

# OpenTheo

## Ephesians 2



### **Ephesians** - Steve Gregg

In this teaching, Steve Gregg delves into Ephesians 2 and discusses the concept of salvation by grace through faith. He notes that salvation is a gift from God and that even faith itself is a gift. Gregg also discusses the struggle between the desires of the flesh and the desires of the spirit and the importance of repentance and surrendering to the Lordship of Christ. He goes on to emphasize that in Christ, there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile and that the church is a spiritual habitation built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ.

### **Transcript**

The second chapter now of Ephesians. In this chapter, there are a number of metaphors that Paul introduces for the church. The first of these metaphors, although he doesn't use the expression precisely, is that the church is a new creation, created in Christ Jesus for good works.

In verses 1 through 10, he describes the creation of the church as a new entity. Later on, in chapter 4, he will again speak of the church as a created entity. You know that in 2 Corinthians 5, in verse 17, Paul said that if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The church as a whole is a created thing, a new creation, in which God is doing many of the same things that we read of his concern for in the old creation in Genesis 1. There are many parallels, actually. Then later in the same chapter, he describes the church in terms of a reconciled community. In this case, the reconciliation that he's focusing on is not reconciliation with God and man, which is a common theme in the scripture, but in this case, reconciliation between two factions, the Jewish and the Gentile, at one time hostile to one another and alienated from each other, but reconciled in Christ into one new man.

By referring to the new man, it changes the metaphor to that of a body. Of course, we're very familiar with the idea of the church as a body of Christ. Here it's a male body, a man, that is put together here from the Jew and the Gentile in Christ, so that we have the idea of the church as a new man.

And finally, before the end of the chapter, the metaphor changes again in verses 19 through 22, so that the church is a building under construction, a temple of the Holy Spirit. So we have almost all of the major metaphors for the church found in one chapter. There are a few that are not focused on here.

For instance, the idea that the church is a family, that is not a focus of this chapter. And there are some others that come up later in the book, like that the church is an army, and we're an armor of God. That comes up in chapter 6. But we do have quite a variety of metaphors, and the purpose of these metaphors, of course, is to communicate something spiritual about the nature of the church.

And when we talk about the church, I'm sure you know, but I need to remind us sometimes, because the word is used differently in our common vernacular, I think of the church, when I read about the church here, I don't understand Paul to be talking about what we have come to think of as an institutional organization. He's talking about the body of Christ proper, the whole spiritual communion of saints the world over, taken collectively. That is the church.

And while there are many things in the institutional church about which it may be difficult to become excited, the church, the real church, is something that there's much to be excited about. Paul was excited about it, Jesus is excited about it. And it's not too difficult, if you get the vision that Paul has, to yourself gain some real excitement about the prospects and the future and the glory and the destiny of the church of which you and I are a part.

He says in chapter 2, verse 1, *And you he made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.* Now, the phrase *he made alive* is in italics, which means it was not in the original. So the original just says, *And you who were dead in trespasses and sins.*

But Paul was not using quite correct grammar at this point, and he changed the course of the sentence in verse 2. You see, *you who were dead in trespasses and sins* sounds like he's just given the subject of a sentence, *you*, and a modifying clause, *who were dead in trespasses and sins*, and therefore you expect the verb or something to come along. But instead, he goes off on a tangent about the sins, about being in trespasses and sins. He kind of branches off and says, *In which, that is, in trespasses and sins, you once walked, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom, that would be among the sons of disobedience also, we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and we were by your children of wrath, just as others.*

Now, what he does in these verses, essentially, especially, well, yeah, all three of these verses, really, he's talking about the raw materials from which the new creation was put together. It was put together from sinners. It was put together from the most

unpromising of materials.

If God's going to create a glorious new thing, and he chooses such foul things as we were, it's quite astonishing. That is why he twice in the next paragraph says, By grace you have been saved. He marvels, he actually interrupts a sentence in verse 5 to say in parentheses, By grace you have been saved.

And then he says it again down in verse 8. He's astonished by the grace of God, that God, hoping to do something that would last forever and bring glory to him, would choose as the components that he assembled into this new creation such unworthy and unpromising materials as ourselves. He says, first of all, in verse 1, We were dead in trespasses and sins. Now, obviously, if he's going to create a new man, he's going to have to make a living thing, and he starts out with persons who were dead.

Now, what does it mean to be dead in trespasses and sins? He's going to say that again a little later in verse 5. Even when we were dead in trespasses, he made us alive. Now, see, there's where that he made alive that's been inserted into verse 1 comes from. It comes from verse 5. It's just that the translators stuck that in there, knowing that Paul anticipated saying that, because they read verse 5. But the first thing he says, We were dead in trespasses and sins.

Now, what does it mean that we're dead? A lot of people, especially, of course, believe that if you are dead, you can't do anything. And that would be true of people in terms of natural death, if this were not simply a metaphor. We know that it is a metaphor, and that metaphors have their limitations.

The Calvinists, of course, make a very great issue about being dead in trespasses and sins, because they point out that our salvation is all of grace, and by that they mean even our repentance and our faith was provided for us by God. Not so much that he made it possible for us, but that he made it happen, that he planted it in us. He put repentance in our hearts and faith in our hearts, because he had chosen us to have that, and he chose other people not to have that, so he didn't put it in their hearts.

But there is really nothing that we decided that brought us into salvation because we were dead. How could we decide anything? How can a dead person make a choice in any way? People often, I think, preachers, often take these metaphors of death further than the Bible intends for them to be. Paul uses the word dead in an entirely different way.

In Romans 6 we're talking about us being dead to sin. It's very different from being dead in sin. But both metaphors, dead in sin or dead to sin, do not invite us to take the word dead in its absolute, most expansive possible meaning.

To say I'm dead to sin, I've heard preachers say, well, we're dead to sin and crucified with Christ, and therefore we should have no reaction to temptation, because a dead

man has no reaction. I've heard several famous preachers repeat this illustration. You could take a dead corpse and stand it up next to a wall and trace all kinds of temptations in front of it, and you'd get no reaction out of it at all.

And that's what we're supposed to be. We're supposed to be dead to sin. Well, that's a very nice ideal.

I don't know if I've ever met a Christian, however spiritual, who has absolutely no reaction, no inward attraction at all, to temptation. I don't even believe Jesus could be described that way. Jesus was tempted at all points, as we are.

And if tempted means that there was some attraction to sin, then he was not dead, in the sense that that preacher is trying to make that point. No one is dead in that sense, except people who are really, literally dead. Bible doesn't say we're supposed to feel no temptation.

If we felt no temptation, and by the way, if you're going to press the metaphor of being dead all the way to its extreme, then a dead man feels no temptation. If a Christian feels or senses no temptation, then there's no merit in his virtue. There's no merit in his obedience, because he has no attraction to anything else.

The Bible describes the Christian life other than that, where there is a struggle, there is a fight with temptation, there's a wrestling against enemies of our soul. We have to put them to death repeatedly, our desires, through the Spirit. Paul says that, if you through the Spirit put to death the deeds of the body, you shall live.

