

Ephesians 2

In our outline of Ephesians, we come to the fourth main heading which includes all of chapter 2:

IV. The extension of salvation to the Gentiles (Eph. 2:1-22).

This chapter is divided into four parts. In it the Apostle Paul began by tracing their spiritual history from the past, in verses 1-6. Then to the future, in verses 7-10. He returned to the past in verses 11 and 12. And the chapter ends with their present, in verses 13-22.

So we begin with:

- A. "In time past" (22:1-6).
 - 1. For them, the Gentiles (2:1-3).
 - 2. For God (2:4-6).

There is a great change in the Apostle's letter as we move from chapter 1 to chapter 2. In the first fourteen verses Paul had been dealing with the blessing of all the people of God "in heavenly places," or, better, *in the heavenlies*. He had touched upon some of the major blessings that every believer now has in Christ, the Savior. Then he followed that great section by telling the Ephesian believers how he was praying for them concerning the blessings that they now had in Christ. It is clear from what he said in the first part of chapter 1 that salvation is a sovereign work of God in which He is carrying out His will. His prayer is certainly a part of that will, not something that is independent of it. It teaches us how important it is for us to pray for each other in connection with the will of God.

But now in chapter two we see how unworthy every believer was of salvation, when we see especially in verses 1-3 (which in the KJV is another one, long sentence), how totally undeserving and unworthy we all were of salvation, and, at the same time, how hopeless we were. And he came back to this again in verses 11 and 12. But we come to a great contrast in verse 4 where Paul mentioned God Who is "rich in mercy for His great love wherewith He loved us." In 7 Paul spoke of "the exceeding riches" of God's grace, meaning that it is inexhaustible, and that God's grace is not limited by the number of sinners to be saved, nor is it limited by the extent to which any person has fallen into sin. Paul emphasized this when in 1 Timothy 1:14 and 15, he said,
14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.
15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

There would have been no hope for any of us apart from the grace of God. Notice that Paul had mentioned "grace" in verse 6 of chapter 1 also. In chapter 2 notice Paul's use of "grace" in verses 5, 7, and 8. (Read.) As Jerry Bridges has reminded is many times, "grace" is both negative and positive: negative, because God does not give us what we deserve, which is total condemnation; positive, because He does give us what we never could deserve. We might be inclined to think that the Apostle Paul was an exception. But let him speak for himself, as he did in 1 Corinthians 15:10:

- 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

We all are saved by grace. We grow in grace. And we live by the grace of God.

But let us begin our study of Ephesians 2.

2:1 Verse 1 gives us our condition by nature. The words "hath he quickened" are not in the original, but were added by the translators to give us a complete statement. They probably, and rightly so, were anticipating what Paul said in verse 5 about the quickening of believers.

But it could be translated, as it is in the NASB, “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins.” A marginal reading suggests, “And you being dead . . .” By nature and by birth we were “dead in trespasses and sins.” The word “being” in the Greek is a present, active participle, meaning that this continued to be in their present condition as Paul went on to explain. Before they were saved this was always and only their condition. Many explanations have been given for Paul’s use of these two words, but one thing is certain: they must include, as Eadie has said, “sin of every species, form, and manifestation, of intent as well as act, of resolve as well as execution, of inner meditation as well as outer result” (p. 119). And the fact that Paul used both words in the plural means that our guilt included many such offences.

A transgression is a violation of something that is known to be sin. It comes down to the very fact that God has written into every person’s heart the realization that there is a God, and that He has written on our consciences basic facts about pleasing Him or displeasing Him. The Law of God is written in men’s hearts. One thing that the epistles of the New Testament do for us is to spell out in great deal the names of sins. Millions of people are sinning against God just by just ignoring Him. And it goes from that to outright and intentional violations of what men do in opposition to God’s will. A transgression is such a violation in any way of God’s will. Man by nature is a rebel against God. A sin basically is missing the mark. Romans 3:23 tells us that “all have sinned, and some short of the glory of God.” Man was created to glorify God. Sin causes us to miss that mark. Furthermore, to be “dead in trespasses and sins” is to be lifeless as far as God, and the things of God, are concerned. “Dead” means totally unable to help ourselves, separated from God, hopeless, locked in, dominated by sin, unable to escape, and yet it often is expressed in people’s lives that they are content with life that way. Only by the convicting and regenerating power of the Spirit can the hearts of people be changed.

December 7, 2010

2:2 Here Paul continued to speak of their past condition - “in time past.” “Walked” suggests that their sins were not just occasional, but they were their way of life, a life with which they were satisfied and which they were increasingly involved. It did not occur to us that we were headed in the wrong direction. We can see this now as we look back upon our lives before we were saved. Everybody has a God-given desire to be happy, but as long as we are walking, living, as we are by our sinful nature, we look for happiness in the wrong places and in the wrong things with the wrong people. Paul spoke of this again in verses 17 through 19 of chapter 4.

