

## Chapter 2

### Our Position in Christ (2:1–3:13)

- A. *Reconciled with God:*** For by Grace are You Saved (Eph 2:1–10)
1. ***And You:*** Dead in Trespasses and Sins (Eph 2:1–3)
    - a) ***We were dead*** “*who were dead*” (2:1)
    - b) ***We were enslaved*** “*you once walked according to the course of this world*” (2:2-3a)
      - Enslaved to the World (2:2a)
      - Enslaved to the Devil (2:2b)
      - Enslaved to the Flesh (2:3a)
    - c) ***We were condemned*** “*children of wrath*” (2:3b)
  2. ***But God:*** Made Us Alive, Raised Us Up, Made Us Sit (Eph 2:4–7)
  3. ***By Saving us by Grace*** (Eph 2:8–10)
- B. *Reconciled with God’s People:*** Therefore Remember (Eph 2:11–22)
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  2. ***What Christ Did*** – He Brought Jews and Gentiles Near (2:13–18)
    - a) Christ Made Us *One People* – *Broke down the Wall* (2:13-14)
    - b) Christ Created in Himself *One New Man* from Two Groups – *Abolished the Enmity of Ordinances* (2:15)
    - c) Christ Brought Both Groups Together *as One Body* – *Reconciled to God* (2:16-17)
    - d) Christ Gave Both Access to God *in One Spirit* – *Provided Access to the Father* (2:18)
  3. ***What You Have Now Become in Christ*** – Fellow Citizens (2:19–22)
    - a) No Longer Strangers (2:19)
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    - c) A Holy Temple (2:21)
    - d) A Dwelling Place of God (2:22)

Our age, like ever age before us, finds itself in trouble. Collectively and individually we are confronted with economic problems (inflation, unemployment, hunger), social conflict (disintegration of family and nation, hate and murder), moral degradation (dishonesty, sexual promiscuity), religious falsehood (paganism, liberalism, atheism, Islam), and political terror (Hitler, Stalin, Mao Zedong, Pol Pot, the Ayatollah’s, Antifa). Why is it that man is so incapable of creating a good and just world? *It is because man is askew—there is something seriously wrong with the human race.* What is it?

### What God Did for You—Salvation in Christ Alone (Eph 2:1–10)

#### ***And You:*** Dead in Trespasses and Sins (Eph 2:1–3)

***Ephesians 2:1 And you (He made alive), who were dead in trespasses and sins,***

### Our Pre-Christ Condition (2:1-2:3)

“Before we look in detail at this devastating description of the human condition apart from God, we need to be clear that it is a description of everybody. Paul is not giving us a portrait of some particularly decadent tribe or degraded segment of society, or even of the extremely corrupt paganism of his own day. No, *this is the biblical diagnosis of fallen man in fallen society everywhere.* ... Here then is the apostle’s estimate of everyman without God, of the universal human condition. It is a condensation into three verses of the first three chapters of Romans, in which he argues his case for the sin and

guilt first of pagans, then of Jews, and so of all mankind. Here he singles out three appalling truths about unredeemed human beings, which included ourselves until God had mercy on us.”<sup>1</sup>

### The Three Appalling Truths

We were dead **“who were dead” 2:1.**

We were enslaved **“you once walked according to the course of this world” 2:2.**

We were condemned **“children of wrath” 2:3.**

#### **We Were Dead: “Who Were Dead” 2:1.**

**And you....** Who is the **you** in this phrase? First, they are the Gentile community of Asia Minor; see verse 11. This is followed by **we all** in 1:3 thus adding Jews to the indictment. And to sum it up he concludes with **just as the others** 1:3, the whole human race. “Here then is the apostle’s estimate of everyman without God, of the universal human condition.”<sup>2</sup>

**He made alive....** This phrase is not in the Greek text—*here*. So, why add these words here? Because, in the Greek text the subject and the main verb does not occur until verse 2:5 where we read, “*even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ....*” As you can see, the main verb is so far from our introductory phrase, that *some* translators felt compelled to add it at this point in order to make it easier to understand the sentence. However, it distorts the meaning of the paragraph to do so; it adds a positive note that should not be there—yet.

**who were dead in trespasses and sins....** Although this phrase applies to all humanity, here Paul is focusing on the Gentiles reading his letter.

The death spoken of is spiritual, dead to God. What caused the death? It is **trespasses**<sup>3</sup> and **sins**.<sup>4</sup> And physical death is sure to follow.

“A ‘trespass’ (*paraptōma*) is a false step, involving either the crossing of a known boundary or a deviation from the right path. A ‘sin’ (*hamartia*), however, means rather a missing of the mark, a falling short of a standard. Together the two words cover the positive and negative, or active and passive, aspects of human wrongdoing, that is to say, our sins of commission and of omission.”<sup>5</sup> As Isaiah says:

*“But your iniquities have separated you from your God;  
And your sins have hidden His face from you,  
So that He will not hear.”* (Isaiah 59:2, NKJV)

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<sup>1</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 71.

<sup>2</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 71.

<sup>3</sup> trespasses παράπτωμα “to fall by the wayside. Fault, lapse, error, mistake, wrongdoing.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> sins ἁμαρτία “Sin, missing the true end and scope of our lives, which is God. An offense in relation to God with emphasis on guilt.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 71.

This is the condition of the human race: fallen in sin with a God who will not hear.

“...we should not hesitate to affirm that a life without God (however physically fit and mentally alert the person may be) is a living death, and that those who live it are dead even while they are living. To affirm this paradox is to become aware of the basic tragedy of fallen human existence. It is that people who were created by God and for God should now be living without God.”<sup>6</sup>

### **We Were Enslaved: “You Once Walked According to The Course (Age) of This World” 2:2.**

#### **Enslaved to the World (2:2a)**

***Ephesians 2:2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,***

***in which you once walked***<sup>7</sup> .... The word **walked**<sup>8</sup> has the idea of *followed* in it, as in “followed the world.” In other words, theirs was a *lifestyle* in keeping with the spirit of a world awash in sin. They followed the example of the sinful world around them.

***according to the course (age)***<sup>9</sup> ***of this world....*** The word **course** (age) refers to the times of the world or the way the world behaves. “Their behavior has been determined by the powerful influence of society's attitudes, habits, and preferences, which were alien to God and his standards. Hence the NIV's rendering: *when you followed the ways of this world*.”<sup>10</sup> Or, as Paul says in Galatians:

“*who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age....* (Galatians 1:4, NKJV)

“Those thus described are so involved with the activities and values of the present age that they have no time to be concerned with God, eternal values, or with the judgment to come.”<sup>11</sup>

#### **Enslaved to the Devil (2:2b)**

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<sup>6</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 72.

<sup>7</sup> *walked* περιπατέω “to live or behave in a customary manner, with possible focus upon continuity of action—‘to live, to behave, to go about doing.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 504.

<sup>8</sup> A school of philosophy was named after this Greek word. “The Peripatetic school was a [school of philosophy](#) in [Ancient Greece](#). Its teachings derived from its founder, [Aristotle](#) (384–322 BC), and *peripatetic* is an adjective ascribed to his followers.” Aristotle's students followed him while he walked and taught. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peripatetic\\_school](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peripatetic_school)

<sup>9</sup> *course* αἰών “Age, referring to an age or time in contrast to *kósmos*, referring to people or space. Denotes duration or continuance of time, but with great variety.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 159.

<sup>11</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 48.

**according to the prince (ruler) of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience....**

**according to....** You will notice that **according to** is used twice, in verse 2. These are the two evil influences found in our fallen world. The first is *according to* the allure of the world itself and the second is *according to* the power of the devil and his demons.

**the prince (ruler)<sup>12</sup> of the power of the air....** This phrase refers to the devil or Satan (Matt. 9:34; 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15).

*“I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.”* (John 14:30, NKJV)

“Those outside of Christ are not only subject to the pervasive bondage of the present evil age; they are also inspired and empowered by personal evil forces.”<sup>13</sup>

**air....** Does this mean that when astronauts leave that band of oxygen around our planet commonly called *air*<sup>14</sup> that they are no longer subject to the power of this evil prince? It does not. “According to the ancient world-view, the air formed the intermediate sphere between earth and heaven. It was the dwelling place of evil spirits (as the magical papyri and the literature of Judaism attest), not an atmosphere....”<sup>15</sup> It is in the context of the world-view of *that age* that we find our meaning.

The prince of the power of the air “then, is another way of indicating the heavenly realm....”<sup>16</sup> If anything, this phrase would mean that Satan is at work throughout the universe. So, if we colonize Mars, we will sin there just as easily as we sin on this earth.

*“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”* (Ephesians 6:12, NKJV)

**the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience....** Or, those who refuse to obey.

*“Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,”* (Colossians 3:6, NKJV)

## **Enslaved to the Flesh (2:3a)**

***Ephesians 2:3a among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind,***

<sup>12</sup> *prince (ruler)* ἄρχων “to rule. A ruler, chief, prince, magistrate....” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>13</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 159.

