

# “Ephesians”

## Fall Series 1

### Lesson 3

## “Ephesians 2:1-22”

**Objective:** To understand the message that Paul meant to convey to his audience and then to come to understand what that message means for us today as those living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We will seek to ascertain what this message means and to determine how we are intended to live our lives as those who are disciples of Christ in our modern context in light of the message it contains.

**Materials:** We will begin by examining carefully the Greek text of Ephesians, examine other early translations such as the Syriac Peshitta, and any other sources along with the historical setting of the first century Roman world that can help us to understand the original meaning. We will then examine early interpretations and understandings and examine commentaries and modern interpretations to enlighten our understanding for our contextual situation.

#### **Procedures**

- 1.** We will begin by translating the text from Greek into English
- 2.** We will examine the contextual setting and seek to understand as much as we possibly can about the historical, cultural and social settings in order to understand the message.
- 3.** From here we will seek to find out how to best apply the calling that Paul has for the early disciples to our modern contextual framework in order to do our very best to live as disciples of Christ in our modern era.
- 4.** We will seek to understand the attitudes that we are called to have as disciples and to reflect not only the actions that are the calling of a disciple, but also to learn how to form our attitudes to reflect our calling as followers of Jesus Christ.

# Translation

Ephesians 2:1 **And you being dead in your trespasses and your sins <sup>2</sup> in which once you walked according to the lot of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the sons of unbelief. <sup>3</sup> In which we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, doing the will of the flesh and the senses and we were by nature children of wrath just as also are the rest. <sup>4-5</sup> But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us <sup>6</sup> He raised us up together with and seated us together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> in order that in the ages to come He might show forth the surpassing riches of His favor in kindness upon us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by (divine) favor you have been saved through faith; and this not from you, it is the gift of God; <sup>9</sup> not from works, in order that no one might boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are what He made us, being created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time in order that we might walk in them. <sup>11</sup> Therefore, remember that once you Gentiles in flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by those called**

**“the circumcision” in the flesh by hands, <sup>12</sup> that you were at that time without Christ, having been alienated from the citizenship of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and ungodly (ἄθεοι - atheoi) in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near in the blood of Jesus. <sup>14</sup> For He is our peace, the one making both groups one and destroying the dividing wall, the hatred in His flesh, <sup>15</sup> the law of commandments in dogma having been nullified, in order that of the two he might create in Him one new man, making peace <sup>16</sup> and He might reconcile both groups in one body to God through the cross, killing the hatred in it. <sup>17</sup> And He came proclaiming peace to you the ones far off and peace to the ones near; <sup>18</sup> because through Him we both have the access in the Spirit to the Father. <sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and family members of God, <sup>20</sup> being built upon the foundation of the ambassadors and prophets, with Jesus Christ as the cornerstone. <sup>21</sup> In whom all the building is being joined together, growing into a holy temple in the Lord, <sup>22</sup> in whom**

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**also you are being built together, in spirit, into a dwelling  
place for God.**

## Lesson


In this section of Paul's letter he will continue making it apparent to them what God has done for them; reminding them of their past so they can understand more clearly where they are now and where their future lies. Part of this is in reminding his audience, primarily Gentiles, where they had been before accepting the calling to follow Jesus Christ as His disciples. Paul seeks to remind them of their former way and place in life and especially of the former state of their relationship with God in order that this might stand in stark contrast to where they are now, "in Christ." God has created, in the followers of Jesus Christ, a new people made up of both Jews and Gentiles. In Ephesians 2:11-22 Paul will expand and elaborate on what he wrote in Colossians 3:11<sup>1</sup>: **In this image there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all things and in all people.**<sup>2</sup>

One of the things that Paul will highlight as he begins his discussion here is that salvation is in some sense focused on the

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas B. Slater, *Ephesians*, in the Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary series (Macon GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing Incorporated, 2012), p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> CEB.



individual and certainly not upon an institution.<sup>3</sup> There is the expectation that each disciple will become united with Christ, as His body, in a way that is not based upon some kind of earthly institution, as the church has for so many become an institution since the fourth century. Paul is challenging people to make an individual decision to join with the body of Christ through the uniting influence of the Holy Spirit. Through much of its history many within the church have forgotten this focus. Especially after the church received official, preferred status under the Emperor Constantine there was a strong tendency to transform the “church” into to some type of gatekeeper, regulating access to the “favor” (the grace) of God. There is no trace of such a view to be found in Ephesians. The calling is for those that would follow Jesus to devote themselves to the path blazed by Jesus Himself and signposted by His ambassadors after His ascension. We are to work in community, based on God’s personal adoption of us as children as the body of Christ.

