

# The Book of Ephesians

## Chapter 2

### Ephesians 2

*“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, <sup>3</sup> among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. <sup>4</sup> But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup> and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not of works, lest anyone should boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

*“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—<sup>12</sup> that at that time you 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. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, <sup>15</sup> having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup> and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. <sup>17</sup> And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. <sup>19</sup> Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, <sup>22</sup> in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”*

### Ephesians 2:1

*“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins...”*

#### **You Once Were Dead**

All human beings are born with a sinful and fallen nature. We are born “*dead* [spiritually] [and dying physically] *in trespasses and in sins*” (vs. 1). The sinful nature and associated spiritual death we suffer was been passed down to us through Adam. This is theologically called The Law of Seminal Headship, also referred to as The Law of Natural Headship.

Secondly, we must mention that man is sinful because we sin, but also by divine decree. Mankind has been and is declared sinful in Adam—prior to our natural birth or personal act of sin.

With purpose, foreknown and predetermined by God, we are held in contempt for the sin of Adam in order to set the stage for the redemption we have in Jesus. The divine mandate of declared sinfulness in man is what theologians call The Law of Federal Headship.

As we take a closer look you will see the glory of God in His creative and glorious work.

### **At Creation**

When God created Adam, He made him perfect and without sin. However, sin came into the world through Adam and Eve, his wife, when they chose to disobey the clearly declared word of God.

Sin consequentially brought about suffering and death. The sinful and rebellious act of Adam and Eve has allowed for consequences affecting the original two and every other man, woman, and child.

This fact should be noted when seeking to answer the question of why there is suffering and death in the world. It should also be a reminder that there is redemption from the pain suffered. It is for this reason (among others) that God continues (at this present time) to allow sin, suffering and death. We who suffer, long for redemption; thus, God to this day uses sin, suffering, and death, to cause our lack of comfort in this present world—for as long as there is suffering, we will long for better, more, relief, etc. God has intended to use pain and suffering in order to deter us from a relaxed and contented existence without Him. He wants us to suffer the consequence of sin in the present so that we might enjoy the glory He has prepared for those who trust Him for deliverance and redemption. For *“the suffering of this present time are not worth to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”* (Romans 8:18)—in the future—and throughout eternity.

### **The Law of Federal Headship**

Through the Law of Federal Headship sin was “passed down,” through Adam to all men. For this reason, Paul wrote, *“...and thus death spread to all men...”* (Romans 5:12). Paul explained that *“...death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam...”* (Romans 5:14). Therefore, we know that all men are declared sinners, and are subject to death, by divine mandate through this Law: The Law of Federal Headship.

Some will argue that we may be born with a sinful nature but that we are not sinners until we act upon that nature and make the choice to sin. However, this is not what the Bible teaches. We do sin because we are born sinners, and because we have a natural propensity for sin, but through The Law of Federal Headship, we are equated with the sinful history of Adam and therefore held in contempt for the sin of our forefather.

When Paul wrote, *“...just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned,”* (Romans 5:12) he used the past tense of the word sin. Thus Paul communicated that the action occurred in the past.

The Greek word Paul used for sin is “harmatano.” It is in the “aorist tense” and the “indicative mood.” This means that Paul summarized the action as having occurred in the past. He did not say, “all

sin” in this passage, He said, *“all sinned.”* Therefore, we see that Paul taught that God held the descendants of Adam in contempt for the sin committed *in Adam*. Paul also mentioned this to the Corinthians when he said, *“...in Adam all die...”* (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Therefore, when Paul told the Ephesians that they were *“...made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,”* (vs. 1) there was no inconsistency in the expression or meaning. They were dead, but God, by His grace, gave them life from the death they suffered and deserved. The same is true for every believer today! He makes us alive. We were dead and now we live—by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for the Glory of God alone.

Secondly, we should note that sin is not exclusive to The Law of Federal Headship. Paul makes clear that all men and women personally sin and are prone to sinfulness through The Law of Natural Headship – that is, because we are born through natural means and have inherited the fallen nature of our earthly fathers.

We are declared sinners by The Law of Federal Headship but are likewise each guilty of personal sin and are thus conclusively, justly, and personally dead through The Law of Natural Headship and, therefore, in need of a Savior. Paul told the Romans that *“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). The word *“fall”* is in the “present tense” and suggests that we are all “falling” short, personally and presently.

### **Good News**

The good news is that inasmuch *“as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.”* (1 Corinthians 15:22) Therefore, the Law of Federal Headship carries a positive effect for those who have trusted Christ for salvation. This is indeed the Good News found in The Law of Federal Headship. Believers become the sons and daughters of God through spiritual re-birth (being born again) by faith alone in Christ Alone. We who have believed have *“passed from death unto life”* (1 John 3:14) and have been accounted as righteous through the perfect life of Jesus. Having been under the headship of Adam we are transferred to the headship of Jesus. *“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive”* (1 Corinthians 15:22).

