

Pentwater Bible Church

Ephesians Message 5

Jews, Gentiles, & The Church



Jewish Marriage Contract

The Book of Ephesians
Message Five
Jews, Gentiles & The Church
Pentwater Bible Church
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Review:

SALVATION BY GRACE. 2:1-10.

SPIRITUAL DEATH (2:1-3)

Unregenerate people are dead spiritually and therefore like the physically dead are unable to communicate with the living. The spiritually living are those who have been born again and are connected to God. They have been made alive by believing the gospel and receiving the Holy Spirit. Those who are not born again are separated from God and their sins keep them in the “dead” state. The spiritually dead cannot experience the full life that God gives those of us who have truly received Christ and become regenerated (Matthew 19: 28; Titus 3: 5). They cannot connect to God and without His Holy Spirit and they cannot understand Scripture. Christ affirmed the state of the spiritually dead quite clearly in the gospels (Matthew 8:22; Luke 9:60).

Prior to regeneration people live in their sins, which reveals their spiritual dead condition even though they are physically alive. They could not and didn’t follow God. Paul marks three characteristics of the unbeliever.

1. They live like people in the rest of the world.
2. They follow Satan even if they don’t realize what they are doing.
3. The additional description, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient, refers to “the ruler,” meaning that Satan personally works in sons of disobedience. The Bible clearly explains what the sins of the flesh are:

Galatians 5: 19-22 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

This nature can manifest itself in a respectable form as well as in disreputable pursuits. Unbelievers have a close relationship, not with God, but with His wrath! Disobedience and unbelief lead to the wrath of God (Rom. 1:18-2:29; John 3:36). Ephesians 2:1-3 presents a hopeless picture of an unregenerate person who deserves nothing but God’s wrath.

GOD'S RICH MERCY (2:4-6)

The conjunction *but* introduces God's actions toward sinners, in contrast with their condition as expressed in verses 1-3 "God" is described as rich in mercy. God's mercy is seen through the fact that He has a plan, which is confirmation of the pathway He has created for the world to escape to Heaven. His plan is perfect.

God, who is rich in exhibiting this undeserved kindness, acts on behalf of sinners because of His great love for us. His love and mercy are inexhaustible. Since sinners are spiritually dead toward God, they have nothing to commend them to God. God's love has done three things: (a) made us alive with Christ, (b) "raised us up with Christ" (2:6), and (c) "seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus" (v. 6). An unbeliever, spiritually dead, is "made . . . alive" by God "with the work of Christ" (cf. Col. 2:13).

Believers have been raised up from the dead. Christ was raised up from the dead by the power of God. We who have been spiritually born again have been raised up to life by God's power too. This speaks of being positionally resurrected. Christ's post-resurrection state was new, powerful, and unique. So too Christians, in whom Christ dwells, have a new, powerful, and unique life and position. Believers are seated with Christ in the heavenly realms spiritually. This divine power that can make an unbeliever have life, be raised, and exalted with Christ is the same power that presently operates in believers. A believer can then be found to no longer follow the world but truly desire the things of Christ. As Paul said in Colossians:

Colossians 3: 1-2 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

GOD'S GLORIOUS PURPOSES (2:7-10)

We the redeemed become the examples on display of His kindness to the world in Christ Jesus. The Church could only exist by God's love. The fact that we exist is evidence of God's unmerited grace toward this world. Without Christ's sacrifice there could be no hope for any relationship with God and our future would be hopeless.

Ephesians 2: 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

These verses explain "the incomparable riches of His grace." It is by grace you have been saved, and adding that the means of this salvation is through faith. Hence the basis is grace and the means is faith alone (Rom. 3:22, 25; Gal. 2:16; 1 Peter 1:5). Faith is not a "work." It does not merit salvation; it is only the means by which one accepts God's free salvation. Then God says And this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God. Thus it refers back to the *concept* of salvation (2:4-8a), whose basis is grace and the means by which it is accomplished is faith. Faith is the conduit or pipeline through which the grace of God comes to a repentant sinner who is receiving God's grace. This salvation does not have its source in man (it is "not from yourselves"), but rather, its source is God's grace

for “it is the gift of God.” Therefore since no person can bring salvation to himself by his own efforts, no one can boast (Rom. 3:27; 1 Cor. 1:29). Their boasting can only be in the Lord (1 Cor. 1:31). God alone provides the salvation and even the faith through which the salvation enters us. We are completely in debt to God for His rich mercy. This is a complete gift of God.

This is totally, completely and without any human effort.

