

**EPHESIANS 2**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Ephesians chapter 2 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

Remember, Ephesians chapters 1-3 deal with doctrine or ***THE POSITION OF THE CHRISTIAN!*** And, Ephesians chapters 4-6 deal with how we are to walk or ***THE PRACTICE OF THE CHRISTIAN!***

And, as we saw last week in chapter 1, God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places ***IN*** Christ, that of course being the key, these blessings are only for those who are saved, the children of God.

Ephesians chapter 1 is truly an overview of God's plan of uniting believers together in Christ who is the head of the church.

As we move into chapters 2 & 3 of Ephesians, we continue to look at doctrine, the truths of God but now Paul explains how God is going to take a sinner and make him into a saint, for that is what places them into the body of Christ.

Tonight, we will be looking at Ephesians chapter 2 and the focus is ***DEATH*** and ***LIFE!***

This is what we will be looking at as Paul is going to show that every person who was born or will be born, except for Christ, is dead to God!

I know, how is that uplifting?

Because you have to know where you are, dead to God, before you see your need for God, for the Savior Jesus Christ and can become alive to God!

One writer summed it up like this. He wrote,

Some years ago as a youth pastor I hiked with some of my high schoolers to the top of Mt. Whitney in California, the highest spot in the continental United States (14,495 feet). We exulted over the wonderful panorama of the Sierra Nevada's and the Mojave Desert.

What a spot, with its rarefied [exclusive], crystal-clear air, its indigo and turquoise lakes – vista giving way to vista as far as one could see. As we gazed together from what seemed to be the top of the world, one of our party pointed out that only eighty miles to the southeast was Death Valley, the lowest spot in the United States at 280 feet below sea level and the hottest place in the country with a record 134 degrees in the shade!

What a contrast! One place is the top of the world, the other the bottom. One place is perpetually cool, the other relentlessly hot. From Mt. Whitney you can look down on all of life. From Death Valley you can only look up to the rest of the world.

In Ephesians 2 Paul takes us down to the Death Valley of the Soul (vv. 1-3) and then up to “the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” (vv. 4-7). His method is contrast: from death to life, from Hell to Heaven, from bondage to freedom, from pessimism to optimism. The journey's contrast will enhance our appreciation for what we have in Christ and will influence the way we live.

- R. Kent Hughes, Ephesians, p. 65

So I guess you can say that we are going to go from *DEATH VALLEY* to *THE TOP OF THE WORLD!*

And this is important for us to understand, that we are dead apart from Christ, spiritually speaking.

And I know, many people feel that they are good, that they are okay and when they get to heaven they will talk with God and everything will be good.

But the Bible tells us that none are good, no not even one! (Romans 3:12)

So that will not work for you.

And as Paul laid out in the book of Romans, he showed us that everyone is guilty before God, everyone has fallen short of the glory of God and thus, they are destined for Hell, and then he brings them to Jesus.

In a sense, that is what Paul is doing here. He is showing us our condition apart from Christ, what we do apart from Christ, what we do apart from Christ and then he brings us to Jesus, the One and the only One who can save us from our sins and give to us that abundant life that is only found in Him!

And, because of what Jesus has done, both Jews and Gentiles are one in Christ! He has brought this reconciliation!

With that as our background, let's begin reading in Ephesians chapter 2, beginning in verse 1, and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word!

## EPHESIANS 2

### VERSES 1-3

First of all, you may notice in your Bibles that the phrase "***He made alive***" are in italics.

That means that they were added to the text for clarity. But also understand that this idea is implied from the context.

Obviously, Paul was writing to believers who were “**made alive**” by God working in their lives!

Therefore, Ephesians 2:1 originally read, “*And you were dead in trespasses and sins.*”

And Paul starts out with a bang, you might say. Every person who is not in Christ, is dead!

Now Paul is not speaking of physical death or the separation of the soul from the body. He is not speaking of eternal death here, or those who have rejected Christ and His free gift of salvation and they will be cast into the Lake of Fire or Outer Darkness for eternity!

No, Paul is speaking of spiritual death and we will see how that is played out in a minute. But understand that apart from Christ our spirit is dead, and we are controlled by our bodily appetites!

Ray Stedman put it like this. He wrote,

Of all the truth expressed in Scripture, the truth found at the beginning of Ephesians 2 is the hardest for human beings to hear, believe, and accept.

