

Ephesians

IV. GOD'S SALVATION AS RESURRECTION AND EXALTATION WITH CHRIST (1:15-23)

A. Dead in Transgressions and Sins (2:1-3)

2:1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

2:2 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.

2:3 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.

Verses 1-3 continue the major theme of the epistle launched in 1:15 – the power of God's salvation for those who are in Christ. Paul first reminds us of our sinful condition and our bondage to evil forces and to the flesh (2:1-10). In the second half of chapter 2 (2:11-22) he shows that we were once separated from the covenant promises of God, and then goes on to reveal that we are now a new people.

The original paragraph in Greek consists of two sentences. The first is comprised of verses 1-7 and the second, verses 8-10. The subject of the sentence (God) and the main verb (made alive) are not mentioned until verses 4 and 5 (O'Brien, 152) The following describes how the contents of this paragraph are divided: verses 1-3 reveal the sinful condition of humanity apart from Christ, verses 4-7 speak of God's great love and mercy toward sinful man, and verses 8-10 explain what God's salvation has effected, or summarizes the nature of salvation provided by God.

Before God made us alive, we were deeply affected by evil. This included things in our environment (the ways of the world -v.3), our

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inclination toward evil (the cravings of the sinful nature - v. 3) and the influence of our supernatural opponent (the ruler of the kingdom of the air - v. 2). Like the rest of humanity, we were children of wrath.

We were dead in our trespasses and sins. Paul is not talking about some particularly degraded segment of society or those whose moral character has fallen to the lowest possible level - he is referring to fallen humanity as a whole. If Christ's resurrection was an introduction to the life in the age to come, then those outside of Him can only be called "dead". "Death" describes a state of being. It is a state of alienation and separation from God. The cause of death is our trespasses and sins. The use of these synonyms and the fact that they are in the plural form stresses the fullness and variety of the unbelievers' sinful past (O'Brien, 157). As a result they had no hope, were far away from God (2:12) and were alienated from His life (4:18).

In the OT, and particularly in the Psalms, living a life of sin, disease, alienation, or in captivity under the rule of one's enemy is described as a life in Sheol, in realm of death (Ps. 13:1-3; 30:3; 31:12; 88:3-6; 143:3; Hos. 13:14; Jon. 2:6) (Lincoln, 92). This idea is also found in the NT in Matthew 8:22 and Luke 9:60; 15:24, 32. In I Timothy 5:6 and Revelation 3:1 it is used of Christians who are not living the life that they should. John also has a strong realized eschatology of life and death (Jn. 5:24-25; I Jn. 3:14). This view of life is a theological assessment by the writer for whom reality is determined by one's relationship to God and who sees those who are not related to Him as, tragically, in a state of death.

"The wonder of the salvation that has been experienced is contrasted with the lost situation from which God has freed them. Their past condition is described by terms which relate to their sin (Ro. 5:8-11; 7:5; Eph. 2:1), ethical practices, alienation from God and His people (Col. 1:21; Eph. 2:3), or bondage to evil supernatural forces (Eph. 2:2)" (O'Brien, 158).

The gravity of their previous condition, however, magnifies the wonder of God's mercy. The past is recalled not to emphasize it, but to draw attention to God's mighty action in Christ (O'Brien, 158).

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The readers' former lifestyle was not evidence of freedom, but of bondage to forces over which they had no control. It is only because God is rich in mercy that He acts to benefit those who are objects of wrath.

We formerly walked according to the course of this world. The pre-Christian way of life is described literally as walking according to "the age of this world" and recalls Colossians 3:7. This idea is thoroughly Hebrew in nature and is not an unusual one coming from Paul who was a Jew. "To walk" refers to an ethical conduct or way of living.

An age in Hebrew thought refers to a time span. The old age, prior to the dawning of Christ, is dominated by temporal and spatial limitations (O'Brien). Humanity's conduct simply aligns with the norms and values of a spatio-temporal complex, wholly hostile to God (Lincoln, 95). That is, the people of the world do not focus on the age to come but their conduct is controlled by attitudes, habits and preferences that are alien to God and His standards.

We also formerly walked according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Those outside of Christ were not only subject to the environment around them but were also influenced by personal evil forces that were hostile toward them. Ephesians makes constant reference to spiritual forces that wage war against humanity (1:21; 3:10; 4:27; 6:11, 12, 16).

