SNS 04158-606 08/29/2004
"BUT GOD…" Decatur, IL

INTRODUCTION.

A. Scripture text: **Ephesians 2:1-10**.

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, **2** in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. **3** Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. **4** But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, **5** even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), **6** and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places,* in Christ Jesus, **7** in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. **8** For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; **9** not as a result of works, that no one should boast. **10** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

B. In our series on the book of Ephesians we have studied the following:
   1. The blessings in the heavenly places in X.
   2. The work of the Father, Son, and HS in our salvation.
   3. Paul's prayer for enlightenment.

C. Tonight, we look at one of the greatest texts in all of Scripture: Paul's treatise to our salvation by grace through faith.

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

A. The text:

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, **2** in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. **3** Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

B. This is a contrast between our previous life with the life we now have in X. Paul says that we were constantly dead, while outside of X. There is no spiritual life while one is in sin. Sin kills us spiritually and we are dead; completely helpless to change our spiritual state.
   1. To trespass means to slip, fall, or lose the way, or make a mistake. It means to do something that you should not have done.
   2. Sin means to miss the mark, and not becoming what we should be. Not growing in grace and in knowledge is to miss the mark of what God expects of us.
   3. Both of these terms indicate that not only did we do things we shouldn't (trespasses), but we left undone the things we should have done (sin).

C. Three things have caused this separation and spiritual death:
   1. <u>The course of the world</u>.
      The world has a path it wants everyone to take, but it is God-denying and destructive. We see it in TV, books, movies, etc., showing a life of sin according to the will of man (Prov. 14:12).
      There is a way *which seems* right to a man, But its end is the way of death.
   2. <u>The prince of the air</u>.
      Satan has a part in this "course of the world" because it is a path according to him. Satan is the god of this world (2Cor. 4:4).
      in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
      Jesus says that Satan is the ruler or prince of this world, but that he will be cast out (Jn. 12:31).
      "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out.
   3. <u>The spirit of disobedience</u>.
      It is the Devil's attitude that is working in those who are disobedient. And this spirit is working now! Satan is not giving up his fight for men's souls (Jn. 8:44; Col. 3:13; 1Pet. 4:3).

(Jn 8:44) "You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature;* for he is a liar, and the father of lies.
(Col 3:13) bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.
(1Pet 4:3) For the time already past is sufficient *for you* to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.

D. The emphasis in 2:3 is that we have all have done these things of the flesh and of the mind.
   1. The flesh is not evil, but the misuse of flesh is. Satan wants us to lust instead of love.
   2. Pride, and thinking more of ourselves than what we ought, gives the same end as those who fall into the sins of the flesh.
   3. The statement, by nature, children of wrath is not a proof of original sin, but a teaching that says because of the lifestyle of sin and disobedience we are people (children) destined for the wrath of God. Our sinful nature (life) warrants that we suffer the wrath of God.
   4. Even as the rest contrasts those who are no longer destined to that wrath with those who are. This is a simple proof against the evolutionary theory which says that things are getting better and better, while in effect, things are getting worse and worse (2Tim. 3:13).
      But evil men and impostors will proceed *from bad* to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

II. **GOD'S WORK (2:4-9).**

A. The 2:4-6 text:
   But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, **5** even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), **6** and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places,* in Christ Jesus,
   1. The verse opens with some very important words, but God and this means that a brighter picture begins to develop. God is rich in mercy and this love is aimed at sinners. This is a great love, in the things it accomplishes and in the things it doesn't consider.
   2. We are no longer dead in sin, but alive with X (Rom. 5:8).
      But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
      All of this is not because of anything we have done, but is by God's grace.
   3. We now share the same glorification that X has. We have been raised out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light and can sit with X on God's right hand (a place of approval). Only in X can one enjoy these things. By X and in X we are saved and enjoy all spiritual blessings (Phil. 3:20; Rom. 8:17).
      (Phil. 3:20) For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;
      (Rom. 8:17) and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* in order that we may also be glorified with *Him*.

B. The 2:7-9 text:
   in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. **8** For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; **9** not as a result of works, that no one should boast.
   1. The ages to come is heaven, and to know of the great blessings that are in store for us there is known by the church. Those who are outside of the church cannot appreciate all of the promises to be fulfilled in X in heaven. We identify with the blessings to come, by enjoying the blessings in the church.
   2. The two-fold way in which we are saved--grace through faith. The gift of God is salvation, not faith. Grace is God's part in our salvation, and faith is our part. We are not saved by grace alone. We cannot boast in our works because they were evil (2:1-3). We can no more boast of our salvation, any more than we can boast in breathing free air.

III. **GOD'S WORKMANSHIP (2:10-13).**

A. The text:

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. **11** Therefore remember, that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," *which is* performed in the flesh by human hands-- **12** *remember* that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. **13** But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

B. The church is the "thing of God's doing" or workmanship. To ridicule the church is to ridicule something that God has built through X. The construction of ourselves in X is so that we can do good works (in great contrast to 2:1-3). The church is to be involved in doing good things, thought out by God before the foundation of the world, so that His great plan can be accomplished (2Tim. 3:16-17).

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; **17** that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

We must allow God to mold and make us in the church so that we can walk in a worthy manner.

C. The contrast of those outside God's favor and those within is striking. The analogy is of the condition of the Gentiles during the Mosaic period. In chart form:

<u>The Gentiles</u>	<u>The Jews</u>
1. Uncircumcised of flesh.	1. Circumcised in the flesh.
2. Separate from X.	2. In the seed-line of X.
3. Excluded from Israel.	3. The Israel of God.
4. Strangers to the covenants.	4. Keepers of the covenants.
5. Having no hope.	5. Hope in the Messiah to come.
6. Without God in the world.	6. Jehovah is their God.

D. But everything has changed due to X and His coming. This is a perfect introduction to what Paul will discuss next in 2:14-22.

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

A. "But God…" is the story of how sin's work was overcome by God's work and in that we became God's workmanship.

B. Next time we look at the wonderful unity of Jew and Gentile in the church due to the fulfilling of the old covenant in the new.

C. We are dead in our sins and unable to save ourselves, "But God…"

D. Plan of salvation for non-Xians, erring Xians.