

# EPHESIANS

## Chapter 2

*By Grace Through Faith*

**And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**

**2:1–10** In ch. 1 Paul wrote of the great purposes and plan of God, culminating in the universal headship of Christ (1:10), all of which is to be for “the praise of his glory” (1:14). He now proceeds to explain the steps by which God will accomplish his purposes, beginning with the salvation of individuals. (CSB)

**2:1** *you were dead* – A description of their past moral and spiritual condition, separated from the life of God. (CSB)

Prior to their conversion, they were spiritually dead under the Law’s condemnation (Rom. 5:12-21; 7:9-10), unable to make a single movement toward God (Mt. 8:22; John 5:24-25; Rom. 6:23). “The Scriptures teach that a sinful person is not only weak and sick but also finished and entirely dead” (FC SD II 10). (TLSB)

He is speaking to the Ephesians of Gentile background. Their Jewish counterparts will be addressed later. For now Paul is speaking to Gentiles, and he has some very damaging things to say. (PBC)

Paul describes life before Christ as no life at all. Sin kills. It paralyzes us with a killing force. Sin kills the spirit and the will. What’s more, sin separates from the life God has to give. In this sense, more than in any other, life before Christ is a walking death. (LL)

Corpses can’t move. Dead people can’t do anything; they are totally unable to help themselves. Such was the spiritual plight in which the Gentile Ephesians had found themselves. If any were inclined to question Paul’s diagnosis regarding their spiritual bankruptcy, he urged them to take a look at their lives and actions. (PBC)

**2:2** *once walked* – Imagine a person whose entire perspective on life had been shaped only by television programming. What would such a person’s morality be like? His sexual ethics? His attitude toward violence? The value he placed on life? How strongly would he desire to serve others? The world sets standards different from those of Christ. Life before Christ is lived by a

set of standards that usually settle for the lowest common denominator – standards like, “What’s in it for me?” or “How much can I get away with?” or “It worked for them; why shouldn’t it work for me?” So a newspaper reporter observes Mother Teresa washing the sores of a leper and says to her, “I wouldn’t do that for the all the money in the world.” And Mother Teresa responds, “Neither would I.” Two separate worlds with two distinct sets of standards collide in those statements. Before Christ, we blended into the world’s mediocre, self-focused values. After Christ, we adopted a new set of challenging standards, those given us by God. (LL)

This is biblical imagery for conduct before God (Ps. 1; Romans 6:4). Before Christ they were “dead men walking.” (TLSB)

*course of this world* – In our passage the salient point lies in the words “this world.” This world is mankind estranged from God, the apostolic world. And now the course of this world appears as the determining force for the way of life of the present Gentiles. Not only by their inborn evil nature and constitution and the resultant sinful condition but also by their entire environment. Through the evil world and the evil time in which they lived, they were led into sins and transgressions and held fast therein. (Stoeckhardt)

*ruler.* Satan (cf. Jn 14:30, “prince”). (CSB)

*air.* Satan is no mere earthbound enemy (cf. 6:12). (CSB)

The devil, who operates in “heavenly places” (3:10; 4:27; 6:11, 16). “The Church is Christ’s kingdom, distinguished from the devil’s kingdom” (Ap VII and VIII 16). (TLSB)

This evil principle, the spirit of disobedience, is located, as it were in the air, is the spiritual atmosphere wherein they live, move, and breathe. It is nothing but sin, disobedience, unrighteousness that the men of this world spiritually inhale and exhale without ceasing. (Stoeckhardt)

He ranges not only in the material world but in the spiritual world as well. (LL)

*spirit.* Satan is a created, but not a human, being (cf. Job 1:6; Eze 28:15; see note on Isa 14:12–15). (CSB)

He was created as an angel and has powers far transcending human might. He seeks especially to turn believers into “those who are disobedient,” persons whom he controls and through whom he works his evil will. (LL)

*sons of disobedient* - a Hebrew expression for one’s character (cf. v. 3). The Gentiles were disobedient unbelievers. By contrast, “son of God” have His holy character (Luke 20:36; Rom. 8:14; Phil. 2:15). (TLSB)

This is the atmosphere of the spirit that now, and in this era, operates in the children of disobedience. (Stoeckhardt)

**2:3** *when all.* Jews and Gentiles. (CSB)

That is to say: among whom also we Jewish Christians once, while we were still Jews, wandered about in the lusts of our flesh. “Among whom” - the Jews, did not only live among the Gentiles but belonged in the same category with them, the children of disobedience, were also disobedient

unto God. Just as the Gentiles opposed natural law, so the Jews opposed the revealed law. (Stoeckhardt)