In Romans 8 he says. Now that is an ongoing thing, because you never come to the point, at least I've not yet met a person who professes to have come to the point where they feel no temptation. And yet if we're going to press the metaphor of death to the extent that some preachers want to do so, you get the impression that you're not there yet.

You haven't really died with Christ yet. You're not really dead to sin yet, because you still have wrestlings with temptation. But that's not, I believe, understanding the metaphor correctly.

Likewise, when someone says, we were dead in sin, and that means we couldn't make any decisions, because dead men can't make any decisions, we need to remind ourselves that people who are so-called spiritually dead, unbelievers, make decisions all the time. Every unbeliever around us continually makes decisions. They make decisions about where they'll live, who they'll marry, what they'll do for a living, how they'll spend their money, how late they'll stay up at night, what they'll watch on television, what they'll do with their free time, what they'll eat, where they'll eat.

I mean, they make decisions all the time. Dead people, literally dead people, don't make

any decisions at all. But Paul certainly cannot be saying, when he says we were dead in trespass and sin, that we were dead in the ultimate sense of that word.

He has a particular thing in mind, and I'll show you what it is he has in mind by turning you to Romans chapter 7. Romans 7, 9 says, I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment which was to bring life, I found to bring death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me and by it killed me.

Now, Paul says, though apparently in his very early life he was alive without knowledge of the law, spiritually alive, yet when the law came, it killed him. He died, slain by sin, which used the law as its club or its knife to kill him with. Now, in what sense did he die? He must be referring to a break in the relationship with God.

God is life. When God said to Adam and Eve, in the day you eat of that fruit, you shall surely die, it does not appear as if they did die when they ate the fruit, because they were simply banished from the garden and they lived hundreds of years longer than that. So why did he say, in the day you eat of it, you'll surely die? Because in one sense they did die.

They were cut off and alienated from God by sin. God is life. In him is life.

And that life is the life of men. When they are alienated from the spiritual life that is in God, they are therefore spiritually dead. And spiritual death, then, speaks of alienation from God, from the life.

Now, it doesn't mean that a person who is spiritually dead has no mind active. It does not mean that they don't move and walk around and get up in the morning and eat food and talk. People who are literally dead don't do those things.

But Paul doesn't intend for the metaphor to be pressed that far. When Paul says, the law came and it slew me and I died, he's not trying to say, I never made a decision after that. I never opened my eyes again.

I was dead. Obviously he's not saying that. He is speaking of one particular aspect of spiritual death, which is that he was cut off from, in his conscience, from fellowship with God by the awareness of his sin.

Now, Paul says, using the same metaphor in Ephesians 2, that we were all dead. Like he died when the law came to him, so we have all died. We were all dead in sins and trespasses.

Therefore, what does he mean? We were separated from God. We were alienated from God. Now, does this metaphor in itself suggest that we had no power to take steps back to God? How could it mean that? Every person who is an unbeliever makes steps of a

moral nature.

When a person decides to marry his sweetheart instead of living with her in immorality, he's making a moral choice. Unbelievers make those kinds of choices all the time. When a man decides to stay faithful to his wife instead of taking up with his secretary, he's making a moral choice, a good one.

And yet he's an unbeliever. He is dead in trespasses and sins, but that doesn't prevent him from making moral decisions. His deadness is not a psychological deadness which somehow deadens part of his choices, or his ability to make choices, as far as we know.

At least Paul didn't say it is. The deadness has to do with his alienation from God, who is the source of spiritual life. He has no spiritual life, but he has, of course, biological and psychological life, and choices are made in that realm.

So, when Paul says that we were dead in trespasses and sins, he's not trying to communicate some idea that we have no power to say yes to God. When we have power to say yes to many other things, the Calvinist has not yet been able to explain how it is that a person dead in trespasses and sins can say yes to everybody except to God. And that is something that they're failing to have demonstrated, causes their whole argument about total depravity and total inability, based upon these scriptures, to fall apart like a house of cards.

It really doesn't have any foundation at all. Paul is saying that we were dead in trespasses and sins in the same sense that Adam and Eve surely died on the day that they sinned. They were dead in the sense of alienation from God, who is life, spiritual life.

Remember it says in 1 John 5 that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that has the Son has life. He that has not the Son of God has not life.

Now, that means if you don't have life, you're dead, spiritually. But it doesn't mean that you don't think, act, choose, work, love, hate, get angry, do all the things that people do. The only thing you do when you're not saved is you do all of those things without any connection to God.

But there's a choice left open to us, even in that state, that we can choose this day whom we will serve, as the Bible calls us to do, and to choose to die to ourself. We can't make ourselves die to ourself, but we can choose to let God do so, to take up our cross and to follow Jesus, and that is a choice that God requires people to make. He does not make it for them, or else he would have everybody do it, because he wants everybody to do it.

Now, in that state of being dead in trespasses and sins, it says in verse 2, in which, that is, in trespasses and sins, here in chapter 1 he's talking about in Christ, in Christ, in

Christ. Now, for a little while he's going to talk about in trespasses and sins, the other state that people are in. They're either in Christ or else they're in trespasses and sins.

And in that state, you once walked according to the course of this world. Now, walked is a metaphor for living that we find Paul use quite a bit in Ephesians and elsewhere. He'll speak of it that way again in chapter 2 and verse 10, and there will be a number of times that we'll find Paul talking about walking a certain way.

In chapter 4, verse 1, we're to walk worthy of the calling. And this idea of walking is a very common biblical metaphor for life. It's even found in the Old Testament, that so-and-so walked with God.

Enoch walked with God. Noah walked with God. God said to Abram, walk before me and be perfect.

Now, walk before me, obviously, I mean, literally it's when you move your legs and move, you know, take steps to a certain place you're going to, and that's not what God's referring to when he says walk before me. It means live your life before me. But living the life, living any life, is compared in the Bible with walking.

Walking in sin or walking in righteousness. Walking in the spirit or walking in the flesh. And life is compared with walking for the simple reason that life has a destination, and you move through moments of your life the way that a walking person moves across distance.

Each step you take in a literal walk moves you closer to the goal, and you traverse a certain distance. In living the metaphorical walk, every decision you make is a new step. It takes you in a certain direction.

If you make the right steps, it takes you, you traverse distance that has to be covered to reach your goal. And therefore, walking is the metaphor of choice used by Paul and elsewhere in Scripture. Others use it, too.

So we were walking in our sins, in trespassism sins. And we were walking according to the course of this world. Now you'll see three things here, three factors that dominated our lifestyles before.

The course of this world, first of all. Secondly, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, it would be the devil. And thirdly, in verse three, among whom also we once conducted ourselves in the lust of our flesh.

So we've got the world and the devil and the flesh were once dictating the course of our life, of our walk. Each step we took in our life was dictated by these three factors. First of all is the course of this world.

