

Ephesians 2 - The Believer's Previous Condition; The Unity of Believers in the Church, in Christ

I. Wealth of the believer (Eph 1:1–3:21)

(4) Position (Eph 2:1–3:13)

(A) Individual (2:1-10)

(a) Old (2:1-3)

- (i) Dead (2:1)
- (ii) Demonically influenced (2:2)
- (iii) Depraved (2:3a)
- (iv) Doomed (2:3b)

(b) New (2:4-10)

- (i) Spiritual life (2:4-5)
- (ii) Heavenly position (2:6-7)
- (iii) Saved by grace (2:8-9)
- (iv) Created for good works (2:10)

(B) Corporate (2:11-3:13)

(a) Reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles (2:11-22)

(i) Statement of union (2:11-13)

(a) Past disunion (2:11-12)

- (1) Non-circumcision (2:11)
- (2) Separate from Christ (2:12a)
- (3) Excluded from Israel (2:12b)
- (4) Strangers to covenants (2:12c)
- (5) Without hope (2:12d)
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(b) Present union (2:13)

(ii) Explanation of union (2:14-18)

(a) Assertion of peace (2:14a)

(b) Destruction of wall (2:14b-15a)

(c) Made the two one (2:15b-18)

(1) Peace (2:15b)

(2) One body (2:16)

- (3) Old Testament analogy (2:17)
- (4) One access (2:18)
- (iii) Description of the new building (2:19-22)
 - (a) God's household (2:19)
 - (b) Foundation (2:20)
 - (c) Formation (2:21)
 - (d) Function (2:22)

Your position determines your possessions and authority (incidentally, Paul was a prisoner when he wrote this letter). The power that raised Christ from the grave and crowned Him with glory and honor is the same power that now works in our own lives, raising us from spiritual death and seating us in Christ in the heavenlies! We open this chapter with spiritual corpses in death valley. Man's problem is that he is "out of harmony with his environment" = alienated from the life of God (Eph 4:18).

After describing our spiritual *possessions* in Christ, Paul turns to a complementary truth: our spiritual *position* in Christ. First he explains what God has done for all sinners in general (v1-10); then he explains what God did for Gentiles in particular (v11-22).

Ephesians 2

- (4) Position (Eph 2:1–3:13)
 - (A) Individual (2:1-10)

The first three chapters of Ephesians are broken up into two parts: a believer's individual blessings (1:1–2:10) and a believer's corporate blessings (2:11–3:21).

- (a) Old (2:1-3)
 - (i) Dead (2:1)

1 And you were dead in your offenses and sins,

1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

1 You used to be dead because of your offenses and sins

1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

- Verses 1-7 are one long sentence in Greek...

— The subject of the sentence is "God" (v4); the three verbs are "made alive" (v5), "raised up" (v6), and "seated" (v6). The object is "us" (believers), and the prepositional phrase "with Christ" describes "us".

— The main point of the sentence is: God has made believers alive, raised them up, and seated them with Christ.

- "And" - a continuation of Eph 1

- "...dead" - *nekros*, destitute of force or power; inactive; inoperative (Cf. James 2:17,26)

- Unbelievers are (spiritually) lifeless due to trespasses and sins; spiritually separated from God, and unable to fellowship with Him (Cf. 4:18; John 17:3)
- The word "dead" in Scripture *always* carries the idea of "separation"; it *never* means non-existence. In this case, an unbeliever's trespasses and sins have separated them from God. Our condition before we came to Christ was that physically we were alive, but spiritually we were dead (separated from God). See chart: **7 Deaths in Scripture** below.
- Paul says much the same thing in Col 1:21, describing the spiritual state of an unbeliever: And although you were previously **alienated and hostile** in attitude, *engaged* in evil deeds,
- Reformed theology (Calvinism) uses this verse to argue for their doctrine of Total Depravity: they define "dead" not with the biblical definition, but they substitute their own definition, which is "like a corpse" or "completely unable to respond to God."
- The biblical definition of dead/death is "separation" but Calvinism defines death as "inability" or "non-existence." Dead/death never refers to non-existence in the Bible...not one time! It always refers to separation (i.e. death is the *separation* of the body from the soul; the "second death" is the *separation* of the soul from God; Cf. Luke 15:24).
- Taking the state of people before they come to Christ, who are spiritually dead, and comparing that to physical death, is comparing apples and oranges
- Calvinism analogizes the *spiritual* condition of a lost person to the *physical* world by using an anachronistic (outside of time) exegetical fallacy by defining death by its 21st century definition and reading it back into a 1st century context to explain their belief in Total Depravity
- Here are some examples of how "death" is used throughout Scripture to illustrate separation, not non-existence:
 - Gen 2:17: but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for **on the day** that you eat from it you will certainly **die**."
 - Death in this context ("on the day") could not have meant physical death because Adam did not physically die that day...he lived for 930 years
 - What God meant when He said "on that day...you will certainly die" is that Adam would "die" spiritually (be separated from God). Physical death would come later (much later), but "on that day" when he ate the fruit, death referred to spiritual separation from God.
 - Gen 3:8: Now they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.
 - After the Fall, Adam and Eve were still able to respond to God. Their problem after they "died" was not non-existence, it was separation from God (Cf. Is 59:1-2).

- Gen 35:18: And it came about, as her soul was **departing** [*māwet*] (for she died), that she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin.
 - The death of Rachel...she died, and her soul "departed" (was separated from her body; it didn't cease to exist)
- Eccl 12:7: then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.
 - Upon death, the human spirit does not stop existing...it returns back to the Creator (is separated from the body)
- Dan 12:2: And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt.
 - Every single human being, when they die, remains alive and alert and will one day be resurrected to stand in judgment before God
- Matt 25:46: **These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."**
 - When we die, our soul and body are separated; the soul does not stop existing, it's just separated
- Matt 27:50-51:

50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and **gave up His spirit.** 51 And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.

 - When Jesus died, did He stop existing? No! His soul (spirit) was temporarily separated from His physical body.
- Luke 15:24: **for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found! And they began to celebrate.**
 - The prodigal son was not physically dead...he had returned to the father, and the father is describing his son's previous condition as "dead" (separated from him) and "lost"
- Luke 16:22,25:

22 **Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.**

 - Neither death resulted in non-existence; both men died, but continued to exist, just in different locations

25 **But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.**

 - The rich man obviously died, but he didn't experience non-existence ("lifted up his eyes"; "he saw"; "he cried out"; he "remembered", etc.

- Luke 23:46: And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, **"Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I ENTRUST MY SPIRIT."** And having said this, He **died**.
 - When Jesus died, His spirit was separated from His body and went back into the hands of the Father
 - Acts 7:59: They *went on* stoning Stephen as he called on *the Lord* and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"
 - Stephen understood that upon the death of his physical body, his spirit would be separated from it and go to heaven
 - 2 Cor 5:8: but we are of good courage and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.
 - Believers who die go immediately into the presence of the Lord
 - Phil 1:21-23:

21 For to me, to live is Christ, and to **die** is gain. 22 But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this *will mean* fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. 23 But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better;

 - Paul never anticipated not existing after his death...he knew he would continue to exist in heaven
 - 1 Tim 5:6: But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is **dead even while she lives**.
 - Death for this woman didn't mean non-existence because she was still alive. "Dead" meant she was separated from God.
- To make the Calvinist argument for their doctrine of Total Depravity, they will bring a person to this verse and ask them "what can a dead person do?" Of course the answer is "nothing." Then they lead them into their soteriology...since unbelievers are "dead" (unable) to respond to the gospel on their own, the only way they are saved ("made alive," v5) is that God has to first regenerate them (give the gift of faith, but only to the "elect") in order for them to believe.
- They argue that an unbeliever in their sins are like a "rock," unable to respond to the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit, and thus must first be regenerated by God and given the gift of faith by Him before they are able to come to a saving knowledge of Christ.
- John Piper defines "dead" as the state of being "incapable of any life with God (before salvation). Our hearts were like a stone toward God." Thus, he defines "dead" as inability, even with the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit. The problem is that is not what "dead" means throughout the Bible (see examples above).
- John MacArthur says: "Because we were dead to God, we were dead to truth, righteousness, peace, happiness, and every other good thing, no more capable to respond

to God then a cadaver" and are "spiritual zombies, death-walkers, unable even to understand the gravity of their situation. They are lifeless."

— Their unscriptural doctrine of Total Depravity leads to an unscriptural and inconsistent plan of salvation. Once you believe that Total Depravity means inability, that you're a "rock", you can begin re-writing a number of verses to get them to mean what you want (need) them to mean.

— To prove their point, they cite a number of passages: Job 5:20; Ps 30:3; 33:19; Jonah 2:6; Luke 15:24,32; Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:21–22; Eph 2:1, 5; Col 2:13; 1 John 3:14; Rev 11:8; 3:1–2. However, none of these passages teach what they claim. Their references to "dead" or "death" refer to either physical death or spiritual separation from God.

Death: Calvinism vs Biblicalism		
	CALVINISM	BIBLICISM
Spiritual death:	Corpse, cadaver	Spiritually separated
Consciousness:	Cessation, lifeless	Aware
Results:	Inability	Able to hear and believe
Spiritual response:	Regeneration first	God's Word, Spirit's conviction, Gospel's power
Regeneration:	Before faith, if you're elected	Result of faith

Adapted from Robert R. Congdon, *Oops! I Thought I Was a Four - Pt Calvinist* (Greer, SC: Congdon Ministries International, 2014), 22.

- Contrary to Calvinist teaching that man is so totally depraved and incapable of responding to God, and does not have any faith inside him whatsoever, the Bible teaches that faith *is possible* (without Calvinism's regeneration first) through the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the proclamation of the Gospel (Is 55:8–9; Rom 10:17; 2 Tim 3:15; 1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18).
- A spiritually dead unbeliever can hear the gospel...the Holy Spirit can convict (convince) them of the truth of the gospel, and that person, in their totally depraved state, can make a decision to respond in faith to the grace of God
- But Calvinism says you can give the clearest, best presentation of the gospel ever given, and the Holy Spirit can be working overtime on a person's heart, and that person cannot respond because they are dead. In Calvinism, the only way a person can get saved is that if

they are one of the elect, and then at some point in their life God gives them the gift of faith (regenerates them) in order that they can believe.

— Even though the Bible teaches that faith is possible through the Spirit's conviction and the proclamation of the gospel, in our totally depraved state the Holy Spirit must do a lot of things in order to get our attention. People only come to Christ by the Spirit's enabling. So we can't paint such an optimistic view of human nature that the grace of God pre-salvation doesn't work. It has to work, otherwise no one would be saved. But what we must reject is the idea that if God does those things and it still doesn't work because people are like rocks (completely depraved to the point that they can't even respond to the conviction of the Spirit, the gospel, and God's grace).