Here, in these first three verses, is the revelation of a truth so difficult for us to receive that we immediately tend to discount it and water it down. The result is that we do not have a realistic outlook on the true hopelessness of our condition apart from Christ - or the true wonder of our position once we are in Christ.

In these verses we find Paul’s great analysis of our problem. We are not a little misguided. We are not culturally deprived or misled in our thinking. The solution to the human condition is not better education or a social program or enhanced self-esteem. No, our problem is more fundamental and hopeless than that. Our problem is that, apart from God, we are dead.

- Ray Stedman

Hard to swallow but that is very true!

And because of this spiritual death we are insensitive to the things of God because our sins have separated us from God.

You see, if you kicked a dead person, punched them, they would not feel it, they are insensitive to it because they are dead and the same is true in regard to our spirits.

And when Paul speaks of “**trespasses**” or PARAPTOMA, (par-ap’-to-mah) in the Greek, he speaks of going in the wrong direction while “**sins**” or HAMARTIA (ham-ar-tee’-ah) in the Greek speaks of missing the mark and the mark is perfection. In archery it was the bull’s eye!

You first must know the problem so you than can receive the solution and that is what Paul is doing here.

You see, all have missed the mark, and all are spiritually dead to the things of God outside of Christ. They are like spiritual zombies walking around.

And yes, you can dress them up, put a hat on their head; a cigar in their mouth but the fact of the matter is that dead is dead!

Many, even in the church today, may look good outwardly, all dressed up, but they are spiritually dead, they are unable to feel or be sensitive to the things of God.

In Isaiah 59:1-2 we are told of this condition, “**Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.**”

And how is this then manifested in our lives? Look again at Ephesians 2:2-3, where we are told, **“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.”**

Here is the picture that Paul is painting for us. He is telling us that outside of Christ people meander through life according to the course of this world or the world’s system of values apart from God.

And isn’t that exactly what we see in the world today as people try to satisfy their fleshly desires? Of course it is!

In fact, the word **“desires”** implies that they are seeking after these things with great diligence, it is a willful act on their part and because of their sin the wrath of God will come upon their lives!

And here are three enemies of man: *SATAN* who is the prince of this world that is in rebellion against God and he uses us as pawns to be drawn into the lusts of this *WORLD* that is opposed to God through *FLESHLY* lusts.

Sin is dangled in front of us as if it is some prize to obtain but, in the end, it only brings about death. May we be aware of Satan, the world and the flesh so we won’t be drawn into its deception.

And let me say this. You are either following the Lord or you are following Satan! I know, shocking to many but that is the reality. Those are the only options and you can see who a person is following by the fruit that is produced in their lives!

Think of it like this. Apart from Christ, people are . . .

*Following the course of this world – whichever way the wind is blowing, they go!*

*The Prince of the power of the air – Satan – is directing their lives!*

And following Satan causes us to . . .

*Lust after the flesh*

*Fulfill the desires of the flesh*

*Fulfill the desires of the mind*

*Be children of wrath*

Now I do realize that many don't want to hear that about themselves. They don't want to hear that they are sinners.

And thus, what the church has done is they removed "**SIN**" from what is being taught because they are afraid it might hurt their fragile self-esteem.

Listen carefully to a few quotes from Emerging Church leaders and you will see what I mean.

"Repentance is not turning from sin. It is a 'celebration' of life in Christ. Anyone who tells you that you need to repent is not talking about Christianity." - Rob Bell, "The 'gods' Aren't Angry Tour," Nov. 16, 2007, Dallas, TX

Doug Pagitt, Emerging Leader, author and pastor of Solomon's Porch in Minneapolis, was asked "Is homosexuality incompatible with Christian faith?"

Pagitt simply replied: "NO. Being Gay and Christian is not a contradiction in any way." - Quoted by Mark Driscoll in "Why I Left the Emerging Church" at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fall 2007

How can people listen to these guys? It is amazing to me, but it is what they have been taught. Listen to what Rob Bell had to say about the Bible.

“(This is) part of the problem with continually insisting that one of the absolutes of the Christian faith must be a belief that “Scripture alone” is our guide. It sounds nice, but it is not true . . . When people say that all we need is the Bible, it is simply not true.” - Rob Bell, Velvet Elvis, p.68

So you remove the authority of the Bible. You remove sin from our lives by downplaying what sin is. Thus, without sin you don't need a Savior, you don't need God to become flesh and die for our sins – you don't need Jesus.