Here. As in Romans 1:2, the apostle concludes Gentiles and Jews under sin, under disobedience - only that there he describes disobedience according to its detailed expressions and appearances, while in our passage he briefly sketches it according to its leading features and leads it back to its source: original corruption. (Stoeckhardt)

The remark is hardly necessary that Paul is here not looking at the believing, pious Israelites of the OT Covenant, who were also by nature sinful and were through God's power and grace freed from sin's corruption. (Stoeckhardt)

Paul had charged the Ephesian Gentile with coarse and sinful actions. For himself and his fellow Jews Paul now admits to sinful thoughts and desires. (PBC)

God's law, given to Israel on Mount Sinai, guided and regulated nearly every phase of Jewish life. As such, the law held in check among the Jews many of the coarse outbreaks of sin that were scandalously common among the Gentiles. But even this outward Jewish decency wasn't the full complete obedience that a holy God rightly expects and deserves. Their very nature - hearts, minds, and attitudes - was tainted to the core. That showed itself in their "gratifying the cravings of (their) sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts." (PBC)

*passions of our flesh* – A few examples: Abortion, business corruption, cohabitation, homosexuality, political correctness (there is more than one truth), spiritual laxity among Christians. – The word Paul uses for cravings carries the idea of wanting that which is forbidden, seeking that which is clearly wrong. Before Christ, our glands speak louder than our brains or our conscience. We follow our appetites. Like Big Bellied Ben in the old nursery rhyme, we eat the church, we eat the steeple, we eat the town, we eat the people. Our insatiable desires take us to extremes – as when in ancient Rome they built vomitoria in homes so that the gorged could regurgitate and return and eat more. (LL)

With the lusts and desires of the flesh one first of all thinks of the lower, common, sensual inclinations and lusts: un-chastity, lewdness, impurity of all kinds. But even the nobler, intellectual powers and abilities of man, as reason, understanding, are corrupt. Only unholy thoughts arise from the inborn nature and direct the will to evil. Also the apparently good, reasonable and intelligent reflections and deliberations of natural man are an ungodly form and set the will in motion against God. And so everything that natural man does, even what appears to be good and commendable, is the work of the flesh. (Stoeckhardt)

The grosser and more animal propensities. A life of indulgence in whatever natural feelings may arise in us – be they right or wrong. (Pulpit Commentary)

*desires of the body* – Paul here writes of a fallen nature without God. It is our natural tendency as sinners to do as sinners to do the wrong, to lay ourselves wide open to temptation and sin. Jesus described sins coming "from within, out of men's hearts." He said, "All these (sins) come from the inside...(Mark 7:20-23). That warped inside of us is our sinful nature. (LL)

Romans 7:15-25 <sup>15</sup> I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. <sup>16</sup> And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. <sup>17</sup> As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. <sup>18</sup> I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. <sup>19</sup> For

what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.<sup>20</sup> Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.<sup>21</sup> So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.<sup>22</sup> For in my inner being I delight in God’s law;<sup>23</sup> but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.<sup>24</sup> What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?<sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin”

*children of wrath.* See Ro 1:18–20; 2:5; 9:22. (CSB)

Before Christ, God’s condemnation was our only inheritance (Rom. 1:18; Col. 3:5-6). (TLSB)

Life apart from Christ is life in the hands of an angry God. (LL)

Paul paints a grim picture. All people are by nature spiritually dead, totally unable to change their condition. Not only are they unable to improve their lot, but they are the objects of an offended God’s wrath. They can expect nothing but the harshest of punishment – and that for all eternity. (PBC)

**2:4-10** Martin Franzmann (*Concordia Self-Study Commentary*, p. 186) sees the content of the entire book summarized in 2:10: “We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” St. Paul emphasizes that good works are not the means to salvation but the witness to it. By word and deed, God’s people join in “the praise of his glorious grace” (1:6), to “show the incomparable riches of his grace” (2:7), to make known “the manifold wisdom of God” (3:10). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

Paul sharply contrasts God’s wrath and mercy. (TLSB)

Who we are is described in 2:1–3: originally “dead in . . . transgressions and sins . . . gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts . . . the objects of [God’s] wrath.” The self-examination of Lent reminds us that these phrases continue to describe the *peccator* side of the *simul* formula, but this Sunday’s text fairly shouts for joy the *justus* side. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