“The course of this world” is literally, *the age of this world*. It is, as we sometimes say, speaking of the world, *the spirit of the age*. It is “the world as fallen away from God” (p. 122) – a Godless, wicked, fallen world. Paul said that they lived like they would be expected to live, in the ways of the world, not to please God, but to live according to the ruling principle of the world, according to Charles Hodge. And this was “according to the prince of the power of the air.” Here Paul was speaking of the Devil. This statement seems to indicate that, although, Satan is called in 2 Corinthians 4:4, “the god of this world,” he does not belong to this world. He and his forces have no physical bodies like we do. He is a usurper. He appeared to Eve as a serpent who was a beautiful creature at that time. When Paul in Ephesians 6 spoke of our warfare, he said in Ephesians 6:12, that it was not against “flesh and blood, but against principalities, and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places, or as we have learned, “in the heavenlies.” One thing that makes him so dangerous to us is that we cannot see him. He rules over heavenly, spiritual, unseen forces, who rebelled against God when Lucifer did. And by tempting Eve to sin against God, who, in turn, persuaded her husband to do what God had told them not to do, the human race was brought into bondage to the Devil. And Paul had prayed in chapter 1, verse 19, that the believers in Ephesus, and the believers of all time, would know that it was only by “the exceeding greatness of His power,” God’s power, can anyone be set free. It is the same power by which the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead.

The Devil is clearly an intruder. And he has filled the world with His evil forces to lead as many others as he can into the same, eternal judgment which he faces. And he continuously and vigorously pursues his objective.

And then as Paul continued in Ephesians 2:2 he said that this spirit, this fallen angelic being, is the same “spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” All people are by nature the children of disobedience, which in the Greek text is *sons of disobedience*, sons of Adam’s disobedience, and whose lives until and unless God intervenes, live lives that are characterized by disobedience to God. So to this very day in which we live, this verse describes the nature of the all people who are without Christ. And people are not only dead, but as Paul went on to explain in 2 Corinthians 4:4, Satan has “blinded the minds of hem which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God (Deity), should shine unto them.” That is why it is so important for us, when seeking to win people to Christ, to give them the Gospel. We cannot argue people into the kingdom of God. The transformation of the human heart can only come about through the work of the Holy Spirit, and the Gospel is what the Holy Spirit to bring us to God. This is what the Apostle Paul went on to say in 2 Corinthians 4:5-7,

5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

2:3 Notice that in this verse Paul changed his “ye” of verse 2 into “we.” It is good for us in speaking about salvation to people who are not saved, that we previously had the same problem that they have, and that we have been delivered, not because any goodness that God saw in us, but solely because of the grace of God. All people born since Adam sinned have had the same problem. And the proof of it is to be seen in our “conversation.” This is the word that we have considered before which in English has been changed from our talk to our walk. It speaks of the way we live, our conduct. The words “in time past” suggest that a great change had taken place in Paul’s life. “The lusts of the flesh” is one of the three expressions that the Apostle John used to describe the world in 1 John 2:15-17. The Apostle Paul and every other person who has become a child of God, used to live to seek to fulfill “the lusts of the flesh and of the mind.” “Flesh” can mean our old nature as well as our bodies. “Mind” speaks of how corrupted our thinking had become because of our sinful nature. People in their unregenerate state don’t think correctly about themselves, or how they should live, nor do they think correctly, if at all, about God. Here Paul was describing total depravity. It is not that every person is as bad as he can be, but that sin has affected every part of us, inwardly and outwardly. And all of this is not what we have *become*; it is what we *are* by nature. Consequently all people are “children of wrath,” which is related to *the sons of disobedience*. But according to Alford, suggests an even closer relationship. And “wrath” speaks not only of the judgment sinners are under, but the indignation of God which leads to judgment if some way is not found to satisfy the wrath of God. And we know that that is what the Lord Jesus Christ did when He died upon the Cross. He has delivered us from “the wrath to come” This is what the Apostle Paul said in his first letter to the church at Thessalonica in 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 when he had just written about how widespread the testimony of the church at Thessalonica had become:

9 For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

So much at this point for the bad news. But if the Lord impresses the truth of these first three verses of Ephesians 2 on our hearts, it is actually good news because it opens our hearts to the remedy. There is the greatest possible contrast between verses 1, 2, and 3, at the verses which follow, beginning with the two words, “But

God . . .” The only hope that any person has is in God and what God has done to meet our needs. Verses 1-3 describe for us what theologians have rightly called, original sin. It is not something that happens to us the first time that we sin, but is our condition at our conception, and it becomes immediately evident after we are born. That precious baby that you hold in your arms will break your heart unless God sees fit to intervene with him or her to turn that little sinner into a saint. And that is what we need to pray for. How thankful we all should be for those two words, “But God . . .”