It is for this reason that Jesus was born of a virgin—and not of a natural father. If Jesus had been born of man and not by virgin birth through the supernatural impregnation of Mary by the Holy Spirit, He would have been born with a sinful nature and therefore would have been a sinner Himself (through the Laws of Federal and Natural Headship.) If Jesus were born of a natural father, He would have been incapable of dying for the sins of the world, and would have died only for His own sin. However, Jesus was not born of man; He was born without sin, never personally sinned, and was without a sinful or fallen nature.

It can be said that Jesus was born under The Law of Federal Headship—but not of sinful man! He was born of God the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit. *“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him...”* (Hebrews 7:25a).

Therefore, when Paul tells the Ephesians, and all of us, that *“...you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins”* (Ephesians 2:1a), we rejoice. We were dead, separated from God, and without hope in this world. *“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)”* (Ephesians 2:4–5). Paul also mentioned this glorious truth to the Colossians when he

wrote, *“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses”* (Colossians 2:13). This God did, according to the good pleasure of His will, as declared in Ephesians chapter 1.

For additional study read all Romans 5:6–21 and 1 Corinthians 15:1–28.

Later in this study we will note that The Law of Federal Headship also includes the fact that man is head of his household, as father is head of his family, and is the one who represents his wife, family and descendants before God—and man. (Ephesians 5:22–6:4)

### **The Life of Christ and How It Changes the Believer**

When a believer is regenerated (born again), he or she will experience a multi-faceted change: Spiritual regeneration, mental regeneration and physical regeneration.

#### **a. Spiritual Regeneration**

Mankind has been separated from God by sin, and has thus suffered spiritual death. This death has removed every person from the eternal life of God—otherwise manifested from within each person. Spiritual death does not cause an end of consciousness, memory, or existence in the sense that the individual ceases personhood and identity when passing from this temporal world, but causes the person, at physical death, to forfeit the relationship he or she would have otherwise experienced with the Lord—in the eternal state. Sin causes that separation to continue into eternity! (See Luke 16:19–31 for a picture of life, consciousness, memory, etc. after death.) However, sin has been dealt with by the grace of God at Calvary. Jesus is the one who paid the price!

Spiritual death is justly deserved by every individual, however, as Paul mentioned in verse 1, those who have put their faith in Jesus, trusting Him for salvation, have been made alive and forgiven of all their sin(s). This is spiritual regeneration! This is what it means to be born again! At the very moment one exercises faith in Christ, that person is restored to the eternal life previously lost (see John 3:1–18 and 10:27–28).

Once a person has been born again, all sins are forgiven, and they therefore will never be separated from God, the life of God, and/or any of the blessings God has promised. Moreover, the believer, will experience no future condemnatory judgment—because sin has been forgiven. The believer’s sins will be remembered no more. (For extensive study see Hebrews 8–10.)

As believers, we are promised eternal life in the glories of heaven with the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, the angelic hosts and all the saints who have likewise been redeemed. We are regenerated and sealed with the Holy Spirit—as described in chapter 1. This is spiritual regeneration, and it occurred in its permanent form at the moment we trusted Christ for salvation. It cannot be lost, forfeited, or diminished. This is the work of God—not the work of the believer. Salvation is a gift and will never be recanted.

#### **b. Mental Regeneration**

Mental regeneration (also known as the renewing of the mind—see Romans 12:2 and Ephesians 4:23) is the slower and progressive change that occurs in the believer’s soul (mind) and will develop throughout his or her lifetime. It comes to its fullest fruition at the moment we enter eternity—when

we see the Lord. Mental health is needed by all! According to the Scriptures mental health has also been provided in the atonement and comes by way of renewed thinking—empowered by the Holy Spirit through the word of God. We must be renewed in the spirit of our minds (4:23) by adjustment to the ways and truths of God. As a believer spends time in the written word of God, they will (by the power of the Holy Spirit) be changed from his or her former thinking. We have all experienced hurt, received poor counsel, had experiences that color our thinking, believed lies, etc. All of us need to be healed of some form of “mental illness”—and we will as we grow in the truth. This is mental regeneration—a spiritual maturity.

It is of note to reemphasize that there is a difference between spiritual regeneration and mental regeneration. The former (spiritual regeneration) occurs in the spirit of man—in an instant. The latter (mental regeneration) occurs over time—as we grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.

God grows His own people, His way, in His time, and will accomplish His work. Patience with one another must be developed as He matures us. Inasmuch as we all have areas for growth, we all are promised maturity of soul as God leads us on into eternity.

### **c. Physical Regeneration**

Sin has also resulted in physical death. However, God has promised physical regeneration through the atonement Jesus has provided. Our bodies are presently experiencing decay and death but death (physical, mental, and spiritual) has all been paid for in the sacrifice Jesus made. Therefore, we know that physical regeneration will be experienced—in full—by every believer.

