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Teaching Ephesians

Chapter Two

By

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We are sharing a special series about teaching the Book of Ephesians in small groups. If you haven't read the Introduction to the series, we invite you to [read it here](#).

Whether you are interested in studying Ephesians for the purpose of teaching it to small groups or for your own personal study, we believe you will find this series helpful.

Basic Premises for Studying Scripture

God is worth knowing

His Word is worth learning and obeying

Because God is worth knowing and His Word is worth learning, we will follow a proven method of knowing Him and learning His Word.

We will use the I – M – D – I method of Bible study:

Inductive – Methodical – Direct – Independent

Inductive study – “logical, objective, impartial reasoning” ... examining specifics of Scripture before reaching conclusions

Methodical study – “a way or path of transit” (Greek – methodos) ... focused on taking the proper path to gaining knowledge about God

Direct study – “relying on Scripture as the primary tool for learning”

Independent study – “original thinking combined with Spirit insight”

Observe (See and Record)

Question (Ask and Answer)

Interpret (Determine the Holy Spirit’s Intent)

Apply (How God’s Truth applies to your life)

Bible Study – The Group Process

We invite you to model the process of **observing, asking questions for interpretation, interpreting for meaning, and applying for discipleship** for your small group. This process may be new to some of the people in your group, so going through it with them for awhile may help them feel comfortable with how to do it.

One of the biggest mistakes people make in reading the Bible is trying to interpret the meaning of individual verses before observing everything in the verses. Studying in context also helps keep us from making incorrect interpretations. That means starting the observation process at the beginning of each Bible book.

The challenge in studying alone or with the group is trying to determine the meaning of passages in the Bible before assuring that we've observed everything in the passages and asked every possible question. We carefully answer all of the questions before reaching a conclusion to the meaning.

Read the Scripture and go through each step with your group. You may be able to cover observation, questions, interpretation and application in one meeting, but don't rush the process. It takes time to see everything in a text, ask good questions, get good answers to those good questions, interpret the meaning of the text and apply the meaning to life. If it takes two or three meetings to do that for each text, that's fine! The goal is to rightly divide God's Word, not finish by a certain date.

Observe – Write what you see

Ephesians 2:1-3

“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 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, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves 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.”

Ephesians 1 is a demonstration of God’s great purpose and power in supplying redemption through Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2 is a demonstration of man’s great need for that redemption and how God meets it.

Paul's theme of the dire spiritual condition of the human race runs as a lengthy thread through Paul's sermons and letters. By the time Paul wrote Ephesians, he had already written Galatians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Corinthians and Romans. He made it abundantly clear in those letters that the salvation of God was the only hope people have.

The heart of the Gospel is both the desperate need of the sinner and the abundant supply of the Savior. As a person understands how needy they are and how unable they or anyone else are to help them, their hunger for salvation grows. The key to being saved begins with the knowledge that they are lost.

If you don't know you're lost, why would you respond to someone who offered to show you how to be found? If you don't know you're dead, why would you respond to someone who offered you life? If you don't know you're a sinner, why would you respond to someone who offered you forgiveness?

Ephesians 2:1-3 in Greek

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins ... και υμας οντας νεκρους τοις παραπτωμασιν και ταις αμαρτιαις

dead is a translation of the word νεκρους (*nekrous*) and means “lifeless, corpse, dead”

trespasses is a translation of the word παραπτωμασιν (*paraptōmasin*) and means “false step, falling away, trespass”

sins is a translation of the word αμαρτιαις (*hamartiais*) and means “failure, missing the mark, sin”

The words “He made alive” are not in the Greek text. They were added by the translators to understand the context of 1:22-23 and 2:5-6 –

“And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” 1:22-23

“even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” 2:5-6

Paul reminded his readers that before they were blessed “with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,” they were “dead in trespasses and sins.” It’s important that we always keep our past spiritual condition of death in view as we move through the new life God has given us. It should help to keep us humble and focused.

in which you once walked according to the course of this world ... εν αις ποτε περιεπατησατε κατα τον αιωνα του κοσμου τουτου

once is a translation of the word ποτε (*pote*) and means “formerly, once ever”

walked is a translation of the word περιεπατησατε (*periepatēsate*) and means “to conduct yourself, walk around in ethical sense”

according to is a translation of the word κατα (*kata*) and means “bring down, against, complete” ... the idea here is conforming to or being dominated by something

the course of this world is a translation of the words του αιωνα του κοσμου τουτου (*ton aiōna tou kosmou toutou*) ... αιωνα means “a space of time, a cycle of time” .. κοσμου means “ordered system, world order

The cycle of life in this world impacted us before we were saved. We ordered our behavior, our conduct, in the sphere of the age in which we live with all its appeal and direction.

according to the prince of the power of the air ... ΚΑΤΑ ΤΟΝ ΑΡΧΟΝΤΑ ΤΗΣ ΕΞΟΥΣΙΑΣ ΤΟΥ ΑΕΡΟΣ

prince is a translation of the word αρχοντα (*archonta*) and means “ruler, chief”

power is a translation of the word εξουσιας (*exousias*) and means “authority, weight, delegated power”

air is a translation of the word αερος (*aeros*) and means “air we breathe, lower air”

The chief ruler of the air around us (earth’s atmosphere) impacted our behavior (our walk) when we were dead in trespasses and sins.

the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience ...
ΤΟΥ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΝΥΝ ΕΝΕΡΓΟΥΝΤΟΣ ΕΝ ΤΟΙΣ ΥΙΟΙΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΠΕΙΘΕΙΑΣ

spirit is a translation of the word πνευματος (*pneumatos*) and means “wind, breath, spirit”

It's important to remember that Satan, who is the prince of the power of the air, is a supernatural being. He is an angelic spirit. Psalm 104:4 reminds us that God “makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire.” They live in the spiritual world that is mostly invisible to humans.

works is a translation of the word ενεργουντος (*energountos*) and means “operating, working, engaging in work”

sons is a translation of the word υιοις (*huiois*) and means “descendant, sharing nature with father, son”

disobedience is a translation of the word απειθειας (*apeitheias*) and means “not persuaded, willful unbelief, obstinacy, disobedience”

Every human being shares a spiritual nature with Satan. Jesus told a large group of people following Him that they were of their “father the devil.” He said, “the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it.” (John 8:44)

What is Satan’s spiritual nature? He is obstinate and willfully disobedient. We are born with that nature.

among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh ... εν οις και ημεις παντες ανεστραφημεν ποτε εν ταις επιθυμιαις της σαρκος ημων **we all** are a translation of the words ημεις παντες (*hēmeis pantes*) and means “I/We everyone, of every kind, all” .. Paul included himself in this statement.

once conducted are a translation of the words ανεστραφημεν ποτε (*anestraphēmen pote*) and means “return, turn back, at one time, formerly”

lusts is a translation of the word επιθυμιας (*epithumiais*) and means “passionate longing, passionate desire, lust”

flesh is a translation of the word σαρκος (*sarkos*) and means “carnal, fleshly nature, flesh”

Every human being lives in the world of the flesh – a world of strong and passionate desires and longings. It’s interesting to note how Paul connected our lifestyle of passionate desires with sharing the disobedient nature of Satan.

fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind ...

