Chapter 2 – Made One in Christ

1. *And you* hath he quickened, *who were dead in trespasses and sins;*

The KJV translation shows this as a new sentence and a new chapter, thereby placing a very significant break between the last thought of Chapter One and the first one of Chapter Two. It seems that, because of this disconnection, the translators have inserted "hath he quickened" in an attempt to make a complete thought. Let's draw these two verses together (the last of Chapter One and first of Two): *the ekklesia, who is His body, the full measure of Him Who is completing all things in every way; and you, being dead by trespasses and sins…*.[1] *You* is a reference to those who make up the Body of Christ; the reality is that we, who are His Body and alive *in Him*, have all come from a place of being spiritually dead! "They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one" (Psalm 14:3); "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). It was by one man, Adam, that sin came into the world, and along with sin came death (Romans 5:12) because death is the just recompense for sin (Romans 6:23). Paul is reminding the reader that those who are the chosen *in Christ*, who receive every spiritual blessing from God, who are holy and without blame before Him, and who are adopted by Him as His children and inheritance (Ephesians 1:3-5, 18), have all come from a place of death. *"And God is demonstrating His love to us, since our being yet sinners, Christ on our behalf did die"* (Romans 5:8, literal).[2] If we take this thought back to Adam, then we can see that even as he brought sin and death into the world, God already had a plan of redemption in place. The Lord promised to deal with finality concerning Satan (the deceiver): "[*He*, the Promised

[1] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.
[2] Ibid.

One] shall bruise thy head [Satan], and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15b)[3], and His redemptive plan was introduced by the blood that the Lord shed when He provided coats of skins as coverings for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21).

It is at this point that the Calvinist says that man is unable even to repent and believe the Gospel without God first doing a work of regeneration in him. They contend that, unless God first brings life, man cannot even exercise the faith required to believe and accept, through repentance, God's gift of salvation – without first receiving life from God, man cannot accept His life through Christ. Nevertheless, even though they vehemently argue that man is totally depraved – without even the ability to repent and accept God's proffered gift (what they call *total depravity*), at the same time, they contend that man is accountable to God for not accepting it. Nowhere does the Bible limit God's gift in this way. Paul went about "testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). Jesus said: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink ..." (John 7:37) – the invitation is open to everyone. The Calvinist's mind is closed to every teaching from Scripture that does not agree with his theology; even the plain text of Scripture is twisted in order to conform to his thinking. Although this might sound extreme to some people, to those who have faced the anger and vehemence of a Calvinist, know that it is true.[4]

Being dead by trespasses and sins, begins a passage that tells us of whom we were before Christ purchased us out of sin, thereby highlighting God's ability to work on our behalf. Lest we forget where we came from, and the undeserved sacrifice that Christ made to redeem us, Paul balances the picture that he has been painting by relating to us where we were before Christ. Even as we have already been reminded that Christ died a literal death (Ephesians 1:20), so our memory is refreshed that before we were *in Christ,* we were dead! However, we were not dead physically (lifeless); we were dead *by trespasses and sins* – all that we did confirmed that we were spiritually dead before our Creator. *Trespass* (*paraptoma*)

[3] BDB.
[4] A more thorough study is located here: https://www.thenarrowtruth.com/the-tulip-of-calvinism.html.

means to deviate from the prescribed path of uprightness, implying an offence that, although not deliberate in nature, comes from a place that is deeper than rational thinking.[5] *Sin* (*hamartia*), on the other hand, describes the separation from God that is characteristic of every child of Adam and Eve – it is present before the action (*paraptoma*).[6] Therefore, we were dead in every respect – we were in contradiction to God's standard of holiness (*hamartia*), and, in our attempts at doing right, we failed (*paraptoma*). Isaiah was correct when he wrote: "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" (Isaiah 64:6).

Just how dead were we? Are we as dead as the Calvinists would have us believe? Or, does *whosoever is believing* in Christ (John 3:16) actually mean that *anyone* is able to come to faith in Christ? There is one thing that the Calvinists will not acknowledge, and that is that even sinful humanity still bears the image of God. There is full acceptance that Adam and Eve, before they sinned, bore the *image of God*, for we read: "So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:27). There is also no doubt that sin marred God's image in man, for he was now a sinner; without God's intervention (His plan of redemption), man was destined to be eternally separated from Him. However, as Noah and his family left the ark, God implemented the death penalty and explained His reason for doing so: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (Genesis 9:6). After the Lord had just destroyed all of humanity except for eight people, He established the importance of human life because the *image of God* was still there! The *image of God* is more than simply man being created with a body, soul and spirit – a three-part creation made by a triune God. God instilled within man the ability to think, to reason and to make choices based upon his cognitive abilities; all of the other creatures were made with physical bodies and given life (spirit). For the creation of man, God "breathed into

[5] Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.
[6] Strong's Online.

his nostrils the breath of life [*lives*; this is plural]" (Genesis 2:7)[7] – God breathed into man his eternal soul (spiritual life) **and** his breath (physical life). Unlike all of the other creatures that God made with only life (*spirit*), He placed within man an eternal dimension: his soul. It is within the soul of man that the image of God still resides: his emotions, his cognitive abilities and, out of these, his capacity to make choices.

Sinful man cannot understand everything that God has given to us in His Word because most of it can only be understood with the aid of the Holy Spirit, Who does not reside within unregenerate man (1 Corinthians 2:14). However, despite this, the sinner is fully capable of evaluating what Christ has done to pay the price for his sin, to think about it, and to decide if he is convinced that it is true. This is the essence of the Biblical word *believe*; it includes evaluation before coming to a conviction of the truth of a matter.[8] This is the reason that Jesus could say: *whoever is believing in Him will not perish but is having life everlasting* (John 3:16b); *believing* is in the present tense and active voice – it is ever continuous and it is the action of *whoever*.[9] Through Isaiah, the Lord made this request of sinful Judah: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). The Hebrew root of *reason together* (*yakach*) carries a legal overtone, and can mean to judge or decide; because of her rebellion, Judah was guilty of breaking her covenant with Jehovah, and the Lord is calling her to make her case before Him within His court of law.[10] Notice two things: 1) the Lord Jehovah does not simply declare that Judah doesn't have any hope and then condemn her – He calls on her to think about what she is doing, and 2) the bulk of the verse expresses the Lord's ability to bring cleansing from sin – when Judah understands her sin before God, the anticipation is that she will repent and be cleansed. This is addressed to the people of Judah who at that time were immersed in idolatry and empty ritualism, yet the Lord

[7] BDB.
[8] Friberg Lexicon.
[9] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.
[10] Strong's Online; Holladay Lexicon, *Bibleworks 8*.

acknowledges their ability to evaluate, reason and make a choice – the *image of God* was still present, even within these rebels!

Clearly, we were spiritually *dead*, but that must not be skewed to mean the *total inability* of the Calvinist;[11] the invitation is open for everyone to evaluate what Christ has done to make payment for sin, and then to choose either to accept or reject it! Even though the invitation is open to everyone, acceptance *in Christ* only comes when the terms that God has in place are met – redemption is His plan, and we cannot presume to modify His terms of acceptance.

2. *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:*

There was a time when all who are now called *saints* and *faithful* ones were, spiritually speaking, walking dead-men – dead by trespasses and sins. For each of us, there was a time when we walked according to the path of this world; this is the essence of declaring all men to be sinners (Romans 3:23). We are born with a sin nature, and there is no escaping that reality or its consequences.

Incredibly, there is a growing element within Evangelicalism that seems to be blind to the reality that they are walking in the ways of this world (*according to the course of this world*). When seeking to establish a church, Rick Warren uses techniques that were developed by the world in order to grow a successful business; he continues to walk according to the pattern of this world (the way of sin that was established with the fall) even while boasting of doing God's work. Warren has "hired Ken Blanchard … to come to

Rick Warren

[11] For a more complete examination of Calvinism, go to: https://www.thenarrowtruth.com/tulip---full-study-in-one.html

Saddleback to help train people how to be effective leaders ….”[12] Although Rick Warren has officially denied this,[13] his connection with Blanchard is deep: his name is on the Founders Board of Lead Like Jesus, an organization that was begun by Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges![14] Further to that, you do not have to look very far to discover that “there is countless evidence to show that Blanchard sits on the New Age/mystical/contemplative bandwagon. Blanchard believes in the benefits and use of mantra meditation, yoga, and has no trouble borrowing from Buddhism.”[15] Both Robert Schuller (of the Crystal Cathedral and Hour of Power) and Bill Hybels (Willow Creek Community Church) built their works following this pattern as well. The more that men who follow the ways of the world are emulated within Evangelical churches, the greater will be the compromise and the falling-away in the lives of individuals. Amos 3:3 – “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” No! If Warren, Schuller, and Hybels are using the marketing techniques of this world, then they must be in agreement with the underlying philosophy, and a philosophy of this world cannot be in agreement with God’s standard for His people (1 John 2:15-16). By using the world’s marketing techniques, these men have reduced the Gospel to a commodity that they must sell to the people by creating a felt need for it within the minds of a target audience. This stands in sharp contrast to the Scriptures: “22. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: 23. but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; 24. but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. 25. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 26. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: 27. But God hath chosen the foolish things of

Ken Blanchard

[12] George Mair, A Life with Purpose, p. 193.
[13] https://www.lighthousetrailsresearch.com/blog/?p=3448.
[14] https://leadlikejesus.com/leadership-team/.
[15] https://www.lighthousetrailsresearch.com/PressReleasekenblanchard.htm.

the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; [28.] and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: [29.] that no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Corinthians 1:22-29).

How can Warren, Schuller, and Hybels do the work of God by using the methods of the devil (the philosophy of this world)? Very simply, they cannot! Their success is measured in numbers: the larger the numbers, the greater their success; God's success is measured by a remnant of holy ones who will be saved because they have faithfully followed the Narrow Way that leads to life (Matthew 7:13-14). The sad reality is that most Evangelicals today have accepted a watered down Message; they have never heard the "come out from among them" of the Lord (2 Corinthians 6:17), and most of those who have heard, prefer their status quo. They remain on the broad way of religiosity that leads to death, having only "a form of godliness" that leaves their sinfulness intact – "from such [we are to] turn away" (2 Timothy 3:5).

We are reminded that there is no middle ground; before we placed our faith *in Christ*, we lived *according to the prince of the power of the air*. Before we were recipients of the saving grace of God, which is made available through Jesus Christ, we walked in accordance with Satan, described here as the *the ruler of the jurisdiction of the air*.[16] In the days of Job, Satan told God that he came "from going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it" (Job 1:7; 2:2). Peter warned: "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Clearly, the earth is the domain of Satan and his fallen cohorts (Revelation 12:9), and since we cannot see them with our eyes (for they are spirit beings), they are like the air to us – invisible, but very present.

Jesus said: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matthew 12:30). What is abundantly clear from Jesus' words is that there is absolutely no middle ground between

[16] Stephanus 1550 NT; Gingrich Lexicon.

following Him and being aligned with Satan. For quite some time, Evangelicals have harbored those who have disassociated the idea of Jesus as being Lord of their lives from Jesus as Savior, and have effectively made these into two separate events in a "believer's" life (*Jesus as Lord* is, of course, optional). This same error is propagated through the simple-conversion technique that has been popularized through mass crusades and rallies, as well as through the Ecumenical thrust that says that you can be saved and remain among those who promote heresy. Billy Graham practiced this since the early 1950s by turning his Catholic "converts" back to the Roman Catholic Church, and Liberal "converts" back to their Liberal churches; he mistakenly believed that you can enter the narrow way that leads to life and still walk the broad way that leads to death – these are two very different roads with totally different destinations. The Scriptures make it very clear that you are either with Jesus, which means granting Him complete lordship, or you're not with Him at all; you either receive the light, and no longer walk in darkness, or you do not have the light, and continue to walk in darkness (2 Corinthians 6:14-17; 1 John 1:5-7). This, in modern terms, would be considered unnecessarily harsh and judgmental, yet neither the Scriptures, nor the God of the Scriptures, will cower before the criticisms of modern thinking – and neither should we.

Paul then goes on to add another aspect to describe Satan, whom we followed before we experienced the saving grace of God. He is called *the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience*, the spirit that is exerting effectual influence in the descendants of Adam who are obstinate against God.[17] It is clear that the sinner cannot justify himself by saying, "The devil made me do it;" Eve tried this and was unsuccessful (Genesis 3:13). Satan is on the prowl (1 Peter 5:8), looking specifically for the child of God who has let the Lord's protection slip, so that he might work his deception on him (Revelation 12:17); the *sons of disobedience* are not of great concern to him – he will work through them to accomplish his purposes, for they are already his. To whom are they in *disobedience*? To the Lord! They are the slaves of sin, and most of them do not even realize

[17] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.

it: *for when ye were slaves of sin, ye were free from righteousness* (Romans 6:20, literal).[18] Notice that *sin* and *righteousness* are mutually exclusive; *sin* is the domain of Satan, *righteousness* is of the Lord – there is no middle ground, no gray area! Unless we are *in Christ* (now understanding what that entails), we remain in the domain of Satan – regardless of how righteous we might appear to be to others. Carefully consider Jesus words: "13. Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14. Because **strait** *is* the gate, and **narrow** *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and **few there be that find it**" (Matthew 7:13-14); "**I am the way**, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6); *if you are loving Me, My commandments you must obey* (John 14:15, literal).[19]

3. *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*

Paul goes on to include himself, and all other believers, as having been among these *children of disobedience* at one time; we have all walked contrary to God's desire and lived outside of God's grace. The word *conversation* (*anastrepho*) is used metaphorically to refer to our lives and how we conduct ourselves – our life and character.[20] The guidance system that we had when we were outside of God's saving grace, was based upon what we wanted or whatever worked for us (*lusts of our flesh*), and unless the Spirit of God is permitted to guide us once we believe, we can easily remain in the realm of Satan's workshop (Luke 8:13)! You will recall that *believe*, within the Biblical context, means to hold a conviction of the truth of a matter after having evaluated it carefully, and so, if we *believe Biblically*, then we have stepped out of Satan's dominion. It is interesting

[18] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.
[19] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.
[20] Vine's, "conversation," "behavior."

to hear talk-show host, Dr. Laura, expound on the necessity of "religion" to make a difference in a life, and that there needs to be a standard that is bigger than us, against which we can measure the decisions that we make – otherwise our decisions will simply be what we think that we want at the time. Unfortunately, "religion," as Dr. Laura understands it, is also under the control and influence of Satan. **Only** a personal relationship with God, brought about through Christ's finished work on the cross and the indwelling Holy Spirit, stands exclusively outside of Satan's direct control. Yes, there is a need to have a guide beyond our own lusts, but "religion," no matter how positive, still does not reach beyond Satan's dominion.

Dr. Laura Schlessinger

Fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind describes the life of those outside of Christ. *Doing the will of the flesh* (literal) points to those things that bring about physical gratification, however temporary, and would include such things as gluttony, position and power, sexual sins, and all sorts of self-indulgent pleasures.[21] The *will of the mind* is where most religions and life-philosophies enter as they apply a mental salve to provide a temporary I'm-OK-perspective to life and the hereafter – an easing of the conscience through rationalization. Modern spirituality, like that encouraged by Oprah, is founded upon a deep introspection that "finds" the good that they are sure is within all of us; the devil cares not what is used to bolster self-justification, for he knows that everything outside of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is still his territory.

Elsewhere, Paul elaborated on this: "[5.] Mortify [put to death] therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication [*porneia* – illicit sex], uncleanness [the opposite of holy living], inordinate affection [vile or evil passions], evil concupiscence [longing, lust], and covetousness [a greed for more], which is idolatry: [6.] for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the **children of disobedience**: [7.] in the which ye also walked

[21] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.

some time, when ye lived in them" Colossians 3:5-7.[22] This is who we were outside of Christ; some characteristics are perhaps cultivated more than others, and are more socially acceptable. For example, covetousness (identified as *idolatry*) within Evangelical circles, is often paraded as being successful, and is acclaimed; it may even be accompanied by an apparent generosity that serves to mollify the conscience in an effort to suppress the presence of impure motives. "[5.] For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. [6.] For to be carnally minded [*the way of thinking of the flesh*] is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Romans 8:5-6).[23] If we are *in Christ*, we will then be free from the snare of the devil, and be spiritually alive.