"Prince" was a word used in the OT to indicate a national or tribal leader. Here it refers to Satan, the leader of the powers of darkness. In the gospels he is called the ruler of demons (Matt. 9:34; 12:24; Mk. 3:22; Lk. 11:15) and the prince of this world (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).

Paul says that Satan is in control of the kingdom of the air. "Kingdom" denotes a realm, in this case the heavenly realm. "The air" refers to the lower reaches of the realm, emphasizing the close proximity of this evil power to the world. This "prince" is further described as the spirit that is working in the sons of disobedience. It is difficult to determine whether this is referring to Satan himself who is a spirit, or to Satan's compelling influence over people who are victims of disobedience.

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"Working" is a word that Paul has previously used in Greek to describe God's mighty works (Eph. 1:11) when He raised Jesus from the dead and exalted Him (1:20). Here it speaks of Satan's power to keep the unbeliever in this state of disobedience. "They are sons of disobedience" is another Hebraism denoting men and women whose lives are characterized by disobedience.

The disobedient are described as those who **"live in the lusts of their flesh, indulge the desires of their flesh and of the mind, and are by nature children of wrath"**. The "flesh" does not only pertain to the physical part of man (although it is used this way in the Bible at times). It also describes humanity, which is in a state of rebellion against God. Their desires are "fleshly." Their minds are "fleshly." Sin permeates their being so deeply that every aspect of their lives is tainted. No corner remains untouched (cf. Ro. 3:9-18 Galatians 5:16-25 describes how these fleshly appetites are lived out).

Not only did we indulge in these actions, Paul tells us that we are objects of God's wrath *by nature*. That is, we are objects of His wrath by birth (Ro. 5:12-21; cf. Gal. 2:15 -"Jews by nature"). "The dreadful predicament has been inherited" (O'Brien, 162). This does not mean that man's sinfulness is a part of human nature as designed by God, but it is an abnormal malady that came into existence when man fell into sin.

"Children of wrath" is another Hebrew expression similar to "sons of disobedience" in verse 2 (see Lincoln, 98-99 for more examples of this type of expression). It signifies that we are worthy and deserving of God's wrath. Wrath is God's anger and the resultant condemnation and judgment against sin. It is evidence that God is holy. Wrath is not a result of a natural cause and effect, nor is it vindictive in nature. Though wrath does not contradict love and mercy (as the next verse indicates) one cannot understand the greatness of God's mercy without first understanding the extent of His hatred for sin.

2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,

2:5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

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2:6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus,

2:7 in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

The word "but" signals the magnificent change that has taken place for those who are in Christ. We were dead BUT in Christ we are made alive. We were in bondage to the world BUT in Christ we are exalted above it. We were objects of God's wrath BUT we have become objects of His mercy. Satan was our prince BUT Jesus has become our King. A completely new existence has taken place.

What prompted God to act so freely on our behalf? Our salvation originates from four attributes found in God: (1) His mercy (v.4), (2) His love (v. 4), (3) His grace (v. 5, 7, 8) and (4) His kindness (v. 7).

(1) His mercy (v.4)

God is frequently portrayed in the OT as One who abounds in mercy (Exo. 34:6; Psa. 103:8; Jonah 4:2). In fact, He delights in showing mercy (Mic. 7:8). Mercy is often used of God's immovable loyalty to His covenant and love for Israel, especially when Israel was unfaithful (Lincoln, 100, O'Brien, 165). It is an expression of love and generosity which is unexpected (Anderson, O'Brien, 165). Mercy is neither a duty nor an obligation, but a free act of God based on the promises He has made to His people. It is His response to a desperate, helpless situation and is related to grace, love, and compassion, all of which are extended to Jew and Gentile alike ("us" includes both groups). "Mercy" like "grace" emphasizes that man is not part of the picture. It is a free act that comes from God and is directed toward people who cannot rescue themselves.

(2) love (v. 4)

God's mercy is joined by love as the motivating force behind His saving acts (*dia* [διὰ] with the accusative of words for emotion indicates motive -

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Lincoln, 100). This is combined with the adjective "great" and the cognate expression "with which He loved us" to emphasize the exceeding greatness of God's love. Just as mercy is not adequate by itself when used of God, neither is love. God is *rich* in mercy and He is *great* in love. It is the love of God that leads to the sacrifice of His Son on behalf of undeserving people (Eph. 5:2, 25; Jn. 3:16; Ro. 5:8; 8:39).