— If you take the Word of God (Is 55:10-11), the conviction of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-11), and the power of the Gospel (Rom 1:16), these are all means of grace that God has given to lost people to put them in a place where they can trust in Jesus. God cannot and will not believe for us, but look at all the things God has given us to get us to place our faith and trust in His Son...something the Calvinist says is impossible due to our total depravity.

- Contrary to Calvinism's belief that unsaved man has no capacity or ability to respond to God, there are many examples of lost people, under the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, seeking God in the Bible and coming to faith in Christ. Otherwise, how could God blame people for not acknowledging Him or believing in Christ (John 5:40)?

- Gen 15:6: Then he believed in the LORD; and He credited it to him as righteousness.
 - Abraham believed God. The passage does not mention anything about God giving Abraham the gift of faith, or regenerating him before he came to the conclusion to believe God.
- The Magi (Matt 2:1-2)
- Roman centurion (Matt 8:5-13) - Jesus marveled at the faith of a Roman centurion, saying: "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel." Jesus' reference to the centurion's "great faith" makes sense only if that faith came from the centurion, not from God.
 - If God were the one to impart faith, every person's faith would be great and Jesus would have no need to compliment this centurion
 - Jesus demonstrates by His compliment to the centurion that a lost person has the ability to exercise faith in the Messiah
- John 7:37-38:

37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. 38 The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

 - "The one who believes in Me" - this statement, in fact this passage, makes no sense if unsaved man has no ability to believe in God, as Calvinism routinely asserts

- John 9:35-38:

35 Jesus heard that they had put him out, and upon finding him, He said, "**Do you believe in the Son of Man?**" **36** He answered by saying, "And who is He, Sir, that I may believe in Him?" **37** Jesus said to him, "**You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you.**" **38** And he said, "I believe, Lord." And he worshiped Him.

- Verse 36: the formerly blind man desired to believe in Jesus
- There's no mention in this passage of the man's inability believe in Jesus, and no mention that he must first be regenerated or given the gift of faith before he was able to believe.
- Cornelius was not saved when Peter first met him (Acts 11:14). But he was...
 - "a devout man" who "feared God with all his household" and "gave many alms" and "prayed to God continually" (Acts 10:2)
 - So Cornelius was devout, he feared God along with his entire family, he gave, and he prayed "continually." Clearly Cornelius does not fit Calvinism's doctrine of Total Depravity if he did these things while he was yet unsaved.
 - "a righteous and God-fearing man," "well spoken of by the entire nation of Jews," and was "divinely directed" to "send for you to come to his house and hear a message from you" (Acts 10:22)
 - God spoke to Cornelius while he was unsaved, so apparently God has the ability to speak to an unsaved person
 - In Acts 10:30-32, Cornelius recounted when he prayed in his house when an angel came before him and said that his prayers were heard by God.
 - Apparently God can hear and answer the prayers of an unsaved person
 - And there's no mention of God needing to first regenerate Cornelius or give him the gift of faith
- Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40) - he did not know the name Jesus Christ, but he was seeking/curious and reading Isaiah in order to find the truth. God moved heaven and earth to get the gospel to him
- Lydia (Acts 16:14) - the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. It's as if God removed a mental veil (Cf. 2 Cor 4:3-4) in Lydia that enabled her to understand so she could exercise faith.
- In Acts 17:23, Paul tells the Athenians that he noticed an altar dedicated to an "unknown God." In v28, there is further evidence that the unbelievers in Athens were attempting to seek after God.
 - If these people were stuck in their Total Depravity, with a complete inability to seek God, why did they appear to be groping for God (although in the wrong direction)?
- Acts 17:26-27 explains why God setup nations and borders...so that they would seek God, or at least "groping for Him and find Him."

- If a lost person cannot seek God, why does v27 tell us that God gave us borders, nations, and peoples so that they would seek God?
 - There are many more examples throughout Scripture; see [Neo-Calvinism vs The Bible 12-18 Total Depravity](#) ([Jer 17:9](#); [Gen 8:21](#); [Eph 2:1-5](#); [Acts 17:27](#); [John 5:40](#)) for a complete list, including passages that teach "prevenient grace," which is the grace of God that prepares the heart and mind of an unbeliever to hear and receive the gospel and respond in faith, and additional passages that demonstrate that God put the responsibility to believe on mankind.
- Calvinism believes that the conviction of the Holy Spirit is inadequate to convince a sinner to come to Christ (Cf. John 14:7-11)...
- David N. Steele & Curtis C. Thomas [*The Five Points of Calvinism*] sum it up like this: "Because of the fall, man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel. The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God; his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature, therefore, he will not—indeed he cannot—choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently, ***it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ***—it takes regeneration by which He makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. ***Faith is not something man contributes to salvation***, but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation—***it is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God.***"
- "it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ" - really? So what Jesus told the disciples about the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit to the world (John 16:7-11), according to Calvinism, is not enough. In Calvinism, man is so depraved that they are like an rock (inanimate object), and even the Holy Spirit's ministry of conviction cannot get through to them.
 - Then the question must be asked: If the Spirit's conviction of the unsaved about their need to believe in Christ is not enough, why does God waste His time doing it?
 - Isn't it strange for a Bible-believing Christian to think/believe that God the Holy Spirit, omnipotent and omniscient just as both the Father and the Son, is powerless to convict (convince) even one single person of their need for Christ without the Father first giving them the gift of faith?
 - "Faith is not something man contributes to salvation" - our faith doesn't save us, but Jesus asks *us* to exercise *our* faith in Him. And we become aware of the need to exercise our faith in Christ as the Holy Spirit convicts/convinces us to do that. Calvinism comes along as says, No, it's not your faith it's God's faith that He gives to you. And secondly, to have your eyes opened as a dead man (Eph 2:1), you have to be regenerated first. And even before that, you have to be one of the elect.
 - In reality, faith is required by God on our part to be saved because faith is the one thing we have that is not a work/non-meritorious (Rom 4:4-5; Cf. Heb 11:6).

- "it [faith] is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God" - when you believe in Christ, you're not giving God a gift. You are acquiescing to His terms, that faith is the one thing we have that is non-meritorious, that can be pleasing to God.
- Calvinism believes that (unbelieving) man is as sinful and rotten as they can possibly be. But this belief is refuted by a number of passages:
- Gen 3:22: Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out with his hand, and take *fruit* also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"—
 - Right after the Fall, God says that man knows the difference between good and evil. He can't do anything to merit God's favor, but God clearly states here that he knows good from evil.
 - This doesn't communicate man's state anywhere near what Calvinism purports it to be (like a rock, unable to respond to God)
 - The reason man sins/does evil is not due to his inability to do good, but because he takes truth and holds it down (suppresses it) in unrighteousness (Rom 1:18ff).
 - This is a problem with man and his volition/free will, not with his ability
 - Matt 7:11: **So if you, despite being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!**
 - Jesus' point is that we should ask/pray that God would give us good gifts because we as fathers know how to give good gifts to our children
 - If sinful fathers know how to give good gifts and bless their children, how much more does a good God know how to give good gifts to us?
 - This shows that man, even in his fallen state, knows how to bless his children
 - Rom 2:14-15:
 - 14 For when Gentiles who do not have the Law instinctively perform the *requirements* of the Law, these, though not having the Law, are a law to themselves, 15 in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience testifying and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,
 - Every single human being has the law of God written in their hearts in the form of their conscience, whether or not they are saved
 - If I make a volitional decision to sin, my conscience will accuse me; but if I make a decision to do good, my conscience will defend/justify me

- In the Nuremberg Trials after WWII, when the Nazis were tried for their war crimes and what they did to the Jews, their defense was that they were simply following orders from higher-ups. However, they were convicted anyway because "following orders" wasn't a sufficient defense/excuse for the atrocities they committed, and the reason given was because of the conscience. Their conscience accused them that what they were doing was wrong, and they should've obeyed it.
- Henry Clarence Thiessen [*Lectures in Systematic Theology*] explains it well: "The Scriptures speak of human nature as totally depraved. However, the doctrine of "total depravity" is easily misunderstood and misinterpreted. From the negative standpoint, it is important to know both what it does not mean and what it does mean. This does not mean that every sinner is devoid of all qualities pleasing to men; that he commits or is prone to every form of sin; or that he is bitterly opposed to God as it is possible for him to be. Jesus recognized the existence of pleasing qualities in some individuals (Mark 10:21); He said that the scribes and Pharisees did some things God demanded (Matt 23:23); Paul asserted that some Gentiles "do instinctively the things of the law" (Rom 2:14); God told Abraham that the iniquity of the Amorites would grow worse (Gen 15:16); and Paul says that "evil men and impostaers will proceed from bad to worse" (2 Tim 3:13)."

- If man is as depraved and unable to receive the gospel as Calvinism's Total Depravity says they are, why does Satan...

- Need to "blind the minds of the unbelieving" so that they will not see the light of the gospel (2 Cor 4:4)? If unbelievers are already blinded by their own depravity, as Calvinism argues, then what is the purpose for Satan to also blind them? Wouldn't that be a waste of his time and effort? Why would you put blinders on a "rock"?
 - Need to come and snatch away the seed/gospel so that it cannot be understood (Matt 13:19)? Why would Satan need to snatch away the seed/gospel if the unbeliever has no ability or capacity to understand it anyway?
 - Hold unbelievers captive and ensnared in order to do his will (2 Tim 2:26)?
- The way Satan operates, according to numerous passages, does not follow or comport with Calvinistic assumptions about Total Depravity
- What are the implications of Calvinism's unscriptural doctrine of Total Depravity?
- Denigrates and erases the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit in the heart of an unbeliever. Calvinism believes that the convicting ministry of God the Holy Spirit is inadequate to convince a sinner to come to Christ.
 - Based on this unscriptural (heretical) belief, if the Spirit's conviction of the unsaved about their need to believe in Christ is not enough, why does God waste His time doing it?
 - Does not recognize Satan's role in hindering the gospel. The hinderance of the spreading and understanding of the gospel is laid upon the unbeliever himself.