**2:4 but** - This would be a terrifying chapter if not for the fact that Paul can continue with a “but.” That three-letter conjunction is the pivotal point of this chapter, yes, of the whole letter - in fact, of all Scripture. Mankind as a group has made a terrible mess of things. In their wickedness and perversity all people are at odds with God. All are spiritually dead and enemies of God. All deserve the severest punishment. (PBC)

*great love* – This is agape love. It speaks of a love and affection that is totally one-way. It all comes from God. Nothing in man the sinner, the God-hater, the spiritual corpse, drew God to him. Love resided only in the heart of God. (PBC)

God is the One who acts out of love ( *agapē*), mercy ( *heleos*), grace ( *charis*, v 5), and kindness ( *chrēstotēs*, v 7). The words are not entirely synonymous; each carries a specific weight. God has seen us as we are, and he has been moved to have mercy on us. (The LXX often uses *heleos* for *chesed* and *chrēstotēs* for *tov*, two key Gospel terms.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

Romans 5:8 “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

1 John 3:1 “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.”

*rich in mercy* – *eleos* – For no other reason, God has rescued men and women from death and given them life. God’s mercy is his overflowing active compassion, freely exercised, excluding all idea of merit on the part of the object. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 2)

Mercy is a positive quality that certainly has much in common with love. But it is also somewhat different. Mercy is the attitude in the mind and heart of God that moves Him to take pity on us when He sees our lost and wretched state. Mercy prompts Him to action. (PBC)

Psalm 103:17 “But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD’s love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children’s children—

Titus 3:5 “he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.”

**2:5-6** *made us alive* (5) *raised us up and seated us* (6) – Paul describes not what we *should* be but what we *are*. This makes it Gospel, not third use of the Law. A parallel might be drawn to the full rights of citizenship an infant has already at birth even if the infant is unaware and does not actively use them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

Paul uses three aorist verbs, denoting onetime action in the past, to show that what Christ did (1:20) *included* us—a much stronger concept than just being done *for* us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

Though we were dead, God made us alive with Christ (vivification), raised us up with Christ (resurrection), and seated us with Christ (enthronement). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

It would be inadequate to say here that we are in a continual process of vivification so that some day we will be raised from the dead. Nor does Paul say these were done “in” Christ, as though what he did was symbolic or substitutionary. No; the thing is done. These three verbs, accomplished in our baptism (Rom 6:3–11), will be consummated when we enter the eschaton after Christ’s return. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

Romans 6:4 “We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”

**2:5** *made us alive together with Christ*. This truth is expanded in Ro 6:1–10. (CSB)

Through Baptism, we were put to death by the judgment of God’s Law and raised as forgiven children (Rom. 6:1-11). (TLSB)

It is contrary to the context to refer as some do “hath quickened” to the future resurrection of the flesh, guaranteed in the resurrection of Christ. The apostle rather means an inner quickening which we have already experienced in ourselves, as ethical, spiritual quickening, translation from spiritual death into a new, spiritual life. As spiritual death consists in the complete lack of knowledge of God, fear, love and trust, in complete impotence with respect to the things concerning God and the soul’s salvation; so the new spiritual life, whereto God has quickened us, consists in this, that we now have contact with God, possess us, an organ for God and divine things, that we now rightly know God, fear Him from our hearts, love and trust Him. (Stoekhardt)

Paul, however, does not simply write “hath quickened” but “hat quickened together with Christ.” God has quickened us with Christ. (Stoekhardt)

Raising Christ from physical death signaled the completion of Christ’s saving work and sealed our redemption. It made possible our resurrection. It made possible our resurrection from spiritual death. (PBC)

When we could not lift a finger to help ourselves, God through Word and sacrament worked faith in our hearts, creating life where formerly there had been none. (PBC)

*when we were dead* – Just as a dead body cannot raise itself to bodily, earthly life, so a person who by sin is spiritually dead cannot raise himself to spiritual life” (FC Ep. II 3). (TLSB)

1 Timothy 5:6 “But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.”

Romans 5:6, “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.”