(3) grace (v. 5, 7, 8)

Grace is a theological concept that most clearly expresses God's work of salvation in Christ (Ro. 3:23-24). The apostle's message is called "The Gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). Grace is opposed to anything that pertains to merit and the root of this word conveys the idea of "gift". Grace is also the key theme of Ephesians and, according to 1:3-14, is something that is lavished upon us in the Beloved.

In Exodus 33:19 God refers to Himself as gracious (see Lincoln. 102-104 for a good discussion on the grace of God in the OT and NT).

In 1:6 we saw that salvation in Christ is the reason Paul gives for believers to praise God - specifically, since our salvation by predestination is an act of God's grace it follows that we resound in praise for His glorious grace. In 1:6 the term "freely bestowed" is related to the word grace and emphasizes the abundance of grace found in salvation and the generosity of the One giving it. Grace is the cause and reason for our redemption. According to 2:7 God intends to pour copious amounts this grace upon us in the age to come.

(4) kindness (v. 7)

Kindness speaks of God's sympathetic concern for humanity, His goodness in acting on their behalf (Ro. 2:4; 11:22; Titus 3:4). Although His kindness in salvation is available to all men, it is only experienced by those who put their faith in Christ.

Verse 5 is connected to the opening 3 verses with the words "even when we were dead in our transgressions". This is in contrast to "made alive" in verse 5 and "by grace you have been saved" in verses 5 and 8. The change

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from "you" in verse 1 to "we" in verse 5 shows that both Jews and Gentiles are in the same sinful condition and face the same consequences. The main verb (made alive) in the paragraph is also in verse 5. What God has accomplished in Christ He has also accomplished in unbelievers. I Corinthians 15:45 and II Corinthians 3:6 state that at His resurrection Christ has already become creatively life-giving. There is a correlation between 1:20-21 and 2:1-7 (esp. 1:20 and 2:6). The rescue from death implies that forgiveness of sins has taken place (cf. Col. 2:13).

Paul just has just completed writing the main verb when he feels compelled to interject the words "for by grace you have been saved." It is an emphatic statement underlining what salvation means to his readers. It draws attention to the divined initiative and accomplishment of God (Lincoln, 102).

Paul speaks of salvation from both a present and a future perspective. In 1:3-14 he has enumerated the blessings of salvation already received. In 2:5 he uses the perfect passive participle "having been saved" indicating a past action which results in a continuing state of being (we were saved and are saved as a result of that initial act). In 2:6 the resurrection of believers is also expressed in a way to show that it has already taken place. However, in Romans 8:24 though he says we "were saved" he qualifies it with the words "in hope" a phrase indicating the future aspect of our salvation. Salvation is also expressed as a future event (cf. Ro. 5:9, 10:10:9, 13; 13:11; I Cor. 3:15; 5:5). Our full salvation is yet future - we are yet to be raised from the dead and to be seated with Christ. This is the eschatological (future) aspect of it. But the fact that we are now seated with Christ is something we experience at the present time. Reality is determined by our relationship to Christ. Our present participation in a future event is called "realized eschatology."

To be raised and seated with Christ means that we have been taken out of the dominion of darkness and have been placed in a new state of existence. In Colossians 3:1-3 this fact is implicit, for it emphasizes that the life that we share with Christ is the basis for believers to seek the things above. Christ changed the power structures in world history. A new age has dawned, and from God's perspective, the believer is with Christ in His state of existence. Jesus conquered death - so did the believer who is in Him.

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Jesus was exalted - so are we. Jesus triumphed over hostile cosmic powers - believers also share His victory over them.

Verse 7 is an extraordinary verse. It concludes the thought that began in verse 4 and states that the purpose (*hina* [ἵνα]) of lavishing mercy on sinners is to serve as a demonstration of God's abundant grace for all eternity.