As Paul begins this section he will remind them that they were “dead,” not mostly dead or a little bit dead, but well and truly

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas B. Slater, *Ephesians*, p. 59.

dead, in their trespasses and sins. <sup>2:1</sup> **And you being dead in your trespasses and your sins....** The word that Paul uses here (*νεκρός - nekros*) can be translated as “dead,” but it may also be translated as “corpse.” This is the word that gives us words such as “necrotic” and “necrosis,” which is the death of body tissue that is irreversible. In a sense Paul is saying that before they accepted Christ they were “corpses,” and were irredeemable; they could not be brought back to life. What God has done in Jesus Christ is miraculous beyond all measure of human understanding and capability. The cause of their death is due to their trespasses and sins. “Trespasses and sins” is in the dative case here, which means what is being expressed in this phrase is both the cause and the actual manifestation of death. “Trespasses and sins both bring about the condition of death and characterize the existence of those who are spiritually dead.”<sup>4</sup>

**<sup>2</sup> in which once you walked according to the lot of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the sons of unbelief.** Paul continues in this verse a description of the former estate of those who are now

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<sup>4</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, the Word Biblical Commentary series, Vol. 42 (Dallas TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1990), p. 93.

followers of Jesus. He seeks to remind them of their previous situation so that he as he reminds them of who they were they can understand the contrast between who they were then and who they were before. Previously, they lived life under the auspices of a tyrant (the ruler of the prince of the air), like the remainder of the people of the world still live. That tyrant is described here as “the ruler of the power of the air.” Concepts pertaining to “power” in Ephesians are indeed a prominent feature of the verbal inventory of this letter. One finds a variety of terms that have either a literal or a figurative reference to the concept of some personal or personalized power that may either be human, divine, angelic, or demonic. These terms are used to describe a rich diversity of malevolent, demonic beings that follow the leadership of Satan, who is described as “the ruler of the kingdom of the air.”<sup>5</sup>

Van Der Toorn indicates that it is Satan here that is called “the prince of the power of the air.” He writes that this is clearly a designation for Satan who is also described as “the spirit (*pneuma*) now at work in the sons of disobedience.”<sup>6</sup> Most,

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<sup>5</sup> Ernst R. Wendland, “Contextualizing the Potentates, Principalities and Powers in the Epistle to the Ephesians,” *Neotestamentica* (1999) 33:1, pp. 199-223.

<sup>6</sup> David E. Aune, “Archon”, in Karl van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Pieter W van der Horst, eds., *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, Second Extensively Revised Edition (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 83-84.



though not all commentators,<sup>7</sup> take “the ruler of the kingdom of the air” to be a reference to Satan, or the Devil. The air was considered to be the dwelling place of “evil spirits in the ancient world” (Philo, *On the Giants* 6;<sup>8</sup> *2 Enoch* 29:4;<sup>9</sup> *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isa.* 7:9<sup>10</sup>).<sup>11</sup> As Paul lays out the previous status of those who are now believers in Jesus, he makes it apparent that they were once under the dominion and authority of Satan and his minions. This was their previous state of being. It is still the state of those who even now are not believers that they are under the dominion of Satan.

**<sup>3</sup> In which we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, doing the will of the flesh and the senses and we were by**

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<sup>7</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, in the Word Biblical Commentary series, Vol. 42 (Dallas TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1990), pp. 95-96. Thomas B. Slater, *Ephesians*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing Incorporated, 2012), p. 60.