<sup>14</sup> Nitrogen 78.1%, Oxygen 20.9%, Argon .94%, Carbon Dioxide .03%; <https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-chemical-formula-of-air>

<sup>15</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 160.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 160.

**we all once conducted ourselves....** Verse 2:2 said, “*you once walked.*” Now we read “*we ... once conducted ourselves.*” The “you” and the “we” address Gentiles and Jews. So, the Jews and Gentiles share this sinful spiritual history. Peter tells us how they conducted themselves.

*“For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.”* (1 Peter 4:3, NKJV)

It appears that not much has changed in the last 2,000 years.

***in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.***

Paul now adds “**flesh**” to the list of influences that pull at our lives for evil. Three compelling influences directed their lives: *the world* (v.2), *the devil* (v.2), and *the flesh* (v. 3).<sup>17</sup> Now, “‘flesh’ means not the living fabric which covers our bony skeleton but *our fallen, self-centered human nature.*”<sup>18</sup>

***and of the mind....*** As we can see from this phrase when Paul uses “flesh” he is not attacking the *material* part of our life; he is attacking the *fallen* part of our life that so deeply resides in the material body. And here, with the use of the word **mind**, we can see that *the immaterial part of man is also fallen.* “...they not only satisfy the wants of the flesh but also *rationalize* this self-centeredness.”<sup>19</sup> In other words, our thinking is corrupt—and by nature; we are born that way. As such, Paul says:

*“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”* (Romans 12:2, NKJV)

“So then, before Jesus Christ set us free, we were subject to oppressive influences from both within and without. Outside was ‘the world’ (the prevailing secular culture); inside was ‘the flesh’ (our fallen nature twisted with self-centeredness); and beyond both, actively working through both, was that evil spirit, the devil, ‘the ruler of the kingdom of darkness’, who held us in captivity.”<sup>20</sup>

### ***We Were Condemned: “Children of Wrath” 2:3b.***

***Ephesians 2:3b and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.*** The **natural** result of this fallen condition is wrath—the judgment of God on sinners.

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<sup>17</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 158.

<sup>18</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 74.

<sup>19</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.* (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 47.

<sup>20</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 75.

**by nature**<sup>21</sup>.... That is, they were born this way. When people say, in justification of their sin “I was born this way” they are right. Fallen in Adam, we are born “that way,” *naturally*. But it’s still sin, and we are still “**children of wrath**” because of it.

**wrath**.... “God’s wrath is not like man’s. It is not bad temper, so that he may fly off the handle at any moment. It is neither spite, nor malice, nor animosity, nor revenge. It is never arbitrary, since it is the divine reaction to only one situation, namely evil. Therefore, it is entirely predictable, and it is never subject to mood, whim, or caprice.”<sup>22</sup>

“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things *the wrath of God* comes upon the sons of disobedience.” (Ephesians 5:6, NKJV)

**just as the others**.... All the human race shares this condemnation.

By **nature**, we are children of wrath, by **grace**, we are children of God.

### **But God: Made Us Alive, Raised Us Up, Made Us Sit (Eph 2:4–7)**

**Ephesians 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,**

**But**.... “The conjunction “but” denotes a strong contrast to what was said before. The contrast is between mankind’s sinfulness and God’s gracious acts of love.”<sup>23</sup>

**But God**.... You “*were dead in trespasses and sins,*” (2:1; 2:5) **but God**. You “*once walked according to the course of this world,*” (2:2) **but God**. You “*conducted yourselves in the lust of your flesh*” (2:3), **but God**. You were “*children of wrath,*” (2:2) **but God**.

“What prompted God to act so freely and mercifully on our behalf? Using four groups of words, the apostle shows that the origins of God’s saving initiative are to be found in his mercy (v.4), his great love (v.4), his rich grace (vv. 5, 7, and 8), and his kindness to us in Christ Jesus (v.7).”<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *nature* φύσις

- ① condition or circumstance as determined by birth, *natural endowment/condition, nature*,
- ② the natural character of an entity, *natural characteristic/disposition*
- ③ the regular or established order of things, *nature*
- ④ an entity as a product of nature, *natural being, creature*

Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000. 1069–1070.

<sup>22</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 75–76.

<sup>23</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 49.

<sup>24</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 164.

**who is rich in mercy**<sup>25</sup>.... “The Greek noun translated “mercy” means “pity, compassion, feeling of sympathy.”<sup>26</sup> To show mercy is to take action to help one in distress. Mercy without action to help is not mercy at all. God showed us mercy. Why?

**because of His great love with which He loved us....** **Because of** draws attention to the reason for God’s mercy.

**His great love....** It is because of his **great love**. Love drives mercy. “the major emphasis of this whole paragraph is that what prompted God to act on our behalf was not something in us (some supposed merit) but something in himself (his own unmerited favor).”<sup>27</sup> The nature of love is that it acts.

*“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8, NKJV)*

You will note that love is demonstrated.<sup>28</sup> One might ask, of what value is a love that is not demonstrated?

*“In this the love of God was manifested<sup>29</sup> toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation<sup>30</sup> for our sins.” (1 John 4:9–10, NKJV)*

We know that “*God is love*” (1 John 4:8, NKJV) and that he loves us. What we don’t know is *why* he would love us. I’m not sure we ever will.

**Ephesians 2:5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),**

**even when we were dead....** It’s not just Gentiles that are dead; as indicated by the “we,” it is Jews as well.

**made us alive....** Only now is the main verb mentioned, although, it was used earlier in 2:1 to improve the sense of the passage.

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<sup>25</sup> *mercy* ἐλεῶω “to show kindness or concern for someone in serious need—‘to show mercy, to be merciful toward, to have mercy on, mercy.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 750.

<sup>26</sup> Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians* (UBS Handbook Series; New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 44.

<sup>27</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 81–82.

<sup>28</sup> demonstrated συνίστημι “to cause something to be known by action—‘to make known by action, to demonstrate, to show.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 340.

<sup>29</sup> *manifested* φανερώω “...to cause something to be fully known revealing clearly and in some detail—‘to make known, to make plain, to reveal, to bring to the light, to disclose, revelation.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 337–338.

<sup>30</sup> “The word *propitiation* carries the basic idea of appeasement or satisfaction, specifically toward God. Propitiation is a two-part act that involves appeasing the wrath of an offended person and being reconciled to him.” <https://www.gotquestions.org/propitiation.html>

**made us alive together with Christ....** “Thus, when Christ was made alive physically, we were made alive spiritually.”<sup>31</sup> “Paul’s readers have come to life *with Christ*, who was dead and rose again; their new life, then, is a sharing in the new life which he received when he rose from the dead.”<sup>32</sup>

**by grace<sup>33</sup> you have been saved<sup>64</sup> ....** **Grace** or, *unmerited, undeserved favor*. “Grace is a key theme in Ephesians. According to the introductory eulogy (Eph. 1:3–14), God lavished his grace on us in the Beloved (vv. 6–8), particularly by delivering us from judgment on our trespasses. The riches of divine grace are the ultimate cause of our redemption (v.7) and provide the reason for that deliverance.”<sup>35</sup>

**saved....** Rescued or delivered and not only our souls but ultimately, our bodies as well. “The verb “to save” is the one most used in the Bible to describe the central event of humanity’s experience with God, namely, God’s intervention in human history to rescue people from a situation with which they themselves are not able to deal.”<sup>36</sup>

**Ephesians 2:6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,**

**made us alive together** (2:5) .... We are alive because He is alive.

**raised us up together....** We are raised up because He was raised up.

**made us sit together....** “what God did for Christ he did at the same time for believers.”<sup>37</sup> Sitting together implies *ruling* with Jesus.

These acts of God in Christ are not something we can see or necessarily feel. It is a message from God that we believe. We know this by revelation and by faith.

These declarations have become central to the Christian faith, and we affirm them when we recite the Apostles Creed.

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,

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<sup>31</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 49.

<sup>32</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 167.

<sup>33</sup> *grace* “The dative χρίμι is a dative of cause and is best translated ‘by grace’ rather than ‘because of grace’....” Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999).

<sup>34</sup> *saved σώζω* “To save, deliver, make whole, preserve safe from danger, loss, destruction.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>35</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 168.

<sup>36</sup> Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians* (UBS Handbook Series; New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 45.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 170.



was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Notice also the “us” in 2:5-6. This paragraph is about what God did to and for *us*. Because we are in union with Christ, where he went, we went; where he will go, we will go.

