

THE NATURAL MAN
Ephesians 2:1-3

Intro: In chapter 1 Paul was dwelling in the heavenlies as he contemplated what the Lord has done for all of His people in salvation. That is true especially of vv. 3-14. But as he revealed to the saints in Ephesus (and probably elsewhere as well) how he was praying for them, He laid before them the prospects of their lives as the people of God. By the grace of God they could go higher and higher. And that was Paul's burden for them which he was continually bringing before the Lord in prayer.

But he was not through as he came to the end of chapter 1. All that the Lord had done for them was even more marvelous when he (and they) considered what they used to be; that is, when they considered what their condition was before they came to the knowledge of Christ as their Saviour.

There is, however, one thing that I want to suggest as we come to the first verse of chapter 2.

If you have a KJV of the Bible which uses italics, you will notice that the words, "hath he quickened," are in italics. This is not done for emphasis, but it is done to indicate that the translators have added those words to complete what they felt was the thought of the writer; in this case, the thought of the Apostle Paul. You will see that that expression is used in verse 5, and they probably borrowed their idea in verse 1 from that expression in verse 5.

But I want to suggest another possibility.

In the original language of the NT the verse says this:
And you (plural) were dead in your trespasses
and your sins . . .

Often in translating from one language to another words do have to be added to complete the thought in the translation because languages are different, and they express themselves differently.

You see, the problem in verse 1, and going into verse 2, is that there is no main verb. So they borrowed their verb from verse 5.

But let me suggest another solution which I think ties chapter 2 even closer with chapter 1.

Sometimes the Greek word for "and" (which comes at the beginning of this verse) can be translated, even. If we translate it that way, we do not need the words that the

translators have inserted. In that case, the last verse of chapter 1, and the first verse of chapter 2, would go together like this: Paul was speaking of . . .

the church, which is his body,
the fulness of him that filleth all in all,
even you who were dead in trespasses and sins.

Personally I think that that is what Paul was saying. He was portraying what they were before they were saved in the first three verses of the chapter. And then he went on from verse 4 to show how the great change in their lives had come about. What the KJ translators did was not wrong, but I believe that we see the connection a little more clearly, and the statement is even more powerful, when we leave it like it is in the original text, taking advantage of the alternate meaning of the Greek word for and: the word even.

Paul was saying to those Ephesian believers, "You are the body of Christ, the fulness of Him Who fills all in all, even you who were dead in trespasses and sin, etc." The contrast is so amazing that Paul wanted them to sense the marvel of it all in the depths of their souls.

We need to sense that, too. It is easy for us to say that we are in the Church, the Body of Christ, and yet forget how unworthy we are that we should ever have a relationship like that to Christ, and that we need to bless God every day for His mercy and His grace by which the marvelous change has been made in our lives. In verse 4, the words, "But God," point to the reason why we are not what we used to be and why we are what we are now.

In these three verses at the beginning of chapter two, Paul was picturing THE NATURAL MAN, that is, what every man is before he was saved. He was describing what we all were "in time past." This is what every man, woman, and child who is without Christ continues to be.

Paul stated four distinct things in his description.

We hear a lot today about self esteem. And we are frequently told that people suffer from a low self esteem. What is the meaning of the word, esteem?

Well, you can see that it is a word that is related to the word, estimate. When counselors tell us that our problem is that we rate ourselves too low. We are better than we think we are. So we are told how to get rid of those low ideas of ourselves, and how to get some high ideas.

When we get through with Paul's description we are going to see that unless our ideas about ourselves are determined by Scripture, they are not low enough. People go to counselors

many times because their pride has been injured. They have seen that they are not so good. And the counselor, instead of telling them that they are on the right track, makes them prouder than they ever were before. The person who has started to see his own badness is a person who is on the right way IF HE TAKES GOD'S ANSWER FOR HIS SINS. If not, his condition will only get worse, not better. The counselor may succeed in making him think that he is OK, but time will show that trying to raise a person's estimate of himself is not the way to true peace, and to God.

Now let me get to Paul's four points.

I. "DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SINS" (Eph. 2:1).

I like what Dr. Salmond said about this word "dead" in the EGT, Vol. III, p. 283:

The means neither dying nor mortal, nor yet, again, condemned to death, but dead.

"Dead" means being without life, lifeless.

Paul was not talking about physical death. He was talking about people who were very much alive physically, but who were dead spiritually!

Death always involves a separation. A human body is dead when it is separated from the soul, the life within. A person spiritually dead because he is separated from God. "God is not in all his thoughts" (Psa. 10:4b). He does not have the capacity for fellowship with God. He cannot love God. Instead, he is in rebellion against God. His rebellion may be very respectable, but it is rebellion nevertheless.

And spiritual death is not only the result of sin, but it shows itself in "trespasses and sins." Our "trespasses and sins" are the outward manifestation of spiritual death within us. We sin in practice because we are sinners by nature, and our sins have separated us from God, and the life of God.

What did Paul mean by "trespasses and sins"?

Well, it is not always possible to distinguish between them, but I think we can draw a helpful distinction here, and there are others who have suggested this.

"Trespasses" are things we do which are a violation of God's will. "Sins" are a missing of the mark, a failure to do what we ought to do. In other words, there are "trespasses" of commission, and "sins" of omission. Men show their separation from God, their lack of divine

life, by doing what they ought not to do, and by failing to do what they ought to do.

Now let me emphasize that these words are not always limited to these definitions, but it seems that they are here when you consider what Paul was talking about.

Now for Paul's second point:

II. OUR FORMER WAY OF LIFE (Eph. 2:2).

In the Bible, your walk is your way of life. It is the way you live.

Paul mentioned two mighty forces in this verse which are opposed to God and opposed to the people of God. They are, (1) "this world," and (2) "the prince of the power of the air," the Devil.

Both of these forces are greater than man. Man lives as he does, not only because the sin in his heart causes him to want to live that way, but because he is under the influence of powers, greater than he is, so that he cannot do otherwise!

Paul did not mention "the flesh" until verse 3, but he was actually describing "the flesh" in verse 1. However, you can see that in these three verses Paul was mentioning all of man's enemies:

- 1) The flesh, his sinful nature, within him.
- 2) The world around him.
- 3) The devil above him.

Any solution which ignores these evil forces in every man's life is no solution at all. And let me say here that man, in his own strength, cannot handle any one of them, let alone all three together.

The term, "the course of this world," is lit., the age of this world. We might translate it as the time of this world. It is the course which this world is following during what we call, time. Perhaps we are referring to this when we speak of "the times in which we live." We all understand, or should understand what this means.

A few years ago one of our national Christian youth organization was using the expression, "Anchored to the Rock (speaking of Christ), geared to the times." That is a contradiction of terms. If you are anchored to Christ, you are not going to be geared to the times. If you are geared to the times, you are not anchored to the Rock. The times and Christ are so opposed to each other that you and I cannot be in both.

But THE NATURAL MAN, the man without Christ, cannot help himself. He is going to be geared to the times, and he is going to live the way the Devil wants him to live, mainly WITHOUT GOD!

The Devil is called "the prince of the power of the air" because he is the chief of all of the evil heavenly creatures, fallen angels, demons, who are opposed to God and opposed to all who are godly and all that is godly. THE NATURAL MAN is a willing slave, but nevertheless a helpless slave, to the times in which he lives and to the Devil who continues to work in the sons, lit., "of disobedience."

What was Paul's third point?

III. THE NATURAL MAN'S ALLIES (Eph. 2:3a).

Notice the words, "among whom." Who does the "whom" refer to? It refers to the sons "of disobedience" mentioned at the end of verse 2.

THE NATURAL MAN feels right at home among those who are living in disobedience to God. He certainly does not enjoy being with the people of God. He lives to satisfy his inner cravings, whether they be of his body, or of his mind.

The word that Paul used here for "the mind" is a word which literally means, thinking through. Do you remember our verse which says that God's thoughts and our thoughts are not the same? But do you also remember that the prophet Isaiah said in that same passage that God's thoughts are higher than ours--higher and better? THE NATURAL MAN, the man (or woman) without Christ, is not interested in what God thinks. He is not interested in the Word of God. He is not interested in the will of God. He wants to have his own way, think his own thoughts, and do his own thing. And Solomon said long ago,

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man,
but the end thereof are the ways of death
(Prov. 14:12; 16:25).

