

Ephesians 2
The Significance of Calvary
How Deep is the Redemption!

So far we have said that the Christian Life is already created for us to walk in. We do not invent it as we go along. All the blessings of the Christian experience are already available for us in the heavenlies. God has demonstrated the power available to us who believe by raising Jesus Christ from the dead and placing Him above every conceivable name and authority in the heavenly places. Everything shall be brought to a head in Jesus Christ.

Sentence 8 (2:1-3) And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience, amongst whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

This describes our godless state. We were like this before we met Jesus Christ and we are like it whenever we leave Him. It is the Natural State of Man. In this Natural State we are dead in trespasses and sins. Just as the Eskimo has many words for snow, the Christian has many words for sin. Sin may be described as missing the mark, going over or transgressing a boundary, disobedience to a voice, falling when one should have stood, diminishing what should have been given in full measure, lawlessness or non-observance of a law, ignorance of what we should have known, incurring a divine debt. Jesus says that he who commits sin is the slave of sin (Jn 8:34). As Charles Wesley describes in one of his hymns 'Long my imprisoned spirit lay / Fast bound in sin and nature's night / Thine eye diffused a quickening ray / I woke, the dungeon flamed with light / My chains fell off, my heart was free / I rose, went forth, and followed Thee'. Sin is not just some personal misdemeanour; it is part of the character of the age. The whole culture is bound by sin and defiance of God. This is according to the spirit authority of the prince of the power of the air. This suggests the strength of spirit influence in which we are immersed as in the air. Jesus is described as the Prince of Peace (Is 9:6). Daniel's prayers are late in being answered because the Prince of Persia is opposing the angel (Dan 10:13). This relates to spirit territories. Satan is described as the prince (ruler) of demons (Mtt 9:34; 12:24). So there is strong spirit opposition. This spirit is at work in the sons of disobedience. The term 'sons' suggests the offspring of evil. Disobedience fathers its problem children. The lifestyle of disobedience (sin) is described as conducting ourselves in the lusts of the flesh. We live by and are driven by strong desire (lust). Lust is a desire that serves its own ends. The desire is no longer anchored in God but in the self-serving energies of the desire itself. It craves its own fulfilment and fuels its own intensity. There are many motivations and excitements cultivated by the rogue flesh and mind which create their own momentum and justification. Because these desires are not managed in God (called exercising godliness 1Tim 4:7) we become subject to judgement: we are children of wrath. If we stay this way we become subject to corruption (Rom 1:18-32; Eph 4:22) like the bulk of humanity.

Sentence 9 (2:4-7) But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together and made us sit together in

the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us in Jesus Christ.

Our being lost in sin (the state of perdition) is not altered by us. We were done for. But God acted sovereignly. He decided to do something about it. This is the core Christian teaching of God's love for the sinner. 'While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us' (Rom 5:8). We were dead but now we are alive in Christ. This is not only an amazing attitude (that God should chose to do it) but an amazing power (that God was able to do it). Not only have we been redeemed from the state of sin we have been raised up together beyond the slavery of sin. This is the baptism experience in Rom 6:4-5. As we go down into the water of baptism we identify with Christ's death. As we come up out of the water of baptism we enter into newness of life and circumstance. Then we are made to sit (we are placed there beyond our desiring) together in the heavenly places which are in Christ. Christ is in the heavenlies and we have the heavenlies experience in Christ. We are not physically in the heavenlies (see 2Cor 12:1-6) but in Christ we have some place in the spirit realm which Paul calls the heavenlies and this is obtained 'in Christ'. When we believe in Christ we are taken somewhere; we have some spirit placement which is God's doing and is an expression of His love and provision for us. This is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory (2Cor 4:17) and causes us to taste the powers of the age to come (Heb 6:5). This all indicates the enormous investment of riches that God has designed and given to us in Christ. Have you experienced the extent (width, length, depth, height (Eph 3:18)) of what God has prepared for you as a believer? The Christian life is something we walk in with all its spiritual discovery: we do not invent it.

Sentence 10 (2:8-9) For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

This was one of the great revelations for Luther. We are saved and delivered from the power of sin not by any effort of our own (which usually would only compound the situation) but purely by the will and work of God. Salvation is by grace alone. Although we may cooperate with what God is doing we are simply going along with God. We get hold of this salvation by faith. We do not earn it, buy it or control it. It is not magic. It is gift. It is the grace in which we stand (Rom 5:2; 1Pet 5:12). If there was a controlling element of works, then there would be grounds for boasting, spiritual competition or pride in experience. However, works do become relevant when we show our faith. For faith without works is dead (James 2:17). Works are always an expression of where we stand. Works, like words, come out of the abundance of the heart.

Sentence 11 (2:10) For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

We are, in fact, God's workmanship, (His product, masterpiece, manufacture). We are saved by grace but we are re-created (fashioned) for good works. The good works are the sign of the new creation. To be in Christ is to be productive of entirely new things. Now these good works are not our creation but the creation of God. We walk in good works that God has created for us to walk in. Our behaviour is not an expression of our individuality or personality, as the natural man argues. Our behaviour is sourced in Jesus Christ and is the result of our conforming to the image of God's Son in us (Rom 8:29; Phil 3:21). We perform God's

intention not ours. We do God's thing not our thing. God has works for us to do that He has already prepared (conceived). I need revelation in my spirit as to what this work is. To be created in Christ means that we have an identity, a task, a destiny established for us already which conforms to, is conceived in and is derived from Jesus Christ. Watchman Nee has said that God has only one answer to every human need - His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the centre of every provision of God: for wisdom, for righteousness, for sanctification and for redemption (1Cor 1:30).

Sentence 12 (2:11-12) Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh - who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands - that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Paul is reminding the Gentile believers of their original alienation from God. God's provision and salvation was for Israel. Jesus came first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As Paul explains in Rom 9:3, the Israelites knew and owned the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the services of God and the promises. Circumcision was given to Abraham as a seal of the righteousness of faith (Rom 4:11). It was used by the Jews as a distinguishing sign of pride to mark them off from the Gentiles. But this distinction is no longer valid.

Sentence 13 (2:13) But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Jew and Gentile have now been united through the sacrifice of Calvary. Jew and Gentile are no longer strangers and aliens but they are each a part of the new creation. This is part of the supernatural atonement of the Cross of Christ. All kinds of things have been reconciled by the Cross. It is the central and determining event of history. This also points to a deep unity of Jew and Gentile in the purposes of God. God has not forgotten either the Jew or the Gentile. Both are part of God's purposes in history.

Sentence 14 (2:14-16) For He Himself (Christ) is our peace, who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of partition (separation) having abolished (annulled, rendered useless) in His flesh the enmity (the law of commandments in ordinances) so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the Cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

This is the reconciling work of Jesus Christ (2Cor 5:18-20). The Gentiles were locked away in the passions of their flesh and the lostness of being without the provisions of God and the Jews were locked away in their legalism and religious pride. There was a bitterness and enmity between Jew and Gentile. This is no longer necessary, although people may persist in their originating positions. Jew and Gentile are reconciled in Jesus Christ. The two are made one. They are a new creation, a new man, a new example of humanity. The Cross of Jesus Christ is able to accomplish such a change, if people will enter into it. The new humanity is already formed. Will we walk in it? In fact, the Cross of Christ creates the foundation and possibility for the removal of any dividing wall such as that created by racial pride, invented sexuality or cultural poverty. The opportunity is for estranged and divided peoples to enter into a new humanity.

Sentence 15 (2:17-18) And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near because through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

The seal of the Holy Spirit is the sign of the unity. The provision of the Holy Spirit is all that is necessary for the new creation. It is the way to the Father. The Holy Spirit is the driving power of the new experience and fashions the new reality in us.

Sentence 16 (2:19-22) Now therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you are also being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Those who were once hostile strangers, foreign to each other's culture and religious expression, are now fellow citizens of a new community - the household of God. This new household (privileged community) has the foundation of the witness, ministry and authority of the apostles and prophets. This includes the prophetic ministry of the OT prophets. The chief object that is the key to the whole structure (the cornerstone) is Jesus Christ Himself. Now this building has a purpose, a grand architectural design: as it is assembled it becomes a temple for God. This temple originates in God so it is holy and it facilitates holy worship which is already created for us to worship in. This suggests that Christian worship is not inventing a new experience (in the flesh) but is our tapping into a worship that is already formed and happening in the heavenlies (Rev 5:11-14). Our music is to be true to a heavenly theme. The believers are also being built into a dwelling place for God in the spirit realm. Paul teaches that the body of the believer is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1Cor 6:19; 2Cor 6:16) as well as groups of believers. The sacred site of the Christian is the Person.