<sup>8</sup> Philo, *On the Giants*, 6. “It is Moses’ custom to give the name of angels to those whom other philosophers call demons (or spirits), souls that is which fly and hover in the air.” F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, trans., *Philo Volume II*, Loeb Classical Library 227 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1929), p. 449.

<sup>9</sup> “But one from the order of the archangels deviated, together with the division that was under his authority. He thought up the impossible idea, that he might place his throne higher than the clouds which are above the earth, and that he might become equal to my power.” James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 1 (New York NY: Doubleday & Company, 1983), p. 148.

<sup>10</sup> “And we went up into the firmament, I an he, and there I saw Sammael and his hosts; and there was a great struggle in it, and the words of Satan, and they were envying one another.” James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 2 (New York NY: Doubleday & Company, 1983), p. 166.

<sup>11</sup> Ernst R. Wendland, “Contextualizing the Potentates, Principalities and Powers in the Epistle to the Ephesians,” *Neotestamentica* (1999) 33:1, pp. 199-223.

**nature children of wrath just as also are the rest.** In this verse Paul now brings to the attention of his readers the third form of evil influence that holds unbelieving humanity in bondage to sin; from which they need deliverance. He describes their decadent human behavior before finding Christ.<sup>12</sup> This influence effected and still effects Jews and Gentiles alike. Paul is saying that previously (prior to believing in Jesus) people were dominated by the forces of evil. They “lived” in this realm: they lived their lives under the control of the “ruler of the power of the air.”<sup>13</sup> These people were dominated by their passions, but Paul makes it clear that this is not the full extent of the problem. There is a connection between the domination of their passions over their lives and the forces of evil. Their influence has proven to be a part of dominating the unbelievers.

This verse describes a situation that is very much like what is described in Romans 1:18-3:20 and especially what is found in 3:9-20.<sup>14</sup> Sin is a problem for which there is no human solution. Paul wants his readers to understand that this is the case. He

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas B. Slater, *Ephesians*, p. 60.

<sup>13</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, in the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 2010), pp. 132-133.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas B. Slater, *Ephesians*, p. 60.

wants his audience to understand this is what they were and the state they were in before the intervention of God through Jesus Christ. We were under the dominion of our passions; the passions of our flesh. It was in the midst of this situation that God reached out and through His “rich mercy” brought about by “His great love” “raised us up together and seated us in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.” <sup>4-5</sup> **But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us <sup>6</sup> and He raised us up together with and seated us together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus,....**

There is a dynamic union created here that challenges the readers to recognize the tremendous contrast that exists between their current state, “in Christ,” as compared to what it was before when they were “children of wrath” controlled by passions that were manipulated and accentuated by Satan and his minions. There was no hope of escape or of anything better without the intervention, of God’s mercy, His gracious, and His compassionate, actions. We were in truth dead in our trespasses, without hope of remedy. There was nothing within the power of human beings to

correct this situation or make it better. Only through the intervention of God is a solution even possible.

This intervention came because God “loved” us. The word used here for love is the Greek word *agape* (ἀγάπη). It is a word used of the love of husband and wife, of God for man.<sup>15</sup> There is a tremendous emphasis in this section on the love that God has for those that then become recipients of His merciful act, which is to raise them up to the realm of rule known here as “the heavenlies” (not a place in the sky, but a domain of influence and dominion) and seat them with Christ Jesus as partakers of His family, His kingly council. This is a place of great honor and it sets out the tremendous contrast with their former state of existence as the manipulated subjects of a despotic and cruel ruler (Satan, “the ruler of the power of the air”).

In verse 7, Paul will begin to lay out the reasoning for the merciful actions of God. In this verse, and in those that follow I have deliberately avoided using the more common translation of the Greek word *charis* (χάρις) in order to call attention to the personal nature of this action on God’s part. We have perhaps

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<sup>15</sup> Wisdom - 3:7 **Those who trust in the Lord will know the truth. Those who are faithful will always be with him in love. Favor and mercy belong to the holy ones. God watches over God’s chosen ones.** CEB.

become so familiar with the word “grace” that it no longer has the impact that it once did. This word (*charis* - χάρις) carries with it an element of kindness that is perhaps not conveyed as fully as it might be by the word “grace.” For some at least, “grace” has become an almost mechanistic, colorless indicator of the response of God to the divine justice that is deserved by those who deserve the death, but instead receive “grace” as if in some sense it is a mechanical response.