Now the world in this sense means organized society in rebellion against God. The word world is used a lot of ways in Scripture. God so loved the world, just means the people, all the people in the world.

And sometimes the word world, the whole world, can just mean the planet Earth. But sometimes the word world means a geographical region. That's when Caesar Augustus declared that all the world should be taxed.

It meant all the Roman Empire, the Roman world. And so also more commonly in the New Testament, we read of the word world in the sense of the unsaved humanity organized in its social structures to live independently of God and in rebellion against God. So that the world when used that way is actually at enmity with God.

Jesus said to his disciples in John chapter 15, if you are of the world, the world would love its own, but because you are not of the world and I have called you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. There's obviously an enmity between the world spoken of in this sense, and God and his people on the other. So that we are told in 1 John chapter 2, do not love the world, neither the things that are in the world.

If a person loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Now the world, Christians often talk about someone being worldly. I don't know if the Bible uses that term.

I don't recall ever finding it there. It might be there somewhere. But worldly is a term that Christians often use for somebody who acts in a way that is bordering on sinful.

It may not be actually in terms of violation of a commandment of God found in scripture. It may not be even what you could say for sure is sinful. Or if it is, it's in a gray area of what might be called sinful, because it's not all that clearly defined by any command of God that's being broken.

But usually it's a course of life, a course of attention getting, a course of flattering, a course of immodesty. Now I'm not saying that immodesty isn't a sin. It's just a point of, it's hard to know at what point it becomes a sin.

The Bible doesn't say that a person should wear clothes with just this cut, this particular cut of clothing, and anything beyond that is immoral or immodest. It's like there are areas that are gray areas. We know we should be modest, but how modest is modest? We know we should be sober, and we should avoid foolish jesting, but just how much humor is permitted before it becomes foolish jesting? We know that we shouldn't seek to get attention to ourselves, but just how much talking about ourselves is appropriate before we cross that line into something that we shouldn't be doing? I mean, these are the kinds of things that are not easy to decide, and of course a Christian, we often hear Christians say, well, just how much can I do in this area before I really am in trouble with God? You know, typically people ask this about how far they can go with the opposite



sex, you know, without really falling into sin.

Obviously what Jesus said about looking with lust puts the line pretty far in, you know, that you can't really go very far at all with the opposite sex without falling into some infraction. But, you know, there are people who would say, well, you know, we can hold hands without feeling lustful, or I can put my arm around her and that doesn't make me feel lustful, or what if we go this far, and this far, and this far? And these are the areas where, of course, you find a person who is asking these questions and trying to see how far they can go in the direction of sin, without actually becoming guilty of sin. That person is following the course of this world, rather than the course of Christ.

The course of Christ would be to flee from temptation, to flee from sin, not to get anywhere near it, but the course of the world is, and it's what the world does, the world doesn't want to get into trouble either. The world doesn't want to get in trouble with the law, and insofar as they have any awareness of God, and they have some, generally, but not a very clear one, they also don't want to feel like they're doing anything bad enough to go to hell. So most worldly people don't want to do anything that would get them into big trouble, but they want to do as much carnal, selfish things as they can without getting into trouble.

They want as much self-indulgence, as much self-gratification, as much of their own way as they can manipulate to have, without getting in trouble with the law, or with society, or with God, or something else. And that's the course that this world takes. It's the course of self-interest.

It's something that you can see it in many churches. It's particularly evident in youth groups. I'm sure it seems to me, when I've been in youth groups, that worldly kids, and to speak of someone as worldly usually would just mean that they're desiring to get along with the world as much as they can, without perhaps getting into serious problems with their salvation.

And so they like to go to certain movies, but what movies can a Christian go to? Can a Christian go to a PG movie, or can they ever go to an R-rated movie? You know, there's some R-rated movies that are okay. And they're always asking these kinds of questions, because they want to get as much of the world, and of the world's things, as they can. They don't love God.

They love the world. And they want to be saved without loving God. Well, if a person is walking according to the course of this world, Paul says that they are walking in trespasses and sins.

It is those who are dead in trespasses and sins that walk according to the course of this world. And once you are saved, there's a new course for you to run, a new track, a new road to follow. And it runs contrary to the course of the world.

But before we're saved, we do walk the course of the world. And some Christians, as I point out, or people who would like to think themselves Christians, still are very attracted to, and follow as much as they can, the world's course. And the world is a great enemy to the Christian soul for that reason, just like the devil is and the flesh is.

The world is because, really what the world represents is acceptance. If you do it the world's way, you'll be in the majority. People won't think you're strange.

People will think you're pretty hip. You'll have admiration, or at least acceptance. You won't be mocked.

And it's not even necessarily that that has anything to do with the flesh, I mean, in the sense of fleshly desires. A lot of temptation is to satisfy actual sexual or appetite drives, fleshly drives. But worldliness is actually a little something different than that.

I mean, of course, there's a lot of flesh in the world. But additional to the things that the flesh desires, the temptation of the world is to be like everybody else, is to have the acceptance of most people, or of as many people as possible, and to have them think that you are okay and that you're pretty cool. And that is really what worldliness amounts to, the desire to please the world, to walk according to its course, so that you don't find yourself walking contrary to it and experiencing their rejection.

We can see Peter talking the same way in 1 Peter. Remember, I've mentioned that 1 Peter has a lot of parallels in it to Ephesians. This is one place where we could see one, because he says in 1 Peter 4, 1 Peter 4 of 3, it says, For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in licentiousness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.

In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. Now, these people who you used to run with, you're not running with them anymore. You're not on the same course with them anymore.

You're following a different course. They don't understand it, and they'll speak evil of you. And it's that very speaking evil of you that you're tempted to avoid.

It's tempting to try to avoid criticism and rejection and ostracism. And for that reason, following the world's course, there's strong pressure to do that. Now, you know it says in Romans chapter 12, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

Romans 12.2. And there is a conformity to the world that we are supposed to avoid. The world has its way, its course, its patterns, and those are molds that the world likes to squeeze you into, to make you the same shape as the world, make your course like its course, and your pattern like its pattern. And that, Paul says, is what was the case with us before we were saved, but he's assuming that that's not what we're doing anymore.

Christians are not worldly. Christians are not concerned to be accepted by the world. They just want to have the approval of God.

And so the world is one of the dynamics, the dynamic influences that govern the life of the unbeliever, of us when we're unbelievers. The second one is the, verse 2 says, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience. Sons of disobedience simply is a Hebraism, really.

I mean, although Paul's not writing to Jews, he is a Jew and still tends to fall into Hebrew manners of expression. Sons of disobedience just means disobedient people. And sort of like sons of Belial or sons of Belial in the Old Testament is a Hebrew expression that just means worthless people.

Belial meaning worthlessness. And so sons of disobedience just means disobedient people. The same expression is used again by Paul in chapter 5, verse 6. Now, the spirit that is at work in disobedient people, in the people who don't obey God, there is a spirit at work in them.