- Calvinism turns a God-centered gospel into a man-centered gospel
 - The entire focus of Calvinism is, Am I really persevering as a Christian as I should? If not, then I'm not saved. It's a subtle way to put all of the onus on ourselves and what we can/need to do rather than on what God has already done.
 - Calvinism is a gospel of works; once a person moves into a gospel of works, they deny the power of the gospel
 - It believes that faith is not the cause of the new birth, but the consequence of it
 - It removes man's free will/volition in the realm of salvation. It believes that personally we have no more to do with our spiritual birth than we had to do with our natural birth.
 - The gospel loses its power (Rom 1:16; Cf. Is 55:10-11). It is no longer the gospel message, plus the internal conviction of the Holy Spirit in the heart of an unbeliever, but instead it is God giving the gift of faith, based on election, to an individual in order for them to be saved. If this is the case, what is the "power" of the gospel that Paul describes in Rom 1:16?
- See Neo-Calvinism vs The Bible 12-18 Total Depravity (Jer 17:9; Gen 8:21; Eph 2:1-5; Acts 17:27; John 5:40) for a complete refutation of Calvinism's doctrine of Total Depravity.
- "...offenses" - violation of known law; false steps
 - "...sins" - falling short of God's perfection; acts of missing the mark

		WHEN	CAUSE	WHAT	VERSES	REMEDY
1	SPIRITUAL	At conception	Born in Adam	Spiritual/relational separation of yourself from God	Gen. 2:17 Eph. 2:1	Salvation: being "Born Again"
2	PHYSICAL	When you die	The fall, the curse, and being in Adam	Separation of your soul / spirit from your body	Gen. 35:18 Heb. 9:27 James 2:26	For believer, it is only "sleep," then bodily resurrection
3	ETERNAL	Begins when you die, lasts forever	Physical death apart from faith in Christ	Separation of your body, soul, and spirit from God forever	Rev. 20:14 Mt. 25:46	Salvation and eternal life
4	POSITIONAL	At the moment you get saved	Born again in Christ; Identification with Jesus Christ	Separation of your body, soul, and spirit from your old unregenerate self	Romans 6:3-6 Gal. 2:20	It is a remedy!
5	TEMPORAL	During your life, after salvation	Personal sin of the believer	Separation from a right fellowship with God	Luke 15:24 1 Tim. 5:6 James 1:15	Confession of sin and/ or yielding to God
6	OPERATIONAL	During your life, after salvation	Uninterrupted living in the flesh	Separation from godly good works, and a right testimony before man	James 2:17, 20, 26 Heb. 6:2	Confession of sin and dependence upon God
7	SEXUAL	During old age	Physical limitation	Separation from ability to physically reproduce	Rom. 4:17-19	Miracle from God

(ii) Demonically influenced (2:2)

2 in which you previously **walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air**, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

2 that you once practiced as you lived according to the ways of this present world and according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now active in those who are disobedient.

2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

- Before we were saved, we were demonically influenced; we walked according to the world system, which is controlled and ruled by Satan

- Satan's authority (John 12:31; 2 Cor 4:4); Satan rules the world (Luke 4:5-7; 1 John 2:15-16)

- Three spheres in which unbelievers live:

- "...walked according to the course of this world" - a lifestyle in which people follow the ways of the "world"...the philosophy that seeks to eliminate God from every aspect of life

- "...according to the prince of the power of the air" - the unsaved follow the person who is promoting this philosophy, namely, Satan

- Unbelievers "fulfill the desires of the flesh" (v3)...an unbeliever characteristically gives in to their fleshly desires and thoughts, whereas the believer should not, and need not, do so

John 12:31: **Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.**

2 Cor 4:4: in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

1 John 5:19: We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in *the power of the evil one.*

A description of the world system — 1 John 2:15-16:

15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

(iii) Depraved (2:3a)

(iv) Doomed (2:3b)

3 Among them we too all previously lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature **children of wrath**, just as the rest.

3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

3 Indeed, all of us once behaved like them in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of our flesh and senses. By nature we were destined for wrath, just like everyone else.

3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

- Prior to coming to Christ, all people are depraved. We have a nature, inherited from Adam, that is at war with God (Rom 5:12; Cf. Jer 17:9)/

— Thus, my sin does not make me a sinner; rather, I sin because I am a sinner (because we have a corrupted nature). This sin nature manifests itself in the "works of the flesh" (Gal 5:19-21).

- "...children of wrath" - "objects" of wrath

— Before we came to Christ, we had two things working against us:

1. God's holiness - we have to understand the character of God in order for us to understand our position in relation to Him, before coming to Christ
 - Holiness is God's dominant attribute; the seraphim around God's throne say, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty day in and day out. They don't say Sovereign, Sovereign is the Lord God Almighty, even though He absolutely is sovereign.
 - Holiness means God cannot look upon or tolerate sin; God must punish sin. This creates real problems for us because (v3a) we are depraved by nature. This puts us in a precarious position before coming to Christ.

2. God's judgment - before coming to Christ, we were on a collision course with the righteous judgment of God (John 3:36). We are in a pathetic position before coming to Christ...dead (v1), satanically controlled (v2), depraved (v3), indulging the sin nature because it's who we are, and doomed to judgment (v4).

— It's not until we grasp our position before we came to Christ that we will have any understanding of the grace of God. This is why Paul structures this chapter in the way that he does.

Verses 1-3 picture the hopeless unbeliever as a part of the world system, controlled by Satan, indulging the flesh, and destined to experience God's wrath. When an unbeliever trusts in Jesus Christ: the world, the devil, and the flesh become their three-fold enemy.

(b) New (2:4-10)

(i) Spiritual life (2:4-5)

- 4 **ButGod**, being rich in **mercy**, because of His **greatlove** with which He loved us,
4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,
4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love for us
4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,
- "But God" - the turning point (hinge) of this chapter; v1-3 describes man's predicament, v4-10 describes God's solution. The most significant, eloquent, and inspiring transition in all of literature!
- "...mercy" - *e/eos*, as noted above, God is holy; holiness is His dominant attribute, but it is not His only attribute. He is also a God of mercy ("rich in mercy"); He is holy, but He is also "loving."
— There is a contradiction in the attributes of God: because He is holy, He must punish sin. On the other end, He is loving and merciful, and does not want His creation to fall into judgment. So God's solution: pour out His wrath against sin onto a Substitute. The shock of the NT is that God pours His wrath out upon Himself. This act satisfies God's competing attributes: His wrath is satisfied because it was poured out on Christ, and His holiness was satisfied because sin was punished. His mercy is satisfied because punishment is limited to the Cross, a one-time event.
- "...great love" - God's *agapē* sought the highest good in the objects of His choice, even though we were rebellious sinners
— How great? Examine the price which He paid. It was at Calvary that God displayed His hatred for sin and His love for sinners (Rom 5:8; John 3:16).

- 5 even when **we were dead** in our wrongdoings, **made us alive** together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),
5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),
5 even when we were dead because of our offenses, made us alive together with the Messiah (by grace you have been saved),
5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ,
- "...we were dead" - separated from God by sin, unworthy and unlovely, enemies of God; destitute and degraded
- "...made us alive" - after we were convicted by the Holy Spirit and placed our faith in Christ, we were born again/regenerated
— The solution to our "dead" problem (v1) is regeneration, which occurs the moment we place our faith in Christ (not beforehand, as Calvinism believes). Regeneration takes us from being walking dead people to being "alive together with Christ."

- The Holy Spirit "regenerates" us the moment we trust Christ; regeneration is the impartation of divine life. We can't understand our desperate need for regeneration until we understand that we are dead (separated from God) in our sin before we come to Christ.
- Calvinism, building on its unscriptural interpretation of "dead" in v1, interprets this as coercion—that God overrode our free will by giving us the gift of faith and regenerating us, so that we were capable to believe, but only if you happen to be one of the elect.
- It is accurate that God "made us alive" but this verse does not tell us *how* God made us alive. Calvinism reads into the verse that God made us alive by infusing us with the gift of faith and regenerating us, but the verse doesn't say that. This is eisegesis of the highest order...interpreting a text by imposing one's own ideas, biases, or preconceived notions onto it, rather than drawing out the text's inherent meaning.
- The only way you get the Calvinist interpretation of this passage is by reading the Bible with a Calvinist lens, interpreting it based on the doctrines of TULIP rather than reading the Bible for what it says. A normal person reading this passage would never get the Calvinist interpretation from it if they knew nothing about Calvinism beforehand.
- So if God doesn't "make us alive" through regeneration and giving us the gift of faith, how does He make us alive? Since Paul doesn't tell us how in this passage, we learn how He makes us alive from other passages, which essentially says that an unbeliever falls under the conviction of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-11), hears the gospel, and then responds to it of their own free will by faith.

Calvinism's belief that God must regenerate unbelievers and give them the gift of faith begs the question: If a sinner has new life through regeneration before they have believed anything, why does he need to believe at all? Charles Spurgeon asked the same question:

If I am to preach the faith in Christ to a man who is regenerated, then the man, being regenerated, is saved already, and it is an unnecessary and ridiculous thing for me to preach Christ to him, and bid him to believe in order to be saved when he is saved already, being regenerate. Am I only to preach faith to those who have it? Absurd, indeed! Is not this waiting till the man is cured and then bringing him the medicine? This is preaching Christ to the righteous and not to sinners. [Spurgeon, sermon entitled "The Warrant of Faith"]

Calvinists hate this quote from Charles Spurgeon because they believe Spurgeon was a 5-point Calvinist. When you quote this to them, they get enraged because they believe it's heresy from one of their own.

One of the big problems with Calvinism, how they get to what they believe, is that they have moved in a Roman Catholic direction. They don't believe in *Sola Scriptura*, in fact many of them are *anathema* to the idea. They take Scripture, but they also put the "sages of the

past" on equal footing with Scripture. They also place the various confessions and creeds of the past on equal footing with Scripture.

Ordo Salutis (Order of Salvation)

The Bible clearly teaches (Gen 15:6; John 3:16; 5:24; 6:40,47; Acts 16:30-31; 2 Cor 5:17) that a person first believes, then they receive eternal life, are regenerated, and receive the indwelling Holy Spirit. Belief in Christ by faith alone is always the FIRST act an unbeliever must take before receiving any of the other aspects of God's "grace package."

Calvinism reverses the order: they place regeneration/born again first, before an unbeliever does or believes anything of their own free will (which they don't have in Calvinism). Then God "automatically" regenerates a pre-selected person (the "elect"), with no knowledge or compulsion on the part of the unbeliever, then the unbeliever believes.