I hope you see how dangerous this is. And that is why Paul is hitting this hard, you are dead in your trespasses and sins!

“The late Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman used to tell of a Methodist preacher who often spoke on the subject of sin. He minced no words, but defined sin as ‘That abominable thing that God hates.’ A leader in his congregation came to him on one occasion and urged him to cease using the ugly word. Said he, ‘Dr. Blank, we wish you would not speak so plainly about sin. Our young people, hearing you, will be more likely to indulge in sin. Call it something else, as ‘inhibition,’ or ‘error,’ or a ‘mistake,’ or even a ‘twist of nature.’”

‘I understand what you mean,’ the preacher remarked and going to his desk brought out a little bottle. ‘This bottle’ he said, ‘contains strychnine. You will see that the red label here reads poison. Would you suggest that I change the label, and paste one on that says, “Wintergreen?” The more harmless the name the more dangerous the dose will be.’”

Amen to that, it is time more would stand up and call sin what it is, ***SIN!***

And here is the reality before we come to the solution. Warren Wiersbe put it like this,  
 The unbeliever is not sick; he is dead! He does not need resuscitation; he needs resurrection. All lost sinners are dead, and the only difference between one sinner and another is the state of decay. The lost derelict on skid row may be more decayed outwardly than the unsaved society leader, but both are dead in sin - and one corpse cannot be more dead than another! This means that our world is one vast graveyard, filled with people who are dead while they live (1 Tim. 5:6).

- Warren Wiersbe

Now if Paul concluded here, we would all be in trouble, it would be very depressing. But Paul doesn't end here and with just two words he changes our whole outlook on the situation we are in and he gives us hope.

Let's read on and see what Paul has to say.

#### VERSES 4-5

Here is the answer to all of our problems – ***BUT GOD!***

Do you see how those two words; “**But God**” changes everything!

People want to clean up their act before coming to God, be more lovable to God but you can't, He already loves you so much that He died for you!

Why does God love us so much?

It is not because we are so great, but it is because of His rich mercy that He does not give to us what we deserve, eternal punishment.

Instead, He gives to us eternal life, not because we deserve it, but, again, He loves us that much!

You see, we were spiritually dead and God, but, because of His great love for us, He made us spiritually alive, not because we deserved it or were worthy of being saved, but by His grace or unmerited favor that He has bestowed upon us.

And now we are sensitive to the things of God, the Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts as we read the Word of God, as we hear the Word of God, and-so-on.

Now there is one requirement that we all must have before God can do this, and that is we must be dead, dead to all our attempts of being justified before God by our own efforts.

It is as Jesus said in John 5:24, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”**

We were dead but Christ has given us life, eternal life with Him! ***BUT GOD . . .!***

#### VERSES 6-7

God loves us. God saved us. And now God has raised us up with Christ! How powerful that is, and the focus is not what we have done, but what God has done for us!

Remember what Paul told us in Philippians 3:20, **“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Thus, we are pilgrims and strangers on this earth, just passing through but our citizenship is in heaven with our Lord.

And for eternity God’s exceeding riches of His grace will be displayed in us because folks, we don’t deserve this gift, but God has freely given it to us!

We are, in a sense, His trophies and as the angels look at us, they will be saying,

***“Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like Joe!”***

And it will blow them away when they see the love of God for sinful man and all that God has done! Never forget that.

It is not what you have done, it is truly ***BUT GOD . . .***”

### VERSES 8-10

I think the most important question we must ask is this. ***“What must I do to be saved?”***

Now, in saying that there is a plethora or an abundance of answers that people have.

Some would say we are saved through baptism, or confirmation, or church membership, or keeping the Law, or being good, or living by the Sermon on the Mount, or giving to those in need, or communion, or paying for our sins in Purgatory, and the list can go on and on!

No, that is not how you are saved.

We can't work our way into heaven because we have missed the mark of perfection and thus, our sin separates us from God.

And the reality is, the only thing we have added to the work of salvation is sin, God did the rest by saving us and our salvation is only found in Christ and it is through Christ's finished work that grace is given to us!

Paul put it this way in Romans 6:23, **“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

Thus, the basis for our salvation is grace, the means or our salvation is faith and it is a work of God!

Keep in mind that faith is not a worthy act, it is not some work we do. It is simply reaching out to accept and receive God's gift of eternal life.