ποιουντες τα θεληματα της σαρκος και των διανοιων

fulfilling is a translation of the word ποιουντες (*poiountes*) and means “doing, making, acting, causing, fulfilling”

desires is a translation of the word θεληματα (*thelēmata*) and means “a wish, preferred will, desire”

flesh is a translation of the word σαρκος (*sarkos*) and means carnal, fleshly nature, flesh”

mind is a translation of the word διανοιων (*dianoion*) and means “thought, understanding, intellect, insight, mind”

This is an interesting parallelism of the two clauses. The word “the flesh” in the first clause includes both “the flesh and of the mind” found in the second clause. The nature we share with Satan includes passionate feelings and desires and thoughts. What Paul introduces us to in Ephesians 2 is the totality of the sin nature that plagues every human being. The “sin nature” includes sins of the “world,” the “prince of the power of the air” (Satan), and the “flesh.”

and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others

... και ημεν τεκνα φυσει οργης ως και οι λοιποι

nature is a translation of the word φυσει (*phusei*) and means “inherent nature, inner nature”

children is a translation of the word τέκνα (*tekna*) and means “descendant, child”

of wrath is a translation of the word οργής (*orgēs*) and means “settled anger, passionate anger”

others is a translation of the word λοιποὶ (*loipoi*) and means “the remaining, the rest, others”

Verses 1-3 are a powerful indictment of the sinfulness of human beings. We share the sinful nature of Satan and are through that nature “children of wrath.” We are all under God’s wrath.

[You may want to share insights from Paul’s letter to the Romans concerning the wrath of God on humans as you summarize – Romans 1:18-32]

Observe – Write what you see

“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 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, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves 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.” Ephesians 2:1-3

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Question – Ask and answer questions based on observations

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Interpret – What is the Holy Spirit’s intent in these verses?

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Apply – How can you apply these spiritual truths to your life?

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Observe – Write what you see

Ephesians 2:4-7

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

A large part of Paul’s missionary ministry was traveling, preaching and planting new churches, but he often used particular locations as his base of operations for long periods of times. Ephesus was one of those locations.

Paul traveled to Ephesus after spending almost two years ministering in Corinth. He met Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth. They became friends and traveled together to Ephesus. Paul preached in Ephesus for a short time, but felt compelled to return to Syria and his home church in Antioch. He left Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus to continue building the new ministry. Paul returned to Ephesus and stayed there for three years, “so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 19:10). It was during Paul’s ministry in Ephesus that God worked “unusual miracles” at the hands of the apostle, “so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them” (Acts 19:11-12). Many people who practiced magic in Ephesus brought their books together and burned them in sight of everyone. The value of them totaled 50,000 pieces of silver. “So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed” (Acts 19:20)

Ephesians 2:4-7 in Greek

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us ... ο δε θεος πλουσιος ων εν ελεει δια την πολλην αγαπην αυτου ην ηγαπησεν ημας

But God — δε θεος — two of the richest words in any language, especially in this context. Paul just outlined the worst possible condition of the human soul in relationship to the Almighty God — “by nature children of wrath.” So, the words “But God” offer great potential. What will God do for sinners who are “dead in trespasses and sins”?

who is rich in mercy — πλουσιος ων εν ελεει — the word ‘rich’ is πλουσιος and means “wealthy, abounding in, rich.” The word ‘mercy’ is ελεει and means “pity, compassion, mercy.” Talk about God’s richness with your group. He owns the universe and everything in it. Now, consider how rich He is in mercy, compassion, pity. Why would God take pity on sinful people under His wrath?

because of His great love with which He loved us — δια την πολλην αγαπην αυτου ην ηγαπησεν ημας — The words πολλην αγαπην mean “much in amount, plenteous, unconditional love.” The word ηγαπησεν means “to take pleasure in, to love and esteem.”

This is such an important point to share with your group. God loves us with a “great love.” That great love causes Him to take pleasure in us and esteem us. However, we are by nature children of wrath. We are sinners who sin. We are dead in trespasses and sins. God is both a God of wrath and a God of mercy. He loves those who are His enemies and under His wrath? What’s God to do in this situation?

even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved) — και οντας ημας νεκρους τοις παραπτωμασιν συνεζωοποιησεν τω χριστω χαριτι εστε σεσωσμενοι — this is similar phrasing to 2:1, “dead in trespasses and sins,” νεκρους τοις παραπτωμασιν και ταις αμαρτιαις.

Even when is και οντας, “even being” .. even though we are in the position of being dead in trespasses, God did something that only He could do.

made us alive together with Christ — συνεζωοποιησεν τω χριστω χαριτι — The word συνεζωοποιησεν means “to make alive together with.” It’s aorist indicative active, which means God did this to us at a past time. We can be sure of it. God made us alive together “with Christ.” Even as we were buried with Christ in His death, we were raised to new life in Christ (also read Romans 6). We were raised “together” with Christ Jesus. We were dead in trespasses, but God made us alive together with Christ! How did He accomplish that?

(by grace you have been saved) — χαριτι εστε σεσωσμενοι — The word χαριτι means “by grace, kindness, favor” .. σεσωσμενοι means “rescue, heal, preserve, save.” We are rescued through the agency of God’s grace, kindness, favor.

Here's an interesting insight from Greek expert Dr. Kenneth Wuest –

“Now comes the interjection, ‘by grace ye are saved.’ We have here in the Greek what is called a periphrastic construction. This is used when the writer cannot get all of the details of the action from one verbal form. So he uses two, a finite verb and a participle. The participle here is in the perfect tense and was completed in past time,, having results existent in present time. The translation reads, ‘By grace have you been completely saved, with the present result that you are in a saved state of being.” Ephesians in the Greek New Testament, Eerdmans Publishing, p 66, 1953

and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus — και συνηγειρεν και συνεκαθισεν εν τοις επουρανιοις εν χριστω ιησου

and raised us up together — και συνηγειρεν — “to raise together, to raise along with”

and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus — και συνεκαθισεν εν τοις επουρανιοις εν χριστω ιησου — συνεκαθισεν means “to make to sit together” .. επουρανιοι means “of heaven, in the heavenly sphere” .. this is the same word Paul used in Ephesians 1:20 – “which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.” Even as God raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, so God has raised us up together with Christ and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

You might wonder how we are “made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” while we’re still on earth. Good question! Jesus Christ is the ‘firstfruits’ of the resurrection. We are seated together with Christ in heavenly places because we are “in Christ Jesus.” Paul explained it this way to the Corinthians –

“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming.” 1 Corinthians 15:20-23

that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus — ινα ενδειξηται εν τοις αιωσιν τοις επερχομενοις τον υπερβαλλοντα πλουτον της χαριτος αυτου εν χρηστοτητι εφ ημας εν χριστω ιησου

that in the ages to come — ινα ενδειξηται εν τοις αιωσιν τοις επερχομενοις .. literally – *in order that he might show in the ages that are coming* .. ενδειξηται means “show forth, make fully evident” .. αιωσιν means “a cycle of time, time span, age” .. επερχομενοις means “to arrive, to come upon” .. it literally means “in the ages that are coming one upon another.”