The biblically proper *Ordo-Salutis* (order of salvation) is:

1. Conviction by the Holy Spirit (don't confuse conviction with believing)
2. Hearing the Gospel (Rom 10:17)
3. Faith alone in Christ alone, as a result of conviction
4. Regeneration (born again, new creation, in Christ, indwelling of the Holy Spirit)

In Calvinism, the *Ordo-Salutis* is:

1. Regeneration ("elect" unbeliever is given the gift of faith)
2. "Elect" believe (because they are "made" to believe) by faith alone in Christ alone

Calvinism sees no need for the conviction ministry of the Holy Spirit because a "dead" person cannot respond to God. Calvinism also doesn't emphasize the gospel as the means to generate faith in a person because they believe that even the gospel, coupled with the convicting ministry of the Spirit, is not enough to convince an unsaved person to come to Christ. In their minds, God has to do a work first, only in the "elect," to regenerate a person prior to them coming to belief.

The Dangers of Eisegesis

Eisegesis is the practice of interpreting a text by imposing one's own ideas, biases, or preconceived notions onto it, rather than drawing out the text's inherent meaning.

Eisegesis reads what a reader wants a biblical text to say into that text. Rather than "drawing out" meaning (exegesis), eisegesis imports meaning into it. Eisegesis comes from the Greek word *eisegeomai*, which means "reading into."

Key Characteristics of Eisegesis

1. Reading into the text - the interpreter brings their own message and injects it into the text, rather than letting the text speak for itself.

2. Personal bias - the interpreter's personal feelings, cultural perspectives, or theological assumptions shape the interpretation.
3. Misleading interpretations - this approach can distort or bypass the original meaning of the text, potentially leading to misrepresentations of the author's intent.
4. Justification of beliefs (proof-texting) - eisegesis is often used to find support for beliefs that the interpreter already hold, rather than to understand the text's true message.

Why Is Eisegesis Problematic?

1. Undermines authorial intent - it disrespects the original author's intended message.
2. Compromises integrity - it can be harmful, especially in religious contexts, as it can twist Scripture to justify various beliefs or policies.
3. Misleads others - in teaching, eisegesis can lead to incorrect information being shared, misguiding congregations about the content of the gospel.

(ii) Heavenly position (2:6-7)

6 and **raised us up** with Him, and seated us with Him **in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,**

6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,

6 raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavenly realm in the Messiah Jesus,

6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

- "...raised us up" - this is a jurisdictional transfer, from the realm of Satan to the realm of Christ; this describes who we are as a believer, our legal identity

— The authority over us was transferred:

- Formerly: demonically influenced (v2)
- Presently: seated with Christ (v6)

- Paul uses a *de jure* (legal) / *de facto* (reality) distinction: legally, we are seated with Christ in the heavenlies, with Christ Jesus. Factually, in reality, we're not there yet.

— If we're obviously not there yet, why would the Bible say that we are? Because it's not describing a statement of fact, it's describing a statement of legal right. This is how God legally sees us.

- "...in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus" - our position: already raised, already delivered, no longer earthbound, no longer occupied with the trivial and the transient

— Heaven is where our citizenship lies (Phil 3:20) and where our final home is

— What Christ did physically (died, arose, and took His seat in heaven), God has already done for the believer spiritually. The fact that God enabled Christ to do these things,

physically, should help us believe that He has done these things for us spiritually.

Why did He do this? To glorify Himself...

7 so that in **the ages to come** He might show **the boundless riches of His grace in kindness toward us** in Christ Jesus.

7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

7 so that in the coming ages he might display the limitless riches of his grace that comes to us through his kindness in the Messiah Jesus.

7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

- God's ultimate purpose is to glorify Himself (See Tag: **Doxological Purpose of God**)

— God will use the regeneration of believers to demonstrate the wealth and richness of His grace

- "...the ages to come" - all future ages (millennium and eternal state)

- "...the boundless riches of his grace" - outlined in v8-9

- "...kindness toward us" - displayed in what we have "in Christ"; we especially see God's kindness in His giving life to those who were dead in sin.

(iii) Saved by grace (2:8-9)

8 For **by grace** you **have been saved through faith**; and **this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God**;

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;

8 For by such grace you have been saved through faith. This does not come from you; it is the gift of God

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

- Verses 8-10 are the clearest statement of the plan of salvation (justification) in the Bible (Cf. Rom 3; Phil 3)

- "...by grace" - mankind's problem before coming to Christ is that our sinned doomed us to hell. God's solution is His grace.

— The moment we accept Christ by faith, we become the recipient of unmerited favor. A divine blessing has been transferred to my account that I don't deserve and didn't earn.

— This blessing is activated by faith; if you do not have faith in Christ, your blessing has not been activated, it has not been transferred (gifted, imputed) to your account

— If you're a believer who thinks that they have to do something, some work, in order to please God or have Him take His judgment away from you, you have been caught in a

deception

- Our salvation originates with the grace of God. It was His initiative, given to us as a present possession (Cf. Rom 3:24; 6:23; Gal 2:16; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:5).
- The instrument by which we receive salvation is "faith" (trust in Christ). Faith is not an act or work that earns merit with God, which He rewards with salvation.
- Salvation can't be earned: it is the gift of God
- "...have been saved" - present tense verb with a perfect tense participle; communicates a one-time action in the past with ongoing results
- "...through" - the Bible never says people are saved because of their faith or on the basis of their faith. God saves people *by* or *through* faith. This means faith is necessary, but it is only a channel. Faith adds nothing to the gift.
- "...faith" - *pistis*, feminine noun; faith itself is not righteousness, it is non-meritorious in itself (Rom 4:3-5). It is only the vehicle by which God's righteousness reaches us. Faith is the only thing in the mind of God that a person can "do" that is non-meritorious.
- Some people have difficulty understanding that faith is not a work. While faith does involve doing something—trusting God—the Bible never regards trusting God as a meritorious work because in connection with justification, Paul always contrasts faith with works of the Law (Cf. Rom 3:27-28; Gal 2:16; 3:2-5,9-10). It regards faith instead as the act of believing a statement and relying on the truthfulness of the One who made it. In fact Paul, in Rom 4:3-5, completely separates faith from works.
- Faith can be compared to accepting a gift offered to you by someone. To accept the gift, you must extend your arms to receive the gift, but that act does not constitute doing something that earns the gift.
- Faith involves the abandonment of any attempt to justify oneself, and an openness to God which is willing to accept what He has done in Christ. Faith is a human activity, but a specific kind of activity/response which allows salvation to become operative, which receives what has already been accomplished by God in Christ.
- Human faith is but a passive response that receives God's free gift of eternal life. Who would accuse a beggar of working by holding out his hand to receive a dollar bill?
- We receive faith by and through the Word of God (Rom 10:17)
- "...this" - *touto*, singular, neuter gender pronoun; it is widely agreed that Greek pronouns normally agree with their antecedents in gender and number, thus grammatically *touto* ("this") cannot refer back to either "grace" (*chariti*) or "faith" (*pisteōs*) because both are of the feminine gender in Greek. See extensive notes on Rom 4:3-5.
- Similar Greek constructions in the rest of the NT leads to the conclusion that *touto* has as its only antecedent the concept found in the main verb(s) of the passage. In fact, all 22 occurrences where the phrase *kai touto* appears, there are no clear examples in the NT

that involve different genders. Thus, it is totally inappropriate to apply the word "this" to the noun "faith" or to an implied act of believing.

— Yet Reformed theologians (Calvinism) continue to hold that the clause "and this *is* not of yourselves" relates conceptually to faith or to the act of believing, in order to argue that faith is a gift of God, which their theology requires in order to justify their belief in Total Depravity (see notes on v1).

— Those who believe that faith is the gift Paul is referring to point to other passages that they believe bolster their argument (John 6:27-29,44-45; Acts 3:16; 18:27; Rom 4:3-5; 12:3; 1 Cor 12:9; Eph 2:8; Phil 1:29; 2 Peter 1:1) as proof of the "faith as a gift" theology (see note on v1; also see extensive notes on John 20:31).

— Others, even some non-Reformers, believe this refers to "everything"—grace, faith, and salvation—are the gift. The problem with this is that "this" is singular, so it cannot refer back to three things...it can only refer to one thing.

— By the way, "gift" (*dōron*) is singular as well, so it cannot refer to grace, faith, and salvation. It can only refer to one thing.

— In the NT, *touto* regularly refers to a conceptual antecedent, not a specific word. There are also numerous examples of this in Ephesians:

- in 1:15, *touto* refers back to the contents of 1:3-14
- in 3:1, it refers back to 2:11-22
- in 3:14 it refers back to 3:1-13
- in the present context, *touto* refers back to 2:4-8a and more specifically to v8a, the concept of salvation by grace through faith

— Even Calvin himself rightly interpreted "this" in Eph 2:8 as referring to salvation rather than either faith or grace, even though he contradicted this in other commentaries (see note: **Calvin's View of Eph 2:8 below**).

— See [Is Faith a Gift from God According to Eph 2:8?](#) for additional details.

- A view that faith for salvation is a gift from God and not a human exercise poses several theological problems:

1. This view is closely related to the sacramentalism of the Roman Catholic church, which holds that faith is a transmitted and efficacious element which God gives to men for salvation.
 - However, this understanding of faith confuses the instrument to receive salvation (faith) with the agent who gives salvation (the Holy Spirit)
 - When faith is called "dynamic" it is confused with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the agent of salvation and the power that effects a changed life. Faith is the instrument of salvation, which, when exercised as a response to God's grace, secures the Spirit's salvation.

2. If God divinely imparts faith, then human responsibility is nullified. If faith is a gift, then men no longer bear the responsibility to believe the gospel.
 - Numerous verses call for people to believe, that is, to exercise their own personal faith: John 1:12-13; 3:16,36; 5:24; 6:47; Acts 16:31; see also Rom 3:21-22,25-26,28; 4:3-6
 - However this does not preclude the notion that for faith to save, the Spirit of God must initiate the conversion process
3. If faith is a gift from God, people should be asking God for regeneration before they can believe, but such a request is foreign to the Bible.
 - It is not God who believes, but man, even though a work of God may have occurred previously to enable man to believe. It is man who performs the action.
 - Linguistically, man is the *subject*, God is the *object*. Saying that faith is a gift of God reverses the subject-object relationship.
4. The faith as a gift view impacts our sanctification. According to advocates of this view true believers will never fail to live godly lives. This is because God, having infused them with faith, guarantees their sanctification throughout their lives. However, this diminishes the seriousness of the commands of Scripture for believers to pursue holiness.
 - If faith is a gift, then many commands in Scripture that exhort, command, prompt, and warn believers to live obediently become superfluous because the ultimate end of infused faith guarantees the sanctification of believers without their involvement.
 - Followed to its logical conclusion, the gift-of-faith view lessens the urgency of putting forth effort to obey scriptural exhortations.

