

Ephesians ~ Chapter 2 ~ Scripture

Made Alive with Christ

Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. ² You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world.[a] He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. ³ All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God’s anger, just like everyone else.

⁴ But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, ⁵ that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God’s grace that you have been saved!) ⁶ For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. ⁷ So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.

⁸ God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. ¹⁰ For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Oeness and Peace in Christ

¹¹ Don’t forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders. You were called “uncircumcised heathens” by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts. ¹² In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope. ¹³ But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ.

¹⁴ For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. ¹⁵ He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. ¹⁶ Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.

¹⁷ He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near. ¹⁸ Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.

A Temple for the Lord

¹⁹ So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God’s holy people. You are members of God’s family. ²⁰ Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. ²¹ We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. ²² Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

a. 2:2 Greek: obeying the ruler of the power of the air.

Ephesians ~ Chapter 2 ~ Discussion Questions

1. What was one of the best gifts you received as a child? What made it so special?
2. What three characteristics mark the condition of a person without Christ? (2:2-3)
3. What were you like before you became a Christian?
4. Exactly what or who is Satan? What does “prince of the power of the air” (KJV) mean?
5. Why did God make those who were dead (in sin) alive with Christ? (2:4-5, John 3:16)
6. How is a person saved? What does being saved mean? Where does salvation come from? (2:8-9, Galatians 2:16, Romans 9:16, 2 Timothy 1:9, Romans 14:7-9)
7. So what is the position of “good works” in salvation? (2:10)
8. Why do some people not deserve God’s grace, mercy, and riches?
9. Why did many people feel that not being circumcised was a major problem for the Gentiles? Is there something you don’t have that you feel puts you at a disadvantage compared to others (driver’s license, college degree, poor hearing, etc.)? (2:11-12)
10. What totally changed the position of the Gentiles? (2:13)
11. How and why did the hostility and enmity between the Jews and the Gentiles come to an end? How does this affect us? (2:14-16, Romans 5:1)
12. What does it mean in verse 2:15 which says that Jesus “ended the system of the law?”
13. What is the result of believing the message of Christ? (Then and now.) (2:17-18)
14. On what foundation were the Ephesian believers built? How was Christ a part of this foundation? (2:20)
15. How does your church treat strangers, foreigners, aliens, immigrants, and outsiders?

Ephesians ~ Chapter 2 ~ Leader's Guide

1. What was one of the best gifts you received as a child? What made it so special?
2. What three characteristics mark the condition of a person without Christ? (2:2-3)
 - A. Live in sin and follow the desires and cravings of our sinful nature.
 - B. Follow and obey Satan (the Devil), the prince or ruler of the “power of the air.”
 - C. Subject to the wrath (anger) of God
3. What were you like before you became a Christian?
4. Exactly what or who is Satan? What does “prince of the power of the air” (KJV) mean?

Satan in Hebrew means “adversary,” the original term coming from a verb meaning primarily “to obstruct or oppose.” In Arabic, Satan means “astray” or “distant,” and sometimes “devil.” Satan is a figure in the Bible who brings evil and temptation, and is known as the deceiver who leads humanity astray. Some religious groups teach that he originated as an angel who fell out of favor with God, seducing humanity into the ways of sin, and who has power in the fallen world. In the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, Satan is primarily an accuser and adversary, a decidedly malevolent entity, also called the devil, who possesses demonic qualities.

Satan with the definite article occurs 10 times in the book of Job (ch.1–2) and 3 times in Zechariah 3:1–2.

Satan without the definite article is used in 10 instances, of which two are translated diabolos in the Septuagint and “Satan” in the King James Version and some other translations.

1 Chronicles 21:1 – “Satan stood up against Israel” (KJV) or “And there standeth up an adversary against Israel” (Young's Literal Translation)[10]

Psalms 109:6b – “and let Satan stand at his right hand” (KJV) or “let an accuser stand at his right hand.” (ESV, etc.)