In 1:3-14 we saw that the goal of salvation is to bring glory to God (1:6, 12, 14). His free choice of men and women to inherit the blessings of eternal life and become God's sons and daughters is "to the praise of His glorious grace" (1:6). 1:10 showed that our salvation is not centered on us. Instead, God is uniting all things under Christ, and our salvation is simply a part of accomplishing that purpose. From beginning to end, God is the center and the fulfillment of His purposes. 2:7 emphasizes this once again. We benefit from God's work of salvation. We experience His grace, mercy, kindness, and love. We have been delivered from the kingdom of darkness and have avoided His wrath. But ultimately our salvation reverts back to God, for through it His grace and goodness will be displayed in us for all eternity. From our vantage point, the grace of God is seen as kindness. The saved individual, however, turns people from themselves, to the extravagance of the grace of God that saved them.

For all eternity all of creation will marvel at the goodness of God and the surpassing riches of God's grace and kindness which He has shown to us who are in Christ . . . and the richness of God's grace is magnified especially since it is poured out upon to the most undeserving, disobedient, and rebellious bunch of people. You and I - in spite of our sinfulness - become trophies of God's grace to be displayed for all eternity!

The plural "ages" in the phrase "in the ages to come" is not simply a stylistic variation, but implies "one age supervening upon another like successive waves of the sea, as far into the future as thought can reach" (O'Brien, 173). What God has done for us now will continue forever as a display of His goodness. As Colossians 3:3-4 says, "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God, when Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."

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2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

2:9 not as a result of works, that no one should boast.

2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Paul had just shown that what had happened to believers was due to the amazing abundance of God's grace. It was He who gave them life and He will be glorified throughout all eternity for it. While Paul denies that their salvation was due to any human effort, he also insists that it was a call to live a life of good works.

Faith is normally understood as the human response by which God's salvation is received. It is the means (*dia pisteos* - διὰ πίστεως) by which salvation is made effective in a person's life. It is the response that accepts what was already done for the person in Christ. In other words, one could say that at the instant men are made alive by God, they also desire to receive what God has done for them.

In order to stress that salvation is a work of God alone, Paul adds that it is not from us, it is a gift of God. The Greek word for "not of yourselves" is *ek* (ἐκ), and it is used to indicate source. In other words Paul is saying that salvation is by grace through faith, neither of which is found in sinful man. Faith that saves is our faith, but that faith cannot exist without God opening our eyes and allowing us to see in new dimensions that are hidden from the unbeliever. Man's faith is not choosing the correct option of two; it is a response to the work of God making man into a new creature.

Furthermore, he then states that it is not by works lest someone boast. Although Paul often speaks of works of the law, here he is speaking of human merit in any form. God's salvation is a total act of grace. It does not originate in man (Ro. 11:6), nor is it achieved through human performance.

Salvation that is devoid of human involvement is God's way of preventing men from boasting. Boasting accompanies works because they become a ground for self-congratulation and pride. Boasting puts confidence in the flesh by making it the object of trust.

Verse 10 gives an additional reason ("For" - gar [γάρ]) why salvation is seen as a gift, namely, because we are His workmanship (2:10). Poima (ποίημα) literally means "what is made" and is frequently used of God's creative work (cf. Psa. 143:5 [LXX = Psa. 142:5]; and Ro. 1:20). Since salvation is *God's* creative work, it follows that good works do not enter in; works are the result of being a new creature, not the cause of it.

Believers have been *created* in Christ Jesus not "by good works" but "for good works". God took the sinner and made him into someone to do good works. This is the purpose for which God created people as new beings in Christ. Formerly we walked in trespasses and sins, according to "the age of this world" and the lusts of the flesh and mind (2:1-3), but a radical act of transformation has taken place. We have been created to walk in the deeds that God has prepared beforehand. God is the origin of the good works in which we are to walk. To say this is to assert one more time that a believer can take no credit for what he does. However, this does not constitute total determinism, for the human activity of "walking" is still necessary. The actual living out of God's purposes still has to take place.

It is fitting that new creations will someday live in the new creation described in Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22.

B. The Creation of a New Body (2:11-22)

Verses 11-22 provide a beautiful picture of both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of reconciliation brought by the cross.

1:9-10 tells of the mystery of God's plan to bring all things together as a unified whole in Christ. Two obstacles need to be overcome for this to occur: the subjection of all powers and the creation of the church, an organism that unites both Jews and Gentiles. Explanation of the latter is the purpose of verse 11-22.

This paragraph is parallel in composition to 2:1-10. There Paul spoke of what they were in relation to sin and what they had become in Christ. Verses 11-13 describe the Gentiles' pre-Christian past in relation to Israel.