- Since "this" cannot refer to either "grace" or "faith" because the Greek genders do not match, it must refer to something that precedes this verse. In this case, "this" refers to the entire preceding clause that describes salvation (v1-7; Cf. 1:15; 3:1), thus "salvation" is the gift that God gives to us, along with the benefits that come along with it.

— A good translation of this v8-9 is: "and this salvation (which comes by grace through faith) is not of yourselves; it is a gift from God; this salvation is not the result of works, that no one should boast."

— Many passages, and even entire books of the NT, are written to prove *salvation* is a gift of God and not the reward for good works. But where are the passages to prove that faith is the gift of God? This belief (that faith is the gift) is deduced from the doctrine of election rather than exegesis of Scripture.

— Evangelicals universally embrace the theological truth that *salvation* is a gift from God, not faith (John 4:10; Rom 3:24; 4:4; 5:15-17; 6:23; Heb 6:4; James 1:17-18; Rev 21:6; 22:17)

— Paul elsewhere mentions his own personal faith without a reference to the fact that God gave it to him as a gift ("my faith," Rom 1:12). Other references such as "your faith" or "their

faith" are numerous in the NT: Matt 9:2,22,29; Mark 2:5; 5:34; 10:52; Luke 5:20; 7:50; 8:25,48; 17:19; 18:42; 22:32; Rom 1:8,12; 3:3; 4:5,12,16; 1 Cor 2:5; 15:14,17; 2 Cor 10:15; Phil 2:17; Col 1:4; 2:5; 1 Thess 1:8; 3:2,5,10; 2 Thess 1:3; Philemon 6; 1 Peter 1:9,21; 2 Peter 1:5.

- "...not of yourselves" - refers to the object of "this" which is salvation; salvation is not of ourselves, it is gifted by God

— Reformed theology, because of their grammatically and theologically incorrect interpretation of "this," believe that it is "faith" that is "not of yourselves" and thus must be given to us by God in order for a person to believe and be saved.

— While it is true that apart from God's mercy, gracious enabling, and enlightenment, saving faith could not be exercised (John 6:44,65; Rom 9:16; Matt 11:27; 16:16-17; Acts 16:14), it is also true that there is a sense in which faith really is of you

— You must do the believing (Acts 16:31). Men are responsible to believe (John 3:15-16). Men are commanded to believe (1 John 3:23; 2 Thess 1:8). Men are condemned if they don't believe (John 3:18). We cannot save ourselves, but our part and our responsibility is to believe. God does the saving, we must do the believing.

— To say that it is "faith" that is not of us makes no sense because God clearly puts the responsibility to believe squarely on mankind. Man must believe, or perish (John 3:16; 2 Thess 2:12).

— However it makes good sense to say that salvation is "not of you" because salvation is clearly of the Lord. We contribute nothing to our salvation. It is based solely on the completed work of Jesus Christ, which fully satisfied God's justice. The penalty for our sins, past, present, and future, has been paid in full.

— By faith, we simply "receive" Christ, resting fully on what He has accomplished for us

- "...it" - refers to salvation, not faith (like Calvinists believe); see notes on "this" above

— Faith is not the gift (see notes on v1), salvation (and all associated benefits) that we receive by faith, because we fulfilled a single condition (belief; faith alone in Christ alone), all belong to us

— Our past (which God has already dealt with), our present (which God is now empowering us for), and our future...are all ours because of grace

— If God gave them to us by grace, there's nothing we can do to disqualify ourselves from anything God has for you in your future. We did not get anything by works...if we did, we'd have to maintain a level of works to maintain what we have received. But that's not what happened...it's all from God.

- "...gift" - *dōron*, salvation is the gift, not faith (see notes above); Cf. Rom 3:24; 4:23; 5:15,18; 6:23; Matt 19:26; John 4:10; 1 John 5:11; Rev 22:17

— The genitive could be possessive ("God's gift") or more likely a genitive of origin ("gift from God"). The gift of God here does not refer to faith but rather to the whole concept of

salvation. The contrast is stark when you consider both the words themselves and their position in the sentence:

καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ εξ ὑμῶν, θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον literally means "and this is not of yourselves, of God is the gift"

- Thus, the "gift" is that which is outside of ourselves and is to be received. Therefore, the gift of salvation has its origin in God, its basis in grace, and it is received by means of faith.
- This is the only time *dōron* is used to refer to the "gift of God" but there are other Greek words for "gift" (*dōrea* [feminine noun], *dōrean* [present tense, neuter noun], and *charisma*) are used of spiritual gifts (Rom 1:11; 12:6; 1 Cor 1:7; 12:4,9,28,30-31; 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6; 1 Peter 4:10) and of other God-given privileges or purposes (Rom 11:29; 1 Cor 7:7).
 - In John 4:10, the gift (*dōrea*) of God is living water; in v14 living water is identified as "eternal life"
 - In Acts 2:38; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17, the gift (*dōrea*) of God is the Holy Spirit
 - Salvation involves the reception of the Holy Spirit, and those without the Holy Spirit are not saved (Rom 8:9)
 - In Rom 5:15,17, justification is spoken of as a gift (*dōrea*)
- Interestingly, *dōrea* is never used of faith
 - In 2 Cor 9:15, Paul refers to an "unspeakable gift" (*dōrea*) which is Jesus Christ and the salvation found in Him
 - In Rom 5:16, gift (*dōrēma*) is used of God's gift of salvation or justification
 - In Rom 6:23, the gift (*charisma*) of God is eternal life (compare Rom 5:15-16), which is synonymous with salvation
- Note: in 1 Cor 12:9 *charisma* is used of faith, but that is speaking of the temporary gift of miracle working faith, not saving faith
- Even "grace" is mentioned as a gift given by God (Eph 3:7; 4:7; Cf. Rom 12:3,6; 15:15; 1 Cor 1:4; 3:10; 2 Cor 8:1; Gal 2:9; Eph 1:6; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). But in stark contrast, "faith" is never mentioned in Scripture as a gift from God.
- It is important to distinguish between the gift and the reception of the gift. Salvation is the gift and that gift is received by faith. Faith is the hand of the heart that reaches out and receives God's gift of salvation.
- There is a clear distinction in this verse between the gift of salvation and the reception of that gift. Salvation is the gift of God brought to man by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The gift is salvation and that salvation is received by faith.
- If, as Reformed theology believes, faith is a gift given by God in order for a person to believe in His Son, how does one receive it? Calvinists will give you two answers:
 1. Do nothing, just hope that God will bestow it on you. It's totally up to God, there's nothing you can do.

- If that was true, why didn't Paul respond as such when the Philippian jailer asked him what he can do to be saved? Paul didn't say, Just sit there and do nothing, and just hope God will decide to give you the gift of faith.
 - Instead, they told him to "believe" (Acts 16:31). Men are responsible to believe, commanded to believe, and blamed and judged if they refuse to believe
2. Pray and ask God for it.
- Nowhere in Scripture does God command an unbeliever to pray for the gift of faith. Telling unbelievers to do this in order to be saved perverts the gospel by making the condition for salvation prayer instead of faith.
 - Sinners are commanded to believe on Christ, never to pray for the gift of faith

Other than the Person and work of Christ, there is no truth more far-reaching in its implications and no fact more to be defended than that salvation in all its limitless magnitude is secured, so far as human responsibility is concerned, by believing on Christ as Savior. To this one requirement no other obligation may be added without violence to the Scriptures and total disruption of the essential doctrine of salvation by grace alone. Only ignorance or reprehensible inattention to the structure of a right soteriology will attempt to intrude some form of human works with its supposed merit into the principle of grace. [Chafer]

Charles Spurgeon wrote about the absurdity of saying a man must be regenerated before he believes:

*If I am to preach the faith in Christ to a man who is regenerated, then the man, being regenerated, is saved already, and it is an unnecessary and ridiculous thing for me to preach Christ to him, and bid him to believe in order to be saved when he is saved already, being regenerate. Am I only to preach faith to those who have it? Absurd, indeed! Is not this waiting till the man is cured and then bringing him the medicine? This is preaching Christ to the righteous and not to sinners. [Charles Spurgeon, in his sermon *The Warrant of Faith*].*

Another Explanation for the Neuter Gender of *touto*?

There are some who give another explanation for the neuter gender being used. Mr. Stephen Parker argues that the pronoun is attracted to the neuter gender of the word "gift," and he cites Mark 15:16 as an analogy. It is true that attraction does take place in Mark 15:16 as Mr. Parker correctly points out. This is one of those rare cases where the pronoun agrees with the predicate when the relative clause is an explanation. Another example would be in Eph 6:17: "the sword (feminine) of the Spirit, which (neuter) is the Word (neuter) of God" (the antecedent is "sword" but the pronoun is attracted to the neuter

gender). However, we do not really have the same thing in Eph 2:8. First of all, in Mark 15:16 we have a relative pronoun, but in Eph 2:8 we have a demonstrative pronoun. In Mark 15:16 the verb is explicitly stated, but in Eph 2:8 the verb is understood (the words "it is" are in italics). The greatest problem, however, is that in Mark 15:16 the word "praetorium" comes right after the word "hall" but in Eph 2:8 there is a whole additional phrase which comes between "that" and "gift," and this would make attraction much less likely: "...through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift..." In other words, in Mark 15:16 there is only one word (the verb ἀούει) which comes between the pronoun and the word to which it is attracted. In Eph 2:8 there are five Greek words which come between the pronoun and the word which Mr. Parker claims it is attracted to. This explanation seems highly unlikely, and I did not find this argument in the respectable commentaries that I consulted, even among those men who believe that the antecedent is "faith." It could also be noted that Mr. Parker is wrong when he says that the words "hall" and "which" in Mark 15:16 do not agree in number. They do agree. They are both singular in number.

The Reformer's View of Eph 2:8 (Faith as a Gift)

In his commentary on Eph 2:8, Calvin wrote: "And here we must advert to a very common error in the interpretation of this passage. Many persons restrict the word gift to faith alone. But Paul is only restating the former sentiment. His meaning is, not that faith is the gift of God, but that salvation is given to us by God, or that we obtain it by the gift of God." [John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, 227-228]

However, Calvin's comments on 1 Cor 2:14 contradict this view. He wrote, "Had he [Paul] said men are not willing to be wise, that indeed would have been true, but he states further that they are not able. Hence we infer, that faith is not in one's own power, but is divinely conferred" [John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, trans. William Pringle].