*“Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism<sup>38</sup> into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been **united together**<sup>39</sup> in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be [**united together**] in the likeness of His resurrection,”* (Romans 6:4–5, NKJV)

*“buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”* (Colossians 2:12, NKJV)

What is the role of baptism in these passages? Is it the point of these verses to teach us the proper mode of baptism—dipping? If so, the verses are without any meaning common to their context. No, the purpose of the use of the word baptism here is to identify the *change of condition* or *result* wrought by the work of Christ in our lives. What was that? He went from life to death, he was buried, he arose from the dead, and he ascended to the Father. Our baptism by the Holy Spirit unites us to Christ and to the results of his redemption. Because of our union with him, what happened to him, happened to us. So, if he died, so did we, if he was buried, so were we, if he rose from the dead, so did we, if he ascended to the Father, so did we.

Baptism symbolizes a change. Since we were baptized (really by the Holy Spirit and symbolically by water), some change is implied. What change? Whatever change happened to Jesus, happened to us.

“Furthermore, it is impossible for immersion to illustrate the actual death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The baptismal formula used by immersionists is “buried in the likeness of His death, raised in the likeness of His resurrection.” But was Christ buried

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<sup>38</sup> “We can, therefore, definitively conclude that βαπτίζω: 1) ... is in no way controlled or dependent upon by any particular form, act or mode. 2) ... is often (but not always) dependent upon and controlled by the idea of envelopment within some element. 3) ... is fundamentally connected with a continuance within this element for an indefinite period of time, and 4) this results in a change of condition, state or result of the baptized object.” Ralph E. Bass, Jr., *Baptidzo – A 500 Year Study in the Greek Word Baptism*, (Greenville, SC: Living Hope Press, 2009), 130.

<sup>39</sup> *united together* σύμφοτος “...to grow together. Planted together, united with, innate (Rom. 6:5, oneness with Christ in the likeness of His death, to be explained in accordance with 6:4, 8). It denotes not merely homogeneousness, but a similarity of experience.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

in a hole in the ground and covered with dirt? Did He come up from a hole in the ground through the dirt? No, He did not. He was buried sideways in a vault, probably by being laid on a stone slab. His resurrection consisted of Him walking upright through the stone door placed there to seal the tomb. Does the immersionist's mode of baptism portray the **real** burial and resurrection of Christ in any way? No, it does not!"<sup>40</sup>

***Ephesians 2:7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.***

What Jesus did in verse 2:6, he will show forever.

**that....** With the word **that** we are given the purpose of God's saving work.

**in the ages to come....** "one age supervening upon another like successive waves of the sea, as far into the future as thought can reach."<sup>41</sup> He will do this forever.

**He might show**<sup>42</sup>.... Or, *demonstrate*. "God acted to save sinners so that they might serve to display the surpassing wealth of his grace."<sup>43</sup> What is being shown here?

**the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.** That is what is being shown!

In 1:19 he demonstrated "*the exceeding greatness of His power*. Interestingly, that was the power:

"which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places," (Ephesians 1:20, NKJV)

Now in 2:7 it is "*the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness*" that is demonstrated. And that kindness is explained with the phrases **made us alive together** (2:5), **raised us up together** (2:6), **made us sit together** (2:6). These correspond to the points in Ephesians 1:20.

**kindness**<sup>44</sup>.... Love (2:4) and grace (2:7) are shown by means of kindness. No kindness, no love, no grace. Kindness does things that are "useful, profitable."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ralph E. Bass, *What about Baptism? : A Discussion on the Mode, Candidate, and Purpose of Christian Baptism* (Naples, FL: Nicene Press, 2002), 48–49.

<sup>41</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 173.

<sup>42</sup> *show* ἐνδείκνυμι

① to direct attention to or cause something to become known, *show, demonstrate*,  
② to display conduct that affects another, *show.*" William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 331.

<sup>43</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 172.

<sup>44</sup> *kindness* χρηστότης, ητος, ῆ

① uprightness in one's relations with others, *uprightness—*

② the quality of being helpful or beneficial, *goodness, kindness, generosity....*" William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1090.

<sup>45</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

*“But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,” (Titus 3:4–5, NKJV)*

So, who is He *showing* this to ***in the ages to come***? We have several possibilities: 1) To us, that we may never forget his love. 2) To the angelic host, that they may be continually awed at God’s grace. 3) to the demons in hell that they may never forget their treason. 4) to the souls in hell that they may never find peace for their rebellion against God.

Paul actually said something similar in the Book of Romans.

*“What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known [show] the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?” (Romans 9:22–24, NKJV)*

Why is He showing this?<sup>46</sup> “Verses 8–10 elaborate on God’s grace and explain *why* in the coming ages God will show his grace and kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. It is because of our *salvation*.”<sup>47</sup> “A patient after a major operation is a living testimony to his surgeon’s skill and a condemned man after a reprieve to his sovereign’s mercy. We are both—exhibits of God’s skill and trophies of his grace.”<sup>48</sup> **And this is the forever story of God.**

### **For by Grace: Reconciled with God (Eph 2:8–10)**

In verse 2:5 Paul started this thought, (*by grace you have been saved*), but was so deeply involved in explaining the work of Christ in verses 2:5-7 that he did not there give it his full attention. He will do that now.

***Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,***

***For....*** The word ***For*** looks back to the preceding section and begins to explain why that previous material is true.

What was most recently said was that “*in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” [2:7]. ***For*** or ***the reason this is so*** is because ***you have been saved by grace*** and ***through faith***. If that was not the case—*salvation by grace and through faith*, then there would be **no showing** of “*the exceeding riches of his grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus*” [2:7]. Because then our salvation would be a product of our works and not of His grace. In which case, God could not point to our salvation as a picture of His grace and kindness—because the salvation would be by our own efforts. However, because salvation is ***by grace*** and ***through faith*** verse 2:7 is possible and our salvation gives God something **to show**, which is the *exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness**

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<sup>46</sup> Jay Adams, *The Grand Demonstration: A Biblical Study of the So-Called Problem of Evil*.

<sup>47</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 82.

<sup>48</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 82.

toward us in Christ Jesus” [2:7]. That can only be shown if salvation is in fact by *grace* and *through faith*, and not by our own efforts.

**by grace you have been saved through faith....** “That it is “**by grace**” means that it has *not originated from a human source* but comes from God as a gift.”<sup>49</sup> “... “**by faith**” means *the exclusion of human effort* and, therefore, of any pride or boasting in the presence of God.”<sup>50</sup>

**and that....** What are the possible antecedents to the word **that**? It appears to be either, 1) **faith**, the closest antecedent, 2) **grace**, the next in closeness to **that**, or 3) both **grace** and **faith**. Number 3 appears to be the best option. **That** (all of salvation) is:

**not of yourselves....** The **grace** and the **faith** of salvation do not have their origin in a person, here called **yourself**, but, in God.

**it is the gift of God....** “**It**” refers back to the whole phrase, “**For by grace you have been saved through faith.**” “We must never think of salvation as a kind of transaction between God and us in which he contributes **grace** and we contribute **faith.**”<sup>51</sup> Neither **grace** or **faith** is from ourselves; *both are gifts of God.* That statement is the essence of Reformed Theology.

**Ephesians 2:9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.**

**works....** “Not only is salvation not a “reward for the good things we have done,” but it also is not a payment or wage that has been earned “for the good things we have done.” In other words, we cannot earn salvation by our works; since salvation is not obtained by *our* efforts, we cannot boast.

*“Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,” (Romans 4:4–5, NKJV)*

“It could not be clearer that salvation comes to sinful humanity freely, generously, and undeservedly.”<sup>52</sup>

### **Monergism vs. Synergism**

Let’s take a moment and talk about monergism vs. synergism as they address our current passage. “This topic has been hotly debated within the church for centuries. It is not exaggerating to say that this debate concerns the very heart of the gospel itself. First, let us define the two terms. When we talk about monergism vs. synergism, theologically speaking, we’re talking about *who brings about our salvation.*”

<sup>49</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 118.

<sup>50</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 118.

<sup>51</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 83.

<sup>52</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 120.

Monergism, which comes from a compound Greek word that means “to work alone,” is the view that *God alone effects our salvation*. This view is held primarily by Calvinistic and Reformed traditions and is closely tied to what is known as the “doctrines of grace.” Synergism, which also comes from a compound Greek word meaning “to work together,” is the view that *God works together with us* in effecting salvation. While monergism is closely associated with John Calvin, synergism is associated with Jacob Arminius, and his views have greatly shaped the modern evangelical landscape. Calvin and Arminius aren’t the creators of these views, but are the best-known proponents of Calvinism and Arminianism.”<sup>53</sup>

That man does not cooperate in his own salvation is based on the simple fact that, being dead to spiritual things, he is incapable of doing so.