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In 2:11-22 he speaks of what they were in relation to Israel and what they have become in Christ.

2:11 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--

2:12 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.

2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

"Therefore" in verse 11 signals the conclusion to what was said earlier; in light of the unmerited blessings they possess (1:3-14) and the change that has occurred to their position (2:1-10), the Gentile readers are to remember their pre-Christian condition from another perspective. This does not mean that they have actually forgotten what they were like outside of Christ, but that they need to understand and appreciate the mighty reversal that has happened to them. If they realize what they have been rescued from, they will enjoy their present condition in an even greater way.

First Paul calls them "Gentiles in the flesh" - an expression that emphasizes that there is a genuine physical difference between themselves and the Jews who were descendants of Abraham; they are ethnically different. Also, they did not practice circumcision, which was a physical symbol of the Jews' covenant relationship with God. "Uncircumcision" was a derogatory word used by the Jews to express the inferiority of the Gentiles as being people outside the covenant. Paul, however, distanced himself from that mode of thinking, as evidenced by his words "by the so called circumcision". He was quite aware that such distinctions were merely external - and nothing more. Circumcision was an act performed with mere human hands by "so-called" believers. It was not a supernatural, life-transforming act of God.

After a lengthy description of the Gentiles, Paul returns to the subject of remembering the past in order to appreciate their new condition. Five deficiencies are listed and all of them are related to being outside of God's saving purposes and His people, Israel.

- (1) They were separated from Christ. In the theme of Ephesians, this means that they were outside the realm of life and salvation. To Gentile readers it may sound strange to put being outside of Christ and being outside of Israel in a parallel thought, but Paul conceives of Messiah as belonging to Israel.
- (2) They were separated from the commonwealth of Israel. This meant that they were alienated (estranged) from the sphere of God's elect and the Covenants with God enjoyed by the elect. The plural "covenants" includes the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David.
- (3) They were without hope, excluded from the promise of Israel's Messiah and ultimately, salvation.
- (4) "Without God" signifies that they were without the true God.

The words, "But now" in verse 13 introduces a dramatic contrast to the position they currently enjoy and functions in the same way that the words, "but God" does in verse 4. Though they were once "far off" they have "come near" in Christ (see notes on 2:20-22). However, as we will see, they did not merely become a member of the nation of Israel, they have joined an entirely new community in which Jews and Gentiles are on equal ground. The two groups become something that neither had been previously.

2:14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,

2:15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace,

2:16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

Verses 14-18 tell of how the reconciliation between Jew and Gentile has taken place through the death of Christ.

"Christ is our peace" is a surprising statement, initially. Usually we think of Christ as bringing peace or proclaiming it, not as being it. The description is close to the Messianic title "prince of peace" (Isa. 9:6; Mic.

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5:5). "Peace" in Biblical thought is not just the cessation of war or the absence of hostilities. It also includes the positive well being and salvation that God offers.

The meaning of "He is our peace" is developed by (the) three statements that follow: (1) He made two groups into one, (2) He broke down the Dividing wall, (3) He abolished the enmity.

Jesus is the One who brings reconciliation and destroys enmity in its various forms. He made the two groups (Jews and Gentiles) into one. By doing this, Christ has transcended one of the fundamental divisions of the first-century world (O'Brien, 194). The Jews saw two groups; themselves and the rest of the world. Paul saw three - Jews, Gentiles, and the church. Although there is no conscious effort to recall prophecies, this peace is found in Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-4.

Christ has also "broken down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the law of commandments contained in ordinances." This phrase may be better translated as "the dividing wall, which is the fence" (the word fence being a genitive of apposition - O'Brien, 195, n.160). This wall is clarified as "the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances." In other words, the law itself made a fence around Israel by separating Jews and Gentiles from each other, both sociologically and religiously. In the mind of the Jew, the law was the wall that kept the perversions of the Gentile world out. This included prescribed purifications in matters of food, drink, sight and touch. It not only alienated the Gentile and became the source of hostility between the two groups, it also created a sense of superiority on the part of the Jews. In response, the Gentiles viewed Jews with suspicion and hatred, and considered them to be inhospitable and arrogant. Through Jesus' death the law of commandments contained in ordinances has been done away with.