This doesn't mean they are demon-possessed necessarily. But Satan, the prince of the power of the air, is working upon their minds and deceiving them. We know that in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, Paul said, if our gospel is hid, it is hid from those whose, our gospel is veiled, he says, in 2 Corinthians 4.3, it is veiled from those who are perishing, whose minds the God of this age has blinded.

That's 2 Corinthians 4.4. Their minds have been blinded by the God of this age. Now, there Satan is called the God of this age because he is the one who has revered and followed and worshipped him, at least in action, if not by liturgy, by those who are in the world. Here he is referred to as the prince of the power of the air.

God of this world, prince of the power of the air. I'm not sure exactly what forms the basis for this particular title for Satan. Prince obviously means ruler, but what the powers of the air refer to is not entirely clear, probably referring to the demonic powers in general.

And whether this means that they sort of just fly around through the air and they inhabit the atmosphere, or if the air here means something else, spiritual, the spiritual realm or something like the heavenlies, I'm not sure. In any case, we don't have to sort that out completely. All we need to know is that he refers to the devil here as one who has authority over certain powers, which probably means the principalities and powers, the demonic powers.

And he is at work upon the minds and therefore in the people who disobey God. Satan's work is going to be looked at again and how to resist it in chapter 6 when he talks about the armor of God and our wrestling against the principalities and powers there. But Paul

is saying simply here that we had so unworthy a background before we were saved.

When we were dead in our sins and separated from God, living out our life alienated from him, we lived according to a course that was dictated by the world and by the devil and by our own flesh. And he says in verse 3, among whom, that is among the disobedient sons, also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh. So that's the third influence that dominated our lives, the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature children of wrath just as the others.

It's interesting that he mentioned the lusts of the flesh last. I would have imagined without this passage telling me otherwise, that probably before becoming a Christian, the main and most obvious dictator of behavior to the unbeliever is the flesh, lusts. But Paul makes it last after the world and the devil.

And perhaps we would flatter ourselves to feel like, you know, our biggest problem is our flesh because we think of ourselves as self-governing and our flesh is us. And I just followed that bad side of me. And it might be less flattering to ourselves to realize that we're really following other influences from without every bit as much, if not more than our own rebel flesh.

We were influenced by society. We were influenced by demonic spirits. You know, when Frank Sinatra is saying, I did it my way, you know, he may be speaking in rebellion against God.

He didn't do it God's way. He did it the way he wanted to do it. That may be the way the average sinner boasts to himself.

Well, I, you know, I walk according to my flesh. I do what I want, whatever I crave, I do. But they don't realize that there are other influences that maybe even have more to say about what they do than their own desires.

A person might do something he doesn't even want to do because of pressure from the world. You know, that's really true. In fact, I mean, most people don't kill people, even though they sometimes want to, because the world would put them in prison and maybe execute them for it.

And their flesh has to be curtailed. They don't go out and rape women every time they have lust, because the world would bring sanctions against it. And you can see that even the lusts of the flesh are subordinate to the pressure that comes from the world.

Now the world, of course, encourages a lot of the lust of the flesh, but it also has its, you know, sanctions and strictures that it places on certain behaviors if it's, if it hurts other people, other sinners. And we can see that although a person who's a sinner might think himself to be a bold rebel, doing things his own way, just following his own lusts, his own flesh, his own desires, but in fact there's more to it in the sinner's life than just the flesh.

There's that, that pressure, that peer pressure from the world, and of course that unseen working of the devil upon the mind, blinding the mind, so that the flesh is just one of several factors that influence a person in their walk in the wrong way.

Now he says that when we walked and conducted ourselves in the lust of the flesh, we were at that time fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. The word desires there in verse 3, the Greek word means the wills, the wills of the flesh and of the mind. That is, the will of the flesh and the will of the mind.

As a non-Christian, you fulfilled both. You fulfilled the will of your flesh, and that agreed with your mind. Your mind had no objection to that, and therefore you fulfilled at the same time the will of your mind.

Now once you're converted, the will of your mind changes, but the will of your flesh does not. See, repentance changes what your mind agrees to. When you're a sinner, you want your sin.

When you repent, you don't want to sin, you want to live a holy life. Once you've turned to Christ, you hate sin. You want holiness.

Your will of your mind now is favorable toward the law of God, but your flesh is every bit as corrupt as it used to be. You still have sensual desires. You still have cravings of the same sort that were there before you were a Christian.

And so Paul talks about this struggle between the desires of the flesh and of the mind, for example, in the closing verses of Romans 7, and he says in verse 18, For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells, for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, that's his mind wills it, I do not do, but the evil which I will not to do, that is, my mind does not want to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

I find then a law that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man, but I see another law in my members, that is, in my flesh, warring against the law of my mind. My mind has embraced the law of God.

The will of my mind is to do the will of God. But there's another law, another will, exerting pressure upon my life, and that is in my members, in my flesh. And this warfare means that my flesh and my mind are no longer agreeable with each other.

I have, you have always had a will of the flesh and a will of the mind, which suggests that your flesh has a mind of its own, in a sense. I mean, your mind is your soul, who you are, what course you're setting, who your identity is, I identify as a follower of Jesus Christ. That means that I, in the deepest part of my being, embrace the Lordship of

Christ and holiness, but there is still in my members biological cravings, even.

And those cravings have to be governed by the Spirit. And if they are not, then they prove to be wicked in themselves, or at least to lead to wickedness. So that he says that before we were saved, when we walked according to the flesh, we were at that point fulfilling the desires of our, or the wills of our flesh and of our mind.

Now today, if you walked according to the flesh, you'd still be fulfilling the desire of the flesh, but not the desire of your mind. And that was different. That's the difference between the believer and the unbeliever, very much, is their mind.

What does their mind want? What have they chosen? What is their, what is their embraced values and goals? He says at the end of verse 3, we were in those days by nature children of wrath, just as others. Now by nature, children of wrath, some have felt that this, saying that we are that by nature, is a proof of original sin, of the doctrine of original sin. Well, maybe it is.

Of course, if Paul held the doctrine of original sin, that we're all born under wrath because of Adam's sin, then this scripture would be a good way of him saying so, where we were by nature children of wrath. But to my mind, it doesn't necessarily say all that much. If you have that doctrine in place, you can see this scripture in that light and support it with it.

That if Paul taught elsewhere that we're all born under the wrath of God because of Adam's sin, then we could easily interpret by nature children of wrath that way. However, it doesn't necessarily mean that. I mean, our nature is a sinful nature before we're converted.

That doesn't mean we're born under wrath, we're just born under handicap. The handicap is we can't live a holy life because our nature is corrupted, because we have cravings of a dominating sort in our lives that are selfish and therefore sinful. And that condition is our natural condition.

It doesn't mean that wrath was upon us from the moment we're born. God's wrath comes upon a person, according to Romans 1, when they suppress the truth in their unrighteousness. The wrath of God is against all those who suppress the truth in their unrighteousness, Paul said in, I guess it must be Romans 1 around verse 18.