*And you were dead in your trespasses and sins.... But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.... For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.* Ephesians 2:1, 4-6, 8-9

A good example of how the Spirit works in salvation is through the analogy of the story of Christ raising Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus did not, and indeed could not, cooperate with Christ in his resurrection. He could not exercise, through cooperation, an energy that was not present in his body. After Christ issued his order for Lazarus to “*come forth*” thereby giving him life, then Lazarus was capable of cooperating with the Lord. As a result, struggling with the grave wrapping, he made every effort possible to obey Christ and come out of the tomb. So it is with man in salvation. *After* the Holy Spirit has imparted life, man is capable of obeying Christ and repenting of his sin and believing on Him as Savior. But as a corpse he is incapable of any such response. Arminians reverse the biblical order and place repentance and faith **before regeneration**. But that is as impossible as asking Lazarus to struggle forth with his grave wrappings first, in the hope of being given life as a reward for his effort afterward. Instead, **first the Holy Spirit regenerates**, that is, gives life and after this life is imparted, the sinner responds in gratitude with repentance and faith.

*So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.* Romans 9:16 **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

*...who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* John 1:13

Clearly, the work of God in salvation is not dependent on “*the man who wills*” [Romans 9:16] nor is the new birth dependent on “*the will of the flesh*” [John 1:13]. It is God’s sovereign work. Man does not cooperate in his salvation. His salvation is monergistic not synergistic. It is wholly the work of God.”<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/monergism-vs-synergism.html>

<sup>54</sup> Ralph E. Bass, Jr. *Tell Me About Presbyterians – Just What Do They Believe?* (Greenville, SC: Living Hope Press, 2006), 44-45.

**Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.**

**For....** “A further reason is now given why salvation can be said to be a divine gift, not of human origin or by human works, and therefore leaving no room for boasting.”<sup>55</sup>

**we are His workmanship**<sup>56</sup>.... We are not our own workmanship or the product of our own abilities—we are His workmanship. “In Paul’s letters, believers are regarded as God’s work....”<sup>57</sup> We are something that was *made by God* and not made by ourselves. We see this same Greek word for **workmanship** in Romans.

“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,” (Romans 1:20, NKJV)

As you can see, the Greek word for **workmanship** in Ephesians could be translated as “we are the things that he has made.”

**created**<sup>58</sup> **in Christ Jesus for good works....** The point is: “Just as humans contributed nothing to their own creation, so also they contributed nothing to their *new creation*; both are God’s work.”<sup>59</sup> Contrary to modern ‘science,’ *things* cannot self-create. In our material state, we were created by God, so also in our spiritual state, we are created by God. We did not create our material self, nor did we create our spiritual self—or cooperate in either, both were made by God. Here in Ephesians, the point is that God alone is the creator of salvation and we no more helped him in the second creation than we did in the first creation. Both were solely the act of God.

**in Christ Jesus....** Jesus was the instrument of both creations.

**for good works**<sup>60</sup>.... The Greek word **works** refers to the expending of energy. So, we are “created in Christ Jesus” to expend energy on good projects.

**which [good works] God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them....**

The word **which** refers to the “good works” Paul just spoke of. “Good works are indispensable to salvation—not as its ground or means, however, but as its

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<sup>55</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 113.

<sup>56</sup> *workmanship* ποίημα “Something made, a work, workpiece, workmanship....” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>57</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 114.

<sup>58</sup> *created* κτίζω “to make or create something which has not existed before—‘to create, creation’ (in the NT, used exclusively of God’s activity in creation).” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 513.

<sup>59</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 114.

<sup>60</sup> *works* ἔργον “Work, performance, the result or object of employment, making or working.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

consequence and evidence.<sup>61</sup> "...these are the actions which Christians are to perform. These works are the consequence of salvation, not the basis for it."<sup>62</sup>

**prepared beforehand**<sup>63</sup>.... The only other place this word is found is in the New Testament is Romans 9:23—a context similar to Ephesians.

*"and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory," (Romans 9:23, NKJV)*

So, both our salvation and our sanctification have been "**prepared beforehand.**"

So, although salvation is not "**by works**" it is "**for works.**"

**that we should walk in them....** "This new way of walking completes the contrast with the walk (2:2) in trespasses and sins mentioned at the beginning of the pericope."<sup>64</sup>

*"in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience," (Ephesians 2:2, NKJV)*

"Thus the paragraph ends as it began with our human 'walk,' a Hebrew idiom for our manner of life. Formerly we walked in *trespasses and sins* in which the devil had trapped us; now we walk in good *works* which God has eternally planned for us to do."<sup>65</sup>

Notice, the final purpose was not to get saved and then sit. "God's saving power reaches its intended goal when there is a *changed lifestyle*. Only in the actual practice of good works is the contrast between then and now, between death and life, completed."<sup>66</sup>

"This section, (2:8-10) presenting the essence of the gospel, provides the best summary concerning salvation in all of Paul's writings."<sup>67</sup>

## Reconciled with God's People (Eph 2:11–22)

### First, What You Were Without Christ – Gentiles in the Flesh (Verses 11–12)

<sup>61</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 84–85.

<sup>62</sup> Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians* (UBS Handbook Series; New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 48.

<sup>63</sup> *prepared beforehand* προετοιμάζω "... from *pró* (4253), before, and *hetoimázō* (2090), to make ready. To prepare beforehand. In the NT equivalent to predestinate, to appoint before.... The only two times this verb is used in the NT, it is used of God's foreordaining for good, referring to glory and to good works." Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>64</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 118.

<sup>65</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 85.

<sup>66</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 116.

<sup>67</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 52.

In 2:11-12 Paul takes the Gentile reader back to 2:1-3, their condition without Christ, and in the next two verses magnifies this plight. He reiterates that condition of sin and expands its consequence.

***Ephesians 2:11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—***

***Therefore remember....*** Remember what? Remember you Gentiles that this salvation of 2:8-10 was never yours because you were never God's people. This is somewhat similar to what God had earlier said to the Jews.

*“And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm....”*  
(Deuteronomy 5:15, NKJV)

But why are you to remember this? I think the reason is somewhat similar to Deuteronomy; remembering this intensifies one's faith and gratitude. Like Israel, the Gentiles in Ephesus have come to faith in God. Now, remember what you were before that happened—“...*having no hope and without God in the world.*” (Ephesians 2:12, NKJV). Paul will now help their memory by giving the details of that condition.

***you once....*** Or, *you used to be.*

***Gentiles***<sup>68</sup>.... Gentiles were “A multitude, people, race, belonging and living together.”<sup>69</sup> Sometimes the word is translated “*the nations*”—nations other than the Jewish nation. It was the Jews that called the Greeks and Romans Gentiles; they did not use this term of themselves.

***Uncircumcision....*** It was the Gentiles that were uncircumcised.

***by what is called the Circumcision....*** It is the Jews that were circumcised.

***made in the flesh by hands....*** This phrase addresses the human side or act of circumcision or the use of the hands by the person that cuts the flesh of the foreskin. This circumcision is a *sign* of the real thing, but *not* the real thing. What is the real thing? It is the circumcision of the heart *made without hands.*

We see the same idea in the Old Testament.

*“And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.”* (Deuteronomy 30:6, NKJV)

*“but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.”* (Romans 2:29, NKJV)

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<sup>68</sup> *Gentiles* ἔθνος “those who do not belong to the Jewish or Christian faith—‘heathen, pagans.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 126.

<sup>69</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).



And also in the New Testament.

*“In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,”*  
(Colossians 2:11, NKJV)

Colossians 2:12 goes on to explain what Paul meant by the phrase “*the circumcision of Christ*.”

*“buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”* (Colossians 2:12, NKJV)

Christian baptism is the New Testament counterpart to Old Testament circumcision.

Although this ***circumcision made in the flesh by hands*** equates in our day to a baptism by water, water baptism is but a sign of the baptism that saves, Holy Spirit baptism.

*“I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’”* (John 1:33, NKJV)

***Ephesians 2:12 that at that time you 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.***

Verse 2:12 brings us back to what they were to *remember* (2:11) which was that they were in a desperate strait for they were ***without Christ***, they were ***aliens***, and ***strangers***, they had ***no hope*** and were ***without God***.

The Jews possessed all these benefits; the Gentiles did not. And even more, “Not only were the Jews entrusted with the very words of God (Rom. 3:2) but also theirs is the adoption as sons, ... the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ (Rom. 9:4, 5). From all of these privileges Paul’s Gentile readers had been excluded.”<sup>70</sup>

***you were without Christ....*** “They had been groping in the darkness, filth, and despair of sin. The light, holiness, and hopefulness of those who come to know Christ had not as yet become their portion. Hence, in that former state, they had been unspeakably wretched.”<sup>71</sup>

***aliens***<sup>72</sup>.... The root of this Greek word means “other.” So, an alien was one of the others, not one of us. In relation to Israel, the people of God, the Gentiles were “the other ones, not of us.” “They were not citizens of the nation with whom God was in

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<sup>70</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 187.

<sup>71</sup> William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Ephesians* (vol. 7; New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 129.

