

Made Alive in Christ (Eph 2:1-10)

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INTRODUCTION: To be sanctified is to be possessed by God

The Holy Spirit binds you into Christ's personal property. In this Epistle, Paul talks to "you" over eight times (we see his pastoral heart). Paul is compelled to mention Christ and you in almost every sentence (chock 'o block compacted together). It is not hard to get what this letter is about. If you are even semi-conscious, Ephesians ought to produce an intensely personal encounter with the Lord. When we allow our understanding of Ephesians to slide into abstraction, the truths about God become impersonal, instead of grabbing you, me and, us. It is not the way God intends this letter to be used.

In this Epistle, God chose people to belong to Himself. He chose you to be His. God claims you, presses wonders upon you, and pleads with you through His personal representative. This must grab us or we will fail to communicate the immediacy of the living Christ. Many commentaries on Ephesians are like expansive oceanographic technical manuals, with a 'sea' of pages laying out details of speaker, audience, and context. But they do not capture the pastoral heart of Ephesians as God reveals Himself to His people.

Where is your passion concentrated?

Ephesians is a New Testament Psalm, because it sparkles and crackles with Paul's own faith, excitement, and drive. Ephesians gives us God. The apostle wants his readers, including us, to enter in to his own passion. Faith, hope, and love are catching--contagious, just as grumbling, boredom, anxiety, and contempt are catching. Paul begins Ephesians with joy in the Lord—this is intensely practical. How will you not become discouraged, impatient, anxious, false, blasé, cynical, or self-confident in this world in which we are passing through? Answer: You must bring your own gladness and fierce love into the situation, confident in your Lord.

In making God known to us, the book of Ephesians tears the doors off of mysteries

God reconciles what no earthly genius could reconcile: *justice to mercy, Jew to Gentile, suffering to glory*. The love of Christ is beyond knowing, it cannot be fathomed, yet this epistle is written so God can make Himself known and deepen our knowing of Him. Don't ever forget that the best and the deepest aim is to know the Lord, that is the apex of Paul's prayers in both Chapters 1 and 3. At the heart of this Epistle is a revelation, a making known who God is and what He is about.

Yes, God is in control and acts intentionally; things happen by His will (1:1, 5, 9, 11). His hand is on the controls of history and of your life. It is a decisive hand of wisdom and power to perform what He chooses. The same God who spins the galaxies and holds the atoms together has raised spiritual corpses to new life in Christ. He had your name in mind in Christ from all eternity. Because God is in control you can bend all your energies to your calling, trusting that God's plans are working out. You can live 'leveraged' upon God. And the more you feed on His purposes made manifest in His glory story, the more you will live leveraged upon Him.

In His sovereign mercy, God purposes to give us Himself. This is the marvel of God glorifying His grace—which gives us glory in Christ. One pastor called it “God’s thermonuclear goodness,” it is all-consuming in intensity, like our own sun. But Christ’s grace multiplies goodness times forgiveness times kindness times mercy. Christ carries us into the center of the fiery sun of the living God.

Left to ourselves (carnal reasoning) we either think we are too good to need grace, or too bad to receive it. The default mode of our flesh is a grace-less pendulum swinging steadily between pride and despair (self-elevation or self-loathing). But for those who are His, God can use anything to bring us to a fresh grace renewal: losses, crosses, bosom sins, unique mercies and broken dreams. His grace pesters and pursues us. It is grace that makes you realize that sin is your deepest problem. Grace brings repentance with it (we repent for slighting true treasure and for our idolatrous habit of assigning the word “treasure” to things which are passing away).

Christ, Mediator of the new covenant, dispenses the benefits He has purchased

From His seat of power, He gives His long promised Holy Spirit, who animates us, seals us into Christ, and works His presence and will into us. Christ by His Spirit continues to work through us, to wash us, nourish us, and change our lives. As He does so, we grow up together into His likeness.

Finally this story has a glorious future. Christ and His people will be fully revealed together in glory; as one with Him and one with each other. All of our darkness will be swallowed up in light. Now, the great calling of this epistle is that you were dead and dark but God has made you alive in Christ (2:1-10). Don’t go back into darkness; walk in the light (4:17-24). Do you want to know if you are Christ’s? Then ask, “Am I caught up, however imperfectly, however groping, in this story?” Are you part of what is happening in God’s glory story in Christ, or are you on the outside, hoping that if you ignore reality long enough it will go away?

Exposition: Outline:

I. The spiritual state of believers before their conversion: a state of sin, spiritual death, subjection to Satan and to our own corrupt affections, a state of condemnation (vv. 1-3).

II. The change which God has wrought in them: the change which they experienced was a spiritual resurrection of which God is the Author. It is a work of love and grace which through Christ in virtue of their union with Him. And that involves great exaltation, even an association with Christ in glory (vv. 4-6).

III. The design for which that change has been effected: the manifestation through all the coming ages of God’s grace. It is the manifestation of grace because salvation is all of grace. Believers accept salvation not due to themselves but due to God who gives faith as a gift. Good works are the fruits but not the nature of grace; we are created unto good works (vv. 7-10).

I. The spiritual state of believers before their conversion

V. 1 – The depth of our ruin reveals the greatness of the power necessary to make us alive and bring us to God. God raised Christ from the dead and has given life to you who were dead in trespasses and sins (Charles Hodge, *Ephesians, The Geneva Series of Commentaries*, Banner of Truth, pp. 58-58). The apostle is dwelling on the natural state of the Ephesians for an important reason.

In Scripture the term “life” is often used to express a state of union with God, and death a state of alienation (cut off) from God. “Life” therefore includes holiness, happiness, and activity. Death includes corruption, misery, and helplessness. Those spiritually dead are secluded from all the sources of true blessedness, and they are beyond the reach of any help from creatures—they are dead—dead on account of trespasses and sins (2:12) (Hodge).

The reign of sin and death is the cause of death reigning in us. Spiritual death is the soul’s alienation from God. RCC says that those outside of Christ are only ‘half dead’ (Calvin).

V. 2 – They walked in sin, were conversant with it, and devoted to it (surrounded by it, clothed with it) (Hodge) (like the goldfish unaware it is wet). Men are unaware of sin’s power—they tend to associate it only with outward acts (Calvin). They lived according to this world. This was the governing principle which controlled their conduct. They lived according to, and under the control of the spirit of the world (as to motive, intent, etc.). It is hard to convince a postmodern person that his sin alienates him from God. But our text is painting a picture of sin not merely as what we do but what we are (by nature, orientation, and life view).

This subjection to sin is at the same time, a subjection to Satan. This malevolent spirit is called the ‘god’ or ‘prince’ of this world (Jn 12:31) and the prince of demons (Mt 9:34). A kingdom is ascribed to him as the kingdom of darkness (built upon human and angelic crime against God). All wicked men (unbelievers) and evil spirits are his subjects, and are led captive by him at will (sin committed bears the marks of its original ‘author’—our sins cry out “my father, my father”—Spurgeon).

As the ‘prince of the power of the air’—unbelievers are under his authority and dominion—subjects in his kingdom (see Colossians 1:13). This kingdom of ‘darkness’ is designated such (‘darkness’) because of ignorance and futile thinking and opposition to the truth (Eph 4:17ff.). The ‘. . . power of the air’ is intended to mean that the evil one is a different order of creature, a higher order of being—a spiritual being not weighed down by flesh and blood. The realm of evil spirits is the heavenly places (6:12) (Hodge).

All those outside of the kingdom of Christ are slaves of Satan. They are subject to Satan because they love darkness and are rebels against God—they won’t yield obedience to Him, thus they are the children of disobedience. Unbelief is always accompanied by disobedience. “Let them blame themselves for having a bad master” (Calvin). “We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in *the power of the evil one*” (1 Jn 5:19).

Who or what is this spirit now working in the sons (children) of disobedience? Commentators are divided on whether ‘spirit’ here alludes the prince of the power of the air (who constantly leads men into sin), OR, whether ‘spirit’ means the evil

principle or disposition which works in mankind (see 1 Corinthians 2:12 on the ‘spirit’ of the world) (Ibid, pp. 63-64). ‘Children of disobedience’ expresses the idea of a particular character quality. For example: ‘sons of Belial’ are worthless. ‘Sons of disobedience’ are disobedient. (Note also, sons of thunder are angry, son of consolation is consoling—Barnabas) (Hodge).

We do not know just how much access evil spirits have in sowing thoughts and temptations (suggestions to evil); but we do know that their influence and operations do not destroy our freedom of action.

V. 3 – This spiritual condition of the Ephesians prior to their conversion is not peculiar to Gentile heathen (who engaged in gross immorality including temple prostitution). Jews and Gentiles are by nature in the same state. Whatever the differences in character or custom, these differences are subordinate to the greater reality that all fall short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23).

To our eyes, there is a substantial difference in how communities and individuals manifest the depravity common to all. And, there is a very great difference as to the degree of grossness of such manifestations of our corrupt natures (the desires of the flesh and of the mind are clearly exhibited). Yet Paul in his own testimony does not hesitate to associate himself and his countrymen with the Gentiles in his description of their moral condition—“*walking according to the lusts of the flesh and of the mind*” (even though the Jews appeared substantially morally superior).

All men, whatever their outward may be, are in their natural state “have a carnal mind” as opposed to a spiritual mind (Rom 8:5-7). They are governed by things that are seen and temporal, instead of those things which are not seen and eternal (2 Cor 4:16-18). Thus, Paul groups himself and his fellow Jews as having a ‘pre-Christ’ lifestyle as among the children of disobedience.

We all lived in the lusts of the flesh—our desires had their origin in the flesh. By the flesh, we are not to understand this as merely our sensuous nature, but the whole nature considered as corrupt. Scripture uses the word flesh in an extensive manner—referring to that which is governed by what is material, and in terms of what is sinful, then that which is opposed to the Spirit. Paul uses flesh in Philippians 3:4 to include under that word, *his descent from the Hebrews, his circumcision, and his legal righteousness (outward keeping of the law)* (Gal 3:3, 5, 19-21). Religion can be a broad arena for the flesh: heresy, spiritual pride, legalism, superiority, presumption (see Col 2:18).

In Scripture, the meaning of the use of the word, “lust” depends on the immediate context whether that word means our whole nature as corrupt, OR, only the sensuous animal part of that nature (envy, hatred, sexual lust, drunkenness, over-eating, slothfulness, or revellings).

‘Mind’ here is to encompass the whole thought process; for unbelievers are enemies of God in their minds; their reasoning processes reveal enmity toward God (toward the glory and knowledge of God); they are hostile in mind—Col 1:21). (See also Romans 1:18, 28; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

The expression ‘children of wrath’ means objects of wrath, destined for wrath. God’s settled anger (wrath) is what we deserve. ‘By nature children of wrath’ indicates that we were

born in that condition—it was something natural to us. We did not become children of wrath, but were already such when we were born. We are born in a state of condemnation—prior to conversation we stand in Adam and carry the guilt of original sin. Our innate disposition is truly that of a child of wrath.

Our age of utopian false optimism about the human condition promotes the very opposite of the truth of God’s Word. Men consider babes as born impressionable, good, and/or morally neutral. The prevailing philosophy of our day is that evil deeds may come about in a person by the process of development. But our passage states that ‘we were by nature the children of wrath’. The biblical assertion is that we are such by nature as we were born (Hodge). We are sinners by derivation from Adam, not by imitation of Adam. A venomous viper does not develop its toxic bite over time, but is born with poison already in its fangs.

How is it, some object, that we are condemned if God is our Creator of our human nature? Answer: we are not born as Adam was created. Our human nature was created by God in His own image and likeness; but sin is the corruption of that nature (Calvin).

The history of the world agrees with the Bible, mankind as a race is fallen: they had their probation in Adam; therefore they are born in a state of condemnation. They need redemption from the moment of their birth. Our text affirms that original sin was ‘evenly distributed’ throughout the human race. This recitation of our deplorable condition—the very depths from which we have been rescued—is essential if we are to see the warmth, brilliance, and mercy of God’s grace.

II. The change which God has wrought in them

V. 4 – The manner in which we have been delivered from our dreadful ruined condition is by a spiritual resurrection. God as the Author of this change exerted His life-giving power upon us, having made us the objects of His eternal love. His love is more than His mercy, compassion, or pity (love is timeless, commitment, action, devotion, relation). His constraining love moved in power toward definite individuals (persons who are the objects of that power). It was to satisfy His love that He raised us from the death of sin. (In our moral condition we reaped death and separation) (Hodge).

V. 5 – God intervened for our recovery. He made us alive together with Christ. Life was imparted; bestowed upon us. The death from which we were delivered includes condemnation (judicial death), pollution (defilement), and misery (consequent depravation). The life which we receive comprehends forgiveness (justification), regeneration, and blessedness. “Life” (a relationship of life bestowed) reverses and replaces these three aspects of spiritual death. See Colossians 2:13.

“You hath He made alive”—is limited to the commencement (the beginning of our redeemed state and restoration). Here it expresses the deliverance from death and the impartation of life. It was our entrance into this grace in which we stand (Rom 5:1-2).

To be made alive with Christ indicates that there is an analogy between His resurrection from the grave and our spiritual resurrection (Rom 6:6-8; Gal 2:19-20; 2 Cor 5:14-

15). By virtue of union and covenant and vital organic life between Christ and His people, His death was their death, His life is their life; and His exaltation is theirs. Hence all of the verbs used in this connection are in the past tense and are compound verbs ('with'—*suon*—Grk.). Made alive with, raised with, seated with. God saved us by radically identifying us with Christ so that His vicarious work on our behalf changes our entire spiritual state and relation to God.

The life of the whole body is the Head—when the Head rose, the body rose (by reason of union with Him, we are His members). Each in his order—first Christ, then they that are Christ's (1 Cor 15:23-24).

The gracious nature of salvation is the most prominent idea in this context. The state of men was one of helplessness and ill desert. They neither deserved to be saved nor could they redeem themselves (inability). Their deliverance from that state is due to the unmerited love of God. This truth is absolutely essential to the gospel (God's inbreaking into our helpless state).

In terms of God accepting a guilty sinner; all of us naturally reason from what we are in ourselves then up to God. Our religious instincts argue that it is the things we do which make us OK or acceptable in God's sight. How different is the assertion of the Word of God—salvation is by union with Christ. There is no other life of the soul other than that which is breathed into us by Christ (Calvin).

V. 6 – The life graciously bestowed includes exaltation. In the heavenly places means the very presence of God (Note the three uses of heavens: atmospheric, stellar, **third heaven**). This is where God manifests His presence, and where the glorified body of Christ is right now. But, (in terms of position) it is the state into which believers are introduced by their regeneration. It is that state of purity, exaltation, and favor with God into which His children in this world are introduced (thus a heavenly status, state, and standing).

The opposite state is called "the kingdom of darkness." We have been translated (or transferred) from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of His beloved Son (Col 1:13-14). In this sense we are said to be citizens of heaven (Phil 3:20). Within the pale of this kingdom we are under its laws; have in Christ a title to its privileges and blessings; and possess (in humble measure) its spirit.

Our kingdom transfer has freed us from the condemnation of the law, from the dominion of Satan, from the tyranny of our sin nature, from the lethargy and pollution of spiritual death, and made us reconciled to God, partakers of His Spirit (as the principle of everlasting life). We are adopted into His forever family, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God (both in this life and the life to come). This is what it means to be made alive and raised and seated with Christ in heavenly places. All this is "in Christ." We are to reign with Him (Hodge).

This kingdom transfer, this mighty change in positions is so immense that it is not an exaggeration to heap on the superlatives: it is as Paul said that we had been transferred from the deepest hell to heaven itself and now are the Lord's companions (Calvin).

These blessings are represented as already ours; as already conferred for this reason: ONE: because in measure they are already enjoyed, and TWO: because the continuance and consummation of these blessings are rendered certain by the nature of union

between Christ and His people. (In Him they are already, made alive, raised and seated with Him.) We are partakers of His life and resurrection and exaltation. Christ is the sphere and realm in which our change took place by virtue of union with Him (again we are stressing radical identification with Christ).