The law of commandments is the Law of Moses, which consists of the commandments. In what way has the law been abolished? The answer to this question is very complex. "Abolish" means "to make ineffective, or powerless, nullify" and is used in Romans 3:3; Galatians 3:17 and I Corinthians 1:28. Here it means that Christ made the law no longer binding. It is through Christ, not the law that we establish a relationship with God. With

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the law nullified, the enmity that it caused disappeared. (For more on the law being abolished see appendix 1. also Lincoln, 143).

Removing the hostility brought by the law cleared the way for something new. He abolished the law "in order that in Himself He might make the two into one new man." The unity of all the people in Christ forms a single corporate entity - one new man. Christ has done something that transcends Israel's election. He has not merely brought the Gentiles into Israel, He has transformed both groups into one and established peace between them.

Christ's death also established peace between man and God. In Colossians 1:20 Paul also speaks of reconciliation. But there it speaks of overcoming cosmic hostility, resulting in the restoration of harmony between heaven and earth. In Romans 5:8 and II Corinthians 5:18, 19 it is used in the more general sense of reconciling sinful humanity to God. Although Paul does not elaborate on this point, the introduction of the new man (consisting of both Jew and Gentile) being reconciled to God implies that Israel was not reconciled and sheds new light on their previously mentioned status. If Paul were asked to explain why Israel was not reconciled before the death of Christ, his response would probably be that "the law which separated Gentiles from Israel, and from Israel's God, can now be seen to have also separated Israel from God" (Lincoln, 145-146; cf. Gal. 3:10-22; II Cor. 3:7-11; Ro. 3:19-20; 7:7-25; 9:30-10:4). The remainder of the chapter shows the reconciliation to God achieved by Christ's death.

2:17 And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near;

2:18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.

Although it's inconclusive, some have seen connections with verses 20-22 and 17-18. In 2:17-18 Paul says, "And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father." The terms "far" and "near" were sometimes used in the OT as designations of the Jews in relationship to the Jerusalem Temple (In exile, the Jews were said to be far off - Isa. 57:19, Dan. 9:7). Gentiles were also described as "far off" (Deut.

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28:49; 29:22; I Ki. 8:41; Isa. 5:26; Jer. 5:15). The peace in Ephesians 2:14 and 17 is related to the future peace that was prophesied to come when the nations would be drawn to Jerusalem (Isa. 2:4; Mic. 4:3). The death of Christ brought this to fulfillment in a way greater than could be imagined. The *Gentiles* are not only brought near to the Temple, they become an integral part of it. They are living stones. They have not become part of the Jewish community, they are members of a new community in which both Jew and *Gentile* are equals.

Access to *God* has many OT connotations and involves sacrifice. Since verses 19-22 speak of the temple and verse 16 of the reconciliation brought about by Christ's death, this imagery is strengthened. This access to *God* through Christ is the basis for the peace referred to in verse 15. Christ proclaimed peace to both groups since each now had equal access to the Spirit through the work of Christ.

2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,

2:20 having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,

2:21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;

2:22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

Verses 19-22 apply the truths of vv. 14-18 to the readers' new position. Namely, they are members of *God's* new community which transcends the previous division that had existed between Jews and *Gentiles*. They are fellow citizens with *God's* people and members of His household. Though they were once alienated from *God's* people, they now hold a privileged position and have equal access to the Spirit through Christ's death.

Paul's' conclusion is that they are no longer aliens and strangers. A stranger is a foreigner and is synonymous with "alien" - one who lived in a place that was not his home. *Gentiles* were in this position before the unifying work of Christ on the cross. But now they are no longer in this position; they are neither homeless nor citizens of someone else's country.

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They are members of the Kingdom of God. . . but they are more than that, they are part of an intimate family, members of God's own household.

The idea of membership in God's household appears throughout Paul's writings. Reference to the believer's glorious access to the Father has already been made in 2:18. In 1:5 he said that believers are sons and daughters of God (cf. 3:14-15; and 4:6). The concept of family membership pertains to both our relationship to God and to each other. In I and II Timothy this idea is used to encourage appropriate and responsible behavior (I Ti, 3:15; II Tim. 2:20-21). In Ephesians, however, Paul most likely wants to stress that being a family member includes having a place of refuge, protection and security, and possessing a sense of belonging (ideas that were in the Roman world - O'Brien, 212). They are no longer far off. They have been brought near.

