

Ephesians Chapter 2

From Death to Life - Ephesians 2:1-7

Probably no other passage in the New Testament so clearly and directly describes our condition without Christ. Unlike what most people hear today, apart from Christ man is spiritually dead. He is not only not able to obey divine truth, he cannot even discern it. Apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, men will remain spiritually dead, both now and in eternity.

In these first seven verses of Ephesians 2 we find the problem of spiritual death, prescription for spiritual death, and the purpose of regeneration.

The Problem - Spiritual Death - Ephesians 2:1-3

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

The “you” in verse one is in the emphatic position. This denotes that Paul is placing the emphasis on those who have been quickened¹, or made alive. What was their problem? It was spiritual death. They were dead in trespasses and sins. The word for trespass, *paraptoma*, means “to stumble,” and the word for sins, *hamartia*, means to “miss the mark.” All of mankind is hopelessly dead in the sense that they have stumbled and missed God’s mark of perfect holiness.

Implications of Spiritual Death²

- 1. As a result of Adam’s transgression, men are born in sin and by nature are spiritually dead; therefore, if they are to become God’s children and enter His kingdom, they must be born anew of the Spirit - Romans 5:12; Ephesians 2:1-3; Colossian 2:13; Psalm 51:5; 58:3; John 3:5-7.**
- 2. As the result of the fall, men are blind and deaf to spiritual truth. Their minds are darkened by sin; their hearts are corrupt and evil - Genesis 8:21; Ecclesiastes 9:3; Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:21-23; John 3:19; Romans 8:7-8; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 4:17-19; Ephesians 5:8; Titus 1:15.**
- 3. Before sinners are born into God’s kingdom through the regenerating power of the Spirit, they are children of the devil and under his control; they are slaves to sin - John 8:44; Ephesians 2:1-2; 2 Timothy 2:25-26; 1 John 3:10; 1 John 5:19; John 8:34; Romans 6:20; Titus 3:3.**

¹ The phrase, “hath he quickened” is not in the original text although it is implied by verses 4-5.

² David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1976), pp. 24-30.

- 4. The reign of sin is universal; all men are under its power; consequently, none is righteous—not even one! - 2 Chronicles 6:26; Job 15:14-15; Psalm 103:3; Psalm 143_2; Proverbs 20:9; Ecclesiastes 7:20, 29; Isaiah 53:6; 64:6; Romans 3:9-12; James 3:2-8; 1 John 1:8, 10.**
- 5. Men left in their dead state are unable of themselves to repent, to believe the gospel, or to come to Christ. They have no power within themselves to changed their nature or to prepare themselves for salvation - Job 14:4; Jeremiah 13:23; Matthew 7:16-18; 12:33; John 6:44; 6:36; Romans 11:35-36; 1 Corinthians 2:14; 4:7; 2 Corinthians 3:5.**

Spiritual death is a state of existence characterized by radical corruption. By this we mean that sin has invaded every aspect of man's being to such an extent that he is radically and totally corrupt.³ That is not to say that those who are spiritually dead are as bad as they could be. Some may be great intellects, achieve great success, and may even be good, moral people.⁴ The problem is that they are spiritually dead. As such, they cannot respond to divine truth. When we expect pagans to live like believers and discern truth that, to us, is obvious, we are not realizing that they *cannot* know spiritual truth. Furthermore, not only do they *not* know spiritual truth, but they do *not want* to know spiritual truth. The unbeliever is in a hopeless situation. They are under total domination by the world, the Devil, and the flesh.⁵

What is the character of one who is spiritually dead? Paul lists several in verses 2-3.

A Worldly Walk - Ephesians 2:2a

The first characteristic of one who is spiritually dead is a worldly walk. The word for walk, *peripateo*, means "manner of life." The manner of life of one who is spiritual dead is marked out by a lifestyle that is according to this world, that is, according to the values and pursuits of the world. Note that the manner of life of the believer is not that of the world. The one who is quickened *once* walked like the world, but not he does not. It is incongruous for a believer to act like the world, because we are not longer of the world.

What Is The World?

It is the system of beliefs, thoughts, and desires headed by Satan.

It is the enemy of God - James 4:4.

It is the enemy of the believer - John 15:18ff.

It will someday pass away - John 2:15-18.

An Allegiance to the Prince of This World - Ephesians 2:2b

A second characteristic of one who is spiritual dead is that they have an allegiance to Satan. In Romans 6:16 Paul says, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" Those who are spiritual dead, whether knowingly or unknowingly, belong to the kingdom of

³ R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians*, (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1990), p. 67.

⁴ William Hendricksen, *Galatians and Ephesians*, NTC, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1984), p. 111.

⁵ Hughes p. 66.

Satan who is known as the prince of this world or the god of this age (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

The metaphor of two kingdoms is found throughout the New Testament. In Colossians 1:14 we read that God, "...hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." In Romans 6 we read of two masters, sin which leads to death or obedience which leads to righteousness. Christ said that no man can serve two masters, God or money (the mundane pursuits of life). All humanity finds themselves under one of two kings, God or Satan. Those who belong to the world belong to their king, and as such act like their king.

Of the saddest passages in the New Testament is Christ's confrontation of the Pharisees in John chapter 8. Throughout the chapter the Pharisees are accusing Christ of being an illegitimate child and deceiver. Christ culminates his discussion by telling them, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." Far from being God's children, the Pharisees were in actuality children of Satan. Why? Because their character was that of Satan's who was a murderer and liar from the beginning. In rejecting God's revealed Son, they proved where their real allegiance lied.

The Activities Of The Worldly Person

- 1. They walk in their own lusts - Ephesians 2:3.**
- 2. They hate God - James 4:4.**
- 3. They hate God's people - John 15:18-19.**
- 4. They walk in spiritual darkness - 2 Corinthians 4:3-4.**
- 5. They think God's people are looney-toons - 1 Peter 4:3-4.**

A Bondage to the Flesh - Ephesians 2:3a

A third characteristic of the spiritual dead person is that they are in bondage to their flesh. What is the flesh? It is the fallen humanity that we all carry around until the day we die or are taken to heaven at the rapture. As believers, our struggle is with the flesh (Romans 6-7) although the absolute power of the flesh over us is broken. However, the person who is spiritually dead is in total bondage to their flesh. They can do nothing but sin. True, all may not sin as much as they could, but no one can successfully deal with the flesh outside of Christ. When we as believers are tempted to fulfill the desires of the flesh, we have the power of God in us which enables us to say "no." The believer has no such power in themselves.

As an aside, of the three enemies that the believer faces, the world, the flesh, and the devil, the most powerful and stubborn is the flesh. This is because the flesh is at war against God and refuses to be subject to God (Romans 8:5-8). As believers we are constantly being torn between the desires of the flesh, which want to drag us into sin, and the new nature within us (Romans 6-7).

A Nature Under God's Wrath - Ephesians 2:3b

Fourthly, a person who is spiritual dead is under a divine sentence of wrath. That sentence may not be immediately carried out, and a person may live a long time seemingly immune from

divine judgment, but someday God's wrath will come. Note that Paul says the spiritually dead person is *by nature* under divine wrath. There is no escape. In Romans 9 Paul talks about vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath. All men apart from Christ are vessels fit for wrath, and were it not for the grace of God, all men would suffer divine wrath.

The Prescription - Regeneration - Ephesians 2:4-5

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

As noted in verses 1-3, man apart from Christ is in deep trouble. They are in bondage to their flesh, they are under a divine sentence of wrath, they walk just like their king Satan, and they live total lives of disobedience. What is the solution. It is not addition, but transformation!

Some people think of salvation in terms of addition, God adds a new nature to our old, he adds Christ's righteousness to us, he adds a new relationship with him. None of these are true. Salvation is transformation. One who is spiritually dead is made spiritually alive. One who had no desire to know and understand divine truth now has a hunger for God. One who had an old nature chained to Adam is given a completely new nature. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The divine work of salvation, based solely on God's grace, completely transforms a spiritually dead sinner into a spiritually alive saint. In fact, someone has said that the transformation that took place at salvation far outstrips the transformation that will occur when we die.

What Is New?

- 1. We have a new covenant with God, not according to the law, but grace - Jeremiah 31:31; Hebrews 8:8; 8:13; Matthew 26:28.**
- 2. We are made a new creation in Christ - 2 Corinthians 5:17.**
- 3. We are a new man in Christ - Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 4:24 ; Colossians 3:10.**
- 4. We have a new and living way to God - Hebrews 10:20.**
- 5. We have an inheritance in the new heaven and earth - 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1.**
- 6. We are citizens of the New Jerusalem - Revelation 21:2.**
- 7. We are given a new name - Revelation 2:**
- 8. We have a new song - Revelation 5:9.**

Why did God save us? It was because of his mercy. God's mercy is different than his grace in the sense that mercy concentrates on the pitiable and wretched condition of the sinner, whereas grace deals with the sentence of divine judgment.⁶ God saw our pitiable condition in sin, and was moved with compassion and regenerated us by faith.

⁶ Hendricksen, p. 117.

The Purpose - To Glorify God - Ephesians 2:6-7

And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

Why did God save us? It was for his ultimate glory. Many times we are given man-centered reasons for salvation, such as salvation will keep us out of hell, it will fulfill us, it will give us abundant life, and the list goes on. Ultimately, none of these are the real reason God saved us. God's purpose in redemption had nothing to do with something we get out of it, but with what he gets out of it.

When we were regenerated, we were raised spiritually into the heavenlies in Christ. Again we see the phrase, "in Christ." Every spiritual blessing and benefit we receive is not because of who we are, but because of who we are in. We have been so identified with Christ in our salvation that the benefits given Christ are given to us (Romans 6:1-15).

Why were we raised into the heavenlies? It was so that we could be displayed as objects of God's exceeding grace in the ages to come. The word for exceeding, *huperballo*, literally means "to throw over."⁷ It has the idea of a super-surpassing abundance.⁸ God's grace was not dribbled out a little at a time, and in just enough quantities to meet the need, but it superabounded. The grace that God gives is greater than all sin (Romans 5:20). Throughout all of eternity we will be displayed as trophies of God's superabundant grace to a glorified and redeemed humanity.

Huperballo And Paul

1. **God's has displayed exceeding greatness in his power towards us - Ephesians 1:19.**
2. **God has exhibited exceeding grace in us - 2 Corinthians 9:14.**
3. **God has given us exceeding riches of his grace - Ephesians 2:7.**
4. **The love of Christ passes all knowledge - Ephesians 3:19.**
5. **Our tribulations work a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory - 2 Corinthians 4:17.**

By Grace Ye Are Saved - Ephesians 2:8-10

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Probably no other three verses in the New Testament most succinctly define the saving work of God than these two verses. They have been used by God to bring many people to Christ. Although upon first reading the message seems simple, and it is, nevertheless there are some very important issues raised and answered in these three verses. Here we find the foundation

⁷ TDNT, VIII, pp. 520-22.

⁸ Hendricksen, p. 119.

of salvation - God's grace, the means of salvation - faith, the exclusion of salvation - boasting, and the reason for salvation - good works.

The Foundation - Grace - Ephesians 2:8a

The foundation of salvation in any age has always been the grace of God. In Genesis 6:8 we find that "Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." Noah was not saved by works, or by the deeds he had done, but because God's grace shone upon him. In Exodus 33-34 we find that it was God's grace that sustained Israel in the wilderness and his grace that caused him to be moved in their behalf. Ezra, in Ezra 9:8, commented that it was God's grace that spared a remnant to return from captivity. And finally, in Zechariah 12:10 we read that it is God's grace that spares a believing remnant in the last days. From Genesis to Revelation we are constantly reminded that all we have in Christ is as a result of God's grace.

Grace in the New Testament	
1.	Grace refers to salvation, i.e. the placement of an individual into God's favor - Acts 15:11 20:24; Romans 3:24 5:15, 17; Titus 2:11; 1 Peter 1:10.
2.	Grace refers to this "dispensation" - Romans 6:14-15; Ephesians 3:2.
3.	Grace refers to God's special favor in the bestowal of gifts - Ephesians 4:7 3:7; Galatians 2:9; Romans 1:5; Acts 14:3.
4.	Grace refers to God's favor in strengthening believers in trial as well as service - 2 Corinthians 12:9 1:12; 1 Corinthians 15:10 3:10; Acts 20:32; Romans 12:3,6; Philippians 1:7; Hebrews 4:16 12:28; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5.
5.	Grace refers in general to a position of favor before God as opposed to condemnation in the law. Romans 5:2 11:6; John 1:14; Luke 2:40; 2 Corinthians 9:8; 1 Peter 1:13; 1 Peter 5:12.
6.	Grace refers to God's favor bestowed on individuals in election- Galatians 1:5; Romans 11:5; 2 Timothy 1:9.
7.	Grace is used in the New Testament as a greeting - 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Peter 1:2; Philemon 1:3, 25; Titus 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:2; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:2; Ephesians 1:2; 1 Corinthians 1:3.

Grace is such a rich word that it is very difficult to understand all of its implications. Perhaps the following short list will help.

Grace is Unmerited

First of all, grace is unmerited. By this we mean that no one does anything, or has any quality in and of themselves that causes God to move in grace towards them. Why is God gracious to the sinner, because of reasons known only to him.

Grace is Unearned

Secondly, grace is unearned. That is, no one earns grace by doing works or by futile attempts to please God. Paul makes this very clear in Romans 11:5 where he writes concerning the remnant of Israel, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if [it

be] of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." Paul's point is simple. If God's choice for the sinner is based on merit, then grace is totally and completely absent. If on the other hand, it is grace, then works is totally and completely absent. It cannot be by a mixture of merit and grace.

Grace is Undeserved

Thirdly, grace is undeserved. No one deserves salvation, all deserve judgment. Many have problems with the concept of election as they think that "God is not fair." The fair thing for God to do is send all to hell. As a result, the redeemed sinner cannot complain about God's grace since it is only by grace they are saved.

Grace is Unending to the Redeemed

Fourthly, God's grace is unending for the redeemed sinner. There will never come a time when God's grace runs out for someone. If they have been saved by grace, then they will be kept by grace right on through eternity.

The Means - Faith - Ephesians 2:8b

How is God's grace activated in the life of the sinner? It is by faith. God does not save someone without their knowing it, or without an exercise of faith on their behalf. Abraham believed God, and God credited righteousness to his account. Abel believed God, and brought a better sacrifice. Esau believed God, and as a result received the promise. Throughout the Bible we see that men are universally called upon to believe God.

What does it mean to believe God? Is mere intellectual consent enough, or is there something more. In fact, there is! Faith can be understood by considering the acrostic F-A-I-T-H. First, faith is based in FACTS. There are some things that we need to know, some information given to us by God. In the salvific sense the facts we have are the facts of the Gospel; Christ died, was buried, and rose again. Secondly, faith consists of AFFIRMATION. It is one thing to hear a set of facts, something quite different to affirm their veracity. Thirdly, faith has the component of INTERNALIZATION. Not only are the facts true in general, but they are true for me. Fourthly, there is TRUST. I must place my full and final confidence in the facts as true for me and at the same time fully and completely believe God. Finally, there is HOPE. This is a confident expectation of receiving the full benefits of that which God promised.

I believe that true salvation occurs at step four. There are a lot of people who know the facts about Christ. Some of those even believe that those facts are true, and of that number many believe they are true for them. But until one places full and final trust in the facts of the gospel, true salvation will not occur. Trust is the key word. Without trust, faith remains inactive and dead.⁹

Before we move on there is one more important point to consider. That is, what is the source of this faith? Is it ourselves. Do we in and of ourselves decide to believe? The answer is no. Total depravity, or radical depravity, has so infected and affected men that they cannot respond in faith to the gospel message unless God does a work in their hearts to help them understand and believe, or to somehow reverse the effects of fallenness so that men can believe. Some call this prevenient grace.¹⁰ However, the better way to understand this, and the one most consistent with the gospel message, is that God does the supernatural work of regeneration, and *then* the

⁹ See the story of Blondin, the great tightrope walker in Hughes, pp. 77-79.

¹⁰ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), pp. 633-634.

person believes. In other words, regeneration precedes faith, not faith regeneration. Of course to the observer the process appears to be a continuous event; gospel presentation, faith, salvation. But to God, the process is gospel presentation, regeneration, faith. In fact, the text in this verse can be interpreted to understand that the faith to believe is of itself a gift of God.

Some have objected to this interpretation, saying that **faith** (*pistis*) is feminine, while **that** (*touto*) is neuter. That poses no problem, however, as long as it is understood that **that** does not refer precisely to the noun **faith** but to the act of believing. Further, this interpretation makes the best sense of the text, since if **that** refers to **by grace you have been saved through faith** (that is, to the whole statement), the adding of **and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God** would be redundant, because grace is defined as an unearned act of God. If salvation is of grace, it has to be an undeserved gift of God. Faith is presented as a gift from God in 2 Peter 1:1; Philippians 1:29; and Acts 3:16.¹¹

The Exclusion - Boasting - Ephesians 2:8c-9

Why has God saved man by grace? It is so that boasting would be excluded. If a man did anything for his salvation, then he would spend all of eternity telling everyone what he did. We would all be glorified, “Mohammed Ali’s.” Since God has designed salvation to be all of grace, then it is impossible for anyone to have done anything to deserve, earn, or merit salvation. This allows all of the glory to go to God and not men.

The word for gift, *doron*, refers to something that is given with no string attached.¹² God does not save us conditionally. His salvation is not given to those who keep the law, do good deeds, or anything else. Some say that salvation is by grace, but then is kept by works. This cannot be true. We are reminded again in Romans 11:6 that if salvation is by grace, it cannot be by works, and if by works, it is not by grace. This does not refer to only the receipt of salvation, but the maintenance of it as well. All is of God for his glory.

The Reason - Good Works - Ephesians 2:10

So why have we been saved? Is it to keep us out of hell, or make life good for us. No. We are saved for God’s glory. This glory is revealed not only in that we are his eternal trophies (Ephesians 2:7), but that we reflect his character in our lives as we do good works. The word for “workmanship” is *poiema*, from which we get poem. A good translation would be “masterpiece.” We are God’s masterpiece, a work of art, as we are transformed from depraved sinners into saints of God.¹³

There is a notion that circulates today that says a person can be a Christian and yet exhibit no change in life. This is a notion foreign to the New Testament. Although we may not be all we should be, and sometimes we are not what we want to be, yet there is an upward progression in our lives as we are transformed into the image of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” Salvation is not addition, it is transformation. God saved us so that we could be his masterpiece, an example of grace throughout eternity.

The Unity of Believers - Ephesians 2:11-22

Paul now turns to the subject of the Church. The main theme of Ephesians is *The Church, the Body of Christ*. This is a mystery (Ephesians 3:1-4) which was not known in the Old Testament but was manifested in the new. This mystery is that God is calling out of both Jew and Gentiles

¹¹ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 61.

¹² TDNT, II, pp. 166-73.

¹³ Hughes, pp. 81-82.

those who are his own and making them into a new body, his Church. This is what we find addressed by Paul in the rest of chapter 2 and all of chapter 3.

The Alienation of the Jew and Gentile- Ephesians 2:11-12

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

Paul begins his discussion of the unity of the Church with a portrayal of the separation of Gentile from Jew. This is important, as it was very clear in the Old Testament that the Jews were God's chosen people through whom he would reach the world. Under the Old Testament law salvation was closely linked with Jewishness, so much so that the schism between Jew and Gentile grew to mammoth proportions. The Jews harbored God's truth and rejoicing in their relationship with God while ignoring the Gentile as "cursed by God." The Gentiles saw the Jews as stuck-up and extremely biased against them, so much so that they hated the Jew. If God was to make one new body in Christ, this great wall of separation had to be breached.

The Condition of the Gentile in the Old Testament¹⁴

- 1. They were Christless - aliens to the Messiah.**
- 2. They were Stateless - aliens to the theocracy of Israel.**
- 3. They were Friendless - aliens to the covenants of promise.**
- 4. They were Godless - aliens to God.**
- 5. They were hopeless - aliens to any hope of salvation.**

Without Christ - Ephesians 2:12a

The first characteristic of the Gentile in the Old Testament was that they were without Christ. This stresses the utter hopelessness of their situation, as the only way to God is through Christ. Since they were not part of God's chosen people, then did not naturally have any connection to Christ. Only by becoming a Jew was it possible for a Gentile to become part of God's covenant people.

Aliens From the Commonwealth of Israel - Ephesians 2:12b

Secondly, Gentiles were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. This stresses national identity as it relates to the blessings of God. Throughout the Old Testament we see that Israel was God's chosen nation. The Gentile, however, had no part or parcel in the theocracy of Israel. Only by becoming a proselyte could a Gentile become part of God's chosen people.

Strangers From the Covenants of Promise - Ephesians 2:12c

Thirdly, Gentiles in the Old Testament were strangers from the covenants of promise.¹⁵ We are reminded of the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 12, in which God promised special blessings to

¹⁴ Hughes, p. 90.

Abraham and his descendants. We are reminded of the Palestinian Covenant of Deuteronomy 31 where God promises Israel a land if they keep his promises. Then there is the Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7 in which God promises Israel a King and a Kingdom that will endure forever. Note that all of these covenants were made to Israel. God never promised Babylon a King, but he did promise Israel a Messiah. Apart from becoming an Israelite, Gentiles were excluded from these great covenants of God.

Without Hope - Ephesians 2:12d

Fourthly, Gentiles were without hope in the Old Testament. Without the light of God's revelation they had no hope of eternal life, and no hope of a covenant relationship with God. One of the most devastating things in life is to be without hope. Many people find that the only thing that keeps them going through their trials and tribulation is the hope that someday the trial will be over, or better days lie ahead. Take away one's hope, and all joy is gone. Apart from becoming a citizen of the nation of Israel, a Gentile in the Old Testament could only look forward to a future of divine judgment.

Without God - Ephesians 2:12e

Lastly, the Gentiles in the Old Testament were without God. They had gods, but these were Gods of their own making. To be without God, is to be without hope, and without all else that makes life worth living. Without God, it is never possible to become part of his chosen people. There is probably no bleaker or more devastating state to be in than that of being without God.

The Reconciliation of Jew and Gentile - Ephesians 2:13-18

But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

The state of the Gentile apart from Christ was truly bleak. However, we find two great words in verse 13 that bring joy, "but now." Yes, once the Gentiles were without God and hopeless, but now! Once they were strangers from God's covenants, but now! Once they were stateless, without an identification to God's chosen people, but now! Once they were without Christ, but now! How is this total reversal possible? How is it that a Gentile can become reconciled to God and as a result share in the many blessing Israel possessed in the Old Testament? It is the death of Christ that paved the way back to God from the state of total despair and hopelessness.

The Means - The Blood of Christ - Ephesians 2:13

First of all, the means of reconciliation is the blood of Christ. The word for reconcile, *apokatallaso*, means to "bring together." It was a legal term used to refer to the reconciliation of enemies in a court. Because of Christ's shed blood, we have become reconciled to God.¹⁶

¹⁵ Hendricksen, p. 130.

¹⁶ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 79.

In the Old Testament, the Jew was reconciled to God in a sense by God's covenant relationship with them. This covenant relationship was based in God's grace and ultimately founded in the future sacrifice of Christ for sin. In the New Testament, this same sacrifice not only reconciled the Jew to God, but in reconciled the Gentile to God. In fact, the entire world has become reconciled to God in the sense that Christ's death has made it possible for all men to come to God apart from national identity, human effort, or works of the flesh.

Christ's blood is that which has made an atonement for sin. This is not a reference to the physical fluid that flowed in Christ's veins, rather it is a picture of his death, as vividly described as a bloody, messy sacrifice. In the Old Testament sacrificial system the shedding of blood was a crucial and essential part of the sacrifice. It was a picture of the awfulness of sin and the extreme price that needed to be paid. In the same way, Christ's death was a blood death, to vividly picture the high price of our sin.

The Method - Abolishment of the Wall of Partition - Ephesians 2:14-16

How was this reconciliation accomplished. The means was the blood of Christ, and the method was the destruction of the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile. In the Old Testament, the wall between Jew and Gentile was insurmountable as we have seen in verses 11-12. In Christ, these dividing issues have been forever removed.

This wall has been broken down by Christ himself, who is our peace. The idea here is that Christ is the one who has brought Jew and Gentile together in much the same way an umpire or ambassador would bring two fighting parties together. Christ himself has taken the Jew in one hand, and the Gentile in the other, and has brought them together in one new body where there is no longer Jew or Gentile, but one new man. In the Jewish temple there was a dividing wall between the Court of the Gentiles and the Court of the Women. Large bronze plates were inscribed with dire warnings for any Gentile who would try to enter, as the penalty for a Gentile profaning the temple was immediate death. Christ has not only brought Jew and Gentile together, but he has destroyed the wall. A modern picture of this is the Berlin Wall. For almost thirty years it served as a vivid picture of the separation of east from west, of one German to another. It was there that many lost their lives, and where political prisoners were exchanged. When the wall fell, the joy was overflowing as finally east German and west German were united as one.

Christ accomplished this reconciliation by first abolishing the law of commandments. This does not refer to the moral law of God, as that is eternal and unchanging. What is in view here is the ceremonial code, the sacrificial system.¹⁷ Because of Christ's death, the sacrificial system had become obsolete. There was no longer and need to sacrifice animals, and there was no longer any need for a temple where one would go to worship God. The very institution that kept the division between Jew and Gentile from being healed no longer was necessary, and in a few short years would not even exist.

Secondly, Christ accomplished this reconciliation by creating a single, new body. Racial, gender, and economic distinctions have been erased in the Church. The significance of national origin or the identification with a group of people was abolished, as all men now have access to God.

The Message - Peace - Ephesians 2:17-18

¹⁷ Hendricksen, p. 135.

What is the message of this reconciliation? It is peace. Those who were formerly enemies have now been made part of God's chosen people through the blood of Christ. Christ proclaimed the peace with God to those who were afar off, Gentiles, and those who were near, Jews.

One of the great verses in the New Testament is verse eighteen. Through Christ, we both, Jew and Gentile, have access to the Father by the Holy Spirit. The word for access, *prosagogon*, refers to the access a subject of a kingdom would have to the king.¹⁸ This access that we have with God is not because we deserve it, or because of something we have done, but is solely through the sacrificial work of Christ on our behalf. Apart from him we have no access. Furthermore, this access which is made possible by Christ is given to us by the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who is our *paraclete*, the other comforter. He is the one who sustains our link with God, a link made possible by Christ.

The Unity of Jew and Gentile - Ephesians 2:19-22

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

The reconciling work of Christ has made possible the complete restoration of the Gentile to God. The problems of verses eleven and twelve have been reversed. Those who had no privileges before God have now been made part of God's kingdom.

Fellow citizens - Ephesians 2:19a

The first great privilege is that of citizenship. Gentiles who were specifically excluded from the covenants of promise and the privileges of the nation of Israel are now full citizens. One of the most guarded and cherished treasures of the ancient world was that of citizenship. Paul's citizenship in Rome gave him tremendous privileges. Many who desired to become citizens could not, and others had to pay large sums of money.

What the Gentiles could not do in and of themselves God did for them through the sacrifice of Christ. They have been given full citizenship in God's kingdom of saints along with the Jew.

Members of God's One Family - Ephesians 2:19b

Secondly, the Gentile has become part of God's family. In the Old Testament God had a relationship with Israel that was much like a family. Now in Christ, both Jew and Gentile have been made members of God's family.

Ephesians 3:15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

Galatians 6:10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Part of God's Building - Ephesians 2:20-22

¹⁸ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 80.

Finally, both Jew and Gentile have been made part of God's building. This building, made up of all true believers in the age of grace, has as its foundations the preaching of the apostles and prophets. Thus, the foundation is not the apostles and prophets themselves, but the message they proclaimed.¹⁹ It is the message of the gospel that has been made the foundation of the Church.

Christ is the cornerstone from which all other stones are placed. Repeatedly throughout the Bible Christ is called the cornerstone (Isaiah 28:16; 8:14-16; Psalm 118:22; Matthew 21:42; Acts 4:11). As the cornerstone Christ determines the stability of the building, as well as the unity and symmetry of the building. If the cornerstone is not true, then the entire building will become lopsided and unstable.

Finally, we are the individual stones which make up the rest of the building. Peter calls us "*living stones*" in 1 Peter 2:5. Kent Hughes makes the statement, "The Gentiles were excluded from the Jerusalem Temple by a wall and by signs threatening death. But now, in Christ, they actually form the wall of the new temple."²⁰ Those who were not a people of God, are now a people of God!

¹⁹ Hughes, pp. 100-101.

²⁰ Hughes, p. 101.