You see, man's desires and man's thinking have been corrupted because he has a sinful heart that is dead with respect to God.

Finally,

IV. THE NATURAL MAN'S JUDGMENT (Eph. 2:3b).

Paul spent all of the first chapter showing us how we, because we are in Christ, because we have been made alive to God--that now we love Him and want to please Him (even though so often we fail to do so), are under the favor of God, under His eternal blessing. But it was not always so! "By nature" before, we were "the children of wrath." And he used a word here to indicate that we were born that way--just like everyone else!

We did not become sinners when we committed our first sin; we were born sinners! A sinful nature was ours by natural descent. And because we are sinners, sons of disobedience, with a nature that is only inclined to disobey God, we were under the wrath of God!

We were condemned to eternal death. We were on our way to hell. We deserved hell. THE NATURAL MAN has a hard time believing this. He will even deny that there is such a place. This is when he will even say that God would not send anyone to a place like hell.

But remember that man without Christ does not think rightly about God and the ways of God. He thinks he is right when he is wrong. And to be wrong here is to be wrong forever. My friend, if you are without Christ, you are under the wrath of God.

Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church that some day the Lord will come,

In flaming fire taking vengeance
on them that know not God,
and that obey not the gospel
of our Lord Jesus Christ,
Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction
from the presence of the Lord,
and from the glory of his power (2 Thess. 1:8 , 9).

Concl: I have finished the exposition of my text. But I am thankful that my message does not have to end on that tragic note.

Let me say in closing that there is hope for deliverance from sin's penalty and from sin's power. Go on and read verses 4 through 9 in this chapter. The answer is there.

Do not believe those who say that you are lacking in self esteem. The problem is that you have too much. You can never see how really bad you are until you see your portrait in the Word of God. When you see that you are a sinner, then you will see your need of a Saviour. Then you will be ready to listen to the Gospel, the only remedy there is for sinners. Cf. 1 Tim. 1:15.

Also John 5:24.

"BUT GOD"
Ephesians 2:4-7

Intro: In verse 4 of chapter 2, after being in the dark in the first three verses, we come out again into the light. In the first three verses we see what it means to be in the darkness of sin, without Christ. As we come to verse 4, we see that it is God Who has made the difference as far as the people of God who are concerned. (Read.)

Perhaps I could go back to the beginning of the epistle, after Paul's initial words of greeting in verses 1 and 2 of chapter 1, and show you how we can compare the content of the four sections we have gone through. The divisions are 1:3-14, 15-23; 2:1-3, 4-7--bringing us down to our text for today.

- 1) In 1:3-14 we see what we all have.
 - 2) In 1:15-23 we see what we all need.
 - 3) In 2:1-3 we see what we all were.
 - 4) In 2:4-7 we see what we all are now, and why.
- (Review.)

Ephesians 2:4-7, along with verses 8-10, tell the whole story of salvation. If we get the truths of these verses into our hearts, we will never be confused as to what salvation is. As well known as these verses are, I am afraid that most of us have been slow in understanding what Paul was saying in these verses, and I am equally afraid that many of the people of God never do experience the joy of what Paul was teaching here. Let all of us who know the Lord be praying that the Lord will make the truth of these verses clear to all of us that we might glorify the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as we should, for the blessing, the great blessing, the greatest of all of blessings: SALVATION!

The first thing that I want you to see about Paul's teaching regarding salvation is:

I. HE BEGAN WITH GOD.

He did not begin with man; he began with God: "But God."

All is darkness and despair in verses 1-3. Man is hopelessly in bondage to the flesh, the world, and the Devil. He is a sinner by nature, and by choice. He is under the judgment of God, and there is nothing that he, nor any other human being, nor any angel, can do about it. He is dead, spiritually dead, without any divine life at all, and really not at all interested in making things right. In fact, he is so dead in his sins that he does not even know that he is dead--separated from God by an immeasurable distance.

That is why the words, "But God," are wonderful beyond anything that the most eloquent saint can express. As long as man is seeking help from himself, or from others, he is doomed to despair and continued hopelessness. It is only as he comes to realize that his only hope is in God that he will have any light in the darkness of his sin.

Here is the greatest of all contrasts. Here is the great transition. Most people are full of pride, but if and when they begin to see what they really are, they are not able to stand the sight. This is why they will turn to busy-ness, or pleasure, or anything else that will help them to overlook the emptiness and hopelessness and badness of what they see. It is not until they can say, "But God," that things begin to change for them. And no man ever gets this far unless God has been dealing with him.

But what did Paul say about God? FIVE THINGS.

And I want you to see that all FIVE THINGS are directed toward those to whom he referred as "we" and "us" and "ye" (plural). (Point them out.) To whom was he writing? Go back to the beginning of the epistle and you will see. He was not writing to everybody in the world, but "to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." Paul was writing to the people of God, to those whom he said in verse 4 of chapter 1 that they had been "chosen in him (Christ) before the foundation of the world."

And so this leads us to see two very important points regarding salvation. In the beginning it originated with God. The plans were all made before the foundation of the world. They were made even before man had sinned. Salvation was in the heart of God before there was any creation.

But the other important thing that I want to point out from those words, "But God," is that the salvation of every person who ever comes to the Lord, likewise begins with God! So the things that I am going to point out now are things that apply to the people of God.

Let us call this,

II. THE WORKS OF GOD.

The FIVE THINGS that Paul mentioned are these:

- 1) He loved us.
- 2) He quickened us, or made us alive.
- 3) He raised us up.
- 4) He made us sit down in heavenly places.

5) The last one is future: "That in the ages to come he might . . ."

Let us look at each one of them.

A. He loved us.

Have you noticed those words in our text which go together?

- 1) Mercy.
- 2) Love.
- 3) Grace.
- 4) Kindness.

These are all characteristics of God. We speak of them as His attributes. If you want to know what God is like, think about these four words. Add to them the words, goodness, and compassion, and tenderness, and lovingkindness, and all other words that are similar to these. The Apostle John said twice in his First Epistle, "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16).

Do you remember that statement in the OT that is repeated over and over?

O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good:
for his mercy endureth for ever.

God is righteous also, and so He "is angry with the wicked every day" (Psa. 7:11), but the Bible nowhere says that God is anger, or wrath. He is the personification of love. If you want to know what love is, study the character of God, and of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. You will be amazed at what you learn.

And you see, the reason the Lord chose us, and the reason the Lord saved us, is because He loved us. As amazing as it may seem, He has always loved us. What the Lord said to Jeremiah almost 2,600 years ago applies to all of the people of God:

Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love:
therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee
(Jer. 31:3).

When you look at God's picture of us, and of every other human being, the first three verses of this chapter, and then read about "his great love where- with he loved us, even when we were dead in sins," you know it is "great," and you know that it all had to be by the grace of God.

How great is His love? Cf. Rom. 5:8.

The same applies to the love of Christ Himself. See Eph. 5:25.

The love of God is an inexhaustible subject, and we need to meditate on it much more than we do. The love of God is without beginning, without ending, without change. You and I may be able to grieve the Lord, and we do, but we will never be able to do anything that will make the Lord stop loving us. I have told you that before, and I never tire of saying it over and over and over again.

But let us go on to the second thing that the Lord has done:

B. He quickened us.

This means that He gave us life, and made us alive.

Do you remember that verse 1 told us that before we were saved, we are dead, spiritually dead? We had no life. We were incapable of doing anything that would please God. Dead people need life before they can do anything.

Would you get angry with me if I told you that God had to give you life even before you could believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation? Well, whether you get angry with me or not, I have to tell you that because it is true. Paul does not mention faith until we get down to verse 8, and then he says that it is a part of that whole gift which makes up salvation.

Man is so dead in his sins that he cannot believe until he is quickened.

Now I do not mean that you are quickened one year, and then believe in Christ the next year. I am not even putting them a day apart, or a minute apart-- probably not even a second apart. But I am saying that no man can believe until he has life, and so God quickens those whom He intends to save, gives them faith, and then they can believe. And note that this is all "together with Christ."

You and I are standing on holy ground in dealing with this passage, and I would be the first to admit that I do not know all that is here. Let me explain what I mean.