Luther spoke of faith not as a work but in a passive sense in receiving salvation as a gift. He wrote that faith: "holds out its hands and opens the sack to allow itself to be presented with good things. For as God the Giver by His love bestows this gift, therefore we are recipients by faith, in which faith does nothing more than receive the gift. For it is not our doing, and it cannot be merited through our work.... All you need to do is to open your mouth or rather your heart, hold still, and allow it to be entirely filled." [Martin Luther, *Am Pfingstmontage: Zweite Predigt*, ed. Joh. Georg Walch, vol. 11 of *Sämmtliche Schriften* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1882), 1103-4]

9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

9 and not the result of actions, to put a stop to all boasting.

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

- What is Paul saying is not a result of works? Is faith not of works, or is salvation not of works?

— If we look at Paul's epistles for what "is not of works" we find the following:

- Rom 3:20: Paul says that **justification** is not of works
- Rom 3:27: Paul says that **justification** is not of works
- Rom 3:28: Paul says that **justification** is apart from works
- Rom 4:2,6: Paul says that **justification** is not of works
- Rom 9:11: Paul says that **election** is not of works
- Rom 9:32: Paul says that **righteousness** is not of works
- Rom 11:6 Paul says that **election** is not of works
- Gal 2:16: Paul says that **justification** is not of works
- 2 Tim 1:9: Paul says that God's **salvation** and **calling** are not according to works
- Titus 3:5: Paul says that **salvation** is not of works

— In v9, Paul clearly means that salvation is not of works, which puts this verse in harmony with all of the above passages. Nowhere does Paul or any other NT author say that faith is not of works.

— On the other hand, the Bible consistently says that we are saved/justified by faith:

- Rom 3:28: we are **justified by faith** apart from works
- Rom 5:1: since we have been **justified by faith**, we have peace with God
- Gal 2:16: a person is **not justified by works** of the law
- Gal 3:8: God would **justify the Gentiles by faith**
- Gal 3:11: it is evident that **no one is justified before God by works**
- Gal 3:24: the law was our guardian...in order that we might be **justified by faith**
- Phil 3:9: not having a **righteousness** of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes **through faith**

— "not as a result of works" - salvation is by "grace" thus not of us; it is through "faith" so it is not by "works." This the differentiating factor between Christianity and every other world religion (cult).

— If we are not saved by works but by faith, then faith is obviously not a work (Rom 4:5).

There is no merit in the act of believing something.

— Christianity is not a works-based religion; it is not man working his way to God. Instead, it is God reaching down to become a Man in the Person of Jesus Christ and offering us a relationship with Him.

— This phrase is parallel to "and this is not of yourselves" in v8; see a diagram of v8 from the NIV:

2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—

and this [is] **not from yourselves**, it [salvation] is the gift of God—

2:9 [this is] **not by works**, so that no one can boast.

- It would be meaningless if Paul were reminding his readers that faith is not by works, so the phrase "and this" (*kai touto*, v8) cannot logically refer to faith
- Salvation cannot be earned by: Confirmation, Baptism, Church Membership, Church Attendance, Tithing, Holy Communion, (trying to) keep the Ten Commandments, "Living by the Sermon on the Mount," being a good neighbor, or living a moral, respectable life...
- It is logically and theologically absurd to claim that a salvation that is apart from works is not recognizable except by works
- Consider this self-evident principle: ***A necessary result for which we are responsible (works) that must be present for another result to occur (salvation) is no different than an additional condition for the achievement of the second result.*** Therefore if works play no part in our salvation, like v9 clearly states, then works cannot be required to maintain or evidence one's salvation without being considered a second condition, in addition to faith.
- There is no difference between the result for which we are responsible (works) and a condition! Think about this, and you will discover that it is impossible to come up with an illustration which contradicts this fact.
- Since we have not been saved by our good works, we cannot be lost by our bad works
- "...that no one may boast" - contrary to Calvinistic teaching, to accept salvation by faith no more means that the person who does so has merited the gift of God's grace than the acceptance of a free meal by a destitute person means that they merited the charity
- The mere acceptance of a gift does not mean that the person deserves it. God sets the terms of salvation, which man must accept in order to be saved. If he doesn't, there's no other recourse than eternal damnation.
- A drowning man who allows himself to be rescued has nothing to boast about, nor can he take any credit for his rescue. So it is with the lost sinner who allows Christ to rescue him: he has nothing to boast of since he has done nothing to contribute to his salvation.
- Rom 3:27 explains that God designed salvation in such a way that it excludes the principle of boasting. God is not interested in people in heaven with Him taking partial credit for their salvation.
- A person cannot praise himself or take credit for his faith; faith gives all credit to Christ
- It's not our own righteousness that gets us to heaven...it's the righteousness of Christ
- Paul calls the Gospel "offensive" to sinful man, because God designed it that way (Cf. Gal 5:11, see notes there)
- Our position before faith in Christ was hopeless, so much so that we were unable to fix ourselves. The only hope of mankind is to cling to the old rugged cross.
- Both Arminians and Calvinists today teach that our assurance of salvation is "of works"

- This theology reinvigorates man's latent desire to boast because our good works become the badge of my acceptance before God and they are the basis on which I can judge others as unworthy of the name of Christian
 - Where such views are held, they are often accompanied by spiritual pride and by a harsh, judgmental spirit toward those who do not "measure up"
- [Rom 6:23; 1 John 5:13]

Does faith precede new birth or does new birth precede faith? The answer is "No" for both questions. The fact is, both faith and new birth occur at the same time, and this is proof that rebirth is a miracle. In our world, two connected events cannot happen simultaneously, because we live in a world of sequence. But when God is involved, multiple related events can happen simultaneously. This is what we call a miracle, and that is what the new birth is. It is God who saves. If salvation is rooted in anything we do, we can boast before the Lord. Faith is essential, but faith is not a work. Faith is our hearts open to receive what God gives. We are saved by God's grace alone—through our faith alone—in Christ alone.

Man is *not* saved by works; man is *not* saved by faith + works; man is saved by faith *alone*. He did it all...*any attempt to add to His completed work is blasphemy*. It is a finished work (John 17:1-4; 19:30). We can add nothing to it (Heb 10:1-14).

Salvation is a gift, not a reward. Why? To preclude human boasting (Rom 3:27). If a man could be saved by works then Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane was unanswered (Matt 26:39-44). The death of Christ was unnecessary (Gal 2:21) and man would be his own savior.

v10 tells us *why* He saves us...

(iv) Created for good works (2:10)

10 For we are His **workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus for **goodworks, which God prepared beforehand** so that **we would walk** in them.

10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

10 For we are God's masterpiece, created in the Messiah Jesus to perform good actions that God prepared long ago to be our way of life.

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

- God solves the problem of our depravity by ushering us into good works

— After Paul states unequivocally that works play no part in our salvation, and in fact even the thought of it is offensive to God, he turns right around and says that the purpose of our salvation is to perform good works, which He planned for us to do before creation.

- We are not saved *by* good works, but *unto* good works. After we come to Christ, we now have the capacity to perform good works that are glorifying to God (James 2:18-26). Before Christ, we could do good works in the sight of men, but we were unable to please God with our works.
- God's plan for our lives is summarized in v8-10: that we would come to trust in the provision of His Son, and that once we trust in Christ, He wants to use our lives as ambassadors for His kingdom
- Formerly: depraved (v3b); Presently: walking according to good works
- Calvinism teaches the idea that good works are automatic and guaranteed once you become a Christian. They argue that if you don't have good works, there is no evidence of your salvation thus your faith was not "genuine" and you were never truly saved.
- However, if good works were automatic, guaranteed, Paul would have no reason to write Ephesians (or many of his other epistles). The entire point of Ephesians is to inform believers of their wealth in Christ, and then to encourage them to walk consistent with their wealth.
- It is very possible for a Christian to be very carnal, weak, or immature in the area of good works. In fact, most of the NT is written to rescue believers from that plight (1 Cor 3:15).
- The evidence of our salvation does not come from the good works that we do. The evidence that I'm saved comes from the promises of God (John 3:16). Our security rests on that promise, not on our good works.
- Once we are saved (justified), God loves us too much to leave us there...He wants to spur us on to greater things. He wants our orthodoxy (right thinking, doctrine) to turn into orthopraxy (right practice, living).
- "...workmanship" - *poieme*, a work of art; a masterpiece
- The word only appears 1x elsewhere in NT in Rom 1:20; used to describe God's creation
- "...good works" - not the roots from which salvation grows, but the fruit that God intends it to bear. Works are the consequence, not the antecedent, of our acceptance in Christ.
- Notice that the good works come *after* salvation, not before or at the same time. We work *because* we are saved, not in order to earn it.
- Our conversion is not the end: it is the beginning (Phil 2:12-13). Good works are what God intended for us to practice, with divine enablement.
- Paul, in 2 Tim 2:21, states that once the believer cleanses himself from certain practices (listed earlier), he becomes a "vessel for honor," "sanctified" (practically), and "useful to the Master, prepared for every good work." Our sanctification is what prepares us to be useful to God for good works.
- However, God does not force believers to persevere in good works any more than He forced the Israelites to persevere in good works. The Israelites' failure to walk in the good

works that God had foreordained for them does not mean that His efficacious grace failed. Neither does a Christian's failure to do so mean God's grace has failed.

– "...which God prepared beforehand" – our responsibility is to determine His Will for us and obey it. How?

1. Confess and forsake sin as soon as we are conscious of it
 2. Be continually and unconditionally yielded to Him
 3. Study the Word of God to discern His will and then to do whatever He tells you to do
 4. Spend time in prayer every day
 5. Respond to opportunities for service (as He leads!)
 6. Cultivate the fellowship and counsel of other Christians
- Why? To glorify God (Matt 5:16; 2 Cor 9:8; Col 1:10; 2 Tim 3:17; Titus 2:14; Heb 13:16)
- "...we would walk" – *peripateō*, subjunctive mood, meaning the mood of possibility; a better translation of this phrase is "we *might* walk" because the subjunctive mood is not a command or a statement of fact, it's a possibility.
- Maybe a believer is going to walk in good works, maybe they won't. Maybe good works which God has planned before the foundation of the world will be evident in a believer's life, maybe they won't (Cf. 1 Cor 3:15). This is the proper interpretation of *peripateō* in this verse.
- The NT always holds out the *possibility* of a Christian growing in the second tense of their salvation. Our justification is a free gift from God, received by faith (v8); our glorification is guaranteed by Christ because of His resurrection and the sealing of the Holy Spirit. However, we must participate in the middle tense of our salvation (Cf. Luke 8:14; John 15:2; 20:31; Rom 6:4; 2 Cor 5:15).

