

THE GREATEST CHAPTERS IN THE BIBLE-18

EPHESIANS, CHAPTER 02

GET OUT OF THE GRAVEYARD!

I. SIN'S WORK AGAINST US (2:1-3).

Paul gives us a full-length picture of the terrible spiritual condition of the unsaved person.

A. He is dead (2:1).

This means spiritually dead. He possesses no spiritual life, and he can do nothing of himself to please God. The unbeliever is not sick; he is dead! He does not need resuscitation; he needs resurrection. All lost sinners are dead, and the only difference between one sinner and another is the state of decay.

B. He is disobedient (2:2-3a).

This was the beginning of man's spiritual death—his disobedience to the will of God. There are three forces that encourage man in his disobedience; the world, the devil, and the flesh:

1. The world; puts pressure on each person to try to get him to conform (Rom. 12:2).
2. The devil; Satan is "the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience."
3. The flesh; the fallen nature that makes us disobey God.

C. He is depraved (2:3b).

When you apply the word *depraved* to the unsaved person, you are not saying that he *only* does evil, or that he is incapable of doing good. You are simply saying that he is incapable of doing anything to merit salvation or meet the high standards of God's holiness.

D. He is doomed (2:3c).

By nature, children of wrath! By deed, children of disobedience!

II. GOD'S WORK FOR, IN AND THROUGH US (Eph. 2:4-10).

A. God's Work For Us (2:4-9).

1. He loved us (2:4).

Love is one of God's intrinsic attributes, but when this love is related to sinners, it becomes *grace* and *mercy*. God is "rich in mercy" (2:4) and in "grace" (2:7), and these riches make it possible for sinners to be saved. It comes as a shock to some people when they discover that we are not saved "by God's love," but by God's mercy and grace.

2. He quickened us (2:5).

This means He made us alive, even when we were dead in sins. He accomplished this spiritual resurrection by the power of the Spirit, using the Word.

3. He exalted us (2:6).

We are not raised from the dead and left in the graveyard. Because we are united to Christ, we have been exalted with Him and we are sharing His throne in the "in heavenly places."

4. He keeps us (2:7-9).

God's purpose in our redemption is not simply to rescue us from hell, as great a work as that is. His ultimate purpose in our salvation is that for all eternity the church might glorify God's grace (1:6,12,14).

B. God's Work In Us (2:10a).

1. "For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus." Our conversion is not the end; it is the beginning. We are a part of God's "new creation" (2Cor. 5:17), and God continues to work in us to make us what He wants us to be. His purpose is to make us more like Christ (Rom. 8:29).

2. But how does God work in us? Through His Holy Spirit, "both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). Christ is equipping us for our walk and our work here on earth.

C. God's Work Through Us (2:10b).

1. We are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

2. The Bible speaks of many different kinds of works:

- a. The “works of the Law” which cannot save (Gal. 2:16; 3:11).
- b. The “the works of the flesh” which are listed in Gal 5:19-21.
- c. The “works of darkness” (Rom. 13:12; Eph. 5:11).
- d. The “dead works” in Heb. 6:1 seem to be “works that lead to death,” since “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23).

THE GREAT PEACE MISSION.

III. THE SEPARATION OF THE GENTILES (2:11-12).

The one word that best describes the Gentiles is *without*. They were “outside” in several respects.

- A. Without Christ.
Keep in mind that every unsaved person, Jew or Gentile, is “outside Christ” and that means condemnation.
- B. Without citizenship.
God called the Jews and built them into a nation. He gave them His laws and His blessings. A Gentile could enter the nation as a proselyte, but he was not born into that very special nation. Israel was God’s nation, in a way that was not true of any Gentile nation.
- C. Without covenants.
While the blessing of the Gentiles is included in God’s covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3). The Gentiles were “aliens” and “strangers.”
- D. Without hope.
Historians tell us that a great cloud of hopelessness covered the ancient world. Philosophies were empty; traditions were disappearing; religions were powerless to help men face either life or death. People longed to pierce the veil and get some message of hope from the other side, but there was none.
- E. Without God.
The heathen had gods aplenty, as Paul discovered in Athens (Ac. 17:16-23). But the pagan, no matter how religious or moral he might have been, did not know the true God.

IV. THE RECONCILIATION OF THE GENTILES (Eph. 2:13-18).

Introduction.