So, I don't personally believe that Paul is saying here we're born under God's wrath and therefore by nature, that is from birth, we're under the wrath. I believe by nature we are sinners. I believe by nature we are handicapped in any effort to be holy, even if we had wanted to be holy.

And when we're little and young and even when we get older, our nature is not necessarily to desire to be holy until God draws us and puts that kind of urging upon us,

in which case we then begin to seek after him, I think. But he is saying that our nature before was not the nature of holy people, but the nature of people under the wrath of God. But God, who is rich in mercy, verse 4, because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, he made us alive together with Christ, by grace you have been saved, and raised us up together and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Now, it says that he made us alive together with Christ and raised us up together, apparently meaning ascending, the ascension of Christ, and made us to sit in Christ Jesus. Our dead condition was our natural condition, but we came to life again. Like when Jesus rose from the dead, it's as if we rose with him.

When one died for all, all died, and we were dead. But when Christ rose again, we, through faith in the operation of God, are raised to a newness of life, and come to life, and even when he was ascended, we ascended in him and are seated where he is seated, at the right hand of God, in the heavenly places. Now, the exact practical value of this realization, I'm not quite sure, except that it gives us an exalted awareness of the glory and the destiny of the church, that we are in Christ, we share in his exaltation, and in his authority, and in his destiny, and so forth.

Now, when Paul says that we were dead and God made us alive, he's referring, of course, to our regeneration, but he indicates that it's like when Jesus rose, when Jesus came alive from the dead, we come alive in him. When he was ascended, we ascended in him. When he sat down in heavenlies, we sat down there in him.

Thus, the experience of regeneration is likened to a resurrection. And I believe that in Revelation 20, when it speaks of the first resurrection, it is a reference to this experience, and the second resurrection would be the resurrection of our bodies. Jesus spoke this way in John chapter 5. In John 5, 24, Jesus said, most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes in him who sent me has everlasting life and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

See, Paul didn't originate this idea that we were dead before and came alive in Christ. Jesus is the first to suggest it. That person who has heard Jesus' word and believes in him that sent him has passed from death, their original state, spiritual death, to life.

They've experienced a resurrection. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming and now is when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. That time now is in the sense that when we who are spiritually dead hear the voice of the Son of God in the gospel and respond to it, we come to life.

That's a spiritual resurrection. But he goes on in verse 28 and 29 to talk about a physical resurrection that will come later on. Those are the graves, the physical bodies.

So, we have two resurrections. One is our rebirth, when we come from death to life. That's a spiritual resurrection.

Then there's another resurrection later on that Paul doesn't talk about here in Ephesians, but does elsewhere. Now, it says in verse 7 that God has done this, that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. So, God has saved us so that for ages to come, he might continue to demonstrate the riches of his grace.

Now, some interpreters have suggested that there's going to be fuller and fuller revelation of God's mercy given to us throughout all eternity, that God's grace and mercy is so immense that it'll take ages to come for him to show it to us. That once we go to heaven, we won't even grasp it all. It'll just be ages and ages of eternity that God will be showing this more and more.

On the other hand, of course, just saving us is a show of his exceeding riches and his grace, and if we're saved for eternity or for ages to come, then it would follow that by saving us and by our salvation enduring for ages to come, he is thereby for ages showing his mercy by simply saving us. So, I don't know if Paul means more than that in that verse 7. Now, these verses are very well known, but let me just make some points of clarity if I can. By grace you have been saved through faith.

I said something about this yesterday, and I'll say it again. In the dispute whether a person is saved first and then believes, or believes first and then saved, this verse seems to come down on the side of faith being first. You are saved by grace, but that grace comes through faith.

If I say that I drank water, water came into my house through pipes, it means that those pipes had to be present before the water could come through them. The conduit must be there before the substance comes through the conduit. And if grace comes to me through faith, that must mean that there must be faith present so that the grace can come through it.

This is certainly what Paul indicates also in Romans 5. He says, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand. Now, it's not so much here that the grace comes to us through faith, but that we come to this grace through our faith. But nonetheless, whether the imagery is of grace coming our direction or us going into it, it is through faith.

Faith is the avenue. Faith is the conduit. Faith is the means by which grace comes.

Now, the reason I make this point is because, astonishingly, there are those who believe that you receive grace first before you receive faith, and that you must be regenerated by grace before you can believe. Because, of course, you were dead in trespasses and



sins, and you can't believe when you're dead. And so, pressing that metaphor beyond measure and beyond Paul's intention, they try to make it as if you must first have the grace of regeneration given to you before you can have faith.

Paul does not seem to know that doctrine, and says rather, that it is through your faith that you are saved by grace. And if it's through faith, then faith is the means. Faith is the thing that causes it to happen.

And he says, that is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Now, again, the Calvinist, and I hate to pick on the Calvinist, but Ephesians is the Calvinist's favorite book. And it's impossible to teach it without interacting with Calvinism, because this is their favorite, some of their favorite passages.

When it says, we're saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, what is that? What is it that's not of yourselves? The Calvinist says, it is faith that is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. So that, they're saying that you cannot choose to believe. God must gift you with faith.

If you have it, God gave it to you. If a person doesn't have it, it's because God didn't choose to give it to them. It's that simple.

Faith is just a gift of God. He gives it to some and not to others. If this is true, then it's very difficult to know how God could hold anyone blamed or accountable for not having faith.

Since it's simply, if somebody doesn't give you a gift, you're not to be blamed for that. A gift is undeserved, which means you can't have earned it. The person who received it and the person who didn't receive it have done nothing different from each other.

The person who received it gets no credit for it, and the person who didn't receive it gets no blame. If faith is merely a gift that God arbitrarily gives to whoever he chooses to give it to and doesn't give it to others, then there can be no culpability accrued to those who don't have faith. And yet the Bible holds people without faith fully accountable for their lack of faith.

Blames them for it. Accuses them of not believing or of having little faith. And yet if that's just a gift of God, what's the point of accusing them? Why not talk to God about it? If I don't have faith just because God didn't give it to me because it's a gift of God, then don't blame me.

Talk to God about it. He's the one who didn't give it to me. Don't look to me.

I can't get it anyway. I'm dead, according to Calvinist doctrine. But, of course, Paul is not saying that faith is a gift of God here.

And that is quite obvious. You can figure that out easily enough. One way you would not be able to unless you knew something about the Greek is that the word faith, *pistis* in the Greek, is a feminine noun.

But the word that is not in the feminine. Now, whenever a pronoun is referring back to a noun in the Greek language, there has to be agreement between the pronoun and the noun in the area of gender. *Pistis* is a feminine word.

I mean, for some reason. I mean, that's how it is in some languages. They have masculine and feminine words in neuter.

And you can't always predict by why it would be so, but that's just the way it is in the language. Therefore, the word that, if it were referring back to *pistis* or faith, should be in the feminine. But it's in the neuter.