*heavenly realms.* See note on 1:3. (CSB)

Verses 6 and 7 emphasize how our union with Christ assures us of our place in heaven. Just as Christ has ascended to sit at the right hand of God the Father, so we can be confident that our place “in the heavenly realms” is secure. (LL)

*in Christ Jesus.* Through our union with Christ. (CSB)

This union with Christ, already providing a foretaste of our reward, displays the riches of God’s love. Christ is often called the first fruits of the resurrection. Here appears as the first fruits of the ascension. The grace of God doesn’t just save us from hell – it delivers us to heaven. (LL)

**2:7 coming ages.** Cf. 1:21; probably refers to the future of eternal blessing with Christ. (CSB)

*show.* Or “exhibit” or “prove.” (CSB)

Imagine how at the turn of the century immigrant families sent one of their own on to America. Sometimes months later they would hear that their loved one had arrived and was doing everything possible for the rest of the family to follow. That loved one’s presence in the new country left those in the old country already sensing the blessings that were to be theirs. That is the dynamic at work here. Christ is in heaven, victorious after the living, dying, and rising. As

sure as he is there and has done all that is necessary for us, we will follow. His grace, his love, in going before us, has made it possible. (LL)

God did not make us alive just to give us a small taste of heaven. He did so, “in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. (PBC)

*immeasurable* – The incomparable ( *hyperballon*) riches are so great that they surpass any hyperbole. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

There is nothing in our present range of experience that can compare with heaven, so great is the love and mercy of our God, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. (PBC)

**2:8-9** “And this ( *touto*) not from yourselves.” *Touto* is neuter, referring back to the concept “saved,” not to “grace” or “faith” which are feminine. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

**2:8** A major passage for understanding God’s grace, i.e., his kindness, unmerited favor and forgiving love.

*By grace* – It is utter generosity, unselfish, spontaneous, recklessly prodigal generosity, which acts wholly out of loving concern for the other’s need, even if he is completely unworthy of the love and help thus offered him.

*you have been saved.* † “Saved” has a wide range of meanings. It includes salvation from God’s wrath, which we all had incurred by original sin and our own sins. The tense of the verb (also in v. 5) suggests a completed action with emphasis on its present effect. (CSB)

*through faith.* † See Ro 3:21–31 which establishes the necessity of faith in Christ as the only way of being made right with God. (CSB)

*not of your own doing.* No human effort can contribute to our salvation; it is the gift of God. (CSB)

Corpses don’t resuscitate themselves! Our rescue, our life, comes as a gift from God. (LL)

The Greek literally says, “not from you.” – “You have not done this of your own strength.” (Brauer)

John 3:16 ““For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,<sup>f</sup> that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Romans 3:24 “and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”

Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in<sup>a</sup> Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 8:32 “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”

**2:9** *not a result of works.* † One cannot earn salvation by “observing the law” (Ro 3:20, 28). Such a legalistic approach to salvation is consistently condemned in Scripture. (CSB)

The only way good works could save us with a perfect and just God is if our whole life were perfect. God cannot accept a 99 percent morally perfect life. He requires 100 percent perfection. (LL)

The New English Bible translates it “not a reward for work done.”

*no one may boast.* No one can take credit for his or her salvation. (CSB)

The idea behind the Greek is an attitude of self-congratulation and pride.

Matthew 5:48, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, <sup>f</sup> that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Romans 3:23, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in <sup>a</sup> Christ Jesus our Lord.”

**2:10** *workmanship.* The Greek for this word sometimes has the connotation of a “work of art.” (CSB)

“Workmanship” ( *poiēma*) is that which is made or fashioned. While the verb *poieō*, “make,” is used in the LXX of Gen 1, *passim*, the next word in our text, *ktizō*, “create,” is used more frequently in the New Testament to denote God creating out of nothing (e.g., Mark 16:15; Rom 1:20). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

The Greek word for “workman” is *poiema*, the same word from which we get our word “poem.” God continues to work in each of us in order to make us what he wants of us – and what God creates is always a thing of beauty! (LL)

*poyaymah* – To be the product of someone who has very lovingly crafted something. We say that a craftsman communicates with his work so God continues to do so with us.

Mark 16:15 “He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”

Romans 1:20 “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”

2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

Galatians 6:15 “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.”

*for good works* – God has much work for us to do. Good works are a crucial aspect of the Christian life. Our good works, however, become an expression of thankfulness for all Christ has done for us, not an attempt to win heaven. (LL)

“To do good works” ( *epi ergois agathois*). The connection denoted by *epi* is not motivational but descriptive: just as the sun was created as that which shines, so we have been vivified-raised-enthroned with Christ as those who do good works. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

All of man’s work is God’s work through man. It embraces the whole conduct of a man in so far as he falls under the antithesis of good and evil.. and including the hidden motions of the will, whether in relation to God, to the world or to other men. (Kittel) –

With our new God-given spiritual life we are indeed able to respond to God’s will. We are able, albeit imperfectly, to do what God wants. It is not that we have to, but rather that we want to do God’s will. The good works that flow from faith are simply an opportunity to show our appreciation for all that God in Christ has done for us. It would be hard to improve on the apostle John’s terse analysis: “We love (God) because he first loved us (1 John 4:19). But even the good deeds we do are not basis for boasting. They are really not our own doing; we’re simply being given the opportunity to do the good things “which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (PBC)

Good is *agathos* and means to do something that is of benefit to others. Works comes from *ergon* which means an act of labor. The sun has its purpose and so do we. What we are to do is connected to the gifts/talents and opportunities God gives us. Our walk in Christ is a walk in good works (little Christs).