“The satisfaction of His love was God’s motive in quickening and raising them. The manifestation of His glory in its surpassing wealth is His final purpose in the same. The verb ἐνδείκνυσθαι occurs eleven times in the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews, and nowhere else in the NT. The active is very rare even in the classics, and is never found in the NT. Hence the ἐνδείξεται is to be taken as a simple active (not as = shew forth for Himself), all the more by reason of the αὐτοῦ. What is meant by the τοῖς αἰῶσιν τοῖς ἐπερχομένοις? Some give it the widest possible sense, e.g., per omne vestrum tempus reliquum quum in hac vita tum in futura quoque (Morus), “the successively arriving ages and generations from that time to the second coming of Christ” (Ell.). But it is rather another form of the αἰὼν ὁ μέλλων (Harl., Olsh., Mey., Haupt, etc.), the part. ἐπερχόμενος being used of the future (e.g., Jer. 47:11; Isaiah 41:4; Isaiah 41:22-23; Isaiah 42:23; Luke 21:26; Jam 5:1, etc.), and the future being conceived of as made up of an undefined series of periods. In other cases reduplicated expressions, αἰῶνες τῶν αἰώνων, etc., are used to express the idea of eternity. God’s purpose, therefore, is

that in the eternal future, the future which opens with Christ's Parousia, and in all the continuing length of that future, the grace of His ways with those once dead in sins should be declared and understood in all the grandeur of its exceeding riches." Expositor's Greek Testament

He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus — τον υπερβαλλοντα πλουτον της χαριτος αυτου εν χρηστοτητι εφ ημας εν χριστω ιησου

exceeding riches of His grace — τον υπερβαλλοντα πλουτον της χαριτος .. υπερβαλλοντα means "to surpass, to excel, to exceed" .. πλουτον means "wealth, abundance, riches" .. χαριτος means "kindness, favor, grace"

in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus — αυτου εν χρηστοτητι εφ ημας εν χριστω ιησου .. χρηστοτητι means "goodness, excellence, gentleness, kindness" .. εφ ημας means "on us, upon us" .. εν χριστω ιησου means "inside, within" Christ Jesus.

This is a remarkable statement from Paul. The apostle gave the Ephesians (and us) the key to God's purpose in saving us by His grace. He will demonstrate to all creatures in the universe the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus!

Someone has said that Christians are God's trophies and He will hold us up throughout all eternity for all to see how great is His grace, mercy and kindness. I like that and hope your group will enjoy it as well. We are so blessed to belong to God.

Observe – Write what you see

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 2:4-7

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Interpret – What is the Holy Spirit’s intent in these verses?

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Apply – How can you apply these spiritual truths to your life?

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Observe – Write what you see

Ephesians 2:8-10

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Some Background To The Letter

One of the most poignant moments in the Book of Acts was when Paul said goodbye to the leaders of the Ephesian church. It was during the time when Paul was sailing from Greece on his way to Jerusalem. He stopped in Miletus and sent word to the Ephesian elders to visit him. Paul told them that the Holy Spirit had testified to him that chains and tribulations awaited him in Jerusalem.

But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. ACTS 20:24-25

Paul warned the Ephesian elders to “take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves” (Acts 20:28-30)

All of the elders from Ephesus “wept freely, and fell on Paul’s neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more.” (Acts 20:37-38)

Even though they wouldn't see Paul again, they would receive a special letter from him a few years later – the Epistle to the Ephesians – and in that letter Paul would share with them some of the greatest truths ever written by a human being under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God.

Ephesians 2:8-10 in Greek

For by grace ... τη γαρ χαριτι

The word *chariti* means “grace, kindness, favor.” This is from God’s heart to our heart. We saw this a few verses earlier when Paul wrote – “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).” God’s love is at the ‘heart’ of all that He is doing today and all that He has done and will do. God’s love is the driving force behind His great and eternal plan.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. JOHN 3:16-17

you have been saved ... εστε σεσωσμενοι

The word *sesōsmenoi* means “rescue, save, heal, preserve.” The idea of the word is to ‘deliver out of danger and into safety.’ Paul wrote in verse 5, “by grace you have been saved,” and he repeated it in verse 8 and expanded on it.

through faith ... δια της πιστεως

Our salvation, Paul wrote, is ‘through faith.’ Faith is the ‘means’ by which a sinner accesses the salvation that comes from the grace of God. The word ‘faith’ is *pisteōs* and means “belief, trust, confidence.”

I understand how someone can be gracious toward us and how we can believe they are being gracious, but how can we have the faith to be saved by grace if we are ‘dead’ in trespasses and sins? How do we get past the ‘dead’ problem?

and that not of yourselves ... και τουτο ουκ εξ υμων

What is “that”? Of course the grace of God is “not of yourselves.” That’s obvious based on what Paul wrote a few sentences earlier about the richness of God’s mercy and “His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses.” But what about ‘faith’? Did Paul also mean that ‘faith’ is not of ourselves? Could it be that someone who is dead in trespasses and sins, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and by nature a child of wrath, could not muster the ‘faith’ to be saved? If a person is ‘dead’ in trespasses and sins, was Paul saying there is no way for that person to have a flicker of ‘life’ to believe in God’s salvation? Is there no way a sinner can play a role in their own salvation?

I ask those questions because many people think they have the ability to ‘work up’ the faith to believe in God’s salvation and when they do they can share in some of credit for their own salvation. Is that true?

The issue here is the ‘source’ of ‘faith.’ From whence does it come to us? Is ‘God’ the source or are ‘we’ the source? Keep in mind that sinners are “dead in trespasses and sins” (2:1). Can a ‘dead man’ believe anything? Can a ‘dead man’ respond to anything? What must be done so that a ‘dead man’ can believe and respond?

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved). EPHESIANS 2:4-5

God is the One who “made us alive together with Christ” even when “we were dead in trespasses.” God made us “alive together with Christ” and “raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (2:5-6).

That's why salvation is "not of ourselves." We had nothing to do with it. So then, what is it if not something we cause to happen?

it is the gift of God ... θεου το δωρον

Aaah, and there we have it. Salvation is the 'gift' of God. The word 'gift' is *dōron* and means "present, offering, gift" and focuses on the free nature of the gift. Yes, people are told to 'believe' in Jesus. That's what Paul told the Philippian jailer to do (Acts 16:31) and what he wrote to the Christians in Rome —

... that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ROMANS 10:9-10

Believing is not a ‘work’ on our part for which we can claim credit. We are saved when we believe in Jesus Christ – when we confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in our heart that God raised Him from the dead. However, the act of confessing and believing is “not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.”

not of works ... ουκ εξ εργαων

The Greek words *ouk ex* translate “not as a result of.” The word *ergōn* means “deed, action, work that accomplishes something.” Paul gives us an oppositional view about salvation. It is God’s gift to us, not something for which we worked.

Most religions are based on the idea of performing ‘works’ for whatever the religions view as ‘salvation.’ Paul’s audience in Ephesus, and other cities in the ancient world, were made up of Jews and Gentiles. Both groups were part of religions that emphasized ‘working’ for salvation.

The same is true today. Look into the foundational beliefs of religions around the world and ‘works’ plays a vital role in their relationship with whatever they view as God or supernatural being(s).

Paul struck a mighty blow to all of the world religions and various worldview when he wrote – “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works ...”