Which argues fairly strongly, although maybe not conclusively, because sometimes there are peculiarities of misused grammar. But it argues strongly that Paul is not intending to refer back to faith when he says that is not of yourselves. That is the gift of God.

It. What is the gift of God? Well, actually, there's really not any noun in the sentence that is neuter in verse 8. And therefore, it is probable that it simply refers to salvation in general. You are saved by grace through faith.

That the whole transaction of being saved by grace through faith, the salvation is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God. In other words, although the word salvation does not appear in verse 8, it is implied by the verb being saved or been saved.

And it is that the being saved, the salvation, that is the gift of God, not of works. Now, one could hardly imagine Paul saying faith is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works.

How could, why would you say faith is not of works? As if someone ever believed that faith is a product of works. Many people believe that salvation is a result of works. I've never met anyone yet who believed that faith is a result of works.

Except the Calvinist. The Calvinist believes that if you are saved because of your faith, then you are saved by your works. Now that's a weird, weird position to take in view of the scriptures, but that is what Calvinism teaches.

Because Calvin said that if God saved us on the basis of foreseen faith, then we are saved by our works. Which is a bizarre thing to say, but that's what Calvin said, and Calvinist writers say that too. That if God elected us on the basis of foreseen faith, then it is not of grace, it's of works.

Now, only Calvinists talk that way, and that's a, I mean, Paul talks just the opposite. As

far as Paul is concerned, faith and works are opposite things. They are not the same.

In fact, if you look at Romans 4, Romans 4 verses 4 and 5 says, Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace, but as debt. But to him who does not work, but believes, that's faith, difference of works. A person who doesn't work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

So Paul says there's two possible considerations. One is that you'd be saved by works. The other is that you'd be saved by believing or faith.

He said, but if you were saved by your works, this couldn't be grace, this would be a debt that God owed you. Therefore, it's not by works, it's by faith. Faith is the other alternative.

If you look over at, well, that's good enough for now, we need to look back at Ephesians. When Paul says, it is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, he means salvation is not of works. Salvation is the gift of God.

Salvation is not of yourselves. He's not saying faith is not the product of works, because no one has ever believed that faith is the result of works. But many, as I say, believe salvation is the result of works.

So, this thought of the Calvinists, that Paul is calling faith a gift, just doesn't work. It just doesn't fit the passage, and it doesn't fit biblical theology either. Faith is something you do, you believe, or you don't believe.

You're called to, you're commanded to. You can't be commanded to have a gift if it's not given to you. But you can be commanded to do something that you're capable of doing.

Now, it says in verse 10, Now, his workmanship, his craftsmanship, it means that he's working on us. The church is something that God has created in himself to walk in good works. And the church is under construction.

We are being worked upon. We are his craft. We are his project.

The word workmanship, the Greek word is poema, as I understand it, and apparently forms the root for our English word poem. A poem is a creative work, of course, an active creative artistry of a sort. And that's the word that is used here for, it's like a person writes a poem.

A person comes up with a creative work. So, we are that. God has come up with us as his creative work.

We are created in Christ Jesus. We're a new creation. And this creation was made for something.

Just as he said, back in chapter 1, verse 4, that he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. That is, he chose us for a purpose, that we be holy and without blame. So, also, he created us for a purpose.

And that is that we would walk in good works. That he has foreordained that we should walk in. It's amazing that so many people quote verses 8 and 9 in order to act as if good works are not important.

Since verses 8 and 9 say we're saved by grace through faith, not of works. And people quote this as if Paul is saying that it's not important to have good works. Because we're saved by grace, not works.

But Paul makes it clear that we're saved for good works. Once God has saved us, it's not just for us to go to heaven, it's for us to do something different than we did before. Instead of walking according to the course of this world, we're supposed to walk in good works that God has foreordained, a new path that God has mapped out for us that we should walk in.

He says, verse 11, Therefore, remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision made in the flesh by hands, that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off, have been made near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in himself one new man from the two, thus making peace.

And that he might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and to those who were near. For through him we both have access by one spirit to the Father.

Now the main thought in this section is the reconciliation of the formerly hostile categories of Jew and Gentile. In the old covenant, the Jew were, of course, recognized as God's chosen people in a covenant relationship with God, the Sinaitic covenant, and the Gentiles were left out. Therefore, the Jews just considered themselves to be superior, a superior race, and the Gentiles an inferior race.

Well, there were many things inferior about the Gentiles. They were inferior in their knowledge of God. They worshipped idols.

And the Jews knew better than that. But rather than becoming the light to the Gentiles

that God intended the Jews to become, the Jews simply had contempt for the Gentiles. And the Gentiles returned the compliment.

They had contempt for the Jews, too. And Gentiles persecuted Jews, and the Jews hated the Gentiles. And so by the time that Christ came, there was deeply ingrained hostility between those two races.

The Jews were very self-righteous, saw themselves as morally superior to the Gentiles. Now Paul points out in his writings to them, in Romans, that having the law and knowing more about God doesn't make you morally superior. Only if you follow the law and obey God and live up to the calling of your special privilege is there any merit accrued.

And most Jews did not live up to it. They just felt they were superior because they knew more. They knew the law, and the Gentiles didn't.

Well, Gentiles pretty much found the Jews a bit disgusting. The Jews were arrogant against the Gentiles, and the Gentiles tended to not appreciate that and hold the Jews in contempt also. And so Paul says to these readers, who were probably predominantly Gentiles, I mean, we're writing here to churches in Asia Minor, and Asia Minor was a Gentile region, not a Jewish region, though there were Jews in those cities, and some of them possibly had been converted.

The churches that he wrote to could well have been a mixture, probably most churches were, a mixture of Jew and Gentile, but predominantly Gentiles. And he says, therefore, remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh, so he's addressing the Gentile element in the church, and he points out the contempt with which Gentiles are viewed by the Jews, although Paul says it in such a way as to show a little contempt for the arrogance of the Jews. He says, you are called uncircumcision.

Now that uncircumcision is a contemptible way that the Jews spoke of Gentiles. The word Gentile is bad enough, but to call them the uncircumcision was to speak of them as unclean in particular. And he says, you're called that by those who call themselves the circumcision.

He doesn't just say you're called the uncircumcision by the circumcision, he says by that which is called the circumcision. Why does he say that which is called the circumcision? Certainly the Jews were the circumcision, and he is referring to the Jews. Why doesn't he just say the circumcision instead of that which is called the circumcision, made in the flesh by hands? It is Paul's intention to show his contempt for the Jewish arrogance on this point, and that they may call themselves the circumcision, but in God's sight they're not really the circumcised.

If circumcised comes to be used almost as a synonym for clean, and uncircumcised for unclean, then in a real sense the Christians who are Gentiles, though uncircumcised, are

the clean. And the Jews who are physically circumcised but not saved are unclean. And Paul brings that out in Romans chapter 2, where in verses 28 and 29 he says, He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh.

