2). Thus, Paul describes the fullness of God's eternal plan of redemption as the basis for a holy, united, and fruitful Christian life. The whole of this letter shows the close interconnectedness between doctrine and ethics, between identity in Christ and the responsibility of living as God's people (Thielman, 2010).

2. The Writer of the Ephesians

Church tradition and the internal testimony of the epistle to Ephesians consistently state that the apostle Paul was the author of this epistle. Paul wrote this letter to affirm true Christian teachings and implicitly counter the influence of teachings that have the potential to undermine the church's understanding of grace and salvation. In the context of Paul's broader ministry, he faced challenges from teachers who emphasized obedience to the law as a condition of salvation, particularly

on the issue of circumcision and the identity of God's people. Through the letter of Ephesians, Paul affirms that salvation is wholly the work of God's grace in Christ, and that spiritual life and the reception of the Holy Spirit are received by faith, not by the works of the law. Thus, the letter of Ephesians serves as a solid theological foundation for the doctrine of salvation by grace in the new covenant (Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8–9) (Bruce, 2018).

Exegesis Ephesians 2:1–10

The passage Ephesians 2:1–10 occupies a central position in Paul's theology of grace and salvation. Paul begins by describing the condition of man before he is in Christ, which is "spiritually dead" because of transgression (*paraptōma*) and sin (*hamartia*). This death is not just a moral metaphor, but an existential state of man who is separate from God and under His punishment. Man lives according to the ways of the world, is dominated by the power of evil spirits, and obeys the lusts of the flesh, so that his whole existence is in disobedience to God. This picture confirms man's total helplessness to save himself (Eph. 2:1–3; Rom. 6:23) (Stott, 1991).

Next, Paul introduces a very powerful theological turning point through the phrase "But God" (Eph. 2:4). The initiative of salvation comes entirely from a God who is "rich in grace" and is moved by His great love (*agapē*). God does not allow man to remain in spiritual death, but rather acts actively to bring man to life with Christ. This salvation is rooted in the mercy (*eleos*) and love of God, not in human worthiness. Thus, Paul affirms that the basis of salvation is God's own character, not man's initial response (Eph. 2:4–5) (Thielman, 2010).

Furthermore, Paul explains the eschatological dimension of salvation by stating that believers are not only made alive, but also resurrected and seated with Christ in heaven (Eph. 2:6–7). This expression shows that salvation is not only a present reality but also a guarantee of a new spiritual status before God. Oneness with Christ is at the heart of Paul's soteriology, where Christ's death and resurrection are the basis for the believer's participation in the new life. God's purpose in doing all of this is to reveal the "riches of His grace" abundantly for future generations (Wright, 2013).

The culmination of Paul's teaching in this passage is found in Ephesians 2:8–9, which explicitly affirms that salvation is God's grace through faith, not the result of human effort or work. Faith serves as a means of receiving salvation, not as the basis of salvation itself. Thus, all forms of spiritual pride are eliminated, for salvation is entirely God's gift. Paul emphatically rejects the view that salvation can be obtained through obedience to the law or good works, and affirms that the entire process of salvation is a work of God's grace from beginning to end (Keller, 2022c).

Finally, Ephesians 2:10 affirms that grace does not negate the ethical responsibility of believers. The saved is God's "new creation" (*poiēma*) in Christ, created to do the good work that God had prepared beforehand. Good work is not a condition of salvation, but the fruit and purpose of salvation itself. Thus, grace results in a life that glorifies God through obedience, holiness, and service. This entire passage

confirms the divine pattern: sinful man is saved by grace, renewed in Christ, and equipped to live for the glory of God (Ferguson, 2021a).

The Concept of Grace in Ephesians 2:1–10

Based on the results of literature research and exegesis on the Ephesian letters, especially Ephesians 2:1–10, the author finds that the concept of grace (*charis*) taught by Paul has a deep and comprehensive theological dimension. Grace is not just an abstract theological term, but the reality of God's work that touches the existential condition of man who died in sin and restores it in Christ. The following are some of the key aspects of the concept of grace according to Ephesians 2:1–10.

