

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 2

Having described our spiritual possession in Christ, Paul turns to a complementary truth; our spiritual position in Christ. First, he explains what God has done for all sinners in general; then he explains what God did for Gentiles in particular. We will see that all of us have the opportunity to be taken out of the great graveyard of sin because of God's great mercy and great love for man He demonstrated on the Cross at Calvary. Paul clearly teaches we are saved by grace through faith in Christ Jesus; there is no other way to be saved.

Vs. 1 - *If you are physically dead, what can you do to make yourself physically alive again? If you are spiritually dead, what can you do to make yourself*

spiritually alive? In both cases NOTHING. A person who is “dead” in this verse refers to someone “spiritually dead.” And this means that one is unable to understand and appreciate spiritual things. The phrase, “*who were dead in trespasses and sins*” although Christians are now alive, we must never forget where we came from. We were dead in trespasses and sins. Being dead in sin means there is no Holy Spirit operating in your life to alert you – to convince and convict you of sin that could lead to one confessing and repenting of sin.

David said it like this in the **51st Psalm vs. 5** - “*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.*” Every human being is born in sin due to Adam...it takes God to make us spiritually alive. Regarding the phrase, “*In trespasses and sins*” the idea behind the word *trespasses* is that we

have crossed a line, challenging God's boundaries. The idea behind the word sin is that we have missed the mark which is the perfect standards of God.

Vs. 2-3 – The phrase “*In which you once walked*” means at one time we lived in trespasses and sins; we were dead to them but then something happened (*read Romans 5:8*). This verse should make all of us stop judging others and offer others *grace* when they are in a season of disobedience because all of us who are saved at one time was dead in our sins and trespasses (*Romans 3:23*). The word “*world*” is not talking about the *universe* but the realm of Satan, it's the place the unregenerate man spiritually lives...he is controlled by his flesh, his own thoughts, emotions and lusts (*Galatians 5:16*). *The prince of the power of the air* is Satan (the accuser also called the devil). In the resurrection, Christ was victorious over Satan and his power. Therefore, Jesus Christ is the permanent ruler of the whole world; Satan is only the temporary ruler of the part of the world that chooses to follow him. Vs. 3 highlights the fact we are born lost in sin and cannot save ourselves. Apart from Christ people are dominated by fleshly lusts (*unredeemed urges in our life apart from Christ*). Only through being united with Christ's perfect life can we become good in God's sight...all that is “good” in us is the good we do empowered by the Holy Spirit. The works of the flesh are summarized in Galatians 5:16-21 (*read them*). The text says “*we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of the flesh*”

and of the mind” is a statement the church too often forgets. We (saved people) have not always been saved...so when we see unsaved people doing what unsaved people do; we must remember, that was us also. We (saved people) have the Holy Spirit to alert us to sin – to lead and guide us. But unsaved people do not, so we must exercise patience and extend grace and forgiveness to others as God has showered saved people with. Pray for the unsaved in the manner of Acts 16:14. Because of our surrender to the old man, the world, and the devil, we were by *nature children of wrath*. We rightfully deserved God’s wrath, and deserved it because of who we were by our heritage. While functioning as free moral agents, sin always negatively influences human decisions and actions.

Vs. 4 – Now verses 1-3 lets us know we were in a callous state of sin being controlled by the devil but by the time we get to vs. 4 a seismic shifts occurs...praise the Lord for the “*But God*” verses in Scripture especially, this one. *But* is a coordinating conjunction...if we were dead on the front side of the “*But*” we are about to be made alive on the back side of the “*But*.” The word “*but*” is about to nullify what has been previously stated. And Paul with the word “*but*” and the word “because,” provides explanation for God’s reason of reconciling man to Himself, and these reasons are found totally in God. The reasons choose to reconcile man from his spiritually dead state is

because: *God is rich in mercy* and *God has great love* which He focuses on us.

The Cross is where the mercy of God and the love of God intersect. Praise

God we did not die in what we were dead in. The penalty of sin and its power over us were miraculously destroyed by Christ on the Cross. Through faith in Christ, we stand acquitted or not guilty before God (*Romans 6:23*). When it says, *“His great love with which He loved us”* - God’s love is so great that it extends even to the unlovely - to the children of wrath mentioned in the previous verse. Every reason for God’s mercy and love is found in Him. We give Him no reason to love us, yet in the greatness of His love, He loves us with that great love anyway.

