

Ephesians 2

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[0 : 0 0] just by way of refreshing or recap from when we began to open our study of Ephesians which was just a couple of weeks ago so there's been a week in between we didn't just by way of looking back at chapter 1 and at the context we said that chapter 1 was really seeking to establish the truth of the fact that the universe is God-centered not man-centered that the glory of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ is at the center of everything and this is what Paul opens with in this letter to the Ephesians Ephesus remember being a strategic city the capital of the province or the main city certainly of the province of Asia Minor the Roman province of that area and a key city in so many ways and what he wants to bring to this key city and to these believers who are a mixture of Jew and Gentile and from different backgrounds is that it is the glory of God and the Lord Jesus Christ which controls everything sovereignly and in the context of that chapter 1

God is glorified in doing the impossible specifically the otherwise impossible salvation of sinners planned and predestined from all eternity as we see there verses 3 to 6 blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus according to see I've chosen in him chosen us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him in love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ and so on this is a work that he has done from all eternity and remember we made mention of the fact about the commentator Matthew Henry likens the fact of how if you're giving a you know help or something to a beggar in the street he says the arms which you give to the beggars at your doors proceed from a sudden resolve it's because you see them there you act on it instantly or a spirit spur of the moment decision but the provisions which a parent makes for his children is the result of many thoughts and is put into his last will and testament with a great deal of solemnity and I said how this indicates how God in the glory that he has laid up for his children it's not a sort of spur of the moment thing much less is it anything influenced by supposed good things that he may see us doing or may foreknow that we will do it is something he has planned from all eternity all this forethought all this planning all this application has gone into the testament of the Lord Jesus Christ both the Old Testament and the New which completes it it doesn't wipe away or supersede it in that sense it just completes it it crowns it because all of the Old Testament is of course leading up to the New and the New is the completion as it were of it all and if that is the case then it means that these Ephesian believers whether they are Jews or whether they are former pagans

Gentiles they are all redeemed by the same way this is their joint inheritance and this is why Paul keeps on emphasizing whom we have redemption through his blood verse 7 wherein he hath abounded toward us it is the mutual the inclusive application but at other times he is seeking to emphasize to them who may doubt whether or not they are included within this covenant because they were formerly pagans or Gentiles or whatever he said in whom verse 13 in whom ye also trusted after that ye heard the word of truth and then the latter part of the chapter is reverting again to the glory of God and the Lord Jesus Christ not just for the sake of a hymn of praise but rather to emphasize the means by which they the Ephesians could rest in the certainty of their salvation which is not down to anything in themselves it is due to the power of God at work through his son

Jesus Christ this is what he is doing this is their confidence this is their salvation and so we begin in chapter 2 here and you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins now if you have the authorised version in front of you you'll see that the words hath he quickened are in italics which means that they are not part of the original Greek that's not there in the original text but the reason that it is there is because it is taken as being applied in the same way as what we have at verse 5 even when we were dead in sins hath quickened us together with Christ and so they've taken out okay well if that's what it's saying there it's likely to be seeking to convey the same thing in verse 1 you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins quickened doesn't mean speed it up it means brought alive and this is the sense the context of it he hath quickened he has brought alive who were dead in trespasses and sins remember what Jesus says himself in John 5 verse 25 verily verily I say unto you the hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God how can the dead hear anything the dead cannot hear anything by nature because by nature they are dead that is their natural condition but God who has the power of life and death who has the power to bring life where there was previously only death who has the power to speak life when there was nothing before but there the hour is coming when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live they'll be brought alive by the voice the word of the living God just as he spoke creation into being at the outset so he speaks redemption into being through the power of his word his spoken word just as he is the living word and the word made flesh and you have the quickened brought alive who were dead in trespasses and sins now some commentators or one commentator at least makes a distinction here between trespasses and sins and said that the trespasses this could be taken as applying to the Jewish