The other eight instances of satan without the definite article are traditionally translated (in Greek, Latin and English) as “an adversary”, etc., and taken to be humans or obedient angels:

Numbers 22:22 – “and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him.”

Numbers 22:32 – “behold, I went out to withstand thee,”

1 Samuel 29:4 – The Philistines say: “lest he [David] be an adversary against us”

2 Samuel 19:22 – David says: “[you sons of Zeruaiah] should this day be adversaries (plural) unto me?”

1 Kings 5:4 – Solomon writes to Hiram: “there is neither adversary nor evil occurrent.”

1 Kings 11:14 – “And the LORD stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite”

1 Kings 11:23 – “And God stirred him up an adversary, Rezon the son of Eliadah”

1 Kings 11:25 – “And he [Rezon] was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon”

According to the John MacArthur commentary, a person who is spiritually dead has

no life by which he can respond to spiritual things, much less live a spiritual life. No amount of love, care, and words of affection from God can draw a response. A spiritually dead person is alienated from God and therefore alienated from life. He has no capacity to respond. As the great Scottish commentator John Eadie said, “It is a case of death walking.” Men apart from God are spiritual zombies, the walking dead who do not know they are dead. They go through the motions of life, but they do not possess it.

In the state of spiritual death, the only walking, or living, a person can do is 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. As Paul makes clear, the course of this world follows the leadership and design of Satan, the prince of the power of the air.

Sinful men have many different ideas and standards, but they are in total agreement that the network of things in this world is more important than the divine perspective of God. They are of one mind because they have a common leader and lord, the prince of the power of the air. Satan is now “the ruler of this world,” and until the Lord casts him out (John 12:31) he will continue to rule. The power [or authority] of the air probably refers to Satan’s host of demons who exist in the heavenly sphere. Paul has this in mind in Ephesians 6:12, where he warns of “the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” During the present age he and his demon host dominate, pressure, and control every person who is unsaved. He is the personification of spiritual death because he is the personification of rebellion against God—and so is the system he designed.

Satan is the prince and ruler over this world system. Not all unsaved people are necessarily indwelt at all times by Satan or are demon–possessed. But knowingly or unknowingly they are subject to Satan’s influence. Because they share his nature of sinfulness and exist in the same sphere of rebellion against God, they respond naturally to his leading and to the influence of his demons. They are on the same spiritual wavelength. As with the world, the air over which Satan has controlling power represents the sphere where demons move.

5. Why did God make those who were dead (in sin) alive with Christ? (2:4-5, John 3:16)

God is so rich in mercy and he loves us so much, that he gave us a gift by which we are (or can be) saved. Christ took all of our sins—past, present, and future—on his shoulders when he was crucified and as he was resurrected from the dead, so are we.

John 3:16 – For God so loveth the world, that he hath given his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. (Geneva)

I especially like the footnote in the Geneva Bible (1560) – “Nothing else but the free love of the Father, is the beginning of our salvation, and Christ is he in whom our righteousness and salvation is resident: and faith is the instrument or means whereby we claim it, and life everlasting is that which is set before us to claim.”

6. How is a person saved? What does being saved mean? Where does salvation come from? (2:8-9, Galatians 2:16, Romans 9:16, 2 Timothy 1:9, Romans 14:7-9)

Verses 8-9 are one of the best and most concise summaries of how a person is saved. It is a cardinal tenet of the Good News that people are made righteous (right with God) through trust in Christ rather than through their own merit.

Galatians 2:16 (NIV) – know that a person is not justified by the works of the law,

but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in[a] Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

Christians live and die dependent on God's grace. Salvation is God's gift and can never be earned. It is **not** a reward for the good things we have done.

Romans 9:16 (NIV) – It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy.

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

Salvation is for those who trust Christ alone to save them. As a result, none of us can boast about it.

Christians speak of “salvation” and “being saved,” but what exactly is it? There are actually many (7) parts to being saved: God's forgiveness of our sins, a right relationship with God, acceptance into God's family as his child and heir, eternal life, spiritual understanding, the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of God's blessing now and forever. These are the gifts of God for those he has chosen and made his own by his grace. There is nothing we can do to get or earn these things by ourselves.