Some have suggested that every believer should and must experience physical healing/regeneration in the here and now. However, Paul made clear that this is not the case when he said, *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance”* (Romans 8:18–25). More could be cited.

This fact should not be viewed as a denial of the physical healing some have experienced. For this and for those we rejoice. However, one must not suggest that physical regeneration must occur here in the temporal, any more than one should suggest that mental regeneration occurs in a moment. Our spiritual regeneration has occurred, our mental regeneration is occurring, and our physical regeneration will occur.

More will be said about how the life of Christ in the believer affects our interpersonal relationships, our marriages, ministry to our children, etc.

## Ephesians 2:1–10

*“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”*

### A New Way of Living

Paul explained that those who have been regenerated no longer “walk” in sin—like the unregenerated. He said that the believers “*were dead in trespasses and sins*” (vs. 1a) adding, “*in which [they] once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience*” (vs. 2). Moreover, he said that the believers were formerly “*among [those who] conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others*” (vs. 3).

The walk of the believer is often associated with conduct. However, within this context Paul seems to gently distinguish with contrast one’s walk and conduct. It is pretty clear that conduct describes behavior, for Paul said that these believers were those who had earlier “*conducted [themselves] in the lusts of [their] flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.*” We can see then that conduct was in view. However, “walk” seems to indicate more about the person’s nature and disposition, for he said that they “*once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air.*” That is to say, they were formerly like those who were unregenerated, blind, deceived, and under the directive of Satan—“*the prince of the power of the air.*”

The fact that Paul put both of these declarations in the past tense tells us that he no longer saw the believer as presently “*walking according to the course of this world,*” nor did he see them as those under the domination and influence of Satan, and in particular they were no longer considered “*sons of disobedience.*”

Please let this sink in: 1) Believers do not walk in sin; 2) Believers are no longer subject to the power of the Devil; 3) Believers are no longer sons of disobedience; and 4) Believers are no longer considered the children of wrath.

According to Paul, the Ephesian believer’s earlier condition was in the past, and by extension, this is the way all believers today should be seen. Having trusted Christ for salvation, we are redeemed from our past. We have passed from death unto life. We now walk in the light. We are no longer deceived by the enemy—we know the truth. Moreover, Paul said that believers as “*among [those] whom once conducted [themselves] in the lusts of [their] flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were [then] by nature children of wrath*” (vs. 3) indicates that we are no longer to conduct ourselves in the “*lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.*” This is the behavior

and nature of the “*children of wrath.*” Not us! Not anymore! We have been set free from the power of sin, death, the Devil, and the wrath to come.

### **Some Elaboration**

For brief elaboration please allow me to further explain these 4 points.

1) Believers may still sin—for we “*all fall short*” (Romans 3:23). Moreover, at times, believers intentionally or rebelliously sin. However, we are not identified as those who conduct themselves after the flesh. Our identification is distinctly different. We are those who walk in the light. We walk in the truth. We are children of the day—not of the darkness (see 1 Thessalonians 5:5–11).

As regenerated believers identified with the day, the light, and the truth, we put off what is in our past. As believers we are not just *called* to a new way of living, but are those who have experienced forgiveness of sins and a supernatural change within—whereby God transforms us. We grow! Our conduct *will* change along with our identity. For some the changes occur rather quickly, but for others, incrementally over time. Either way, let it be understood, as regenerated believers we will change, for it is God who is at work in us. Our walk is not changed by “self-revelation” and our conduct is not shaped by human effort, will power, or self-discipline. We are changed by the power of God! We are “*His workmanship*” (vs. 10).

Even amidst our struggle with the world, the flesh, and the Devil, God *will* bring us to maturity in order to manifest the life of Christ in us—from within—by His grace and power (see Romans 8:28–30). We walk in the light and will grow to live by love. We walk in the truth and will grow in unity with other believers. We have been changed and given the power whereby we grow to conduct ourselves in the nature of Jesus. We do not “walk” in darkness and we do not live in the flesh (see Romans 8:1–9). We have been redeemed!

2) Believers are not subject to Satan and have been given the power to overcome all of his schemes (see Luke 10:19, 2 Corinthians 2:11). Believers cannot be “demon possessed” because we belong to the Lord. We were bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20), for His glory. Believers may “give place to the Devil” (see Ephesians 4:27) and often do, but we cannot be controlled by him—unless we give him permission through acts of rebellion or lack of wisdom. Some may allow the enemy to “whisper in their ears” and influence them to do wrong. However, a genuinely born again believer is not under Satan’s control (vs. 2, Acts 26:18 and Colossians 1:13).