The concept of “justice” and its meaning is something that has shown tremendous resilience as a question for human beings going on into time immemorial. Plato grappled with this question in his pursuit of a philosophical definition of justice. He sought to demonstrate that true justice must be found in the forms (the orderliness) of the physical realm, where eternal patterns or archetypes from which material reality takes its shape. He believed that the universe was a place of intrinsic order and in the midst of that order one could find patterns that would aid human beings in understanding their place in the created realm. What Plato pursued had been a pursuit of the Greeks before his time and for them was set in terms of the Greek gods themselves with


Zeus being the chief representative of order over against chaos.

“Justice” basically came to be defined as the order of the universe.<sup>16</sup>

In the context of what Paul is saying here and what will likely have been understood by his original audience, humans had and still have become agents of chaos and disorder following the direction of the chief agent of disorder and chaos. “In Christ” they are now being transferred into a new form of existence as agents of God, who in Christ inaugurates the reign of order over chaos. His kingdom and authority press ever more deeply into enemy territory, into the chaotic and disordered realm of Satan. If this interpretation is indeed correct then there is a connection between kindness, love and “order.” This also would mean that there is a connection between the forces of evil and “chaos” and disorder. For Plato one of the most extreme examples of chaos and disorder in the political arena was to be found in mob rule and tyranny. He saw these as the most degenerate forms of polity and as representing the furthest point from the eternal archetype

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<sup>16</sup> Colin E. Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement* (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), pp. 97-98.



of order and mercy.<sup>17</sup> They were the ultimate example of injustice and chaos; the opposite of what God had created.

In Ephesians 2:7, Paul continues to lay out the reasoning for the actions of God in redeeming people. God does this as a demonstration of His nature. In Christianity we would say that this is a reflection of cosmic order and the forces of good as opposed to evil. This is the start of the “new creation.” Just as in Genesis 1:2 God calls order out of the chaos so the call of God has gone forth in Christ Jesus for a restoration of the sovereignty and rule of God over the realms occupied by the forces of chaos and injustice. This is done however, not in mechanistic or machine-like manner or with the power of a conquering army of might; warriors clad in armor of iron, bearing swords and weapons of war, but this battle is fought with divine favor and kindness bestowed upon us in Christ Jesus. This came to pass<sup>7</sup> **in order that in the ages to come He might show forth the surpassing riches of His favor in kindness upon us in Christ Jesus.**

We now move into some of the most inspiring and astounding words ever written as Paul seeks to lay out for his

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<sup>17</sup> Colin E. Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, p. 97.

readers the basis for their hope. **8 For by (divine) favor (grace) you have been saved through faith; and this not from you, it is the gift of God; 9 not from works, in order that no one might boast. 10 For we are what He made us, being created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time in order that we might walk in them.** In my translation of this passage I have left the traditional translation of *pistis* (πίστις) as “faith.” As long as we understand that this is connected organically to “trust” and “loyalty” this is still a good translation. If we forget this connection, then “faith” becomes something less than what Paul intends his audience to understand here. Through the agency of “divine favor” God has opened up a way forward for those who will trust in God and be “loyal” to Him. They will be singular in their devotion to that loyalty and trust.

Despite the fact that those who have such loyalty and trust do good works, works that demonstrate compassion, order, and the nature of God: it is crucial to understand that the basis for their salvation is not based in these works. These works come about because of their “creation” in Christ Jesus. They are a part



of the “new birth,” the “new creation.”<sup>18</sup> In this metaphor there is a richness that is too rich to codify or systematize, though that is the modern human tendency. There is mystery and power that must be explored in the artistry of the metaphor. This is new life, something different, something revolutionary and universe altering. We are challenged into the realm of wonder and newness that we have no words or frame of reference to define outside of with the usage of imagery created for us in the totality of who Christ is and what He has done. Words fall short in conveying the fullness of meaning here.

