

## Ephesians 2:1-22

Well, our last lesson ended on a high note,  
didn't it?

Not only did we see all things put under  
Jesus' feet, but the church is  
described as being "**the fullness of  
him that filleth all in all.**"--- yes,  
the church, which is described in  
Eph.1:18 as God's "**inheritance in the  
saints**".

But, where did this masterpiece of God's  
workmanship come from?

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When an artisan, or a tradesman, sets out to  
produce a work of art, he invariably  
chooses the best materials he can  
afford.

It may be a valuable hardwood, or a flawless  
piece of marble.

But when God created His masterpiece, He selected the worst material that could be imagined.

He reached down into the refuse heap and lifted out a material that was literally offensive to His nostrils.

Yes, He chose sinners, those who are best described in Eph.2:1, "**And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins**".

In this particular case, Paul was referring to the Gentile Christians in and around Ephesus, but his description is universal.

And not only were they dead, but they were "**dead in trespasses and sins**".

Now, the word translated trespasses, in this particular verse, gives the idea of falling aside, rather than standing upright.

In fact, one of the reasons God gave Israel the Old Testament Law, was to enable them to see this kind of trespass as He sees it.

And then we come to the word "**sins**", which has a little different connotation. It expresses the idea of missing the mark, or wandering from the path.

And even though they are slightly different in their meaning, their effect is exactly the same.

Yes, they produce death in both its forms.

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As you will remember, God warned Adam ---

**"in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die".**

And on the very day of his disobedience, Adam died spiritually.

Yes, on that fateful day, the sweet  
fellowship they had both enjoyed  
evaporated.

But, what about physical death?

Didn't Adam live to be 930 years old?

That not so bad, is it?

Well, no it isn't.

But for a man who had been created to be  
incorruptible, for a man who would  
have lived forever, that's not so good  
either.

And even though he didn't die immediately,  
he began to age, ever so slowly.

Yes, on that very day, he took his first  
step on that long road to the grave.

And there are acres and acres of graveyards  
that give testimony to the fact that  
we are following in his footsteps.

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But Paul wasn't talking about physical death, when he said **"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins"**.

No, he was talking about spiritual death. And not only had these believers been dead but they had been deluded.

V2 **"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:"**

Yes, not only had they been dead to God, but they had been alive to Satan.

And this is true of all mankind.

Oh, I know, in this day of higher learning, it's not fashionable to believe in Satan.

In fact, some people don't even believe in God.

But whether we believe it or not, Satan is  
alive and well, and mankind is walking  
**"according to the prince of the power  
of the air"**.

And not only had they been dead, and  
deluded, but they had been controlled  
by the lusts of the flesh, **"fulfilling  
the desires of the flesh and of the  
mind"**. Eph.2:3

Now, you can't really classify every lust of  
the flesh as gross sin, but every  
desire of the flesh has the potential  
of drawing us away from God.

That's what 1 John 2:16 tells us doesn't it?

**"For all that is in the world, the lust of  
the flesh, and the lust of the eyes,  
and the pride of life, is not of the  
Father, but is of the world."**

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And, as Paul continues to describe their former condition in Eph.2:3, it gets worse.

They had been **"by nature the children of wrath"**.

Now what exactly did Paul mean, when he used the term **"the children of wrath"**.

Had they let anger totally control their lives?

No, of course not!

Paul wasn't talking about their passion.

He was talking about their position.

Because of their sinful nature, and consequently their actions and attitudes, they were the enemies of God.

As a result, their very nature called forth God's righteous anger.

Yes, they were the children of Adam, and they were **"the children of wrath"**.

And by the way, that's the real condition of all of us, even though many don't believe it.

Oh we might, in one of our more reflective moments, get the feeling that there is something wrong, but it doesn't last.

And the political, educational, and even religious systems that surround us tend to reinforce the belief that we are OK.

But we're not OK!

When the Apostle Paul penned the words, "**For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God**", he was giving us the bottom line.

But here's the wonderful news.

God has added a P.S. to our bottom line.

Yes, God has spent all to create His masterpiece.



Eph.2:4-6 **"But God, who is rich in mercy,  
for his great love wherewith he loved  
us,  
5: Even when we were dead in sins,  
hath quickened us together with  
Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)  
6: And hath raised us up together, and  
made us sit together in heavenly  
places in Christ Jesus:"**

I remember the late Dr. Howard Sugden, a  
pastor and well-known Bible teacher  
from Michigan, making this statement -  
-- "I love the buts in the Bible. They  
change gloom into glory, pain into  
peace, and trial into triumph."