3) Believers are no longer “*sons of disobedience*” because we have obeyed God in believing the Gospel—trusting Christ for salvation (2 Thessalonians 1:8–10). “*And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His son Jesus Christ...*” (1 John 3:23a). Disobedience is unbelief and unbelief provides no relief from the wrath fully deserved by sinful man. As we are transformed from within, we learn obedience by the working of God.

Some would suggest that we learn obedience by trying harder each day to please the Lord. However, we please the Lord by faith—not works, and therefore learning to rest in Him also brings forth change—from within and manifested without. It is my belief that striving against the Lord brings no rest and working to please God likewise creates laborious fatigue. Therefore, resting in the Lord will both prove to manifest change in us and call us away from a performance-driven lifestyle. The Hebrews were chastised for failing to enter into “His rest” and ceasing from their labors (see Matthew 11:28 and Hebrews 4). More on this below!

4) Believers are no longer children of wrath. Jesus suffered the wrath of God, in our place, for our sin (Isaiah 53:4–5, Romans 5:9, and 1 Thessalonians 1:10). Paul told the Romans that those who are self-seeking and obey not the truth require indignation and wrath (Romans 2:8). However, those who trust Christ for salvation are no longer appointed to wrath but are the recipients of grace and mercy causing every believer to escape the wrath to come (see 1 Thessalonians 1:9–10 and 5:9).

There is no need for anyone to refuse the grace so freely given and provided to each of us in the Lord, *“for the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men”* (Titus 2:11).

### **But God...**

We have already learned that through the Law of Natural Headship we were born with a sin nature, have all personally *“sinned and are falling short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23), and as sinners are worthy of the righteous judgment of God. We also understand that God has declared all men and women sinners by sovereign declaration—through the Law of Federal Headship. However, we have the infamous contrasting and beautiful interruption, *“But God...”* This abrupt expression brought forth opposition to what the Ephesian believers were before knowing the Lord and declared what they had become—new creations in Christ. The same applies to every believer today. We who were dead in trespasses and sin have been given a new life, for *“God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).”* (vss. 4–5)

Paul told the Romans that *“God demonstrate[d] His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8). Therefore, we know that God did not bring grace to us, send Jesus for us, forgive us, redeem us, transform us, or as promised, intend to glorify us because we are good or because we try to be good. God planned for our redemption in spite of us. This brings us great hope. Indeed, *“God [did] demonstrate His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* Furthermore, He still demonstrates that love for us—knowing that we still fall short and are waiting for our climactic maturity. God saved us in spite of us, keeps us in spite of us, and will yet glorify Himself in us.

### **No Longer Dead**

Paul communicated the fact that we were dead and showed that we are dead no longer. We are alive in Christ. He saved us in spite of our sinful and fallen nature. He did not save us because we overcame the propensities of the flesh but in spite of the fact that we are weak, fallen, and undeserving. God was and is aware of our nature and knows that left to ourselves we would be fully incapable of saving ourselves. He is aware of the fact that we all *“fall short”* (Romans 3:23) and that without His Divine intervention and merciful love we would never be able to know the glories of eternal life. Therefore, by grace God *“raised us up together, [with Christ] and [has] made us [to] sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”* (vss. 6–7) This indeed is the destiny of the believer.

### **Seated in the Heavenly Places**

Being seated with Christ in the *“heavenly places”* is a positional condition declared of us by God. It is how He sees us—in Christ. We are, even prior to our literal gathering together unto Him, declared as reigning with Christ, seated with Him on His throne, and complete in Him. *“You are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power”* (Colossians 2:10). God declares the work finished even



before we literally pass from this earthly life and into the eternal state He has promised to every believer.

This glorious grace is both comforting and motivating. It is comforting to know that He *“raised us up”* in spite of ourselves, and that He has seated us together in the *“heavenly places in Christ Jesus,”* so that *“in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus”* (vs. 7). It is motivating because it moves us from earthly, sensual, and temporal to the heavenly, spiritual, and eternal. As believers we live with a new worldview. We live differently than we did before being saved. Behaviors once common to the unsaved—the earthly, fleshly, sensual, and selfish—are changed into the heavenly, spiritual, eternal. We put aside the selfish temporal nature and live as servants of God with the desire to please others over ourselves (see Philippians 2:1–5).

### **“Seated” Declares Us “Complete in Him”—We Are the Overcomers**

In Colossians Paul declared, *“You are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power”* (Colossians 2:10). Therefore, as believers, we know that these truths about our life in Christ are not the result of human performance but are the declared positions of every believer. You are complete in Him, and you have been seated with Him in the dimension of the heavenly places—on His throne in heaven! Jesus said, *“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne”* (Revelation 3:21). John said, *“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”* (1 John 5:4–5). Therefore, as believers who have placed our faith in Christ, we are *“the overcomers!”*

### **Not of Us—All of Him**

As fallen man we are fully incapable of saving ourselves and are therefore incapable of being *“complete,”* or greater still, *“seated with Christ”* on His throne. Such work is the work of Christ—not our own. The salvation we have received, our position in Christ, and our completeness in Him is a work of grace. That is to say, no person on earth could ever accomplish this work on their own—even through the best human effort. For this reason, Paul says that it is *“by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast”* (vss. 8–9).