Now some believe that the faith is a gift of God and thus, God gives to some the faith to be saved and others He does not. Foolishness!

You see, if that was true then man would have no free will in this matter; it is all predetermined by God. And if I go to Hell, it is not my fault, it is God's because He did not give me the faith to believe! Foolishness!

Faith is not a means of salvation to those in the Reformed Theology group, which J. I. Packer is part of; faith is a gift of God. No person, unregenerate person can **BELIEVE** unless and until the person is regenerated and only God can do that!

But you look at the Scriptures and we do have a free will to choose. And, New Testament Greek Scholar Harold W. Hoehner explains it like this,

Much debate has centered around the demonstrative pronoun "this" (touto). Though some think it refers back to "grace" and others to "faith," neither of these suggestions is really valid because the demonstrative pronoun is neuter whereas "grace" and "faith" are feminine. Also, to refer back to either of these words specifically seems to be redundant. Rather the neuter touto, as is common, refers to the preceding phrase or clause. (In Eph 1:15 and 3:1 touto, "this," refers back to the preceding section.) Thus it refers back to the concept of salvation (2:4–8a), whose basis is grace and means is faith. This salvation does not have its source in man (it is "not from yourselves"), but rather, its source is God's grace for "it is the gift of God."

- Harold W. Hoehner, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 624

Also, that means that our salvation is a *gift* of God not a reward for man's *hard work and good deeds*.

And, what we should do since God gives it as a free gift, is that we should praise and thank Him.

Make no mistake about it, if we earned it, we would boast and pat ourselves on the back.

Now here is a question that some may have. If works don't play a part in our salvation, why did James tell us, "**Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.**" James 2:17.

Please understand that James is not saying that works save us, not at all.

Works are the fruit of our salvation; they show that we are saved!

And I love this, Paul says that we are God's "**workmanship**" or POIEMA, (poy'-ay'mah) in the Greek. And this word can speak of a poem or of a tapestry, a masterpiece.

When you look at the back of a tapestry it is a mess, it is ugly with threads going in all directions, you can't tell what you are looking at.

But, when you look at the other side it is a beautiful picture, a masterpiece.

God is making us into a beautiful masterpiece and when we look at it through this side of heaven it may look like a mess, but when we get a heavenly perspective we see that God has made our lives into His beautiful masterpiece, what He began in us He will complete!

And God has created us for good works or as William MacDonald wrote,

In order to find out the good works He has planned for our individual lives, we should:

- (1) confess and forsake sin as soon as we are conscious of it in our lives;
- (2) be continually and unconditionally yielded to Him;
- (3) study the word of God to discern His will, and then do whatever He tells us to do;

- (4) spend time in prayer each day;
- (5) seize opportunities of service as they arise;
- (6) cultivate the fellowship and counsel of other Christians.

God prepares us for good works. He prepares good works for us to perform. Then He rewards us when we perform them. Such is His grace!

- William MacDonald

Now I guess we should touch on this because many people have a misunderstanding regarding what grace is all about. It is a word that is terribly misunderstood!

Let me share this acronym for **GRACE** and it is not too bad, but it does not answer the question completely about what grace is. **GRACE** is *God's Riches at Christ's Expense*.

One of the best-known definitions of grace is only three words: *God's unmerited favor*.

A. W. Tozer expanded on that: "Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines him to bestow benefits on the undeserving."

Berkhof is more to the point: grace is "the unmerited operation of God in the heart of man, effected through the agency of the Holy Spirit."

Grace is not merely unmerited favor; it is favor bestowed on sinners who deserve wrath. Showing kindness to a stranger is "*unmerited favor*"; doing good to one's enemies is more the spirit of grace. (Luke 6:27-36)

Grace is not a dormant or abstract quality, but a dynamic, active, working principle: "**The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation . . . and instructing us.**" (Titus 2:11-12) It is not some kind of ethereal [unearthly] blessing that lies idle until we appropriate it. Grace is God's sovereign initiative to sinners (Ephesians 1:5-6).

Grace is not a one-time event in the Christian experience. We stand in grace (Romans 5:2). The entire Christian life is driven and empowered by grace: “**It is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods.**” (Hebrews 13:9) Peter said we should “**grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**” (2 Peter 3:18)

Thus, we could properly define grace as *the free and benevolent influence of a holy God operating sovereignly in the lives of undeserving sinners.*

Let me sum it up like this. God has created good works for us to do in this life, He has prepared the works for us and then He has prepared us for the work, and He tells us to then walk in them, do them.

