

# E P H E S I A N S

## Week Three: Ephesians 2:1-22 Study Guide for the week of June 20, 2021

**Study Ephesians 2:1-10, "Made Alive In Christ."** Some questions to answer and discuss:

1. When have you shown mercy to a person who deserved to be punished?
2. What three characteristics mark the condition of a person without Christ? ([2:2-3](#))
3. Why did God make those who were dead, alive with Christ? ([2:4-5](#))
4. Why can no one boast in his own salvation? ([2:8-9](#))
5. Why was your position hopeless before becoming a Christian?
6. How do you see God's creative workmanship operating in your life?
7. With whom can you share the news of God's mercy? How?

### Life Application Bible Notes

[2:1, 2](#) Immediately after his prayer, Paul reminds the Ephesians of the reality of personal sin. Like them, we must never forget our past, the condition from which Jesus saved us. Those memories are the best fuel for our gratitude to Christ for all he has done in our behalf.

[2:2](#) Paul describes Satan, the devil, as "the commander of the powers in the unseen world." Paul's readers believed that Satan and the evil spiritual forces inhabited the region between earth and sky. Satan is thus pictured as ruling an evil spiritual kingdom—the demons and those who are against Christ. In the resurrection, Christ was victorious over the devil and his power. Therefore, Jesus Christ is the permanent ruler of the whole world; the devil is only the temporary ruler of the part of the world that chooses to follow him.

[2:3](#) The fact that all people, without exception, commit sin proves that without Christ we have a sinful nature. We are lost in sin and cannot save ourselves. Does this mean only Christians do good? Of course not—many people do good to others. On a relative scale, many are moral, kind, and law abiding. Comparing these people to criminals, we would say that they are very good indeed. But on God's absolute scale, *no one* is good enough to earn salvation ("dead because of your disobedience and your many sins," [2:1](#)). Only through being united with Christ's perfect life can we become good in God's sight. "Subject to God's anger" refers to those who are to receive God's wrath because of their rejection of Christ.

[2:4](#) We were dead in our sins, *but God...* We were rebels against him, *but God...* We were enslaved by the devil and our sinful natures, *but God...* These may be the two most welcome words in all of Scripture: "but God." God could have left us spiritually dead, in rebellion against him and in bondage to our sins. *But he didn't.* He did not save us because of, but rather in spite of, what he saw in us. In addition to thanking him for what he has done for us, we should also

show humble patience and tolerance for others who seem unworthy or undeserving of our love and compassion. They may be spiritually dull, rebellious, and even antagonistic toward God. So were we; *but God loved us anyway*. Can we do less for fellow sinners?

[2:4, 5](#) In the previous verses Paul wrote about our old sinful nature ([2:1-3](#)). Here Paul emphasizes that we do not need to live any longer under sin's power. The penalty of sin and its power over us were miraculously destroyed by Christ on the cross. Through faith in Christ we stand acquitted, or not guilty, before God ([Romans 3:21, 22](#)). God does not take us out of the world or make us robots—we will still feel like sinning, and sometimes we will sin. The difference is that before we became Christians, we were dead in sin and were slaves to our sinful nature. But now we are alive with Christ (see also [Galatians 2:20](#)).

[2:6](#) Because of Christ's resurrection, we know that our body will also be raised from the dead ([1 Corinthians 15:2-23](#)) and that we have been given the power to live as Christians now ([1:19](#)). These ideas are combined in Paul's image of sitting with Christ in "the heavenly realms" (see the note on [1:3](#)). Our eternal life with Christ is certain because we are united in his powerful victory.

[2:8, 9](#) When someone gives you a gift, do you say, "That's very nice—now how much do I owe you?" No, the appropriate response to a gift is "Thank you." Yet how often Christians, even after they have been given the gift of salvation, feel obligated to try to work their way to God. Because our salvation and even our faith are gifts, we should respond with gratitude, praise, and joy.

[2:8-10](#) We become Christians through God's unmerited favor, not as the result of any effort, ability, intelligent choice, or act of service on our part. However, out of gratitude for this free gift, we will seek to help and serve others with kindness, love, and gentleness, and not merely to please ourselves. While no action or work we do can help us obtain salvation, God's intention is that our salvation will result in acts of service. We are not saved merely for our own benefit but to serve Christ and build up the church ([4:12](#)).

[2:10](#) We are God's masterpiece (work of art, workmanship). Our salvation is something only God can do. It is his powerful, creative work in us. If God considers us his masterpieces, we dare not treat ourselves or others with disrespect or as inferior work.