Grace most simply described is *“unmerited favor.”* God has granted favor toward us apart from human effort, works, etc. Any other definition refuses to accept what grace truly is—unmerited! Furthermore, we should add that any offering of salvation, granted by human achievement, be it all or in part, is not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and should be rejected as heresy (see Galatians 1:3–9; 2:16–3:14). Sadly, the *“gospel of works”* is taught in most churches today. However, the *“gospel”* that couples together any human effort, work, or standard to the true gospel of grace is no gospel at all.

For example, if one must be baptized in order to be saved, that is a false gospel. If one must join a particular denomination in order to be saved, that is a false gospel. This is front loading the gospel. If one must keep up with a certain standard, give enough, serve enough, etc. in order to remain saved, this too is not the true gospel. This is back loading the gospel.

## Trapped in Performance

Many believers don't really understand the power of the Gospel and are trapped in a game of performance. They have been taught that when they respond to Christ they are "asking Jesus into their lives" and then making every effort to live a life pleasing to Him. They expel great energy "working" and "trying" to please God, make good choices, and refuse the impulses of the flesh. They focus their energy warring with the devil/demons, fleshly habits, and the lure of the world—always with little to no success and always with great discouragement. However, they believe that this effort is pleasing to the Lord and therefore He "makes up the difference" for their weakness. This is how they see the workings of grace. In this way they are then "saved," "complete," etc. and therefore are "*seated with Christ in the heavenly places.*" However, Paul makes clear that we are saved "*by grace,*" "*through faith,*" and "*not of works.*" The salvation we enjoy is a "*gift.*" This fact is good news! This is the true gospel!

Nowhere in Scripture are we told to "Ask Jesus into our lives." However, we are instructed to trust Christ for the salvation He tells us He will provide. In doing so, there is an exchange of our old and sinful lives for the new life we have in Christ. We are declared righteous, holy, and complete in Him by the sovereign act of God, according to His grace. As a result of understanding the true Gospel of grace, we give up spending our lives "working" and "trying" to please the Lord. We simply trust in God and rest in His holiness.

Any human effort designed to "please the Lord" by "trying harder" is an assault on grace. It denies the power of God at work in us. As Christians we simply enter into the "Sabbath rest" of a relationship with Jesus—and cease striving to please Him. "*For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His*" (Hebrews 4:10).

## The Ages to Come

God has a beautiful future planned for every believer, that "*in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus*" (vs. 7). This leads us to agree with Paul by declaring, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved*" (Ephesians 1:3–6).

## He Made Us, He Makes Us!

"*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them*" (vss. 8–9).

As a result of God's divine power, and of His sovereign work of grace, we become the workmanship of God. "*For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*" (Philippians 2:13). For this reason Paul says that, "*...we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them*" (vs. 10).

The word Paul uses for "*workmanship*" is "*poiema.*" It is where we get our word "poem." We are the poem of God. He is writing the story of our lives. The prose is His, and therefore He receives all the glory.

Once born again, God delivers us from our sin, changes us from within, directs us in our walk, and matures us as we daily enjoy the outworking of His grace in our lives. We don't strive through our human effort to accomplish what He is doing in us. We let Him do the clean-up. We trust Him as He changes us. We surrender to His leadership. Therefore, not only will God accomplish in us what we could never do, but we will grow to see that He retains all the glory for Himself. We are His workmanship.

### **This is a Revelation**

When a believer comes to understand that it is God who is at work in us, and that He is the one shaping us—according to the good pleasure of His will—and as we see that our life is naturally being changed by God, we begin to experience “His rest.” Christ in the believer is manifested by grace through the nature of Jesus in ways we never dreamed possible. We will begin to grow in righteousness and will likewise find ourselves uncomfortable practicing the ways of the old sinful man. We become a conduit for good as the result of the regeneration we have experienced. This is what Paul means when he says, “...we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (vs. 10). The good work we manifest is the result of His workmanship—not our human effort.

God did design that we walk in good works. Therefore He empowers, enables, and works out those good works in and through us. These good works (His work in us) become the “gold, silver, and precious stones” that survive the consuming fire that burns away the “wood, hay, and stubble” of our human-generated “good” (see 1 Corinthians 3:12–15). This is just another way of saying that our human effort will not stand the test—His work in us will and it is eternal.