But he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not from men but from God. So Paul indicates that circumcision, as far as God is concerned, is decided on a different matter than physical circumcision. But on the matter of the heart, whether a person is acceptable and circumcised before God, is a matter of whether their heart is circumcised.

Paul said that to the Philippians also, who were Gentiles. There were very few Jews in Philippi. They didn't even have a synagogue there, there were so few Jews, but there were a lot of Gentile converts.

And Paul said to those Gentiles in Philippi, in chapter 3 of Philippians, in verse 2 and 3, he says, Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation, that is the people who want to circumcise you physically. For we are the circumcision who worship God in the spirit, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. So the true circumcision is that which is spiritual.

It is seen in rejoicing in Christ Jesus, in walking in the spirit, and in putting no confidence in the flesh. It is not from physical circumcision. So when Paul speaks of the Jews as the circumcision, he simply says in Ephesians 2.11, Those who are called the circumcision in the flesh made with hands.

Paul is not willing to acknowledge that that title is a legitimate title for them, since they are uncircumcised of heart. But he says, you Gentiles were once on bad terms with these circumcised ones. You were once Gentiles.

And in that condition, verse 12, you were at that time without Christ, of course, they were pagans, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise. Now, the commonwealth of Israel and the covenants of promise speak of a special realm of privilege. God had selected by covenant promises, Israel to be his people.

But as we know from the Old Testament, not all who are of Israel were Israel. I mean, Paul actually said that in Romans 9.6, but we see it in the Old Testament. All who were born of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or Israel, were not necessarily entitled by God to the privileges of the covenants made with Israel, because there was a remnant who were faithful, and there was the rest of the Jews who were unfaithful.

And God's covenants were only fulfilled to the faithful. The unfaithful fell under his judgment again and again and again, in the wilderness and in various other situations. God judged the wicked among them, and saved and confirmed his promises to the

remnant.

Now, there were some Gentiles that became part of that remnant. There were some Gentiles that became what they called proselytes, and they became part of the commonwealth of Israel, and they participated in the covenants of privilege. But the Gentiles in Ephesus were not among them.

These Christians were not proselytes. They did not get circumcised. They did not join Judaism.

They were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. They were strangers to the covenants of promise. They did not have any claim on God's promises of privilege to his people in their Gentile condition.

They had no hope, it says, and they were without God in this world. But that has changed. Now, what has changed? Well, for one thing, they're no longer without hope, and they're no longer without God, and they're no longer without Christ, but more importantly, in the particular discussion, particular focus he wants to make, they're no longer alienated from the commonwealth of Israel.

What he's going to say in these following verses is that in Christ, those who were alienated from each other, the Jews and the Gentiles, have been made one body, so that God has removed the barriers between natural enemies and made them love each other and be joined to one another in one body. Now, that's his point here. He says, now, in verse 13, now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off, far off from where? Well, far off from being in Israel, and they were strangers of the covenants and aliens from Israel.

They were far off from the Jews in terms of their relationship to them. You have been made near by the blood of Christ. Now, of course, we could understand that we were far off from God and have been made near to God.

That would be true, too, but that's not what he's saying, and we see that from how he goes on about this. He says, for he himself is our peace, who has made both, whatever both was, the Jew and the Gentile. He's made both Jew and Gentile one.

That is, in Christ there's a new body, a new identity. There's no more Jew or Gentile. There's one new man, as he goes on to say, made up of both elements, the Jew and the Gentile, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us.

What was the middle wall of partition between the Jew and the Gentile? It was the law. The Jew boasted that he had the law of God. The Gentile didn't.

The Jew followed, at least externally, the law of God. The Gentile didn't. It was the law that was the great dividing point between Jew and Gentile.

But in Christ the law, as a definer, is removed. Therefore, there's no distinction between Jew and Gentile anymore. The law is no longer an issue.

We're not under the law. We don't define our conduct in terms of the law. We don't define our identity in terms of whether we are the people to whom the law was given or not, as the Jews did and the Gentiles did.

But the law is gone. He says he has abolished in his flesh the enmity, that is, the law, of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in himself, that is, in Christ, one new man from the two, that is, from the Jew and the Gentile, thus making peace between the Jew and the Gentile. There was hostility, alienation, between the Jew and the Gentile.

Now he's made peace between the Jew and the Gentile in Christ. Now there's not particularly a peace between the Jew and the Gentile outside of Christ, but he's not talking about outside of Christ. He's talking about the Church.

In the Church, Jew and Gentile are at peace with each other. Now, this being so, of course, isn't that big an issue to us. There aren't that many Jews in our society.

I mean, there are a lot of them, but we've never really been hostile toward the Jews. Some Gentiles have, but I doubt if you ever have. I doubt if you've ever been anti-Semitic, and I doubt if the Jews have ever really been very harsh in their thoughts of you.

Lots of Jews aren't even religious anymore. But what Paul is saying is, of course, in Christ, there's no longer basis for division between groups of people at all. The Jew and the Gentile being a notable group that were alienated from each other, but in Christ, all come on the same terms, and all are one.

All the racial, social, gender, and whatever other, you know, barriers might have made us fall into different classes alienated from each other before, are dissolved in the larger issue of being found in Christ, and all things that we were before no longer being relevant. It says, Christ has abolished the law of commandments, continued ordinances in his flesh. Apparently meaning when he died.

When he physically died, he brought an end to the relevance of the law and ordinances because he established a new covenant, which preempted the old, and the law and the covenants were part of that. Law and ordinances were part of that. And he made in himself one new man.

This new man is the body of Christ. We'll come back to this when we get to chapter 4, where Paul talks about putting on the new man and putting off the old man. But the new man is the body of Christ, made up of the two, the Jew and the Gentile, and Christ has made peace between those two categories.



And then the rest of these next few verses are about how Christ has, just sort of rhapsodizing about this peace, that he might reconcile them both, Jew and Gentile, to God in one body, that's the church, through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity, the enmity was the law, the cause of enmity between the two. And he came and preached peace to you who are far off, that's the Gentiles who are far off from the covenants of God, and to those who were near, the Jews. The Jews were not alienated from the covenants, and we were.

So we were the ones far off, the Jews were the ones who were near. And he came and preached peace to both. And so through him we both, that is Jew and Gentile, have access by one spirit to the Father.

So the Jew and the Gentile come to the same God by the same access, on the same terms, through Jesus. And this access is to the Father. Remember Jesus said, no man comes to the Father but through me, in John 14, 6. That's what Jesus is saying here.

Everyone who comes to the Father comes by the same access, through Jesus. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners. Now this is a very important thing to note what Paul is saying.

No longer strangers and foreigners, in what sense? Well, he just said back in verse 12, we were strangers and foreigners from the commonwealth of Israel. We're no longer that, we're now in Israel. We're now Israel.

And that's what he's going to say. We as Gentiles were once not Israel, we were foreigners and aliens from that, but not any longer, we're now Israel. Israel is us.