There is an important reason for this –

lest anyone should boast ... ινα μη τις καυχησηται

People will take credit for something they earn. If I work for something, I can boast about getting it. However, a free gift is different. If someone gives me that kind of gift, the credit goes to the giver of the gift. They gave the gift freely, without coercion. I may boast about what someone freely ‘gives’ me, but I can’t claim I earned it. Any credit goes to the gift-giver. In the case of salvation (eternal life), that credit goes to God – all

of it. As Paul wrote in Galatians – “But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” (Galatians 6:14)

This is a foundational truth that sets Christianity apart from every other religion and worldview. In order to understand what God accomplished in sending His Son from Heaven to earth to die for us, we must grasp the majesty of His saving us –

by grace

through faith

not of ourselves

it is the gift of God

not of works

lest anyone should boast

That the glory of that salvation belongs wholly to God and in no degree to man, and that it has been so planned and so effected as to take from us all ground for boasting, is enforced on Paul's hearers again and again, in different connections, with anxious concern and utmost plainness of expression. Expositor's Greek Testament

The suppression of boasting was a purpose of God in his scheme of salvation; not the chief or final purpose, any more than the manifestation of his grace in coming ages was his chief or final purpose in showing mercy to the Ephesians, but inseparable from the nature of his plan. The spirit of glorying is essentially unsuited to the relations between the creature and the Creator, between the Redeemer and the redeemed. Pulpit Commentary

For we are His workmanship ... αυτου γαρ εσμεν ποιημα

This verse, verse 10, is often overlooked by Christians. We quote verses 8 and 9 easily and often to support the truth that salvation is a free gift of God. No one can work for it.

However, Paul does quickly add an important note about the importance of works.

First, Paul points out that we are God's 'workmanship.' The Greek word is *poiēma* and means "a thing made, what has been made." We Christians are God's 'workmanship.' We are the 'work' of His hands and heart – God's 'handiwork.'

created in Christ Jesus ... κτισθεντες εν χριστω ιησου

Paul goes on to say that God 'created' us in Christ Jesus for something. The word 'created' is the Greek word *ktisthentes*. It means "built, formed, shaped, made." God created us "in" (*en* – inside, within) Christ Jesus for something. That something is ethical, spiritual in nature, rather than physical. That is what happens to a person when they are saved by grace through faith and not of themselves. God's 'work' of grace in a sinner's life brings about a new life which is both spiritual and ethical. That 'new creation' changes people on the inside as they are now 'inside' Christ Jesus. As Paul wrote the Corinthians – "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a

new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

for good works ... επι εργοις αγαθοις

God created us in Christ Jesus ‘for’ (with a view toward) ‘good works.’ The Greek words are *ergois agathois* (works good) and mean “deeds, actions” that are “intrinsically good, good in nature.”

While Ephesians 2:8-9 tell us ‘how’ we are saved, verse 10 tells us ‘why’ we are saved. We are saved to ‘work’. We are not saved ‘by’ good works, but we are saved ‘for’ good works.’ What we do in obedience to God’s will is not ‘for’ acceptance, but ‘from’ acceptance.’ God gives us the free gift of salvation, then puts us to work to fulfill His will for our lives.

Jesus made the interesting comment that “whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother” (Mark 3:35). The Lord was laser focused on doing His Father’s will – “He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed,

saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” (Matthew 6:39) Jesus taught His disciples to pray – “Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.”(Matthew 6:10)

We learn something of the ‘work’ Jesus came to do from what the Apostle John wrote in his first letter – “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” (1 John 3:8)

What is our work? To do the ‘will’ of God. As Paul wrote to Timothy – “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17) God gave us His Word to thoroughly equip us for “every good work.”

which God prepared beforehand ... οἰς προητοιμασεν ο θεος

The words “prepared beforehand” are an English translation of the Greek word *proētoimasein*. It means “to prepare or appoint beforehand, to predestine, made ready in advance.”

God designed a grand plan in eternity that included the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (e.g. 1 Peter 1:10-21; Ephesians 1:3-14; 2 Timothy 1:8-10) and our service to Him (e.g. Ephesians 2:10). Our service is explained in the phrase “good works.” That’s what God intends for us to do from the moment we are saved. The sooner a new Christian understands God’s purpose for their lives, the more they will glorify God and enjoy His blessings.

Here are some thoughts from other commentators about this important truth –

God prearranged a sphere of moral action for us to walk in. Not only are works the necessary outcome of faith, but the character and direction of the works are made ready by God. Dr. Marvin Vincent, Word Studies In The New Testament, Eerdmanns Publishing, 1946

God's purpose in the place which He gave to good works in His decree was that they should actually and habitually be done by us. His final object was to make good works the very element of our life, the domain in which our action should move. That this should be the nature of our walk is implied in our being His handiwork, made anew by Him in Christ; that the good works which form the Divine aim of our life shall be realised is implied in their being designed and made ready for us in God's decree; and that they are of God's originating, and not of our own action and merit, is implied in the fact that we had ourselves to be made a new creation in Christ with a view to them. Expositor's Greek Testament

The phrase does not state, but surely implies, the happy truth that the Divine pre-arrangement so maps out, as it were, the duties and the sufferings of the saint that his truest wisdom and deepest peace is to ‘do the next thing’ in the daily path, in the persuasion that it is part of a consistent plan for him.
Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges

that we should walk in them ... ἵνα ἐν αὐτοῖς
περιπατησωμεν

“we should walk” is a translation of *peripatēsōmen*. It is the idea of “walking around” in a complete circuit. In an ethical sense this means how we conduct our life. In this context, it concerns how we conduct ourselves in the sphere of “good works.”

Another way of understanding the word is “to order one’s behavior.” How do we order our behavior, our conduct? How do we speak, act and react? Paul used the word *peripatēsōmen* many times in his letters.

In Romans 6:4, Paul wrote that Christians “should walk in newness of life.”

In Romans 13:13, Paul wrote that Christians should “walk properly...not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.”

In Galatians 5:16, Paul told Christians to “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”

In Ephesians 4:1-3, Paul urged Christians to “walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

It is important how Christians “walk”. In our context of Ephesians 2:10, we are to “walk in good works.

Observe – Write what you see

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.
Ephesians 2:8-10

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Question – Ask and answer questions based on observations

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Apply – How can you apply these spiritual truths to your life?

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Observe – Write what you see

Ephesians 2:11-13

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— 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. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

One of the primary differences between Jews and Gentiles in the 1st Century AD was circumcision. Jews were circumcised and Gentiles were not. For Jews, it began almost 2,000 years before Christ.

This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. GENESIS 17:10-11

Circumcision was known and practiced in some areas of the ancient world, though many nations did not participate in it or it was just for the higher classes. However, by the time Paul wrote Ephesians circumcision had become one of the primary differentiations between Jews and Gentiles.

The word “circumcise” in Hebrew is *namal* and means “cut off.” The word “circumcise” in Greek is *peritemnō* and means “a cutting round.” While Jews of Paul’s time considered circumcision a sign of God’s covenant with them, Greeks and Romans viewed circumcision as mutilation.