### **A Worthy Notation**

It is notable to mention that Paul's declaration of the gospel of grace can carry an additional insight worth our attention. He said that it is, “by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (vss. 8–9). In this statement Paul is saying that we are saved by grace—unmerited favor—therefore declaring that grace a gift. It also shows that we receive that gift by faith. Here lies another great truth from the Scriptures. Faith, like grace, is also a gift. We do not possess the human propensity to believe in and of ourselves. In fact, left to ourselves, according to Scripture, the message of the gospel of grace would be too much for the natural man to grasp. Therefore, it is God who draws, illuminates, and gifts us with faith to believe. Therefore, we cannot even take credit for our faith. It, too, is a gift from God—and thus we declare that salvation is all of God and not of man.

Paul wrote the Romans saying, “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith” (Romans 12:3). “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18). Moreover, “...the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)” (vss. 4–5). We simply trust Him to do what He says—and give all the glory to Him.

## **Ephesians 2:11–13**

*“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you 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. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”*

### **Strangers without Hope**

As Gentiles, the Ephesian believers were not the recipients of the covenants God made with Israel. They were *“strangers from the covenants of promise”* and *“aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.”* In this sense the Gentiles were without *“hope”... “in [this] world”* because they were *“without God.”*

### **The “Sign” of the Old Covenant: Circumcision**

In Genesis 17 we read, *“This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant”* (Genesis 17:10–13).

This covenant “sign” made distinct the Jew from the Gentile. Thus the phrase *“...Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands.”* This highlights the fact that God did not make a covenant with the Gentiles. This comes as a surprise to many. Moreover, because there was no “Old Covenant” with the Gentiles, it stands to reason that there is no “New Covenant” with the Gentiles either. However, as Paul explained to the Ephesians (and likewise to the Romans and Galatians), the Gentiles are blessed as a result of God’s covenant with Israel. (For more insight see Romans chapters 9–11 and Galatians 3:1–9).

### **The Commonwealth**

The *“commonwealth”* is a broad term that embraces all God planned and promised to Israel—past, present and future. It refers to the provisions of the Law: civil, ceremonial and dietary, commandments and consequences, blessings and cursing, a unique knowledge of God, a unique relationship with God, promises of a land of their own, a future national Kingdom whereby God will make them the head of all the nations—showing Himself both faithful and great among all the nations. But most important in the commonwealth was/is the prophetic declarations of the promised Savior/Messiah/King: Jesus.

### **Once Far Off but Now Brought Near**

When God chose Israel (by sovereign election), He did so with the Gentile nations in mind. His choice was to use Israel as a special people and as the nation through whom the Messiah would come. This was all part of God’s plan for the nations.

Some see God's purpose in the election of Israel as unrighteous because they believe He had no desire to give the Gentile nations hope. However, they are wrong! God planned, from before the foundation of the world, that all the world would know of His covenants with Israel—and benefit by it. The revelation of Himself to Israel, and through Israel, would bring a revelation of Himself to all the nations. God chose Israel to make Himself known to Israel and through Israel make Himself known to the rest of the world.

### **A Peculiar People**

Throughout the duration of the Old Covenant dispensation, God made Himself known to the surrounding nations through the peculiarity of Israel and by the awesome acts of His power. At times those acts appeared gracious and merciful. At other times His awesome power was manifested as judgment and wrath. The "*commonwealth*" may have seemed odd to the Gentiles, but indeed that was part of the plan.

### **To Teach the Nations**

We should keep in mind that even within those occasions that appeared harsh and vengeful, grace was being manifested. God's judgments taught the nations His holy standards and that He is a God to be feared. The end result was that those who saw His awesome works would know of Him, come to fear Him, and turn to Him in repentance. Therefore, God, foreknowing that some men and women would come to Him by faith made provision in the law for Gentiles to come into the camp of the people of Israel—by faith—and worship the one and only, true and living God.

### **Then and Now**

The Old Covenant dispensation made provision for Gentiles through specific means: Faith in God and through "The Law of the Proselyte." This provision of law included ceremonial washing, circumcision of the male worshipper(s), blood sacrifices, and abiding by the standards of Jewish Law. "*But now*" (vs. 13) in the Church Age, we see how God in His great and sovereign foreknowledge planned for the Gentile people through the shed blood of Jesus. God made provisions for us through the promised Jewish Messiah—and therefore through the "*Commonwealth*." We were planned for and anticipated in God's overarching and gracious plan.

Paul wrote the Romans saying, "*Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: 'For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your name.' And again he says: 'Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!' And again: 'Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!' And again, Isaiah says: 'There shall be a root of Jesse; and He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in Him the Gentiles shall hope.'* Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:8–13). This couldn't be clearer. God planned for the Gentiles from the beginning. We were not a replacement of Israel, not a "Plan B," and not neglected in the work of God.