Christians who before had the law they had God they knew about the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob they had his law but they trespassed that is they crossed the line they crossed over they transgressed against the laws that they had been given they rebelled against it in that sense and sins which of course is a generic term but also is taken by some to apply more to the Gentiles who had never known God or never known the true God before had known lots of false gods and Diana the goddess of the Ephesians and so on whose temple was also there in Ephesus and in Acts 19 we read of how the worship of Diana of the Ephesians was undermined by the gospel and how Demetrius and the other silversmiths began a riot because the gospel was taking away their trade in graven images people didn't want graven images anymore because they now believed in the living and true God it was affecting their business so those who are dead in trespass and sins then you had they quickened he has brought you alive whether you're Jewish or whether you're Gentile whether you're Scottish or English or Irish or African or European it doesn't matter this is a this is a gospel a good news which applies to you regardless of where you are from because nobody however long they have been in the faith however long they have been in the culture of the church or the knowledge of God in the sense of the head knowledge you know

[8 : 05] Jewish people had been brought up with the scriptures with the sacraments circumcision the Passover the knowledge of Abraham Isaac and Jacob and all the culture and tradition that went with it and yet they still might be complete strangers to the grace and the love of God in his son Jesus Christ Gentiles might have been complete pagans and likewise were still strangers to the love of God in his son Jesus Christ if whether they were brought in whether they were steeped in the culture and tradition of the church of God or whether they were complete outsiders the only reason they were saved and born again was by the grace of God and this again is the complete emphasis here in chapter 1 and into chapter 2 you have he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins whether you were Jewish whether you were Gentile whether you were steeped in the culture and tradition of the church or whether you're a complete outsider the only reason you're alive in Christ is because of what the Lord himself has done the doubt is coming

Jesus said when the dead will hear the voice of the son of God and those who hear will live you see there comes a point when we are when the Lord is dealing with a soul when what they may have heard before whether the conversation of Christians or things they've read in the Bible or things they've heard maybe on the radio or in a sermon if they've been in church or something they've read in a tract if they've received it or whatever the case may be there was a tiny strength oh it's rubbish that's just boring it doesn't mean anything to me at all and then it begins to make sense and it begins to speak to their hearts and it begins to sort of put the pieces together and that's not them getting cleverer that's not them beginning to become more mature that's not them changing in and of their nature that is the work of God that is the work of God awakening their soul you can do things when you're awake that you cannot do when you're asleep you may dream that you are doing them when you're asleep but you're not actually doing that and it is only as you awake it whether from sleep or how much more from death that you're able to be able to put these things together and to see the truth that the Lord reveals where in time past you walked according to the course of this world according to the prince of the power of the air in other words the devil the spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience and this is the power we're all under the power of Satan until we're under the power of Christ and we might think oh that's not true you know

I'm not a devil worshipper I'm not an occultist I don't you know have a little pain tango around my neck and I don't do all this devil worship so that's nonsense I just want to live my own ordinary life in the world and do my own thing I'm not into any kind of religious worship like Satanism or Christianity or Buddhism or Hindu I just want to be me the devil's quite happy with that and you're under his power as long as you're outside of Christ because until you are free in Christ you are still a slave to the evil one now if you think in terms of slavery if you were to talk about slavery most people would think in terms of the old south of America and you would think of slaves on the plantations and of course there would be different grades within the slave society there would be those who were just workers in the fields and they were just the daily labourers out there or those who would be working maybe craftsmanship the blacksmith the horseshoes and working away skilled artisans others might joiners or stonemasons or cabinet makers or whatever but they were still slaves whatever their skills or abilities some of them might be doing quite sophisticated jobs for their masters but they're still slaves others are working in the house and they're maybe better dressed they serve at the table or maybe they wait on the master or the mistress and they help to dress them in the mornings and they can bring them all their food or drink or refreshments they're in the house they're able to behave themselves in society they're aware but they're still slaves it doesn't really matter whether you're at the top of the pecking order or down at the bottom it doesn't matter whether you're out in the field or in the big house you're still a slave at the end of the day no amount of mixing near to the masters or the free people is going to make you any less of a slave you're still a slave no matter how free or privileged you may think you are within that slave culture you may think you're superior to other slaves who do lesser jobs or work out in the fields or don't have so many privileges but you're still a slave and whatever it is that you are at or doing in the world if you are not free in Christ then you are still a slave to the power of Satan the prince of the power of the air the course of this world the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience that is the power that we are among whom also we all