In return (and this is often overlooked), believers should live in recognition that they belong to God. We should praise God for his glorious grace because we know that we owe God and Jesus everything. Our entire lives should reflect our gratitude for God's grace.

Romans 14:7-9 (NIV) – ⁷For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. ⁸If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. ⁹For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

Joy and thanksgiving are the appropriate response to God's grace (*joy, thanksgiving, and grace* are all related words in Greek.) Everything in this life and the next hangs on grace. Without God's grace, we would be “without God and without hope.” (2:12)

7. So what is the position of “good works” in salvation? (2:10)

Verse 2:10 reads, “He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.” So we see that good works are the *result*, not the cause, of salvation. The Holy Spirit, working through our transformed hearts, produces a good life. Other Bible translations say “we are God's workmanship,” which in Greek can connote a “work of art.” I think that's a stretch and we can simply say that the outcome of salvation is a complete contrast to the old way of life—God's handiwork, a new creation on the template of Christ, and ‘good works’ such as God had made humankind for in the very beginning.

8. Why do some people not deserve God's grace, mercy, and riches?

It is NOT because they do not do good works. It is NOT because they lie, cheat, steal, kill, or covet what their neighbor has. It is NOT because they don't go to church or don't respect their parents. It is NOT because they are in Satan's grip. It is simply because they CHOOSE not to believe that Jesus died for them, that they turned their back on the

fundamental truth of the Bible that Jesus Christ is their savior. Simple as that.

9. Why did many people feel that not being circumcised was a major problem for the Gentiles? Is there something you don't have that you feel puts you at a disadvantage compared to others (driver's license, college degree, poor hearing, etc.)?

The Jews who were in positions of power and leadership mocked the Gentiles for not being circumcised and called them "heathens." In Biblical days, heathens were polytheists, meaning they believed in many gods and believed that each god and goddess was a real and distinct individual not an aspect or archetype of a greater being. Besides the major gods spoken of in the lore, there were also local gods, ancestral spirits, and other human-like creatures.

In verse 2:11-12, Paul emphasizes that Gentiles used to be outsiders, the Jews regarded them as heathens, and they were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel.

There are many things that affect people today in a similar way, such as not having a driver's license, a college degree, or lack of some physical ability (hearing, sight, etc.) Some people complain about being discriminated against because they lack something similar to the Gentiles lack of circumcision, but you have to be careful to objectively evaluate these situations. For example, a student today with no baseball-playing ability will be allowed to play and rewarded with a varsity letter. Some schools have done away with academic grades. This idea that everyone is equally deserving is spreading throughout society today. This is not going to end well.

10. What totally changed the position of the Gentiles? (2:13)

Verse 2:13 begins with "but now" which strongly contrasts with "at that time" or "in those days" in the previous verse (2:12) meaning the Jews and Gentiles living in almost separate worlds (the Jews, after all, were God's chosen people with whom God had made a covenant whereas the heathen Gentiles were nothing). Now, however, as a result of Christ's death on the cross (the "blood of Christ") and his resurrection, the Gentiles—indeed everyone in the world—could now be united with Christ and God.

As the NLT Study Bible says, "only by being united with Christ Jesus through trust in him can a person be reconciled to God."

11. How and why did the hostility and enmity between the Jews and the Gentiles come to an end? How does this affect us? (2:14-16, Romans 5:1)

Right at the start, Paul says "Christ himself has brought peace to us." So the effect on us is right in the first sentence.

Romans 5:1 (NIV) – Therefore, since *we* have been justified through faith, *we* have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

The verses go on to say, "He united Jews and Gentiles...he broke down the wall of hostility...He made peace between Jews and Gentiles...Christ reconciled both groups to God...our hostility toward each other was put to death." There was not only a figurative wall of hostility but an actual low wall in Jerusalem around the Temple which marked the boundary beyond which Gentiles were not allowed to step.