This section of the epistle (v1-10) contrasts what the believer was before regeneration with what he or she is afterward. All the glory for the change goes to God. He provided salvation for people. We do not need to do good works to merit salvation, but we should do good works because we have received salvation. This is God's plan for the believer.

In the previous 10 verses, Paul discussed salvation in general; now he focuses on the work of Christ for the Gentile in particular.

Man's Problems; God's Solutions

Problems

- Death (2:1)
- Demonically influenced (2:2)
- Doomed (2:3b)
- Depraved (2:3a)

Solutions

- Life (2:5)
- Authority transferred (2:6-7)
- Grace (2:8-9)
- Good works (2:10)

(B) Corporate (2:11—3:13)

Up to now in Ephesians, Paul has told us that as believers, we have been blessed by God as individuals (chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son, sealed by the Spirit). These are vertical blessings, from God to us. In v11, Paul begins to talk about how believers corporately are blessed. We are blessed together. These are horizontal blessings.

Background

To understand this passage, we need to understand some background:

1. Ephesus was home to a number of zealous Jews. As many Gentiles were coming to Christ, so were many zealous Jews. However the zealous Jews who came to Christ continued to hold on to their Judaism. The Gentiles, who didn't understand Judaism, were confused. This caused a rift between Jewish believers and Gentile believers.

2. The Ephesian Gentiles worshipped a pagan form of deity in the Temple of Diana (Cf. Acts 19:35). These people believed that the Temple of Diana had come down to earth from heaven. In this passage, Paul will explain to them that the true source of power is not from a pagan Temple, but from God. Paul uses the temple as a metaphor for the church.

(a) Reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles (2:11-22)

(i) Statement of union (2:11-13)

(a) Past disunion (2:11-12)

(1) Non-circumcision (2:11)

11 Therefore remember that previously you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision" *which is* performed in the flesh by human hands—

11 Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," *which is* performed in the flesh by human hands—

11 So then, remember that at one time you gentiles by birth were called "the uncircumcised" by those who called themselves "the circumcised." They underwent physical circumcision done by human hands.

11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

- Paul describes the disunion between Jews and Gentiles (see note: **Dividing Wall**

Between Jews & Gentiles below)

— Paul is saying that at one time, these former Gentile unbelievers (now believers) were looked down upon by the Jews as "uncircumcised" (just another Gentile dog)

— This described the state of Jewish/Gentile relationship prior to Christ forming the Church

(2) Separate from Christ (2:12a)

(3) Excluded from Israel (2:12b)

(4) Strangers to covenants (2:12c)

(5) Without hope (2:12d)

(6) Without God (2:12e)

12 remember that you were at that time **separate from Christ, excluded from the people of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world.**

12 remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

12 At that time you were without the Messiah, excluded from citizenship in Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise. You had no hope and were in the world without God.

12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

- Paul lists five privileges Jewish believers enjoyed that Gentile believers did not:

1. "...separate from Christ" - the Gentiles had no corporate national hope centered in a Messiah
2. "...excluded from the people of Israel" - God excluded them as a people from citizenship in Israel. Individual Gentiles could become members of the nation of Israel, but as a whole, the Gentiles had no part in what God planned to do in and through Israel.
3. "...strangers to the covenants of promise" - Gentiles had no part in the promises of God to Israel contained in the covenants (plural, referring to the Abrahamic, Land, Davidic & New Covenants); Gentiles were outside of the stream of divine blessing
4. "...having no hope" - as a race of people, Gentiles had no corporate future promised by God, to which they could look and in which they could "hope," as Israel did.
5. "...without God in the world" - does not mean they were atheists: they were godless in their conduct; they had no real knowledge of the Living God.

Dividing Wall Between Jews & Gentiles

Before Christ came to earth, there was a schism between Jews and Gentiles. When God created the nation of Israel through Abraham, He set Abraham aside and promised him that He would create a special nation through him. God promised to bless him and the nation, and that blessing was intended to pour over to the Gentiles as well. God blessed Abraham's race, the Jews, so that the Jews would become a blessing to the rest of the world.

The problem is, the Jews forgot the part about being a blessing to the rest of the world. They focused so much on the fact that they had been blessed, but they didn't focus on *why* they had been blessed. God did not bless Israel just because they were Israel...God had a missionary calling on Israel, but they missed it.

The Jews began to look at the Gentiles as if they were dogs. Remember Jonah...he comes along in the 7th century BC, the only prophet of God who was successful. He preaches judgment to Nineveh, the capital of Gentiles in Assyria, and the entire city believed. Jonah wasn't happy about that...he was mad at God because Jonah wanted to see the city and its people destroyed. This summarizes how Jews looked at Gentiles, having completely lost their missionary calling.

Cornelius was the first Church Age Gentile to believe in Christ (Acts 10). This shocked the Jewish believers, so much so that they had to have a meeting about it (Acts 11). This whole schism between Jews and Gentiles over the centuries was not God's plan...this disunity amongst believers was not what was supposed to happen.

(b) Present union (2:13)

13 **But now** in Christ Jesus you who previously were **faraway** have been **brought near** by the blood of Christ.

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

13 But now, in union with the Messiah Jesus, you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of the Messiah.

13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

- "But now" - after describing the past disunion between Jews and Gentiles in v11-12, Paul now describes the present union of all believers in Christ, describing what God has done in the Church

- "...far away" - sums up the Gentiles' condition and position to God

— While the problem of sinners in general (v1-10) was spiritual death, the problem of the Gentiles in particular was spiritual distance from God and His blessings

— Note: in the Gospels whenever Christ helped a Gentile, He did it at a distance (Matt 8:5-13; 15:22-28)

- "...brought near" - the Gentiles, who were formerly dogs, are now "brought near"

because of the cross

— Because of Jesus' death, God has brought Gentiles "near" to Himself and to the Jews, in a sense never before true

— Notice that this unity is free to us, but was not free to God

(ii) Explanation of union (2:14-18)

(a) Assertion of peace (2:14a)

(b) Destruction of wall (2:14b-15a)

14 For **He Himself is our peace**, who made both *groups into one* and **broke down the barrier of the dividing wall**,

14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into one* and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,

14 For it is he who is our peace. Through his mortality he made both groups one by tearing down the wall of hostility that divided them.

14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

- "...He Himself is our peace" - Jesus is the source of restored relationships, not only between individuals and God, but also between individuals
- "...broke down" - this verse is strong testimony to the fact that with the death of Jesus, God began dealing with humankind on a different basis than He had in the past
 - He now stopped working primarily with and through the Jews, and began dealing with Jews and Gentiles on the same basis: faith in His Son
 - In other words, God began a new dispensation or administration in His dealings with humanity
 - Previously, if you wanted to learn about God, you had to do so through the nation of Israel. If you wanted to grow in God, you had to become a proselyte (convert) to the nation of Israel.
 - The most famous proselyte in Scripture is Ruth, who was a Moabitess. She famously told Naomi, her mother-in-law that, "your people will be my people, and your God will be my God"
 - In this verse, Paul is saying that this isn't how it works any more...there is no pre-eminent nation or people group, Israel is not elevated over other nations in the Church Age
 - "...barrier of the dividing wall" - the wall in the temple from which Gentiles could not enter (upon penalty of death); this refers to the Mosaic Law (see Mosaic Law > Purpose of the Law in Covenants).
 - Paul was arrested and condemned by the Jews in Jerusalem on the basis of a false accusation that he took an Ephesian, Trophimus, beyond this barrier (Acts 21:28-31)
 - The two camps, Jews and Gentiles, who formerly hated each other, are now brought into one body as a new man
 - This is a completely new concept that Paul is describing here...you can read the entire OT and never get a hint of bringing Jews and Gentiles together into a single entity (one new man)
 - There was always a divide between Jews and Gentiles
 - In fact, if a Gentile wanted to follow Christ, he would have to become a proselyte to Judaism

Let no one of any other nation come within the fence and barrier around the Holy Place. Whosoever will be taken doing so will himself be responsible for the fact that his death will ensue. [Josephus]

Middle Wall of Partition ("Barrier of the Dividing Wall")

The Mosaic Law served as *the middle wall of partition* as stated in Eph 2:14 [KJV]. The four unconditional covenants are Jewish covenants, and God's blessings, both physical and spiritual, were mediated through the four covenants, the *covenants of the promise* mentioned in v12. Because of the Jewish nature of these unconditional covenants, a conditional covenant was also added, the Mosaic Covenant, containing the Law of Moses, *the law of commandments contained in ordinances* of v15. The purpose of the Law, then, was to become *the middle wall of partition* to keep Gentiles, as Gentiles, from enjoying the Jewish spiritual blessings of the unconditional covenants. Because of this purpose, Gentiles were both *alienated from the commonwealth of Israel*, and *strangers from the covenants of the promise*. The only way Gentiles could enjoy the spiritual blessings of the Jewish covenants during the period of the Law was to take upon themselves the obligation of the Law, undergo the rite of circumcision, and then live like every Jew had to live. Gentiles, as Gentiles, could not enjoy the Jewish spiritual blessings, only Gentiles, as proselytes to Mosaic Judaism.

Gentiles, as Gentiles, were not able to enjoy the spiritual blessings of the Jewish covenants; hence, they were strangers from the commonwealth of Israel. They did not receive any of the spiritual benefits contained in the covenants. However, at the Cross, the Mosaic Law, the middle wall of partition, was broken down. Now by faith Gentiles can enjoy the spiritual blessings of the four unconditional covenants. That is why Gentiles today are *partakers of Jewish spiritual blessings, not "takers over."*

The concept of partaking is also found in Rom 11:17. The Olive Tree represents the spiritual blessings of the Jewish covenants. The types of branches partaking of the blessings: natural branches, which are the Jewish believers; wild olive branches, which are the Gentile believers. However, the Olive Tree itself still belongs to Israel according to v24.