You will notice that Paul said that:

- 1) We were "quickened together with Christ," and
- 2) that we have been "raised up together" (with Him, understood), and

3) "Made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ."

Now when was Christ quickened, and raised, and exalted to the Father's right hand? It certainly was long before we were quickened. We have the record of His resurrection, ascension, and His being seated in heaven in the four Gospels. He is not quickened and raised and seated with us; we were quickened and raised and seated with Him!

So I have to say this: While I want not actually quickened until the Lord gave me eternal life, yet there is a very real and important sense in which, when He was quickened, I was quickened; when He was raised, I was raised; when He was seated in heaven at the Father's right hand, so was I--AND SO WERE YOU, if you belong to the Lord.

I cannot understand how it could be then and also when I was saved, and when you were saved, BUT I KNOW THAT THERE IS ONE VERY IMPORTANT TRUTH IN ALL OF THIS. IT IS THIS (and let me even go back to the death of Christ in saying this): IF YOU AND I DIED WHEN THE LORD DIED, IF WE WERE QUICKENED AND RAISED WITH HIM, IF WE ASCENDED WITH HIM, AND WERE SEATED WITH HIM, THEN MY SALVATION AND YOURS WAS ABSOLUTELY GUARANTEED BY THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST!

Now let me ask you this: Do you think that the people who are in hell, or who will be in hell some day, were crucified with Christ, buried with Him, raised with Him, ascended with Him, and seated with Him? If you are thinking carefully, your answer will be, NO! You see, we are dealing here with the purpose that the Lord had in His death. He died to save those whom the Father had chosen. He was their Substitute. They were united with Him in His death, and in all of the rest up to and including the glorious place which He holds today at the Father's right hand. And not one for whom Christ died will fail to be in heaven.

Can Christ fail? Of course not. Would He leave salvation up to each man? If you believe verses 1 through 3, you would have to say that if He did, no one would be saved. Could He save everyone if He chose to do so? Of course He could! Why, then, does He not save all men? Simply because it is not according to His eternal plan.

I realize that this different from the man-centered

kind of a Gospel which is being preached today, but I plead with you to think about what Paul has said here, and you will soon be praising God and giving Him all of the glory that He has been pleased to save you.

My time is getting away from me, and so let me hasten on quickly and briefly to my last three points.

C. He raised us up together.

This is another inexhaustible subject. What is the significance of this?

He has raised us out of death, out of the bondage of sin, out of the power of the world, and out of the power of the Devil. Paul said in Romans 6 that we have been raised to "walk in newness of life." This means a complete change. Jesus Christ is not only our Saviour; He is our Lord.

But more than that . . .

D. We are seated with Him in the heavenlies.

What does this mean? It means that just as the Son's acceptance back into heaven, and the fact that He is seated at the Father's right hand, means that He has fully satisfied the Father, so we have a place before God in Christ and with Christ of perfect acceptance also. The only One you need to know to get into heaven is the Lord Jesus Christ. The Father would no more reject us than He would reject His own dear Son.

How wonderful can all of this get?

Well, there is one more thing--and we are still talking about the works of God. But this one is future:

E. The best is yet to come.

We have experienced the riches of God's mercy (v. 4) in our salvation, but throughout eternity we will experience not just the riches of God's grace, but "the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

What will that be? I do not know. But I can assure you that it will be so much better than we have ever experienced here on earth that there will be no basis for comparison! Then God will "show" in ways which we cannot experience now, His marvelous grace, and we

will never cease reaping the benefits of what Christ did for us when He died for us, and we with Him, on the Cross.

Concl: Spiritually we are seated there with Him now. But the day is coming when—how shall I say it?—we will be there in our glorified bodies, just like He is. What will it be like then? It is so wonderful that it has not been revealed to us in the Scriptures. But eternity will be one long existence of enjoying the blessings of God, and then making heaven ring as we sing praises to God for all that He has done for us in Christ.

Robert Murray M'Cheyne expressed the thought of verse 7 on words that go beyond what I could say. Let me read just three of the verses for you. The hymn is #600 in our hymnal.

When this passing world is done,
When has sunk yon glaring sun,
When we stand with Christ in glory,
Looking o'er life's finished story,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know,
Not till then, how much I owe.

When I stand before the throne,
Dressed in beauty not my own,
When I see thee as thou art,
Love thee with unsinning heart,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know,
Not till then, how much I owe.

Chosen not for good in me,
Wakened up from wrath to flee,
Hidden in the Saviour's side,
By the Spirit sanctified,
Teach me, Lord, on earth to show,
By my love, how much I owe.

AMAZING GRACE
Ephesians 2:8-10

Intro: My text for today is Ephesians, chapter 2, verses 8, 9, and 10. The words of my text for today are probably the most familiar words in the book of Ephesians--at least verses 8 and 9. Let us read or quote them together as we begin. (Read.)

As we have been going through Ephesians, I have been trying to show you how one section ties in with those that have gone before so that, when we are finished, you will have a good idea of the message of the whole book. It is the message of the entire book that we want to get, not just looking each text as standing by itself. Any verse in the Bible will mean more to us if we see the context, that is, what led up to it, and what follows it. So I consider this an important part of my work in preaching through Ephesians, or any other book--to try to bring together the entire book.

With that in mind, let me remind you that Paul really has been dealing with the Gospel from the very beginning of the Epistle. I have suggested these divisions:

- 1) Vv. 3-14 -- what we all have in Christ.
- 2) Vv. 15-23 -- what we all need, Paul's prayer emphasizing the necessity for spiritual growth.

In chapter 2, -

- 3) Vv. 1-3 -- what we all were.
- 4) Vv. 4-7 -- what we are now, and why.

And then in our text for today, vv. 8-10, we have the explanation of how we became what we are now.

As you look at verses 8, 9, and 10, you will see that verses 8 and 10 begin with the word, "For." For is what we call a conjunction because it is a word which joins two things together. In this case the "For" in verse 8 joins that verse with verse 7, and the "For" in verse 10 joins that verse with verses 8 and 9. And it has the meaning of the word, because. In fact, you can read verses 8 and 10, substituting the word because, and have the true meaning. I think that one advantage of using the word because is that it, more than "For," makes you look for the reason behind the words that follow. If, when we memorized verses 8 through 10, we had learned the word because, it might have made us think a little more about what Paul was saying.

Anyway, verses 8, 9, and 10 are linked to verses 4-7 like the cars on a train are linked with each other. Each car is dependent upon the car ahead of it to pull it along.

With this in mind we see that Paul is not concentrating as much as ever on:

I. THE THEME OF THE EPISTLE: SALVATION BY GRACE.

Only once before do we have the word salvation, and that is in 1:13. And only once before do we have the word saved, and that is in 2:5. In fact, these, and the reference to salvation in 6:17 are the only times we find either of these words in the Epistle. Our Lord is referred to in 5:23 as "the saviour of the body." But this includes all of the references. However, salvation is referred to in Scripture by other terms, and by various works of God which are included in salvation, so I still can say that salvation, in many of its various parts, is the theme of this epistle.

But what do we mean by salvation? What are we talking about when we talk of being saved?

The word suggests that we are saved from something. It suggests a deliverance of some kind, an escape, being brought to a place of safety. Salvation is the grand word in Scripture which describes all that God does for those whom He has delivered from hell, from the Devil, from death, and from the power of sin which is in all of our hearts. Let me give you some verses which will help us to understand:

- 1) Paul said in Romans 5:9a, "We shall be saved from wrath through him," that is, through Christ.
- 2) In 1 Tim. 1:15 Paul wrote that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

A saved person has had his sins forgiven. A saved person has become a child of God, and has everlasting life. A saved person is on his way to heaven, not to hell.

The whole purpose of the Bible is to tell us about our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the salvation that it is possible to have through Christ. Any other interpretation of the coming of Christ, and of the Gospel, is a false interpretation.

But let me move on to the word "grace."

"Grace" is unmerited favor. This simply means that God is favorable toward us as sinners, but we do not deserve it. We deserve His wrath, but we receive His mercy. We deserve hell, but we are going to heaven. This is not true of everyone; it is only true of those who have been saved. And, as we have already seen, only those who have been saved by Jesus Christ are saved. Any other hope is a false hope.

So we can say this about grace--two important points:

- 1) Grace means that God does not give me what I deserve.