2:4 Here, as I have tried to bring out in the outline I have given you is what is also true “in time past” *for God!* Our hope is not in something that needs to happen, but in something that has happened! And it is not something that other people have done for us, nor in what we can do for ourselves. But it is in *what God has done for us!* And what God has done is not because we deserve it. We deserve nothing but the outpouring of the wrath of God. But our hope is in the very nature of God. He is “rich in mercy.” He was moved to help us because of “His great love wherewith He loved us.” And Paul reminds us again in verse 5 that it is “by grace ye are saved.” And then in verse 7 we jump into the future, “That in the ages to come He come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”

Man in his unregenerate state had neither the wisdom nor the desire to ask God to do something to help, and so it was God Who took the initiative in saving us. And when did He do this? Was it after we had constantly experienced the disappointment and devastating effect of sin? No! It was “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4), before creation itself. This is why Jeremiah could write even to ancient Israel in words we find in Jeremiah 31:3:

3 The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

This why so many have said that the greatest word in John 3:16, is the little word “so.” And so the Apostle Paul said that God in the past, not in time, but in eternity, had set His love upon those whom He had chosen, that they would be saved.

This is truth that we can rejoice in, and rest in, and believe, not because we can explain it how it could possibly be, but because it stands written here in our Bibles. The thought here in verse 4 is continued in verse 5.

December 13, 2010

2:5 It is hard for us to conceive of God loving us, and loving us while we were in our sins, but in addition to this amazing truth is the further teaching God has quickened us together with Christ. What is the meaning of the word “quickened”? It is a compound word, made up of three Greek words, and found only here and in Colossians 2:13. It means “to make one alive together with another” (Thayer, p. 594). Paul said in Galatians 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ.” And here we learn that we were made alive, raised from the dead, when Christ as raised. There is no free will for us in all of this. It was done, finished, for all who ever would believe in Christ, when Christ died on the Cross, and then when He was raised from the dead. In fact, God determined this in eternity past. In Revelation 13:8 our Lord is called “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” So our salvation was secured not only before we were born, but before there was any creation at all! It is inevitable that all of the elect will be saved. It sound ridiculous to talk about “free will,” doesn’t it? We exercise our will when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but it is only because God works in us “to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). That not only applies to our lives after we are saved, but it applies to our salvation.

Is it any wonder that, after making the amazing statement here in Ephesians 2, verse 4 and 5, Paul added, “for by grace are ye saved”? There is no other explanation for such revealed truth. So our mission in the world is to

bring to people the good news of the Gospel, not to try to argue them into salvation. It is “the Gospel” which “is the power of God unto salvation.” Cf. Rom. 1:16. Actually this statement, “for by grace are ye saved” is not in the present tense, but in the perfect tense, and should be translated, “ye have been saved.” And the perfect tense expresses something that took place in the past, but continues into the present. Let me add that is a perfect passive participle, indicating, not that we saved ourselves, but that someone else saved us, pointing to the work of all Three Members of the Godhead.

But Paul did not stop just with getting us saved. Look at what he added in verse 6.

2:6 This is just as amazing as what we have already read. Not only were we chosen for salvation before the foundation of the world, as we learned in chapter 1, verse 4. But we were crucified with Christ, buried with Christ, and raised up with Christ, but we have been made to sit with Him in the heavenlies with Christ. And where is He seated? At the Father’s right hand, the place of honor and full acceptance. And what is our Lord doing there? That is where He “ever lives to make intercession for us.” See Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:34.

Physically we are still here on earth. Some day the Lord is going to come to take the whole Church to heaven. But in the sight of God *we are already there* in the Person of our Savior. All that we have been learning in these verses have to do with our union, a living union, with our Savior. God always sees us in Him. Spiritually we are in heaven, and bodily we will be there forever.

But the Apostle Paul is not even finished yet.

2:7 What the Apostle Paul has been writing has had to do with what God has done in Christ which has been done in the past, leading up into the present. Now he takes us into the future.

“In the ages to come” speaks of eternity. You would think from what we have been reading that the whole story has been told. But that is not the case. Unfortunately for us, at least for now, the Lord has not revealed to us what He meant when He said that when we get to heaven, and all through eternity He is going to “show us the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. But look, even then it all will be channeled to us” through Christ Jesus.” Geoffrey Wilson, a British pastor, commented “that only eternity will suffice for the complete display of the surpassing riches of God’s grace in that kindness which He has shown us ‘in Christ Jesus’” (p. 49). The word “show” is in the middle voice, and it means *to show in Himself*. Regardless of how well we have learned of Him in this life, we will learn more and more about our blessed Savior throughout eternity. Only eternity will give us adequate “time” to learn about Him and to know and love Him!