Prior to being delivered out of sin by Christ, we were no different from anyone else in humanity – as sinners, we all remained under the wrath of God – *children of wrath*. Our very nature, as descendants of Adam, destined us for eternal separation from God (Romans 3:23; 6:23); it is only those who are *in Christ*, whose names are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life, who will enjoy the glories of our inheritance in Him (Revelation 20:15). What Paul has made abundantly clear is that there was nothing special about us before we became *in Christ*; we were the average, run-of-the-mill sinner on the broad road to destruction! Moreover, there is nothing that we can do that can take us beyond the status of a sinner. After describing the magnificent provisions that God has made for the believer (in Chapter 1), the contrast drawn as to where we have come from, is sharp! This realization should be humbling; it should raise a heart of renewed thanksgiving for what God has done for us, and instill within us a greater commitment to walking in faithful obedience to Him!

4. *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,*

[22] Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.
[23] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.

We have probably all heard of the great "but God" passages in Scripture; however, the Greek word translated here as *but*, can just as easily be *and*, *moreover*, or *then*.[24] So, rather than focusing in on the phrase *but God*, it is better that we turn our attention to the words that follow and what they say about God. We have just heard Paul describe who we were without Christ, and now he begins to explain what God did for us while we were in our hopeless state – there is nothing less hopeless than being *dead* (Ephesians 2:1). The foundation upon which God's actions toward us are built, is His mercy: God is *rich in mercy*. His abundant store (*rich*) of mercy was the basis for Christ's willingness to suffer, die, and be raised again in order to offer to mankind a way of escape from His wrath. The just recompense for sin is *death* (Romans 6:23) – not just physical death, but the eternal ruin of the soul in the Lake of Fire (Matthew 10:28; Revelation 20:15). Jeremiah understood the mercy of God when he declared that it is through "the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed" (Lamentations 3:22). It is through His rich mercy that He withholds His just punishment of all of sinful humanity; it was His mercy (and His eternal plan for our deliverance from sin) that provided Adam with the opportunity to restore his relationship with God that he had lost through his sin of disobedience (Genesis 3:21).

The word *for* in this case is a preposition that signals the reason for an action, and could be *on account of* or *because of*.[25] The foundation for the exercise of God's mercy is the *great love* that He has for us – for us, who had no ability to please Him, who remained under the condemnation of His wrath, who were without hope and outside of His mercy. There can be no doubt that the love of God is directed toward all of mankind (John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9), yet even though God's love and Christ's sacrifice were truly made for all of humanity, it is equally clear from Scripture that only a remnant, a few, will accept His abundant provision (Matthew 7:13-14).

What we must not lose sight of while we consider the mercy and love of God, is that they flow out of His holiness and alongside of His justice. Evangelicals typically are keen to hear of God's love and mercy, but are

[24] Friberg Lexicon.
[25] Ibid.

much less enthusiastic about His holiness and justice. It is through the Lord's mercy that we have not all been consumed (as sinners, we have earned death!), yet His justice required that the payment for sin be made (death). God is love (1 John 4:8), yet His love flows through His holiness that cannot abide sin. In the eternal counsels of God, a plan for salvation was devised that would see the expression of His love, mercy and justice while also meeting the exacting requirement of His holiness. The plan was that God (as the *Word*) would become a man and thereby be the perfect Lamb to be offered one time for the atonement of humanity's sin and to break the power of the devil, which is death (Hebrews 2:14-15; 10:10). By ignoring God's holiness, Evangelicals have embarked on the road of pragmatism that says, "if it works, then it must be right"; for them, the *end* holds a greater priority than the *means*. Yet God has always said: "be holy as I am holy" (Leviticus 11:45; 1 Peter 1:15), which is a call to pay particular attention to the *means*, and leave the *end* to God.

5. *Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)*

When did God love us? – while we were dead in our sins! Paul wants to ensure that we do not miss the reality of what God has done for us. After describing our state outside of Christ and then speaking of God's rich mercy and great love, he again reminds us that we were at one time *dead* – a time when we lived within Satan's domain, and our best efforts could not reach beyond his realm. We were dead to God! Yet while in this condition, God still loved us! Amazing!

Something that we hear little of from the pulpits of today is our original condition before God – *dead in sins*. There is a greater desire to placate the guilt that we might have, to emphasize our inherent goodness, and to extol the positive things in life – yet none of these will lead us to understand our position outside of God (something that Paul wants the Ephesians, and us, to know). Along with the inordinate emphasis on the positive, comes a corresponding neglect of the need for repentance before

God. The holiness of God is ignored; He becomes something that we can add onto our already "good" lives and claim our "assurance" of a place in heaven, even while we live out our "good" lives as we please. Today's church leaders bear a tremendous responsibility for providing such a false hope – a false gospel!

We now return to the reoccurring theme of the first chapter of Ephesians – *in Christ*; we are made alive *with Christ*. The thought is that God, Who is rich in mercy, has made us alive *with Christ*. After ensuring that we understand our former condition without God, and after emphasizing and reemphasizing that we were dead, Paul declares that it was God Who made us alive *in Christ*. There is no question, or at least there shouldn't be by this time, that there is no merit within us that would have caused God to make us alive. The critical thought here is that the life that we receive from God is a result of what He has done for us through the death of Christ and His resurrection! When Christ rose from the dead, He made new life possible for the believer. The resurrection of Christ is central to the Gospel message; "And if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain" (1 Corinthians 15:14).

By grace ye are saved – what is understood here is that the *grace* is God's grace, and it is through God's rich grace (His favor extended to an undeserving people) that we **are being saved** (*are* is in the present tense; this cannot be construed as a completed act while we are in this life).[26] It is through God's rich mercy that we are not judged immediately and consumed; it is through His grace that we can experience new life *in Christ*! His mercy withholds what we deserve; His grace provides us with what we do not deserve.

The death of the Passover lamb did nothing to protect the family for whom it was slain; the blood had to be applied, in faith, to the doorposts and lintel in order to provide protection from the death angel (Exodus 12:6-10). Even so, Christ's death is of no effect until the blood is applied, by faith, to the hearts of individuals. I must be believing (the application of the blood through the continual exercise of faith) in order to one day be

[26] Strong's Online.

saved (Matthew 24:13; John 1:12; Acts 16:31 – salvation is always future!); by faith we must receive, or accept, the gift of life that God offers to all of mankind; we can do nothing to earn it.

6. *And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*

God has raised us up together *with Christ*; it is through His resurrection that we can become spiritually alive before God! By placing our faith in Christ and the work that He accomplished for all of humanity, we are effectually raised up together with Him – we are identified with Him in His resurrection. Baptism by immersion (Biblical baptism) provides an illustration of this: as the water covers us, we are identifying with Christ in His death, and so as we are raised out of the water, we are identified with Him in His resurrection. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk [*do walk*] in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).[27] Once again, the critical factor that must not be overlooked is that this is only possible *in Christ*; it is as we are together with Him in His resurrection that we will live a new life.

Our way of life, or how we live in this world, must reflect this "newness of life." "Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). One of the heartaches of today is that the life of the average Evangelical is a greater reflection of the world than of the Savior. Lip-service is paid to the need to live our lives for the Lord, but no consideration is given to the holiness of God; we hear little about our old lives being crucified with Christ so that we might live according to the Spirit of God and not after our own flesh (Galatians 2:20; Romans 8:8-13). Rather, we hear that it is what's in the heart that matters, and our manner of living is not that important; amazingly, they seek to glean support for this line of thinking

[27] https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

from Jesus' condemnation of the Pharisees: "[25] Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. [26] Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. [27] Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. [28] Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matthew 23:25-28). If you suspend all consideration for Jesus' teachings, it might seem possible to find some support for such a position; the scribes and Pharisees were condemned for neglecting their spiritual lives – the inner man. Unlike the Pharisees, the Lord will not condemn the modern Evangelical for having cleansed the outside while leaving the interior corrupt; He will simply proclaim: "I never knew you" (Matthew 7:21-23). Jesus' condemnation will be that they have declared the inside of the cup to be clean while neglecting the outside, not realizing that the exterior is a reflection of the interior. They have missed the principle that Jesus identified right within the passage quoted: "… cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the **outside of them may be clean also**." If their lives do not reflect the new life in Christ characterized by holiness and righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Peter 1:15-16), then indications are that they have not been cleansed within (Matthew 7:13-20) – it matters not what they profess. There is a general failure to recognize the principle laid out in Matthew 15:18-20 – "… those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man." The Pharisees were careful to fulfill the smallest requirement of the Law, yet they neglected their hearts before God – the whole reason for the Law! Today's Evangelical endeavors to convince everyone that their heart is right with God, even while they turn a blind eye to their own worldliness and sin that is a reflection of their heart attitude (1 John 2:15). The Pharisees sought to

clean the outside of the cup in order to impress others; today the attempt is made to convince others that the inside is clean, while the outside remains untouched – it is simply hypocrisy of a different stripe, and will also receive the Savior's condemnation.

God not only *did raise* us *together*, but also *did seat* us *together* with Christ in the *heavenlies* – the same place where He *did bless* us with *every spiritual blessing* (Ephesians 1:3).[28] Yet, what remains abundantly clear is that all of this is only made possible through the work of Jesus Christ. None of this is based on any merit of our own – without Him, we remain dead in our sins (Ephesians 2:5); "… without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5b). One of the mysteries of our faith is that as we abide *in Christ*, and He is in that place of honor with the Father, we have a presence in the heavenly realm!

As Jesus spoke of the Vine and branches, He said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without [*apart from*] me ye can do nothing [*ye are able to be doing absolutely nothing*]" (John 15:5).[29] Jesus emphasized the same two things that Paul has been underscoring in his letter to the Ephesians: 1) we are helpless and hopeless without Christ (*dead*), and 2) we must be "in Him" in order to have the fruitful life of which Jesus spoke (every spiritual blessing is found only *in Christ*). Becoming a Christian (even without the consideration of living the Christian life) requires an active persuasion in the life-giving role of the *Vine*, and certainly the blessing that God has in store for the one who is believing cannot be obtained without first abiding in Christ. Jesus stated unequivocally that a branch that does not bear the fruit of the Vine, is removed, and a branch that is no longer drawing from the life source of the Vine is cast out and burned (John 15:2, 6). In a day when the simple declaration by a wolf that he is a sheep is all that is needed to be accepted into the fold, it is good to be reminded that the fruit of a life bears testimony to the life within. Unless our lives demonstrate obedience to God's Word and the fruit of the Spirit of God, we must not be deluded into thinking that praying a

[28] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.
[29] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

prayer, or walking the aisle, has led to our salvation. In the same way, we must watch for the signs of a new life in Christ in the lives of others, lest we inadvertently embrace wolves masquerading as sheep. *"The one who is believing in the Son is having life everlasting, and the one who is disobeying the Son will not see life but the wrath of God is abiding on him"* (John 3:36, literal).[30] Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep [ye must obey] my commandments" (John 14:15).[31]

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

Here we find an elaboration of God's purpose for extending His grace to those who were dead in sin, for making us alive, raising us up, and seating us with Christ in the heavenlies. We will be part of a host of called-out ones (the *ekklesia*) who will stand as a monument to the grace and goodness of God – a testimony to His greatness to future generations. This great company is comprised of those who were without hope and dead to God, yet, by the mercy that He extended through the finished work of Christ on the cross, they have been made alive to stand before Him being blameless and holy (Ephesians 1:4). Indeed, God's grace is exceeding; it is beyond our comprehension that He would save us, and fashion us into new creatures who are pleasing in His sight (2 Corinthians 5:17). Could it be that some day the host of the saved will stand as a testimony to God's efficacious grace to the condemnation of those who have spurned His grace, and devised their own "salvation"? It seems clear that we, as God's holy ones, will be a testimony to His great grace, and we must begin that testimony in this life by living a life that is changed – not by our own efforts, but by the grace of God working in us by His Spirit. We are commanded to not be "conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind ..." (Romans 12:2a); the word *transformed* is

[30] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.
[31] Friberg Lexicon.

in the passive voice, which means that this is something that we must permit the Spirit of God to accomplish in us – we cannot do it ourselves.[32]

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

Salvation coming through God's grace has been reiterated from verse five – a concept that Paul wants to ensure that we have firmly in mind. However, he now goes on to add the phrase *through faith*. This is the gate through which God's saving grace makes its entrance into the heart of man.

"Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Romans 4:3; Genesis 15:6). Abraham placed his faith in God, and acted upon that faith; his life demonstrated his faith for he walked in obedience to God. "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith" (Romans 4:13). God's conditional promise to Abraham ("in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" Genesis 12:3; a Messianic promise) was made not on the basis of the Law of Moses (for that had not yet been given), but rather, on the basis of Abraham's obedience – the exercise of his faith. Paul clarifies that God's promise that Abraham's Seed would be the heir of the world was not through the law, but through faith – if it were through the law, then the promise would be void, but it was made on the basis of faith alone (Romans 4:14). *"Because of this (by faith) so that by grace the sure promise being to all of the children, not from the Law only, but also of the faith* of *Abraham, who is the father of us all"* (Romans 4:16, literal).[33] The spiritual seed of Abraham are those who are made righteous after the manner of Abraham: faith placed in the promises of God! "[26.] For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus … [29.] And if ye be Christ's,

[32] Strong's Online.
[33] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.

then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:26, 29).

There are many Evangelicals today who believe that God has temporarily set Israel aside, and that His focus is now on the "Church" – a new entity that was brought into being at Pentecost. However, Paul makes it clear that "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel," that is to say, not all of those who are of the physical lineage of Abraham are the true Israel – being born a Jew does not automatically place you within the promises made to Abraham (Romans 9:6). Those who were saved while under the Law of Moses were made children of God through faith – in exactly the same way as Abraham, and just as we are today. Their faith was in the promise of God that there would come a Savior Who would fulfill the prescribed ceremonial rituals, and the Law was there to teach them of their need for such a Deliverer (Galatians 3:24). The clarity of the matter is that there is a spiritual Israel (a true Israel, i.e., the seed of Abraham through faith), and there is an Israel that is dependent upon tracing their ancestry to Abraham. When he wrote to the Roman believers, Paul made it evident that the true Israel is very much alive and well: "[16.] For if the firstfruit *be* holy [the Israelites were to present an offering (not a sacrifice) to the Lord of the first of their harvest, or produce, for use by the priests (Numbers 18:12)], the lump *is* also *holy* [the principle is that if the portion that was given as an offering is considered to be holy, then the rest of the dough from which it came, is also holy (Numbers 15:20-21)]: and if the root *be* holy, so *are* the branches [this is the reciprocal principle: if the source is holy, then so are the portions]. [17.] And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert graffed in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; [18.] boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. [19.] Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be graffed in. [20.] Well; **because of unbelief** [*no faith*] **they were broken off, and thou standest by faith**. Be not highminded, but fear: [21.] for **if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee**. [22.] Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee,

goodness, if thou continue in his goodness [this is not a hypothetical statement, but one that carries the possibility of **not** continuing *in His goodness*]: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off [this is the certainty for not continuing in His goodness]. [23] And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief [if the Jews come to believe], shall be graffed in:" *for thereupon* [no longer abiding in *unbelief*] *God is able to graft them in* (Romans 11:16-23, last italics is a literal translation).[34] It is not the branches that have been *broken off* that are grafted in, rather, these are Jews who come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus clarified for us that the branches that are *broken off* are burned (John 15:6) – there is no "second chance" for the *broken off* branches as the KJV translators lead us to believe by including the word *again* (last word of Romans 11:23).[35]

Therefore, the spiritual Seed of Abraham (Jesus Christ) is the root, or trunk, into which we are grafted by faith (Galatians 3:16); He is the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham ("in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed," Genesis 12:3)! The Galatian Christians erred in that they sought to place themselves under the Mosaic Covenant, but Paul clarified for them (and for us) that they were not under the Law of Moses but under the New Covenant – a covenant that is entered into by faith. "[6] Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. [7] Know ye therefore that **they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham**. [8] And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. [9] So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" (Galatians 3:6-9). If our faith is in the finished work of Christ for our salvation, then we are spiritual children of Abraham: we are the spiritual Israel!