The issue of circumcision was at the heart of one of the most contentious disagreements among mid-1st century believers. Some of the believers in Judea who were of the sect of the Pharisees argued that it was necessary for Gentile converts to undergo circumcision and keep the Mosaic Law (Acts 15). Paul and Barnabas strongly argued that it was not necessary. James, Peter, John and other leaders in Jerusalem determined that God did not require Gentile converts to be circumcised or keep the Mosaic Law (Galatians 2).

Ephesians 2:11-13 in Greek

Therefore remember that you once Gentiles in the flesh

... διο μνημονευετε οτι υμεις ποτε τα εθνη εν σαρκι

remember is μνημονευετε and means “to call to mind, recall by memory”

once Gentiles is ποτε τα εθνη and means “formerly nations, culture” (distinct from Israel) .. Christians in Ephesus were majority Gentile, but notice that Paul used an adverb to describe that description as *former* ..

in the flesh is εν σαρκι and means “body, human nature” ..

who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision ... οι λεγομενοι ακροβυστια υπο της λεγομενης περιτομης

who are called Uncircumcision is οι λεγομενοι ακροβυστια and means “the ones being called physically uncircumcised” .. that word ακροβυστια was also a slang word Jews used for Gentiles .. Jews looked down on Gentiles because they were not circumcised and part of God’s covenant people ..

by what is called the Circumcision is υπο της λεγομενης περιτομης and means “by that being called physically circumcised, cut around” .. notice that the emphasis is on Jews calling Gentiles a slang name ..

made in the flesh by hands ... εν σαρκι χειροποιητου means “performed by hands” .. baby boys are not born circumcised .. it’s not a natural condition .. someone has to “cut around” to circumcise the male child ..

that at that time you were without Christ ... οτι ητε εν τω καιρω εκεινω χωρις χριστου

that at that time you were ... οτι ητε εν τω καιρω εκεινω means “that you were at the opportune time, season” .. Paul was referring to the time before the Ephesian believers were saved ..

without Christ ... χωρίς χριστου means “separate from, apart from, without, Christ, Messiah, anointed One” .. the Gentile believers had been separated from Christ before they believed ..

being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel ... απηλλοτριωμενοι της πολιτειας του ισραηλ

being aliens from ... απηλλοτριωμενοι means “alienated from, estranged from”

the commonwealth of Israel ... της πολιτειας του ισραηλ means “the citizenship of Israel, the Jewish people”

and strangers from the covenants of promise ... και ξενοι των διαθηκων της επαγγελιας

and strangers ... και ξενοι means “foreigner, alien, stranger”

..

from the covenants of promise ... των διαθηκων της επαγγελιας means “to the set agreement, testament, will, of announced promise” ..

God made His covenants of promise with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and expanded them through Moses and David. The Gentiles were not partakers of the covenants of promise. In fact, they were *strangers, foreigners, aliens*.

having no hope and without God in the world ... ελπιδα μη εχοντες και αθεοι εν τω κοσμω

having no hope ... ελπιδα μη εχοντες means “confident expectation not possessing” ..

and without God in the world ... και αθεοι εν τω κοσμω means “godless, ungodly within the ordered system of the world, universe”

This is a powerful declaration of the utter hopelessness of Gentiles prior to Jesus dying on the Cross and rising from the dead.

without Christ

aliens from the commonwealth of Israel

strangers from the covenants of promise

having no hope

without God in the world

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ ... νυνι δε εν χριστω ιησου υμεις οι ποτε οντες μακραν εγγυς εγενηθητε εν τω αιματι του χριστου

But now in Christ Jesus ... νυνι δε εν χριστω ιησου means “precisely now however within the Messiah Jesus”

you who once were far off ... υμεις οι ποτε οντες μακραν means “you at one time existing a long distance away”

have been brought near ... εγγυς εγενηθητε means “have emerged, transitioning from one point to another, near in place or time”

by the blood of Christ ... εν τω αιματι του χριστου means “by the, through the, shed blood of Messiah”

Paul reminded the Gentile Christians in Ephesus that they once were far from Christ. They weren't connected to God through the promises He had made to Israel (members of the Circumcision). They had no hope in this world because they were godless. However, as Gentiles had once been far away from God, the shed blood of Jesus Christ had brought them near to God. That is the wonder and glory of being a Christian.

Non-Christians often ask why Christians sing about the blood of Jesus. What's the big deal, they ask? The big deal is that without the shed blood of Jesus, we have no way to know God or approach Him. Without the shed blood of Jesus Christ, we are strangers, aliens, hopeless, without God in this world.

Observe – Write what you see

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— 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. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

EPHESIANS 2:11-13

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Interpret – What is the Holy Spirit’s intent in these verses?

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Apply – How can you apply these spiritual truths to your life?

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Observe – Write what you see

Ephesians 2:14-18

“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 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, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.”

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.” We hear that phrase often today, but who said it first? King David of Israel.

*“Jerusalem is built As a city that is compact together,
Where the tribes go up, The tribes of the Lord, To the
Testimony of Israel, To give thanks to the name of the
Lord. For thrones are set there for judgment, The thrones
of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
‘May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your
walls, Prosperity within your palaces.’ PSALM 122:3-7*

Peace between Jews and Gentiles is a powerful theme in Paul’s preaching and writings. Jesus Christ is the One who brings that peace. Jews had a big advantage in having peace with God. They were partakers in the covenants of God’s promise. Gentiles had a big disadvantage in having peace with God. They were strangers from the covenants of promise, “having no hope and without God in the world.” (Ephesians 2:12) So, what made the difference? “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” (Ephesians 2:13)

Watch carefully in today's study because Paul is going to open our understanding to God's great plan of peace for Jerusalem, Israel and the world.

Ephesians 2:14-18 in Greek

For He Himself is our peace ... αὐτος γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ εἰρήνη

For He Himself is an emphatic way of presenting the fact that Jesus is the only source of a Christian's peace, whether Jew or Gentile. αὐτος γὰρ is an intensive use of the pronoun in Greek.

is our peace ... Jesus is *the peace of us* .. the word **peace** is εἰρήνη and means "all things joined together, wholeness, rest" .. the word comes from *eirō*, tie together into a whole ..

"The selection of the abstract εἰρήνη, instead of the simple εἰρηνοποιός, suggests that the point of the αὐτός is not only "He alone," but "He in His own person". It is not only that the peace was made by Christ

and ranks as His achievement, but that it is so identified with Him that were He away it would also fail,—so dependent on Him that apart from Him we cannot have it. And He is thus for us “the Peace” (ἡ εἰρήνη), Peace in the absolute sense to the exclusion of all other.” EXPOSITOR’S GREEK TESTAMENT, WILLIAM ROBERTSON NICOLL, EDITOR, 1897

who has made both one ... ο ποιησας τα αμφοτερα εν

who has made .. ποιησας is a verb in the aorist tense, which means it is a simple past tense that shows an action has happened .. it is like a photograph that can be looked at and remembered .. the peace that Jesus made by making Jew and Gentile one is a past action that we can remember fondly .. to make peace is to join something together that has been separated .. Jesus made peace between Jew and Gentile who God had separated thousands of years earlier when He called Abram out of paganism to make a people for Himself ..

both one ... αμφοτερα εν is the idea of two things being brought together into a unified whole (one) .. there are no longer two in Christ, but one .. Jesus made peace and made two into one .. this is amazing to think that God separated Abram out of the Gentile people to make a new people about 2,000 years before Christ died on the Cross to bring those two “people” together as *one* new people ..

and has broken down the middle wall of separation ... και το μεσοτοιχον του φραγμου λυσας

has broken down is λυσας and is a verb in the aorist tense .. it is a simple past tense that shows an action has happened .. Jesus accomplished the breaking down when He shed His blood on the Cross (*brought near by the blood of Christ*, verse 13) ..

the middle wall of separation ... the *middle wall* is μεσοτοιχον and means “barrier, partition, partition wall, middle wall” .. του φραγμου is “of separation” and means “fencing in, hedge, enclosure” ..