Vs. 5-7 – Notice it is God who made us alive, not we ourselves. Salvation starts with God, goes through God; and ends with God. It is through faith in Jesus we stand acquitted. The devil could be right when he says look at so and so; he is guilty of sin; but God can say “not guilty” because of the atoning sacrifice Jesus’ shed blood provided for us on the Cross at Calvary. As Christians we will still commit sin; but before we became Christians, we were dead in sin and were slaves to our sinful nature. But now we are alive and have God the Holy Spirit dwelling inside of us to give us the power to overcome sin when we yield to that power. The phrase *“Made us alive together with Christ”* - this is what God did to those who were dead in sin. He shared in our death so that

we could share in His resurrected life. The old man is crucified and we are new creations in Jesus with the old things passing away and all things becoming new. And because of Christ's resurrection, we know that our body will be raised from the dead (*1 Corinthians 15:2-23*) and that we have been given the power to live as Christians now. When the text says in *vs. 6* "*Sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus*" - this is the present position of the Christian. We have a new place for living, a new arena of existence – we are not those who dwell on the earth (as Revelation often calls them), but our citizenship is in heaven (*Philippians 3:20*). Now we do have to balance that last statement that we do not become so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good either. Because *currently* we don't physically sit in the heavenly places with Christ Jesus yet. Instead, we sit in the heavenly places *in* Christ Jesus. Since our life and its identity is *in Christ*, as He sits in heavenly places, so do we. Finally, regarding "*Christ's exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ*" - One way to see the greatness of the grace of God is to see how He begs man to receive it. When we offer a gift to someone and they refuse it, we are likely to allow them to refuse and we leave them alone. God does not do this with us; even when we refuse His mercy He reaches into His storehouse of grace and persists with us, pleading with us to receive the free gift.

Vs. 8-9 – These are two of the most important verses in the Bible that Christians who desire to live out the Great Commission must commit to memory. These verses tell us how we are saved and how we are not saved. The work of salvation is for the glory of God and is not accomplished by human works. Salvation starts with God; goes through God, and ends with God. The emphasis is always on Christ, the object of our faith. Salvation is by God’s completely unmerited favor. The phrase “*And that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God*” - the it in this phrase is “salvation” – the work of salvation is God’s gift as mentioned in **vs. 4-8**, and not directly to the faith mentioned in this verse. Even our *faith* is a *gift of God*. We cannot believe in Jesus unless God does a prior work in us, for we are blinded by our own deadness and by the “little g god” of this age as stated in **2 Corinthians 4:4**. The phrase “*Not of works, lest anyone should boast*” makes it clear if salvation was the accomplishment of man in any way, we could boast about it. But under God’s plan of salvation, God alone receives the glory.

Vs. 10 – Every other religion known to man is basically a “works based religion.” Christianity is the only religion where works is a what you do after you get saved; not to get saved. Good works are the fruit of salvation not the cause of salvation. Regarding the phrase “*for we are His workmanship*” God saves us not merely to save us from the wrath we rightly deserve, but also to

make something beautiful of us. We are His workmanship, which translates the ancient *Greek* word *poiema*. The idea is that we are His beautiful poem. The Jerusalem Bible translates workmanship as “*work of art*.” Since God considers us His masterpiece, we dare not treat ourselves or others with disrespect or as inferiors. Since we have been saved by grace through faith to do good works – kingdom advancement works...*what are “you” doing to help advance God’s kingdom on this earth? Do you know your spiritual gift(s)? What is the name of the last person you led to Christ? What are the names of the people you are praying come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. What are the names of unsaved people you have prayed to come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior in the past 3 days? Who are the people you invited to join you for S.H.O.P. – Wednesday Bible study – or Sunday morning worship?* Whatever God is calling you to do, it will be associated with the spiritual gifts God endows you with.

Oneness and Peace in Christ (vs. 11-18)

Vs. 11-12 – In the first 10 verses of *Ephesians chapter 2*, Paul has discussed the salvation of sinners in general, but now he turns to the work of Christ for Gentiles in particular. Most of the converts in the Ephesian church were Gentiles and they knew that much of God’s program in the Old Testament involved the Jews. But this also speaks to the present day church that we

must be about *reaching the unsaved...reaching people who don't look like you*; the church must grow not just with people who left church A to go to church B, but God's people must evangelize those who are outside the ark of safety. Paul in these verses is trying to get all people to *realize how great the gift of salvation is*. We need to remember our former natural unclean condition to best appreciate us being a new creation in Christ. The Gentiles were not only *morally separated* from God, but they were also separated from God's covenant people. They were without any knowledge of Christ and had no hope. *Without Christ* is a terrible state to be in for it alludes to being *without*: peace, eternal security, and spiritual blessings. The prince of preachers Charles Spurgeon said something profound about what Paul says regarding being *without Christ and hope*. Spurgeon said, "*If the phrase without Christ be the description of some of you, we need not talk to you about the fires of hell; let this be enough to startle you, that you are in such a desperate state as to be without Christ. Oh! What terrible evils lie clustering thick within these two words!*" Additionally, it is worth noting that the spiritual plight of the Gentiles was not caused by God but rather by their own willful sin. Paul said in *Romans 1:18-23* the Gentiles knew the true God but deliberately refused to honor Him. Religious history is not a record of man starting with many gods (idolatry) and gradually discovering the one true God. No, it is the sad story

of man knowing the truth about God and deliberately turning away from it.

