

Eph Ch 2 Vs 10-22

We covered quite a bit last week as it pertains to God and His richness in mercy and His great love with which He loved us, and that His love was for us and towards us not when we became some loveable type person. But rather even when we were dead in our trespasses and sins, and though we were dead, not at all responsive to the things of the Spirit or interested in God and were seeking to run away from God just as fast as we could He still loved us. and Drew us to repentance through His abundant riches and great love, the bible teaches us that it's the goodness of God that draws man to repentance.

I can testify to that even in my own life and I know that we are to use discernment in our approach to reasoning with people regarding judgment or grace, but in my case though I didn't want to go to hell, even as anyone in their right mind wouldn't. Because it's not going to be some never ending party, and I knew that, I knew of the flames, I knew of the darkness and the worms and the gnawing of my tongue and gnashing of my teeth that the bible talks about. But that didn't cause me to turn to God, But when I found out that even though I'd been apart of so many ungodly acts and sinful behavior, even though I'd mocked God and the things that I thought He stood for and had done so much to deserve judgment, but that God still loved me, that's when my heart began to melt. How could God love someone like me, and yet He does, and that's what Eph ch 2 vs 4-5 is saying, that even though I was dead in trespasses, crossing over all the lines that God had drawn, out of His great love for Me and His rich mercy toward me, He made me alive together with Christ. and He raised us up together, (again that resurrection/ascension power at work in our lives), and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ. Why, so that we might exemplify and glorify the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Notice vs 8-9

This is where we left off last week, God will not share His glory with any man, there's not going to be any bragging parties in heaven about what I did to get here, no, all the glory and honor and praise will go to Jesus Christ, due to the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us. You remember back in Judges around ch 6-7 when God called Gideon, and after God had convinced Gideon that it was really Him who was calling him to deliver the people out of the hands of the Midianites, Gideon gathered together 32,000 men to go up against the army of 135,000 of the Midianites. and God said to Gideon "*The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.'*

So He told Gideon to go tell everyone who was scared to go home, and so he did; 22,000 of them went home. Now he's left with 10,000 men to fight off 135,000 of the enemy, and God said hey, it's too many, if I deliver the Midianites into your hands these men will go around boasting with in themselves, I know the hearts of these people, send them all down to the creek to get a drink. and All who lap from their hand like a dog, set them apart and everyone who gets down on their knees to drink and sticks their face in the water separate them, 9,700 of them stuck their face in the water, God said send them home. I'm going to deliver the Midianites into your hand, all 135,000 of them with these 300 men.

You say but those are impossible odds, that's the point, what was Gods point in doing such a thing? To keep the people from boasting in their salvation, that which God alone was going to do. and In like manner God alone has brought us into salvation, there is no work that we can do by which we'll have some boasting right in our salvation, He alone has delivered us from certain death, and He alone will receive the Glory.

Vs10

So what is this vs telling us? Not that we're saved *by* our good works, but that we are saved *unto* good works. You see, again we need to remember that Paul is writing to people who are already believers; he's not telling them how to be saved, but rather the ramifications of that salvation in our lives, in the physical. and This word "workmanship" is the Greek word "poiema" from where we get our word, "poem" we are His poem, or His work of art, that's who you are in Christ Jesus, you are God's masterpiece, His work of art, His poiema.

There's a wonderful study that lies in the examination of the human body, how David said that we are fearfully and wonderfully made, and the miraculous inner workings of all that happens so that we might see and hear and comprehend and speak, the study of the nervous system or any number of things and then taking that and using it as only a base platform by which to show that as awesome as that is, it's nothing compared to the work of art that God has created in you, in Christ Jesus. I don't see how anyone in the medical field who's had to study the human body could be atheistic, or believe that we all got here by random chance and that there's not a divine creator. We are His workmanship and have been created in Christ Jesus for good works.

It's been said that, it is faith alone that justifies, but faith that justifies can never be alone. Unfortunately a lot of believers belittle the aspect of good works since we're saved by faith, but the bible has much to say concerning the importance of good works in the life of a Christian. Jesus said, *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."*

You see that's the key, it's all about the motive of the heart, we're not to do good works to glorify ourselves or gain ourselves a platform in the eyes of man, we talked about that last week. But we're to do our good works so that God is glorified. Col 1:10 says, "*that you may have a walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.*" 2nd Tim 3 teaches us that we need to be diligent students of the word of God, "*that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*" Titus 2:14 tells us to be "*zealous for good works.*" and Heb 13:16 reveals to us that good works are as sacrifices that are pleasing unto God. and Of course we're familiar with James who said you show me your faith with out your works and I'll show you my faith by my works.