We are challenged in these verses and the words that follow to live into the reality of being new creatures transformed by the loving favor of a God who has undergone the travail of birthing a new world order and a new people on the cross; in order to bring into being their new life.<sup>19</sup> Paul here challenges His readers to comprehend their lives in terms of this new reality. He challenges them to recognize too that this is the work of God and not something of their own making or doing. As Lincoln points out, “It is grace all the way. Even the living out of salvation in good works

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<sup>18</sup> Galatians 6:15; 2 Corinthians 5:17.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Andrew Bennett, *Labor of God* (Waco TX: Baylor University Press, 2017).

is completely by grace.... The human activity of “walking” is still necessary; the actual living out of God’s purpose in the world has to take place.”<sup>20</sup> Barth writes, “Yet the distinctive thing about Christian or theological ethics is that we do not have to do any carrying without remembering that we are carried.”<sup>21</sup>

Some people focus here on the concepts of being predestined and certainly there is the fact that God prepared these good works “beforehand.” This should not take away our sense of responsibility to cooperate with the Spirit of God and the leading of God to actually walk in these good works. It does however, mean that when they are done we are to recognize that these were put in place by God and the goodness comes from Him as the source of all that is good. Certainly, it is the case that some see here a determinism as if the whole script of every human life is written even before a person even lives that life. The view is that they have a destiny that is inescapable. Such a view was widely held in the ancient world of Paul and these early Christians to be

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<sup>20</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. 116.

<sup>21</sup> Karl Barth, *Ethics*, Dietrich Braun ed., Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans. (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2013), p. 516.

certain. Many Christians in the past and still to this current day take Paul's words here as indicative of just such a view.<sup>22</sup>

There is however, another possibility. Verse 10a states that the community of believers is God's work. This means that the writer refers to the creation of the community of believers and not to the creation of the world. The phrase that Paul uses "created in" (some versions have through) "Christ Jesus" confirms this understanding. The next phrase **which God prepared ahead of time** refers to the "good works" that God has prepared for the believers to perform in the course of human history. The verse then ends with another "purpose" clause **in order that we might walk in them**. The subjunctive verb used in this clause indicates that the actions of the believers are potentialities and are not set into stone in some irrevocable manner as specific actions. "The writer believes that God has planned the future, but we are still responsible for putting the plan into action." It is in this way that Ephesians attempts to avoid the tension that exists between predestined actions and human responsibility.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas B. Slater, *Ephesians*, p. 66.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas B. Slater, *Ephesians*, p. 66.


Paul then moves onto reminding his readers that they were once Gentiles, without Christ, alienated from membership in the covenant community (Israel) of God, the people that were heirs to the “covenants of promise.” It is likely that Paul uses the plural “covenants here as a reference to the covenants mentioned in the Hebrew Bible that bonded Yahweh and Israel (e.g. the Abrahamic covenant [Genesis 15], the Mosaic covenant [Exodus 20], the Davidic covenant [2 Samuel 7]).<sup>24</sup> **Therefore, remember that once you Gentiles in flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by those called “the circumcision” in the flesh by hands,<sup>12</sup> that you were at that time without Christ, having been alienated from the citizenship of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and ungodly (ἄθεοι - atheoi) in the world.** Before being included in this community through Christ these readers were “alienated” from that citizenship and without hope. They are described here using the word that we get our English word “atheist” from; a word used to describe one who is without God.

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<sup>24</sup> Thomas B. Slater, *Ephesians*, p. 68.


Paul then sets before them the contrasting position that they are now able to claim as their place, “in Christ.” <sup>13</sup> **But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near in the blood of Jesus.** <sup>14</sup> **For He is our peace, the one making both groups one and destroying the dividing wall, the hatred in His flesh,** <sup>15</sup> **the law of commandments in dogma having been nullified, in order that of the two he might create in Him one new man, making peace** <sup>16</sup> **and He might reconcile both groups in one body to God through the cross, killing the hatred in it.** In the ancient world, as in the modern world, there is so much that creates division and animosity between people. Things like ethnic origin, race, religion, and so much more. In Christ these dividing forces are shattered and removed in the power of the new creation, “in Christ.”