### **Through the Sacrifice of Jesus**

In climaxing the Old Covenant dispensation, the most awful display of God's wrath was the crucifixion of Jesus. This act of judgment and wrath was also the most merciful God has ever performed. The fact that Jesus bore the sins of the whole world, suffering the wrath of God in the place of sinful

man, has given opportunity to every man, woman, and child to come to Him by faith alone, in Christ alone, apart from the law, and find the only salvation available to man.

Thus, *“But now in Christ Jesus you [Gentiles] who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ”* (vs. 13). It was through Jesus’ sinless life, shed blood, finished work on the cross, death, burial, and physical resurrection that the law and its sacrificial system was fulfilled—therefore bringing to an end the Old Covenant. As the result, Paul was then able to tell the Gentile Ephesians that *“now”* in the Church Age both Jew and Gentile may come freely to God—apart from the law—by faith alone.

Paul told the Colossians that, *“In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross”* (Colossians 2:11–14).

To the Hebrews God made clear that the Old Covenant has been fulfilled and that the New Covenant (found only in Jesus) has begun. *“In that He says, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away”* (Hebrews 8:13).

Note: The New Covenant made with the house of Israel and Judah (Jeremiah 31:31–34 and Ezekiel 36:16–38) will come to its fullness in the future following the Second Coming of Jesus. However, for believers now in the Church Age—both Jew and Gentile—there is a prelude to the climactic blessing yet to come! Insight herein is given by the inauguration declared by Jesus Himself (see Luke 22:20).

Jesus was crucified, and the law of commandments were crucified with Him (making them obsolete); Jews and Gentiles are now welcomed into the family of God, by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ Jesus alone. Now, in the Church Age, God has made one body of all believers—the *“Circumcision”* and the *“Uncircumcision”* (vs. 11) apart from the Law. We as believers—now in the Church Age—are all one in Christ. Moreover, this *“oneness”* is a prelude to *“the dispensation of the fullness of the times,”* when He will make all believers one *“in Him”* (see Ephesians 1:7–10).

### **Ephesians 2:14–18**

*“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.”*

#### **He is our Peace**

Without Jesus, we Gentiles were without hope in the world, and therefore without peace. *“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ”* (vs. 13). Therefore, Jesus is our peace and has provided His peace where there was once enmity and division. The Jews who enjoyed the *“commonwealth”* and the Gentiles who were *“aliens and strangers from the*

*covenants of promise*” now *“both have access by one Spirit to the Father”* (vs. 18). We have the same faith, the same Lord, and the same promised future (see Ephesians 1:11 and 4:4–6).

The enmity (referred to as a middle wall that once divided us) is described within the text: *“the law of commandments contained in ordinances”* (vs. 15). Moreover, as mentioned earlier, these Old Covenant commandments *“were abolished in His flesh”* (vs. 15) having been crucified with Jesus (see Colossians 2:14 above).

### **One New Man**

The *“one new man”* made from the *“two”* shows that the *“Uncircumcision”* and the *“Circumcision”* are *“now”* made one in Christ. To the Galatians Paul explained, *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise”* (Galatians 3:26–29).

### **God’s Continuing Plan for Israel**

The fact that God has made all Church Age believers a distinctive group (the Church) does not make the Gentiles into Jews, does not make Jews into Gentiles, does not make the Church Israel, and does not make Israel the Church. Israel and the Church are separate entities, and God has committed to Israel (within the *“commonwealth”*) a *“Promised Land,”* a national existence, and national headship. He fully intends to keep that promise! God will fulfill all His promises! He made these to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—and in His predetermined and orchestrated time, He will bring it all to fruition. The climactic moment Israel will experience it will follow a national repentance (Zechariah 12–14) at the time of the Second Coming of Jesus—then into and throughout the 1000 year/Millennial Kingdom when the New Covenant is climactically realized. (See the illustrated timeline on page 11 in chapter 1.)

### **Heretical Doctrine**

A careful look at the overall blessings provided in the *“commonwealth”* (which includes more prophecy and detail than this work will allow) clearly shows that the Church has not replaced Israel and that the New Covenant does not nullify the promises God made to His people Israel. On the contrary, it establishes them! In fact, the heretical teachings of Replacement Theology can be clearly identified by comparing the promises God made only to Israel with those things common now to the Church. (See list below.)

Jesus will come to the earth again, at the time of His Second Coming, and make Himself fully known to Israel, establish the nation and people of Israel, secure for them the promised land, and reign as the Messiah/King during the literal physical Millennium Kingdom. After the 1000 years, *“...He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power”* (1 Corinthians 15:24).

## **Ephesians 2:19–22**

*“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”*

### **The Household of God**

As believers in the Church Age, Gentiles have been adopted into the *“household of God.”* We are *“fellow citizens with the saints”*—the people of Israel. Therefore, Gentiles become participants in the promised blessings God made to Israel—by faith alone and as Gentiles—apart from the law. Paul wrote, *“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference... Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law”* (Romans 3:21–22, 28).