But one thing that it's important to understand is that even though you may be the one who's doing the work, you are not the one who manufactures the good work, the bible is very clear that as Christians it is "*God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*" Phil 2:13 So the Christian life isn't all about being a bench warmer and hearing only, James said that's only to deceive ourselves, but rather we are to be doers of the word. (Repeat vs10) So you see we're not doing just these spasmodic random good works, we're busy about kingdom business, about doing those good works which God prepared before-hand that we should walk in *them*. So the non-believer walks according to the course of this world, or in the general direction of secular society, but the believer walks, not on the satanic path, but rather in good works that God has prepared for us, in opposition to vs 2. So God works for us, and then in us, and then through us.

Now the remainder of ch 2 breaks down into basically 3 sections vs 11,12 alienated from God, vs 13-18 reconciled to God and vs 19-22 indwelt by God. That's both our history and Gods desire for all of mankind, presently those who don't know the Lord are alienated from God, but He wants to reconcile them to Himself, and dwell in them as His holy temple and we'll be looking at these vs this morning.

Vs11-12

Paul is now returning again to the former condition, inviting us to remember from where we've come, he says, therefore remember that YOU, once gentiles in the flesh. Paul was known primarily as the apostle to the gentiles, which basically means anyone who wasn't a Jew. You're either a Jew or you're a gentile, but what he's going to head into basically is the fact that all of the differences between the Jew and the Gentile and we'll see that there were quite a few, were set aside in favor of common unity in Christ. These vs basically eradicate all racial, ethnic, cultural or social differences that make for contentions or barriers to be placed up between mankind, and those walls are broken down, in Christ.

Gal 3:27-28 *“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”* That vs sort of capsulizes a chunk of the main idea here, this passage focuses on the idea of spiritual oneness. So Paul interjects here this phrase concerning circumcision, he says that you, once gentiles in the flesh, who are called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision, but the key is the fact that they are called that by the circumcision that is made in the flesh by hands. Those who were religious, who were unable to see them as legitimate children of God apart from the physical act of circumcision, but Paul is rebuking that mentality when he says that those who have this problem are those who those who are of the circumcision that is made in the flesh by hands.

In other words the circumcision of the flesh is not the circumcision that God acknowledged anyway, it was the position of the heart and the circumcision was that of the heart. Rom 2:28-29 says, *“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.”* Today in the church the argument is more over baptism then it is circumcision, but it’s similar in it’s tone, one group will purport that you can’t be a true child of God apart from baptism. But baptism in itself is not that which commends us to God, Peter said it’s not the removal of the filth from the flesh, in other words the physical act in and of itself is worthless, apart from the position of my heart in why I’m doing it. To baptize a baby, though it looks real spiritual, really doesn’t do anything for the child spiritually speaking, to be baptized in order to join a church, isn’t what baptism is all about, it has a reality before God, but it can become a meaningless religious ritual or procedure.

That’s what Paul is saying here in regards to those he refers to as the circumcision that’s made in the flesh by hands, it was just a human activity, it went no deeper than the skin that was being severed, it wasn’t a spiritual reality of God in their hearts that was being testified to by their physical outward acts. Now, does God want us to be of the circumcision as believers, absolutely. But not that which is in the physical, made in the flesh by hands, but that which is of the Spirit in the heart, that which God alone can do and does do in Christ. Col 2:11 *“In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ”*

The circumcision of Christ is that of the heart, the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh through the power of the Holy Spirit. The bible tells us that physical circumcision is in and of itself nothing more than mutilation, as to where those who are of the true circumcision are those *“who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”* Phil 3:3

But Paul is saying remember that when you were in the flesh, before the circumcision of your heart, you were with out Christ, (Finish vs 12)Before you were in Christ and those who are presently not in Christ.

There is a 5-fold alienation that we experienced. and We won't look at each of them in depth, but for you who take notes and maybe desire at a later time to follow up on it #1 We were with out Christ, #2 We were with out citizenship, being aliens from the common wealth of God's nation, Israel, when someone is not part of a certain country, they aren't citizens they're aliens, we were aliens from the common wealth of Israel. #3 We were strangers or outsiders to the covenants of promise, #4 we were with out hope, and #5 we were with out God in the world.

We were with out Christ, that's every lost individual, no messiah in their lives, with out citizenship, God had chosen to make Israel His nation, of which we as gentiles had no part in, now they were to be a light in this dark world, through which God would reveal Himself to the nations and they failed in that. Instead they became proud and preferred to condemn the gentiles rather than witness to them and we know that ultimately they slipped into religious apathy rather than maintaining relational intimacy, so God has raised up the church and Jesus has commissioned us to be a light in the world around us reflecting God's goodness and grace and mercy.