2) Grace also means that God does give me what I do not deserve, and could never earn.

Therefore, when we consider what we were (2:1-3), and compare that with what we are now in Christ (2:4-7), we can only ask, How could that be? And so Paul is here giving us the answers as he wrote, "For . . . , or, Because.

The second thing that I want you to see from our text is this:

II. SALVATION IS A GIFT FROM GOD.

Paul wrote in Rom. 6:23,
 For the wages of sin is death,
 but the gift of God is eternal life
 through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Before that, in Rom. 3:24 he wrote this:

 Being justified freely by his grace (God's grace)
 through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

If we purchase something for ourselves, it is not a gift. The very nature of a true gift is that it is free. It may be a very expensive gift, and have cost the giver of the gift a great deal, but it comes to us without any cost whatever. It is a gift.

To bring out these facts, Paul said in our text that this salvation is:

- 1) "Not of ourselves."
- 2) "Not of works."

That is, there is nothing about us, our character, our heritage, our personal characteristics, which has caused God to save us. Neither is it given because of any good thing which we have done. It is not a reward. It is not a "distinguished service medal." The Bible even says,
 But we are all as an unclean thing,
 and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags . . .
 (Isa. 64:6a).

Paul, in his epistle to Titus (3:5), said,
 Not by works of righteousness which we have done,
 but according to his mercy he saved us . . .

So we are not saved because we do good things for people, or because we give money to the church. We are not saved because we go to church. We are not saved because we are very sorry for our sins. All of the good things that we could ever do, and all of the good characteristics that we might have, are not enough to atone for our sins. Our sins require our death—eternal death in hell! And if it were not for the death of Christ in which He atoned for the sins of all who would ever believe on Him, we would

be headed straight for hell at this very moment!

Yes, salvation is a gift, but it was purchased by God for us at the terrible price of the death of His Son. If we understand at all what Christ was doing on the Cross, we will never again even think that we are saved because of who we are, or because of what we have done, or because of any combination of the two.

But I am not finished what I have to say about salvation as a gift.

When Paul said that salvation is a gift from God, he meant, according to our text, that everything connected with our salvation is a gift of God, INCLUDING OUR FAITH.

It is at this point that many well-meaning Christians raise their voices in protest. They will agree that salvation is a gift, that it is through the death of Christ that we are saved, but they also believe that faith is our part in salvation, and by faith we receive this gift. It is true that by faith we receive this gift, but if salvation is "not of ourselves," then the faith cannot be from us.

Man does not determine his own destiny. His salvation is not in his hands. God determines our destiny, and our salvation is in His hands. The Bible says,

So then faith cometh by hearing,

and hearing by the word of God (Rom.10:17).

It also says that "Jesus" is "the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). That is saying that our faith originates with Him, and He is the fulfillment of it. If that is the case, faith does not begin with me, nor does it end with me. It is all from Christ. Therefore, if I want to believe in Christ, I must look to Christ for my faith.

Let me pass on to a third point:

III. THE GLORY IN SALVATION.

If salvation is not of ourselves, nor of our works, and if it is entirely a gift of God, then the glory for our salvation does not belong to us. If I have any part in it, I have something for which I can take credit. But if there is one thing that God hates, it is human pride in any form. So we are specifically told, "Lest any man should boast." A literal rendering of the original text goes like this: In order that not anyone, that is, man, woman, or child, may boast.

The beginning of verse 10 also should help us to see this: "For we are his workmanship." The Greek places the emphasis on "HIS"--HIS workmanship we are! We are not self-made people; we are God-made people. We are not partial saviours; we are not saviours at all. If it were left up to us, we would never in a billion years have come to Christ. God chose us, bought us, sought us, brought us, and keeps us. And so all of the glory is His!

You know, this word which is translated "workmanship" is used only one other time in the NT. It is in Romans 1:20 where we read,

For the invisible things of him
from the creation of the world are clearly seen,
being understood by the things that are made . . .
So Paul, in using the word "workmanship," was saying that we are, as Christians, creations of God. That is what Paul told the Corinthians in 2 Cor. 5:17,

Therefore if any man be in Christ,
he is a new creature (or, it is a new creation):
old things are passed away;
behold, all things are become new.

It is just as unreasonable for us to claim to have had a part in the creation of the earth, and of man upon the earth, as it is for us to claim to have had any part in our existence as new creatures in Christ Jesus.

One final point:

IV. THE PRESENT PURPOSE OF SALVATION.

I spoke in chapter 1 about the future purpose of God in salvation. We are going to be like Christ. We also saw in 2:7 something of what God has planned for the future. It is all going to be so wonderful that we will marvel at our past attachment to this world and to this life.

But what about the present. Does God have any plans for the present?

Yes, He does! Works were out as far as getting salvation was concerned. And works are out as far as keeping salvation is concerned. God saves us, and He keeps us. But works are in as far as our lives are concerned. See Eph. 2:10. We are not saved by our works, but we are saved unto good works. James said very rightly, "I will shew thee my faith by my works" (Jas. 2:18b).

The Apostle Paul was saying at least two things here:

- 1) Works are an essential evidence of salvation. If there are no good works, there is no salvation. It

is just as simple as that. It is impossible to experience the salvation of the Lord, and remain like you were before. If your life is not changed, you are not changed.

- 2) God planned ahead what those good works would be. Paul was saying that God is the One Who determined before the foundation of the world the way in which His people should live. Thus, we do not determine what good works are; God does that. And the only way we can find out what they are is by reading and searching the Word of God. A lot of Christians have their own ideas as to what Christians ought to do, but often their ideas cannot be found in Scripture. We need to let our lives be guided by the Word of God.

Notice that Paul brought together here the words "works" and "walk." When we think of works, we think of preaching, or witnessing, or giving, or teaching a Sunday School Class, or something like that. And they are all legitimate service unto the Lord. But actually our works are our walk, and our walk is the way we live day by day. Paul is going to have a great deal to say about our walk in this epistle, and this is to get us ready for what he will say later. But let me say at this point that it is only by a godly walk that anyone can please the Lord, and it is impossible to live a godly life until you are saved.

Concl: We have in these three verses the two main purposes for the church on earth:

- 1) The preaching, the proclamation, of the true Gospel of the grace of God.
- 2) The teaching that will help the people of God to live the way the Lord planned that they should live.

Can I ask you this morning, Is Jesus Christ your Saviour? Is your faith in Him? Do you know that it is only by grace, and not by works, that you can be saved?

Secondly, what right do you have to call yourself a Christian? Does your life show that you are different? Do you live to please yourself, or do you live to please God?

There is something here for all of us, and I trust that the Spirit of God will show all of us what our need is, and how He has ordained that that need should be met. We start with works, and try to change the heart. God starts with a changed heart, and a change in the life is inevitable.

THE GENTILE AND CHRIST
Ephesians 2:11-13

Intro: Thus far in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians we have seen that he had written about:

- 1) What we all have in Christ -- 1:3-14.
- 2) What we all need as the Lord's people -- 1:15-23.
- 3) What we used to be -- 2:1-3.
- 4) What we are now -- 2:4-7.

And last Sunday we saw in 2:8-10 how we became what we are. It was all through the grace of God, and because of what God has done for us in and through and because of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the three verses I want to consider with you today Paul was turning his attention to the Gentiles. This was especially appropriate for the Ephesian church because it was predominantly a Gentile church. Ephesus was located in the Roman province of Asia, now Turkey, as were the other churches to whom this letter may have been sent.

And it is at this point that we come to the first exhortation of the epistle: "Wherefore remember . . ."

When we began our study I mentioned that the epistle has two main divisions:

- 1) Chapters 1-3, doctrinal.
- 2) Chapters 4-6, practical.

But I think that I also said that you will find some practical exhortations in the first three chapters, and you will find some doctrine in the last three chapters. And here we have an example of an exhortation in this doctrinal portion of the book: "Wherefore remember . . ."

The second phrase of verse 11 indicates that Paul was addressing himself here to Gentiles. (Read v. 11a.)

Why did he do this?

He did it because he wanted all of the Gentiles to remember how much they owed to the grace of God. The Jews were indebted to God of their salvation, to be sure, but, if anything, the Gentiles were even more so. And Paul wanted them to remember that, and never, never forget it! No one can possibly calculate what we all owe to God for His grace, but this passage was designed to show how much the Gentile owed.