And then Paul went back in verse 8 to elaborate on what he had just mentioned in verse 5, “by grace ye are saved.”

2:8 Quoting Geoffrey Wilson again, he said that “Paul exultantly attributes the Ephesians’ salvation to the solitary achievement of the grace of God” (p. 49). All about salvation is a gift. Even the Lord Jesus is God’s gift to us. Even our faith is a gift from God. Our pardon and the forgiveness of every sin that we have ever committed, is a gift from God. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.. No part of it has come from us except for the need. And God’s grace also is exercised upon us by not giving us what we truly deserve – eternal judgment.

2:9 “Not of works” - by which the Apostle Paul meant, not of our works. It is solely due to the work of Christ on the Cross. God designed salvation for His glory. Although everybody needs to be saved, it is

not a reward for works. It cannot be purchased. Long ago the prophet Isaiah told people to come “without money and without price. Pride is such a major part of our human nature that it is not unusual for us to think that there must have been something good in us, that caused God to save us. But that is never true, either before or after we are saved. Only the realization that salvation is all of grace, will keep us from boasting. As the Apostle Paul said, “But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal. 6:14). And then Paul added, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature” (v. 15). A Jew without Christ and a Gentile without Christ, stand on exactly the same ground. Both alike are hopeless apart from the grace of God.

2:10 Now, although we are not saved by our works, we are saved “unto good works.” “We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Man originated by divine creation. Because of sin man needs a new creation. That is what salvation is, a work of God. True children of God are not self-made, but God-made. And the strongest evidence that we have been saved are the good works that we do. This speaks of a complete transformation of a person’s life, and it is the strongest evidence that we have really been saved. The expression “that we should walk in them,” at the end of this verse means our walk is our work. And the details of our walk, a life that is pleasing to God, and which bears fruit to God, is given to us in the Word of God. A child of God has eternal life, and the evidence will be seen in a transformed life style. Before we finish Ephesians we are going to find a lot of instruction as to how we are to live. This is when God can be pleased with what we are and how we live. It is impossible for an unregenerate person to please God. We need life, and the works will follow. Our works include the way we think, the way we talk, the way we live. These include everything about us. We are never going to be perfect in this life, but we are going to be different, and different in God’s way. By our works we pursue holiness of life because our great objective in all that we are and do, is to please God. And the Bible tells us all about these works, this life. The Apostle James makes it very clear that without works we cannot rightly claim to know the Lord. As we all are learning in our Sunday morning studies, the first epistle of John was given to us that we might know that we have eternal life. And John mentioned our attitude toward sin, toward the people of God, toward the Word of God as to what we believe and how we are live. It talks to us about prayer. As Christians, true Christians, we walk by faith in God, and we are continually growing in all of the works that show that we are truly saved.

There is no more important truth anywhere in the Word of God than what we find here in the first two chapters of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians.

January 10, 2011

The Apostle Paul’s letter to the Ephesians was written almost thirty years following the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. But a most important change took place among the people of God at that time. The Lord spoke of it primarily after His resurrection and before His ascension.. It had to do with the ministry of the Gospel to the Gentile world. While there was some evidence that Gentiles could be saved in OT times, for example, in the salvation of Naaman the Syrian, yet from the days of Abraham on through the OT and throughout the ministry of our Lord in the Gospels, there is abundant evidence that it was the purpose of God for the Gospel to go “to the Jew first,” as we read, for example in Romans 1:16. So that verse does not mean, as some have explained it, that when missionaries go into any area, they should go “to the Jew first,” but it does mean that that is exactly what happened. We see that clearly in our Lord’s ministry in the four Gospels. Again there were exceptions. For example, some Roman centurions came under the influence of the Gospel.

But when the Lord gave what we call the Great Commission which is recorded for us in Matthew 28:19, and 20, we notice a new emphasis. Let me read it to you. I am going to begin reading with verse 16. Here is what

Matthew wrote:

- 16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.
17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.
18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.
19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:
20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matt. 28:16-20).

Although there is some question about the last part of the last chapter of the Gospel of Mark, whether Mark wrote it, or it was added later, yet in Mark 16:14 and 15 we read these words:

- 14 Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.
15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

But then, when we come to the first chapter of the book of Acts we read these familiar words in verse 8, spoken by the Lord immediately before His ascension. Most of you know these words very well:

- 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8).

When we go on into Acts 2 we find the same emphasis. I want to take the time today to read a large portion of that chapter to point out that what took place on that particular Day of Pentecost was to lead to the very work we see being done in the book of Acts itself. A very important thing took place that day which had everything to do with the spread of the Gospel to the Gentiles. (Read Acts 2:1-40, pointing out how Peter concluded in verses 38-40.)