And that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God, or *and not from you – this, the gift of God*.[36] In the Greek, *this* is a demonstrative pronoun that refers to the salvation by faith that God has made possible, and it is this salvation that is His *gift*. Clearly, when it comes to the salvation that God

[34] Strong's Online; Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.
[35] *Again*, as it appears in the KJV, is something that was brought forward from the Bishops' Bible, which the translators were to follow as closely as possible.
[36] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.

prepared before creation, we are the beneficiaries; there is nothing that we can contribute to His salvation – it was complete and perfect before Adam was created. The *Word* (a part of the tri-unity of God – 1 John 5:7) was known as the Lamb, the perfect and complete Sacrifice for sin, before the eternal *Elohiym* began creating this world (1 Peter 1:19-20; Genesis 1:1). It is through His shed blood that we are purchased out of the empty traditions that sprang from Adam's descendants under the influence and encouragement of Satan – the adversary who seeks the destruction of the children of God (1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:17). The restoration of fellowship with the Lord comes only through the infinite wisdom and grace of God, and not us! Nevertheless, we must be careful not to follow the unbiblical track of the Calvinist who declares man's *total inability* by downplaying (or denying) the presence of the image of God within sinful man (Genesis 9:6); yes, man still holds the ability to evaluate and think about what Christ has done to pay the price for sin (and then choose to believe, or not). Jesus said that it is the one who is convinced that He is the Truth (the *believing* one) who will not perish but is having everlasting life (John 3:16). However, even that *believing one* **must** live in obedience to the Lord's commands, or he will remain under the wrath of God (John 3:36).

The Calvinist is wrong when he touts man's inability to accept God's gift of salvation that He offers to all of humanity, and the Evangelical is equally wrong to assume that believing without obedience brings salvation! We must be very careful to understand God's Word to us lest we fall victim to the many theologies that bear the marks of Satan. "Beloved, believe not [*you must not be believing*] every spirit, but try [*examine* against God's Word] the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).[37] Peter brings this warning closer to home: *"and there did come also false prophets among the people* [generally speaking, *the world*]*, as also* ***among you*** *will be false teachers who will secretly introduce heresies of destruction, and the Lord Who did purchase them, they are denying: they are bringing upon themselves imminent destruction"* (2 Peter 2:1,

[37] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

literal).[38] The *destruction* that Peter identifies uses the same Greek word that Jesus used to describe the destiny of the broad way (Matthew 7:13).[39]

God's salvation is a *gift* that He extends to all of humanity, yet our acceptance of that *gift* must be on His terms: a presently active believing in the work of the Lord Jesus **and** a presently active obedience to His commandments! Jesus said, *if you are loving Me,* [then] *My commandments you must obey* (John 14:15, literal).[40] God's gift, in God's way, yields everlasting life; God's gift, in man's way, yields everlasting destruction! We must be very attentive to what this means; accepting the theology of an appreciated teacher of the Scriptures is **not** the way to open the gates of heaven – our hope must be in Christ alone and based solidly upon His Word.

9. *Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

To ensure that we understand that our salvation is a *gift* and not a product of our own efforts, the Holy Spirit, through Paul, spells it out very clearly for us: *not from works so that no one can boast*.[41] There is no place for our works within the salvation that God offers to mankind. Although the Catholics agree that salvation involves God's grace, they are also insistent that what we do forms a significant part of salvation – they consider salvation to be a life-long process that is begun by grace but completed by good works (as defined by their dogma) that impart additional saving grace. This is not unlike the endeavors of the Galatians whom Paul took to task for their acceptance of a gospel that was not **the Gospel**: "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:3). To this, the Catholics would have to answer "yes," despite their insistence to the contrary; however, Paul is asking a rhetorical question to which the understood response is that it is

[38] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.
[39] Strong's Online.
[40] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.
[41] Ibid.

impossible to begin in the Spirit and then to complete the work of the Spirit through the efforts of the flesh (Romans 8:13-14). Not unlike the Pharisees of Jesus' day, the Catholics have reduced their concept of salvation to a shopping list of liturgical acts that they are required to complete in order to be acceptable to God; Jesus made it clear that this would not work for the Pharisees (Matthew 5:20), and we can be sure that it will not work for the Catholics either!

However, this is not to say that "good works" are not to be a part of the Christian life! To the Philippians Paul wrote: "[12.] Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. [13.] For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12-13). Even as we, as the saints of God, are to seek to live in holiness, so Paul is calling the Philippians to *work out* their salvation through a life of obedience. Why? Because it is God Who is working in them (and us) to do those things that are pleasing to Him (Romans 8:9-12). Once again, we face the reality that the fruit of a life will reveal the allegiance of that life! Is this always going to be clearly evident? No! Jesus spoke of wolves masquerading as sheep (Matthew 7:15), and Paul speaks of the devil wearing the guise of an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). There is a need for discernment and dependency upon the Spirit of God to unveil the error and deception that will frequently wear the clothing of truth.

> Truth and Error went swimming. Error got out first and stole Truth's clothes. Truth got out, but was too proud to wear Error's clothes. That is why whenever you see error, it will always be clothed with some Truth ... but Truth is always the naked Truth.[42]

There is a need for sound judgment, and a will to stand against those who desire to be lauded as men and women of God but will not follow the precepts of Scripture. "Now **we command you**, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother

[42] Ralph G. Colas, *The Review* Vol. VIII, No. 3, May 1999, "Perspectives," p. 9.

that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (2 Thessalonians 3:6). Within this context, *tradition* does not refer to the way that we've always done things, but rather, it points to the instruction that has been given by Paul and others of like persuasion – i.e., the teaching that is received from the mouth of the Apostles or through the written Word of God (Biblical truth). We are to withdraw ourselves from anyone who appears to be a Christian (*every brother*), but does not follow the clear teachings of Scripture. It is at this point that New Evangelicals made their fatal error back in the late 1940s, for they determined to engage the Liberals in dialogue. Two things came out of this error: 1) they set the clear direction of Scripture aside for their own purposes, and 2) they began accommodating what they had hitherto considered to be unacceptable (again in contradiction of Scripture, 1 Corinthians 10:12). The consequence is that today's average Evangelical stands where the Liberals of that era once stood.

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

Here is new light shed on the place of *good works* in our lives. First of all, we are the *workmanship* of God: *for we are His creation, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God did prepare beforehand so that in them we do live*.[43] "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Coming to salvation by faith, a new creation has been made within us; we still have our body of flesh, but a new life has begun where before there was only death! Unlike the modern thought that there is a spark of the divine within all of us, Scripture makes it clear that the spiritual life, which begins at the time of our expression of faith, is a new creation. We do not become more like God by yielding to the spark of divinity that is within us (as New Age and Mormon teachings would

[43] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon; https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

have us believe); rather, God creates a whole new life within us! It is God's work in us, accomplished through the completed work of Jesus on the cross! We are brought from death unto life (John 5:24)!

This also speaks against those who would hold to a progressive salvation experience: a salvation that initially may not include a submissive yielding in all things to the Savior – merely a deliverance from hell, but no required change of life. Unless there is an "old things are passed away," there has not been a new life created, and we still abide in our sins. Unless we demonstrate a new life in Christ, we do not possess that new life; for clearly, how we conduct ourselves reveals the life, or death, that is within (Matthew 7:15-20).

The second thing that is obvious here, is that the purpose of this new life is obedience to God – we have this new life within so that we are able to live in holiness before God. It is precisely this new life that will not permit the child of God to live in a manner that is characterized by sin and disobedience. Once again, the fruit will be in keeping with the life (or lack thereof) within. We hear so little today of holy living, yet this is the purpose that God has for creating new life within us! In a day when the world is enamored with *self*, and the average churchgoer is no different, we bear a great responsibility to be *selfless* before God and man.

There is a thought rampant among Evangelicals that says: "It's what's on the inside that matters; how we live is not important." The Spirit of God would differ on this thought. We have been created for *good works*; if our lives do not demonstrate obedience to the Word of God (1 John 2:3), then, without a doubt, there has not been a new life created within us. Holiness of life is **not** an option for the Christian, it is a command of God that we are to be holy even as He is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16).

It was God's original purpose in offering a way of salvation for mankind that we would walk in holiness of life; this is what God prepared beforehand. There is no new life without a change in living – we cannot continue as we were, for we were dead in our sins, and now we have been made alive in Christ. We easily understand the difference in the physical realm – a corpse is unquestionably different from a living body; but we

are more inclined to fudge in the spiritual realm. When the line between the Christian and the world becomes decidedly blurred, we are less likely to call for that distinction of living; yet the Scriptures know no such compromise. If the line of separation is becoming difficult to see, then rest assured, the world is not becoming more "Christian," but the Christian is becoming more worldly – the sheep is beginning to look and sound more and more like a wolf, and this is a world without mirrors (subtle changes can often go without notice, even within ourselves)! Our mirror must be the Word of God; we must diligently guard against worldly compromises.

God chose us *in Christ* from before the foundation of the world so that we will be holy before Him (Ephesians 1:4), and it is reiterated here that God has prepared beforehand the *good works* in which we are to walk – works of holiness and righteousness (Ephesians 4:24). It is the eternal purpose of God that we, who are saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, will live out the works that He has prepared for us. The subjunctive mood of *walk* must be viewed within the context of being part of a purpose clause: this is not a mere possibility; rather, it is God's intent that we live in keeping with His predetermination (i.e., in holiness and righteousness) – for those who are *in Christ*, this is reality![44] There are numerous commands in Scripture: the Ten Commandments, providing the foundation (Exodus 20:3-17), to *abide* in the Vine (John 15:5), to be *vigilant* (1 Peter 5:8), that we *be not deceived* (2 Timothy 3:13-14), and that we not succumb to an *evil heart of unbelief* (Hebrews 3:12), and all of these are given so that we will remain faithful to the Lord in our daily walk. Jesus said, "… he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13); *endure* (*hupomeno*) speaks of remaining faithful through the trials that will come our way – Jesus clarified that it is the faithful one (*the same*) who will one day be saved (future tense).[45] The reality of our text is that unless we are living in keeping with what God has prepared for us, we will **not** be among those who are being saved *by faith*, and so God's intent will not find fruition in us.

[44] https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.
[45] Strong's Online.

Perhaps because of their ignorance of the Scriptures, many Evangelicals think that walking in the way that God desires is automatic: once we've said the required prayer, then God will look after the rest – we can relax, for all of the work is done. What a delusion of Satan to keep the would-be Christians in the dark concerning the sins that they have **not** left behind; if he can keep them out of the Word and thinking that they are okay, then he has won! There is a generation today of religious Evangelicals who have grown up thinking that their eternal destiny is secure, even while they carry on living their lives according to their own lusts – those who will one day hear an "I never knew you" from the Lord (Matthew 7:21-23). These are not even those who have tasted of the heavenly way and then fallen away (Hebrews 6:4-6) – these have never tasted, yet they live under a cloud of delusion that they have secured their eternal destiny in heaven (James 1:22).

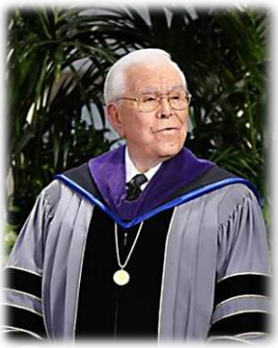
11. *Wherefore remember, that ye* being *in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;*

Understanding what God has done in providing us with a salvation that is entirely His gift, Paul commands his readers to remember, to think back to the way that things were. What simpler way can there be to gender a sense of humility and unworthiness than to recall how things used to be – to ponder those times when we walked in disobedience. There is no room for pride or arrogance, only humility before God and gratitude for His grace. For first generation Christians, as it was with the Ephesian believers, this recollection would be particularly moving; yet for each of us who are being renewed by the Spirit of God, there must be an understanding of the reality of our position before we were purchased out of darkness. We may not have practiced gross heathenism, yet spiritually we were at one time no different from the pagans – we were dead!

It appears that this is something that has been lost by Evangelicals. Since, generally speaking, they do not accept a proper view of who they

are without Christ, it only follows that they will not understand the necessity for repentance. Inasmuch as they perceive themselves as being *good* sinners (to be too negative would damage their self-esteem), they are then free to attach the precepts of Christianity onto their already *good* lives, and carry on. Within this scenario, it is very easy to become accommodating concerning the doctrines of Scripture since there has not been a proper understanding of the concept of being spiritually dead. Jesus said, "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mark 2:17). Is there a root of Evangelical righteousness that prevents many from understanding their need for becoming a new spiritual creation? Could this be the root from which we get the philosophy of pray-this-prayer and you're in? Jesus taught the need for everyone to count the cost of following Him (Luke 14:28-33), to deny yourself and take your cross (Mark 8:34), and of being a servant (*doulos*, slave; Matthew 20:27);[46] Paul testified that he considered all of the benefits of his Jewish life as rubbish compared to knowing the Lord Jesus (Philippians 3:7-8). There is a cost to naming the name of Christ, yet we hear nothing of this from the leaders of today's average Evangelical church.

Robert Schuller, in an interview with *Christianity Today* (published on October 5, 1984), noted the following:



Robert H. Schuller

> I don't think anything has been done in the name of Christ and under the banner of Christianity that has proven more destructive to human personality and, hence counterproductive to the evangelism enterprise, than the often crude, uncouth and un-Christian strategy of attempting to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition.[47]

Not surprisingly, this came from a man who defined sin as being a lack of self-worth, yet who continued to be acclaimed within Evangelical circles

[46] Strong's Online.
[47] http://letusreason.org/Curren13.htm.

decades after making this revealing declaration in *Christianity Today*, and, even after his death, his teachings remain very popular within the Evangelical community. How can this be?

Schuller, like many of today's Liberal (and Evangelical) pastors, had a strong desire to avoid the word *sin*. In *Self-Esteem: the New Reformation*, Schuller wrote: "Salvation is defined as rescue from shame to glory. It is salvation from guilt to pride, from fear to love, from distrust to faith, from hypocrisy to honesty."[48] Schuller never used the word *sin*, and said nothing about repentance. This kind of misleading verbiage actually leads people away from salvation, for, without acknowledging their sin and their need for spiritual life, there can be no salvation. Clearly, the Evangelical crowd has abandoned the teaching of the Word of God in favor of fables that appeal to their itching ears (2 Timothy 4:3-4); otherwise, they would have forsaken Schuller long ago and identified him as being a religious pagan. There is a grievous condition among Evangelicals today that will see many of them enter into eternity still clinging to a false hope – they are blind and deaf to the Word of God; they refuse to see and hear the truth that could set them free, and their ignorance of the Scriptures has numbed their minds into believing a lie. Satan loves religion, and the positive-only religion of today has become a feel-good anesthetic tossed out by Satan to deceive many. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). Jesus openly declared: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible [this actually means that it is possible (*it were* was supplied by the translators; it's not in the Greek); *if they are able to*], they shall deceive the very elect" (Matthew 24:24).[49] The false prophets of today are preaching a feel-good, positive-only message that cannot be found in God's Word; it is a deception that has been devised by the father of lies, Satan, in order to deceive the average, pew-warming Evangelical right into his clutches.

[48] Robert H. Schuller, Self-Esteem: the New Reformation, p. 151.
[49] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.

Paul now begins on what he would have these Ephesians remember. They were among those whom the Jews took pride in calling the *uncircumcision*, those whom they considered to be unclean and untouchable – Gentiles. However, Paul draws an interesting parallel here: those who are of the *Circumcision in the flesh* (the Jews) called the Ephesian believers, who were once *Gentiles in the flesh*, *Uncircumcision*; notice that both are *in the flesh* and, therefore, really not that different from one another. Paul made his position on circumcision very clear to the Corinthians: "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping [obeying] of the commandments of God" (1 Corinthians 7:19).[50] To the Romans, he declared that not all of those who are of Israel (the *circumcision in the flesh*) are Israel; in other words, not everyone who is a Jew is of the faith of Abraham (Romans 9:6) – not all Jews will benefit from the spiritual heritage that could be theirs. Colossians 2:11 says: "In whom [that is, in Christ] also ye are circumcised with the circumcision **made without hands**, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." This was the struggle that Paul had with the Galatian believers who desired to hold onto the Mosaic Law, to whom the Spirit of God declared: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Galatians 6:15). The old circumcision of the law is not sufficient, and so *in Christ*, there is made a whole new creature! "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). This is the circumcision of Christ: a new life in Him! However, it is also clear that "in the flesh" stands in contrast to the new life that comes through faith in Christ – a new life *in Him*, marked by the presence of His Spirit; it is *in Christ* that we are made into new creatures – no other way.

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:*

[50] Strong's Online.