Matthew 5:13 “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.”

Matthew 5:16 “In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

2 Corinthians 5:15 “And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”

Galatians 5:16 “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”

Ephesians 5:2 “and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

*prepared beforehand.*† Carries forward the theme of God’s purpose and planning, seen in ch. 1. (CSB)

All the ways of holiness and righteousness are God’s design and preparation. We need not puzzle about and search for what may please God, he has long ago mapped out the entire course. They all spring from faith. (Lenski)

“Which God prepared in advance for us to do.” In *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, and to the Philippians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961, p 427), Lenski writes, “All the ways of holiness and righteousness are God’s design and preparation. We need not puzzle about and search for what may please God, he has long ago mapped out the entire course. What Paul says is not that God prepared us that we should walk in good works (so Luther), but that he prepared the good works.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

1 Corinthians 12:11 “All these (gifts) are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”

2 Timothy 1:9 “who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.”

*One in Christ*

**11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands — 12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.**

**2:11–22** From the salvation of individuals, Paul moves to another aspect of salvation in which God reconciles Jews and Gentiles, previously hostile peoples, not only to himself but also to each other through Christ (vv. 11–16). Even more than that, God unites these now reconciled people in one body, a truth introduced in vv. 19–22 and explained in ch. 3. (CSB)

Directly addresses the unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ. As in many early Christian churches, there must have been tension between the two groups at Ephesus. If salvation is by grace, there can be no such divisions. (TLSB)

**2:11** *Therefore*. Refers to the state of those without Christ, described in vv. 1–10. (CSB)

*you Gentiles*. Most of the Ephesians (cf. 1:13, “And you also”). (CSB)

The flesh no longer defines Christians as it once did. (TLSB)

A great ethnic, moral, and religious barrier had divided Jew and Gentile for centuries. Jews hated Gentiles. The physical covenant of circumcision marked a Jew as other than a Gentile and Gentiles as other than a Jew. Jews spoke a daily prayer of thanks that they had not been create Gentiles. Intermarriage was forbidden, with funerals being held for Jew who did marry Gentiles. A Jew rubbing elbows with Gentiles in public was considered unclean. (LL)

“*uncircumcised*”... “*the circumcision*.” The rite of circumcision was applied to all Jewish male babies; so this physical act (“done in the body by the hands of men”) was a clear mark of distinction between Jew and Gentile, in which Jewish people naturally took pride. (CSB)

A term of derision for Gentiles, used by “the circumcision,” i.e., Jews. (TLSB)

*in the flesh by hands* – Circumcision as an external mark is now obsolete (Rm 2:28–29; Gal 6:15), in contrast to Baptism, which changes the heart. (TLSB)

**2:12** *at that time*. Before salvation, in contrast to “But now” (v. 13). (CSB)

*separate from Christ*. All these expressions emphasize the distance of unbelieving Gentiles from Israel, as well as from Christ. (CSB)

Before Christ Gentiles had no promise of a Messiah, no legacy of prophets foretelling the Promised One. For Gentiles, schooled in Greek thought, history was a matter of cycles going nowhere. The Hebrew notion of a linear history with a plan and terminus was foreign to Greeks. For them history would cycle and recycle, destined to repetition and redundancy. (LL)

*alienated from the commonwealth* – Before Christ’s coming, God’s promises were located in His kingdom. (TLSB)

Recall that Jacob’s well Jesus told the Samaritan woman, “Salvation is from the Jews (John 4:22). (PBC)

*covenants*. God had promised blessings to and through the Jewish people (see note on Ro 9:4). (CSB)

Israel received the promise of the coming Messiah. Through Christ, the Gentiles are now included (v 19; 3:6) (TLSB)

*without God* – It is not that they were atheists who denied the existence of a god. They had many gods, but they were false gods. They did not have the triune God, so they had no god at all to help them. (PBC)

Though they worshiped many gods, they did not worship the one true God (1Co 8:5–6). (TLSB)

**2:13** *But now*. Not only contrasts with “at that time” (v. 12) but also introduces the contrast between “from Christ” (v. 12) and “in Christ” (here). (CSB)

*have been brought near* – The verb “brought” here is passive. The Gentiles did not do anything on their own to approach God. (PBC)

In the OT, Gentiles are “far off” (1 Kings 8:41; Is. 5:26), but Israel is near to God (Ps. 148:14). (TLSB)

*blood of Christ*. Expresses the violent death of Christ as he poured out his lifeblood as a sacrifice for us (cf. 1:7). (CSB)

Matthew 26:28 “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

Romans 5:9 “Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!”