Paul tells why this salvation is not from man or by his works. The reason is that salvation is God’s workmanship. The word “workmanship” used only here and in Romans 1:20 denotes a work of art or a masterpiece. It differs from human “works” (*ergōn*) in Ephesians 2:9. Believers are God’s workmanship because they have been created (a work only God can do) in Christ Jesus. The purpose of this creation is that believers will do good works. Good works does not achieve God’s workmanship, but it is to result in good works (Titus 2:14; 3:8). Meaning we are not saved by any good works but after salvation we will do good works.

The purpose of these prepared-in-advance works is not “to work in them” but “to walk in them.” In other words, God has prepared a path of good works for believers, which He will perform in and through them as they walk by faith. This does not mean doing a work for God; instead, it is God’s performing His work in and through believers (cf. Phil. 2:13). Paul in Ephesians 4:6 discusses this path of good works.

Therefore Ephesians 2:1-10 demonstrates that though people were spiritually dead and deserving only God’s wrath, God, in His wonderful grace, has provided salvation through faith. Believers are God’s workmanship in whom and through whom He performs good works

Today’s Message:

II. CORPORATE BLESSINGS (2:11-3:22) LIFE WITH BELIEVERS

For those people on this earth who have become spiritually alive, the wonderful workmanship of God we are about to learn is the Great Mystery that was previously unrevealed in Old Testament times. Starting in the eleventh verse of the second chapter Paul enters a new division of this book. We saw in the first chapter how God planned the masterpiece, His called and chosen for His Church. Then in our last session we saw how God deals with us individually as lost sinners who trust Christ to fashion us into His Masterpiece. Now we are to see how all believers of all races, ethnicity, cultures and religions are brought into one unit called the Church of Jesus Christ. This is truly God’s “one world government.” This is not the pagan one world government, which is coming on the world in the future. This is how God has fashioned for Himself His Chosen to be a single unit all responding to the Holy Spirit that lives within each one of us directing us and uniting all Christians past, present and future until Christ comes for us to take us out of this decaying world.

A. ONENESS OF JEWS AND GENTILES IN CHRIST. 2:11-22.

1. WHAT THE GENTILES WERE WITHOUT CHRIST. 2:11,12.

Ephesians 2: 11 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;

Paul directs this first verse to the Ephesian Gentiles. He has reached a summary of all the previous text in the book by saying “now therefore.” Previous to Christ’s sacrifice there were two people groups in God’s economy. They were Jews and the rest of the world’s population called the Gentiles or the nations and sometimes the New Testament uses the term Greek. God called the Jews to a special position in this world.

Deuteronomy 7:6 For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.

Paul makes a clear distinction to the flesh and not the spirit in this delineation by saying “in the flesh.” The Jews had been elected as God’s chosen people. The males were required to be circumcised on the eighth day of life as a sign of obedience and belonging to the covenanted people and symbolically cutting off the old life of sin, purifying one’s heart and dedicating oneself to God. The practice of circumcision provided the visible separation from the Gentiles with whom the Jews lived. It was first given to Abraham by God. Cir. 2350 B.C. (Genesis 17:10) and made part of the Mosaic Covenant for all Jewish males (Leviticus 12:3). So as Paul began this section he wanted to remind the Ephesians that before conversion they had no relationship with God. Paul commanded them to remember that formerly, before their conversions, they were Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by the Jews. Jews looked down at all non-Jews by calling them the “uncircumcised.” This physical difference between Jews and Gentiles affected every area of their lives. A great social and spiritual division existed between them as far as the Jews were concerned. The great error the Jews committed was their reliance on the “physical” and their status as God’s elect as sufficient to make them godly and in God’s good graces for their salvation. They failed in large measure to promote inner renewal by changing their hearts. This is why Paul uses the terms “flesh made with hands.” He knew the Jews hearts were hard and they relied on the physical. When Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount He addressed this very issue through out the entire message.

Ephesians 2: 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:

The Gentiles’ lack of the external sign of circumcision also meant that they lacked five privileges that God had given the nation Israel.

1. They were separate from Christ personally (true also of most Jews) but also in that they had no national hope of the Messiah as the Jews did.
2. They were excluded from citizenship (commonwealth) in Israel. They did not belong to the theocratic state of Israel. Though some Gentiles were admitted into

Judaism as proselytes, Gentiles as a whole were excluded; they were thus alienated. The few who were admitted were required to immediately be circumcised before they could participate in the Passover (Exodus 12: 48) and then the other components of the Jewish Covenant.