Paul says had our conversations in times past in the lust of our flesh fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature the children of wrath even as others you see you don't have to be into the occult in order to be under the power of Satan it's just human nature he is the prince of this world the prince of the power of the air he is the minister of death and if we are under his control we're living in that state of ongoing death and that Paul says is what we all were even he himself who was a Hebrew of the Hebrews a Pharisee who was steeped in the scriptures and the law and the knowledge of God he thought he was serving God when he was persecuting the church of Jesus Christ in fact he was serving Satan although he didn't know that but that's the great strength that Satan has most of the people under his power don't know it and would deny it if ever anyone told them so this is the condition in which most of us are in fact all of us are by nature and we can't do anything about it ourselves but God who is rich in mercy for his great love where would he love us even when we were dead in sins have quickened us together with Christ by grace you're saved all of us who are saved when we were dead in sins the Lord has redeemed by grace now you need to recognise that in verse 5 here the contrast of being saved by grace is not so much a contrast with works in verse 5 when it says by grace you're saved you'll notice that's almost identical terminology to what we have at verse 8 by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God but in verse 5 the contrast is not so much with works as with nature remember look at verse 3 whereby nature the children of wrath even us others but in verse 5 by grace you're saved the contrast is with the old human nature on the one hand and grace on the other when we move down to verse 8 the contrast is between grace on the one hand and works on the other we can't save ourselves it's by grace and the previous verses of course it's by grace not by nature our nature is fallen we are lost but we

Jews Paul is saying just as much as you Gentiles we required to be redeemed we needed to be redeemed just as much as did the Gentiles and the pagans we who were dead in sins have been quickened together with Christ by grace he's raised us up together made us together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace and his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus for by grace he is saved through faith you see the emphasis again he's raised us up together whatever you were before God is not impressed with which part of the downhill you might have inhabited he doesn't really mind which part of the plantation you might have been serving on or toiling in as a slave the point is he wants to emancipate you the point is he wants to set you free and when he does it's by grace it's because he himself has paid the price he has if you like you know if slavery was still in place it's as though he has gone and paid for you and then set you free so that he owns you instead of instead of belonging to the old master you now belong to a new master but that new master sets you free but of course if we are free we're only really free in as much as we are free in Christ otherwise we're just destitute you see if a slave who's never had a home or anyone to show him how to provide for himself or work to do whatever it's always been served he's been fed he's been housed he's been given his work to do and then suddenly somebody says it's okay now you're free and turns him out on the road and suddenly he's got no roof over his head suddenly he's got no means of income he's got nowhere he can stay nowhere he can live all the land that belongs to somebody else he's got nothing to call his own he's destitute he's starving he's worse off than he was before if he is simply on his own but rather what we have in Christ is it's not so much we're just we're set free and we're turfed out on the road okay fend for yourself rather we are set free and we are brought in as part not simply of the workforce but of the family of the Lord and of his people we're adopted as children we're brought as a boy into the big house and we become part of the family so that we have his provision for us his grace to us his care his love of us

[18:12] God who is rich in mercy for his great love for within us even when we were dead in sins have quickened us together with Christ by grace you have said and have raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus you couldn't spell it out anymore clearly how much the Lord loves those whom he is setting free the emphasis again is how the Ephesians are included in this by grace are ye saved you Ephesians even if you were pagans even if you were worshippers of Diana before now you are saved you are brought in through faith and not not of yourselves it is the gift of God now this emphasis remember of course in verse 8 it is now contrasted with works and we shouldn't believe that you know well it's not my works but it's my faith if my faith is good enough then I'll be saved faith is in a sense you know it's at work as well in that sense we shouldn't put our trust in our faith but rather an old