<sup>72</sup> *aliens* ἀπαλλοτριόμαι “to be a stranger or foreigner—‘to be a stranger, to be a foreigner.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 132.

covenant relation. Thus, to be an alien was to be *alienated* from God. Though God's relationship with Israel included a promise to bless the nations (Gen. 12:3), Gentiles had no awareness of that hope."<sup>73</sup> And Jews had little interest in telling them about it.

**from the commonwealth<sup>74</sup> of Israel....** *Commonwealth* or *community*, this word comes from the Greek word "city" which was a political unit of likeminded people. Originally, cities were made up of extended family units from a common clan or tribe. The Gentiles were not from God's "community." It was Jews only that made up this community.

**strangers<sup>75</sup>....** Or foreigners. We get our English word xenophobic, fear of foreigners, from this word. Strangers are from another family, clan or tribe. They are not part of Israel.

**from the covenants of promise....** This was the most critical point of all. "The Gentiles exclusion from the community of God's people meant that they had no share in the covenants which promised the messianic salvation...."<sup>76</sup> The biblical covenants were God's peace treaty with man. Outside a covenant relationship with God, man is at enmity with God.

**having no hope and without God in the world.** They were Christless, stateless, foreigners to God's peace treaty with sinners, the covenants. And in this condition, they were both hopeless and Godless. All this is what they were (and we are) to remember.

But then comes 2:13.

### **Second, What Jesus Christ Did – Brought You Near (Verses 13–18)**

***Ephesians 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.***

Earlier, the negatives of 2:1-3 were changed with the phrase "**but God**" in verse 2:4. Now, the negatives of 2:11-12 are changed with the phrase "**but now**" in 2:13.

***But now in Christ Jesus....*** The solution to the Gentiles problem was found in the words "**in Christ Jesus.**" "...God's integrating principle for uniting human beings is neither intellectual (philosophy) as in Roman Catholicism, nor political (conquest) as in Islam or Marxism, but spiritual (redemption by Christ, involving union between Jews and Gentiles, man and God and ultimately heaven and earth)."<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> R. C. Sproul, ed., *The Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version* (Orlando, FL; Lake Mary, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2005), 1707.

<sup>74</sup> *commonwealth* πολιτεία, "a group of people constituting a socio-political unit—'state, people.'" Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 131.

<sup>75</sup> *strangers* ξένος "Strange, foreign, not of one's family...." Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>76</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 189.

<sup>77</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 98.

***you who once were far off have been brought near....*** “This, then, in its essence is the difference which Christ has made: *you who once were far off have been brought near.*”<sup>78</sup> Isaiah also spoke of this.

*“I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace to him who is far off and to him who is near,” Says the Lord, “And I will heal him.”*” (Isaiah 57:19, NKJV)

“God promised that one day he would speak ‘Peace, peace, to the far and to the near,’ a promise which was fulfilled in Jesus Christ....”<sup>79</sup> Paul will again speak of it in 2:17.

***in Christ Jesus .... by the blood of Christ....*** None can come near to God by any other means than “***in Christ***” and “***by the blood of Christ.***”

*“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* (Acts 4:12, NKJV)

***Ephesians 2:14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,***

Verse 2:13 tells how this peace was attained—***by the blood of Christ***, verses 2:14-15 provides the details on the benefits of 2:13.

***For He Himself is our peace....*** ***Peace*** here refers to the end of hostility between Jew and Gentile.

***our....*** Notice that the ***you*** of verse 13 is now replaced with the ***our*** of verse 14. There is one salvation for Jew and Gentile alike. Salvation is now ***our***.

In making ***peace*** between Jews and Gentiles, Jesus did three things: 1) he ***made both one*** (2:14), 2) he has ***broken down the middle wall of separation*** (2:14), and he ***abolished in His flesh the enmity*** (2:15).

***He Himself....*** The vocabulary and grammar of the text are saying, “*For He and He alone is our peace.*”

***peace....*** Isaiah spoke of peace.

*“For unto us a Child is born,  
Unto us a Son is given;  
And the government will be upon His shoulder.  
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting  
Father, Prince of Peace.”* (Isaiah 9:6, NKJV)

But, in this verse, Paul is speaking of peace between Jew and Gentile, not peace with God.

As mentioned above, what is meant by “***For he Himself is our peace***” is explained in three clauses “***has made both one,***” “***has broken down***” and “***having abolished.***”

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<sup>78</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 97.

<sup>79</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 97.

Each clause is expanded and explained by the one that follows. “Made both one” comes to pass because he has “broken down the middle wall of separation.” In turn, that occurred because he “abolished in His flesh the enmity.” The unfolding of all three is necessary for understanding the point.

**who has made both one....** “The first relative clause, who **made both one**, refers to the resulting unity of Jewish and Gentile believers. ... They have been brought into a mutual relationship and a unity which surpasses what they once were (cf. vv. 15, 16, 18).”<sup>80</sup> So, Gentiles are no longer aliens and strangers, but they are not Jews either. “Later Christians were to speak of themselves as a third race or new race neither Jewish nor Gentile.”<sup>81</sup>

**and has broken down the middle wall of separation**<sup>82</sup>.... This is the next element in the chain of reasoning. We both became one because he broke down the *middle wall of separation*. It was this wall that had created the enmity between Jews and Gentiles.

But what is this “**middle wall of separation?**” “Some have understood the barrier as a reference to the temple balustrade<sup>83</sup> separating the court of the Gentiles from the inner courts and the sanctuary in the Jerusalem temple. Attached to this barrier at intervals were notices in Greek and Latin warning Gentiles not to proceed further on pain of death (Josephus, *Jewish War* 5.194). Such a reference would powerfully symbolize the separation of Gentiles from Israel....”<sup>84</sup>

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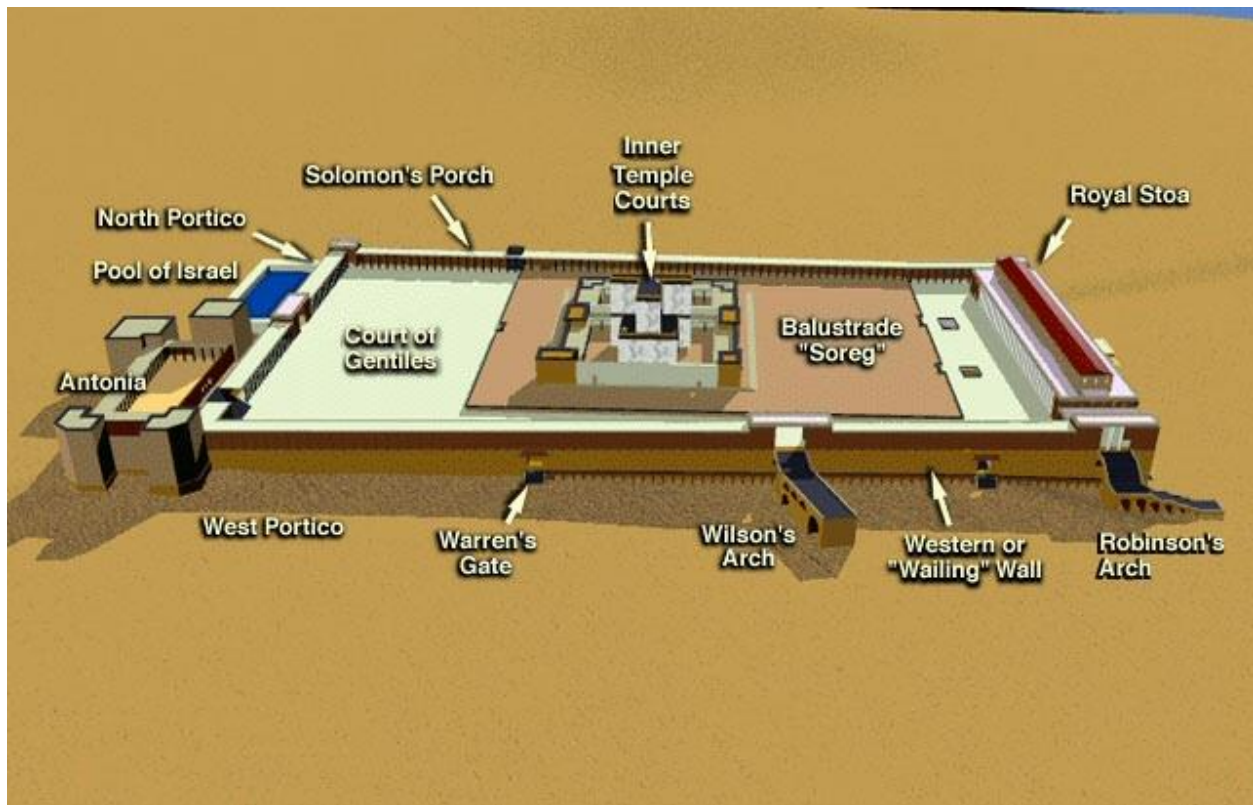
<sup>80</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 194.

<sup>81</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 195.

<sup>82</sup> *wall of separation φραγμός* “A fence, hedge, a thorn hedge around a vineyard, beside which there was often a wall....” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>83</sup> balustrade, “a low parapet or barrier” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/balustrade>

<sup>84</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 195.



However, it is not at all likely that the Gentiles of Ephesus would have known anything about this wall and its signs with the result that the allusion would have communicated little useful information to them. In addition, the Greek word for **separation**<sup>85</sup> used here in 2:14 is not the word used on the inscription itself or used by Josephus who translates the inscription.<sup>86</sup> The two different Greek words for the wall don't give confidence that this is what Paul is talking about. We must also note that the wall was still standing and therefore had not been broken down and would not be until A.D. 70, years after the writing of this letter.

There is another view. Some identify this barrier as the "veil of the temple" that was torn at the time of Jesus' crucifixion.

*"Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split,"* (Matthew 27:51, NKJV)

This incident symbolized the opening of the holy place to all, not just the priest. According to this view, such access to the holy place would also be available to the Gentiles as well. Now, although this is true, is this actually what Paul is here referring to? Most scholars do not think so. The Jewish temple was simply not important to most Gentiles in Asia.

So, if not these two explanations, then what was this "*middle wall of separation*?" We should be looking for something that the Gentiles could experience in Ephesus which would there create enmity. Is there something that fits this picture? There is and verse 2:15 explains it for us.

<sup>85</sup> separation φραγμός "A fence, hedge, a thorn hedge around a vineyard, beside which there was often a wall...." Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>86</sup> fence δρύφακτος "*railing or latticed partition, serving as the bar of the courts of law, the council-chamber....*" Henry George Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 451.

***Ephesians 2:15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,***

***having abolished***<sup>87</sup>.... The Greek word abolish means “to render inoperative, nullify, invalidate. Thus, it conveys the idea of neutralizing the effect.”<sup>88</sup> The effect was enmity. That was abolished....

***in His flesh***.... How? As was just mentioned:

*“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”* (Ephesians 2:13, NKJV)

***the enmity***.... Paul identifies this ***enmity***<sup>89</sup> or *hatred* saying:

***[that is,] the law of commandments contained in ordinances***.... Many read this passage this way: “*having abolished the law*” or “*having abolished the enmity, that is, the law*.” But, look again, that is wrong, although the passage is often taught this way. But what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount should give us pause.

*“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.”* (Matthew 5:17, NKJV)

Now, let’s compare this with other statements by Paul.

*“But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully,”* (1 Timothy 1:8, NKJV)

*“For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.”* (Romans 7:14, NKJV)

*“If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.”* (Romans 7:16, NKJV)

*“Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.”* (Romans 3:31, NKJV)

These positive statements by Paul are in harmony with what Jesus said in the Sermon.

So, again, we note what was not said, “*the enmity, that is, the law*.” If all Paul was trying to do was condemn the law, why add this phrase, ***of commandments contained***

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<sup>87</sup> *abolished* καταργέω...

① to cause someth. to be unproductive, *use up, exhaust, waste*

② to cause someth. to lose its power or effectiveness, *invalidate, make powerless*

③ to cause someth. to come to an end or to be no longer in existence, *abolish, wipe out, set aside*

④ to cause the release of someone from an obligation (one has nothing more to do with it), *be discharged, be released.*” William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 526.

<sup>88</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 55.

<sup>89</sup> *enmity* ἔχθρα “Enmity, hatred, hostility....” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

**in ordinances?** If condemning the Law of God was his purpose, then stopping with **the law** would have done that. But he didn't.

**the law<sup>90</sup> of commandments<sup>91</sup> [contained] in ordinances<sup>92</sup>....** It is this phrase that explains what aspect of the law Paul is addressing.

It appears that the key word here is **ordinances**; the sentence does not end with **law** or even with **commandments** but takes the reader to a specific type of law of commandments, **ordinances**. How do **ordinances** differ from law, especially from the Law of God?

In Colossians, Paul uses the same Greek word for **ordinances** in such a way as to give us a clear understanding as to what he means.

*“Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—”*  
(Colossians 2:20, NKJV)

**Regulations!** This is the same Greek word. And remember how close Ephesians and Colossians are in their message. That point gives Colossians 2:20 particular importance in explaining our Ephesians verse.

In law, we have what is known as statutory law and regulatory law. In the Bible, the Law of God is statutory law which is “a formal written enactment of [God’s] legislative authority....”<sup>93</sup> But, in law we also have regulatory laws which are laws that are the result of the primary legislation law—the add-ons that were intended to explain and work out the purpose of the statutory law. In this passage we are not dealing with God’s statutory law—the Ten Commandments, but the regulatory law, the add-ons designed to clarify statutory law in real life settings.

Paul fleshes out his Colossian statement following his comments in 2:20 this way:

*“Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.”* (Colossians 2:21–23, NKJV)

In addition, these **ordinances** also addressed, “circumcision (the main physical distinction between Jews and Gentiles, verse 11), the material sacrifices, the dietary

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<sup>90</sup> *law νόμος* “1. law, rule prescribing what a person must do ...; 2. LN 33.55 the Law, Torah, the Pentateuch, the first five books of Moses ...; 3. the Scriptures, the Holy Writings, the Tanakh, not limited to the first five books of the Christian OT ....” James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

<sup>91</sup> *Commandments ἐπιταγή, ἡς, ἡ...*

“① authoritative directive, *command, order, injunction*

② right or authority to command, *authority....*” William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 383.

<sup>92</sup> *ordinances δόγμα* “Opinion, conclusion, ordinance, proposition, dogma.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>93</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statute>

regulations and the rules about ritual ‘cleanness’ and ‘uncleanness’ which governed social relationships.”<sup>94</sup>

So, the **enmity** Paul here speaks of was the product of *regulatory law* which is what Paul here calls in 2:15 **ordinances**. “The enmity was the result and working of the law regarded as a separative system; as it separated Jew from Gentile, and both from God.”<sup>95</sup>

One ancient writer said, “our lawgiver ... fenced us about [περιφράσσειν-hedged] with impenetrable palisades and with walls of iron to the end that we should mingle in no way with any of the other nations, remaining pure in body and in spirit” (139) and “so that we should be polluted by none nor be infected with perversions by associating with worthless persons, he has fenced us about [περιφράσσειν-hedged] on all sides with prescribed purifications in matters of food and drink and touch and hearing and sight” (142). It can easily be seen that in functioning as a fence to protect Israel from the impurity of the Gentiles, the law became such a sign of Jewish particularism that it also alienated Gentiles and became a cause of hostility....”<sup>96</sup>

But, “the same law that protected Jews from the pollution of gentile practices also caused hostility between them. For instance, certain laws prevented Jews from eating with Gentiles or intermarrying with them. It was such that led to the hostility of Jews toward Gentiles, which in turn caused Gentiles to hate the Jews.”<sup>97</sup>

So, Paul is not attacking God’s statutory law for he understands that this Law is good. But he is addressing the **ordinances**—the *commandments and doctrines of men* (*Colossians 2:21–23*). These ordinances created a “*wall of separation*” (2:14) or hedge between Jew and Gentile. But, “The ceremonial laws of the Old Testament that separated Jews and Gentiles are no longer appropriate after their fulfillment in Christ.”<sup>98</sup> “The reference then is especially to the many rules and regulations of the Mosaic Code, stipulations with respect to such matters as fasts, feasts, foods, offerings, circumcision, etc.”<sup>99</sup>

Now there are several types of “add-on’s” in the Law that we should take note of 1) God’s regulatory laws found in the Bible, 2) man’s regulatory laws made up by men and not in the Bible, but we should also consider 3) those laws fulfilled in Christ first coming.

It appears that all three of these are done away with in the New Testament—but not the statutory Law of God summed up in the Ten Commandments. This is a common error, one we should not make. What God can never be is lawless, and we should not be either.

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<sup>94</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 100.

<sup>95</sup> Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (vol. 3; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887), 378.

<sup>96</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 141.

<sup>97</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 57.

<sup>98</sup> R. C. Sproul, ed., *The Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version* (Orlando, FL; Lake Mary, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2005), 1707.

<sup>99</sup> William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Ephesians* (vol. 7; New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 135.



“To sum up, Jesus abolished both the regulations of the ceremonial law and the condemnation of the moral law. Both were divisive. Both were put aside by the cross.”<sup>100</sup>

### To Create in Himself One New Man

Once the divisive law by which Jews and Gentiles had been alienated from one another was set aside, there was nothing to keep the two elements of humanity apart. Christ brought them together in a sovereign act that was nothing less than a new creation.<sup>101</sup>

**so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace....** “Jews and Gentiles were alienated from one another and at enmity with one another. But once the divisive law had been set aside, there was nothing to keep the two parts of humanity apart. Instead, Christ brought them together by a sovereign act of creation.”<sup>102</sup>

**create**<sup>103</sup>.... The Greek word means to create something from nothing. We read about this just a few verses ago.

*“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”* (Ephesians 2:10, NKJV)

The saved are created. And all the saved are one entity, one new man. In Colossians, Paul describes it this way:

*“and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.”* (Colossians 3:10–11, NKJV)

**one new man from the two....** The two would be Jew and Gentile; the one that followed would be the Christian or *the Church of Jesus Christ*. “What Paul is referring to, in fact, is not a ‘new man’ but a ‘new human race,’ united by Jesus Christ *in himself*.”<sup>104</sup>

“This new unity through and in Christ does more than span the Jew-Gentile divide. In other passages, Paul says that it also does away with sexual and social distinctions.” ... Not that the facts of human differentiation are removed. Men remain men and women women; Jews remain Jews and Gentiles Gentiles. But inequality before God is abolished. There is a new unity in Christ.”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 101.

<sup>101</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 199.

<sup>102</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 101.

<sup>103</sup> *create* κτίζω “In the NT, to create, produce from nothing....” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>104</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 101.

<sup>105</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 101–102.

*“where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.” (Colossians 3:11, NKJV)*

*“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28, NKJV)*

**making peace....** In verses 14-18 the word peace is used four times. This is the theme; this is the point in these words. “Christ is the peace-maker between men, nations, races, classes.”<sup>106</sup> But specifically, peace between whom? It is Jew and Gentile **enmity** (2:15) that Paul here addresses.

### **That He Might Reconcile Them Both to God**

***Ephesians 2:16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.***

***that He might reconcile<sup>107</sup> them both to God....*** The fact that God reconciles both to himself presupposes that both were alienated, not just the Gentiles but, the Jews as well. Paul makes this point in Romans 3.

*“What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.” (Romans 3:9, NKJV)*

**reconcile....** Paul here reminds us of plight noted in 2:12 and his solution in reconciliation.

*“And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled” (Colossians 1:21, NKJV)*

**to God....** “In the preceding verses, Paul’s focus has been on the horizontal dimension, namely, Christ’s removal of the enmity between Jew and Gentile. Now the vertical dimension is explicitly coupled with this, as the issue of reconciliation with God is introduced.”<sup>108</sup> The horizontal peace between Jew and Gentile is possible only because there was first a vertical peace between God and man.

**in one body....** The **one body** is not referring to Jesus body but to the body known as the Church. As we read “...this has occurred *in one body*, which is a reference to the church rather than the physical crucified body of Christ....”<sup>109</sup> “Here *one body* denotes the same as the ‘one new person’ (man) of v. 15....”<sup>110</sup>

**through the cross thereby putting to death the enmity.** “The imagery of the cross has apparently suggested the language of death to the apostle, so he speaks of Christ

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<sup>106</sup> A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Eph 2:15.

<sup>107</sup> *reconcile* ἀποκατάλλασσω “the restoration of a relationship of peace which has been disturbed....” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>108</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 201.

<sup>109</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 201–202.

<sup>110</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 202.

killing the enmity. 'Christ in his death was slain, but the slain was a slayer too.'<sup>111</sup> "...it was *in his reconciliation* of both Jew and Gentile in one body to God that Christ *killed* the enmity."<sup>112</sup>

*"And I will put enmity Between you and the woman,  
And between your seed and her Seed;  
He shall bruise your head,  
And you shall bruise His heel."* (Genesis 3:15, NKJV)

"To sum up, Jesus abolished both the regulations of the ceremonial law and the condemnation of the moral law. Both were divisive. Both were put aside by the cross."<sup>113</sup> Note that John Stott here talks about abolishing the "condemnation of the moral law" but, not abolishing the moral law itself.

"This, then, was the achievement of Christ's cross. First, he abolished the law (its ceremonial regulations and moral condemnation) as a divisive instrument separating men from God and Jews from Gentiles. Secondly, he created a single new humanity out of its two former deep divisions [the Church], making peace between them. Thirdly, he reconciled this new united humanity to God, having killed through the cross all the hostility between us. Christ crucified has thus brought into being nothing less than a new, united human race, united in itself and united to its creator."<sup>114</sup>

***Ephesians 2:17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.***

***He came and preached peace....*** "Already we have been told that *he is our peace* (verse 14) and that he created a new humanity, *so making peace* (verse 15). But now he *preached peace....*"<sup>115</sup>

Christ himself is the evangelist, the one who preaches peace. Jesus preaching "is based on his death on the cross, is a royal proclamation that hostilities are at an end."<sup>116</sup>

*"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"* (Romans 5:1, NKJV)

***who were afar off and to those who were near.*** This assessment is based on 2:1-3 and 2:11-12. The Gentiles were ***afar off***, and the Jews were ***near***. But ***both*** needed the Gospel message.

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<sup>111</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 204.

<sup>112</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 205.

<sup>113</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 101.

<sup>114</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 102.

<sup>115</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 103.

<sup>116</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 207.

***Ephesians 2:18 For through Him we both have access<sup>117</sup> by one Spirit to the Father.***

**access....**

*“in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.”  
(Ephesians 3:12, NKJV)*

But you will remember, it is not those bad Gentiles that are now incorporated with those good Jews into a new man, “The union of which vv. 14–17 speaks is not a union of Jews and Gentiles but of redeemed Jews and Gentiles who are in Christ.”<sup>118</sup> The message is to all that are lost, Jews and Gentiles. Being a Jew did not get you a pass into the new man; being a believer whether Jew or Gentile did.

***by one Spirit....*** “It is by means of the ministry of the Holy Spirit that the saints have *entree* into the presence of God the Father.”<sup>119</sup>

“...in this passage also Paul speaks of salvation in trinitarian terms: Christ’s peacemaking work has provided access to the Father for both Jews and Gentiles through the one Spirit.”<sup>120</sup>

“In conclusion, in 2:14–18 the union of Jews and Gentiles is explained in four different ways: (1) We are made all one people (2:14). (2) Christ created in himself one new person from two groups (2:15). (3) Christ reconciled *both* groups together as one body (2:16). (4) Christ gave *both* Jews, and Gentiles access to God in one Spirit (2:18). This new union replaces the old hostility.”<sup>121</sup>

### ***Thirdly, What You Have Now Become - Fellow Citizens (Verses 19–22)***

***Ephesians 2:19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,***

***Now, therefore....*** We note here that “so then,” [Now, therefore] announces a summarizing statement of the main point the writer has been attempting to make.”<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> *access* προσαγωγή. “The term was commonly used for the audience or right of approach granted to someone by high officials and monarchs.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>118</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 204.

<sup>119</sup> Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader* (vol. 4; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 78.

<sup>120</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 210.

<sup>121</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 58.

<sup>122</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 150.

***you are no longer strangers***<sup>123</sup> and ***foreigners***<sup>124</sup>.... We read earlier:

*“that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth<sup>125</sup> of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”* (Ephesians 2:12, NKJV)

But this old relationship of enmity no longer exists as 2:13-18 (*What Christ Did*) makes clear.

***but fellow citizens***<sup>126</sup>.... The component parts of the Greek word mean “*with a city*.” “They now have full citizenship in and belong firmly to a commonwealth, for they are fellow citizens with the holy ones.”<sup>127</sup>

***with the saints***.... With all the children of God. “These Gentile Christians now have a homeland or commonwealth. They ‘belong’ as fellow-citizens with the rest of believers in that heavenly commonwealth ruled by God.”<sup>128</sup>

***and members of the household of God***.... “The Gentile readers are no longer far off from Israel and from God as foreigners and outsiders. Their proximity to God now is such that they are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God’s own family....”<sup>129</sup>

***Ephesians 2:20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,***

***having been built on the foundation***.... “Once more the apostle’s imagery changes. The readers are not only intimate members of God’s household. They also have a privileged position in his building and temple, the place where he dwells.”<sup>130</sup>

In 2:19 we read about *fellow citizens*, *saints*, and *members of the household of God*; all these are now like bricks laid on a foundation, which the apostles and prophets have already laid, with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone of that foundation. The Church continues to build on this same foundation.

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<sup>123</sup> *strangers ξένος* “a person belonging to a socio-political group other than the reference group—‘stranger, foreigner.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 131.

<sup>124</sup> *foreigners παροικία* “In the NT, a sojourning, residence in a foreign land without the right of a citizenship....” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>125</sup> *commonwealth πολιτεία*, “a group of people constituting a socio-political unit—‘state, people.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 131.

<sup>126</sup> *fellow citizens συμπολίτης* “a fellow member of a socio-political unit—‘fellow citizen.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 131.

<sup>127</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 150.

<sup>128</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 211.

<sup>129</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 152.

<sup>130</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 212.

***the apostles and prophets....*** Placing ***prophets*** after ***apostles*** instead of before apostles suggest that these are New Testament prophets that Paul is addressing, much in the same way he uses the terms in I Corinthians and later in Ephesians 3.

*“And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.”* (1 Corinthians 12:28, NKJV)

*“which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets.”* (Ephesians 3:5, NKJV)

“To assert, then, that these Gentile believers are built upon the apostles and prophets is to state that their membership in God’s people rests on the normative teaching that arises from divine revelation. They have the right foundation. None may question their membership in God’s new community.”<sup>131</sup>

“The apostles provided a foundational link with the risen Christ and, together with the prophets, gave foundational interpretation of what God had done in Christ for the edification of the Church.”<sup>132</sup> It was the apostles and prophets that were the men who made up the foundation of the Church. Their writings were the documents that taught us the things of God.

So, “In practical terms, this means that the church is built on the New Testament Scriptures.”<sup>133</sup> “And just as a foundation cannot be tampered with once it has been laid and the superstructure is being built upon it, so the New Testament foundation of the church is inviolable and cannot be changed by any additions, subtractions or modifications offered by teachers who claim to be apostles or prophets today. The church stands or falls by its loyal dependence on the foundation truths which God revealed to his apostles and prophets, and which are now preserved in the New Testament Scriptures.”<sup>134</sup>

There are some that tell us that the Church was built upon Peter—alone.

*“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”* (Matthew 16:18, NKJV)

And although not entirely correct, they are not entirely wrong either for Peter was one of several who were the builders of the Church. And in the early years, he was their spokesman.

*“having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets ... into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”* (Ephesians 2:20–22, NKJV)

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<sup>131</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 216.

<sup>132</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 153.

<sup>133</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 107.

<sup>134</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 107.

**Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone**<sup>135</sup>.... Cornerstone has been suggested as either the foundation stone, the capstone on the top of the wall, or a keystone in a roof or arch; scholars debate the meaning. But Isaiah suggests foundation stone and Paul in I Corinthians seems to be speaking this way as well.

*“Therefore thus says the Lord God:*

*“Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation,*

*A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation;*

*Whoever believes will not act hastily.”* (Isaiah 28:16, NKJV)

*“... you are God’s building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”* (1 Corinthians 3:9–11, NKJV)

**cornerstone**.... This **cornerstone** is “...the primary foundation-stone at the angle of the structure by which the architect fixes a standard for the bearings of the walls and cross-walls throughout...”<sup>136</sup> “The cornerstone was placed first in the foundation, and all the other stones in the foundation were lined up in accordance with it. Such an interpretation would make clear that the apostles and prophets have Christ as their norm.”<sup>137</sup>

*“Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture,*

*“Behold, I lay in Zion*

*A chief cornerstone, elect, precious,*

*And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.”* (1 Peter 2:6, NKJV)

“Paul seems, therefore, to be making the following points: Christ is the vital cornerstone on whom the building is constructed. The foundation and position of all the other stones in the superstructure were determined by him.”<sup>138</sup>

**Ephesians 2:21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,**

**the whole building**.... “Here, as in the rest of the letter, the writer has the universal Church in mind.”<sup>139</sup> But without the Gentiles, the building is not whole.

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<sup>135</sup> *cornerstone ἀκρογωνιαίος* “The foundation cornerstone, applied figuratively to Christ who not only sustains the whole structure of the Church, but also unites Jews and Gentiles into one mystical building....” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>136</sup> A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Eph 2:20.

<sup>137</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 155.

<sup>138</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 217.

<sup>139</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 156.

**being fitted together**<sup>140</sup>.... “It is the growth of the community, the whole Church, which is decisive, and the growth is in this context a qualitative rather than a quantitative concept.”<sup>141</sup>

A similar idea, but using a *body* instead of a *building*, is mentioned in Ephesians 4.

*“from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”* (Ephesians 4:16, NKJV)

**grows into a holy temple....** “In the OT and in apocalyptic literature Yahweh’s earthly abode in the temple was seen as the counterpart of his heavenly abode, and after the exile, the hope of the divine presence in the eschatological temple was increasingly transferred to the heavenly Jerusalem and its heavenly temple.... In rabbinic thought ... the temple was considered as the gate from earth to heaven and as inhabited by heavenly beings....”<sup>142</sup> But this Temple image is now changed and is replaced with the image of the people of God, they are His Temple, and in them, He dwells.

This was a radical change from how all religions viewed the role of their “temple.” The temple was always the place where God met select representatives of the community in a holy location. Now God meets with all his people and the holy place is their heart.

*“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”* (1 Corinthians 3:16, NKJV)

Soon this idea will be augmented with the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in A.D. 70.

***Ephesians 2:22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.***

Ephesians 2:11-22 are one sentence in the Greek text. Notice the inclusio, **you**, used at the beginning and end of this passage.

*“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—”* (Ephesians 2:11, NKJV)

*“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,”* (Ephesians 2:19, NKJV)

**You** were once this (2:11), but no longer, **you** are now this (2:19, 22).

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<sup>140</sup> *fitted together συναρμολογέω* “to fit together in a coherent and compatible manner—‘to fit together, to be joined together.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 611.

<sup>141</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 158.

<sup>142</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 157.



You were once “*children of wrath*” (2:3b), “*without Christ*” (2:12), *aliens and strangers* (2:12), without the *covenants of promise* (2:12), “*without hope*” (2:12) and “*without God*” (2:12).

But you are now “*fellow citizens*” (2:19), “*members of the household of God*” (2:19), “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (2:20)—the new Temple of God.

**also....** “The writer does not allow his picture of the Church to remain in general terms but applies it to the Gentile Christian recipients of his letter as a reminder of what they have become through their relationship to Christ. They need to be aware of the immensely privileged nature of their new situation. In Christ, they are being built into the dwelling place of God himself. They are the bricks that are being built into God’s new temple (cf. also 1 Pet 2:5).”<sup>143</sup>

“*you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*” (1 Peter 2:5, NKJV)

**being built together....** The “*fitted together*” of 2:21 is a similar idea to the “*built together*” of 2:22.

“The Jerusalem temple was an exclusively Jewish edifice, as we have seen, which all Gentiles were forbidden to enter. But now Gentiles are not only admitted; they are themselves constituent parts of the temple of God.”<sup>144</sup>

**for a dwelling place of God....** The metaphor of “*temple*” in 2:21 is now replaced with the “*dwelling place*” of 2:22. God lives in His Temple; God dwells in His people.

God “is not tied to holy buildings but to holy people, to his own new society. To them, he has pledged himself by a solemn covenant. He lives in them, individually and as a community.”<sup>145</sup>

**in the Spirit.** The “*in the Lord*” of 2:21 is now “*in the Spirit*” in 2:22.

“As Paul was dictating his letter, there stood in Ephesus the magnificent marble temple of Artemis (‘great is Diana of the Ephesians’), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, and in whose inner shrine there was a statue of the goddess. At the same time in Jerusalem there stood the Jewish temple built by Herod the Great, barricading itself against the Gentiles, and now also against God, whose shekinah glory it had housed in its inner sanctuary for centuries, but whose glory as revealed in its Messiah it had sought to extinguish. Two temples, one pagan and the other Jewish, each designed by its devotees as a divine residence, but both empty of the living God. For now, there is a new temple, **a dwelling place of God in the Spirit**. It is his new society, his redeemed people scattered throughout the inhabited world. They are his home on earth. They will also be his home in heaven.”<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 158.

<sup>144</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 108.

<sup>145</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 109.

<sup>146</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 109–110.

## **In Conclusion**

In Ephesians 2:1-10 Paul explains how Gentiles and Jews are reconciled to God. In 2:11-22, He explains how Gentiles and Jews are reconciled to each other as God's Church.

In this last section, he explains:

### ***What You Have Now Become in Christ.***

1. ***What You Were Without Christ*** – Gentiles in the Flesh (2:11–12)
2. ***What Jesus Christ Did*** – He Brought Jews and Gentiles Near (2:13–18)
  - a) Christ *Made Us One People* – *Broke down the Wall* (2:13-14)
  - b) Christ *Created in Himself One New Man* from *Two Groups* – *Abolished the Enmity of Ordinances* (2:15)
  - c) Christ *Brought Both Groups Together as One Body* – *Reconciled to God* (2:16-17)
  - d) Christ *Gave Both Access to God in One Spirit* – *Provided Access to the Father* (2:18)
3. ***What You Have Now Become*** – Fellow Citizens (2:19–22)
  - a) No Longer Strangers (2:19)
  - b) Built on the apostles and prophets (2:20)
  - c) Into a Holy Temple (2:21)
  - d) A Dwelling Place of God (2:22)