It says, therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, meaning the former saints that were already there, the original ones, and members of the household of God. Now, that's what Israel once was, was the household of God. This is a spiritual defined Israel now that we're a part of.

But we're now the Israel, the household of God. We're not strangers and aliens, or separated from Israel anymore. We're now joined with the saints, that would be the remnants of Israel that were always saved before, and we're members of the household with them.

We're part of one body with them. Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. Now, having been built on the foundation shifts the metaphor now.

He was talking about us as a reconciled community, and even as a family, briefly. I mentioned that family is not really an issue in this chapter, but it does come up there in verse 19. We remember the household of God means family, but the word household, or the word house, which can mean household, can also mean a house, a building.

And this apparently leads Paul to shift the metaphor, to think of us as a building. The church is a building, and Peter says so too, in 1 Peter 2.5, that we are living stones being built up into a spiritual house. In fact, I believe this is another point of comparison between 1 Peter and Ephesians.

Because 1 Peter 2.5 says, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Now, you are like living stones, and you are being built up. That's what Paul says here.

We're having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit. You are being built up a spiritual habitation, Peter said. So, this idea of the church as a building under construction is yet another metaphor.

The building is a temple. It's not just any building. It's a temple.

It's a holy temple in the Lord, according to verse 21. Now, Stephen, when he was preaching his final sermon before he was executed, made this as his point to the Jews, that God does not dwell in temples made with hands. God dwells in people.

And wherever God's people are, there is God. He's not confined to a physical temple made of stones. And in the Old Testament, this is made clear also.

In fact, Stephen quotes the Old Testament to make his point. One of the verses that he quotes is Isaiah chapter 66, verses 1 and 2. Actually, he only quotes verse 1, but you can read verses 1 and 2 to get the whole thought. Isaiah 66, 1 and 2 says, Thus says the Lord, Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.

Where is the house that you will build me? And where is the place of my rest? For all those things my hand has made, and all those things exist, says the Lord. But on this one will I look, on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, who trembles at my word. So God says, I don't inhabit temples made with hands.

I inhabit the one who trembles at my word, who is of a contrite spirit. The poor in spirit, as Jesus called them. Theirs is the kingdom.

And so God inhabits people, not buildings. This is something that even modern Christians, though they acknowledge this, sometimes get hung up on the sacredness of certain places. Some people think that the church building is to be treated with particular respect.

Why? Well, that's where the church gathers. Well, maybe that's a good thing, but the church can gather in a living room, or out on the lawn, or in many other places, just as well as in any particular building. There's nothing sacred about a building.

There was in the Old Testament. There isn't now. Buildings aren't just buildings.

A lot of people like to go to the Holy Land of Israel and see, you know, the tomb where Jesus was buried, and the church that stands where Jesus was allegedly born, and so forth, and the synagogues and so forth where Jesus may have been in. And I can sort of understand that. As a point of interest, that'd be an interesting thing to see.

But I don't have the same interest in it as many seem to, because I just don't think of places as being sacred. There were sacred places, sacred buildings, sacred things, sacred bowls and dishes and spoons and things like that, and furniture in the Old Testament, but those things were all a type and a shadow. All of that never really was a picture of what God's ultimate purpose was.

He never intended it to live in a place, but in people. That's why Jesus said to the woman who asked Him in Samaria in John chapter 4, well, should we worship in Jerusalem or in this mountain? He said, woman, the time has come when people won't worship in Jerusalem or in this mountain, that those who worship God will worship in the Spirit and in truth. There was a temple in Jerusalem, and there was a temple in that mountain, Gerizim, where she was.

But He said that neither temple is going to be sacred in the future. What is sacred is worshiping God in the Spirit and in truth. The person who does that is God's habitation.

Now, this is true of us individually, of our bodies as habitations of God, but Paul here is talking about something corporate, sort of like Peter is. Peter says individually we're like stones, but a stone is not a temple. You bring many stones, and by doing so you build a temple.

And the church is the temple. We are the stones. We are the individual stones, living stones built up into a holy temple.

This temple is built upon a certain foundation. It is the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Paul said in Ephesians 2.20. And Jesus Himself is the chief cornerstone. Now, in saying the chief cornerstone, Paul is actually alluding to several Old Testament ideas.

In Psalm 118, the stone which the builders rejected became the chief cornerstone. Jesus quoted that about Himself, indicating that God intended even Israel to be figured like a building. His kingdom is like a building, and God provided a stone for that building, but the builders didn't want it because they had their own blueprint, different than God's.

So they rejected that stone, and God took that stone that they rejected and built a new building, made it the chief stone of the building. That was Christ. It's that Jesus came to Israel, and the builders, the leaders of Israel, didn't want Him.

He didn't fit their pattern or their blueprint of what they wanted their society to be like.

So they rejected Him, but God took it and made a new building to be His habitation. Jesus is, at once, depending on which metaphor is used, the foundation of the building and the cornerstone of the building.

In seeing Christ as both, the New Testament writers have Old Testament precedent because in Isaiah chapter 28 and verse 16, a prophecy about Jesus. It says, Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tridestone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation. Whoever believes will not act hastily.

Now notice in referring to Jesus here as the stone, a trid and precious stone, it says that He's a cornerstone, but He's also a foundation. Now the cornerstone and the foundation are not the same. It's just a fluidity of metaphor.

Seen one way, Jesus is the foundation the building is built on. Seen another way, He's the cornerstone and the foundation is that of the apostles and prophets. Paul observes the same fluidity of metaphor.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 3, he talks about himself as having laid the foundation in a church and another builds on it. But he said this in verse 11, 1 Corinthians 3, 11, For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become manifest.

The church's foundation is Jesus Christ. But then Paul can shift the metaphor and say, well, Jesus is the chief cornerstone and the foundation is the apostles and prophets. This is true in its own sense too.

The apostles and prophets laid the foundation for the church. And in doing so, they have provided an adequate foundation for the church of all time, which has been growing ever since into a growing building. More stones being added every time new converts are made.

And for 2,000 years, this building has been growing and growing and growing upon the original foundation. Now there is an institution, in fact there are zillions of institutions called churches, but they are only really legitimately called churches if they are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Now we have the writings of the apostles and the prophets in the scriptures.

And therefore, what is written in the scriptures provides for us a definition of the perimeters of the foundation of the true church. That foundation laid by the apostles spiritually in their teachings. And the prophets in their teachings are the foundation of the church.

And if a church is built somewhere else and not on these truths, it is not the church. There has always been a church on that foundation ever since it was laid. Sometimes it

has been contrary to the organized church and the institutional church.

Sometimes it has been more or less identified with it. But the church has been growing into a holy habitation of God through the spirit, which is a global phenomenon ever since the days of Christ and the apostles. And that is what Paul is saying.

That someday this church will be finished. This building will be complete. And the glory of the Lord will fill the house just as it filled the temple of Solomon.

And that will be, of course, the consummation. Now Paul continues, but will not continue at this point because we have run out of time. So we will come back to the third chapter after we take a break here.