Therefore, since I am addressing a Gentile congregation this morning, I say to you, "Remember."

This is the only time that Paul used this word in this

epistle. He certainly wanted them to remember everything he had written to them, but this is where he wanted to make a special point. His object was to bring even greater glory to God for His amazing grace.

How was he doing this?

In answering that question, let us consider verse 11 where Paul spoke of:

I. THE GENTILE AND THE JEW (Eph. 2:11).

The two terms which Paul used here were the terms used by the Jews to distinguish themselves from the Gentiles. They were "the Circumcision"; the Gentiles were "the Uncircumcision." In calling the Gentiles "the Uncircumcision," the Jews were excluding them, not only from the Jewish community, but more importantly, they were excluding them from God! It was a term which showed the contempt that the Jews had for the Gentiles. Even those Gentile proselytes who submitted to circumcision were never quite the same as the Jews, in the eyes of the Jews. Even among those Jews who professed faith in Christ, it was the battle of the first century to get Jewish Christians to accept Gentile Christians as being equal with them. This conflict is seen many places in the NT.

But what all of this boils down to in our text is this: IF IT HAD BEEN LEFT UP TO THE JEWS, NO GENTILE WOULD EVER HAVE BEEN SAVED! Of course, the attitude of the Jews toward circumcision was contrary to the grace of God, but their superiority with God had been so ingrained into the Jewish mind that they would not move over to make room for the Gentile.

Do you remember how even the Apostle Peter showed his uneasiness in being with Gentiles when, in the home of Cornelius, the Roman centurion, he said,

Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing
for a man that is a Jew to keep company,
or come unto one of another nation . . .

(Acts 10:28a).

That undoubtedly was the first time Peter had ever been in the home of a Gentile.

Another illustration of this attitude is to be seen in the Lord's contact with the Samaritan woman in John 4. She was amazed that He had asked her for a drink, and this was her response:

How is it that thou, being a Jew,
askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?

for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans
(John 4:9).

The Samaritans were Jews who had intermarried with
Gentiles, and so they were especially despised by loyal
Jews.

It is true that, as the Lord said, "Salvation is of the
Jews" (John 4:22b). The promises were given to Abraham,
who was the father of the Jewish nation. God's dealings
with Israel were different from His dealings with any
other nation. Our Lord was a Jew by birth. And yet it
was never His purpose that only Jews would be saved. We
have instances of His dealing with Gentiles in the OT:

- 1) Rahab.
- 2) Ruth.
- 3) Naaman.

And in the NT we have examples such as:

- 1) The woman at the well in Samaria.
- 2) The Syrophenician woman.
- 3) The Centurion who sought healing for his servant.

And these are not the only examples we could cite.

But the point that Paul was making the point that, if it
had been up to the people of Israel (apart from God's
dealings with them), NO GENTILE WOULD EVER HAVE BEEN
SAVED! THE SAME PEOPLE FROM WHOM OUR LORD CAME WOULD
HAVE CLOSED THE DOOR ON THE GENTILE WORLD.

The one thing in the book of Acts that seemed to
infuriate the Jews in every place more than anything else
was the fact that the Gospel was being preached to the
Gentiles. They hated that!

Therefore, it was clear evidence of the grace of God that
any Gentiles were saved. It was not to Peter's glory
that he was the first to carry the Gospel to the
Gentiles. It was to the glory of God. It was not to
Paul's glory that he had gone to Ephesus preaching the
Gospel to the Gentiles. It was to the glory of God. The
Church, to begin with, was a Jewish Church, and, if the
Jews had had their way, it would have stayed that way.
But how thankful we can be for the almighty power of a
sovereign God Who taught Jewish believers the true
meaning of the grace of God, and then constrained them to
preach the Gospel to the Gentiles at such a great price
as many of them had to pay.

God opened the door to the Gentiles, and He alone gets
all of the glory for that! Gentiles need to remember
this, not that they might hold it against the Jews, but
that they might give the greater glory to God. And
Gentiles need to remember today that they have an

obligation to carry the Gospel to the Jews.

But let us go on to verse 12. What do we have there?

II. THE GENTILE WITHOUT CHRIST (Eph. 2:12).

Paul was speaking of the "time past" in verse 11, and he was speaking of that same time in verse 12. The "time past" was the time before they were saved.

So the expression, "at that time," in verse 12, points to the "time past." And he said here that five things were true of them "at that time":

- 1) They were "without Christ."
- 2) They were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel."
- 3) They were "strangers from the covenants of promise."
- 4) They had "no hope."
- 5) They were "without God in the world."

Let me try to explain each of those terms for you.

A. "Without Christ."

There is nothing more alarming that can be said of any person than that he or she is "without Christ." The person who is "without Christ" does not know Him, and is not interested in knowing Him. Matthew Poole said that "this is the foundation of all other miseries" (III, 667). Fausset in the JFB commentary said that this means separation from Christ, without any access to Him, having no part in Him and far off from Him. Can you imagine such a life? Perhaps some of you remember when this was true of you. Can we ever forget what those days were like? Why do people do the terrible things that they do? Because they are "without Christ." You see, there can be no solution to the problem of crime as long as people remain "without Christ." This is the label that can be put on every person in the world who is not saved. To be "without Christ" is to be without spiritual blessings. It is to be under the penalty of sin, dead in sins, a child of wrath. It is to be outside of the family of God. It is the basic problem of the world in which we live.

B. "Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel."

The word "commonwealth" has to do with being citizens of a government. The verb, "being alienated," was used by Paul again in 4:18 where he was speaking of the same people he was mentioning here as "being alienated from the life of God." And so here in 2:12

it means that before they came to Christ they were shut out of the kingdom of God and barred from any fellowship at all with God or His people.

Cf. 1 John 1:3. Could you think of going back to a life where you had no fellowship with God, and no fellowship such as we enjoy here at Trinity Bible Church? You could not pray. You could not claim the blessing and help of God. You would be barred from all that is now most precious to you as a child of God.

But let us go on to the third statement:

C. "Strangers from the covenants of promise."

Where are "the covenants of promise" to be found? They are found in the Word. What does it mean to be a stranger to them? It means not only that you do not know of them, but that you have no part in them, and that you are actually living in an entirely different world with different standards and different hopes. "The covenants of promise" are the promises of salvation.

So this means that your Bible is taken from you. The promises there, as wonderful as they might be, are not for you as long as you remain in that condition.

D. "Having no hope."

This means that you have no bright and perfect and eternal prospect for the future. Heaven is not for you. You are on your way to hell. You have nothing more as far as this life is concerned than what you have right now. Your pleasures are just an anesthetic for an empty heart.

E. "Without God in this world."

You see, if you are "without Christ," you are also "without God." You might think that you can have God without Christ, but you are only kidding yourself. And to be "without God" is reason enough for complete despair, but to be "without God in this world" is the cause for the greatest despair.

Look at the condition of the world this morning. Would you like to live in this world "without God"? Would you like to face death "without God"? Would you like to enter eternity "without God"?

Add all of these together, and you have cause for the greatest despair. If all you have is what you have in this world, you have nothing. We were all in this condition at one time; how would you like to go back to that again? When we as Christians get discouraged in the trials of our lives, then we really have need to "remember" what things would be like if we did not have Christ--AND THEN TO PRAISE HIM FROM THE DEPTHS OF OUR HEARTS FOR HIS MARVELOUS GRACE!

But I must hurry on to my last point in verse 13:

III. THE GENTILE IN CHRIST (Eph. 2:13).

There are only two possibilities: you and I are either "without Christ," or we are "in Christ." To be "in Christ" is to have all of those five points of verse 12 completely reversed:

- 1) Instead of being shut out from Christ, "without Christ," He is our Saviour, and we are united to Him by a bond which can never be broken. We are His, and He is ours.
- 2) We are citizens of heaven, belonging to the kingdom of God--with all of the rights and privileges of daily, personal fellowship with our God, and with His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3) We are saved. We know the meaning of the promises of salvation, and "have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).
- 4) We have a heavenly hope. We are "looking for that blessed hope . . ." (Tit. 2:13, 14).
- 5) We have God. He is on our side. He is our heavenly Father. He cares for us. He delights in us. Our greatest joy is to please Him and to have His blessing upon us. This is the joy of all joys, the joy that the world knows nothing about, and the joy that enables us to rise above the worst that the world can bring to us, or do to us.