“This alludes to a wall in the temple that partitioned off the Court of the Gentiles from the areas accessible only to Jews. Paul referred to that wall as symbolic of the social, religious, and spiritual separation that kept Jews and Gentiles apart.” **THE MCARTHUR STUDY BIBLE, 2ND EDITION, THOMAS NELSON, 2019**

having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances ... την εχθραν εν τη σαρκι αυτου τον νομον των εντολων εν δογμασιν καταργησας

having abolished in His flesh the enmity .. καταργησας is a verb in the aorist tense and means “annulled, rendered inoperative, make of no effect, abolished” .. Jesus made of no effect **the enmity**, εχθραν .. it means “hostility, alienation, enmity” .. that enmity was what Jews and Gentiles felt toward each other .. both were opposed to each other, they were hostile to each other, alienated from each other .. what Jesus did was to abolish that hostility **in His flesh** .. the words are εν τη σαρκι αυτου and mean “in the flesh of Him” .. the *flesh*

here points to the human body of Jesus, the body prepared for Him to sacrifice (Hebrews 10:5) on the Cross .. Jesus “rendered inoperative, made of no effect, abolished” the hostility that had existed between Jew and Gentile, a hostility that came from God’s choice of Abram and the choices that followed .. a powerful display of how all of God’s choices are part of His eternal plan, even if separated by hundreds or even thousands of years .. what does that mean for us? There are differing views ..

“Through His death, Christ abolished OT ceremonial laws, feasts, and sacrifices which uniquely separated Jews from Gentiles.” THE MCARTHUR STUDY BIBLE, 2ND EDITION, THOMAS NELSON, 2019

“So Erasmus, Vatablus, Estius, Cornelius a Lapide, Bengel, and others, including Rückert and Bleek; while Hofmann turns the notion of ἔχθρα into the mere ἀπαλλοτρίωσις of Ephesians 2:12, and, referring it to the estrangement on the part of the Gentiles towards the theocracy hated by them, removes the distinctive mark

of reciprocalness demanded by the context.” MEYER’S NT COMMENTARY, HEINRICH AUGUST WILHELM MEYER, 1832-1859

that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances ... when we read the entire verse it becomes clear that the enmity (hostility) that was abolished in the death (flesh) of Jesus came from the *law of commandments contained in ordinances* .. the issue here is the Law God gave to Israel through Moses .. the Mosaic Law of commandments contained in ordinances (literally hundreds of them) were a separation between Jews and Gentiles, as God intended at the time .. He gave those ordinances to Moses for Israel to obey .. Gentiles who feared God were allowed to worship, but their relationship to God was different than Jews because of the Mosaic Law of commandments contained in ordinance .. what the death of Jesus on the Cross did was to καταργήσας (abolish, annul, make of no effect, render inoperative) those ordinances, thus bringing an end to the separation between Jews and Gentiles through Christ .. that was God’s plan all along ..

“This Law is abolished in the sense of being rendered inoperative (as καταργεῖν means), and it is defined as the Law τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν. What is the point of the definition? The article, which is in place with the ἐντολῶν, is omitted before the δόγμασιν, as the latter makes one idea with the former and further is under the regimen of a prep. (cf. Win.-Moult., pp. 139, 149, 151, 158). The Law is one of “commandments-in-decrees”. What is in view is its character as mandatory, and consisting in a multitude of prescriptions or statutes. It enjoined, and it expressed its injunctions in so many decrees, but it did not enable. The Law was made up of ἐντολαί and these ἐντολαί expressed themselves and operated in the form of δόγματα, ordinances.” EXPOSITOR’S GREEK TESTAMENT, 1897

“Consisting in many institutions and appointments concerning the outward worship of God; such as those of circumcision, sacrifices, clean and unclean meats, washings, and holy days; which, being founded in the mere pleasure of God, might be abolished when he saw fit.

These ordinances Jesus abolished, that he might make in himself — That is, by uniting them to himself as their head; of twain — Of Jews and Gentiles, who were at such a distance before; one new man — One mystical body, one church, renewed by the Holy Ghost, and uniting in one new way of gospel worship: so making peace — Between the two kinds of people, and even laying a foundation for the most sincere mutual love and friendship: And, or moreover, to complete this blessed work of making peace, that he might reconcile both, as thus united in one body, and animated by one spirit, not merely to one another, but unto God, by his death on the cross — By which he expiated the guilt of sin, and rendered God reconcileable, and ready to pardon the penitent that should believe in Jesus; and by which he procured for mankind, whether Jews or Gentiles, the Holy Spirit to work repentance and faith in them, and destroy that carnal mind, which is enmity against God, (Romans 8:7,) and all those sinful passions which are connected therewith, and which render men odious in his sight, and hostile to one another.”

BENSON COMMENTARY, 1815

so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two ...

ΙΝΑ ΤΟΥΣ ΔΥΟ ΚΤΙΣΗ ΕΝ ΕΑΥΤΩ ΕΙΣ ΕΝΑ ΚΑΙΝΟΝ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΝ

literally “so that the two he might create into one new man” .. Jesus is the Creator of the universe (John 1:1-3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16), so creating one new man out of two is certainly within the realm of His ability and our belief .. Jesus’ death on the Cross was a creative process .. even though we think of it as primarily a payment for the penalty of sins, Jesus’ death was also creative .. Paul used the term *brought near* in the 13th verse when he wrote, “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” You may remember that the Greek word ἐγενήθητε in verse 13 (*brought*) means “have come into being” .. The death and shed blood of Jesus on the Cross was instrumental in taking two hostile peoples (Jew and Gentile) and creating them into “one new man” (ενα καινον ανθρωπον) .. the word *new* (καινον) means “new in quality, fresh in development, unused, not found like this before” .. what Jesus created is not a re-making or re-shaping of the old men (Jew and Gentile), but something entirely new and unique .. there’s never been

anything like it before .. Christians are not Jew or Gentile in the spiritual sense, they are spiritually “new” .. what came from that new creation?

thus making peace ... ποιων ειρηνην .. ποιων means “manufacturing, making, constructing” .. ειρηνην means “joining together, wholeness, rest” .. In Christ, Jews and Gentiles come together as new people, joined together, whole, able to rest in who they are in Christ Jesus our Lord, reconciled to one another through the shed blood of Jesus .. that reconciliation brings permanent peace (rest and wholeness) .. Paul wrote the Corinthians about the new creation and reconciliation we have in Jesus Christ and the responsibility we have to share this truth with others ..

“Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has

reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” 2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-19

“Christ does not exclude anyone who comes to Him, and those who are His are not spiritually distinct from one another.” THE MCARTHUR STUDY BIBLE, 2ND EDITION, THOMAS NELSON, 2019

“The new creation and the new union have their ground and principle in Christ. What was contemplated, too, was not simply the making of one man (ἓνα ἄνθρωπον) where formerly there were two, but the making of one new (καινὸν) man. The result was not that, though the separation between them was removed, the Jew still remained Jew and the Gentile still Gentile. It was something new, the old distinctions between Jew and Gentile being lost in a third order of “man”—the Christian

man.” EXPOSITOR’S GREEK TESTAMENT, WILLIAM ROBERTSON NICOLL, EDITOR, 1897

and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity ... και αποκαταλλαξη τους αμφοτερους εν ενι σωματι τω θεω δια του σταυρου αποκτεινας την εχθραν εν αυτω

and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross .. Paul continues the theme of reconciliation .. we are reconciled to God in one body (the body of Jesus) through the Cross .. the word reconciled is αποκαταλλαξη and means “change completely from one state of feeling to another” .. Jews and Gentiles were both at enmity with God before Christ’s death on the Cross .. the death of Jesus Christ made reconciliation with God and each other possible ..

“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.” ROMANS 5:6-11

thereby putting to death the enmity ... the enmity between God and men and between Jews and Gentiles were put to death when Jesus died on the Cross .. this takes us all the way back to the Garden of Eden where the enmity between God and humans began .. that enmity increased through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel), and through the Law God gave Israel through Moses .. thousands of years later, God

put to death all of that enmity through the death of His Son .. a remarkable event indeed ..

“Through the person, sacrifice, and mediation of Christ, sinners are allowed to draw near to God as a Father, and are brought with acceptance into his presence, with their worship and services, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, as one with the Father and the Son. Christ purchased leave for us to come to God; and the Spirit gives a heart to come, and strength to come, and then grace to serve God acceptably.”

MATTHEW HENRY’S CONCISE COMMENTARY, 1706

And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near ... και ελθων ευηγγελισατο ειρηνην υμιν τοις μακραν και τοις εγγυς

And He came and preached peace to you .. the word “came” (ελθων) is an aorist participle and translates as “having come” .. that speaks to the first coming (advent) of Jesus .. He preached peace to you (ευηγγελισατο ειρηνην υμῖν) translates as “He proclaimed the Gospel peace to

you” .. the Gospel (good news) that Jesus preached on earth was the “gospel of the kingdom” (Matthew 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; Mark 1:14) .. In Mark 1:15, Jesus said “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.” .. Repentance and faith are at the center of Jesus’ preaching .. true peace comes from true repentance and true faith ..

who were afar off and to those who were near .. this speaks to the context, which is the Gentiles who were afar off and the Jews who were near .. Jesus preached peace to both and that’s still our message today .. our Gospel of peace is to all people .. we are reminded of what is written in Isaiah 57:19 – “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.” .. some NT manuscripts repeat the word for peace (ειρηνην) twice – και ελθων ευηγγελισατο ειρηνην υμιν τοις μακραν και ειρηνην τοις εγγυς (Westcott-Hort)

“The repetition of the word ‘peace’ in the R.V. is expressive; if the subject had been merely peace between the two classes of men, we should not have had the repetition; the repetition denotes peace between each of the two classes and a third party, viz. God. It is remarkable that the Gentiles, ‘those that were far off,’ are mentioned here before the Jews, ‘those that were nigh.’ In point of chronology, the Jews came first; but the order is here transposed, probably to emphasize the offer of the gospel to the Gentiles, and to show that spiritually they were as near as the Jews.” PULPIT COMMENTARY

For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father ... οτι δι αυτου εχομεν την προσαγωγην οι αμφοτεροι εν ενι πνευματι προς τον πατερα

Notice the Trinity reference here ... “through Him” (God the Son), “by one Spirit” (God the Spirit), “to the Father” (God the Father)

Paul has given us, in one sentence, one of the best insights into how God saves .. salvation is “through” Christ, “by” the Holy Spirit, “to” the Father ..

What is “salvation” if not **access** to God the Father .. προσαγωγήν means “come toward, a bringing to, admission, to open a way of access” .. as Jesus told His disciples – “No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6) .. the only way anyone can have access to God the Father is through God the Son by God the Spirit .. that’s how salvation works ..

“God the Son provides the way into the Father’s presence through the Blood of His Cross, God the Spirit conducts the saint in and presents him, and God the Father is the One into whose presence the believer is brought.” **WORD STUDIES IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT, EPHESIANS, KENNETH WUEST, EERDMANS PUBLISHING, 1953**

“No sinner has any right or worthiness in himself for access to God, but believers have been granted that right through faith in Christ’s sacrificial death (cf. 3:12; Rom. 5:2). The resources of the Trinity belong to believers the moment they receive Christ, and the Holy Spirit presents them before the heavenly throne of God the Father, where they are welcome to come with boldness at any time.” *The McArthur Study Bible, 2nd Edition, Thomas Nelson, 2019*
**THE MCARTHUR STUDY BIBLE, 2ND EDITION,
THOMAS NELSON, 2019**

“‘Access’ is properly ‘the introduction’ (used also in Ephesians 3:12; Romans 5:2), a technical word of presentation to a royal presence. So says Chrysostom, ‘We came not of ourselves, but He brought us in.’ The corresponding verb is found in 1Peter 3:18, ‘Christ also suffered for sins—the just for the unjust—that He might bring us to God.’ **ELLICOTT’S COMMENTARY FOR ENGLISH READERS, 1878**

*“Ephesians knew that in their prayers and other exercises they did really stand before God, and felt as children to a Father. How came this to pass? ‘Through him.’ Sinful men have not this privilege by nature; ‘Your iniquities have **separated** between you and your God’ (Isaiah 59:2). They need a Mediator; Jesus is that Mediator; and through him, both Jews and Gentiles enjoy the privilege. But right of access is not enough; in approaching God and holding fellowship with him there must be some congeniality of soul, a fellow-feeling between God and the worshipper; this is effected through the same Spirit. Some render ‘in the same spirit, or disposition of mind.’ This is true, but not all the truth; for the question arises – How do we get this suitable disposition? And the answer is – It is wrought by the Holy Spirit. As the state of the soul in true intercourse with God is substantially the same in all, so it is brought by the same Holy Spirit. In fact, this verse is one of the characteristic texts of Ephesians, in which Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are brought together.” PULPIT COMMENTARY*

Observe – Write what you see

“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 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, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.” EPHESIANS 2:14-18

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Question – Ask and answer questions based on observations

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Interpret – What is the Holy Spirit’s intent in these verses?

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Apply – How can you apply these spiritual truths to your life?