And we have one of those wonderful buts  
right here --- **"But God, who is rich  
in mercy, for his great love wherewith  
he loved us,  
5: Even when we were dead in sins,-- "**

Surely, every action must be energized by a motive.

Normally speaking, we don't do something without a reason.

So, what motive could have possibly energized a righteous God to show this kind of mercy, especially, to those who "**were dead in sins**", who by their very nature, could only attract His wrath?

Why would He give the best that heaven could provide to redeem the worst that earth could produce?

Well, the answer is found in V4.

It was "**his great love**" that motivated His great salvation.

The words of Samuel Medley are so appropriate here:

"He saw me ruined by the fall,  
Yet loved me notwithstanding all,

He freed me from my lost estate,  
His loving kindness, oh how great! "

And I think John 3:16 puts it in a nutshell:

**"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."**

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And not only has He saved us, not only has he retrieved us out of the refuse heap, but He has lifted us to the very heavens.

In our last lesson, we read about God's mighty power --- **"Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places ---"**.

Eph.1:20

But it was His **"great love"** that **"raised us up together, and made us sit together**

**in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:"**

Eph.2:6

Yes, **"heavenly places"**, the very place where Christ sits at the right hand of God.

In the past, **"the desires of the flesh and of the mind"** dictated our horizon, but in Christ, our eyes have been opened to heavenly things.

Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the doors of God's Word have swung open.

And even the physical world that surrounds us is seen in a different light.

"Heav'n above is softer blue,  
Earth around is sweeter green!  
Something lives in every hue  
Christless eyes have never seen:  
Birds with gladder songs o'er-flow,  
Flowers with deeper beauties shine,  
Since I know, as now I know,

I am His, and He is mine."

Yes, God's **"great love"** has lifted us **"out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay"** and has **"made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:"**

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Eph.2:7 **"That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."**

Certainly, God's creation gives witness to His wisdom and power --- **"Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge."** Psa. 19:2

But when it comes to **"the exceeding riches of his grace"** there can be no better evidence than **"his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus"** and the scars in

His dear Son's hands and side, as He  
sits beside Him on His throne.

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Eph. 2:8 **"For by grace are ye saved through  
faith; and that not of yourselves: it  
is the gift of God:"**

I don't think the Holy Spirit could have  
made it any clearer than that.

Our salvation is God's work, motivated by  
God's love.

It is **"not of yourselves"** it is **"the gift of  
God"**.

It can't be purchased, and it can only be  
received by **"faith"**.

And just in case we still didn't get it, the  
Holy Spirit has added V9 --- **"Not of  
works, lest any man should boast."**

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As the hymn writer has penned,  
"Not the labour of my hands

Can fulfil Thy law's demands;  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears for ever flow,  
All for sin could not atone;  
Thou must save, and Thou alone."

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Now, there has been some controversy  
concerning "**the gift of God**" as it  
appears in V8.

Of course, two possibilities would be God's  
grace and faith, as they both appear  
in this verse.

However, I believe Paul is referring to  
salvation, and the very next verse  
seems to bear this out.

You see, if Paul is identifying salvation as  
the "**gift of God**", then the caution  
which follows, namely, that it is "**Not  
of works**", would make sense.

On the other hand, this same cautionary word, applied to God's grace or our faith, would seem quite unnecessary.

So then, **"--- by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:  
9: Not of works, lest any man should boast."**

However, in spite of this clear testimony, at the heart of every false religion there is a doctrine of works.

We make our pilgrimages to holy shrines; we seek to build up our equity by good works.

And like Cain of old, we offer the fruits of our labours, only to have them rejected.

No, God will have **"no respect"** for the work of our hands.



Only the blood of a substitute will suffice  
to put away sin.

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However, there is a place for good works in  
the economy of God.

And might I say, a very essential place, as  
the very next verse points out.

Eph.2:10 **"For we are his workmanship,  
created in Christ Jesus unto good  
works, which God hath before ordained  
that we should walk in them."**

So then, even though good works can never  
suffice as the price of salvation,  
good works will forever remain a proof  
of our salvation.

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Let me give you an example.

I think everyone would agree that a painting  
can tell you a lot about the artist  
who created it.

For instance, a qualified expert can usually identify a Rembrandt even before he sees the signature.

And God's workmanship is like that also.

His creation, that literally surrounds us, clearly identifies the profound wisdom and ability of its Creator.