Concl: Where are you this morning? Are you "without Christ," or are you "in Christ." You say, "But how do you get "in Christ"? God, the Holy Spirit puts you there. That is how you get eternal life. And when He puts you there, the evidence that you are there is that you will then believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. What you need to be concerned about is whether or not you are trusting in Christ, trusting Him for the forgiveness of your sins, trusting that His sacrifice on the Cross was sufficient for your salvation. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." It makes no difference how great your sins have been, nor how many, the Lord calls you to come to Him, and to find in Him that grace by which you can be cleansed and made new.

But I am speaking primarily today to those who are "in Christ." Through the Word of God I command you to "remember," and never to forget, what you used to be, what you are now, and how the change was made in your life. In other words, never get over the blessed fact that you are saved! The more you "remember," the greater will be your joy, and the more you will find yourself going to the Lord just to thank Him that a God like He is would send a Saviour like Christ is to die for a sinner like you are, and that you were awakened to your need like a Comforter like the Holy Spirit is.

Thy grace alone, O God, To me can pardon speak;
 Thy pow'r alone, O Son of God,
 Can this sore bondage break.
 No other work, save thine, No other blood will do;
 No strength, save that which is divine,
 Can bear me safely through.

I bless the Christ of God; I rest on love divine;
 And with unfalt'ring lip and heart,
 I call this Saviour mine.
 His cross dispels each doubt; I bury in his tomb
 Each thought of unbelief and fear,
 Each ling'ring shade of gloom.

I praise the God of grace; I trust his truth and might;
 He calls me his, I call him mine,
 My God, my joy, my light.
 'Tis he who saveth me, and freely pardon gives;
 I love because he loveth me, I live because he lives.

--Horatius Bonar,
 Trinity Hymnal, #403,
 Verses 3, 4, 5.

CHRIST, OUR PEACE
Ephesians 2:14-18

Intro: I sought to show you last week, from Ephesians 2:11-13, that one of the greatest problems to face the first century Church, was the problem between the Jew and the Gentile. The fact was that the Jews hated the Gentiles, and the Gentiles hated the Jews. The Jews falsely felt that they had exclusive rights to God, and they based this primarily upon the truth that God had given the Law to them, the Jews. They believed that the Temple was theirs, the sacrifices were theirs, the Law was theirs. Therefore, it was the Law that had become a bone of contention between them. God had not dealt with any Gentile nation like He had dealt with the Jews.

But the Jews had failed to realize two things about the Law:

- 1) That the Law with its teachings was only a temporary arrangement. It was to serve as a restraining influence upon the people of God until the Messiah would come. Cf. Gal. 3:19a:

Wherefore then serveth the Law?

It was added because of transgressions,
till the seed should come

to whom the promise was made . . .

The clear indication from this verse is that, when "the seed," the Lord Jesus Christ, "to whom the promise was made," would come, then the Jews would no longer be under the Law. The Law would have served its purpose.

But there was a second thing that the Jews were overlooking:

- 2) The Law was given to convict of sin. We see this in Rom. 3:19:

Now we know that what things soever the law saith,
it saith to them who are under the law:
that every mouth may be stopped,
and all the world become guilty before God.

But there was another thing that the Jews had not realized. It was this: It had never been the purpose of God to exclude the Gentiles from salvation. We have abundant evidence of that all through the Old Testament. I mentioned last week what the Lord said to Abraham at the time the Lord called him. I refer to Gen. 12:3: ". . . and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Paul said in Gal. 3:8 that, when the Lord said this to Abraham, He was preaching the Gospel to him. Listen to Gal. 3:8:

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen (the Gentiles) through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

The Lord meant, blessed with salvation! So it was never God's will to exclude the Gentiles from salvation. In fact,

the Jews in the Old Testament were to be missionaries to the Gentiles. Jonah is one example of a very reluctant missionary.

Paul wrote Galatians to deal specifically with this problem. But he referred to it also in Romans. He did not write Ephesians for that purpose. In Ephesians we have the revelation of God concerning the Church, the Body of Christ. And as Paul wrote of the Church, He had to show not only that saved Jews and saved Gentiles were in the Church, but that they were in the Church on an equal basis. Neither one had a position above the other. And that was a hard pill for the Jews in the early Christian Church to swallow.

The solution to the problem centered upon Christ, and in particular, upon His work on the Cross. Once Jews and Gentiles really understand the work of Christ on the Cross, all racial prejudice in the Church, in any form, ceases. Remember Paul's words in Gal. 3:28,

There is neither Jew nor Greek (Gentile),
there is neither bond nor free,
there is neither male nor female:
FOR YE ARE ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS.

Now let me read our text emphasizing the fact that Paul was speaking here about Jews and Gentiles. (Read Eph. 2:14-18.)

I hope that all of us can see clearly what the issue was that concerned the Apostle Paul in our text, and actually from verse 11 down through the 22nd verse.

I believe we have three ways in these five verses in which we see Christ as our Peace:

- 1) First, PEACE AND THE WORK OF CHRIST (Eph. 2:14-16).
- 2) Second, PEACE AND THE PREACHING OF CHRIST (Eph. 2:17).
- 3) Third, PEACE AND THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT (Eph. 2:18). You may think that this last point does not speak of Christ, but you will see that it does when we get to that point.

I. PEACE AND THE WORK OF CHRIST (Eph. 2:14-16).

Peace between the Jew and the Gentile in the Body of Christ, is traceable to Christ, and only to Christ. He has made us one. He has "broken down the middle wall of partition between us." He has "abolished in his flesh" that which caused "the enmity between us," which was the Law of Moses. He has "reconciled us unto God in one body by the cross."

When we speak of peace through the work of Christ, that work to which we refer is His work on the Cross, His death, His sacrifice for our sins.

Paul indicated that by his reference to "the blood of Christ" at the end of verse 13. In verse 15 he spoke of the enmity of the Jew for the Gentile, and the enmity of the Gentile for the Jew as having been "abolished in his flesh," another reference to His death. Some feel that Paul's reference to the "one body" in verse 16 is also an allusion to the Cross, and it may be! But I am more inclined to think that Paul was speaking there of the Church. However, the point that I am making is clear whatever that mention of the "body" might mean.

"Christ is our peace" because of His work on the Cross. And He is our peace, according to Paul in verses 14-16, in a twofold sense:

1) He is our peace with each other: Jews with Gentiles, Gentiles with Jews, Jews with Jews, and we could even say, Gentiles with Gentiles, although that is not the point that Paul was making here. Cf. verses 14, 15.

But also:

2) Christ is our peace with God. Cf. verse 16.

Logically and in time, the second belongs before the first, but Paul mentioned our peace with each other before our peace with God to emphasize the fact that we have no justification for trouble in the body of Christ because Christ is our Peace, and He is our Peace because by His death on the Cross He has established peace for all believers, whether Jew or Gentile, with God Himself. If we have peace with God, this is the basis for our peace with each other. And we have both in Christ!

A. Peace for the Jew and Gentile with each other (Eph. 2:14, 15).

When Christ died on the Cross, we all should remember that the veil in the Temple was torn from top to bottom. This was the work of God signifying that the way into the Holy of Holies was opened up for all of the people of God. That which was limited to the high priest, and only once a year to him, was now open for all. The priesthood of Aaron was no longer in effect. Christ was the Great High Priest, and all believers became priests with the right of approaching God for themselves, and to intercede for others.

Now in the Temple, there was a "middle wall of partition." It was probably a curtain like a veil, separating the Court of the Jews from the Court of the Gentiles. The Court of the Gentiles was the place where Gentile proselytes were restricted. They could not take their place with the Jews.

Paul said here that Christ has "made both" (Jew and Gentile) "one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us" (Jews and Gentiles).

How did He do that?

Not by the same kind of spectacular act was with the veil, but nevertheless He did it by His death, and what His death meant as far as the old Mosaic Law was concerned.

He "abolished" the basis of "the enmity" which was "the law of commandments (contained) in ordinances." The word for "ordinances" in the original text is the word from which we get our English word, dogmas, meaning doctrines, or teaching.