Anglican divine of a previous century called Richard Hooker wrote this God justifies the believing man not for the worthiness of his belief but for the worthiness of him in whom he believes I'll read that again God justifies the believing man not for the worthiness of his belief it's not the quality of your faith but for the worthiness of him in whom he believes in other words it's because your faith is in Christ that you are saved or redeemed you see lots of people in the world will have faith they'll have faith in false gods they'll have faith in false prophets they'll have faith in other religions and so on saying well who are you to say that your faith is better than my faith and this is my truth and so on well it's not the truth and my sin it's the truth in Christ Jesus Jesus prayed for his disciples in John 17 at verse 17 sanctify them through thy truth thy word is truth it is in Christ that we are redeemed and saved and not simply because of our faith in something in anything that's okay as long as you're a person of faith no it's not according to the quality of your individual faith but rather the worthiness of him in whom your faith is placed your faith is in Christ you are safe because he is worthy and because he is acceptable to the father and his perfect justice if your faith is in everything else it will crumble to the dust it will not stand before the all-seeing gaze of God it is not a works lest any man should boast for we are his workmanship you know anything in us

God did it created in Christ Jesus under good works which God had before ordained that we should walk in them Philippians puts it like this chapter 2 verse 13 it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure and the previous verses of course wherefore my beloved as we've always obeyed not as in my presence only but now much more in my absence work out your own salvation with fear and trembling and that doesn't mean so your salvation is down to how well you work because then it goes on it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure if you think those two verses are contradictory they're not because what we have in verse 12 of Philippians 2 is that well work out your own salvation with fear and trembling for is God which worketh in you in other words it's because God has worked in you that work of his grace that you are able to outwork in other words the evidence that flows from that it's like from the source of a stream high up on a hillside that bubbles up everything that flows down the hill ultimately from that comes from that source if the fountain is pure then all that flows down from it will likewise be pure if what God has done within is of him then all that flows outward from that all the work that you do the speech of your lips your attitude and interaction with other men and women should become affected and influenced by that we work outwards that which is within it changes the kind of people we are and people see it you know we hear in testimony after testimony as I mentioned many times in the past that you hear of those who after they became

Christians they were worried about telling their workmates or worried about telling their family and by the time they actually had the courage to speak up and say what had happened and they said oh we knew something had happened we knew that you were different in some way we could tell there was a change in you they didn't know perhaps what it was or maybe they did but they knew something had happened because the person was changed in the way they spoke in their attitude in their terms they used in their behaviour toward others they were different there was a different spoon about them and what Paul is saying in Philippians 12 is put this into practice work out your own salvation put your stagous into practice with fear and tremble for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do God works it in you work it out in the sense of out working of it likewise in Colossians 2 verse 14 we read blotting out the handwriting of ordinances which was against us which was contrary to us he took it out of the way nailing it to his cross the things that stood in our way the law the commandments that we felt we had to do ourselves he himself has fulfilled so because he's brought about the change in us we outwork that differently then because we are changed within we are his workmanship then created in Christ

Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them wherefore remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands at that time you were without Christ being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel strangers from the covenants of provis having no hope and without God in the world that was the status of paganism before you were outside of the people of God the people of Israel but now in Christ Jesus ye and here's the emphasis again it's not me that's you you're included in it who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ and this applies not merely to pagan Ephesians who were Gentiles before these are verses which applies to every race and people throughout the world who before they came to hear the gospel of Christ were far off were physically removed from the centre of the worship of

[25 : 33] Christ which of course you could say the only place that Christianity is actually native to is Palestine is Judea anything other than that may have become part of the culture of Scotland or Ireland or different parts of Europe or South America or North America or whatever it may be but it's only worked its way in there it's not native to these places this is something which is not native to anywhere in the world really because this is something God has planted into the world from heaven itself it is not ours by nature it is not ours by our native soil now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ wherever you were whoever you were he has brought you near to himself by the blood of Christ for he is our peace who had made both one and had broken down the middle wall of partition between us having abolished his flesh to enmity in the law of commandments contained in ordinances and this also is what