What was it that actually happened in Jerusalem on that day in Acts 2? Well, the answer is given to us in our Lord's words in Acts 1, leading up to verse 8.

Now what special work of the Holy Spirit took place on the day that was immediately before them? The Lord said in Acts 1:5, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence." What is the baptism with the Holy Spirit? We are told in 1 Corinthians 12:13. This is what that verse tells us: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

What is this "one body"? Paul told us in Ephesians 1, the last two verses. It is the Church. The Church is the body of Christ. We who have trusted Jesus Christ as our Savior, have been joined, united to Christ, like the members of our bodies make up our bodies. In the epistle to the Colossians, which we all know parallels the epistle to the Ephesians, Paul said, speaking of Christ in Colossians 1:18,

- 18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Let me raise a very important question: Are the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the filling of the Spirit the same work? All believers in Christ since the Day of Pentecost have been baptized by the Spirit. It is a once-for-all work for every child of God. It is by the baptism of the Spirit that we are made a part of the body of Christ. The filling of the Spirit enables us to live the Christian life, and to serve the Lord with power. It is not a permanent work, but is based upon our personal relationship with Christ and with the Spirit. It was manifested in the early days of the Church by speaking in tongues, but that gift was temporary, and now no longer exists.

Let me say another word or two about the church. As time went on, the Gospel was spread out to more and more people, and there was raised up a church in Ephesus, and in Philippi, and in Corinth, and in Rome, to name a few. In our study of the Revelation on Sunday mornings we learn more about the church in Ephesus at a later date. Then we learn about the church in Smyrna, and the church in Pergamos, and the church in Thyatira, and several others. Churches sprang up all over the Empire. And most of them were predominantly Gentile. Today there are thousands of churches, individual groups of believers who meet together for fellowship, to receive the teaching of the Word, and to pray. People will join churches who are not really saved. We read about some of them in 1 John 2:19. So individual churches can go bad. But only those who know the Lord are in the true Church, the Body of Christ.

Some day the Lord is going to return for His Church. That will not be the end of the world, but it will mean that the Church, the Body of Christ, is completed, and according to John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58; and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 will be removed from earth to heaven. "And so shall we ever be with the Lord."

But that day has not come yet. The Church is still on earth. All of this is called a mystery because God's work in the Church was a secret which God did not reveal until after the death and resurrection and ascension of Christ. And for several years after the Church began, God revealed primarily through His servant, the Apostle Paul, the amazing truths which have to do with the character of the Church, its mission in the world, its ministry to its own members, and its ultimate glory. And Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus is an important part of the total revelation that God has given us concerning His people today – what we are to believe, how we are to live, and what our hope is. This is why the NT epistles were written.

January 11, 2011

Since it has been three weeks since we had our last class, I want to take a little time just to refresh our minds over the truth that we have considered in coming to the middle of chapter two.

After his customary salutation in the first two verses of chapter 1, Paul launched into what Bishop Westcott called, "A HYMN OF PRAISE TO GOD" (p. 4). And, in the light that he used the little pronouns "us" and "we" and "our" again and again in this hymn of praise, he was indicating that the Gentile believers to whom he was writing already had the same blessings in salvation that he had! The expanded ministry of the Gospel to Gentiles had already begun, and had been going on for approximately thirty years. But it was the case with the Gentiles in those days, as it always is with anyone who is saved, we learn more about salvation after we are saved than we knew at the time we are saved.

Then in the latter part of chapter 1, beginning with 1:15, Paul told them how he had been praying that they would understand what God intended for them to know concerning their salvation. The teaching of the Word of God always needs to be preceded by prayer, carried out by prayer, and followed up with prayer. And this was not just a prayer that he had prayed for them in the past, but in verse 16 of chapter 1 he said that he had never stopped for them in this same way. And then it is, at the end of his prayer, that he mentioned the Church, the body of Christ, which had Christ as their head. And this turns out to be one of the main reasons that he had written to them.

Beginning with chapter 2 the Apostle reminded them of their condition before they were saved, admitting that it was not different from the Jews, as he did in 2:3. And then in verses 4 through 7 he used the word "us" again.

So it was not because the Gentiles were more in need than the Jews, but God's dealings with both Jews and Gentiles was to meet the same spiritual needs of both groups. It just was His plan that it would go to the Jews first. The only basis upon which the Jews could be saved was by the mercy and grace of God. And the same

was true of the Gentiles. This takes us down through chapter 2 and verse 10.

But then in verse 11 he reminded them again that there was nothing in them that caused God to save them. But it was because of Christ Jesus (see 2:13).