**Study Ephesians 2:11-22, "One In Christ."** Some questions to answer and discuss:

1. What people have you known whose upbringing and family connections provided them with certain advantages?
2. How did Christ's work on the cross transform the condition of the Gentiles? ([2:13](#))
3. In Christ, how did the Gentiles achieve new spiritual and social status? ([2:19](#))
4. How were the Ephesians becoming part of God's dwelling? ([2:22](#))
5. How does the gospel break down religious and social barriers?
6. How does your church treat foreigners and aliens?
7. How can you show God's love to an "outsider" this week?

## Life Application Bible Notes

[2:11-13](#) Pious Jews considered all non-Jews (Gentiles) ceremonially unclean. They thought of themselves as pure and clean because of their national heritage and religious ceremonies. Paul pointed out that Jews and Gentiles alike were unclean before God and needed to be cleansed by Christ. In order to realize how great a gift salvation is, we need to remember our former natural, unclean condition. Have you ever felt separate, excluded, hopeless? These verses are for you. No one is alienated from Christ's love or from the body of believers.

[2:11-13](#) Jews and Gentiles alike could be guilty of spiritual pride—Jews for thinking their faith and traditions elevated them above everyone else, Gentiles for trusting in their achievements, power, or position. Spiritual pride blinds us to our own faults and magnifies the faults of others. Be careful not to become proud of your salvation. Instead, humbly thank God for what he has done, and encourage others who might be struggling in their faith.

[2:11-16](#) Before Christ's coming, Gentiles and Jews kept apart from one another. Jews considered Gentiles beyond God's saving power and therefore without hope. Gentiles resented Jewish claims. Christ revealed the total sinfulness of both Jews and Gentiles, and then he offered his salvation to both. Only Christ breaks down the walls of prejudice, reconciles all believers to God, and unifies us in one body.

[2:14ff](#) Christ has destroyed the barriers people build between themselves. Because these walls have been removed, we can have real unity with people who are not like us. This is true reconciliation. Because of Christ's death, we are all one ([2:14](#)); our hostility against each other has been put to death ([2:16](#)); we can all have access to the Father by the Holy Spirit ([2:18](#)); we are no longer strangers or foreigners to God ([2:19](#)); and we are all being built into a holy temple with Christ as our chief cornerstone ([2:20, 21](#)).

[2:14-22](#) There are many barriers that can divide us from other Christians: age, appearance, intelligence, political persuasion, economic status, race, theological perspective. One of the best ways to stifle Christ's love is to be friendly with only those people that we like. Fortunately, Christ has knocked down the barriers and has unified all believers in one family. His cross should be the focus of our unity. The Holy Spirit helps us look beyond the barriers to the unity we are called to enjoy.

[2:15](#) By his death, Christ ended the angry resentment between Jews and Gentiles, caused by the Jewish laws that favored the Jews and excluded the Gentiles. Christ died to abolish that whole system of Jewish laws. Then he took the two groups that had been opposed to each other and made them parts of himself. "One new people" means that Christ made a single entity out of the two. Thus, he fused all believers together to become one in himself.

[2:17, 18](#) The Jews were near to God because they already knew of him through the Scriptures and worshiped him in their religious ceremonies. The Gentiles were far away because they knew little or nothing about God. Because neither group could be saved by good deeds, knowledge, or sincerity, both needed to hear about the salvation available through Jesus Christ. Both Jews and Gentiles are now free to come to God through Christ. You have been brought near to him ([2:13](#)).

## Our Lives Before and After Christ

### *Before*

Dead because of sin

Under God's anger

Followed the ways of the world

God's enemies

Enslaved to the devil

Followed our evil thoughts and desires

### *After*

Made alive with Christ

Shown God's mercy and given salvation

Stand for Christ and truth

God's children

Free in Christ to love serve and sit with him

Raised up with Christ to glory

[2:19-22](#) A church building is sometimes called God's house. In reality, God's household is not a building but a group of people. He lives in us and shows himself to a watching world through us. People can see that God is love and that Christ is Lord as we live in harmony with each other and in accordance with what God says in his Word. We are citizens of God's Kingdom and members of his household.

[2:20](#) What does it mean to be built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets? It means that the church is not built on modern ideas but rather on the spiritual heritage given to us by the early apostles and prophets of the Christian church.

*Ephesians Study Guide questions and notes are from*