Although being *without*, or *apart from*, *Christ* is directed specifically to the *Uncircumcision*, there is a sense in which this is applicable to all who are *in the flesh*. Paul explained this to the Romans: "[8] So then they that are in the flesh [this is the same Greek phrase that was used in Ephesians 2:11] cannot please God. [9] But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans 8:8-9). Despite how the Evangelical landscape might appear today, there are no varying shades of Biblical Christianity. Jesus stated: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matthew 12:30). There are only two positions: we are either for Christ, or we are against Him; there is no fence to straddle, and certainly no permission for a Christian to live with one foot in the world – it simply does not work! "Ye cannot serve God and mammon [or riches]" (Matthew 6:24). These occupations are mutually exclusive; they have nothing in common – "what fellowship hath light with darkness" (2 Corinthians 6:14). With the Spirit of God as our guide and the Word of God as our resource, we are charged to be discerning, to test the spirits in order to determine if they are for Jesus or against Him (1 John 4:1). We may not always be able to immediately spot the wolf under the sheep's coat (his true fruits may not be obvious to us, after all, Satan, himself, likes to appear as an angel of light), but we may rest assured that God knows those who are His, and He will reveal the deceiver as we endeavor to walk in obedience to His Word. It is critical that we familiarize ourselves with the Scriptures, for that will be the means of identifying those who are not walking according to God's Standard (the Word of God) – those who have donned a religious coat so as to appear to be righteous before men. It is at this point that modern Evangelicals are most vulnerable – along with a significant de-emphasis on doctrine, has come a corresponding decrease in familiarity with the Word of God.

From here, Paul goes into a brief overview of what "without Christ" really means.

Being Gentiles, the Ephesians had not been a part of Israel so that they could have heard of the coming Messiah and experienced the foreshadowing of the temple ordinances. Many of the Jews had lost their way, and become dependent upon their ritualistic adherence to the Mosaic Law and prescribed interpretation of that Law for their "salvation," but for those outside of the nation of Israel, there wasn't even that glimmer of hope that their eyes would be opened to the spiritual reality of God's dealings with mankind. Despite the general blindness of the Jews to what God really desired of them, they still held the truth that could set them free. Although most of them were oblivious to God's truth, having succumbed to an empty ritualism that left them in their sins, nevertheless, contained within many of their rituals was the truth that could point them to God and salvation, if they would see it. This is not unlike some liturgical churches today where the truth may be present, but it is buried under the rituals; it is quite unlike New Evangelical churches that have virtually removed the Word of God and diluted the Gospel – however, the result is the same for both. For those outside of the nation of Israel, even this hope was missing. Although Israel was to be the light to the Gentiles (Simeon understood this when he blessed the infant Jesus and called Him a "light to lighten the Gentiles" [Luke 2:32]), their light had been buried under a load of legalism – it remained largely hidden to the children of promise, let alone shining out to those who were outside of their nation. Lest we be unduly critical of the Israelites for their neglect of the Light, it is evident that the denominations that came out of the Reformation (Lutheran, Reformed, Presbyterian, etc.) and, it would be safe to say, many of the present-day Evangelical denominations as well, hold more truth in their statements of faith and creeds than they do in their lives and hearts. They give a fleeting mental assent to the Word of God and many of the truths that it contains, even while they live in spiritual darkness – a religiosity without repentance before a holy God, a mental nod without a change of heart.

God's covenant of promise had been given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; a covenant that included His promise that all of the nations of the world would be blessed through them (Genesis 12:3; 26:4; 28:14).

Although this saw ultimate fulfillment in the coming of Christ as the Savior of mankind (Galatians 3:16), being a blessing to those outside of their family was to have been the continual attitude of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God expressed this by making provision within the Law of Moses for the stranger who lived among the Israelites (Exodus 12:49; Leviticus 19:34; Isaiah 56:6-7), and through including, in the genealogy of the Lord, those who were not descendants of Abraham (Matthew 1:5 includes the detail that Rahab, of Jericho, and Ruth, of Moab, were a part of the lineage of Christ as marked through Joseph). Although there were some outside of Israel who were brought into fellowship with God during OT times, this was clearly the exception rather than the rule. Typically, Israel's contact with the heathen nations around them was to become involved with their heathenism, rather than drawing them to the worship of Jehovah. With our sin nature, it seems that it is always easier to become a part of the darkness than it is to shine as a light in that darkness – we are no different from Israel of old; hence, the accounts of their struggles are included in Scripture, by the Spirit of God, for our instruction (1 Corinthians 10:6). Unfortunately, in the minds of most Evangelicals, there has been an artificial separation made between the Old and New Testaments to the point that they typically ignore most of the OT; after all, it is said, "We are under grace, and not under the Law," thereby confirming their ignorance of God's dealings with mankind, and thereby securing their blindness.

The source of this error (being under *grace* and not the *law*) comes from a misinterpretation of Romans 6:14: "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Let us look at this statement very carefully and seek to understand it, so as to remove the stumbling block that this passage has become. If we are honest, we will acknowledge that this passage is often used as a feeble attempt to provide self-justification for something that we should or should not do, most often in an area that we see as being gray (as opposed to being black or white), but which God does not see as such. Satan may confront us with an opportunity that might appear to be of great benefit to us, but it sets an alarm off in our heart of hearts; we remind ourselves that

we are under grace, and so we simply consider the determined outcome and take advantage of the opportunity. Most often, this is a step downward, perhaps the first onto the slippery slope of compromise, or, perhaps, another step taken to quicken the slide downward. On the other hand, we might be faced with a matter that will require something of us, and we would rather not pay the price; this is an opportunity to remind ourselves that we are not under the law – we don't have to do it. In essence, what this has become, for most Evangelicals, is an excuse to permit pragmatism to be our guide; like the Israelites of old, we no longer hear the "thus saith the Lord." The question simply becomes: is the anticipated end generally beneficial to us? When you combine this pragmatic approach with a growing unfamiliarity with the Scriptures, you have a deadly team – to the joy of Satan, and the destruction of the average, poorly-rooted Christian (Luke 8:13).

What is so very important to a proper understanding of any passage of Scripture is its context, and this passage is no exception. If we look back to Romans 6:3, we can begin to unfold the proper context and understanding of this verse, which has become a real problem within the Christian community. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" Baptism is a symbol of our identification with Christ in His death – our "old man is crucified with *him*" (verse 6). "Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him ..." (verse 8) – we not only identify with Christ in His death, but also in His resurrection, through which we anticipate a new life in Him. Because of this, we are to consider ourselves "to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (verse 11). Earlier, Paul declared: "... the law entered, that the offence [or sin] might abound" (Romans 5:20). With the entrance of the written Law of God (upon two tables of stone) and the Mosaic Law at Mt. Sinai, sin shone forth in all of its misery; it was no longer possible to excuse our failure before God. However, when, by a living faith, we identify with Christ's death and resurrection, we are now dead to sin – the spotlight of the Law's condemnation is extinguished, and we now stand in the grace of God (Romans 5:1-2; 8:1). For the Israelite under the Old Covenant, this came

when, by faith, he identified with the lamb that was slain for his sins (a God-instituted foreshadowing of the sacrifice that was to be made by the promised One); by this faith (which is the same faith as ours), he also stood in the grace of God. "*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1). *In Christ* (whether looking forward to His coming, or back on the salvation that He accomplished) the condemnation of the Law has no power over us; we abide in God's grace by faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). No one is ever justified through the Law, yet God has declared that we are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption [deliverance] that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24).[51] However, what we must not miss is that the Law of God has not been removed from our lives so that we should live unto ourselves. To the contrary, Jeremiah spoke of a coming day when God would write His Laws (the permanent Ten Commandments) upon our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33). "[24.] And he that keepeth [*is obeying*] his [God's] commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us. [1.] Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 3:24-4:1).[52] We are called to a life of obedience to God's commands (John 14:15) – the Spirit of God working out the righteousness of the Law of God in our lives (Romans 8:3-4; James 1:25).

Reading on, to complete the context: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Romans 6:16). This is not advocating a salvation by works; on the contrary, it is calling us to a life of obedience to the Law of God as it is so clearly declared in 1 John 3:24: if we are keeping His commandments, we are then dwelling in Him. The reality is that we could not live a life of "obedience unto righteousness" without the enablement of the Spirit of God (Galatians 2:16; Romans 8:4). The question that we are faced with is this: "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" (Romans 6:1). In

[51] Strong's Online.
[52] Friberg Lexicon.

other words, because of God's infinite grace, do we continue as we were so that we might behold the grace of God abounding to cover our sin? The answer is very clear: "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:2). If we are *in Christ*, which means that we have died to sin, then it is impossible for us to carry on in a life of sin. Will we fail? Yes, for we carry our sin nature about with us (Romans 7:22-23), but a way has been made for dealing with our failures. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). What Paul is making abundantly clear is the importance of obedience to the commands of God (and this is corroborated by John in 1 John 3:24). When we are born anew by faith in Christ, we have accounted ourselves to be "dead indeed unto sin" (Romans 6:11); if then we have identified with Christ in His death, how can we live any longer unto sin? If we continue in a lifestyle of sin, then we have not identified with Christ in His death – we remain in our sins. However, if by faith we have made that identification with Christ in what He has done for mankind, then we will yield to the Spirit of God to lead us in paths of righteousness (Psalm 23:3; Romans 8:4).

"We are not under the law" – through faith in Christ, we are no longer under the **condemnation** of the Law of God (Romans 8:1), and the Mosaic Law of statutes and ordinances has been replaced by the New Covenant that was instituted through the shed blood of Jesus (Ephesians 2:15; Luke 22:20). However, to say that we are not under obligation to be obedient to the Law of God is to contradict Scripture; therefore, we must understand this to mean that we are no longer subject to the penalty of sin (the result of the Law on sinful man) as long as we continue to be **in Christ** (Hebrews 3:14). However, (and this is a caveat of which most Evangelicals today will not abide) if we become faithless and turn away from Christ (Hebrews 3:12), there is then no way to be restored to faith in Him again, for we have spurned the **only** Way to life (John 14:6; Hebrews 10:26; 2 Peter 2:20-21). If we abide in Christ (John 15:4), then we will obey His commandments (1 John 3:24) – beginning with the Ten that God has written upon our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33).

"We are under grace" – in truth, everyone, who comes to God by faith in His promised One, stands in His marvelous grace. Whether we looked forward to the coming of the Fulfillment of God's promise made in the Garden of Eden, or back on the deliverance from sin that was accomplished by Christ on the cross, it matters not, for we are equally recipients of God's grace – we are all looking to the same Savior. The expression of God's grace toward mankind did not begin at the cross – it was in place before the world was formed (Revelation 13:8), and it shone forth when Adam sinned. Salvation has always been the same – faith in God's Provision (whether promised or realized, it matters not). Today's average Evangelical stumbles at this simple truth, and this same truth caused the Judaizers and the Galatians to falter; works have never played a role in the salvation of mankind! The Law of Moses came to guide the children of Israel to faith in the promised Deliverer so that they might be "justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24); it was never intended to be incorporated into the New Covenant (Testament) that was instituted by Jesus with His disciples (Luke 22:20; Galatians 3:19). Man, from Adam onward, has always been the recipient of God's grace; however, under the New Covenant, God has taken a different approach to dealing with us. Since the Law of Moses, with its complex system of sacrifices, priestly duties and personal requirements, ended at the cross, it is only appropriate that God would see fit to work in a different manner in us. Jesus declared, "... when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth ..." (John 16:13). As we come to faith in Christ, God writes His Law (the Ten Commandments) upon our hearts (in fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:33), and the Spirit of God enters our hearts to guide us into all truth. Jesus said, "I am ... the truth," therefore, it is evident that the Spirit will lead us into a full understanding of Who Jesus is (John 14:6; 15:26). We are no longer under the condemnation of the Law (because we are *in Christ*); the Spirit of God has been given to lead us into living in a manner that will express the righteousness of the Law of God (Romans 8:1-4). Jesus also said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15); it is not all grace and no Law – rather, it is God's grace that enables us to live in obedience to His Law. What could be more marvelous?

Returning to our text, Paul identifies the Ephesians as having been those *having no hope* – being outside of the promises of Israel isn't the worst; a person without Christ means that he is without hope! Christ is our only hope, the true Hope for all of mankind; from the day that man sinned, God made a promise of deliverance from sin (Genesis 3:15). From the very day that sin entered into the heart of man, there has been genuine hope – a hope in God's provision of a Deliverer. From Abel's sacrifice, to Simeon's declaration of the arrival of the Messiah as the Light of the world, that hope lived on – a true hope that could only be accessed by faith in God, the One Who made the promise. By faith, the OT saints believed the promises of God and had hope of a coming Savior; by faith, we believe in the Messiah Who came and paid the price for our deliverance, and we live in hope of that final salvation when we will be with Him in glory. First Corinthians 13:13 declares: "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three": *faith* in the God Who promised, *hope* in the promises made by God, and a two-fold *love*: 1) the love of God for mankind on which this faith and hope are based, and 2) a love that we have for God and mankind as a result (Matthew 22:37-40).

It is not that those outside of Christ are without all hope; it is only that their hope is ill founded, and so it is in vain. Cain offered his sacrifice with the hope that it would be acceptable to God, yet his hope proved to be empty, and his offering was rejected (Genesis 4:3, 5). Most religions offer some form of hope: the hope of reincarnation, the hope of universal salvation, the hope of salvation through good works – these are all hopes that may well be held in all sincerity, yet they are all futile. There is only one Hope that carries with it the assurance of fulfillment: our hope in the promises of God, and His Provision for the purchase of our souls out of sin.

Before Christ touched our lives through His Spirit, we were without hope and without God, living in a world that was Satan's domain. Our former state was eternally hopeless, for we were part of a world that is hostile toward God – a world of sinners under the influence of the great deceiver. Hell was a certainty, for we were ignorant of the possibility of faith in the God of mercy from Whom we were separated, and against

Whom we sinned. Paul instructs the Ephesians to remember this former reality – to call to mind what once was, not so that they would dwell on their former state and be immersed in misery, but so that the grace that God extended toward them would shine forth in greater glory! This call to reminisce follows on the heels of the triumphant: "for by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God!" Faith in God opens the door of salvation – a salvation that is established by the sacrifice of Jesus, Who brought us from the depths of hopelessness into union with Himself. Israel of old was instructed from time-to-time to remember when they were slaves in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15; 24:22) in order to contrast present blessings with past miseries, resulting in joyfully keeping the Lord's instructions. There were times when Israel felt that the Lord's commands were burdensome; a good dose of recollection was the Lord's antidote for such feelings. Likewise, for the Ephesian believers and us, a reminder of what once was will only serve to increase the joy and rejoicing in the salvation that is brought about by God through Christ.

This is so unlike the "remembering" that is done in Recovered Memory Therapy (humanistic, psychotherapy based), or even within the Theophostic (meaning "God-light") ministry (a "Christian" psychotherapy-based work). In these, the individual goes back in their mind to "painful" memories, and relives the experience that caused the pain. Out of this has come "memories" of abuse that have subsequently been found to be untrue, but only after they have destroyed the lives of others. Although the Theophostic process claims to not focus on the event of the memory as much as the emotional response to it (the "lie" that needs to be "over-written" by the truth as spoken to the individual by Jesus or the Spirit of God);[53] both consider the "recovered memories" to be accurate. In both of these systems, the memories are specific, and the purpose is to release the individual from personal responsibility and blame for something that may or may not have occurred. Both systems seem to apply to anyone; there is no thought of whether or not the individual has been born again of the Spirit of God – the facilitator must actually try to determine if he is dealing with Jesus or a demon masquerading as Jesus.

[53] https://www.religioustolerance.org/theophostic1.htm.

This is **not** what Paul is asking the Ephesian believers to do. Only a faithful and obedient believer can look back to a time when he was without Christ, to a time when he was without hope, and separated from God by his sin. The Spirit asks us to recall when we were without hope so that we then are able to rejoice in the "but now" of being joined to Christ!

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

But now in Christ Jesus – here is that key phrase that has been repeated over and over again (*in Christ*)! The difference between once being without hope and now being saved by God: *in Christ*! The blood of Christ has brought us near – we, who were once a long way from God. A Way has been made to bring us from a place of no hope to a place of eternal hope *in Christ*. This is not something that we can add into our "good lives" in order to become righteous before God; this is a radical change in direction, a transformation from death to life! We cannot drape the righteousness of God over our filthy rags and expect to appear cleansed before God. Jesus' condemnation of the Pharisees was that they said, "We see"; it was because of their self-righteousness that Jesus said, "Your sin remaineth" (John 9:41). The Pharisees clung tenaciously to their own laws and ordinances, which they had carefully extrapolated from the Law of Moses; because their focus was on applying their rules and defending their positions, they had no part in the work of Jesus, Whom they considered to be a threat – they had no part in His kingdom of righteousness. We must not delude ourselves into accepting a façade of righteousness in place of **His** righteousness. Unless we are new creatures in Christ, we yet abide without hope – our sin still clings to us. There is no way to become a new creature in Christ and leave one's self-esteem intact; there is no room for self-esteem in the salvation that is offered by Christ – the Pharisees retained their self-esteem (pride) at the sacrifice of cleansing their souls of sin! I would propose that it is no different today; if you wish to preserve your self-esteem, you do so at the peril of your eternal destiny.