But it is our choice to walk or make excuses why we aren't walking like, “*I'm too tired!*” or “*I don't have the time!*” or “*I am not called into that ministry!*” or whatever!

God prepared the work and thus, we are to walk accordingly as Paul says in Philippians 2:13, “**for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.**”

If you don't God will use someone else, but you will miss out on the blessings of serving the Lord!

And we see this principle played out in the life of Queen Esther. Listen to what we are told in Esther 4:13-14, “**And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: ‘Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?’**”

In other words, you were created for such a time as this, step out in faith or God will use someone else to accomplish the task!

Make no mistake about it, we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone  
– and it truly is ***BUT GOD . . .!***

### VERSES 11-12

Here is another one of those depressing sections if Paul didn't finish up with a "**but**".  
And we will see that in a minute.

Keep in mind that the Jews were the children of God, entrusted with the Words of God,  
and they looked forward to the coming Messiah.

But, in speaking of the Gentiles before Christ came, before God became man and dwelt  
among us, the Gentiles had no Messiah, they were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel or  
they were on the outside looking in, they were strangers to the promises of God's covenants that  
He made to His people, and thus, they had no hope!

To give you an idea of the hopeless condition they were in, four hundred years before the  
birth of Christ, Socrates, the renowned Greek philosopher, drank the poison hemlock and lay  
down to die.

One of his friends asked him, "Shall we live again?"

And this dying philosopher could only say this, "I hope so, but no man can know."

- Socrates

Theognes, around 500 B. C. wrote, "I will try to have a good time while I'm young,  
because I will lie under the earth for a long time – voiceless as a stone, and I shall leave the  
sunlight that I loved . . . then I shall see no more. Have a good time, my soul, while young; soon  
others will take my place, and I shall be black earth in death. No mortal is happy under the sun."

Not too hopeful a life and that is how it was and is apart from Christ. There is no hope in the present or in the future!

Spurgeon put it like this, “Without Christ! If this be the description of some of you, we need not talk to you about the fires of hell; let this be enough to startle you, that you are in such a desperate state as to be without Christ. Oh! What terrible evils lie clustering thick within these two words!”

You see, every person outside of Christ is in that condition, they don’t know where they are going and are grasping at things that don’t bring them life, but they don’t have to be.

Listen to what Paul says in the next verse, “**But now in Christ . . .**”

### VERSE 13

The key is simple, and it is in stark contrast to the fact that no amount of good works or religious rituals will ever atone for or “*erase*” the sin in a person’s life!

Then what can be done? What can we do? Paul tells us that it is only through the blood of Christ!

Remember the song we sing, “*What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!*” How true that is!

Ray Stedman gives us this perspective. He wrote,

For obvious reasons, many people don’t like to hear about the blood of Jesus. But God underscores it. He wants us to think about it, because blood is always a sign of violence. It is extremely important that we remember that Jesus did not simply pass away.

He died a painful, violent, bloody, gory, ugly, revolting death. He was tortured and beaten, and then His writhing body was hammered to a rough wooden cross, the end of which was dropped into a hole in the ground with a bone-wrenching thud. The blood of Jesus streamed down His face, His arms, His sides, staining the cross and the ground beneath him . . .

God wants humanity to see that when we have done our worst, sunk to our lowest, expressed our most violent hatred and sadistic cruelty, when we have tortured and impaled Innocence personified - God is there, reaching out in love, ready to forgive. He calls to us who are far off from Him, and draws us to Himself through the blood of Jesus.

- Ray Stedman

And I love what Paul is saying here!

God not only saves individuals, but He unites groups of people together.

Think about a zealot and a tax collector left alone in a room together, they would try to kill each other.

The zealot was pro-Jew, stood up for the things of God while the tax collector collected taxes for Rome and made a big profit off the people by charging them extra and yet, Jesus united these two together, they were two of His disciples!

Not only that, but God has brought Jew and Gentile together into one body in Christ.

The Gentiles could partake of the blessings of God and they too could have hope!

You see, by being brought near to God through Jesus, reconciliation can take place between families, friends, groups of people, but only God can truly do that!

And Paul is going to expound on this as we read on. Listen to what he is saying.

VERSES 14-16

The New Testament describes the Temple two ways. First it is called *NAOS* in the Greek and that consisted of the Holy place and the Holy of Holies, the place where the High Priest could enter but only once a year, on the Day of Atonement!

Surrounding the Temple proper or the *NAOS* was several acres of land called the Temple Precincts, the Greek word that is used here is *HIERON*.

In this area were a series of successive courtyards that led up to the Temple Mount and I will show you how they went.

First there was the *Court of the Priests*, which actually contained the Temple building itself, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, and only the priests were allowed in this section.

This is where they would offer sacrifices to God on the brass altar and wash in one of the Lavers (wash basins) before entering into the Holy Place of the Temple to burn incense to God on the golden altar of incense which stood in front of the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies.

Keep in mind we are moving outward from the Temple proper.

Next came the *Court of the Israelites*. You would enter this court through the gate called Nicanor's Gate, a great gate of Corinthian bronze which needed twenty men to open and shut it.

It was here, in this court, that the Jewish men assembled for the Temple services.

After that came the *Court of the Women* and to enter into this court you entered by the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, into which any Jew could enter but which was called the Court of the Women because it was as far as a Jewish woman could go.

Keep in mind that these courtyards were all on the same level.

What I mean by that is yes, there were great differences between them, but they were not as great as the monumental division that came next.

You see, from the Court of the Women you descended five steps to a level area in which there was erected a five-foot stone barricade that went around the entire Temple enclosure.

Then, after another level space, there were fourteen more steps that descended to the **Court of the Gentiles** also known as the **Outer Court**.

According to the Jewish historian Josephus, the wall dividing Jews from Gentiles was marked at intervals by stone inscriptions stating that no foreigner (Gentile) was permitted to go any farther.

You see, the Gentiles were outside the covenants of God and were seen as far away from God and below the Jews (the Court of the Gentiles being on the lowest level).

And the Gentiles knew the Jews did not accept them unless they became a Jew, a proselyte.

In fact, in 1871 archaeologists discovered an inscription that was located on the wall separating the court of the Gentiles from the other courts in the Temple that Herod built.

This is what the sign said, “*No Gentile may enter within the barricade which surrounded the sanctuary and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death.*”

That wall was a visible reminder of the separation that existed between Jews and Gentiles. The Jews, as the covenant people of God were closest to Him.

Remember back in Acts 21:26-32 we see Paul accused of bringing a Gentile in the court of the Israelites and we are told, **“Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them. Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, crying out, ‘Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.’ (For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut. Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.”**

Now look at what Paul is saying here, that Jew and Gentile are one in Christ, that this middle wall of separation has been torn down!

And, if this is true, and it is, that Jew and Gentile are to be one, then why did God separate the Jews from the Gentiles in the first place?

Because through the Jewish people the Messiah was to come. He was not separating them for saving the Jews alone but both groups of people.

In fact, the Court of the Gentiles should have been the place where the Jews would win Gentiles to God, share their faith in the true and living God but instead it was a place where Gentiles were separated and the money changers were ripping the people off who came to worship God by charging them high exchange rates.

It was a place of thieves and robbers instead of a place of witness and worship.

Many churches are doing the same today, keeping people from God because they don't dress a certain way or act a certain way.

Here at Calvary Chapel all are welcomed and as we go out into the highways and the byways, we compel people to come into a relationship with Jesus Christ.

And I want you to notice that the Law kept Jew and Gentile apart and Christ has come and abolished the Law of commandments that the Jews used as a source of righteousness and the Gentiles didn't keep!

The Law doesn't save it just shows us our condition, sinners separated from God and only Jesus can save us from that condition as we receive Him as Lord and Savior. And as we do, that middle wall of separation between Jew and Gentile is broken down; don't start putting it back up again brick by brick!

Thus, the prayer of Jesus in John 17:20-23 is fulfilled. Jesus prayed, **"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me."**

Now we can negate that prayer of Jesus by building up those walls between people or groups of people or we can allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives and fulfill that prayer!

You see, those walls are forever broken down! It is as Paul said in Romans 10:12-13, **“For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For ‘whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.’”**

Don't put up those walls of separation, let us be one in Christ!

Paul is going to continue with this thought and drive home the point that we both; Jew and Gentiles have access to God through Jesus!

#### VERSES 17-18

Let me say this and it is important because some have this idea that Gentiles are saved by Grace and the Jews by the Law, that there are different ways to get saved.