In verse 20 the apostle's imagery changes. Believers not only have a position of intimacy with God, they are also part of the structure where God Himself dwells.

The foundation for the new temple consists of the apostles and prophets (see my notes on spiritual gifts to clarify the meaning of apostle and prophets; "foundation" is a genitive of apposition). In I Corinthians 3:9-17 Paul had already spoken of the Temple that is indwelt by the Spirit. He referred to himself as the master builder and to Christ as the foundation upon which he and others built. The prophets here are NT prophets who have considerably less authority than the OT prophets (see my notes on prophecy). This conclusion is primarily based on word order - it would be difficult to see OT prophets being listed after the apostles. Prophecy given by NT prophets was tested for accuracy (I Cor. 14:29; I Thess. 5:19-21), It was not received without question, and it was therefore not on the same level as Scripture. Though they lacked the same authority as the apostles, NT prophets were recipients of divine revelation, nonetheless, and were foundational in establishing the early church.

More significantly is the fact that the early church was built upon Christ Himself. He is the chief cornerstone. This expression draws attention to His special function and importance. Scholars debate as to whether this is the foundation stone from which all other dimensions are taken or whether

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it is the crowning stone on the top of the edifice (the final stone that finishes off the building). It seems probable that this text is related to Isaiah 28:16 (contra Lincoln): "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily" (cf. I Cor. 3:11; Psa. 118:22; Mk. 12:10; Acts 4:11; I Pet. 2:6-8). This adds considerable weight to the assertion that the cornerstone spoken of here was part of the foundation. The cornerstone was the most crucial part of the building construction, for all other dimensions were taken from it. If this is the case, then the implication is that the rest of the temple (the church) is built upon Christ who determines the shape of the whole.

Verses 21 and 22 expand upon the significance of the building that is founded upon Christ. Paul had already used the metaphor, "the temple of God", when referring to the local congregation in Corinth and to individual Christians (I Cor. 3:16-17; II Cor. 9:10). The mixing of metaphors presents no problem for him, and thus the building that he describes is comprised of both inorganic and organic elements. He speaks of the building as being "joined together" (typical building construction terminology) and the materials as "growing" and as "living stones" (the organic component). "The cornerstone unites the building because it is organically as well as structurally bound to it" (O'Brien, 219). Because of the nature of the building, "to be joined together" has greater implications than that the building has been put together; it refers to a union with the cornerstone as well.

The joining together of elements is an ongoing activity of the divine community. The building is still under construction and is growing and expanding. The building is clearly the "new" temple of God, for the Spirit of God dwells there. (It should be noted that this does not imply that there will no longer be a literal temple in Jerusalem in the future [Isa. 66:18-20; Mic. 4:1-5]. This metaphor only seeks to explain the relationship of Christ to the church, the members to each other, and the presence of God in their midst).

Verse 22 ends the paragraph begun in verse 11 and focuses attention on the place that the Gentile believers have in the temple of God. The Gentiles have experienced a magnificent change in condition. They were once

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isolated from Messiah; now they are part of the dwelling place of God Himself.

The two expressions "a holy temple in the Lord" (v. 21) and "a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (v. 22) are parallel descriptions of the same thing (O'Brien, 221).

Here, as in 2:1-10, an attitude of gratefulness for what God has done is expected of the believer.

The magnificence of this chapter should not be overlooked. Here we learn of the eternal destiny of the church. We are not simply saved to live with Christ forever - as wonderful as that will be. Nor are going to just enjoy God forever. We will become the very sanctuary - the dwelling place of the living God. We will become "A Shrine, a divine Presence-Chamber; 'a permanent habitation of God.' In measure, the wonderful fact has already begun to be; already He 'dwells in' His people, and 'walks in them' (see II Cor. 7:16); already . . . the eternal Son resides in the very heart of the true member of the Church, by faith" (Moule, 94). "The saints of the Asian Churches have appeared . . . as stones built one by one into the wonderful structure. Rising upon their foundation in Christ, and compacted in Him their corner stone, they are destined at length to form, forever, the complete and faultless sanctuary to be inhabited by the eternal presence, the Shrine for the manifestation of God to the universe in the endless ages" (Moule, 105)