James Dobson

Robert Schuller redefined sin as "any act or thought that robs myself [*sic*] or another human being of his or her self-esteem."[54] James Dobson is quoted as saying that if he could prescribe one thing for the women of the world, it would be "a healthy dose of self-esteem and personal worth (taken three times a day until the symptoms disappear). I have no doubt that this is their greatest need."[55] Here are two men of prominence within Evangelicalism who hold self-esteem as being essential to life. Yet we fail to find such teaching anywhere in Scripture; we are told to consider others better than ourselves (Philippians 2:3), that we are all sinners (Romans 3:23), and that all of our righteousness is as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). You cannot retain a lively self-esteem, and at the same time die to self so that you can live by the Spirit. "For if ye live after the flesh [in the realm of self-esteem], ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8:13). The question that we all must face at some time in life, is this: will we accept the plain teachings of Scripture, or will we accept the teachings of men? Unless we are prepared to follow the example of the Bereans of Acts 17, we will inevitably be swayed by the rhetoric of learned men. This is plainly evident within the Evangelical movement today, where the justification for listening to these men is that there is good in what they say. There is nothing so deadly as a poison that is promoted as being a healthy drink – we must be wary of wolves in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15-20; 1 John 4:1)!!!

Returning to the passage at hand, the Ephesians were at one time a long way off (being those who were called the Uncircumcision, aliens and strangers, without hope and without God), but now they have been brought near by the blood of Christ. The phrase *far off* (from the Greek word *makran*) is used metaphorically to summarize what Paul has been revealing about the Jewish attitude toward the Gentiles: spiritually, they

[54] Schuller, Self-Esteem, p. 14.
[55] Martin and Deidre Bobgan, James Dobson's Gospel of Self-Esteem & Psychology, p. 99.

were in darkness.[56] In contrast to this, the Jews were always *near*, for God had given them His Word and the Law, which outlined for them His reality, His holiness, and the way for their sins to be covered. The Object of their faith (the Promised One Who would put all things right) was declared openly for all to accept or reject, but this was not the case for the *aliens* and *strangers* who were outside of Israel. Paul makes it very clear that this is now all changed! The aliens and strangers, those who were *far off*, are now brought into the presence of God through the blood of Christ – all of the barriers have been removed. Even as the Jews were brought into a relationship with God through faith in the blood of the sacrifices, so Christ became the final Sacrifice so that we might be brought into fellowship with God.

We have seen that God made provision within the Law of Moses for the stranger who was within the Israelite community (Exodus 12:49), yet through the years, the religious Jews had raised the barriers to exclude those outside of the physical line of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. What God provided as a demonstration of His holiness, the Jews used as a tool to exclude those who could have had a part in God's salvation plan. The Way of salvation was forever changed through the sacrifice of Christ – it was now the same for Jew and Gentile. For the Jews, the Way was a stumbling block (they would have to accept that the crucified Jesus was their Messiah, their Promised One), and to the Greeks, it appeared as foolishness (alongside of their numerous philosophies, the Message of the cross and resurrection seemed ludicrous): "...we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock [*skandalon*, that which gives offense or causes opposition], and unto the Greeks foolishness [*moria*, nonsense]" (1 Corinthians 1:23).[57] Both, the Jews and the Gentiles, faced similar hurdles in coming to the Christ, the Messiah of God, for their salvation; the ground at the cross is level.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul framed the question: *"what then* is *the advantage of the Jew, or what* is *the benefit of the circumcision?"*

[56] Vine's, "far."
[57] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

(Romans 3:1, literal).[58] His response for our instruction was this: *"much in every way, for, indeed, they were especially entrusted with the promises of God"* (Romans 3:2, literal).[59] What is missing from Paul's response is any indication that there is any Jewish advantage as it relates to the fulfillment of the promises of God in Christ Jesus! In other words, the advantage that the Jews have is historical; they wrote and preserved the Word of God for generations (including the promises of the coming Redeemer), but now that Christ has come and fulfilled the foreshadowing of the Mosaic Law and the prophecies concerning His arrival, their advantage is ended. The Gospel message is for all people without distinction.

Today we see Evangelicals veiling what Christ accomplished through His death and resurrection in a fog of philosophy and psychology, which results in people losing their way to the Savior. They have them bowing before the gods of self-esteem, of purpose-driven growth, of pray-a-prayer for salvation, of emotionalism, and of unity – all to their own eternal spiritual detriment. Their condemnation is the same as for the Pharisees of Jesus' day: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell [Gehenna, the Lake of Fire] than yourselves" (Matthew 23:15).[60] It is God's Provision plus nothing; we must adhere to the simple truths of Scripture, without the trappings of man's thinking; the Narrow Way leads to life, and is available for all of mankind (Matthew 7:14; John 14:6). We must be continually growing in our understanding of God's Word in order to ensure that the path on which we are walking is the pathway to life eternal (Colossians 1:10). "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25); Jesus warned about this way: "… for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat" (Matthew 7:13b).

[58] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.
[59] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.
[60] Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

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

The word *peace* (*eirene*) speaks of harmony and accord.[61] Isaiah wrote of the coming Messiah and ascribed to Him the name, *Prince of Peace*, thereby making Him the Head over all peace (Isaiah 9:6) – i.e., there can be no peace without Jesus! Within the context of this passage, Jesus, as our Peace, has brought the Jews and the Gentiles together (*both*) – those who place their faith in Him are made one in His *ekklesia*. The distinct separation (**not** *peace*!) that existed between these two groups was largely the result of the Jews regarding the Gentiles as being unclean, and wanting nothing to do with them. It seems that after their time in Babylonian captivity, the Jews had finally learned that God would punish their syncretistic practices (mixing heathen customs with their God-given requirements), and so the pendulum swung the other way in that they showed disdain for everyone who was not Jewish. They lost sight of the fact that God's desire was for them to shine the light of His glory on the people about them and not cut them off altogether – in their zeal to avoid God's punishment, they overcorrected. First, they mixed with the nations about them, assimilating their customs, and consequently, felt God's punishment; now they became isolationistic, but no less failed to comprehend what it was that God desired of them. It was through the seed of Abraham that all of the nations were to be blessed, yet the Jewish practice was to glory in what they perceived to be their special position before God. Jesus changed this: He brought those who were far off (the Gentiles) and those who were nigh (the Jews) and made the two into one. However, we must not consider this to be an oil and water mixture; He is our *peace*, He is our *harmony*, and so our unity (Jew and Gentile as one) rests in Him alone. Jesus brought the two together – how did He do this? He did not simply declare the Law of Moses to be ended and thereby force the Jews to abandon their traditions; rather, He fulfilled, or completed, the Mosaic Law and the prophecies (Matthew 5:17).[62] Paul explained it to the

[61] Friberg Lexicon.
[62] Strong's Online.

Galatians this way: *"… the Law* [of Moses] *became our tutor until Christ, in order that by faith we are declared righteous"* (Galatians 3:24, literal).[63] The instruction that the Mosaic Law provided followed two tracks: 1) the absolute holiness of God, and 2) the absolute sinfulness of mankind – understanding these two things brought the necessity of the priesthood and sacrificial system into sharp focus. Man has always had to approach God on His terms, and, the Mosaic Law, very carefully and in great detail, spelled out exactly what God required for man's sins to be covered. Yes, the Mosaic Law was given specifically to the children of Israel, but as we have already noted, there was provision within it for the Gentile (Exodus 12:49). The writer of Hebrews clarifies for us the essential ingredient for the Mosaic Law to be effective: faith (Hebrews 4:2)! The Law of Moses provided the practical framework necessary for a temporary cleansing from sin, but unless the activities of the Law were accompanied by faith in the One Who gave the Law, they were of no effect (Isaiah 1:10-15). The focus of the Law of Moses was on the One Who had been promised, Who would crush the head of Satan (Genesis 3:15), and the One through Whom all of the families of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3). The instruction of the Mosaic Law was that faith in the God Who had promised was essential (the faith that Abraham exercised, Romans 4:3) – without faith, the liturgies prescribed within the Law of Moses were of no value. Therefore, it is not at all surprising that the Mosaic Law was fulfilled when the Object of their foreshadowing, the Prophet of Whom Moses spoke (Deuteronomy 18:15), had completed His earthly work.

Jesus, the promised Prophet, is that "**one** mediator between God and men" (1 Timothy 2:5), and He replaced the mediating functions of the priests and sacrifices within the Mosaic Law. The writer of Hebrews explained this very carefully: "… now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant (the New Covenant, **not** the Mosaic covenant), which was established upon better promises" (Hebrews 8:6). The writer then quotes from Jeremiah 31 where the Lord promised to establish a New Covenant under which He

[63] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

would place His Law in our minds and write it upon our hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:8-12). As Jesus met with His disciples on the evening before His crucifixion, He made this declaration: "This cup *is* the new testament [*New Covenant*] in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20).[64] As Paul explained to the Galatians: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28) – Christ has *made both one*. Christ is our *peace*, and He is our unity.

We hear much about unity among Evangelicals, many echoing the words of the late Chuck Colson who expended great energy to bring Evangelicals and Catholics together: "We must strive for unity because it is the essence of the church."[65] Although it is true that unity is the essence of the church, it is because Christ is our unity – we are one *in Christ*. It is interesting to note how deceivers will take a truth, twist it a bit, and make it a part of their heresy. The Scriptures tell us to strive, or labor, for some things:

- To enter through the strait gate (Luke 13:24),
- For those things that will endure into eternity (John 6:27),
- In prayers to God (Romans 15:30),
- For the faith of the Gospel (Philippians 1:27),
- To enter into the rest that God has prepared for us (Hebrew 4:11), and
- Against sin (Hebrews 12:4).

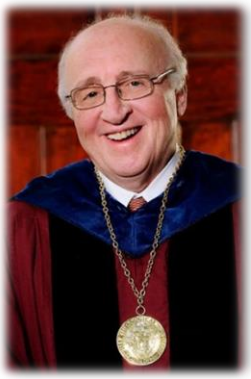
However, nowhere do we see an admonition to strive for unity – that was Colson's personal agenda. Ephesians 4:3 states: "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Even here, it is not the unity for which we are to strive, rather, we are to be making every effort (*endeavor*) to attend carefully to, or to guard (*keep*) the unity of the Spirit – this unity is already existing in the Spirit of God.[66] **We** must remain in the Vine (John 15:4), and guard against unbelief entering our hearts

[64] Gingrich Lexicon.
[65] Charles Colson, The Body, p. 102.
[66] Strong's Online.

(Hebrews 3:12). This is the true, pure unity that we can have with the Lord Jesus, and it has absolutely nothing to do with "unity" with other "Christians"! What Evangelicals seek is a physical cooperation and fellowship with those whom they have determined to be "believers"; there is little consideration given to the guidance of either the Spirit of God or the Word of God – it is much more a matter of successful negotiations between men. The thrust of the document *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* (for the most part, a product of the efforts of Chuck Colson, a professing Baptist, and Richard Neuhaus, a Lutheran who converted to Catholicism) is to find that lowest common denominator (that minimum level of doctrine) where there is complete agreement, and then glorying in the unity that man has achieved. Since it is clear that the Roman Catholic Church will not budge from their age-old position, the essence of modern Evangelical Ecumenical unity requires a continuous downplaying of doctrine to the place where eventually everyone will return to their mother church (Rome).

We often laud the Reformers for coming out of the Catholic Church, yet it was never Luther's intention to separate from Rome – he only set out to correct some of its errors. Unfortunately, the separation that took place through men like Luther and Calvin did not leave the traditions of Rome very far behind – and really, why would they, since they were excommunicated and did not leave of their own accord. What we too easily overlook is that, all through the time of "Reformation," there were true believers who lived by God's Word and had never been a part of the Church of Rome; we often forget this, and naively think that true Christianity was preserved through the efforts of the Reformers. All through the dark ages of Rome's oppression, God had His people – and they were never part of the Catholic apostasy that dates back to the 4th-century AD. As the "Reformers" began to establish their followings, they did not stray far from the example of their mother church in the persecution of God's people who had never bowed to Rome. There are some today who will still recognize the Roman Catholic Church for the

Bill Bright


Richard Mouw

apostate religion that it is, but there is a rapidly increasing Evangelical acceptance of Roman Catholics as "brethren in Christ." Billy Graham, Chuck Colson, James Dobson, Philip Yancey, Bill Bright (of Campus Crusade for Christ), J.I. Packer (Regent College, BC), Richard Mouw (Fuller Theological Seminary), the Promise Keepers movement, and numerous other influential individuals and movements have all played a part in removing the barriers between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics. When Biblical separation was removed as an Evangelical conviction in the late 1940s (under the New Evangelicalism of Harold Ockenga), the doors swung wide open to error and compromise; subsequently, the allurement of unity has proven to be too great to resist. What New Evangelicals failed to acknowledge at the time, and what Evangelicals for the most part continue to ignore, is that setting separation aside strikes at the very heart of God. "Among all His infinite qualities, God's holiness is paramount. Among all other things, He must be known as perfectly separated from the world as we know it, separated unto perfection as we do not know it. He is and, must be seen by man to be, separate."[67] Habakkuk 1:13: "[God] Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity …." All of the attributes of God flow out of His holiness; when we ignore, or discount, Biblical separation, we show our ignorance of, and disdain for, God's requirement that we be holy as He is holy (1 Peter:15-16). Holiness demands separation!

Before God chose Abraham to be a father of a nation of people who were to be blessed and to be a blessing, there were those who, through faith in the Lord, were declared to be righteous (Abel, Enoch, and Noah are specifically identified in Hebrews 11). The pathway of righteousness can only be entered by faith, but the Jews (the descendants of promise through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) were chosen to receive the special revelations of God (the OT Scriptures) and to be the family line for the promised Redeemer. Because they were chosen by God for a special purpose, they eventually came to look with disdain on those who were *far*

[67] John McKnight, "The Holiness of God: The Root of Ecclesiastical Separation," 1998 ACCC.

off. Jesus came to fulfill the Scriptures and, with that fulfillment, He opened a way that is no longer centered around the ceremonial traditions to which the Jews had become accustomed. As we have already seen, the symbolism of the Mosaic laws and ordinances of the OT was fulfilled in Jesus; the foreshadowing contained therein was completed in Christ. However, part of what was given to Moses was the Law of God, the Ten Commandments, or the Decalogue, and it is important that we recognize that Jesus' fulfillment of the law and the prophets has in no way affected their commandment status. When tested by the lawyer of the Pharisees, Jesus identified two over-arching commands that perfectly summarize the Ten Commandments: love God with all of your being and your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:35-40) – the Law of Moses that Jesus did complete, fell under these commands. The faith of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, et al, was always exemplified in action; James 2:17 declares that "faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." John understood this very well: "this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments …" (1 John 5:3). Jesus said, "If ye love me, [you must] keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

That which separated the circumcision from the uncircumcision has been removed (*hath broken down the middle wall*) – and it is Christ Who did it! *Broken down* is from the Greek *luo*, which means loose, and is used figuratively to describe bringing something to an end, to do away with, or undo.[68] The barrier of separation (*middle wall*) was not simply breeched – it has been removed entirely. The implication of this is that it will not be erected again; it has

[68] Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

been removed, destroyed, done away with (Hebrews 8:13). The allusion is to the temple that had a wall to separate the court of the Gentiles from the area into which only the Jews were permitted to go – a wall that served to demonstrate the holiness of God to everyone. Furthermore, as the Gentiles were excluded from casual entrance into the temple area, so the Jews could not enter the holy place (it was limited to the priests), nor could all of the priests enter into the Holy of Holies (it was restricted to the High Priest). However, rather than it being recognized as an indication of God's holiness, the wall of separation became a barrier and a means of excluding the Gentiles. In Jesus, the barriers have been removed – but that does not mean that everyone can simply walk into the presence of Jehovah and be accepted; God is still holy, and He is still just. We can only come to Him in the manner that He has prescribed (Cain is the first example that affirms this truth, Genesis 4:4-5). Unless we come to God through Christ, our great High Priest after the order of Melchisadec, recognizing the sacrifice that He made for our sins, God will not find us acceptable. Both Jews and Gentiles now have the same access to God: Christ is our Mediator. The Jews' salvation is found in the same Savior, Messiah Jesus – the One Who was foreshadowed in the OT Scriptures, Who came, and thereby, the wall of separation has been removed so that both Jews and Gentiles now share the same hope and the same faith.