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Observe – Write what you see

Ephesians 2:19-22

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

During the past couple of lessons we have seen how the Blood of Jesus Christ brings Gentiles spiritual hope. Jesus brought peace between Gentiles and Jews by creating in Himself “one new man from the two” and reconciled both to God “through the cross.” (Ephesians 2:15-16)

Paul wrote that Christians have access to God the Father through Christ and “by one Spirit.” This continues the theme Paul introduced earlier in Ephesians.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace ... In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. EPHESIANS 1:7, 13-14

The Jews and Gentiles had disagreed with each other’s religious beliefs for centuries. Both believed they were right and the other was wrong. God solved the age-old controversy by sending His Son Jesus Christ from Heaven to earth. “For He Himself is our peace.” (Ephesians 2:14)

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows 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 2:19-22 in Greek

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners ... ἀρα ουν ουκετι εστε ξενοι και παροικοι

now, therefore ... ἀρα ουν (so then) ... Paul concludes his recent points for the Gentiles in the Ephesian church ... he wants them to understand the full weight and importance of what he wrote concerning their new position in Christ ... being reconciled with Jews “to God in one body through the cross”

...

you are no longer strangers and foreigners ... ΟΥΚΕΤΙ
ΕΣΤΕ ΞΕΝΟΙ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΡΟΙΚΟΙ ... the Gentile believers had been
strangers and foreigners in the past, but no more ... ΞΕΝΟΙ
(*xenos*) means “foreigner, alien, stranger” ... the English word
xenophobia comes from the Greek ΞΕΝΟΙ ... ΠΑΡΟΙΚΟΙ means
“dwelling near, foreign” ... the idea was of someone who lived
close to others as a temporary dweller ... they would have
limited rights as a non-citizen ... this is similar to what we find
in many countries today with some foreigners living and
working with certain limitations, but without citizenship rights
...

*The word ‘stranger’ is xenos, ‘an alien.’ The word speaks of
that which is of a different quality or nature than something
else, thus, alien to it. **KENNETH WUEST, EPHESIANS IN
THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT,***

**but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the
household of God** ... ΑΛΛΑ ΣΥΜΠΟΛΙΤΑΙ ΤΩΝ ΑΓΙΩΝ ΚΑΙ
ΟΙΚΕΙΟΙ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ

but fellow citizens with the saints ... συμπολιται means “citizen together with” ... this hearkens back to Paul’s earlier words – “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. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” ... Gentile Christians were now full citizens together with the saints (των αγιων) ... the word αγιων means “set apart ones, holy ones, set apart for sacred service” ...

and members of the household of God ... και οικειοι του θεου ... οικειοι means “of the household, of one’s family” ... the word carries the idea of intimacy ... Gentile Christians were intimate members of God’s family, the household of faith ...

having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone ... εποικοδομηθεντες επι τω θεμελιω των αποστολων και προφητων οντος ακρογωνιαιου αυτου ιησου χριστου

having been built ... εποικοδομηθεντες επι ... εποικοδομηθεντες means “to build upon” (aorist participle passive) ...

the foundation ... τω θεμελιω ... θεμελιω means “belonging to a foundation, laid down as a foundation, a foundation stone” ... every house (building) and household (family) has a foundation which undergirds it ...

of the apostles and prophets ... των αποστολων και προφητων ... while the identity of the apostles (αποστολων) is understood, the identity of the prophets is not as clear ... some scholars believe the prophets Paul mentioned were the Old Testament prophets ... others believe Paul meant New Testament prophets ... some believe the word prophets

(προφητων) should be included with the word apostles, to understand that apostles were also prophets and prophetic in their ministry ... Paul later presents apostles and prophets as separate gifts that Jesus gave to the Church (Ephesians 4:11), so it may be that he meant the phrase to be understood similarly here in 2:20 ... one problem with identifying the “prophets” as New Testament prophets who were part of the foundation upon which God built His household is that few NT prophets are mentioned in Acts or the letters of the apostles ... who were they and how did they play a foundational role for the household of God? ... it may be that people may have had in mind some of the people who served with him who had the gift of prophecy ... we know that Agabus was a prophet of the New Testament (Acts 11:28; 21:10) ... we also know that Acts 13:1 identifies several prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch, Syria: “Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.” ... it may be that Paul was referring to some of these men as being foundational to the household of God ... another possible prophet was Apollos (Acts 18:24; 19:1; 1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:5-6; Titus 3:13) ...

there may be others, but this gives us some sense of how New Testament prophets may have been in Paul's mind when he wrote about people who were part of the foundation of the household God was building ... and there is still the possibility Paul was thinking about the Old Testament prophets whose writings he quoted more than a hundred times in his letters ...

Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone ...

ΟΝΤΟΣ ΑΚΡΟΓΩΝΙΑΙΟΥ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΙΗΣΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ ...

ακρογωνιαίου means “at the extreme angle or corner, cornerstone” ... it was used for the primary foundation stone at the corner or angle of a building ... the cornerstone “fixes a standard for the bearings of the walls and cross-walls throughout” (W.W. Lloyd) ... the word was also used for the chief cornerstone and the capstone ... it is the most important part of a foundation as it connects and upholds everything else ... that is who Jesus Christ is to the household of God, the Church ...

in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord ... εν ω πασα η οικοδομη συναρμολογουμενη αυξει εις ναον αγιον εν κυριω

in whom ... εν ω points to Jesus Christ ... the idea of the preposition εν is of being on the inside or within ...

the whole building ... πασα η οικοδομη ... πασα means “every part, the whole, every kind of” ... οικοδομη means “a building, a building serving as a home, the act of building” ... it is within Jesus that the whole building of God:

being fitted together ... συναρμολογουμενη ... συναρμολογουμενη means “to fit together, joined closely with, hinged together, fitly framed together” ... Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the household of God and it is “in Christ that the whole building is being (present participle middle or passive) fitted together for a particular purpose ...

grows into a holy temple in the Lord ... αυξει εις ναον αγιον εν κυριω ... αυξει means “to make to grow, cause to

increase, become greater” ... ναον means “inner sanctuary of a temple” ... it’s important to note that Paul did not use the term ἱερόν, which would include the porches and outer buildings of the temple complex ... Paul made a powerful statement about the “Church” Jesus is building, the inner sanctuary where God dwells ...

in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit ... εν ω και υμεις συνοικοδομεισθε εις κατοικητηριον του θεου εν πνευματι

in whom you also are being built together ... Paul emphasized his statement ... even as the whole building being fitted together to grow into a holy inner sanctuary in the Lord, so the individual believers are also being built together (συνοικοδομεισθε)

for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit ... εις κατοικητηριον του θεου εν πνευματι ... κατοικητηριον means “habitation, abode, dwelling place” ... it has the idea of

permanency of occupation ... του θεου εν πνευματι tells us that God permanently dwells in His earthly inner sanctuary εν (in, by) His Spirit ...

We are reminded here of what Paul wrote in the opening portion of this letter:

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. EPHESIANS 1:13-14

Every true believer in Christ is sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. That promise is connected to our inheritance in Christ (“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.” 1:11-12) That promise is made to Gentile and Jew who Christ has

created as “one new man” (2:15) through His death on the Cross. Not only do we have this special promise of an inheritance, but we also have the promise that God is fitting us all together “for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” How precious are the promises of God our Savior!

Observe – Write what you see

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows 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 2:19-22

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Interpret – What is the Holy Spirit’s intent in these verses?

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Apply – How can you apply these spiritual truths to your life?

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Next Time

We will look at **Ephesians 3** in the next part of our series, *Teaching Ephesians*.

Scripture taken from the New King James Version®.
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