But now we have to be careful as well lest we become guilty of proudly perverting the blessing of God, into a means for pride, isolation and self-satisfaction, instead of using the grace that God has bestowed upon us as a means to witness God's grace and mercy and goodness and compassion to the world around us. But we were with out the citizenship of Israel, the commonwealth or the rights of the citizenship of Israel, being citizens of God's nation. and We were strangers to the covenants of promise, God made several promises and covenants with the nation of Israel, but not to the gentiles, now we would eventually be blessed by them, in that through Ab all the families of the earth would be blessed, that meaning that ultimately the Savior of the world would come through him, but we weren't included in that covenant, we were blessed by it. and We had no hope, being with out God in the world. Not because God turned away from man, but because man turned away from God.

The bible begins with the fact of all of the human race knowing of only the one true God, religious history is not a record of man starting off in some primitive state believing in many gods, being lost in idolatry and then eventually learning of the one true God. But rather in the beginning man knew the truth about God and we've deliberately turned away from it, and you can read a little of Paul's commentary on that in Rom Ch 1.

We were with out God, therefore we were with out hope, there is no hope apart from God, remember that hope in the NT speaks of an assured expectation, of a guaranteed awaiting. and The only hope of that nature is found in God, that's why you remember Paul wanted the Ephesian believers to know (Vs18 Ch1) what is the hope of His calling. Because outside of that calling, the calling of God out of darkness into light, apart from knowing Him there is no hope, our hope is in God therefore to be with out God is to have no hope.

Rom 15:12 in quoting Isaiah says, And again, Isaiah says: "*There shall be a root of Jesse; And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope.*" Col 1:27 "*To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*" You see there it is right there, what is your hope of glory? Christ in you and one more for times sake Heb 10:23 "*Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, (how can we do that, how can we hold fast with out wavering) for He who promised is faithful.*" Because our hope stands on His faithfulness, not ours and He who promised is faithful.

Well, we must be moving on but who were we B.C. what condition were we in, with out Christ, with out hope, and with out God and I don't know about you but when I reflect back on this wretched condition from where I've been brought it only serves to bring about a sense of deeper gratitude in my life for what it is that God has done for me (notice vs13).

Vs13

God has reconciled us to Himself, these vs kind of echo or parallel vs1-4, the "but now" in this vs sort of coinciding with the "But God" in vs 4, in vs 1-3 a dark, and desperate description of who we once were apart from Christ, But God (vs 4) who is rich in mercy, and the whole picture begins to change radically. Vs11-12 Our former condition, with out Christ, with out hope, and with out God, Vs 13 But now, in Christ Jesus, everything has changed, when we were with out Christ we lacked everything we needed, but now that we're in Christ Jesus we have the ultimate spiritual position, with absolute full spiritual provision, we were far off, that was our former condition but now we've been brought near, that's our present condition. We've been reconciled to God in Christ Jesus, and what did it cost Jesus to bring us near to God? To gain us access to the Father, a greater price than you or I could ever pay, because we weren't redeemed with corruptible things like silver or gold from our aimless conduct, but with His precious and priceless blood.

Vs14

He Himself is our peace, this is an emphatic statement; it's the very person of Christ who is in view here, He is our peace. It's not saying that He provided peace, though He did do that and that's an awesome thing, but it goes beyond that, He Himself is our peace. There is no other source, law doesn't bring us peace with God or with each other, look at the position of the Middle East right now, Clinton so desperately trying to bring peace to the situation. and Oh there may be a current cease-fire, but there's no peace in the hearts of the people, there's still just as much animosity between the Palestinians and the Israelis. and Praise the Lord our peace is greater than a philosophy or a political cause, our peace is a person, the person of Jesus Christ Isa 9:6-7 *"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end."* and It's in Him that we have peace with God, Rom 5:1 *"having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* Col 1:19-20 *"For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross."* He is the fullness of our peace, it's in Him that you experience peace on every level, peace with God, peace with each other (Col 3:12-16) and Peace even with in your own heart comes from Him, if you're not in Christ you don't know true peace.