III. The design for which that change has been effected

V. 7 – Why has God done all of this? Why from eternity has He chosen us? Why has He made us accepted in the Beloved? Why when we were dead in our sins and transgressions did He make us alive, raise us up, and made us sit with Christ in the heavenly places? It was in order that in the ages to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.

The manifestation of the grace of God (His unmerited favor and His unmerited love) is declared to be the specific object (purpose) of redemption. Thus, whatever clouds the nature of grace is inconsistent and cross purposes (clashes with) with the gratuitous nature of the blessings promised in the gospel. If the salvation of sinners be intended as an exhibition of the grace of God, it must of necessity be gratuitous.

If glorifying His grace in this world and the next is the design of salvation, then your identity as a trophy of His grace must have a controlling pervasive influence upon your whole life, for you exist as a ransomed person to the glory of His grace (your life is exhibit “A” of God’s grace).

In the world to come (subsequent to the second coming), the saints will be raised up in glory, but not before, will the full kindness of God be revealed towards them. This kindness exercised towards us is through Christ and for His sake (Hodge).

The final cause is that God should be glorified—this is that we might exercise ourselves persistently in His grace and therefore be all the more sure of our salvation as we know its cause was the more righteous. *The point made here is: there is a righteous cause of our salvation to make us more diligent in grace.*

This makes even more hateful those who attacked the free calling of the Gentiles: for they were trying to crush immediately what was to be remembered through the ages (legalists, sacerdotalists, heretics, sensualists, antinomians—take note!—there are many way to be an enemy of the cross—Philippians 3:18) (Calvin).

VV. 8-9 – These verses confirm that the manifestation of the grace of God is the great end and aim of redemption. This is plain: salvation is entirely of grace. Even faith is not of yourselves; it is a gift of God’s grace. Faith is the empty hand (and a dirty one according to Romans 4:4-5) which accepts God’s terms of peace in Christ. Saving faith is moral trust in God—the sinner looks away from himself to Christ. Christ is the fountain of life (Flavel). The convicted sinner has been moved by the Holy Spirit from devastation, to destitution, to desperation.

If salvation were in any way a matter of God rewarding a debt of righteousness, or a matter of a person obligating God, it would be an occasion for man to boast (cancelling grace). But God has made salvation all of grace in order to eliminate any possibility of boasting (1 Cor

1:26-31). A salvation which excludes works removes all ground of boasting—that IS the only salvation suited to the relation of guilty men to God. There is no other ‘Bridge’—no other Mediator (Acts 4:12; 1 Tim 2:5).

‘Through faith’ is designed to show how entirely salvation is of mercy, is the gift of God. Faith is also represented elsewhere as the gift of God: 1 Cor 1:26-31; Eph 1:19; Col 2:12; Phil 1:29 (Hodge). “Not of works”—there is nothing in man procuring salvation.

V. 10 – Salvation is entirely a work of God and good works cannot be the ground of our acceptance with Him. This verse proves this statement: i.e. for we are His workmanship. The fact that men are elected unto holiness proves that holiness cannot be the ground of their election.

Union with Christ is the source of new life, and a life unto holiness; and therefore it is said created unto good works. Holiness is the end and goal of redemption, for Christ gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify for Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works (Titus 2:14). Those therefore who live in sin are not the subjects of this redemption. The good works of believers were prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Before our new creation, these works were in the purpose of God prepared to be our attendants, in the midst of which we should walk.

Thus the apostle in these 10 verses has clearly taught that the natural state of man is one of condemnation and spiritual death; that from that condition believers are delivered by the grace of God in Christ Jesus; and the design of this deliverance is the manifestation, through all coming ages, of the exceeding riches of His grace (Hodge).

We are new creatures who are formed to righteousness by the Spirit of Christ and not by our power. We were born of Adam, wicked and perverse; but are spiritually regenerated by the work of God. We are not created in Christ to ‘any kind of life’—but to good works. He does not say that we are assisted by God. He does not say that we prepare our wills and then proceed in that strength. He does not say that the power of choosing is bestowed upon us, and that afterwards we make our own choice. He says we are God’s work. Everything good in us is His creation (Calvin).

Having a right will itself (which loves Christ) IS His workmanship, otherwise Paul’s argument is pointless. Paul means to prove that man does not in any way procure salvation for himself, but obtains it freely from God. The proof is that man is nothing but by divine grace. (We sinned away our ability; but not our responsibility—with have no merit with which to trade with heaven.) We have brought nothing to God by which He might be obliged to us; he shows that even the good works which we do as saved individuals come from Him. There can be no boasting (Calvin). We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone (Luther). Good works are the polar opposite of living in sin. Those who are the objects of God’s grace have had the work of the cross applied to their flesh (2 Cor 5:14-15; Gal 5:2; Titus 2:14).

The gospel reveals that God is known and glorified in His action of pouring out grace upon His people (we must know God is glorified thereby if we are live surrendered and

consecrated to Him). The gospel believed instills in us that the Father is for us and that we have His endless favor in Christ. The most important thing about you is what you think about God. The gospel of grace obligates in ways infinitely different than the manner in which your nurturing grandmother may obligate you. The gospel comes in power—making the spiritually dead sinner alive and bestowing a relationship with God Almighty in Christ—it is a relationship which gives you a new nature, calling, identity and destiny.

We have seen that God saves a sinner by radically identification with Christ so that the Savior's death, burial, and resurrection become your death, burial and resurrection.

His substitutionary death was my penalty. His righteousness and life is now my righteousness and life. This massive guilt transfer that took place at Calvary is now meant to control us; for the gospel makes possible our unbroken reception of God's love. Grace gives us permission to keep going to God for more grace. It is the lens through which we see who God is towards us in Christ.

We are now to live radically identified with Christ who is 'our life'—for we are hidden in Him, complete in Him. Our testimony as recipients of divine grace through Christ is that we have found our part in God's glory story. Thus to live radically identified with Christ is to have His cause as my cause.

In Christ God has joined His own glory to our eternal welfare.

In Christ the two (God's glory and my eternal welfare) are joined and made one purpose; for God's grace to sinners is the ultimate revealer of His perfections and excellence. This is the all-consuming reason that I may rationally be abandoned to His glory. It is my reasonable, rational, service of worship—presenting myself back to the Lord each day as His own—the argument comes from His matchless love and mercy already bestowed (Rom 12:1).

As those joined to Christ we are now to live as sons of the Father.

We are to whole-heartedly step into the 'sonship script' which He has fashioned/written for us (2 Cor 6:14-7:1). There is a profound transforming effect of knowing that you are purchased, owned, and possessed by the Person and work of Christ. God hides us in Christ and protects us from His wrath, He glorifies His grace and reveals Himself as just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom 3:25-26). He pours out His benevolence upon those who take refuge in Him (Ps 18; 21; 31; 34; 61; 71; 91). For only in an incarnate Christ and in Him crucified can the sinner find a gracious God (Carl Truman, Gheens Lecture, SBTS, 9.12-13.12).

"In Christ" eats up all else (Michael Graham). In terms of the last word, finality, and the focal point of all reality, "in Christ" is the most definitive statement possible. Who God is towards me in Christ is to be the most influential, formative, and foundational truth in my life.

Make it your ambition to close the gap between your position in Christ and your walk

Paul did not fanaticize; yes the gap is all too real: there is a yawning chasm between what we are now, and what we shall be. In fact, 3:14-5:2 is all about the gap between achievement and destination, and about what to do to press in the right direction. Paul saw

reality better than you could ask or dream. And he teaches us how to close the gap (4:1-3ff.). Christ lives in us and we are to live out our lives in Him. He will not fail. Let that seize you. Then do what Paul did and what he tells you to do. Pour your life into bridging that gap in reliance upon the immediate grace of God. I guarantee that you will see and taste glory. Sufferings, defeats, disillusionments, are all par for the course, but you will also witness marvels: lives changed, loving and merciful acts, courage, acts of humility, reconciliations, and the powerful presence of God.