As the psalmist once said --- **"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork."**

In fact, if it wasn't for man's stubborn ignorance, he would see God's fingerprints in everything.

So then, if a Christian is truly **"--- his workmanship"**, then we should see the marks of **"his workmanship"** in him.

And in fact, we do.

As Eph. 2:10 tells us, Christians are **"--- created in Christ Jesus unto good**

**works, which God hath before ordained  
that we should walk in them."**

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Let me give you another example.

If a medical doctor comes across an  
individual who appears to be dead, he  
will look for vital signs.

Well, it's the same with spiritual life.

Since Eph.2:10 tells us a believer is "**his  
workmanship, created in Christ Jesus  
unto good works**", then "**good works**" is  
a vital sign.

Now, I realize, only "**The Lord knoweth them  
that are his**", and a backslidden  
Christian may not exhibit any signs of  
life.

However, if good works are entirely missing,  
if there isn't any desire to please  
his Heavenly Father, then there's no  
real reason to suspect spiritual life.

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However, having said all that, we must  
insist that salvation is **"Not of  
works"**.

As Eph. 2:8 says **"For by grace are ye saved  
through faith; and that not of  
yourselves: it is the gift of God:"**

And didn't Jesus say in John 5:24, **"--- He  
that heareth my word, and believeth"  
yes --- "believeth on him that sent  
me, hath everlasting life and shall  
not come into condemnation; but is  
passed from death unto life."**

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However, Satan is ever busy trying to add  
something to Christ's finished work.  
And not surprisingly, one of those things is  
works.

For instance, there's a doctrine going  
around today that readily accepts the

fact that salvation is obtained by faith, but it also insists that it must be maintained by works.

In other words, if our performance isn't acceptable, we can lose our salvation. Such a doctrine denies the very words of Christ uttered on the cross.

When He cried out --- "**It is finished**", He didn't mean I am finished.

This wasn't a cry of defeat; it was a shout of victory!

Christ had finished the work He had set out to do, and there was nothing left to be done.

Adding works to Christ's finished work is an insult to His ability, and throws us back on the unstable ground of our own ineffectual efforts.

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And now the subject changes.

Previously, Paul had been dealing with the Gentiles' relationship to God, but now he is focusing on their relationship to their fellow believers.

Or, to be more specific, he is focusing on the relationship between Jews and Gentiles inside the body of Christ.

At the time of Paul's writing, the church of Jesus Christ already included Jews and Gentiles.

However, in and around Ephesus, the believers were Gentiles.

And so, in Eph. 2:11-12, Paul says ---

**"Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;**

**12: That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the**

**commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:"**

Yes, not only had they been separated from God, but they had been separated from God's people.

Because of the contamination inherent in their culture, God had found it necessary to separate Israel from the Gentile nations.

One of the ways He did this was by restricting Israel's diet to kosher foods, making it effectively impossible to interact socially.

He had also forbidden them to intermarry, and had they been completely obedient in that matter, it would have protected them from idolatry, and the gross sin that usually accompanied it.

Yes, like the Church of Jesus Christ,  
Israel's strength was to be in  
separation, not conformity.

However, at the same time, this protection  
of Israel automatically made the  
Gentiles **"aliens from the commonwealth  
of Israel, and strangers from the  
covenants of promise, having no hope,  
and without God in the world:"**

That is, **"no hope"** as a nation, for God had  
always kept the door open to any  
individual who might seek Him.

In fact, one of His purposes in keeping  
Israel separate was to make them a  
testimony to the one true God, and to  
be a light in the darkness.

Unfortunately, their testimony was flawed by  
sin.

Nevertheless, any Gentile who was truly  
seeking the God of Abraham and Isaac



and Jacob could become a proselyte in the Jewish nation, and by doing so, receive its benefits.

That provision had been made way back when Israel left Egypt, and you can read about it in Exod. 12:48-49.

However, even though a Gentile could be accepted by Israel's God, he was never really accepted by God's People.

For instance, in the temple there was a wall, about 4 1/2 feet high, which separated the court of the Gentiles from the rest of the temple.

Any Gentile crossing that wall would do so in hazard of his life.

Actually, Paul almost got himself killed when it was rumoured he had brought Gentiles into the temple.

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However, such is not the case in the  
spiritual body of Christ.

And here we have another of those wonderful  
buts.