### **The Temple?**

In the earlier history of Israel, we saw that the Jews were provided a *“place of worship.”* However, now in the Church Age, we who believe (both Jew and Gentile) become a *“holy temple”* unto the Lord. The Church is those of *“whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord”* (vs. 21). We are *“being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit”* (vs. 22). The whole of us, as distinct individual members of the Church, are fitted together by the power of God, and formed into a unique present-day *“temple”* and *“dwelling place”* of God. This is a distinction of the Church Age. In the future there will come another physical temple—during the Millennial Kingdom where all the redeemed will worship the Lord and King, our Savior, Jesus.

### **The Workmanship of God**

As members of the Church, we are *“built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.”*

The cornerstone in a building is the first piece of the foundation in a building project. It is from the cornerstone that all measurements of the building are developed. *“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 3:11). In completing the foundation for the temple in the Church Age, Paul shows that the *“apostles and prophets”* were placed next in order—that the growing Church can and will be properly finished according to the working of God. We are indeed God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus (vs. 10).



## Some Distinctions Between Israel and the Church

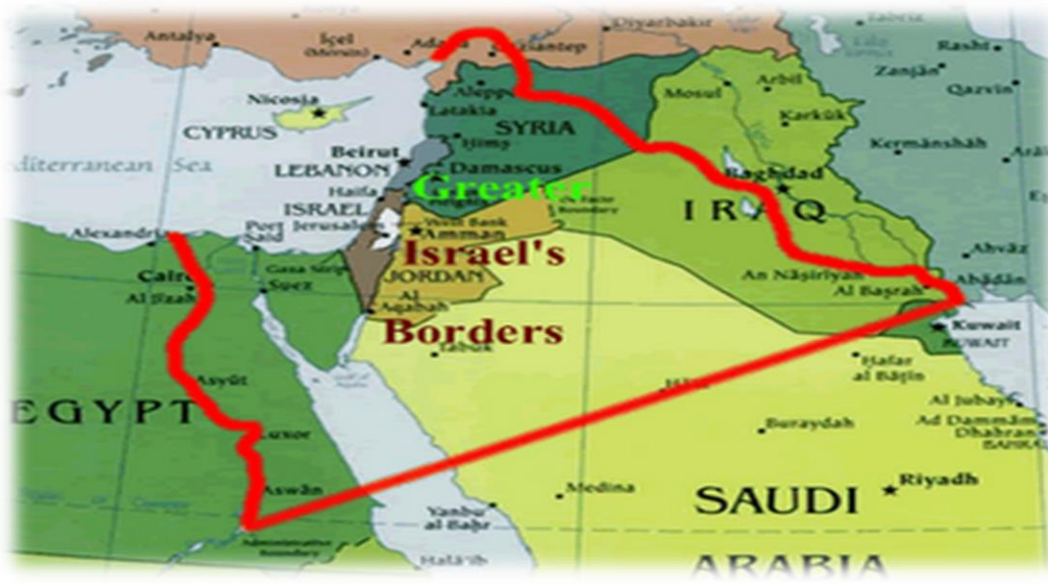
### Similarities:

1. Both are chosen people.
2. Both have been given exceedingly great and precious promises.
3. Both are called God's "elect."
4. Both are called "saints."
5. Both are called to be a "peculiar people."
6. Both are hated and persecuted—some to the point of death.
7. Both are distinguished from the rest of world.

### Differences:

1. The Law was not given to the Gentiles. (Ephesians 2:11–12)
2. The Jews were promised supernatural blessings and disciplinary cursing. (Deuteronomy 28–30)
3. The Church does not suffer the Old Covenant curses. (Galatians 3:13)
4. Israel is promised a national identity and geographically identifiable land on the earth. (Genesis 15)
5. The Church is promised a home in heaven. (John 14:1–4)
6. Israel will be ruled by Christ upon the earth. (Ezekiel 40–48, Revelation 20)
7. The Church will rule with Christ on the earth. (2 Tim. 2:12, Revelation 20)
8. Unbelieving Jews will be on the earth during the Tribulation. (Daniel 7, 9)
9. The Church will not be on earth during the Tribulation. (Revelation 6:14–17, 1 Thessalonians 5:9)
10. The Jews will be overcome by the antichrist during the Tribulation. (Daniel 7:21)
11. Against the Church Hell will never prevail. (Matthew 16:18)
12. The Church recognized Christ at His first incarnational coming. (Ephesians 1:13)
13. Many Jews did not recognize Jesus at His first incarnational coming. (John 1:11)
14. The Church will arrive with Christ (from heaven) at the Second Coming. (Jude 14, Revelation 19:14)
15. The living Jews at the time of the Second Coming will believe on Christ. Many for the first time. (Ezekiel 37–39, Zechariah 12–14, Romans 11)

## Israel's Future Promised Land



Notes: