

EPHESIANS 2

I. BKGRD.

The Ephesian church started with 12 disciples unsure of their doctrine and theology and not even aware that there was a Holy Spirit! Ten years after the church's beginning, the apostle Paul writes to remind them of God's sovereignty, grace and eternal purpose for His Church (us included).

This whole section - chapters 1-3 - is dealing with the spiritual blessings that we have in Christ Jesus. And one of the greatest of all the spiritual blessings is the grace that has been bestowed upon us through Jesus Christ.

A. To see all of the beautiful facets of this grace it must be placed upon a proper background.

1. It is as though a merchant wanted to show to you a perfect diamond. He wants you to see each sparkling facet, so he places the diamond on the darkest velvet that he can find.
2. So Paul wants you to see all the beautiful aspects of the grace of God so he is going to place it on the darkest possible background.
3. What is that dark background?

B. "**And you.**" What could be darker or blacker than us in our "B.C." ("Before Christ) days?

II. TEXT

v. 1 A description of who we were; our past moral and spiritual condition: fallen and separated from God because of our sin, rebellion and selfishness.

"**Transgressions** (*paratoma*) and sins (*hamartia*)" – intentional or unintentional faults, mistakes, errors, fall, offense, deviation or lapse vs. "missing the mark" and so not sharing in the prize. We have done both time without number...

v. 2 "Ruler" (□□□□□□) Satan. Three times called the "*prince of this world*" by Jesus (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Satan has a hold on these people because of their fallen state. Since Jesus was sinless, Satan could have no hold on Him. Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:12-17; Job 1-2 gives details of Satan, his fall and how he operates.

A.T. Robertson, in his excellent Word Pictures of the NT, makes this observation: "Those who deny the existence of a personal devil cannot successfully deny the vicious tendencies, the crime waves, in modern men. The power of the devil in the lives of men does explain the evil at work "in the sons of disobedience."

v. 3 "Sinful nature" is *sarx*, prob. root is □□□□□, (to be stripped of the skin), i.e. (strictly) the meat of an animal (as food), or (by impl.) human nature (with its frailties [phys. and moral] and passions), or (spec.) a human being (as such):--carnal (-ly, + -ly minded), flesh ([-ly]).

"**Wrath**" is ὀργή, God's divine displeasure against sin and rebellion; punishment:--anger, indignation, vengeance, wrath. Used some 36 x's in the NT, 6 x's in the book of Rev.; God's judgment against sinful, rebellious Man.

v. 4 Cf. 1 Jn. 4:9f "*This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*"

As God revealed Himself and His nature to Moses on Mt. Sinai in Exodus 34:4-7 "*So Moses chiseled out two stone tablets like the first ones and went up Mount Sinai early in the morning, as the LORD had commanded him; and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands. Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished..."*

v. 5 Literal resurrection in the case of Jesus, spiritual in our case as pictured in baptism. **"Dead"** -- spiritual death is the state of the man who has not accepted Christ as still in his sins (2:1), alienated from the life of God, and w/o the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9 "You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ").

Spiritual death is a state of eternal separation from God in conscious suffering. This is called "the second death" (Rev 2).

"Have been saved" – perfect passive indicative – done in the past but having having effect still today, done by God for us, indicative is the mood of reality: it REALLY, actually, factually happened.

v. 6 EVERYTHING turns on this phrase, **"in Christ Jesus."**

v. 7 God is going to take all eternity to show us how much He loves us.

v. 8 **"Grace"** is χάρις, from the word *charismatic*. **"Grace"** is God's kindness, unmerited favor and forgiving love. "Grace" is God's part, "faith" ours.

"Saved" – from God's wrath incurred by our sin (perfect tense suggests a completed action with emphasis on its present effect).

"And that" ([kai touto]). Neuter, not feminine [tautê], and so refers not to FAITH (pistis is feminine) or to GRACE (charis is feminine also), but to the act of being saved by grace conditioned on faith on our part. Paul shows that salvation does not have its source in men, but from God. It is God's gift – meaning it's FREE! -- and not the result of our work.

"Through faith" – after mentioning God's part, here's ours: to place our trust, hope, faith and confidence in Jesus alone to save us; it is more than factual, mental assent, though this is part of it: believing the FACTS about the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Romans 3:21-26 lay this out as the only condition of salvation; the only means by which we can know God and be reconciled to Him:

"But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished -- he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus."

"Faith" in Christ Jesus is the key that opens the door to heaven. You know, you could have a key ring with a lot of keys on it, like this (use actual key ring as object lesson if you have one); they will look somewhat alike. But I'll tell you this. If you go to the front door of my house, you could try all of these keys except the right one, and they would not open that door. The right key to heaven is called faith, saving faith. That is what will open the door to heaven. There is nothing else in the world that will open that door. What is it? **FAITH. Not just faith in anyone, or anything, but in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Savior of the world!**

Cf. 1 Jn. 1:12 "...To all who received him, to those who believed [root word is "faith" (pistis)] in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."

"...not of yourselves" – no one can claim any credit for our salvation by God! We've nothing to boast in except Jesus! It's what He did for us.

v. 9 “Not by works” – no one can earn salvation by observing the Law; trying to be good enough . . . “*all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*” – like a boat that overturns and all try to swim to Hawaii . . . some will get closer than others, but all will come up short!

ILLUSTRATION: One characteristic that distinguishes Christianity from all other religions of the world is the teaching of salvation by grace, through faith, apart from human works. For this reason, I was especially interested in the following headline a newspaper a while back: "Conversation to Hindu Faith Is Tortuous." The article stated, "A West German businessman has completed his conversion to the Hindu faith by piercing himself through the cheeks with a 1/4-inch thick, 4-foot-long steel rod, and pulling a chariot for 2 miles by ropes attached to his back and chest by steel hooks. Others walk through 20-foot-long pits of fire, don shoes with soles made of nails, or hang in the air spread-eagle from hooks embedded in their backs."

What a contrast to Christianity! Aren't you glad that conversion to belief in Jesus Christ is not accomplished by this kind of self-inflicted torture?

v. 10 "Workmanship" comes from the Greek work ποίησις, which means "handiwork" or "a careful work of art." In the original language sometimes has the connotation of a work of art, e.g., a sculpture; the original Greek is where we get our word, "poem." Michaelangelo asked how did he see the finished work when only a solid block of marble weighing several tons stood before him: "The work of art is inside; all I have to do is remove the excess on the outside." He finished carving the *Pieta'* at 24 years of age!!! The artist seeks to express himself in his work, so God expresses Himself in us.

vv. 11-22 Our reconciliation to God is the basis of our being reconciled to each other; if vv. 1-10 were grace received, this is grace extended [to others] – in the Church; in marriage . . .

v. 11 “Gentile” – non-Jews.

v. 12 We were: (1) separated from Christ;
(2) excluded from citizenship in Israel;
(3) foreigners to the covenant of the promise;
(4) without hope; and
(5) without God in the world.

How many of you have had an introductory college course in philosophy? One philosopher always read is Bertrand Russell, the father of analytic philosophy. Bertrand Russell was a brilliant philosopher, but a man who had no faith in the Bible or God. He describes in eloquent terms the natural outcome of a life from which all faith in the resurrection of Christ is removed. He says:

"The life of man is a long march through the night, surrounded by invisible foes, tortured by weariness and pain, towards a goal that few can hope to reach and where none can tarry long. One by one, as they march, our comrades vanish from our sight, seized by the silent orders of omnipotent death."

"Brief and powerless is man's life, on his and all his race the slow, sure doom falls, pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way. For man, condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gates of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day."

v. 13 All of those 5 points have been corrected by my position in Christ: once far away; now near!

v. 14 “Peace” (εἰρήνη -- mentioned 7 x's in Ephesians; 93 x's in the NT). Peace with God (Rom. 5:10) vs. Peace of God (Phil. 4:4-7,9 “*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding,*

will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. . . . Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you").

Do you have “peace **with** God?” Do you know, do you experience, the “peace **of** God?”

v. 14 [**“of hostility”**] not in the orig. but helps clarity; the former hostility that existed between Jews and Gentiles. Applied to the Church: any “hostility?” Context is between believers; not always possible to live at peace with unbelievers.

- *“As much as it is possible with **you**, live at peace with all men”* (Rom. 12:18);
- *“God has called us to live in peace”* (1 Cor. 7:15);
- *“Be of one mind; live in peace”* (2 Cor. 13:11).

The Fruit of the Spirit is “love, joy, peace, patience . . . “ (Gal. 5:22f). *If I am not at peace with others, esp. Christians, am I at peace with God? Are they at peace with God? We can’t have peace if one or both are in disobedience to God’s Word.

v. 18 **“Access”** – cf. Hebrews 4:15f *“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*

Do we make use of that “access?” How often – when it’s convenient? If it’s not too hard to obey?

v. 21 **“Joined together”** – indicates the close relationship between believers. We are a building under construction; a work in progress. It conveys the sense of the dynamic growth of the Church (qualitatively and quantitatively).

1 Peter 2:4-10 *“As you come to him, the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him-- you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”*

v. 22 **“Are being built together”** (present passive indicative: indicates a continuous process that God is doing; my job is to yield to that process...). **UNITY**: a close relationship should exist between believers – if it doesn’t, WHY? One or both are IN THE FLESH: *“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: [and I’ve taken the liberty to edit the list] ...hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; . . . and the like.”*

- Matthew 5:23f Jesus said, *“... if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.”*
 - Again, *“where 2 or 3 are gathered together in my name there I am in the midst of them”* (Mt. 18:20); the house of God, where He comes to dwell among His people. How glorious it is to be able to get together with the family of God and to experience the presence of Jesus Christ and the power of God's Spirit, as He is working to build this house; not a physical building but lives that are being knit together, fit together in this whole plan of God, this glorious building where God will reveal Himself to His people, and through His people to the world.
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III. SUMMARY / APPLICATION / RESPONSE

The emphasis in ch. 1 was to outline God's great purpose: ultimately, to bring all things under the headship of His Son Jesus. Ch. 2 then details the steps to accomplish that purpose, starting with:

(1) the reconciliation of people to Himself; BE RECONCILED TO GOD. Have you "*been made alive in Christ*" or are you still dead in your sins? You ask, "I don't know; how can I tell?" Look at the fruit of your life: do you see "*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness*," etc. in your life or do you see the deeds of the flesh instead: *hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, dissensions, etc.*

(2) then, reconciling saved individuals to each other; it's all about LOVE and UNITY! If Christ died to make us ONE, I know the enemy's strategy will be to divide and conquer. Only we can allow him to do so, by:

- (a) By refusing to be reconciled one to another;
- (b) By refusing to pursue peace (with God and of God);
- (c) By refusing to humble ourselves to be obedient to Scripture: "humble yourself in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up."

Matthew 5:23 "*Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.*" "*Live at peace with all men inasmuch as it is possible with you.*"

- What God chooses, He cleanses;
 - What God cleanses, He molds;
 - What God molds, He fills;
 - What God fills, He uses!
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