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;*

The enmity, or hostility, that existed between the Jews and the Gentiles was *abolished*, or replaced, through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. What was *abolished*? The *law of commandments* in the Jewish *ordinances* (the Greek word is *dogma* – "the rules and requirements of the law of Moses; carrying a suggestion of severity and of threatened judgment"[69]). *Abolished* (*katargeo*) means to render idle or useless, a non-physical

[69] Strong's Online.

destruction accomplished by replacement – i.e., the superior replacing the inferior (Hebrews 9:11-12).[70] The things that set the Jews apart before all of the other people on earth (namely, their numerous rituals and teachings that governed the details of their everyday lives) were fulfilled in Christ and replaced by the New Covenant in His blood (Luke 22:20). The ceremonial rites and temple practices of the Jews were ended; that which had become their identity and to which they had clung for generations, was no more. Jesus *abolished* these by fulfilling them and establishing something *new*; all that they alluded to was completed in Him through His death and resurrection. "[8] … when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings [*to take away*] sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure *therein* [a quote from Psalm 40:6]; which are offered by the law; [9] then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He **taketh away the first** [the sacrificial system]**,** [in order] **that he ~~may~~** [*will*] **establish the second** [thereby accomplishing the will of God]. [10] By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*" (Hebrews 10:8-10).[71] Jesus fulfilled and ended the activities of the priests under the Law of Moses; He is now our "high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 6:20; 7:11-19). There is no place for any further sacrifice because Christ offered Himself once, as the perfect Sacrifice, and "entered once into the holy place, having obtained **eternal** redemption *for us*" (Hebrews 9:12). The Jewish High Priest, according to the dictates of the Mosaic Law, would enter into the Holy of Holies (the presence of God) once every year to make atonement for his sins and the sins of the people (Hebrews 9:7). As our High Priest, Christ entered once into the very presence of God in heaven (Hebrews 9:24), destroyed the veil in the earthly temple as a sign that a new access was made into the presence of God (Mark 15:38), and forever completed the sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 10:12).

The Catholics miss this significant point of doctrine, and in their masses they sacrifice Jesus over and over again – idolatrously worshipping the consecrated wafer as Christ. When a Catholic says that

[70] Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.
[71] Friberg Lexicon; https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

he has received Jesus, he means that he has eaten the wafer during the mass, which he believes has become the very body of Christ through the incantations of the priest.

After Mt. Sinai, the Law is generally divided into three broad categories, with the first two belonging to the Law of Moses: 1) those pertaining to worship, or the ceremonial laws (our actions toward God [Exodus 25-40; Leviticus 1-10, 16, 23]), 2) those that govern daily living, or judicial laws (our actions toward others [Exodus 21-24; Leviticus 10-22]), and 3) those that laid out the standard upon which the ceremonial and judicial laws were based: the spiritual or moral laws – the Ten Commandments (the Law of God, or the Decalogue) (Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21).[72] Jesus made it clear, early in His ministry, that His purpose was to fulfill the law: "[17] Think not that I am come to destroy [a compound word which, in the Greek, means to *destroy utterly* or to *overthrow completely*[73]] the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil [to *complete, to carry through to the end*, or *bring to realization*[74]]. [18] For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:17-18). The fulfillment of the law was guaranteed by Jesus' words, and was accomplished throughout His life: the law was kept perfectly in spirit and holiness, not just in letter. That middle wall of separation between the Jews and the Gentiles was none other than the ceremonial and judicial laws – the Law of Moses, which Jesus fulfilled completely and removed.

In the Jewish temple, there was a court of the Gentiles beyond which only the Jews could go. In Jesus' day, this court surrounded the temple proper and its inner courts, which were enclosed by a stone wall that contained "inscriptions in Greek and Latin forbidding non-Jews from entering on the pain of death."[75] This was a physical wall of separation; Jesus fulfilled the foreshadowing of the Law of Moses completely and forever, and so the reason for this wall of separation is gone. This part of

[72] "The Mosaic Law Fulfilled," http://biblia.com/jesusbible/leviticus4.htm
[73] Vine's "destroy."
[74] Strong's Online.
[75] Merril C. Tenny, ed., The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, "temple," p. 835.

the law (the ceremonial part of the Law of Moses) has been *abolished* because Jesus brought in a *New Covenant* (Luke 22:20) – it was removed by replacement! What about the other aspects of the law?

The judicial or social laws of Israel were applicable to Israel individually and as a nation; they were there to provide the judges and rulers of Israel with a standard by which they were to govern the Jewish people. When Israel ceased to exist as an independent nation under God, they became subject to the laws of whatever nation ruled over them. At the time of Jesus' trial, the Jews recognized that they were not permitted to put anyone to death, even if their laws might require such; they were forced to defer to the laws of the governing nation, Rome (John 18:31). Jesus nowhere advocated that they rebel against the laws of the Romans, which was one of the areas that the Jews tried to get Jesus to condemn Himself (Matthew 22:16-22). The principle that Jesus taught was this: "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain" (Matthew 5:41). The context for this charge is this: in order to expedite the quick transmission of the Roman ruler's messages, Rome developed a system of posts along major highways, and the messages were taken from one post to the next. It was the custom that the personnel at these "post offices" could compel anyone or anything into service along the way, and they frequently forced fellow travelers to carry their load for them – customarily for a distance of a thousand paces (roughly a mile). The Jews of the day chafed under this requirement, but Jesus said to submit to this, and beyond that, to volunteer to carry the load a second mile. Peter confirms this: "13. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; 14. or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. 15. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: 16. as free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God" (1 Peter 2:13-16). We are to submit ourselves to the laws of the country in which we live, with the understanding that our first responsibility must always be to God, and not to man (Acts 5:29). The judicial laws were uniquely for Israel and, along with the ceremonial

laws, were put into place by God to underscore His holiness and His desire for Israel to be a holy people. Together, these laws form what I, for the sake of clarity, like to call the Law of Moses.

So how does the moral law, or the Ten Commandments, fit into this? Is it a part of what the Lord *abolished* through His death and resurrection, as many would have us believe? Consider for a moment how Moses received the various laws (the ceremonial, judicial and moral). The Scriptures indicate that the Law of Moses (the ceremonial and judicial laws) came through the hands of angels (Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 2:2-3), but what do we read of the Ten Commandments? "And he [Jehovah] gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, **tables of stone, written with the finger of God**" (Exodus 31:18). There is a significant difference in the preparation of the moral law (the Ten Commandments) – they were written by the Lord upon stone! There is a definite permanency to what God has written, unlike the ceremonial and judicial laws that would find their fulfillment and end in the Promised One. Therefore, when we read "the law" in the Scriptures, we must be very careful to understand what is being referenced: the Law of Moses, the Law of God, or both. When we read that *Christ* is *the cessation of the law for righteousness to everyone who is believing* (Romans 10:4, literal),[76] we can readily understand from the context that this is a reference to the Law of Moses (the ceremonial and judicial laws), and not to the Law of God (the moral law, or the Ten Commandments). The Law of God remains in full force today; it was written by God Who does not change (Malachi 3:6), and upon age-enduring stone (Deuteronomy 4:13). *"So that, my brethren, ye also did become dead to the Law by the body of Christ* [through the Law comes the clarity of sin (Romans 3:20); through identification with Christ the *body of sin* is destroyed (Romans 6:6)]*; for you to belong to Another, Who was raised from the dead so that we do bear fruit unto God*" (Romans 7:4, literal).[77] To which Law did we *become dead*? Clearly, we *are dead* to the Mosaic Law because it was ended through the work of Christ; in essence,

[76] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.
[77] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

Christ made the Law of Moses dead to everyone. However, Paul says here that we have *become dead* to the Law by Christ – this is **not** the same thing as the Mosaic Law being rendered dead to us through Christ! "[5.] For if we have been planted [*united*] together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection … [8.] Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him … [11.] reckon [*regard*] ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive [*living*] unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:5, 8, 11).[78] When we are joined to Christ through faith in His finished work, we *become dead* to the Law; this can only refer to the Law of God because the Law of Moses has already been removed from the picture by Christ. Christ, the perfect Lamb, died in order to break the power of Satan (the spiritual *death* that separates us from the Lord) so that we can be freed from sin (Hebrews 2:14-15). Paul dealt with this quite thoroughly in his letter to the Romans: "[6.] But now we are delivered [*freed*] from the law, [*we did die to what held us fast*]; [*with a view to us serving*] in newness of spirit [through the abiding presence of the Spirit of God], and not in the oldness of [*what is written*]. [7.] What shall we say then? Is the law sin? [*Let it not be*]. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet [this is the tenth commandment in the Law of God] … [12.] Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good [because they come from a *holy*, *just* and *good* God] … [14.] For we know that the **law is spiritual**: but I am carnal [*fleshly*], [*one who has been sold under sin* (*hamartia*: that which separates us from God)] … [1.] *There is* therefore now **no condemnation** to them which are **in Christ Jesus**, who walk [*are living*] not after [*according to*] the flesh, but after [*according to*] the Spirit. [2.] For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. [3.] [*For what was impossible for the Law*], in that it was weak through the flesh [we cannot keep it at all], God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: [4.] [*in order that the commandment of the Law will be accomplished in us,*] who walk [*are living*] not after the flesh, but after the Spirit … [6.] For to be carnally

[78] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

minded [*the way of thinking of the flesh*] is death; but to be spiritually minded [*the way of thinking of the Spirit*] is life and peace. [7.] Because the carnal mind [*the way of thinking of the flesh*] is enmity against God: for it is **not subject [*obedient*] to the law of God**, neither indeed can be" (Romans 7:6-7, 12, 14; 8:1-4, 6-7; literal in italics within brackets).[79]

In the middle of the above, we read this: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2). Notice that there is a *Law of the Spirit of life in Christ* and a *Law of sin and death*. Paul is not writing about the time before Christ came, but is explaining our relationship to the Law of God – the Ten Commandments that were written by God's finger upon tables of stone (Exodus 31:18). When we are outside of Christ, the Law of God is to us a sentence of condemnation because we cannot keep it, particularly the first four commands that deal with our relationship with God: they expose our sinful nature, and the just recompense for sin is death (Romans 6:23) – within this context, the Law of God is certainly a *Law of sin and death*! However, when we are *in Christ* by faith, then the Spirit of God is abiding within us (Romans 8:9), His ten Laws have now been written on our minds and placed within our hearts (Hebrews 10:15-17), we are no longer under the *condemnation* of God's Law (Romans 8:1), and, through the working of the Spirit within us, we are able to live out the commands of the Lord – the *Law of the Spirit of life in Christ* (Romans 8:4)! Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15); this can only come through our identification with Him in His death and resurrection, and the free working of His Spirit within us.

The Law of God and the Law of Moses were both given for two reasons: 1) to confirm to man that he is unable to be righteous before a holy God ("I had not known sin, but by the law" – Romans 7:7), and 2) to point him to the necessity of faith in the promised Messiah (the Law as a schoolmaster – Galatians 3:24). The Law of Moses (particularly the ceremonial laws) not only foreshadowed the coming of the Promised One, but served to reveal the necessity of the children of Israel to have faith in

[79] Friberg Lexicon; Stephanus 1550 NT.

the promises of God, the same saving faith that was expressed by Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham before them (Hebrews 11:4ff). The Law of God also serves to show us the sin that permeates our lives so that we must turn to God in faith and accept the redemption that He made for our sins from before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). When we accept what Christ has done on our behalf and permit His righteousness to be ours, we are then clothing ourselves with the *new man* so that we no longer need to attempt to keep the commandments of the Law of God through our own efforts (Ephesians 4:24). The contrast is this: we are now living in obedience to His commands through the working of His Spirit within us (Romans 8:4).

Paul declares the law to be spiritual (Romans 7:14), and if we have been born-again by the Spirit of God through faith in the completed work of Christ, then we are no longer carnally minded but spiritually minded, because we are new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). We have been rescued from the condemnation of the Law of God, for "no man is justified by the law in the sight of God" (Galatians 3:11). "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29); if we are Christ's, then we are being saved by faith according to the promise, and not by works according to the law. "[20.] Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances … [22.] after the commandments and doctrines of men?" (Colossians 2:20, 22). This is the condemnation that Jesus heaped upon the scribes and Pharisees: they laid the commandments of God aside in favor of their own traditions; they followed the carnal, and ignored the spiritual (Mark 7:5-7). This is the same error as the Catholics, who have twisted God's Word to support their traditions; however, Evangelicals are equally prone to set the Word of God aside in favor of their own favored doctrines.

You might say that since we, who are in Christ, are dead to the Law of God, and Christ came to complete the Law of Moses, then we are free from all law! Indeed, we are made righteous in Christ apart from the law: "[21.] …the righteousness of God **without the law** is manifested, being witnessed [or testified to] by the law and the prophets; [22.] Even the

righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them *who are believing*…" (Romans 3:21-22, italics – literal).[80] We are made free from sin and from the penalty of the Law, but this is **not** a carnal freedom! "[16.] Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? [17.] … ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. [18.] Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of [*became enslaved to*] righteousness. … [22.] But now being made free from sin, and become servants to [*become enslaved to*] God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Romans 6:16, 17b-18, 22).[81] We are now free to be *slaves of righteousness* through the guidance of the Spirit of God – something that is **not** possible apart from being *in Christ*.

Each of the Ten Commandments (the Law of God) finds reiteration in the epistles with the exception of the fourth (*remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy*…), which does not find its origin in the Ten Commandments, but rather in the declaration of God as He completed creation (Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 20:11). Many see a great gulf between the grace of God and the Law of God – unfortunately, it is a chasm of their own making. Are we free from the law? Yes, we are freed from trying to fulfill the requirements of God's Law through our own efforts (the "carnal" trying to keep the "spiritual"), and freed to live in obedience to His commands (all ten of them) by His Spirit within us – i.e., we have been freed from the condemnation of His Law (Romans 8:1)! "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3); the Law of God is still pertinent, and must be obeyed in order to express our love for God and experience His approval. His commandment is: "[37.] Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart [*kardia* – seat of morality and spirituality], and with all thy soul [*psuche* – seat of will and purpose], and with all thy mind [*dianonia* – thinking through, reflection, meditation].[82] [38.] This is the first and great

[80] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.
[81] Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.
[82] Vine's "heart," "soul," "mind."

commandment [this summarizes the first four of the Ten Commandments]. [39.] And the second is like unto it [is just as great as the first[83]], Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself [this encapsulates the last six Commandments]. [40.] On these two commandments [Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18] hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40). Jesus did not come to do away with the Law of God or the prophets (Matthew 5:17) but to perfectly keep the Law so that we, through His Spirit, might have the righteousness of the Law of God fulfilled in us – i.e., our obedience and His holiness in us (Romans 8:4). The Ten Commandments (the Law of God) are as relevant today as they were the day that they were written by the finger of God: the first four Commandments guide our hearts toward God, and the last six, our hearts toward our fellow man. His Law is spiritual (Romans 7:14) and holy, and we must walk according to the Law of the Spirit Who now lives within us (Romans 8:2). "[1.] … let us run with patience [*hupomone*; *endurance*] the race that is set before us, [2.] looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith" (Hebrews 12:1-2);[84] our eyes must be fixed on Jesus, our Righteousness.

Returning to our text: *in Christ*, two separate peoples (*twain*) have been made into one: those who were *far off*, and those who were *nigh*; this was accomplished by the Mosaic Law (the *middle wall of partition*) being *abolished* by Christ. There is "[5.] one Lord, one faith, one hope, one baptism, [6.] one God and Father of all …" (Ephesians 4:5-6). *In Christ* there is unity, but this is not something that has been accomplished by man's efforts – it is realized **only** through the finished work of Christ on the cross and His resurrection. This unity comes by becoming new creatures in Christ; conversely, there can be no unity (as it is expressed here) between someone who is *in Christ* and someone who is *not in Him*. Hence, the unity sought after by Chuck Colson and Richard Neuhaus in the document *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*, is **not** the unity spoken of here; redefining terms to arrive at an accord of compromise is simply forsaking the Lord of unity for a god of pragmatism. Their goal was unity (an

[83] Friberg Lexicon.
[84] Strong's Online.

Ecumenical unity), and their preoccupation was with relationships on the physical level.[85] They may have arrived at a *unity* of sorts, but what they failed to realize is that it was no longer the unity that comes from being *in Christ* – this unity cannot be achieved through the efforts of men, whether professing Christians or not.

Through the unity that Christ works in us, we are not only brought into peace and harmony with the Jews who accept their Messiah (of *twain*, *one*), but we are brought into peace with God Himself. Although the direct context of this passage is clarifying that we are all one people *in Christ*, it is no less true that being *in Christ* brings us into fellowship with God, the Father. John declared this: "ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship[86] is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). This is the unity that Jesus spoke of in His prayer in John 17: "[20.] Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; [21.] that they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us …" (20-21) – true fellowship is found only *in Christ*.