Colossians was referring to blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us which was contrary to us took it out of the way nailing it to his cross and although he's talking in the immediate context about peace between Jews and Gentiles now being one in Christ the reality of these verses the deeper application is not just peace between the races and the nationalities and old rivalries all of which is true but it is more importantly not just the new loyalties and priorities ultimately it is peace between God and man this is what Jesus has done he is our peace who have made both one God and man one in himself and have broken down the middle wall of partition between us having abolished in his flesh the enmity even the law of commandments contained the ordinances because as long as the law stood against us and condemned us and nobody had been able to fulfill it we were condemned by it but when Christ comes he fulfills all the law perfectly at last there is one man who has done it even Adam who was created perfect couldn't do it but now

Christ Jesus has fulfilled it perfectly and in him all who will put their trust and faith in him his perfect obedience as head of that redeemed section of the human race his perfect obedience becomes theirs they share in it they as it were plugged into his perfect obedience it becomes theirs who hath made both one broken down the middle wall of partition having abolished in his flesh the enmity that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross having slain the enmity thereby the enmity between God and man and came and preached peace to you which were afar off and to them that were nigh again that's a reference originally to the Jews and Gentiles the Jews that were near to God being his people the Gentiles that were far off from God but of course ultimately whether we're near or far it's the same peace that we need peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ and this is the message of course from when he was first born isn't it what the angels sang or if we say they sang they spoke anyway to the shepherds you know peace on earth good will toward men why is there peace on earth you know

Herod was busy slaughtering the little children the Romans were oppressing the Jews and so many other nations in the world how can we say peace on earth when Jesus is born there's peace because when Christ comes there is peace between God and man at last this human race has a representative within it in whom the Lord can unreservedly delight and if you think about it is this not how any human parent would react let's say for example that if you are a military man and your enemies were holed up in a bunker or a house somewhere and you had your missile or your cannon trained in that house and you knew if you blew up that building you'd get all your enemies there but in that building as well was your own infant son are you going to blow it up now are you going to blow that place to sky high and risk killing you or do you take such delight in him that for his sake you'll spare the rest so that he will be spared

God looks on the world into which his infant son has been born and he delights in it as the cradle of his only begotten son he delights in his own beloved son who is now in the flesh he's now part of humanity humanity has been taken into the Godhead and the Lord delights in him and because he delights in him he delights in that human race to which he belongs and he is willing to allow them to be brought within he has slain the enmity thereby and came and preached peace to you which were afar off and to them that were nigh for through him we both have access by one spirit unto the Father and now therefore whether you're Gentiles or Jews or whoever it may be you're no longer strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens of the saints and of the household of God now these closing verses 20 to 22 talk about being built into a living temple built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets

[31 : 20] Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone now this verse alone indicates the continuity between the Old Testament and the New the New Testament is not something sort of cobbled together and sort of plomped on top of the Old Testament it's rather that which grows out of it it is rather like the topmost branches of a tree whose trunk is thick and strong and has been there for centuries it is that which emerges out of the Old Testament it is the completion it is the crown of the Old Testament time after time something like 80 times in the New Testament Jesus quotes the Old and remember that the Old Testament is the only Bible that Jesus had and he quoted himself as being the fulfillment of the scriptures the law the prophets the Psalms and all that was written in Moses and so on we read in Luke 24 of how he opened the disciples' minds and enabled them to understand the scriptures and he spoke to them how he was the fulfillment of it all so you're built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets

Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone in whom all the building fitly flamed together grow unto an holy temple in the Lord now we don't think of a stone building as growing we don't think of the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem as growing but the contrast here is not just with the stone temple in Jerusalem the contrast is also for example with the pagan temple of Diana which was of course sited located in Ephesus and the contrast is between all earthly mere stone or wood or gold or silver temples which are earthbound and static and in a sense dead and the living temple which the Lord creates in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord now if it's going to grow then that means it must be something which is alive in John chapter 2