Phil 4:6-7 *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."* He Himself is our peace John 16:33 Jesus speaking, *"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."* The bible has so much to say concerning Jesus and the peace that He brings, John 14:27, Micah 5:5, when He was born the angels burst forth in song saying *"Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"* He Himself is our peace, (Finish through vs 15)

Vs15

So He is our peace and He is the One who makes peace or creates peace between peoples. In vs 14 where Paul is saying that He made both one, he is speaking of Jew and gentile just as we said earlier, in Christ there is neither Jew or gentile but we are all one in Christ. Jesus breaks down the walls of separation between ethnic groups and backgrounds. At the time Paul was writing this there was a literal wall that would separate the court of the gentiles from the rest of the temple and there was a sign between the 2 areas that read. "No gentile may enter with in the barricade which surrounds the sanctuary enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death."

That physical barrier also stood to represent the barrier of hostility, and hatred that separated these 2 groups. Even if you were a Jew and you brought a gentile into that portion of the temple you would be stoned. But Paul is saying here hey you guys Christ has broken down that wall. The work of the cross of Jesus Christ not only removes the barriers between God and man, it also removes the barriers between groups of people; again we are all one in Christ. In reality God only sees one race anyway, the human race, but the wickedness of mans heart has in many ways raised up walls between various ethnic groups. But in Christ all that is tore down, any political or economical, racial or even geographical difference that we have is completely eradicated.

I've had lunch in California with some Japanese believers who could barely even speak a word of English and it didn't even matter, our fellowship was great. You see laws can and should penalize things like racial discrimination, but the problem is that they can't change the heart of the racist - only Jesus can, that wall is only broken down in Christ. He abolished the enmity in His flesh, through His sacrifice on the cross.

Now in this case that source of enmity was the law, the Jew kept it (at least the letter not the Spirit, so they failed) but the gentiles didn't even keep the letter, and so since they violated so many of the legal codes they were considered unclean, most Jews thought that the only thing gentiles were good for was to stoke the fires of hell. But you see they weren't keeping the law as God intended it either, and so Christ came and fulfilled the law perfectly on all of our behalves and bore the penalty for our failure to keep the law, thereby putting to death the source of contention. Because now the law as a source of righteousness isn't an issue you're either in Christ or you're not and all peoples are brought together in Christ into one body, (notice vs 15) one new man. Which is the church where we are unified in Christ, this is in reality the answer to Jesus' prayer in John ch 17 vs 21 where He prayed that they all may be one and indeed we are one in Him, by the work that He accomplished on the cross (notice)

Vs16-18

In other words it doesn't matter how who you are, where you've been or what you've done, it doesn't matter how religious you may think you are or how morally base of a life you've lived, your ethnic background is irrelevant, the message is the same. The only way to get to the Father is by Jesus Christ; it's only by Him that we have access by one Spirit to the Father. and I wish we had more time to spend here, because this is a portion of scripture that really allows you to drive home the fact that Jesus Christ and Him crucified, the gospel message is the only message that we need, that in Him alone we are granted access to the Father and it's in Him alone that we have peace with God. and In vs 18 we see the Trinity, for through Him, (that is the Son) we have access by one Spirit (that is the Holy Spirit) to the Father.

Vs19

In vs 12 we were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, but now in Christ we're no longer strangers, but we are citizens of the kingdom with the saint and members of the household of God. You're as much a citizen of the kingdom as is Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, David, Isaiah, Elijah and all the rest.

Vs20

The foundation that's being referred to here is the message, or the divine revelation that the apostles, and the NT prophets taught, and the message that they heralded was that of Jesus Christ 1 Cor 3:11 "*For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*" and In written form that foundation is what we refer to as the NT, revealing to us Jesus Christ as the Messiah Redeemer and Savior of the world. He is the chief cornerstone, the apostles laying out the foundation which is in reality the message of the reality of who He is and then as mankind, as many as will call upon the name of the Lord, one by one comes to believe in Him, we become the building blocks of His temple.

Vs21-22

1 Peter 2:4-5 says that we come "*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.*" We are being fashioned together by the divine hand of God to be a temple fit for a King, but not just any king, the King of Kings, Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit dwells in you if you know Him and in me and in like manner He dwells in His body corporately as a whole.

What a climax to close on this morning with the reality of the fact that God would make of us His master piece that He might dwell in us and with us, there's no greater privilege than to know God and have Him dwell in us. We're being built together, so many people want to isolate themselves, but that my friends is not scriptural in its origin, we are being built together. I'll close with one commentator's summation of this section. "Through the blood, the suffering flesh, the cross, and the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, aliens become citizens, strangers become family, idolaters become the temple of the true God, the hopeless inherit the promises of God, those with out Christ become one in Christ, those far off are brought near, and the godless are reconciled to God. Therein is the reconciliation of men to God, and of men to men." (MacArthur)