January 17, 2011

Last week, because it had been three weeks since our Christmas break, I sought to emphasize with you the contrast between the plan and purpose of God for the Jews, beginning with Abraham in the OT and even continuing through the ministry of Christ on earth in the NT. But while during His mission on earth He had told His apostles not to go to the Gentiles, yet as the ministry drew to a close He began to speak about the spread of the Gospel to the whole world. For example, this is what we read in Matthew 10:5-6 as the Lord sent His apostles out to minister.

5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

They were not even to go to the Samaritans, even as the Lord did in John 4 with the woman of Samaria. The Roman centurions among the Gentiles were also exceptions. But as a general rule, the Lord came specifically to minister to the Jews.

And then there was the story of the Syrophenician woman who came to the Lord seeking help for her child. The account is given in Mark 7:25-30:

25 For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet:

26 The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.

27 But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.

28 And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.

29 And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.

30 And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

That was the situation in the OT which carried over into the Gospels. The ministry that we read about through all of the OT was a ministry of the Jews to the Jews. But as the days of the Lord's ministry on earth we note that He began to issue a larger ministry to His disciples. And that was especially clear in Acts 1:8. (Quote.) And we see in the book of Acts how the Gospel was spread among the Gentiles, and it was all tied in with the beginning of what was called, the Church. This change was certainly in the mind of the Apostle John as late in the first century, he wrote concerning our Lord in John 1,

11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:11-13).

So the turning of the Lord to the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Lord by the Jews, took place in the same period, but all was in accordance the overall plan of God.

Yesterday, as I was reading through Ephesians, I was particularly struck with Paul's words in chapter 1, verse 9, where he said that God had made known to us, "the mystery of His will." God does not have a Plan B just in case Plan A does not work. What appears to us as a change was obviously a part of the whole outworking of the will of God. Remember that "mystery," does not mean *mysterious*. It means that God chose not to reveal this part of His will until toward the end of our Lord's time on earth and the events of our Lord's ministry on earth were coming to an end. In other words it was His secret revealed in His time for those who are truly His people. This word appears five more times in Ephesians. See 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19.

2:11 This, and verse 12, tell us what the relationship of the Gentiles was in the dominant plan of God "in time past." They really had none except in the those instances where God was pleased to show His mercy. The Gentiles, as a group, were treated with disdain by the Jews. As Paul mentioned here, the Jews called them "the Uncircumcision" by those who called themselves "The Circumcision." The Lord never intended for circumcision to be a way of salvation, but as late (and later) we learn that some Jews will still preaching that "except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). And even more is said regarding the Gentiles in the next verse here in Ephesians 2.

2:12 Here we are told about all of the promises and blessings that had been given to the Jews, but not to the Gentiles.

2:13 But it was clearly the death of the Lord Jesus Christ which brought about the great change. But it was not an afterthought with God as though He had been taken by surprise by our Lord's rejection by the Jews, but it was the next step in the outworking of God's foreordained plan. And it was marked by the beginning of the Church, the Body of Christ.

It apparently was common to speak of the Jews as being near to God because the Law had been given to them. The prophets were Jews. The Gentiles had no access whatever to the Tabernacle, nor to the Temple, where God had been pleased to reveal His presence to the Jews. So the Gentiles were considered to be far off, and the Jews nigh. But what the Gentiles had always been, "far off," had been changed "by the blood of Christ." The Gentiles "are made nigh by the blood of Christ." And this is what the Apostle Peter had preached on the Day of Pentecost. We read this about the response of the Jews when Peter had concluded his message. In Acts 2:36 we read of Peter's concluding words to the Jews, followed by their response, and then an amazing statement from Peter, reading down in Acts 2 through verse 39:

36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Now notice this verse.

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

Clearly the door of salvation was opened to the Gentile world. Remember that Gentiles had been saved before. What took place in Nineveh under the preaching of Jonah, was an example, but now the Gospel was to go "to the uttermost parts of the earth."

Going back to verse 12 again, Dr. Chafer makes these helpful comments in helping us to understand the plight of the Jews before the Cross. He wrote:

Six disqualifying charges are here preferred. The Gentiles were "without Christ," not only personally

Christless, but having no national Messianic hope; they were outside Israel's one divinely recognized commonwealth; they were strangers from the covenants of promise." This does not deny but what God had predicted great earthly blessings for the Gentiles in the coming Kingdom Age (Dan. 7:13, 14; Micah 4:2); it asserts that He had entered into no covenant with them as He had with Israel; the Gentiles had "no hope" since no covenant promise had been accorded them; and they were without God in the world. They could make no claim to His purpose or favor, and they formed that portion of humanity which was under the curse and doomed to destruction. The world today knows little of the godless and hopeless condition of human life among the Gentiles in the days to which reference is made. We are told that, at the highest state of Greek culture under Alexander the Great, it was commonly held that the best thing was not to be born at all, and next to that was to die; so fully did the experience of the heart reflect the actual relation which is unknowingly sustained to God (Chafer, L. S., *The Ephesian Letter*, pp. 83, 84).