The “blood” of Jesus marks the transition to a new order, a “new creation” a “new birth.” It is through the actions of God in Jesus Christ that the new way is initiated and those that are joined “in Christ” become a part of the breaking in of this new creation into the domain of the old world. The reign and rule of heaven have now invaded the domain of the “ruler of the power of the air.”



Paul challenges his readers to live into this reality and to recognize their place in this invasion of light, love, and goodness into the darkness and evil of the previous regime. Paul understands how easy it is for us to lose focus and drift into old ways of thinking and doing things. He will begin here what he will elaborate more in chapter 6; that is in helping his readers to recognize the nature of the conflict that stands before them. The forces of darkness are not going to go quietly into the night and allow the forces of heaven to take over without a fight.

Satan will seek to divide and create internal strife within the body of Christ and thus delay, destroy, and cause the church to struggle in its mission. He seeks to create hatred, mistrust, and suspicion on the part of those who have begun the journey of being disciples of Jesus Christ. Followers of Christ will often be challenged to take up the old ways and old weapons, those of the enemy; and yet Paul here begins to lay the foundation for another way. Commandments and rules cannot do what is necessary to initiate and sustain the changes in the human heart that are necessary for quantum change in the human condition. This is why Christ came. He came to infect us with His love and He




intends for us to spread that infection to the entire world. We are to be a part of giving legs and arms to this infection in order to spread it across the globe. Every place we go we should spread love and concern for others that replicates what Jesus has done for us. We do this because we are changed by His love, we are infected by it and it has begun to rewrite our DNA. We are now infected with His genetic code that will rewrite our old and defective code and transform us more and more into the image of Jesus.

Paul continues challenging his readers to recognize the breaking down of the barriers that have separated people. God brings unity and order where there once was chaos and disunity. He brings peace, where there was once war and strife. <sup>17</sup> **And He came proclaiming peace to you the ones far off and peace to the ones near;** <sup>18</sup> **because through Him we both have access in the Spirit to the Father.** Both Jews and Gentiles now have access to their Father through the Spirit. His Spirit allows us to be in communication with the Father and continues the transformation of our souls into what He knows they can and should become.

The result is that we are no longer strangers and aliens, but we are joined together as one family, the family of God. <sup>19</sup> **So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and family members of God,** <sup>20</sup> **being built upon the foundation of the ambassadors and prophets, with Jesus Christ as the cornerstone.** <sup>21</sup> **In whom all the building is being joined together, growing into a holy temple in the Lord,** <sup>22</sup> **in whom also you are being built together, in spirit, into a dwelling place for God.** God will dwell in the midst of His people, in their hearts and in their souls and He will surround them with His being. We will not be alone, or separate and apart any longer. Our long night of loneliness and despair is shattered by the great power of His love as demonstrated in Jesus Christ. We are born into a new existence. We are becoming; becoming the new creation, the new human being.

God calls us to walk in this new reality as His children, as His family united with each other and with Him, through His Spirit. He calls upon all of us as He did those so long ago to cooperate with the Spirit in becoming like Jesus in our heart and





soul. We are called to love those that hate, die for those who do not deserve it, be merciful to those who are merciless and hateful. Paul has the same message here that he does in Romans when he says: **While we were still weak, at the right moment, Christ died for ungodly people. <sup>7</sup> It isn't often that someone will die for a righteous person, though maybe someone might dare to die for a good person. <sup>8</sup> But God shows his love for us, because while we were still sinners Christ died for us.<sup>25</sup>** We are called to do the same for others, because we understand, we believe, and we follow the way of Christ.


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<sup>25</sup> Romans 5:6-8, CEB.