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

Not only did Christ remove the wall of separation that was between Jew and Gentile, He also brought reconciliation with God for both (this continues the purpose that Christ had in removing that *middle wall*). With the work that Christ accomplished on the cross, He instituted a New Covenant in His blood (1 Corinthians 11:25); by fulfilling the requirements of the Law, Christ brought a new order in – He established the New Covenant (Hebrews 12:24a). The rituals and ceremonies of the Jews foreshadowed the day when the Messiah would come to put all

[85] Paul Procter, "The Test of Faith."

[86] The Greek word is *koinonia* – which speaks of community, intimacy, of one heart (Strong's Online). Today, fellowship has been reduced to having lunch with a friend, or something similar – a significant shift away from any intimacy at any level.

things in order; because that day has come, the Jews must no longer rely on their outward ceremonies to symbolize their inward faith in God (the *commandments in ordinances* have been *abolished*, as we just saw). Christ has accomplished forever what the ceremonies could only foreshadow; however, the Jews need to recognize Jesus as their Messiah, and place their faith in Him, even as Abraham believed God and was reckoned to be righteous. For the Jews, the way to God is now exactly the same as for the Gentiles – through Christ as our Mediator.

Through the cross, Christ is reconciling both believing Jews and Gentiles into one body. The Greek word for *reconcile* (*apokatallasso*) strictly means to transfer from one state to a very different state; within the context, this means that *in Christ* we are moved from being dead to God to being alive before Him![87] The *reconciling* that takes place is between God and man, not between Jew and Gentile. Although *reconcile* (and *make* in the previous verse) is in the subjunctive mood, it is part of a *purpose clause* that means that it is to be taken as a fact – Christ removed that *middle wall* with the full intention of making *one* out of two (verse 15), **and** reconciling this *one* unto God![88] These are factual presentations of God's purpose for removing the Law of Moses as that barrier between the Jew and Gentile; by removing the barrier, Christ brings life to those who by faith are a part of the one Body, the *ekklesia*. Jesus said, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold [*aule*; not of Israel]: them also I must bring [*lead*], and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold [*poimne*, ***flock*** (this is a significant translational error!)], *and* one shepherd" (John 10:16).[89] Through His death and resurrection, Jesus brought Jew and Gentile together into ***one flock*** – His Body, the *ekklesia*! The writer of Hebrews affirmed this: "[39.] And these all [those who were acclaimed for their faith and the numerous others who were not specifically mentioned], having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise [they died without seeing the fullfillment of God's promise]: [40.] God having provided some better thing for us, that

[87] Friberg Lexicon; Strong's Online.
[88] https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.
[89] Strong's Online.

they without us should not be made perfect [*complete*]" (Hebrews 11:39-40);[90] truly, there is only *one flock*, *one Body* and *one ekklesia* that will have all of the saints from all ages in it! The Old Testament saints placed their faith in God, looking forward to the day when a Deliverer would come into the world to fulfill the promise that God made to Satan in the Garden (Genesis 3:15); later, they looked for a Messiah Who would fulfill the foreshadowing contained within the ceremonial practices instituted by God through Moses. New Testament saints look back to the completed work of Christ as Savior and Messiah on their behalf, and forward to His promised return. Paul states clearly here that these (both the Old and New Testament saints) comprise one body through the cross of Christ; the cross was the means by which the unity of all of the faithful ones is accomplished. This unity is a fact, a reality – not a goal for which we are to strive.

Having slain the enmity thereby – this looks back to verse 15 where it is stated that Christ has *abolished* the *enmity* (identified as being the *ordinances* of the Law of Moses). We are reminded that this *enmity* has been done away with, *slain* (*apokteino*)![91] This was accomplished by Christ's death on the cross; what Satan had hoped would ensure his victory, became his defeat. Through His death as the perfect Lamb of God, Christ became our High Priest, after the order of Melchisadec, and the supreme Sacrifice that opened the way to God for all of mankind (albeit a narrow way!), and He fulfilled the promise of Genesis 3:15 by sealing the defeat of Satan. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus brought new life for all people (both the Jew and the Gentile), and secured Satan's defeat in fulfillment of the promise of God – the promise woven through the early Scriptures was the hope of the OT saints. A permanent Mediator was established through Whom the whole world could come to God (1 Timothy 2:5); yet this reconciliation will only take place when an individual places his faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ: "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and **few there be that find it**" (Matthew 7:14).

[90] Friberg Lexicon.
[91] Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

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

And He did come, proclaiming Good News: peace to you, to the far away and to the near (literal).[92] It is Christ Who came and brought peace with God to both those who were *afar off* (the Gentiles) and to those who were *nigh* (the Jews). When Jesus was born, the angels announced *on earth peace* (Luke 2:14) – and indeed Jesus did bring peace to the earth, but it is the peace of reconciliation with God through His sacrifice. Interestingly, the *peace* (*eirene*) spoken of carries the thought of *rest* and *harmony*, and, indeed, such is the case, for a peace has been secured that has seen a way opened to God for all of mankind, and we have seen the unity (*harmony*) that is *in Christ*.[93] Yet Jesus also said: "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace [*eirene*] on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division" (Luke12:51).[94] The peace that Christ mediated was a spiritual reconciling with God, and not an earthly peace. Even as this spiritual *peace* brings new fellowship with God (for those who place their faith in Christ), just as surely it will bring *division* here on earth. This was not the peace that the Jews of Jesus' time so desperately wanted; Jesus brought a peace with God when they really only wanted peace with their Roman overlords. Even so today, the call of Christ is for peace with God, and though we are to seek to live peaceably with all men (Romans 12:18), rest assured that the narrow way of life through Christ will bring division. As a matter of fact, if there is no division brought about by our walk with Christ, then we need to carefully examine our spiritual status lest we are deceiving ourselves (1 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Corinthians 13:5).

Even as the Israelites of old, through their rituals and ordinances, were to come to understand something of the holiness of God, so we must realize that God's call for holiness has not changed, and we are to reflect

[92] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.
[93] Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.
[94] Strong's Online.

His holiness through changed lives. "[14.] Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship [*metoche*, participation] hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion [*koinonia*, close relationship] hath light with darkness? [15.] And what concord [agreement] hath Christ with Belial [a name for Satan that means *worthless* or *wicked*]? or what part hath he that believeth [faithful] with an infidel [someone who is unfaithful]? [16.] And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. [17.] Wherefore come out from among them [involves forsaking], and be ye separate [set apart], saith the Lord, and touch not [not holding onto] the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, [18.] And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).[95] We are called to a life that is separate from the world and from all forms of ungodliness, and it is only through this *separation* that the Lord will *receive* us. The *holiness* to which God has called us means to be separated unto Him; by its very definition, *holiness* requires a *separation* from all that is unholy or *unclean*.[96] "[17.] Now I beseech [or exhort] you, brethren, mark [look at or keep your eye on] them which cause divisions [disunity between the *brethren* and God; NOT between brethren] and offences [an enticement to sin] contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid [to turn away, shun] them. [18.] For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by [deceptively] good words and fair speeches [flattery] deceive [completely] the hearts of the simple [unsuspecting]" (Romans 16:17-18).[97]

Chuck Swindoll

We are also called to separate from those who profess to be Christians, even while their message is not according to Scripture: the Roman

[95] Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.
[96] Friberg Lexicon.
[97] Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

Catholics, the Liberals, Robert Schuller, etc. Those within this group are many: men like Billy Graham, Chuck Colson, Ravi Zacharias, Chuck Swindoll, Rick Warren, Joel Osteen, et al.; these are men who might at times say things with which we can agree, but overall their message is filled with compromise and confusion – a dangerous mixture of a little truth and much error. These men, whose steps are wayward, have lost sight of the holiness of God and serve a god of pragmatism. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw [or remove] yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly [irresponsibly: idly, lazily], and not after the tradition [the substance of teaching[98]] which he received of us" (2 Thessalonians 3:6).[99] We are even to separate ourselves from those who may have been genuine believers in Christ, but whose walk is now careless and without the discipline that it takes to be a disciple of Christ (Luke 14:26-27); we must understand that unless they quickly repent before God, they are on the road to apostasy (Revelation 3:2-3). God is holy, and if we desire to walk in accordance with our calling to His holiness (Leviticus 20:7; 1 Peter 1:15-16), then we must be prepared to separate from everything that is not according to Scripture – whether the world, professors of Christianity who deny its doctrines by word or action, or believers who are careless about obedience to the Lord's commands. If there is no separation unto God, then there can be no holiness; the essence of Biblical separation is a desire to live a holy life before a holy God.

18. *For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.*

Here we can see the Trinity at work: Christ is our Mediator to God the Father, but the access that we have is through the Spirit of God. As we are grafted into the spiritual Root by faith (Romans 11), the Spirit of God, the Comforter promised by the Lord (John 14:26), indwells us so that we will

[98] Strong's Online.
[99] Friberg Lexicon.

no longer live to the flesh (Romans 8:8-9), but to the praise of the Father Who is saving us through the blood of Christ (Matthew 5:16). Indeed there is "[5.] One Lord, one faith, one baptism, [6.] One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:5-6); the way is narrow, and there is **only one way**! Billy Graham's error (one of them) was that he endeavored to broaden the way to include those who never knew Jesus, which is contrary to Scripture. Jesus said, "I am **the** way" (John 14:6), not **a** way, or one of many ways. The drafters of the *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* (ECT) document quote this passage from Ephesians 4 as well, but they have redefined the terms to such an extent that they are able to fit the apostate and the one who holds to doctrine contrary to Scripture, into their unity. Here is a quote from their document:

> However imperfect our communion with one another, however deep our disagreements with one another, we recognize that there is but one church of Christ. There is one church because there is one Christ and the church is his body. However difficult the way, we recognize that we are called by God to a fuller realization of our unity in the body of Christ. The only unity to which we would give expression is unity in the truth, and the truth is this: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all." (Ephesians 4) We [defined earlier as Evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics] affirm together that Christians are to teach and live in obedience to the divinely inspired Scriptures, which are the infallible Word of God.[100]

This *unity in the truth* (as they put it) leaves the oneness that we have in Christ unscathed, for theirs is a fabricated, negotiated unity that is outside of Christ, despite their rhetoric – they have redefined *truth* to the exclusion of Jesus Who is the Truth (John 14:6).

[100] http://www.leaderu.com/ftissues/ft9405/articles/mission.html

It is through Christ that both the Jew and the Gentile (those who were once *nigh* and *far off*) have access to God the Father by the Holy Spirit. The Jew and the Gentile stand on equal footing before the cross of Christ – our eternal destinies are sealed in exactly the same way. Herein is the cause of stumbling for the Jews (they must accept Jesus as their Messiah), and a source of foolishness to the Greeks (they must believe that Jesus rose from the dead). "[18.] For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved [*who are being saved*] it is the power of God … [23.] But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:18, 23, literal in italics).[101]

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

Referring back to verse 12 when there was a time that the Ephesian believers were strangers (*aliens*) and foreigners (*strangers*) without God, this is a restatement of verse 13 of those who were once *far off* but have now been brought *nigh* by the blood of Christ. Through the reconciling work of Christ (the *therefore*), those who were once considered to be outcasts by the Jews, are now on equal standing before God with those who are Israel in the flesh. The Greek word used for *strangers* here is the same as in verse 12, and simply refers to those who are *outside of* or *without a share in*.[102] The Greek word translated as *foreigners* is one that carries the idea of being a non-citizen – living in a country, but without the rights enjoyed by its citizens.[103] Because of what Christ has accomplished, and because we are being saved through the gift offered by God, we are no longer those who are on the outside looking in, nor living in the midst of those who know God, yet without access to Him.

[101] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.
[102] Strong's Online.
[103] Ibid.

In sharp contrast to being *foreigners* without the rights of citizens, we are now *fellowcitizens*, possessing the full rights of children of God! The former brings to mind loneliness and isolation, even in the midst of community; the latter speaks of participation within community, of being an active part of a larger group. The Ephesians were once foreigners to Israel and strangers to the covenant of promise that came through Abraham (Ephesians 2:12); now, however, by contrast, they have become part of this larger body of saints! Having *broken down* the middle wall, Jesus brings the believing Jew and believing Gentile into one body (Ephesians 2:14, 16). We must notice that those who have come to faith *in Christ* since the cross, **do not** form a new body distinct from the saints of the times before the cross, but rather, Christ is drawing all saints, from Adam onward, into one body. The Ephesian believers, who were first generation Christians after the cross, became fellow citizens with God's holy ones from OT times. Romans 9:6 declares that all who are born Israelites are not of Israel; that is to say, they may be Israelites in the flesh, but they are not of spiritual Israel. Romans 11 clarifies that by faith we are grafted into the spiritual Root of Israel (the Lord Jesus Christ); Jesus was born of the tribe of Judah and came to fulfill the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – promises that later found their expression in the laws instituted through Moses. Christians today are **not** a new body, something unique and separate from spiritual Israel, but we are *fellow citizens*, members of the family of God, which began with the faithful from the days of Adam.

Fellowcitizens ("a citizen of the same state or nation"[104]) are not simply the fellow-believers of today (although they are certainly included), but this first generation of believers (first after the completed work of Christ) is included in the existing citizenship of the holy ones (*saints*) of God from all ages. If this were not the case, why would the Spirit of God, through Paul, go to such lengths to identify the wall of separation that existed before Christ's work, and show that as being in contrast to the present situation? If the saints since the cross became a whole new body of believers, distinct from the OT saints, why paint the picture of the

[104] Webster's 1828, "fellowcitizens."

Ephesian believers as having been foreign to Israel's covenants, but now being made fellow-participants with spiritual Israel through Christ? If the believers after Christ's coming formed a completely new body, why confuse the matter with the emphasis of being made into one body (Ephesians 2:16)? The plain reading of this passage supports one body of believers from all ages. Before we leave this, let's consider a couple of other Biblical evidences for this position. Jesus explained the matter very clearly in John 10:16 – "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold [*aule*; a reference to Israel]: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one ~~fold~~ [*poimne*: *flock*, **not** *fold*], *and* one shepherd."[105] As we come to the end of the "faith chapter" of Hebrews, we read this: "[39.] And these all [a reference to the OT saints described in this chapter], having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: [40.] God having provided some better thing for us, that *apart from us they will not be made complete*" (Hebrews 11:39-40, literal in italics);[106] in other words, the OT saints are **not** *complete* without the Lord's saints since the cross! Truly, there is only **one** Body of Christ!

The Greek word used for *saints* (*hagios*) is actually an adjective that is frequently used as a noun, and describes those with whom we are now *fellowcitizens* – the *holy* ones.[107] No longer *strangers*, now we are *holy* citizens of the kingdom of God! However, this is not of our doing (so we have no basis for being high-minded [Ephesians 2:9]); as His purchased ones, this is the state to which God has called us. There are no *saints* apart from God; man may designate "saints" to his heart's content (something that has become a Roman Catholic tradition), but they are not *saints* unless their lives have been made pure and holy by God. If we have been sanctified by God (made holy by being *in Christ*), then we have been set apart, called out from the world and from sin, and brought into a life of holiness and purity before Him. God's dealings with Israel, through the implementation of the laws and commandments (the Mosaic Law), underscored the holiness of God, and the purity of life that He desired of

[105] Strong's Online.
[106] Strong's Online; Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.
[107] Strong's Online.

them. Even though these laws and commandments found their fulfillment (and end) in Christ, the holiness of God has not changed from Isaiah's description of the heavenly exclamations: "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3). God has not changed, but we are often careless in handling the holy things of God; Evangelicals have bred an attitude of familiarity that often borders on blasphemy – something from which we must separate ourselves if we would be holy before God. The essence, or foundation, of Biblical separation is the holiness of God. Scripture calls us to separate from the world (2 Corinthians 6:14-18), from professors of Christianity who deny Biblical doctrine or promote doctrine not found in the Scriptures (Romans 16:17-18), and from those who seem to be believers but are too lazy to be faithful to God's Word (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

Not only are we citizens together with the saints from all ages, but we are also part of the household of God – i.e., sons and daughters of God! The Greek word for *household* is also an adjective, and develops a further description of the term *fellowcitizens*: *belonging to the family*.[108] The conjunction *and*, as it appears in our text, is from a Greek word that can be translated in various ways: sometimes simply as a connecting word (*and*), or it can be a conjunction that carries an accumulating impact (such as *even*). It would seem to me that this would be an ideal opportunity to bring the cumulative emphasis in, and have it read: "… *but fellowcitizens with the holy ones, even belonging to the family of God*."[109] *Fellowcitizens* is a term that conjures up a rather remote relationship with other believers (since we would naturally think of this within the earthly context); however, the Spirit of God removes any such picture by immediately describing it as a family – God's family! This is the only place in Scripture where this phrase (*household of God*) is used (Galatians 6:10 speaks of the *household of faith*).