To abolish by definition is to cause to cease, to do away with, to annul. It means that the Law was by the death of Christ, nullified, cancelled, voided. The Law was no longer in effect!

This does not mean that the moral standards of the Law were changed, or no longer standards of right and wrong. But it does mean that the priesthood had come to an end, the Temple was no longer the only place where people could expect the presence of the Lord. It means that the sacrifices were no longer required. It means that the special days of the Jews were no longer binding upon them. And this included the rules regarding the Sabbath. We are not taught in the Book of Acts, nor in Epistles, to keep the Sabbath Day (which was Saturday). Nor are we ever told that Sunday has become the Sabbath. We are no longer under that old system; we are "under grace" with all that Christ accomplished for us by His death on the Cross. Paul wrote to the Romans, ". . . for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14). And he wrote this to the Galatian churches:

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster
to bring us unto Christ,
that we might be justified by faith.
But after that faith is come,
we are no longer under a schoolmaster
(Gal. 3:24, 25).

It is amazing to me that so many who claim to believe the doctrines of grace still want to hang on to the Law as a rule of life, and even retain the Sabbath, when the Scriptures are so clear to the contrary. If you are inclined this way, I trust that you will seriously consider the teaching of the Apostles.

But we have another point to consider in connection with the Cross, and I will only mention it because I want to go on to the last two verses of our text. But even though I am hurrying over it, it is a matter of the greatest possible importance. It is this:

B. Peace for the Jew and Gentile with God (Eph. 2:16).

Do you know why people have so much trouble with hatred for each other, why there is so much racial hatred in the world, why there is so much hatred in our homes? It is because we are at enmity with God! And the problems that people have with each other will never be settled until they find their peace with God.

Jesus Christ has reconciled His people to God. How did He do it? He did it because His death satisfied every requirement of the Law for acceptance with God. The Law demands the death of every sinner. Jesus Christ died as the Cursed One in our place. He died that we might be forgiven, and His death was effective for all who ever have believed in Christ, and for all who ever will believe in Christ. We are reconciled unto God "by the Cross," because He has slain the enmity. And what was the enmity? See verse 15 again. The answer is there.

If you want to know about reconciliation, read Romans 5:1-11 and 2 Cor. 5:14-21. Paul said in Rom. 5:1,
Therefore being justified by faith,
we have peace with God
through our Lord Jesus Christ.
And then he added in verses 10, 11 of that same chapter:

For if, when we were enemies,
we were reconciled by the death of his Son,
much more, being reconciled,
we shall be saved by his life.

What does it mean to be reconciled?

I like the definition that says it means that those who were enemies have become friends. And our friendship with God is because of, and only, through Christ.

But let me go on to the last two verses.

This message of peace, peace between the Jew and the Gentile, and peace for the Jew and the Gentile, with God, is so important that we see that it is not only emphasized by the

work of Christ on the Cross, but also by the preaching of Christ, and by the work of the Holy Spirit. You have the first of these in verse 17; the second, in verse 18.

II. PEACE AND THE PREACHING OF CHRIST (Eph. 2:17).

Christ not only preached in Person, but He continued to preach through the Apostles, and He continues to preach down to the present hour through those who are faithfully proclaiming the Gospel of the grace of God. And the wonderful thing is that God is seeing to it that Jews hear this message, and that Gentiles hear this message. The message must be carried to everyone whom the Father has chosen. Christ's death is valuable enough to save everybody who has ever lived, but His purpose in dying was to save those whom the Father had chosen, and given to Him. This is what we call, Definite Atonement, or Particular Redemption.

The message will continue to go forth to accomplish God's purpose in sending His Son until all of the elect of God have been saved. And it is the Lord Jesus Christ Who is behind all true evangelism, all true missionary work. I say what has often been said: "There can be no peace without the Prince of Peace, our Lord Jesus Christ."

My last point:

III. PEACE AND THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT (Eph. 2:18).

This verse has often been referred to as giving the pattern for prayer. And it is. But that is not its primary purpose. It was given here to show the pattern of salvation.

Who is instrumental in the salvation of every person who comes to Christ? THE HOLY SPIRIT IS. And how does the Holy Spirit work for our salvation. He draws us to Christ! He knows that there is only One Who can save us, and bring us to God: that One is Christ!

What does the Holy Spirit use? He uses the Word of God. We are born again by the Spirit and by the Word of God. How do we hear the Word? Through the preaching of Christ that is being directed in every age by Christ Himself.

Concl: Can you say that you have this peace of God, this peace with God, this peace which is Christ? If your trust for salvation is not in Christ, then you do not have salvation, nor do you have peace. Peace with God, and peace with the people of God, comes only through Christ. There is no other way. May the Spirit of God save you today.

For those of us who are saved, what food there is here for thought, and prayer, and praise, and the expression of our love for God through obedience to the His Word. As you thank God for your food, and for your health, and for your family, and for your friends, DO NOT FORGET TO THANK GOD FOR ALL THAT HE HAS DONE FOR YOU THROUGH CHRIST AND HIS DEATH ON THE CROSS. Without Him we would not have peace with God, nor would we have this wonderful fellowship of love which we enjoy each time we get together as the people of God.

When the angels appeared to the shepherds so long ago, announcing the birth of Christ, they sang,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace,
good will toward men (Luke 2:14).

"Good will toward men" could also be translated, of His good pleasure, meaning, peace on earth among men with whom He is pleased. It is so translated in the NASB. Peace comes only to those who are pleasing to God, and we can only be pleasing to God when we are in Christ, trusting Him for that work of salvation which prepares us to stand in His presence, and which gives us such a wonderful love for each other.

THE TEMPLE OF GOD
Ephesians 2:19-22

Intro: When we come to the last four verses of Ephesians 2, it is clear that this is the point that Paul was aiming at from the beginning of the Epistle. He addressed himself to those who were saved--showing some of the blessings that they have because of salvation, telling how he had been praying for them, reminding them of what they were before, how they became what they were now, and finally showing how they as Gentiles, who originally were strangers to God and His grace, had, by the mercy of God, been saved by the same salvation and with all of the same privileges as their fellow-believers among the Jews! The old enmity between the Jew and the Gentile had been turned into the greatest possible fellowship by the Lord Jesus Christ who had become their peace, and had made them ONE in Himself. See verses 16-18 again. (Read.)

If the Gentile believers in Ephesus were not praising God in the words of Ephesians 1:3 at this point, there was something drastically wrong in their relationship with the Lord!

But Paul had not finished with all that he had to say about the Jew and the Gentile. He had come to the climax in verse 19. That is why we have the words, "Now therefore . . ." He was still writing to the Gentiles, but what he said also included Jewish believers. They are referred to in the expression, "the saints," which you will see in verse 19. This does not mean that the believing Gentiles were not "saints," but it was Paul's way of using a term that would include all believers, whether Jewish or Gentile.

So let me say just a word about:

I. THE NEW POSITIONS OF SAVED GENTILES (Eph. 2:19).

Actually Paul used three figures of speech in our text for today to describe the new positions of the Gentiles:

- 1) They were now citizens of the Kingdom of God.
- 2) They were now members of God's family.
- 3) They were stones in God's building.

We have 1) and 2) in verse 19; 3) is in verses 20-22.

But let us take all of them together first, and then we will concentrate, as Paul did on the third: God's building.

A. Citizens of God's Kingdom (Eph. 2:19a).

This is seen in these words:

Now therefore ye are no more
strangers and foreigners,
but fellowcitizens with the saints . . .

This means that no longer were they not citizens of the Kingdom of God and, consequently, without any of the rights and privileges, as well as the responsibilities of citizens, but they were full-fledged citizens, having the same rights and privileges and responsibilities as any saved Jew would have. There are no second-class citizens of heaven. What one has, every citizen has.

What are some of those rights? The right to pray. The right to the promises of God. The right to heaven itself. It includes everything that is dear to us as Christians. Your Bill of Rights as a Christian is the Word of God. And it is the responsibility of Gentile Christians, as it is of Jewish Christians, to live on earth as a citizen of heaven.

B. Members of God's family (Eph. 2:19b).

And here I am referring to the words, "And of the household of God." It you and I are members of "the household of God, we are members of God's family.