1. The “but now” in 2:13 parallels the “but God” in 2:4. Both speak of the gracious intervention of God on behalf of lost sinners. “Enmity” is the key word in this section (2:15-16); and it is a twofold enmity: between Jews and Gentiles (2:13-15) and between sinners and God (2:16-18).
 2. Paul describes here the greatest peace mission in history: Jesus Christ not only reconciled Jews and Gentiles, but He reconciled both to Himself in the one body, the church.
 3. The word, *reconcile*, means “to bring together again.”
- A. The enmity between Jews and Gentiles (2:13-15).
 1. God had put a difference between Jews and Gentiles so that His purposes in salvation might be accomplished. But once those purposes were accomplished, there was no more difference. In fact, it was His purpose that these differences be erased forever, and they are erased through the work of Christ in reconciliation.
 2. The cause of that enmity was the Law, because the Law made a definite distinction between Jews and Gentiles. The divine ordinances given by God to Israel stood as a wall between the Jews and the other nations.
 3. In order for Jews and Gentiles to be reconciled, this wall had to be destroyed, and this Jesus did on the cross. The cost of destroying the enmity was the blood of Christ. When He died, the veil in the temple was literally torn in two, and the wall of separation (figuratively) was torn down. By fulfilling the demands of the Law in His righteous life, and by bearing the curse of the Law in His

- sacrificial death (Gal. 3:10-13), Jesus removed the legal barrier that separated Jew from Gentile.
4. In Jesus Christ, Jew and Gentile become one. "He is our peace" (Eph. 2:14). The consequences of Christ's work are, then, the destroying of the enmity by the abolishing of the Law, and the creating of a new man—the church, the body of Christ. The word abolish simply means "to nullify."

Old Position

"without Christ"

"aliens"

"strangers"

"no hope"

"without God" (Eph. 2:12)

New Position

"in Christ" (Eph. 2:13)

"a holy nation" (1Pet. 2:9)

"no more strangers" (Eph. 2:19)

"called in one hope" (Eph. 4:4)

"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1:3)

B. The enmity between sinners and God (2:16-18).

1. Not only did the Gentiles need to be reconciled to the Jews, but both the Jews and the Gentiles needed to be reconciled to God! This was the conclusion the Apostles came to at the Jerusalem Conference recorded in Acts 15 (Ac. 15:9,11). It was not a question of the Gentile becoming a Jew to become a Christian, but the Jew admitting he was a sinner like the Gentile.
2. Jesus Christ "is our peace" (Eph. 2:14). He "made peace" (Eph. 2:15), and He "preached peace" (Eph. 2:17). Jew and Gentile are now at peace with each other in Christ, and both have open access to God (Rom. 5:1-2). Reconciliation is complete!

V. **THE UNIFICATION OF JEW AND GENTILE IN CHRIST (Eph. 2:19-22).**

Paul has repeated the word "one" to emphasize the unifying work of Christ:

1. "Made both one" (Eph. 2:14).
2. "One new man" (Eph. 2:15).
3. "One body" (Eph. 2:16).
4. "One Spirit" (Eph. 2:18).

A. One nation (2:19a).

Israel was God's chosen nation, but they rejected their Redeemer and suffered the consequences. The kingdom was taken from them (Mt. 21:43). This "new nation" is the church, "a chosen generation . . . a holy nation, a peculiar people" (Ex. 19:6; 1Pet. 2:9; Gal. 6:16). All believers, regardless of national background, belong to that "holy nation" with citizenship in heaven (Phil. 3:20-21).

B. One family (2:19b).

Through faith in Christ, we enter into God's family, and God becomes our Father. This wonderful family of God is found in two places, "in heaven and earth" (Eph. 3:15). We are all brothers and sisters in the one family, no matter what racial, national, or physical distinctions we may possess.

C. One temple (2:20-22).

God does not dwell in man-made temples, including church buildings (Ac. 7:48-50). He dwells in the hearts of those who have obeyed Christ (1Cor. 6:19-20), and in the church collectively (Eph. 2:20-22).

VI. **ONE FINAL THOUGHT; NEXT WEEK.**

A. Romans 11:25,26 bears some discussion here. Possible meanings:

1. That at the end of time, God will save the nation of Israel along with everyone who has obeyed X.
2. The Israel being saved (11:26) is a spiritual Israel consisting of the Jews that were not hardened by the gospel message and the Gentiles that obeyed the gospel.

B. Next week: Hebrews, Chapter 11.