So now through the work of Christ on the Cross, is there hope for the hopeless, a different relationship to God and to Christ through the Gospel to be proclaimed to all the world, but "in Christ Jesus" there is a totally new, blessed, and eternal relationship for Jews and Gentiles with each other "in one body," which the Apostle Paul has already made clear, is the Church. And it was the Church that we born on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 when those who believe in Christ were first baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ.

2:14 It is interesting that the Apostle Paul puts the effect of the Gospel upon saved Jews and Gentiles in their relationship with each other before he mentioned their reconciliation with God in verse 16, when it is clear that the cause for the change between Jews and Gentiles is their reconciliation with God. Although under the Law, Gentiles could become Jewish proselytes, yet the Gentiles were never as fully accepted as those who had Jewish blood in their veins. The middle wall of partition was a wall in Herod's temple beyond which no Gentile could pass. Paul had been charged with taking Trophimus into the Temple, and the Jews would have killed him for it, if the soldiers had not intervened. See Acts 21:29 ff. There was not even such a thought among those who were in the body of Christ, the Church. Jews and Gentiles both share equally in the work of Christ on the Cross. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the churches of Galatia, had this to say in Galatians 3:26-28:

26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

2:15 That which divided the Jews from the Gentiles was the Law with all that it contained, but the Lord abolished it in His flesh," that is, by His death He met and satisfied all of the demands of the Law to bring together Jews and Gentiles as one man, so that one did not have more than another, but all benefitted equally.

2:16 Here we come to reconciliation with God which was the major result of the work of Christ on the Cross. Again it is the Cross by which all believers have been reconciled to God, to the Jew as much as to the Gentile, and for the Gentile as much as for the Jew. There is no basis for enmity between the Jewish and Gentile believers because what one has, they all have. As Paul told the Galatians, "ye are all one in Christ" (Gal. 3:28). Our reconciliation with God is not the result of anything that we have done. It is wholly a work of the Lord Jesus Christ Who was sent into this world to accomplish this work for us.

2:17 Through this passage in the latter part of Ephesians 2 much emphasis has been placed upon the death of our Lord, and rightly so. The Jew would have still be in his sin, and the Gentile afar off if it had not

been for the work of Christ on the Cross. But now the words, “and He came,” speak of His resurrection. Though He died, and died such a horrible death, suffering the penalty for you and me and for all who had ever been saved, or whoever will be saved, “He came.” His tomb became an empty tomb. The angel who was in the tomb told those who had come to anoint the Lord’s dead body, told them, “He is not here; He is risen.” This angelic message was of such supreme importance that it is carried by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Cf. Matt. 28:6; Mark 16:6; and Luke 24:6. These references are easy to remember because they are all in the last chapter of each Gospel, and the sixth verse of each chapter. The angel did not say, “He has gone away,” because that would not have been true. He could have gone right back to heaven, but He didn’t. He had promised some of them that He would meet them in Galilee, but at this point it was important that those who believed in Him would know that He was not in the tomb. Our text here in Ephesians 2:17 says that “He came.” He was alive, and He had come back to them although none of them had yet seen Him.

But why did He come, and to whom did He come? We know that after His resurrection no unbeliever ever saw Him. If most of us had been arranging His appearance after His resurrection, we probably would have made sure that every man of the Sanhedrin saw Him, as well as every member of the Roman hierarchy. But He came to the apostles, He came to His own. And what did He do? He preached peace “to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.” A passage in the Gospel of John confirms that this was literally true. (Read John 20:19-26, paying special attention to verses 19, 21, and 26.) Our verse here in Ephesians 2 says that He preached “to you who were afar off, and to them that were nigh.” This verse must not only speak of what the Lord did Himself between the time of His resurrection and His ascension, but how He has continued to preach through those whom He has sent from that day until this. The emphasis regarding the Lord’s ministry was always on preaching, not just behind a pulpit in some church, but wherever even one person would be willing to listen to the message. The Lord did not want people to wait until they discovered the message for themselves because if He did, He knew that no one would ever be looking for the message. It has to be preached. People need to be told. And so our Lord set the pattern, and the basic message is one of Peace – peace with God for man, and peace for men with men.

January 18, 2011

The basic message of the Gospel is that “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). But the verse that tells us this, begins with, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God . . .” Sin alienated Adam and Eve from God, and made them afraid of God. The whole human race was alienated from God by Adam’s sin. When the Apostle Paul was describing the moral depravity of man, one of the things that he said was, “and the way of peace have they not known” (Rom. 3:17). Twice in Jeremiah’s prophecy he spoke of those who were saying, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace” (Jer. 6:14; 8:11). Twice in Isaiah’s prophecy he said, “There is no peace, saith the Lord,” or, “saith my God, unto the wicked” (Isa. 48:22; 57:21).