Hebrews 9:14 “How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death,<sup>b</sup> so that we may serve the living God!”

1 Peter 1:18-19 “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”

1 John 1:7 “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

Revelation 7:14 “I answered, “Sir, you know.” And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

**2:14** *he himself is our peace* – Not just absence of war, but well-being, unity, and salvation. Christ makes peace and is also the place where it is found (v 15; Jn 14:27; 20:19). (TLSB)

Isaiah 53:5 “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”

Romans 5:1-2 “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.”

Colossians 1:20 “and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”

*both*. Believing Jews and believing Gentiles. (CSB)

Jews and Gentiles (v 16). Bern: “What place, then, in the kingdom of Christ and of God has he who is an enemy of charity, peace, and unity?” (*SLSB*, p 4). (*TL SB*)

*dividing wall*. Vivid description of the total religious isolation Jews and Gentiles experienced from each other. (*CSB*)

In Herod’s temple at Jerusalem, a wall separated the (inner) court of the Jews from the (outer) court of the Gentiles. Paul was arrested on the charge of violating this boundary (*Ac* 21:27–29). Here, it symbolizes the Law (*Eph* 2:15). In Christ, Jews and Gentiles are no longer divided in their worship of God or reception of His gifts (*Jn* 4:21–24). (*TL SB*)

*hostility*. Between Jews and Gentiles. (*CSB*)

Matthew 15:26-27 “He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.” Yes, Lord,” she said, “but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.”

Revelation 22:15 “Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”

**2:15 abolishing ... the law.**† Since *Mt* 5:17 and *Ro* 3:31 teach that God’s moral standard expressed in the OT law is not changed by the coming of Christ, what is abolished here is the effect of the specific “commandments and regulations” in separating Jews from Gentiles, whose nonobservance of the Jewish law renders them ritually unclean. (*CSB*)

Although the Law itself is not abolished (*Mt* 5:17; *Rm* 3:31), the precepts that separated Jews from Gentiles are gone (*Col* 3:11). Christ also overcame the Law’s ability to condemn believers (*Rm* 7:4–6; 8:1–2). (*TL SB*)

The OT ceremonial law called for God’s people to remain separate from uncircumcised Gentiles in many aspects of life. By NT times Jews would not eat with Gentiles because that would mean ceremonial defilement. Gentiles were considered to be reprobate sinners, with whom a God-fearing Jew was not to associate on any level. This practice caused a great deal of anger among the Gentiles. The moral law, too, by its very nature brought Gentiles (as well as disobedient Jews) under condemnation because of their lifestyles reflected their opposition to God. The OT civil law also reflected that God’s people served a different king – the Lord himself. – and even though the political independence of God’s people was gone by NT times, it still remained a fervent aspiration (*Acts* 1:6). (*Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 3*)

DOGS – The Jews utterly despised the Gentiles; they considered them dogs, vile, unclean (*Mt.* 15:27; *Rev* 22:15). One must know the status of dogs in the Orient. The Gentiles reciprocated in kind and hated the Jews because of their arrogance, their scornful separation, their peculiar religious laws and ways. (*Lenski*)

The term “dog” in the East was used for impure and profane persons. (*Unger*)

The purpose of these civil and ceremonial laws, unique to Israel, was to keep Israel a separate nation. The many carefully spelled out regulations were to hedge and protect Israel for heathen influence until the promised Messiah was born. (*PBC*)

Matthew 5:17, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”

Romans 3:31, “Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.”