# Synopsis

In this chapter of Ephesians Paul will continue to make his case of helping his readers understand what God has done for them. He reminds them of who and what they were before coming to believe in Jesus. He reminds them that they were dead corpses, without hope, without the promises of God living under the dominion of a chaotic and despotic ruler, Satan. They were dominated by their carnal, passion driven natures; blinded and possessed by these to the reality of their predicament. They were unjust and agents of chaos, enemies of justice, enemies of love and of God.

In spite of all of this, God loved us and in the richness of His great mercy and compassion he opened up a way for people to be transformed and redeemed from their depravity and decay. God reached down and touched us through Jesus calling us to another reality and a new realm of existence. He bestowed upon His gracious mercy and kindness. In the midst of this He calls us into participation into His mission of redemption. He prepared a way for us to be a part of the family business, to become agents of




redemption, love, and justice. We are called forth to walk in the ways of God through His strength, empowered by His Spirit.

He calls us to lives of loyalty to Him, to trust in Him, to become like Him. He calls us to walk in the light of His Spirit and in the power of His favor as agents of the realm of heaven. We are to be people who understand that God is a God of unity and we are to work as forces of unity and reconciliation in our world. Our transformation is initiated through being a part of the new creation that comes into being through the anguish and blood of Jesus. We are to resist the forces of evil that seek to divide and shatter peace. We are called to be the dwelling place of God, His temple, the beachhead into enemy territory. We are to love others as He loved us and lay down our lives in service of others.

# Questions

1. When you think of what it means to be saved by Jesus, what does that mean for you?
2. How important is unity? Why?
3. What are some of the ways that people destroy unity?
4. What are some ways that you see Satan involved in our world today?
5. What are some ways that we as followers of Christ can resist the schemes of Satan?
6. What do you think of when you hear Paul talk about the passions of the flesh and doing the will of the flesh?
7. How would you define mercy?
8. How are mercy and love connected?
9. How would you define justice? Why? How do you decide what is just and what is not?
10. When you think of creation what are some images that come to your mind?
11. When you think of “birth” what are some images that come to your mind then?
12. How would you define “grace” or “divine favor?”
13. What are some ways that you have seen “divine favor” poured out in your life?
14. What are some of the ways that the love of God challenges you to be involved in spreading love to others?

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15. How would you define “loyalty” and “trust?”
  16. How do you view God’s involvement in your life? Has He written a script that you are following, or do you have choices to make?
  17. When you think of the good things that God’s people have done through the centuries what things come to mind? Why?
  18. What are some things that God is calling you to be a part of during this coming year?
  19. How can you promote unity among God’s people?
  20. What are some ways that you can help stop hatred in our world?
  21. What are some ways that you seek to follow the Spirit in your life?
  22. What are some things that have changed about your life since you began following Christ?

# To Take Home

## **What is Important to know?**

It is important to know that we are saved through the divine favor (grace) of God. God loved us and through Jesus He has begun the process of transforming the world. Satan seeks to resist and confuse this change. It is important for us to be able to see the world from a new perspective in order to react in the proper, Christlike, way. What are some things that you see in the world that are clear markers of Satan's influence?

## **Where is God in these words?**

God is in these words reaching out to His wayward children, calling them home, empowering them in the process of transformation, and change. Through Paul, God is challenging people to see the world through new eyes and for them to see their place in the world as changed, and different from the way it was before. God seeks to bring unity, order, love, and peace where there was disunity, disorder, hatred, and discord. What are some ways that you can be an agent of God this week?

## **What does any of this mean for how I live my life?**

What Paul is challenging his audience to understand is that change has been initiated and for those who have chosen to trust in Jesus they have now become a part of that agency of change and transformation. This means we should be seeking to cooperate with God's Spirit in a way that means we are a part of that change. That change is taking place inside of me, through God's power, and as we change, our perception and interaction with the world will change. When do you feel most empowered to embrace the changes God is calling you into?

## **What is the word of God calling us to do?**

The word of God is calling you to recognize what He has done and what He continues to do in order to redeem the world and to redeem each human being. Our focus, our goals, our hearts, are being transformed as we continue to walk in loyalty and trust with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. As you think about your life, what can we as a church community do together to more effectively serve as agents of change, reconciliation, peace, and unity in our community and our world?