

EPHESIANS PART IV

CHAPTER 2; GOD'S PLAN FROM TWO DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

Please turn to Ephesians chapter two.

Last week we covered the overlaps between Heaven and earth, as well as that of this age and the one that is to come. That should help us to see what Paul is doing in chapter two. If we are paying attention to what is written in chapter two, we will see that there are two paragraphs which parallel each other. What that means is that each paragraph uses similar language so that they mirror each other. However, Paul uses the similar wording to come at the same idea from two different perspectives. Most modern translations show the paragraphs by indentation. See if you can pick up the difference between the two as we read them. Look for similar words and phrases, but also look for a difference in perspective between the two paragraphs. One looks at things from a cosmic/ overall perspective while the other looks at things from a covenantal perspective.

Eph. 2:1 ^jAnd you were ^kdead in the trespasses and sins ² ^lin which you once walked, following the course of this world, following ^mthe prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in ⁿthe sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in ^othe passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body¹ and the mind, and ^pwere by nature ^qchildren of wrath, like the rest of mankind.² ⁴ But³ God, being ^rrich in mercy, ^sbecause of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even ^twhen we were dead in our trespasses, ^umade us alive together with Christ—^vby grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and ^wseated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable ^xriches of his grace in ^ykindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For ^zby grace you have been saved ^athrough faith. And this is ^bnot your own doing; ^cit is the gift of God, ⁹ ^dnot a result of works, ^eso that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For ^fwe are his workmanship, ^gcreated in Christ Jesus ^hfor good works, ⁱwhich God prepared beforehand, ^jthat we should walk in them.

Eph. 2:11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called ^kthe circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹² remember ^lthat you were at that time separated from Christ, ^malienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to ⁿthe covenants of promise, ^ohaving no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were ^pfar off have been brought near ^qby the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For ^rhe himself is our peace, ^swho has made us both one and has broken down ^tin his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ^uordinances, that he might create in himself one ^vnew man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶ and might ^wreconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷ And he came and ^xpreached peace to you who were ^yfar off and peace to those who were ^znear. ¹⁸ For ^athrough him we both have

^baccess in ^cone Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer ^dstrangers and aliens,⁴ but you are ^efellow citizens with the saints and ^fmembers of the household of God, ²⁰ ^gbuilt on the foundation of the ^hapostles and prophets, ⁱChrist Jesus himself being ^jthe cornerstone, ²¹ ^kin whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into ^la holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him ^myou also are being built together ⁿinto a dwelling place for God by⁵ the Spirit.

The first paragraph, verses 1-10 tell the story of the Gentile believers from a cosmic perspective. What I mean by that is that it is an over-arching, broad, historical synopsis of the state and condition of all Gentiles. Paul compares their plight with that of Israel. In verses 11-22, Paul uses similar language, but this language is used to tell the story from a covenantal perspective. Let's look at a comparison that may help us to see this.

	2:1-10 Their story from a cosmic perspective	2:11-22 Their story from a covenantal perspective
Their former predicament	2:1-3: And you were dead in transgressions and sins, in which at that time (ποτε) you walked ... doing the desires of the flesh	2:11-12: Remember, at that time (ποτε), you nations in the flesh ... were estranged from the citizenry of Israel, foreigners of the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world
The agents of death	2:2: "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit now at work in the sons of disobedience"	2:14-15: "the dividing wall, the hostility ... the Torah consisting of commands with decrees"
God's intervention	2:4-8: But God, being rich in mercy ... made us alive together with the Messiah ... by grace you have been saved	2:13: But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far have been brought near by the blood of the Messiah
The new creation result	2:5-6: He made you alive together with the Messiah ... and raised you up together and seated you together in the heavenly realm in Christ Jesus 2:10: You have been created in Christ Jesus for good works	2:14-18: He made both groups into one ... in order that in himself he might create two into one new humanity ... through him we both have access by the one Spirit to the Father

This should help us to see what I'm talking about here. Can you get the overall idea? Paul first talks about things from a broad historical perspective and then goes back using the same language from a covenantal perspective.

In the first section/ line of the chart, both paragraphs identify something/ someone that kept them from being a part of Israel/ the covenant/ new creation. From the cosmic perspective, (first paragraph) they were enslaved in sin and transgressions that allowed them to walk in the ways of the world. From the covenantal perspective, Paul says that they were not allowed, (other than being proselytized) to be a part of the covenant. This caused hostility between them and the covenant people, Israel. Some things don't change.

As we work our way through what Paul is saying here, we can see that in both cases, the cosmic and the covenantal, God intervened. In verse 4 we see, "But God." God responded with mercy. He solved the problem of sin and enslavement to it by sending Jesus as the Messiah. In the second paragraph, from the covenantal perspective we see, "But now" in verse 13, as the blood of Jesus has brought those who were afar off, (Gentiles) near to God. Through Jesus, there is now a way Gentiles can be a part of the covenant family.

We see once again the similarities in the two paragraphs as we look at the last section of the chart. We have been made alive together; raised up together in Jesus; and are seated with Him and have been created for good works.

In the second paragraph, from the covenantal perspective, we see that both Israel and the Gentiles; both groups, have been made into one and both have access to the Father through the same means, the same Spirit, (Holy Spirit).

Now, let's go back and take each paragraph one at a time.

Look back at verse 3 and notice the 'you/ y'all and we' thing again.

³ among whom we all once lived in ^othe passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body¹ and the mind, and ^pwere by nature ^achildren of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Paul is showing them that Israel, though they were the chosen people of God, were also in need of Messiah for the same reasons as the Gentiles. The Israelites were, by nature, (sin nature) children of wrath just like the rest of mankind, (Gentiles).

But³ God, being ^rrich in mercy, ^sbecause of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even ^twhen we were dead in our trespasses, ^umade us alive together with Christ—^vby grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and ^wseated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable ^xriches of his grace in ^ykindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For ^zby grace you have been saved ^athrough faith. And this is ^bnot your own doing; ^cit is the gift of God, ⁹ ^dnot a result of works, ^eso that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For ^fwe are his workmanship, ^gcreated in Christ Jesus ^hfor good works, ⁱwhich God prepared beforehand, ^jthat we should walk in them.

Note the continuing us and y'all, but that changes here and there for instance in the B portion of verse 5 where Paul says God has made us alive together with Christ. By the time we get to verse 10, we see the "we" (the new humanity). Paul goes on to say we are not saved by works, but FOR works. We will go into the "works" thing next time, but for now suffice it to say that we are given our purpose in this statement. Good works are not a means, but the fruit that is produced when one is actually attached to the source of life and love – Jesus.

Notice that in verses 5 and 6 we, together have been raised up and seated together in the heavenlies with/ in Jesus. What do we see in the first chapter concerning who is raised and given a throne in the heavenlies?

Eph. 1:19,20

¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, ^aaccording to the working of ^bhis great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ ^cwhen he raised him from the dead and ^dseated him at his right hand ^ein the heavenly places,

We see that in the first chapter, that it was only Jesus mentioned as being raised and sitting with the Father. Now, in the second chapter, Paul is expanding this to his Gentile audience, which then extends to us. Remember, His resurrection is ours. His life is ours. His elevation is ours. We have this in Him. And if we are paying attention to the tenses here, we can once again see the near/ far – then and now that we talked about last week. The overlap is still there.

Paul also speaks of grace not being generate by our own effort. It is a gift. We will go into that in more detail next time, but we are to see that grace is a gift. We tend to look at gifts differently that they did. Most of us are aware of Paul's statement here about works and grace.

⁸ For ^aby grace you have been saved ^bthrough faith. And this is ^cnot your own doing; ^dit is the gift of God, ^enot a result of works, ^fso that no one may boast.

Paul also uses this language in Galatians concerning observances about Torah – some of which he believes are good for certain things not others – namely receiving God's mercy.

Now, I want to submit to you that these verses, 8 and 9, are used here in more of a social context than a personal one. This is one of our blind spots as modern westerners. We tend to think and read everything individually and not communally. After all, it is all about us, isn't it? It is often read as I, an individual, am trying to earn my own standing before God and that I can't/ shouldn't boast. But I'm actually arguing that Paul is using this application in more of a communal or church community sense. We see the same line of thinking and theology in Galatians.

Gal. 3:26-28

²⁶ for in Christ Jesus ^ayou are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as ^bwere baptized ^cinto Christ have ^dput on Christ. ²⁸ ^eThere is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither

slave⁷ nor free, ²there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And ^aif you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, ^bheirs according to promise.

Since we are now a part of the same family, both Jew and Gentile alike, those things that are typically used to identify us are now irrelevant in new creation, which Paul says is both here and not yet.

Speaking of how all this ties together with not boasting in a communal sense, look at what Paul says later in Ephesians.

Eph. 4:1 I therefore, ^ma prisoner for the Lord, urge you to ⁿwalk in a manner worthy of ^othe calling to which you have been called, ² with all ^phumility and ^qgentleness, with ^rpatience, ^sbearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in ^tthe bond of peace. ⁴ There is ^uone body and ^vone Spirit—just as you were called to the one ^whope that belongs to your call— ⁵^xone Lord, ^yone faith, ^zone baptism, ⁶ ^aone God and Father of all, ^bwho is over all and through all and in all.

Look at the humility and gentleness as we are to bear with one another. This speaks to social/communal relationships, not the individualistic way we normally take these statements. In many traditions, this “works and boasting” language is only applied at the personal level such as, “I can’t merit God’s favor.” And that is true, BUT when Paul wants to apply his thinking, he generally speaks of social and/ or economic terms. And that is because this is all about a new creation and how that translates to how humans are to relate to each other. The new creation, which we now find ourselves, then and now/ now and not yet, is a place where the things that divide us the things and ways by which we are normally identified no longer matter because we are now identified in Jesus. Think about it. Did Jesus only die for one tribe or nation? Did He only die for males and not females? Did He die only for the wealthy, or only for the poor? No, He didn’t. He died for everyone. And now, in Him, we are all part of the same family and the same covenant.

Do you remember what I asked you to do when we started the book of Ephesians? I asked you to read it and re-read it all the way through in one sitting – once a day. What is the main theme throughout the letter? It is that of unity between two groups that were/ are as different as different can be. That is not an easy thing to achieve. Yet Paul says it can happen and that it was the plan from the beginning.

We need to see the same thing Paul saw in his apocalypse:

Eph. 1:17-23

¹⁷ that ^pthe God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, ^qmay give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ ^rhaving the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is ^sthe hope to which he has called you, what are ^tthe riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, ^uaccording to the working of ^vhis great might ²⁰ that he

worked in Christ ^wwhen he raised him from the dead and ^xseated him at his right hand ^yin the heavenly places, ²¹ ^zfar above ^aall rule and authority and power and dominion, and above ^bevery name that is named, not only in ^cthis age but also in the one to come. ²² And ^dhe put all things under his feet and gave him as ^ehead over all things to the church, ²³ ^fwhich is his body, ^gthe fullness of him ^hwho fills ⁱall in all.

Knowing this changes everything. Living it changes even more than that.