What is peace? It is quietness of heart. It is rest of soul. It is a state of contentment. It can be partial and transitory, or it can be perfect. Only for the Christian can it be perfect, but it has to be learned. It depends upon keeping our minds stayed upon the Lord. See Isaiah 26:3 and 4, “Thou wilt keep him . . .” So it is a work of God in the soul. Circumstances can be far from what we would like for them to be, but still there can be peace.

I have told you often how Dr. Chafer, my main theology teacher when I was a student at Dallas Seminary, was also a great musician. He took chapel time at the Seminary probably every two or three weeks to teach us the great hymns of the Church. He not only taught us the words and the music, but he taught us to sing hymns with understanding.

One of the hymns that he taught us was known, like so many of the hymns, by the first few words of the first stanza. But this hymn had at least seven stanzas, and each stanza began with the same three words, “Peace,

perfect peace. Each stanza had only two lines. The first line was a question; the second line was an answer. Dr. Chafer had us sing the first like softly, thoughtfully, soberly. But He had us raise the volume on the second line and to sing with a note of triumph in our voice. Our children were able to get the podium that he used for many years, and it is now standing where you can see it as you come into our home. But I want to read the verses of that hymn because it speaks of so many circumstances where we can only have peace through keeping our minds focused on the Lord. Listen as I read the verses:

Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.

Peace, perfect peace, by thronging duties pressed?
To do the will of Jesus, this is best.

Peace, perfect peace, with sorrows surging round?
On Jesus' bosom naught but calm is found.

Peace, perfect peace, our loved ones far away?
In Jesus' keeping we are safe and they.

Peace, perfect peace our future all unknown?
Jesus we know, and He is on the throne.

Peace, perfect peace, death shadowing us and ours?
Jesus hath vanquished death and all its powers.

It is enough; earth's troubles soon shall cease,
And Jesus calls us to heaven's perfect peace.

But we not only have peace with God, which is ours by salvation, but we also can enjoy “the peace of God.” Cf. Philippians 4:6-7, “Be careful for nothing, but . . .” This we all are learning through the daily experiences of our lives. We naturally have many fears. And we have a living, unseen enemy who loves to aggravate those fears. So we are constantly in a battle with ourselves, and with our circumstances, and with the Devil, to keep our hearts at peace. The Word of God plays a large part in our enjoyment of the peace of God. Cf. Psa. 119: 165, “Great peace have they which love Thy law . . .” The Jews are on the right track when they have as their most-used greeting, Shalom, peace. In the epistles of the NT we are constantly reminded of our need for “grace and peace” every day of our lives. See Ephesians 1:2.

But Paul's chief emphasis in the passage before us at the end of Ephesians, chapter 2, appears to be the peace that we have with one another as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at verse 18. (Read.) This has been Paul's emphasis from verse 14 on.

2:18 This verse means that through the saving grace that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ we both have the same access to the Father by the Spirit of God. It is all “through Him,” that is, through the suffering and death of Christ on our behalf. Note that all Three Persons of the Godhead are mentioned in this one verse.

2:19 So what used to apply to us according to verse 14, is no longer true. We Gentiles who believe are no longer “strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens” with all of the people of God. There is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles in “the household of God,” which is the family of God. So with the Jews the

Gentiles became brothers and sisters in the family of God.

2:20 The Apostle Paul in these verses mixes his metaphors, doesn't he? But it is because the work of our Lord is so abundant that we are citizens of heaven (v. 19). We are in the family, "the household of God," and here in verse 20 we are the temple of God. "The foundation of the apostles and prophets" has to be a reference to NT prophets, showing that the Church does not become a part of Israel, but that it is uniquely different, combining from Pentecost on until the rapture of the Church, what God is doing with His people in this present age.

2:21 In OT times God dwelt among His people, first, in the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple. Now we, His people, are the temple in which God dwells. It is a "holy temple," a growing temple, as others are added to it. And it is still growing. Now we are not talking about any local church; we are speaking of the mystical body of Christ, made up of all today who are true believers in Christ.

2:22 But Paul is presenting the true Church here in the last three verses of chapter 2 as a building in which God dwells "through the Spirit." And it is made up of all true believers in this present age which began in Acts 2, and it will be completed when the Lord comes in the air, and we all are caught up to meet Him, and taken to heaven.

Remember that the Church began on the Day of Pentecost when there was a baptism of the Spirit, the first one ever mentioned in Scripture. And it will be completed at the rapture of the Church.