It is a story of devolution not of evolution. Israel was chosen by God at His sovereign choosing to be a light to the Gentiles that they may be saved.

Vs. 13 – The “*but now*” is a reference to the remarkable turnaround because of the sacrificial and atoning death of Jesus on the Cross to point the Gentiles to their new relationship to God. The Gentiles believers were no longer in their alienated state. Because of Jesus they can now be a part of the hope and covenant blessings of God. They are like what Jesus describes in *John 15:5-7* (read from Bible). What a great exchange this is. Those Gentiles who are now in Christ Jesus are no longer far off. They are made near to the things of God, and the blood of Jesus accomplishes this, by His sacrificial death.

Vs. 14-16 – These verses emphasize Christ is both our peace and our peacemaker. Jesus’ reconciling death on the cross made the two – Jew and Gentile into one. Believing Jews and Gentiles form one body called the church because of the perfect atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. The end results of Christ’s work on the Cross include the destroying of the enmity between Jew and Gentile by creating a new man called the church, the body of Christ. The word *abolish* means to nullify. The Law no longer holds sway over either the Jew or the Gentile since Christ’s believers are not under Law but under grace by faith in Christ Jesus. The righteousness of the Law, that

reveals God's holiness, is still God's standard. But this is fulfilled in the Believer by the Holy Spirit as stated in *Romans 8:1-4*. It took the early church a long time to get accustomed to there is no difference. In fact to this day, there are many modern day churches that don't get it...Sunday mornings between 10am and 12pm is still one of the most segregated time frames in America...churches today still fail to acknowledge racism especially systemic racism is fact of life in America...America the place with more Bibles than any place on earth is now a mission field for other countries. Note the phrase in *vs. 14* that says, "*Who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation*" - the work of Jesus on the cross is the common ground of salvation for both Jew and Gentile. Therefore, there is no longer any dividing wall between Jew and Gentile. Jesus broke that wall down. Christ's accomplishment of the Cross should dissolve the enmity between Jew and Gentile...and this bringing together of Jew and Gentile in Jesus is a partial fulfillment of God's eternal purpose as stated in *Ephesians 1:10: that...He might gather together in one all things in Christ*. God uses the bringing together of Jew and Gentile into the Church as a preview of His ultimate work of summing up all things into Jesus Christ.

Vs. 17-18 – First of all we must realize something about the peace Paul is speaking of...you cannot have the peace *of God*, until you have peace *with God*

(when you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior). As Judge, Jesus will come (in the 2nd coming) to declare war but in His grace Jesus came (in His first coming as the Messiah and Savior) to declare a message of peace (*Luke 2:8-14; 4:16-19*). Jesus rent the veil from top to bottom at the time of His death (*Matthew 27:50-51*) and that provided individual access to Him through prayer and the word; Reconciliation was made available to all mankind. Not only are Jews and Gentiles saved by the same gospel, but they also have the same essential walk with God and access to Him. One group does not have a greater access than the other does.

Christ our Cornerstone (vs. 19-22)

Vs. 19 – *Strangers* refers to short term non-residents with no rights – *foreigners* refer to resident aliens who have settled permanently into the country of their choice but have only limited rights. Both terms refer to the Gentiles position before Christ. But then, when the text says “*fellow citizens*” it reflects the Gentiles *new position* because they have accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior so now they enjoy a new position and all the privileges of being in God’s household. Believers are adopted into God’s family and are united with the *saints* of every era – past, present, and future. So practically speaking, being Christian and being a racist just do not fit in the same sentence. There is one race – the human race and there is one blood – Christ’s shed blood on

Calvary that should unite all Christians. Political persuasion is no true indicator of one's salvation.

Vs. 20-22 – A church building is sometimes called “*God’s house*” but in reality, God’s household is not a “*building*” but people who have accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior and they have the Holy Spirit as their seal and guarantee of the redemption of their mortal bodies. God walked with His people in Genesis (*5:22, 24, and 6:9*). In Exodus God dwelt with His people in the Tabernacle (*Exodus 25:8*) but when Israel sinned the glory of God departed the Tabernacle (*1 Samuel 4*). Then God dwelt in the Temple with his people again until they sinned and the glory of God departed (*Ezekiel 10:18-19*). God’s dwelling place then became the body of Jesus the Christ (*John 1:14*) but sinful man nailed Jesus to the Cross. And now God dwells in the church (the human body of Christ in our soul in the form of the Holy Spirit) – *1 Corinthians 6:19-20*.