(c) Made the two one (2:15b-18)

(1) Peace (2:15b)

15 by **abolishing in His flesh the hostility, which is the Law composed of commandments expressed in ordinances**, so that in Himself He might make the two **one new person**, *in this way* establishing peace;

15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained in ordinances*, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace,

15 He rendered the Law inoperative, along with its commandments and regulations, thus creating in himself one new humanity from the two, thereby making peace,

15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

- "...abolishing in His flesh the hostility" - the body of Jesus, sacrificed on the Cross, terminated the "enmity" between Jews and Gentiles
- It did so in the sense that when Jesus died, He fulfilled all the demands of the Mosaic Law. When He did this, God ended the Mosaic Law as His rule of life for the Jews.
- "abolishing" - *kataresas*, rendered inoperative; the Mosaic Law ceased to be God's standard for regulating the life of His people
- The Mosaic Law had previously been the cause of the "enmity" between Jews and Gentiles. Its dietary laws requiring separation, in particular, created hostility between Jews and Gentiles.
- "...the Law composed of commandments expressed in ordinances" - the Mosaic Law
- "...one new person" - not the individual believer, but an idiom for the Church as the Body of Christ in the sense of 1 Cor 12:12-13; Eph 1:22-23; Col 3:10-11; Heb 12:23
- Notice that Paul here describes the Church as a new creation, not a continuation and modernization of Israel under a new name
- This new man consists of both believing Jews and believing Gentiles, united together on equal footing, as co-heirs of the things of God
- There is no more national division between Jew and Gentile: in the OT, until until Acts 15, a Gentile had to convert to Judaism and obey the Law in order to be saved. With the advent of the Church, this is no longer the case.
- Paul explains to the Ephesian Christians how God has taken elect Jews and Gentiles, and placed "the two [into] one new man." In Eph 3, he'll proceed to describe how this truth was a mystery, never before revealed in the OT.

(2) One body (2:16)

16 and that He might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it **having put to death the hostility.**

16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

16 and reconciling both groups to God in one body through the cross, on which he eliminated the hostility.

16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

- "...having put to death the hostility" - the Law was the cause of Man's enmity; Christ removed the Law by dying to pay the penalty of the Law that had been broken. Jesus had two purposes for ending Jewish/Gentile hostility:

1. He wanted to create one new man, the Church, out of two former groups, Jews and Gentiles (v15). This "man" is not the individual believer, but the Church, the body of Christ (Cf. 1:22-23; 1 Cor 12:12-13; Col 3:10-11; Heb 12:23).

- In the Church, God does not deal with Gentiles as He did with Jews, nor does He deal with Jews as He did Gentiles. Jews do not become Gentiles, nor do Gentiles become Jews.
 - Rather, God created a whole new (*kainos*, fresh, recent) entity: the Church
 - In the Church, believing Jews become Christians and believing Gentiles become Christians. God now deals with both equally: as Christians.
2. To reconcile Jewish and Gentile believers to Himself in "one body": the Church (v16)
- The OT never spoke of Jewish and Gentile believers as being in "one body"
 - Not only have Jews and Gentiles experienced reconciliation with one another (v14-15), but they have also experienced reconciliation with God by the Cross (v16)

(3) Old Testament analogy (2:17)

17 And He came and preached peace to **you who were far away**, and peace to **those who were near**;

17 And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near;

17 He came and proclaimed peace for you who were far away and for you who were near.

17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

- "...you who were far away" - Gentiles

- "...those who were near" - Jews

- Christ is our peace (v14); Christ made peace (v15); and Christ came and preached peace (v17). Preaching peace does not describe the work of the Lord on earth before the Cross, but the work of the exalted Christ in announcing the peace which His death had made.

— He preached peace in resurrection (Luke 24:36); peace was among His first words (John 20:19,21,26). Peace comes through the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:36).

(4) One access (2:18)

18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.

18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.

18 For through him, both of us have access to the Father by one Spirit.

18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

- The result of the peace...equal access to the Father through the Holy Spirit, through the same path and through the same sacrifice

— Formerly, access to God was exclusively through Judaism, but now it is through Christ

— The proof of peace is access, at any time, into the presence of God (vs. only the high priest into the Holy of Holies, and only on *Yom Kippur*).

— Through prayer, you can enter the throne room of the universe, kneel down before the Sovereign of the Universe, and address Him as "Father"

(iii) Description of the new building (2:19-22)
(a) God's household (2:19)

19 So then you are no longer **strangers and foreigners**, but you are **fellowcitizens** with the saints, and are of **God's household**,

19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,

19 That is why you are no longer strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household,

19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

— "...strangers and foreigners" - previously, Gentiles were strangers and aliens, but as a result of Christ's death, we are no longer

— Today we are so accustomed to this blessing that we forget about how these words would've penetrated the minds of the Ephesian church to whom Paul was writing. The idea of peace, fellow citizens, one household, equal standing, would've been revolutionary to the early church.

— "...fellow citizens" - describes believers; at the time of belief, we go from being "strangers and aliens" in our relationship to God, to being "fellow citizens of God's household"

— Contrast the old position of the Gentiles with their new position in Christ: in the new creation, every believer has the privilege of coming into the Holy of Holies (Heb 10:19-25)

— Sometimes we have a tendency to transfer our earthly dysfunctional family into our belief system about God and His family. We have a bad earthly family, where maybe the parents mistreated you, so we think that God treats us the same way.

— This is why we need to renew our mind in the Scripture, so we understand God as He's expressed Himself, and not transfer our earthly dysfunctional relationships onto how God views and treats us.

— "...God's household" - we're family; we treat family different than strangers...we invite family for Thanksgiving, not strangers; you leave your wealth to family, not strangers

— In 1 Tim 3:15, Paul spoke of the local church as a household, but here "household" refers to all believers of all ages

— When we're in God's family, He treats us differently. We've been adopted into His spiritual family, which transcends physical family lines (Cf. Matt 12:48-50). The moment we're "in Christ" we become part of the family of God.

(b) Foundation (2:20)

20 having been built on **thefoundation of theapostles and prophets**, Christ Jesus Himself being **the cornerstone**,

20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*,

20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, the Messiah Jesus himself being the cornerstone.

20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

- This new "building" = the Church. Paul compares the Church to a temple that rests on the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets.

- "...the foundation" - the rest of the foundation stones are the apostles and prophets

— This refers to NT apostles and NT prophets. There was nothing necessarily special about these NT apostles and prophets, they were just ordinary people with flaws, who God used to build the foundation of His church

- "...the apostles and prophets" - NT prophets are in view, since prophets follows apostles (Cf. 3:5; 4:11)

— The spiritual gifts of "apostle" and "prophet" were foundational to the Church. There were strategic gifts that God gave to the developing Church to help it launch from nothing.

— These foundational gifts petered out after the first generation of Christians passed in the Church Age. For the past 2000 years, God hasn't been laying the foundation any longer, He's been erecting the building.

— There are no apostles around today, thus the gift of apostle has ceased to exist and the biblical canon is closed

— In practical terms, this means that the Church is built on the NT Scriptures

- "...the cornerstone" - the primary foundation stone, at the angle of the structure, by which the architect fixes a standard for the bearing of the walls throughout

— A cornerstone is the stone by which all other stones in the foundation and structure are measured against; the most important stone in the foundation

— It determines the measurements and proper alignment of the rest of the building stones

— Jesus is the foundational stone in the church (Matt 16:18; 1 Cor 3:11; 1 Peter 2:6-8); Paul will later describe the other stones as apostles and believers. All of these other stones must be aligned properly with the cornerstone.

(c) Formation (2:21)

21 in whom the whole **building**, being fitted together, is growing into a holy **temple** in the Lord,

21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,

21 In union with him the whole building is joined together and rises into a holy sanctuary for the Lord.

- 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:
- "...building" - living organism; it is pictured as under construction, with God adding new believers ("growing") constantly
 - "...temple" - *naos*, inner shrine; the meeting place of God and His people; different from *hieron*, the general word for temple precincts
 - Gentiles worshipped in the Temple of Diana before they came to Christ. Paul is saying that the center of God's activity is not in any pagan temple, but in the Church of Jesus Christ, which is used metaphorically as a temple
 - Jews traveled to Jerusalem to worship in the temple. They had a high view of the temple (Cf. Acts 7:47f, where Stephen was understood to be diminishing the temple and was thus stoned to death).
 - This verse removes any pressure believers should have around "building Christ's church"
 - The fact is, human beings can do absolutely nothing to build the church. No pastor has any power whatsoever to build the church. It is the Lord who builds the church (Matt 16:18; Acts 2:47). He is the sole source of the Church's life and growth.
 - No man is capable of building the church because the church belongs to God. We are simply humble servants whom God uses to build His church.

God's Dwelling Places

- In the Jewish tabernacle (Ex 40:34)
- In Solomon's temple (2 Chr 7:1)
- In the temple of Christ's body (John 1:14; 2:18-22)
- Today in the individual believer (1 Cor 6:19-20; 7x in NT: "Ye are the Temple of God")
- In the Church (Eph 2:21-22)

(d) Function (2:22)

- 22 in whom you also are being **builttogether** into a **dwelling of God in the Spirit**.
- 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.
- 22 You, too, are being built in him, along with the others, into a place for God's Spirit to dwell.
- 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.
- "...built together" - the Church was built gradually, brick by brick; the kingdom will come instantaneously (Cf. 1 Peter 2:5)
 - This verse, along with 1 Peter 2:5, imply a gradual "building" of the Church...the Lord is gradually putting stones into this temple. This building will not be completed until the "full number of Gentiles have come in" (Rom 11:25). At that point, the work of the Church will be over and the Rapture will take place.

- Jesus Himself is the “cornerstone” of the building of the Church. He also laid the foundation on the apostles and prophets. Then He began to build up His “spiritual house.”
- “...dwelling of God in the Spirit” - the Holy Spirit indwells the universal Church, as well as every believer individually (John 14:17; Rom 5:5; 8:9,11; 1 Cor 2:12; Gal 3:2; 4:6; 1 John 3:24; 4:13)
- Paul compared individual believers to a temple of God (1 Cor 6:19). He also referred to the local church as a temple (1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 6:16). He revealed here that believers are part of one great “holy temple”: the universal Church.
- In contrast with OT: Gentiles could not even get near to the habitation of God; now they *form* the habitation of God!

Application

1. What is my attitude toward the local church?
 - The primary place of God's habitation is in the local church
 - Many Christians use the local church, but do they love the local church?
 - Our attitude toward the local church is that it is the place where God dwells. It is a place where God is focused. It is a place that God uses. The local church is different than any other organization, therefore it should have a place of preeminence in our thinking and doing.
2. Am I pursuing unity in the local church?
 - In Eph 4, the application section of this epistle, the first topic Paul addresses is unity
3. Am I trying to build the local church?
 - Do I follow a 3-step or 5-step program to build the church?
 - Am I trying to develop a man made formula for building the church?
4. Have I asked God about my role in the local church?
 - We are not the foundation of the church, but we are all a very important part of the building of the church
 - We are the individual stones that God uses to build the church
 - The foundation has been laid properly, now God wants to take various holes in the walls and use each of us to fill those holes
 - The ministry doesn't belong to the pastor or the elders...every believer is already in the ministry
 - The 80/20 rule is not a biblical model
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