Make no mistake about it, there was not a Gospel for the Jews and a Gospel for the Gentiles; it was the same good news.

Paul, in Romans 1:16-17 tells us, **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”**

The Law has been abolished in Christ; His finished work on the cross of Calvary has paid in full the penalty for all our sins!

In fact, Paul said, “**knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.**” Galatians 2:16.

Paul didn't say that this is only for the Gentiles, but “**a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ . . .**” I think that is very clear.

And remember when Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment in the Law was, for the Jews debated that issue.

And He responded by saying, “**. . . ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.**” Matthew 21:37-40.

Notice how Jesus concluded His point here, “**On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.**”

You see, it all goes back to the cross for without it there is no hope. Everything that the Law and the prophets spoke about was seen in Calvary.

Thus, as our relationship with God is restored in Christ, then the fruit that is born out of that relationship with God should be for us to love our neighbor!

And so, both Jews and Gentiles have access to God through Jesus Christ, He is the mediator between God and man, the bridge-builder you might say, and thus, both Jews and Gentiles are one in Christ!

And Clarke made this interesting observation. He wrote, “This text is a plain proof of the *holy Trinity*. Jews and Gentiles are to be presented unto *God the FATHER*; the *SPIRIT* of God works in their hearts, and prepares them for this presentation; and *JESUS CHRIST* himself *introduces* them.”

#### VERSES 19-22

Again, this is so important for us to understand because here in the twenty-first century, we may miss what was being done as Jews and Gentiles were becoming one in Christ!

You see, Gentiles are no longer second-class citizens with the Jews but full citizens and are equal members of God’s household!

Some may wonder, “*How can that be?*”

It is because we are built upon the same foundation and it has been laid down for us by the apostles and the prophets with Christ being the chief cornerstone or the supporting structure.

Now that the foundation has been laid, the primary office of apostles and prophets has passed off the scene. There is no office of apostles and prophets even though many, like the New Apostolic Reformation or the NAR, likes to tell us there is! You only need one foundation and, as the New Testament came into play, the foundation was laid!

In speaking of the chief cornerstone, Peter, in speaking to the Jewish religious leaders, said in Acts 4:11-12, “**This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**”

For both Jews and Gentiles salvation is only found in Jesus, and I think Paul made His case for that and it is very clear in this chapter. Outside of Christ there is no salvation!

Remember when Solomon was building the Temple all the stone cutting was done away, far away from the Temple so that the sound of the hammer or other iron tools could not be heard and then the finished stone was brought to the Temple. (I Kings 6:7)

That is what God is doing with us, it is called the sanctification process where He is chiseling, molding and shaping our lives to be like His.

It is as Peter tells us in I Peter 2:4-5, **“Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”**

You may remember the story of the Christian man who lost his job, his wife died, he lost his home, he had nothing, just a horrible situation.

As he was walking down the street one day, trying to figure out what was happening to him, what God was doing, he saw a man who was working on a building and he was cutting this little stone.

Curious, he asked the man what that was for, what he was doing and the man responded by saying, “I am cutting the stone down here so that it will fit in up there!” as he pointed towards the top of the building.

When he heard that he realized that God was working on him down here also, so that he will fit in up there, in heaven.

Folks, that is what God is doing with each of us, may we not resist but surrender to the Master and allow Him to finish His work in each of us.

And this building that God is putting together is made up of Jews and Gentiles, people from all walks of life because Christ has broken down any wall of separation and we are one in Him!

Let me close with these words from Ray Stedman as he wrote,

That is the picture Paul gives us of how God works with us. He is knocking off our rough edges, shaping us up, getting us ready for placement in His eternal dwelling place. He is building a holy temple - a beautiful, magnificent building. We are His building materials, His building blocks. The process of being chipped and smoothed for His service is often painful, but the result is going to be glorious!

I do not know any way to explain and make sense out of history - including the history of our own lives - other than from this point of view. Everything that happens in the world, from major wars and upheavals to the minor frustrations in our own everyday lives - is part of the building process of God. He is preparing His people, shaping us, smoothing us, making us just the right shape for His service so that He can fit us into place in His temple, His dwelling place, the church of Jesus Christ.

Everything else that we have built in our lives, in our civilization, will one day be blown away in the fires of final judgment. All that will be left is the permanent, eternal structure that God builds out of our lives.

- Ray Stedman