Jesus says when the Jews answered and said what sign showest thou unto us seeing that thou doest these things Jesus answered and said unto them destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up then said the Jews forty and six years was this temple and building what thou read it up in three days but he spake of the temple of his body the temple of his body in which was enshrined the glory of the eternal word remember what John says chapter 1 verse 14 the word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory the glory as of the only behalf of the father full of grace and truth there it was in him he was the ultimate temple destroy that temple of his body which they did when they crucified it and in three days it would be raised up now of course this temple the bringing forth of this living word Zechariah prophesied of this of course in chapter 6 we read verse 12 thus speaketh the

Lord of hosts saying behold the man whose name is the branch and he shall grow up out of his place and shall build the temple of the Lord even he shall build the temple of the Lord and he shall bear the glory and shall sit and rule upon his throne and he shall be a priest upon his throne and the council of peace shall be between them both between kingship and priesthood and he will be the fruitful behold the man whose name is the branch now of course what did Pilate say when Jesus was brought out before he was crucified behold the man you see Pilate doesn't say oh now what can I say that will sound as if it's tying in with the Old Testament prophets I know I'll say this he doesn't know at the human level and yet he is pronouncing behold the man just a second eyes behold the man whose name is the branch who shall grow up out of this place shall build the temple of the Lord and so on likewise all the different authors that the

Lord uses in his inspired word they don't necessarily coordinate with each other and know what the other has written but we read here in 1 Peter chapter 2 verses 4 to 6 here the whom coming is unto a living stone disallowed indeed of men but chosen of God and precious he also as lively stones living stones are built of a spiritual house and holy priesthood and offer spiritual sacrifices accepted to God wherefore also it is contained in the scripture behold I live in Zion a chief cornerstone elect precious he that believe of him shall not be confided and who is this chief cornerstone we're told in Ephesians 2 it's Jesus and this is the temple the living temple that those who were no people are enabled to become a people to be built together into this living temple of the Lord this is the point that Paul is trying to make to the Ephesians that you who were not a people you who were not part of

[36 : 34] God's scheme of salvation now are becoming part of it you're enabled to become it this is what Hosea was prophesying think of how he said say to one child lo ami means not my people lo no mercy God said he would have no mercy on his people of the Jews he said they were not his people anymore but then he reconciled them to himself and then he says in chapter 6 I will have mercy and not sacrifice he desires to have mercy upon the people of the Jews he desires to have mercy upon the people of the Gentiles he desires to have mercy upon sinners like you and me that which is written to the Ephesians is written to us also it is the same invitation it is the same means by which we are brought to become part of this temple of the Lord build it together for an habitation of God through the spirit just this final point habitation of

God why did Solomon build the temple so that God would dwell there which he did by the cloud of his presence why was the tabernacle raised up of God's direction so that he would symbolically dwell there Paul writes to the Corinthians that each one by his body his or her body is a temple of the living God that God would dwell there and that is what the Lord desires to do in the heart and the life yes in the bodily presence of each one of his children to dwell within them and so that the outworking of his presence is seen in their daily lives that is the invitation to the Ephesians it is the invitation to the Scots and the English and the Irish and the French and the Germans and all the nations of the world it is the invitation to lost sinners to we who were nothing to become part of this living growing temple which will never cease to grow and never become finally complete until it is complete in him we mentioned at the end of chapter one that says he put all things under his feet given to be head over all things the church which is his body the fullness of him that filleth all in all and there was a sense in which we said in all reverence

Christ is incomplete without his people without his bride the church and we are most definitely incomplete without him it is to that emptiness it is to that hole in your heart in your spirit in your soul that the Lord pleads and invites that you should open your heart and receive him into it that he may dwell there and where the Lord dwells is by definition his holy living temple let us soul Tenemos all de between y y d lose