12. What does it mean in verse 2:15 which says that Jesus “ended the system of the law?”

Verse 2:15 says this wall of hostility (between Jews and Gentiles) was broken down by Jesus ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations.

Romans 10:4 (NIV) – Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

Colossians 2:14 (NIV) – having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.

Romans 6:14 (NIV) – For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

So was Moses’ Law completely abolished by Jesus? By the time of Jesus, the great moral principles God had given to Moses in the Ten Commandments had been turned into hundreds of ceremonial rules. People thought they were living holy lives if they just obeyed all those rules. But Jesus disagreed. He said people found enough “loopholes” to obey all the rules and still live wicked and greedy lives (Matthew 23:23-28).

Jesus made one statement about the Law that often causes confusion: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. (NIV, Matthew 5:17–18)

Christians have struggled to understand exactly what Jesus meant. At first reading, this seems to say that all the Old Testament rules and rituals must still be observed. But Jesus and His disciples did not observe many of those rules and rituals, so it could not mean that.

Commentators often point out that the term “the Law” could have many different meanings at the time of Jesus:

- The ceremonial laws including "clean" and "unclean" lists, sacrifices, dietary restrictions, ritual washings, etc.
- The civil law regulating social behavior and specifying crimes, punishments and other rules
- The moral and ethical laws, such as the Ten Commandments
- The Pentateuch (the first 5 books of the Bible)
- The scribal law - the 613 rules (mitzvot) formulated by the scribes that everyone was expected to obey
- The Scripture as a whole

Jesus did not abolish the moral and ethical laws that had been in effect from the time of Moses. He affirmed and expanded upon those principles, but he said obedience must be from the heart (attitudes and intentions) rather than just technical observance of the letter of the law (Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28, 31-32, 33-34, 38-42, 43-44, etc.).

13. What is the result of believing the message of Christ? (Then and now.) (2:17-18)

Good news (of salvation) and peace. Now everyone can come to have eternal life with the Father through the Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done. The translation of 2:17 has changed over the years. Tyndale, KJV, ESV, and even the NIV say simply that He (Christ) preached peace to those who were far off and to those who were near. However, the translators of the Living Bible, NLT, GNB, CEV, etc. felt compelled to add

that it was the Gentiles who were far away and the Jews who were near. The NLT Study Bible explains that Gentiles and Jews were implied by verse 2:13. Well, okay, but I feel that the original is actually more inclusive and truly says *everyone*, which is an important consideration today.

14. On what foundation were the Ephesian believers built? How was Christ a part of this foundation? (2:20)

Paul says all of the Gentiles then (and all believers today) are citizens along with all of God's holy people, i.e., they and we are part of God's *church*. In Jesus Christ, called the cornerstone, God has revealed his desire to unite Gentiles and Jews in a new group of people, the church. The foundation of this church is the apostles and the prophets. The church is the community of those who recognize the lordship of Christ and submit to him (5:21-24). The church is part of God's plan to bring everything in heaven and earth under the authority of Christ (1:9-10).

Paul's mention of the prophets means that this is not a new plan, but goes back to the Old Testament and the beginning of time. (Some commentators believe that the reference to prophets refers to NT prophets, not OT ones, but this does not fundamentally change the meaning of these verses.)

Right on the first page of his *Commentary on the Torah*, Richard Friedman has two excellent observations. First that when the broad story of creation narrows to the singular divine relationship with Abraham, it will still be with the ultimate aim that this will be "*a blessing to all the families of the earth.*" Secondly, every Biblical scene is laden—artistically, theologically, psychologically, and spiritually—with all that has come before.

Yes, you can read any story in the Bible by itself, but without being aware of what went on before you lose understanding and depth and it becomes an isolated incident rather than an integral part of God's long-range plan.

As we continue in Ephesians, we'll see much more of the church and what God intends it to be.

15. How does your church treat strangers, foreigners, aliens, immigrants, and outsiders?