3. They were foreigners to the covenants of the promise. They were mostly deprived of direct participation in God's covenants and thus had no hope of future glory and blessing as Israel did. Israel's "covenants" include the Abrahamic (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:18-21; 17:1-8), the Land (Deut. 28-30), the Davidic (2 Sam. 7:16; Ps. 89:1-4), and the New (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:24-30). These covenants—all pointing to "the promise" of the Messiah and of blessings through Him—assured Israel of a national existence, a land, a King, an earthly future Kingdom and spiritual blessings.
4. The Gentiles were without hope. Unlike Israel they had no expectation of a personal Messiah-Deliverer and the Messianic Age.
5. They were without God in the world. The Gentiles were in a desperate situation. They had no meaning, hope, purpose, or direction in life.

Such is the condition of all peoples in the world who are without Christ. They are without hope and this existence is all they have. It ends when their life ends and they will experience an eternity of pain and suffering. This bleakness *does* have a remedy because God Himself intervened in time and space to provide for the Gentiles.

As the world's apostasy grows the light of Christ gets increasingly dimmer which will plunge the world into great darkness before the Great Tribulation comes on the earth. We must try and reach all those within our sphere of influence before the apostasy's dark curtain drops at the final call.

2. THE ONE BODY 2:13-18.

Ephesians 2: 13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Paul now speaks of the new nearness to God by bringing them into the fellowship by Christ's shed blood. Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 9:22). This begins the dispensation of grace as the old covenant, the Mosaic Covenant is fulfilled and therefore replaced by the New Covenant. The Gentiles who were far away from both God and the Jews are now brought near. Because of Christ the Gentiles are now fellow heirs of the New Covenant being in one body with the believing Jews. The *now* he speaks of is:

1. *Now*, In which the surpassing riches of God's grace are made known.
2. *Now*, After corporate Israel rejected the King and Savior.
3. *Now*, When He is sitting on God the Father's throne at His right side.
4. *Now*, When the Holy Spirit is active doing His work on the earth.
5. *Now*, During the present age.

Ephesians 2: 14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

Christ has done the unifying work of bringing together the world's two people groups Jews and Gentiles. He has given us the peace of God (Philippians 4: 7) and enabled us through belief to finally make peace with God (Romans 5: 1). Further since the Jews despised the Gentiles the so-called wall of partition between the two groups Paul speaks of has been removed. In the Church the hostility between Jews and Gentiles has been removed. This of course refers to genuine believers who love God and trust in His Son in *practice* as well as verbal proclamation. Remember the true Church of Christ is invisible. Christ destroyed this enmity so Jewish and Gentile believers must not have any hostility toward each other.

Ephesians 2: 15-16 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; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

Paul now described how and why this hostility ended. The animosity between *believing* Jews and Gentiles was ended because by Christ's physical death (Colossians. 1:22) He rendered the Law "inoperative." in believers' lives. Jews and Gentiles were enemies because the former sought to keep the Law with its commandments and regulations (Col. 2:14, 21-23), whereas Gentiles could care less about them. This difference was the large barrier between them. But now that the Law is inoperative ("Christ is the end of the Law" [Rom. 10:4]), Jewish-Gentile hostility is gone. The Law was the *cause* of the enmity. Christ "destroyed" the barrier (hostility) by making the Law inoperative.

Christ had two purposes in ending the hostility:

1. The first purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace. This "new man" (Eph. 2:15), or "new humanity," is also called "this one body" (16), the church. In the church, Gentiles do not become Jews, nor do Jews become Gentiles. Instead believing Jews and Gentiles become Christians, a whole new creation of God.
2. The second purpose in destroying the enmity was to reconcile both Jewish and Gentile believers to Himself in . . . one body (3:6). This reconciliation was accomplished through the cross, by which Christ killed (put to death) the enmity between people and God. Though *He* was put to death, He in turn put to death the Jewish-Gentile hostility. In 2:14 the reconciliation is between Jewish and Gentile believers, and in verse 16 the reconciliation is between people and God. Reconciliation (removal of enmity) between man and God is mentioned elsewhere by Paul (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Col. 1:20).

Ephesians 2: 17-18 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.

Not only is Christ “our peace” (v. 14), but He also preached peace. The peace that was preached was on the basis of Christ’s death rather than during His life on earth. Peace is supplied both to those who were far away (cf. Eph. 2:13), that is, Gentiles (who were without Christ and alienated from Israel and her covenants, v. 12) and to those who were near, namely, Jews (who have “the covenants of the promise,” v. 12).

As a result of this message of peace both Jewish and Gentile believers have access to God the Father by one Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). This must be understood that Christ gives believers access. As so often in this book the work of the Trinity is visible. Here believers have access to God the Father through the Holy Spirit because of Christ’s death on the cross.