Eph.2:13-15 **"But now in Christ Jesus ye who  
sometimes were far off are made nigh  
by the blood of Christ.**

**14: For he is our peace, who hath made  
both one, and hath broken down the  
middle wall of partition between us;**

**15: Having abolished in his flesh the  
enmity, even the law of commandments  
contained in ordinances; for to make  
in himself of twain one new man, so  
making peace".**

Yes, this national division had completely  
disappeared.

Christ had made **"in himself of twain one new  
man".**

So, that's how it is in the economy of God,  
but that's not exactly how it was in  
the hearts of the early Christians.  
Granted, during those first few years after  
Pentecost, this wasn't an issue.  
That's because the church was completely  
Jewish.

And I'm sure those early believers would  
have assumed this new fellowship was  
simply an extension of God's mercy to  
Israel.

However, as the Gentiles began to be added,  
there was a problem.

Many Jewish believers felt the Gentiles  
should be circumcised in order to be  
truly Christian.

I suppose this was sort of a carry over from  
the Jewish proselyte days.

But Paul would have none of it, insisting  
circumcision was no longer valid.

Certainly, circumcision had been ordained by God and was a sign of the Abrahamic covenant, but the church isn't Israel. The seal of the church is the indwelling Holy Spirit, not circumcision.

And, as you can well imagine, this resistance, on the part of Jewish believers, had a very negative affect on the Gentiles.

It was Paul's job to assure the Gentiles that God had accepted them, and on an equal basis.

So then, in Eph.2:16-17, Paul continues ---

**"And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:**

**17: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh."**

Certainly, Paul made no attempt to downplay their previous differences, for indeed their backgrounds were very different. Before their conversion, the Gentiles had been **"afar off"** from God.

No doubt they had been idol worshipers like their countrymen.

No doubt they had **"changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things."**

And living in and around Ephesus, one of the worst cesspools of inequity in the Roman world, no doubt they had sunk to the very depths.

By contrast, the Jew had been relatively **"nigh"** unto God, having received the law and the prophets.

So their backgrounds were quite different,  
but their new status was the same.  
Not somewhat the same, but exactly the same.

Eph. 2:18-19 **"For through him** (that is  
through Christ) **we both have access by  
one Spirit unto the Father.**

**19: Now therefore ye are no more  
strangers and foreigners, but  
fellowcitizens with the saints, and of  
the household of God".**

No, they were not Jewish proselytes, they  
were not resident aliens; they were  
**"fellowcitizens with the saints".**

They were citizens of that heavenly country,  
and would be legitimate residents in  
the New Jerusalem.

They were Abraham's spiritual seed, they  
were heirs of the new covenant, and  
they were brothers and sisters in the  
Lord.

They had been born again, and were a legitimate part of **"the household of God"**.

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So then, this is the barrier that had been broken down, and here is the new structure God had built.

As Eph. 2:21-22 tells us; our Heavenly Father had constructed **"an holy temple in the Lord"** and **"an habitation of God"**.

And like any structure, it would have a foundation.

That foundation is described in Eph.2:20

**"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone"**.

However, this "**foundation of the apostles and prophets**", is not the apostles and prophets themselves.

1 Cor.3:11 makes it clear that Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Church, as well as being "**the chief corner stone**".

So what exactly is "**the foundation of the apostles and prophets**"?

In a word, it's the New Testament scriptures, which contain the doctrinal foundation of the Church.

It was revealed to God's apostles and New Testament prophets, and they wrote it down.

Yes, they were the foundation builders, and they were faithful in their task, but now it is complete.



There are no apostles or prophets in the church today, and there is no need of them.

The day of foundation building is over, and the New Testament scriptures are complete as they stand.

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However, the "**chief corner stone**" is eternal, and will forever be the guiding light of the church.

In the past, a cornerstone served a very important function.

It was carefully fabricated to be square, straight, and true in every plane.

Actually, it was called "the Stone of testing", and was the standard for the rest of the building.

And so it is with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our doctrines, our conduct, in fact  
everything in the Church must line up  
with the "**chief corner stone**".

Yes, Jesus is the "**chief corner stone**"---

**"In whom all the building fitly framed  
together groweth unto an holy temple  
in the Lord:" Eph. 2:21**

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So, there you have it.

This is the new "**habitation of God**".

- It is built upon Jesus Christ.
- It is built around the Lord Jesus, Who is the "**chief corner stone**".
- Doctrinally speaking, it is built upon "**the foundation of the apostles and prophets**".
- Also, it is built of living stones made up of Jews and Gentiles.

- And it is "**an holy temple in the Lord**",  
indwelt by the Holy Spirit.