Because you are in union with Christ; you are an instrument in the hands of the Redeemer

God is teaching you to speak directly into people's lives. He wants you to grow to a point where you can speak of Him, and from Him, representing Him to others. Don't just point to the truth; seek to bring people closer to Christ through grace. God is primarily interested in making us know Him. Don't ever degenerate into merely giving advice that is unconnected to the good news of Christ Jesus crucified, alive, present, at work, and returning.

Many people we are attempting to counsel and disciple live inside a black hole of self-will, misery, and confusion. They need God to break into their shadow land from which sin has erased the light of the personal and living God. Many professing Christians live as practical atheists, worshipping themselves, their own will, their own opinions, their own yearnings disconnected from God. They see God from within the black hole and He appears remote, irrelevant, distorted, and unconcerned. The answer is always, "Who is God toward me in Christ?" This corrects our fall back mode of hyper self-focused thinking.

When people think about God by instinct, not by revelation, they tend to ask the wrong questions. Will He meet my felt needs? Will He be my copilot in life? Can I get Him to make my day, my spouse, my kids, my health, and my finances work out? If I do my bit for God, will He do His bit for me? In His letter to the Ephesians, God tells us who He is and what He is like; and what we read in this epistle is crystal clear, unmistakable, and radically different from our instinctive opinions.

God will bring wrath on those outside of Christ

Human history is about the rightful King and His allies invading the dark Reich (empire). Everyone chooses sides. There are no neutral countries, the pretense of neutrality and agnosticism is only a cover for darkness. The living God and His Christ are not optional. The choice is this: live or die, know Him or else. Be forgiven and by the wonder of what Christ did for you, OR receive what you've done fair and square on your own head.

The book of Ephesians is primarily written to those who are on the inside of God's love. To God's children, the Holy Spirit speaks of wrath in order to give us a vigorous, pertinent warning: don't go back, don't believe again the destructive ideas which once held you captive. Remember which way is up and which way is down. God reminds you what you were by nature before God's grace intervened and changed you (2:1-3).

With grace comes perfect discrimination between those reconciled and those who are not

Outside of Christ life takes place in the black hole of sin and misery. It is

dangerous—damnable—to live outside of the grace of God (5:3-6). If you are in your sins and outside of Christ; you are a ‘dead duck’ and are condemned (even if you walk about and feel alive). The devil has you dancing to his tune—but your deeds are done by you. You only think that you are free. What you do, think, and want comes naturally to you; then you are living as a child of wrath, even as the rest of mankind.

A deadly serious warning to those yet outside of God’s grace

Without Christ you have no hope and are without God in this world. There are no exceptional sins that bring you into this state of alienation from God. Just being yourself means you are excluded from the life of God (2:2-3). Outside of Christ you are in darkness, and the wrath of God will come upon you. It can’t be stated more bluntly. The things you hope for and hope in will turn to gravel in your mouth if you do not hope in the right thing. On your death bed, everything you have looked to in order to make sense of your life will evaporate. At the approaching disintegration of your earthly existence, accomplishments, family, people you have helped, possessions, experiences, travels—every connection that you have had will all turn to ashes in your hands. Bitter desolation will close in upon you. Your self-reliant pride will wilt at the approaching judgment of God.

Isn’t it true that you have regarded Christ to be too demanding and imperious for you? Haven’t you justified your unbelief by saying to yourself, “How could anyone say or believe, ‘No one comes to the Father but by Me?’” Your false pantheistic notion that God is an all-tolerant cosmic energy will prove in the end to be the devil’s gospel.

You have secretly looked down on God’s people as small-minded narrow group of picky individuals, even though many of them withstood your objections in order to share with you the words of life. Death’s door will prove to be hell’s portal as it makes its eternal claim for you; for you have slighted the Almighty God of grace. The natural state of human existence is “under wrath.” But mercy and life happen in the company of the Invader of normality, in that most unnatural state called grace. If you are in grace, never, never forget it—feed upon the word of His grace every day (4:12-16).