1. Grace is the Manifestation of God's Love for Believers

The grace in Ephesians 2:1–10 is first understood as the manifestation of God's great love (*dia tēn pollēn agapēn autou*, Eph. 2:4) for sinful man. Paul affirms that salvation is rooted in God's love expressed concretely through the incarnation, suffering, and death of Jesus Christ. Grace is inseparable from the love of God, for grace is an active expression of that love in the history of salvation. The Incarnation of Christ is the supreme proof that God loves man not because of his worthiness, but because of God's nature of love (John 3:16). Thus, grace is an act of God's saving love, not just God's emotional attitude toward man (O'Brien, 1999).

2. Grace Is God's Initiative

Ephesians 2:4–5 emphatically shows that grace is God's unilateral initiative. Man is described as "dead for transgressions" and has absolutely no spiritual capacity to seek or choose God. In these conditions, God acts first to bring people to life together with Christ. Grace is given freely (*dōrean*), unconditionally, and without human contribution. Paul affirms that salvation is "not the result of labor" and "not of works" (Eph. 2:8–9), so that all glory belongs to God alone. This concept rejects any form of merit-based soteriology or human deeds and affirms the supremacy of divine grace in salvation (Schreiner, 2021).

3. Grace Is the Restoration of God's Relationship with Man

The grace in Ephesians also has a reconciliatory dimension, namely the restoration of the relationship between God and man. Humans who were previously spiritually dead and living under the power of the world and the devil are now resurrected to fellowship with God (Eph. 2:1–3, 5). Through grace, man is transferred from a state of alienation to become children of God who live in fellowship with Him. This restoration includes deliverance from the powers of sin and the devil and the rapture of man into a new state of life in Christ. Thus, grace not only removes the punishment of sin, but also restores relationships damaged by sin (Ridderbos, 1975).

4. Grace is a Form of God's Forgiveness for Sinners

God's grace is also expressed as divine forgiveness for sinners. In Ephesians 2:1–10, this forgiveness is not explicitly mentioned by *aphesis*, but is implied through God's act of bringing to life a man who should have received the death penalty.

Forgiveness in grace does not mean that God ignores His justice, but rather that justice is fulfilled through Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Sinners who come to God in faith receive complete forgiveness, not on the basis of repentance as merit, but in response to God's grace. Thus, grace affirms that salvation is a gift of God that takes away sin and restores man's status before Him (Sproul, 2017).

5. Grace is the Power of God Who Leads Believers

Finally, the grace in Ephesians 2:10 is understood as the power of God that continues to work in the believer's life through the Holy Spirit. Believers are referred to as "God's creation" (*poiēma*), who were created in Christ to do the good work that God had prepared beforehand. This shows that grace not only saves, but also equips and enables believers to live according to God's will. The presence of the Holy Spirit as an agent of grace allows believers to grow in holiness, serve God, and endure life's struggles. Thus, grace is a transformative force that shapes the faith, character, and service of believers on an ongoing basis (Willard, 2021).

The Actuality of Grace to the Formation of the Contemporary Christian Faith

A correct understanding of God's grace has a very important role in the formation and growth of the contemporary Christian faith. Grace is not only the foundation of salvation, but also the foundation of the Christian life after salvation has been received. Paul affirms that salvation by grace does not stop at justification, but continues at God's broader purpose, which is to live a holy life and bear fruit through the good works that God has prepared in advance (Eph. 2:8–10). Thus, grace should not be understood passively or permissively, but rather dynamically and transformatively, which shapes the character, life orientation, and spirituality of the believer (Schreiner, 2021).

God's grace contains a clear ethical and spiritual purpose, which is to call believers to live in holiness. Paul emphasized that God saves man "according to his own purpose and grace" so that man might live for his will (cf. 2 Tim. 1:9). Therefore, the Christian faith formed by an understanding of biblical grace will reject a life that is compromising on sin and instead encourages a life that is pleasing to God. Grace is an internal motivation that moves believers to live righteously, not because of legal compulsion, but because of love and obedience to God (Ferguson, 2021a).

1. Believers Are More Actively Serving God

Believers who truly understand and experience God's grace will be encouraged to serve the Lord willingly and joyfully. Christian ministry is not an effort to gain salvation, but rather a grateful response to God's bestowal salvation. Through grace, God equips believers with the power of the Holy Spirit to serve according to their individual callings and gifts. Paul himself saw his ministry as the result of God's grace working in him (1 Cor. 15:10). Thus, the believer's purpose of salvation is not only to enjoy eternal life, but also to take part in God's mission in the world (Foster, 2022b).

2. Believers Make God's Will the Purpose of Life

God's grace shapes the life orientation of believers so that God's will becomes the main goal of life. The person who has become a new creation in Christ receives God's grace on an ongoing basis to live in obedience, reject sin, and grow in holiness. Paul affirms that God works in believers, both in will and in deeds, according to His will (Phil. 2:13). This shows that grace not only forgives, but also renews the will of man. A mature Christian faith is characterized by a life that is consciously directed to God's will, not to self-interest or worldly values (Smith, 2021).

3. Believers Grow Stronger in the Face of Problems

God's grace also has real implications for the faithfulness of believers when faced with life's problems and sufferings. Grace is not only the power to triumph over sin, but also the divine power that sustains believers in weakness. Paul himself testified that God's grace was sufficient for him, for God's power was made perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). In the context of the contemporary Christian faith, grace provides hope and spiritual strength for believers to remain faithful in the midst of life's pressures, sufferings, and struggles. Thus, every weakness and difficulty has spiritual value because through these things God expresses His love, inclusion, and power (Schreiner, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Based on the problems and objectives presented in this study, and related to the findings of research and discussion of Grace as the Basis of Salvation in Ephesians 2:1–10: Exegetical-Theological Analysis and Its Implications for the Formation of Contemporary Christian Faith, it can be broadly concluded that grace is an embodiment of God's love for sinful man. Grace is manifestly manifested through the incarnation of God in the Lord Jesus Christ to save man who has fallen into sin. Salvation is entirely an initiative of God given freely to man who should receive God's punishment and wrath, unconditionally, without merit, and without human contribution.

God's grace aims to give new life to man so that he can return to living in fellowship with God and no longer in bondage to sin. This grace is also God's means of forgiveness for sinners who come to Him with true faith and repentance, and encourages them to live according to God's purpose. Believers who live in God's grace will experience a real growth in faith, becoming more and more Christ-like. The growth of faith is expressed in an attitude of life that is oriented towards goodness, namely doing good, saying good, thinking well, sowing goodness, and working for the glory of Allah, as well as making the will of Allah the main goal of his life.

Advice

Based on the results of this study, the author provides the following suggestions. First, for the church and the servants of God, it is hoped that the results of this research

can be a material for teaching and deepening faith regarding the biblical doctrine of grace, so that the congregation is not trapped in extreme understandings, both legalism and antinomianism. The Church needs to affirm that salvation is by grace alone, but that grace produces a responsible, holy, and fruitful life of good works.

Second, for theological educational institutions and theology students, this research is expected to be a reference in understanding Paul's soteriology, especially in the Epistle to Ephesians . The exegetical study of Ephesians 2:1–10 needs to be further developed with interdisciplinary approaches, such as biblical theology, systematic theology, and practical theology, in order to make the understanding of grace more complete and relevant to the context of the church today.

Third, for believers in general, this research is expected to help build a healthy and mature faith, which is a faith that is rooted in God's grace and manifested in a life of obedience, service, and faithfulness in the midst of the challenges of the times. A correct understanding of grace should encourage believers to live in gratitude, humility, and a commitment to glorify God in all aspects of life.

Criticism

The author realizes that this study has a number of limitations. First, this study focuses specifically on Ephesians 2:1–10, so the discussion of the concept of grace has not broadened Paul's entire corpus of writings or their comparison with the perspectives of other New Testament books, such as the Gospel of John or James. Therefore, the results of this study do not fully represent the entire spectrum of New Testament teachings on grace and salvation.

Second, this study uses the method of literature research and textual exegesis, so that it has not touched on empirical or contextual aspects directly, such as the application of the doctrine of grace in the life of the local congregation or the pastoral dynamics of the contemporary church. The authors suggest that further research can combine a theological approach with a practical approach or field studies to see the extent to which the understanding of grace influences the faith life of the congregation in a real way.

Third, within the constraints of space and time, this study has not addressed in depth contemporary theological debates related to the concept of grace, such as the discourse on hyper-grace, the new perspective on Paul, or the ethical implications of the doctrine of justification. Therefore, further research is needed to enrich and complement this study so that it is more relevant to the church and theology today.

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