Revelation 22:15, “Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”

*God in one body.* Probably refers to the death of Christ. (CSB)

Christ fused Jews and Gentiles together by abolishing the law and forming one new person in himself, granting all people peace with one another under his Lordship. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 3)

*one new man.* The united body of believers, the church. (CSB)

All of humanity is reunited in Christ, the Second Adam (Rm 5:12–21; 1Co 15:21–22). (TLSB)

2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

Ephesians 4:24 “and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

*making peace* – If Christ has made peace, then those who are in him can have or make peace with one another (James 3:18). (TLSB)

**2:16 in one body.** While this could possibly mean the body of Christ offered on the cross (cf. “in his flesh,” v. 15), it probably refers to the “one new man” just mentioned, the body of believers. (CSB)

All humanity died with Christ on the cross (Rom. 7:4), exhausting God’s wrath; the benefits are found in one Body, the Church. (TLSB)

This was the church, the new Israel of God (Gal 6:16). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 3)

**TO RECONCILE** – More important, Christ removed the hostility between all people and God (2Co 5:17–20). (TLSB)

2 Corinthians 5:18 “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”

Colossians 1:20 “and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”

*both to God* – All humanity died with Christ on the cross (Rm 7:4), exhausting God’s wrath; the benefits are found in one Body, the Church. (TLSB)

*killing the hostility* – ἀποκτείνας τὴν ἔχθραν ἐν αὐτῷ—means: “by killing.” “Killing the hostility,” though accomplished through a literal death (of Christ), is another figure for rendering the Law incapable of arousing hostility. ἐν αὐτῷ could refer either to the cross (“by it”) or to Christ (“in him[self]”). Although the former is syntactically more likely, as “the cross” is the nearer antecedent, Paul’s consistent usage of ἐν αὐτῷ in Ephesians to mean “in him [Christ]” is persuasive, as is the parallelism in the two statements of purpose: (CC)

**2:17** *preached peace* – As prophesied by Isaiah, the risen Messiah brought a message of peace that His death and resurrection achieved (cf Jn 20:19, 21). Through the apostles, Christ preached peace throughout the world (Eph 1:2; 3:1–9). (TLSB)

*far off... near.* Gentiles and Jews respectively. (CSB)

Paul uses a word for “reconcile” that is used of enemies making friends. We were God’s enemies. In Christ we have become God’s friends. The means of reconciliation is the cross. The hostility between Jew and Gentile disappear as both come under the influence of the immense sacrifice of Christ. (LL)

The Word that he has preached and himself preaches is gospel, glad tidings. The content of these tidings is peace, peace with God, the salvation which Christ has merited by his blood and cross. (Stoeckhardt)

**2:18** *both have access* – Temple-like walls no longer bar access to the triune God (Mt 27:51; Heb 6:19). (TLSB)

Access (prosagoga) literally means “a coming near.” Access to the Father is only through Jesus Christ (John 14:6), and in, or under the influence of, the Holy Spirit. Access means that Jew and Gentile now may approach the heavenly Father with the confidence that he accepts all who are in Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 3)

John 14:6 “Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

**2:19** *so then.* Paul indicates that the unity described in vv. 19–22 is based on what Christ did through his death, described in vv. 14–18. (CSB)

It is as if he were saying: Since you Ephesians have the same direct access to God as the covenant people always had, it follows that “you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household.” (PBC)

*you.* The Gentiles at Ephesus are particularly in mind here. (CSB)

*citizens ... household.* Familiar imagery. The household in ancient times was what we today might call an “extended family.” (CSB)

In Caesarea, where Paul was imprisoned, there was open hostility between Jews and Gentiles over the right of citizenship. Unlike other early Christian leaders, Paul strove to make the Gentile believers welcome in the largely Jewish churches of the first century. Paul points to their joint membership in the kingdom of heaven. Bede, the Venerable: “The gates of this city are opened to us by fortitude; and faith will afford us a broad entrance” (FSEP, p. 3). (TLSB)

Those who were once alien from the commonwealth of Israel and stranger to the covenant of promise are no longer strangers; nor are they foreigners without rights of citizenship, as were once those Gentiles who loved among the Jews, who indeed lived in the Holy Land but did not have equal rights. (Stoekhardt)

They are not only citizens of the same kingdom, but they are even closer than that. They are members of the same family. God is, after all, their Father, and they have access to Him just as the Jewish believers do. (PBC)

When men are reconciled to God, they are reconciled to one another. Notice that Christ not only creates Christians, but immediately binds them into a new corporate personality – the Church.

You are not guest or occasional visitors, but permanent dwellers in the house and members of the family. (PC)

Galatians 4:5 “to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons”

*members of God’s household* – The Christian Church appears not only as a commonwealth in which God is the Lord and King but also as the household of God, as a great, holy family whose Father is God, whose children are the saints or believers. They at all times have free access unto the Father. For them God’s paternal heart stands open. And the Gentile Christians are members of God’s family as are all saints. They have domestic, filial, hereditary rights in God’s house. (Stoekhardt)

Romans 8:16 “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.”

**2:20 foundation.** Further metaphorical language to convey the idea of a solid, integrated structure. (CSB)

As Christ’s work figuratively destroyed the old temple (John 2:19), He erected a new spiritual house of God, the Church (1 Peter 2:4-10), built on the preaching of the apostles and NT prophets (Rm. 15:20; 1 Cor.3:10). (TLSB)

The firm foundation of the Ephesians congregation, Paul states, is the doctrine Christ gave them through the OT prophets and NT apostles. Throughout the ages there has been only one plan of salvation. OT believers looked forward to the Messiah or Savior who was to come. NT believers look back to the Savior who has come. (PBC)

The apostles are not designated as those who have laid the foundation by their preaching, but they appear as the substructure, lower layer of stone in God's house. They are the foundation of the whole structure, which grows continually until the end of days. (Stoeckhardt)

*apostles and prophets.* Probably refers to the founding work of the early Christian apostles and prophets as they preached and taught God's word (cf. 1Co 3:10–11). (CSB)

*cornerstone.* Isa 28:16, which uses the same term in its pre-Christian Greek translation (the Septuagint), refers to a foundation with a "tested" stone at the corner. (CSB)

Establishes the direction of two walls and anchors them together (1 Peter 2:6-7). (TLSB)

The foundation and the corner-stone, however, do not in this spiritual building lie beside each other. Christ Jesus is the very Center of prophetic and apostolic Scriptures. Christ Jesus is to be found in, with and under His Word and only in the Word, nowhere else. He who has, grasps and holds the Word has, grasps and holds Christ. (Stoeckhardt)

Psalms 118:22 "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone;"

Matthew 7:24- "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

1 Peter 2:6 "For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

**2:21 whole structure** – The apostle does not speak of a complete edifice but of one in the process of construction, according to which "a; the building" is as much as what is built or what is being built. (Stoeckhardt)

*joined together.* Cf. 4:16 for the same word. Both passages speak of the close relationship between believers. (CSB)

The Greek verb for "joined together" occurs only here and in 4:16, where it describes how the members of a body are joined. It reinforces the "cornerstone" idea – that all the parts must be in harmony with Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 3)

*grows.* The description of a building under construction conveys the sense of the dynamic growth of the church. (CSB)

The Church as Christ's body is a living temple (1 Peter 2:5). God gives growth (1 Cor. 2:19) as He adds new "stones" (people), but also as it matures by learning the truth, rejecting error, and loving one another. (TLSB)

The living stones, of which the structure of the Church is composed, are not the raw materials. Men, as they are by nature, without Christ, and do not get along well with one another; they live in dissension and hatred. Christians are sanctified through faith in Christ. They are saints. And so they have a new nature. They have the mind of Christ. They live not unto themselves but serve one another in love. Each is concerned about the other's interests not about his own. (Stoekhardt)

*holy temple.* Paul now uses the metaphor of a temple, thereby indicating the purpose ("to become") for which God has established his church. (CSB)

Unredeemed man can build towers of Babel and skyscrapers, but only the Holy Spirit can build a Christian Church. (IB)

1 Peter 2:5, "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."

**2:22 dwelling.** The church is to be a people or community in whom the Holy Spirit dwells. (CSB)

God certainly dwells in individual believers (1 Cor. 6:19), but here Paul emphasizes the corporate nature of the Church, which together is God's temple. (TLSB)

As carpenters and craftsmen add more and more component parts to a building as it proceeds toward completion, so too Christ is building his church – one believer at a time. Each believer is carefully fitted into his or her niche. All are known by name. All are important to the Builder. All fulfill a purpose. (PBC)

Kretzmann says: "This wonderful glory and dignity of the Church is at present still hidden from the eyes of men. But on the last day the Church will appear before the eyes of an astonished world as a temple of beauty and magnificence, and the splendor and glory of the Lord will shine forth from this singular structure. (Rev. 21:3." (Buls)

1 Corinthians 3:16 "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?"

1 Corinthians 6:19 "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own"

1 Peter 2:5 "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."

**GOD LIVES BY HIS SPIRIT** – The three persons of the Godhead, the Lord, God, the Spirit, are mentioned side by side. The Christian Church is a temple, a habitation of the holy Trinity. The great, wonderful God, the Triune God, who sits in the high heaven, whom the very heavens are not able to contain, also has a place, a throne on earth, amid the sinful children of men, which is the Lord's Church. (Stoekhardt)

**2:11–22** Notions of favoritism divided the earliest Christian churches and still affect our churches today. Paul urges all of us to remember who we were apart from Christ and to rejoice in what Christ has made us to be: His one Body. • Lord, forgive my prejudices and teach me to see Your Son in every Christian. Amen.