I believe that this relationship is unique to the New Covenant that Jesus instituted; we have received the Spirit of adoption that brings us into a completely new relationship with God (Romans 8:15). This is quite

[108] Strong's Online.
[109] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.

understandable, for the saints of Old Testament times looked forward to a time when the promised Messiah would come; the promises and Mosaic Law all foreshadowed the coming Deliverer. However, when the Messiah came, it would only seem right that the relationship with God would change – the promises were fulfilled, and the ceremonies and rituals saw their end: Messiah was on hand, and nothing could remain as it was! The writer of Hebrews explained this: "For the priesthood being changed [from the Levitical priesthood as described in the Law of Moses to Jesus, Who came from the tribe of Judah], there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Hebrews 7:12). Under the Mosaic Law, the priests filled a central role in the atonement for sin, and, with the significant change from earthly priests to a heavenly, eternal Priest and Sacrifice, it is only reasonable that God's Covenant with humanity would also change. Now that Jesus has returned to Heaven to prepare a place for those who abide in Him and has sent His Spirit to abide in us, the relationship cannot return to what it was; it is fitting that the presence of the Spirit of God makes all things new and different. Whereas the OT saints lived by faith in the promises of God and in the animal-blood sacrifices, with Jerusalem being their center for the worship of Jehovah, we are now indwelt by the very Spirit of God (John 15:26; Romans 8:9). We are not unique in God's economy, but **we** are now His temples (1 Corinthians 3:16), and so our earthly lives are much different from the faithful of the OT. Worship is no longer centered in the temple of Jerusalem, which was also the hub for all of the ceremonial traditions; we, as faithful believers, have the Spirit of God dwelling within us; we are God's temples (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) – sanctified and holy in Him! Indeed, through faith in Christ, we have been brought into a completely new relationship with God – 2 Corinthians 5:17: "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new!"

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

Although there were prophets within the New Testament (NT) gatherings (Acts 11:27; 13:1), it is my belief that, in this case, the Spirit would have us look to the OT prophets. I have two reasons for taking this position: firstly, the context of this passage deals with God removing the wall of separation between the Jews and Gentiles and, by way of Christ's sacrifice, making one Body in Him. Therefore, it is fitting to refer to the two roles filled by those who brought God's Message to the people with power and conviction: the OT Prophets and the NT Apostles. Secondly, the OT Prophets were more comparable to the NT Apostles in their authority and power in proclaiming God's truth. The prophets of the NT did not carry such authority (unless they were also Apostles), but were subject to the careful scrutiny of others, and their messages could be interrupted (1 Corinthians 14:29-32). Although there was a place for prophets in the NT (1 Corinthians 12:28 makes that clear), it is not comparable in authority to the OT Prophets. Likewise, Peter draws a distinction between the words that came *before by the holy prophets* and those from *us the apostles of the Lord*, and yet he brings them together for our *remembrance* (2 Peter 3:1-2).

Once again, there is a clear drawing together of those from the time prior to Jesus' coming with those after the institution of His New Covenant. The foundation upon which we are built is the message of the Apostles (those specially chosen to proclaim the Gospel after Jesus' ascension) and the message of the Prophets (those Old Testament saints specifically chosen to declare the truth of God and speak of the coming Messiah). It is one foundation secured in the *Chief Corner*! Jesus declared that He would build His assembly upon the reality of Peter's declaration that He was the Messiah, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16-18). The sense here is not that the Apostles and Prophets are the foundation, but rather that they proclaimed the foundation: it was their instruction and their doctrine that forms the foundation. Even as we understand that Peter (the man) was not the foundation upon which Christ would build His body of believers, so it follows here that the foundation is not made up of the Apostles and Prophets (the men), but rather the truth that they declared. The Roman Catholic Church is a prime example of what happens when

the building is founded upon men; they have built upon the "successors" of Peter (the man), and have greatly deviated from the truth.

Once again we see the truth of the declaration in Romans 11 of being grafted into the Lord Jesus (the Root); there is a coming together, a breaking down of the middle wall between the true Israelite and the born-again Gentile – we are one *in Christ*! Together, the Apostles (of the NT) and Prophets (of the OT) have declared the truths of God that form the foundation upon which the assembly of God, from all ages, is being built. God did not start over with "the Church," but rather continued to build what He had ordained from the foundation of the world; the Prophets of old are as much responsible for the foundation as are the Apostles – there is no distinction; the message is the same: the Promised One, Christ! Most Evangelicals and Fundamentalists contend that the "Church" began at Pentecost, after the Jews had rejected Jesus as their Messiah; however, the message of this section is that we are all one – the saints of God, from all ages, are all one Body with Jesus as the Head (Ephesians 5:23), He is the Shepherd of one Flock (John 10:16)!

The voice of the Greek word translated as *built* (passive), clarifies that we are not doing the building. Jesus promised that the Spirit of God would come to abide within us to guide us into all truth (John 16:13); we are being built by the Spirit upon the doctrines and instruction of those chosen by God to be Apostles and Prophets. Clearly, God's hand is in what is being done: both, the Apostles and Prophets, were chosen by God, the message that they declared came from God, and the continual building upon that message is the work of God. Carelessness and self-projects will find no fit here; they will have no part in the work that is being done. Much of Evangelicalism is not being built upon the foundation that God has established; Evangelicals are expending energy on a building that will not stand. What greater challenge could there be than to attend to our doctrine in order to ensure that it lines up with the doctrinal foundation that was established by God through the Apostles and Prophets as declared in the pages of Scripture? "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them [a command to *persevere* in them, to *abide* in them]: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear

thee" (1 Timothy 4:16).[110] We must recognize that there is no salvation in a message that has departed from the teachings of Scripture.

"… narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life …" (Matthew 7:14). God's way is exclusive, it is narrow, and Jesus explained that by declaring: "**I am the way** …" (John 14:6). Yet man continually attempts to broaden *the Way* in an attempt to make it more accommodating for those who do not like the narrow way. The Evangelical Free Church (EFC), for example, prides itself in being "inclusive not exclusive," explaining that they are "intentionally leaving out non-essential issues that have been debated throughout Christian history."[111] As they read the Scriptures, they decide what is essential and what is not, which really places them in a position of judging the Word of God. They have deliberately not taken a stand on such things as predestination, eternal security, baptism, and separation (they have openly admitted to the first three – I've added the fourth based upon their actions). In essence, they would rather set the Word of God aside than to take a position on a matter of Scripture that might be debated by men. What the EFC has proclaimed openly and proudly, I am sure that many other Evangelicals hold to as well.

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We now come to the answer as to how the doctrine of the Apostles and Prophets can form the foundation upon which we are being built: Jesus Christ is the *chief corner* stone. In ancient architecture, this stone was critical to the stability of the whole building; if the corner stone was secure and well founded, then the rest of the edifice was in good standing. Additionally, if there were any important documents that needed to be secured within the building, they were placed into the corner stone. This was also a critical stone that saw the joining of two walls (hence it being a *corner* stone), and would be the first stone laid down. Jesus Christ, the eternal Word made flesh, is likened to being the *chief corner*,

[110] Strong's Online.
[111] Bill Taylor, "The EFC …," "The Pulse," Fall 2001, p. 2.

established securely before the foundation of the Prophets was ever added (Isaiah 28:16; 1 Peter 1:20; 1 Peter 2:5-8). Jesus said, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last" (Revelation 1:11); He is eternal God, the *Corner* established before the world began. The earliest Prophet built upon the foundation of the promised Messiah; the hope was alive from the very first child born to Adam and Eve: *Cain*, "I have gotten a man from the Lord" (Genesis 4:1). The purposes of God are sure; they have been established from before the foundation of the world: the Word (Jesus), Who is God, has been laid as the *chief corner*: the security and pattern for all who would follow. God is building one structure whose stability and strength rests in Jesus alone; the foundation laid by the Message of the Prophets of old and the Apostles of the New Covenant is one. God's plan is not something new; it was there before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). Jesus said, "I will build my church," My *ekklesia*, My called-out ones (Matthew 16:18); here we see the foundation upon which we are being built: Christ, the Son of the living God, Who is the chief Cornerstone, the Rock Who holds the foundation solidly together!

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

Here we have a double confirmation as to Who is responsible for what we are reading about: *in whom* (referring back to Jesus Christ), and *in the Lord* (emphasizing in Whom we are abiding). What fitting parenthesis for what lies in between!

The *building* (*oikodome*) referred to within this context is not a physical structure, but the *ekklesia* that Christ is building upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets; elsewhere, this Greek word is used figuratively as meaning to *edify*, or *to build up*.[112] The *all* is more than simply *everything* – it carries the thought of every little piece; there is a careful

[112] Strong's Online; Bauer Greek-English Lexicon.

individuality (an attention to the smallest detail) to this *building*. *Fitly framed together* is from a single Greek word that means *to join closely together*: there are no gaps, no holes, only a perfectly fitting structure.[113] In Christ, every individual is being perfectly joined together according to His established pattern.

All of this is growing, or increasing, toward a *holy place* – a *temple in the Lord*; the Greek word used here for *holy* (*hagios*) is exactly the same word that is used to describe the OT *saints* (*hagios*) to whom those who are now *in Christ* are joined (Ephesians 2:19). *Temple* (*naos*) comes from a Greek root that means *to dwell*, and, therefore, we can think of this as being *the dwelling place of God*.[114] *Temple*, as it is used here, is in the singular; those who are *in Christ* (including the OT saints) are being made into *one temple*. Again, we see that there is a unity of saints from all ages in *holiness in Christ*!

Let's look into this a little more thoroughly, just to ensure that we understand it fully. When John saw the glorious New Jerusalem, he wrote: "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle [*skene*] of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God" (Revelation 21:3).[115] *Skene* (*tabernacle*) is generally applied to a temporary dwelling place, very frequently a tent.[116] However, at the same time, we recognize that God *dwelt* in the midst of Israel from the construction of the first portable tabernacle in the wilderness until Jesus paid the price for sins upon the cross (except during their time in exile) – His dwelling place remained (with Solomon, it went from a tabernacle to a temple) until His purposes changed it. In the New Heaven and Earth, God's purpose will be to *dwell* among His people, somewhat like those early days when He was in the midst of Israel. Beyond the general, temporary dwelling, we see *skene* (*tabernacle*) used in reference to the Holy Place (Hebrews 9:2) and to the Holy of Holies (Hebrews 9:3) – each identified as bearing the presence of Jehovah, although to varying

[113] Strong's Online.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Friberg Lexicon.

degrees. When Moses had constructed the tabernacle, Jehovah declared that He would commune with him from above the mercy seat and between the two cherubim (Exodus 25:22), and so the presence of Jehovah was said to rest between the two cherubim in the Holy of Holies (within the tabernacle and later within the temple); in the New Jerusalem, it is proclaimed to John that the presence of Jehovah will be *with men* – He will be *dwelling* among them for they are His redeemed ones. A little later, John makes this observation: "And I saw no temple [*naos*] therein [referring to the New Jerusalem]: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple [*naos*] of it" (Revelation 21:22).[117] *Naos*, almost always translated as *temple*, speaks of the dwelling place of a divine being (it is not restricted to the Lord in its use);[118] its application within the Biblical context is specifically to the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies – never including the courts that surrounded the temple structure. With this in mind, it is understandable that there is no temple (*naos*) in the New Jerusalem because God the Father and the Lamb are there – the structures are no longer needed to protect the people from the glory of God! We will have been purged of all sin, and we shall see the face of God and live (Revelation 22:4; cp. Exodus 33:20).

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul explained: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple [*naos*] of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:19).[119] Within the context of our study, this is significant because it identifies our bodies as being the dwelling place of the Lord – like unto the Holy of Holies within the tabernacle and temple. This serves to underscore the fact that the traditions of the Mosaic Law have been replaced by the New Covenant in Christ, and explains why the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom when Jesus died (Matthew 27:50-51). Through faith in Christ, our bodies become the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit – comparable to the Holy of Holies within the tabernacle.

[117] Strong's Online.
[118] Friberg Lexicon.
[119] Strong's Online.

There is one other Greek word that is used as it relates to the temple: *hieron*, which includes everything that pertained to the temple.[120] This word was used when Jesus' disciples called His attention to the amazing temple structure, and which Jesus declared would be destroyed so that not one stone would remain upon another (Matthew 24:1-2). However, it does not impact Paul's instruction here.

Returning to our text, we must remind ourselves of Jesus' words: "… I will build my church …" (Matthew 16:18). This *temple* is being assembled (*fitly framed together*) by the Lord – He is the *Chief Corner*, and everyone who comes to Him in faith is added, in keeping with His eternal pattern (the foundation of the Message of the OT Prophets and NT Apostles). There is no guess-work on the Lord's part; when we place our faith in Him, we become a *new creation* made specifically for His *holy temple* (2 Corinthians 5:17). Individually, we are the *temples* of the Lord; all together, we will make **one** *holy temple in the Lord*.

The importance of being **in Christ** must not be missed or minimized; however, Jesus also made it clear that the responsibility to continue abiding in Him rests with us – we are **commanded** to abide in Him; it is something that **we** are to do (John 15). Jesus' words in John 15:4 are: "*You must* abide in me"; this is a command (*abide* is in the imperative mood) on which we are to take action (active voice where the subject *you* is to carry out the action of *abiding*). Further, we must not misunderstand this to be a one-time, past action; *abide* is in the aorist tense, which simply identifies this as a reality without regard to time (it must always be). Likewise, Jesus also said that *the one who endures unto the end, this one will be saved* (Matthew 24:13, literal);[121] *endures* (*hupomeno*) also bears the aorist tense, and it means to remain faithful even through trials.[122] John explains what faithfulness includes: "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep [*are keeping*] his commandments" (1 John 2:3).[123] We've just seen that one of His commands is that we are to abide in Him; but we are not alone in our obedience, for He has promised that He will

[120] Vine's, "temple."
[121] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.
[122] Strong's Online.
[123] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.

also abide in us (John 15:1) – this in no way minimizes our responsibility of remaining in Him, but it serves to secure the relationship, for it could never be secured through our own efforts. If we seek to obey His command to abide in Him, then He is abundantly able to keep us, and promises that nothing external to us will ever be able to snatch us out of His hand (Romans 8:35-39). If we do not remain in Him, then His Word will be to us like the seed that fell along the path, or among the rocks, or in the weeds – being snatched away, dried up, or choked out. If we are obedient and abide in Him, then His promise is to abide in us: the perfect situation to being a part of this holy dwelling of the Lord – a dwelling made up of saints from all of the ages!

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

Here is another parenthesis: *in whom* (in Christ) … *through the Spirit*. Lest there be any doubt as to the Ephesian believers being included in this marvelous building program of God, Paul clarifies that they, too, are being built on this very same foundation. God's working with mankind was not interrupted by the cross of Christ, rather, it was gloriously advanced at the cross! There are those who would have us believe that the cross of Christ caused an interruption in God's program of dealing with mankind (i.e., those who hold to dispensational teachings), that the believers since the resurrection of the Lord are somehow unique in God's overall program. It is plain from this passage that the Ephesian believers were assured that they, too, were being built upon the foundation that was established by the Prophets and Apostles – that foundation that was laid before the world began (Revelation 13:8). They, too, are being fitly joined together with the saints of all of the ages to form an eternal dwelling for God, accomplished in Christ, the *Chief Corner*, by the working of the Spirit of God! The Spirit of God has been at work throughout all of time: before the flood, God said that His Spirit would not always strive with man

(Genesis 6:3), and Peter assures us that Prophets of old spoke according to the prompting of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21).

What an amazing sentence! We are no longer outsiders, but are holy fellow-citizens with all of those who are **in Christ** (the *chosen*, Ephesians 1:4), even to becoming adopted members of the family of God. We are those who are being carefully joined together upon the foundation that was laid by the Prophets and Apostles, Jesus Christ being the eternally established Chief Corner, the surety and pattern for this holy dwelling for God. Truly, this could only be ***in Christ*** and ***through the Spirit* of God**! The culmination will come in the New Heaven and Earth where God will *dwell* forever among His people – those who have been redeemed from sin through the blood of Christ **and** who have lived faithfully for Him to the end of their days (Revelation 21:3; Matthew 24:13)!