In four ways in 2:14-18 Paul emphasized that the two (Jew and Gentile) have been united:

1. “The two” are made “one” (v. 14)
2. “One new man” is created “out of the two” (v. 15)
3. “In this one body . . . both” are reconciled (v. 16)
4. “Both” “have access . . . by one Spirit” (v. 18). Nothing could be clearer than the fact that this new union replaces enmity.

3. THE ONE BUILDING. 2:19-22.

Ephesians 2: 19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

Consequently you, that is, Gentile believers, are no longer aliens. Believing Gentiles become fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, the Church. Gentiles become a part of the company of the redeemed of all ages beginning with Adam. However, this does not mean that the church inherits the blessings promised to Israel.

There are three reasons for this:

1. In the context Paul was discussing the “one new man” (v. 15), the “one body” (v. 16). This does not mean that Gentiles are incorporated into Israel but that believing Jews and Gentiles are incorporated into one new “humanity.” Paul specifically stated that Gentiles are incorporated “with God’s people” and are in “God’s household” (v. 19); he did not use the word “Israel.” If Paul meant that the church became “Israel,” he would have named both groups, as he did in verse 11. This misunderstanding has led to a major heresy called “replacement theology.” The Church as not replaced Israel. The Jews and the Gentiles become spiritually one entity of God’s chosen known as the Church. We each still retain our own identities and heritage as well as prophetic destinies for the unsaved.
2. Paul explained that this new relationship is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief Cornerstone” (v. 20). This began on the day of Pentecost, not in the Old Testament. True, Gentile believers become a part of the redeemed of all ages (v. 19). But their being incorporated with Jewish believers into the “one new man” distinctly began when

the church came into being at Pentecost. The cornerstone anchors the building and gives the walls their line.

3. Paul described the church as a great building, a holy temple in which God dwells. This figure of God dwelling in a temple comes from the Old Testament. Paul wrote of the building's foundation (v.20), formation (v.21), and function (v.22).

Ephesians 2: 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

Paul goes on to further describe the building illustration of the Church. The foundation is crucial to any well-built structure. Without which it will fail. The reason Gentile believers are "fellow citizens" (v. 19) is that they are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. The "prophets" are of the New Testament era, not the Old Testament. "Prophets" follows the word "apostles" here and in 3:5 and 4:11. These men received the revelation of the mystery of the church in the present Age, which had been hidden in Old Testament times (3:5).

Christ Jesus Himself is the chief Cornerstone, that is, He is the *most crucial* part of the foundation. In ancient building practices "the chief cornerstone" was carefully placed. It was crucial because the entire building was lined up with it. The church's foundation, that is, the apostles and prophets, needed to be correctly aligned with Christ. All other believers are built on that foundation, measuring their lives with Christ.

Ephesians 2: 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

In Christ the whole building is joined together. The various parts of the building are skillfully fitted to each other, not haphazardly thrown together. This structure rises to become (continually grows into) a holy temple in the Lord. This indicates that the church is a living and growing organism, as new believers are included in this temple's superstructure (Ephesians 4:15-16; 1 Peter 2:5). Both Jewish and Gentile believers are being "joined together" into this one organism labeled "a holy temple" (cf. "one new man" [Eph. 2:15] and "one body" [v. 16]). Solomon's Temple when under construction gives us an illustration of the building characterization of which Paul refers. During construction no sounds of hammer, axe and tools of iron were heard (I Kings 6:7). Every stone was prepared beforehand and then at the proper time it was fitted in the exact place it belonged. God's timing and methods are perfect. He is building His Church. He takes living stones prepared before hand and puts each in its proper place (I Corinthians 12). This is in direct contrast to man's methods of church growth through marketing techniques and strategic plans. This is God's work and He places Himself in to the building as the Holy Spirit enters the new structure called a Holy Temple of the Lord, The Church.

Ephesians 2: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

God places individual believers into the structure; thus it is being built together. The

goal of this temple is to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit. In the Old Testament God's glory was in the temple, which represented His presence with the people. In this Age God dwells in His new temple which is constructed not from inanimate materials but of *living* believers. The Holy Spirit indwells each individual believer (cf. John 14:17; Rom. 5:5; 8:9, 11; 1 Cor. 2:12; Gal. 3:2; 4:6; 1 John 3:24; 4:13), who is thus a "temple" (1 Cor. 6:19). But the temple in Ephesians 2:21-22 refers to the Holy Spirit's *corporate* "dwelling" (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16), His "temple" composed of *all* Jewish and Gentile believers.

In conclusion, Paul has shown that though the Gentiles were formerly outside God's household, they are now one "new man" with Jewish believers. This new entity is like a temple that is structured on the apostles and prophets, with Christ being the chief Cornerstone; God indwells it through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

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