And remember, as we learned in Ephesians 1:5, we are not adopted sons; we have been born into God's family. We are in God's family with the same relationship to the heavenly Father that a Jewish Christian has. We can call God our Father--and He is! And remember that God has no favorites in His family. He may be more pleased with some than He is with others, but He does not love one more than another. We are equally brothers and sisters of God because of our relationship with Christ. And we all ought to be saying over and over again what the Apostle John said in 1 John 3:1,2, "Behold, what manner of love . . ."

Then we are :

C. Stones in God's building (Eph. 2:20-22).

Peter also referred to this when he wrote in 1 Pet. 2:5a, "Ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house . . ."

Jews and Gentiles who have trusted in Christ as their

Saviour are stones in God's building. But what is this building? What does it mean that God has a building, and that we are His building—as Peter said, "A spiritual house"?

This brings me to my second point. Paul just mentioned that we are citizens of God's Kingdom, but he did not spend any more time on it. He also mentioned that we are members of God's family, but he did not do any more than mention it either. But he obviously wanted to spend some time on the truth that we are stones in God's building. So let us note what he had to say about this in verses 20-22.

Let me use my main subject for this heading:

II. THE TEMPLE OF GOD (Eph. 2:20-22).

Before we notice what the building is, and what its purpose is, let us notice what Paul said about the building itself.

First, let us notice:

A. The foundation of God's building (v. 20a).

Paul, still speaking of both Jewish and Gentile believers, says that they, as God's building, "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets."

Some feel, including Calvin, that the prophets mentioned here are OT prophets. But that does not seem likely, for several reasons:

- 1) Paul mentioned the apostles first. It seems that, if he had meant OT prophets, he would have mentioned them first, since they came before the apostles.
- 2) In the Greek the Apostle wrote, as we have it translated here, "the apostles and prophets." If he had wanted to set the prophets apart from the apostles, he would have written, the apostles and the prophets, repeating the article, "the." But he did not write it that way. And so we must take from that that "the apostles and prophets" were members of the same team—workers together.
- 3) Two other times in this Epistle Paul mentioned "the apostles and prophets," and in the same order. See 3:5; 4:11. Since it is clear that in those latter passages, Paul was referring to NT prophets, it is most likely that he was doing the same in our text for today.

Prophets were prominent in the book of Acts. We read in Acts 11:27,

And in these days came prophets
from Jerusalem unto Antioch.

Acts 15:32 gives us this information:

And Judas and Silas,
being prophets also themselves,
exhorted the brethren with many words,
and confirmed them.

In 1 Corinthians 14 we see how Paul praised those who prophesied rather than those who spoke in tongues.

The prophets did not write like the apostles did, giving us our NT. Sometimes they did speak by revelation. But it seems that it was their main responsibility to teach and to exhort the people of God that which was being revealed to the apostles.

So, when Paul said that God's building was built upon "the foundation of the apostles and prophets," he was saying that it was the teaching, the doctrines, of the apostles and prophets, which was the foundation of God's building. No other teaching was permitted then, and no other teaching can be accepted now. The guiding rule for the people of God in that day was this: If "the apostles and prophets" did not teach it, it is not to be taught. But the people of God were to accept all that "the apostles and prophets" did teach!

When the people of God move away from the teaching of "the apostles and prophets," they are getting off of their foundation, and the ministry of God's people, is in trouble.

In these days when so many things are being taught as doctrine for the Church, let us make sure that we know what "the apostles and prophets" taught, and accept only what they taught. If the Church had been diligent in doing this, she would be in a much stronger condition today.

Notice this second point about God's building:

B. "The chief cornerstone" (v. 20b).

The word "chief" here identifies the stone which, as one writer has expressed it, was placed at the extreme corner, so as to bind the other stones of the building together--the most important stone in the structure, the one on which its stability depended (Salmond, EGT, III,

p. 300).

Paul said that "Jesus Christ" is "himself the chief cornerstone."

At the very heart of all of the teaching of "the apostles and prophets" was what they had to say about Jesus Christ—Who He is, what He did, why He did it, where He is now, and what we can expect Him to do in the future. They preached and taught Jesus Christ. It is Jesus Christ Who holds God's building together. It is Jesus Christ Who gives the building its stability. The Church would have disappeared long ago if it had not been for Jesus Christ.

Again to quote from Peter, he said of our Lord,
 To whom coming, as unto a living stone,
 disallowed indeed of men,
 but chosen of God, and precious . . .
 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture,
 Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone,
 elect, precious:
 and he that believeth on him
 shall not be confounded (1 Pet. 2:4, 6).

Jesus Christ is the Church's Saviour. Jesus Christ is the Church's Lord. The Church has no other message but of the Son of God Who became man, suffered and died on the Cross, was raised and ascended back to the Father, and is coming again. Let the Church cease to preach Christ, and she ceases to be a mighty force for spiritual good in the world.

But notice a third point about the building:

C. The stones in the building (vv. 21a, 22a).

We are talking now about Jewish believers and Gentile believers in that day, and in our own day, and in every day from then until the present. We are "fitly framed together." We are "builded together."

We are not building the Church; God is, Christ is, the Holy Spirit is. The Lord told His disciples while He was here on earth, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). And we are put into God's building so that we fit together perfectly. Sometimes we may feel that we do not fit with each other, but we do. The Lord gives us the place that He wants us to have.

Notice, too, that this is a growing temple. It grows as more stones are added, but each stone is growing

also. This is a most unusual building, made up of the people of God. Peter called us, "lively stones," or living stones.

And if it is a growing building, it will also be "an holy temple in the Lord." It is to be a temple that is cleansed from sin, a place where sin is avoided and abhorred.

But now we come to a fourth thing that Paul taught about this building:

D. The Builder (vv. 21b, 22b).

I have already said that God is building, Jesus Christ is building, and the Holy Spirit is building. Let me confirm that with our text.

Note Who is mentioned at the end of verse 21, and Who is mentioned at the end of verse 22. In the first instance it is "the Lord"; in the second it is "the Spirit." And we have seen in the first two chapters that God is active in all that has to do with our salvation.

So even when we talk about this phase of salvation, we are talking, not about what we do, but what is being done by the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! And, therefore, this means that it is A MOST IMPORTANT WORK! If the Godhead is involved in anything, it goes without saying that that work is not only important, but absolutely indispensable.

My last point:

E. The purpose of the building (v. 22).

God is the Builder. Jesus Christ is the Chief Cornerstone. The apostles and prophets have given us the foundation. And we are the stones. Why is there such a building? What is its purpose?

The answer is in v. 20. (Read.) The fellowship of believers in what we were told at the end of chapter 1, is the body of Christ, is the place where people are going to find God here on earth. In the words of the Apostle Paul, it is built to be "an habitation of God through the Spirit." "Habitation" in the Greek suggests a place that is fit for God to dwell in permanently!

Think of it! Can that possibly be true---that God is

here among us, that we can expect His presence with us, and others can expect to find God if they come among us? And not just among us, but among every group of true believers throughout the world. We are where God dwells! AND YET YOU OFTEN HEAR PEOPLE SAY THAT THEY CAN GET ALONG WITHOUT THE BUILDING, THE CHURCH! Can they? Can you?

Concl: God dwelt in OT times in the Tabernacle. Then He dwelt in the Tabernacle. Now He dwells among His people, in His building, where the doctrine of the apostles and prophets can be heard, and where Jesus Christ is exalted as Saviour and Lord, and where the people of God find themselves "fitly framed together" in the most wonderful fellowship and ministry that man will ever find this side of heaven.

Are you a part of it? Has God made you one of these living stones? Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour?

If you are a part of this building of God, then surely your heart must be full and overflowing after all that we have seen this day. We have our blueprint here for blessing, do we not? May God always keep us true to the teaching of the apostles and prophets, faithful to Jesus Christ, and trusting our great and wonderful God to enable us to grow and to use us in seeing His Church grow as He has ordained that it should.

If you do not know the Lord, I trust that the Lord has been speaking to you today as you have heard the Word of God. If He has, you will know it. And I plead with you to listen to Him, to forsake your sin, and turn to Christ. He will save you and make you a citizen of His kingdom, a member of His family, and a stone in the building in which He Himself dwells. God is in heaven today, but He is also here, dwelling among His people, accomplishing His will, and always working for the glory of His Name. How wonderful to know Him, to belong to Him, and to know the reality of His presence in our lives!