

## *Made Alive in Christ - Ephesians 2:1-22*

**2** As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,<sup>2</sup> in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.<sup>3</sup> All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.<sup>4</sup> But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,<sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.<sup>6</sup> And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,<sup>7</sup> in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.<sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast.<sup>10</sup> For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

### *One in Christ*

<sup>11</sup> Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (that done in the body by the hands of men)—<sup>12</sup> remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

<sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,<sup>15</sup> by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace,<sup>16</sup> and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.<sup>17</sup> He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.<sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

<sup>19</sup> Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household,<sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.<sup>21</sup> In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.<sup>22</sup> And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

## **Made alive in Christ - Notes from The Bible Guide**

Paul explains to his readers that they were spiritually dead. They may have had healthy bodies, lively minds and attractive personalities—but their souls were dead. They were completely unable to respond to God.

But the situation was worse than that. They were not only spiritually dead, but condemned to eternal destruction. God was so angry with them. He was angry with their sin. All their natural God-given desires were warped and exaggerated—so that hunger had become greed and sexual attraction had become lust.

But then came the miracle. God had mercy on the corrupt, captive, helpless human race. Alongside God’s wrath is God’s love. He has power to save. He raised Jesus from death and seated him in glory—and now he has done the same for those who trust in Christ. What a difference grace makes!

God has done all this for us because of his great mercy, love and kindness. He has saved us from sin and death and given us victory over the powers of evil. We didn’t achieve this by ourselves, and we certainly didn’t deserve it. But God has done it for us. We are prize examples of what God can do!

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God (2:8).*

## **Christ gives peace between Jews and Gentiles**

Paul is writing to Gentiles who have become Christians.

For centuries, Gentiles have been excluded from the special relationship between God and Israel (2:11–22).

In the beginning, God made humans in his own image. No person or race was superior to any other. Even when God chose Israel to be his holy people, it was his plan to bless all the nations of the world through their light.

Sadly, the Jews became exclusive. There was a terrible division between Jews and Gentiles. The Jews felt so strongly about their moral and racial purity that they made a point of keeping outsiders away. In Paul’s day, a wall forms a barrier to keep Gentiles out of the inner Jewish courtyards of the temple. There are notices warning that trespassers will be executed. Paul calls this ‘the dividing wall of hostility’ (2:14).

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. (1984). (Eph 2:1–22). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Now Jesus Christ has destroyed this ‘wall’ and made peace between Gentiles and Jews—those who were ‘far away’ (the Gentiles) and those who were ‘near’ (the Jews). Through Jesus and his reconciling death on the cross, both Jews and Gentiles have access to God the Father.

Paul declares the outbreak of peace. The old enmity between Jews and Gentiles is ended. Jesus has broken down the wall of hostility and made peace with God for both Jews and Gentiles.

This peace isn’t made by circumcision, special diet or keeping clean. It is a peace which is made by Jesus dying for the sins of Jews and Gentiles alike.

Instead of the human race divided into Jews and Gentiles, there is now one new humanity united in Christ. The Christian church is just the beginning of this new creation—the new humanity in a new society.

The peace of Christ overcomes other divisions as well—such as inequality between men and women or between different social groups. Wherever there is injustice, envy or exploitation, Jesus invites all to make peace with God and with one another. We are no longer divided by our race or sex, our education or status. We are united by faith in Christ.

Paul explains to Gentile Christians that they are no longer outsiders to God and his people. They are fellow citizens of God’s kingdom, brothers and sisters in God’s family and living stones in the true temple of God’s church.

## **Jews and Gentiles**

*Paul knows Jews who call Gentiles ‘dogs’. Their argument is that Gentiles know nothing about the true God. Gentiles have no covenant with him, no law to govern their behaviour, no coming messiah, kingdom or hope. If a Jewish son or daughter marries a Gentile, the family holds a funeral rather than a wedding. That son or daughter has ceased to exist. In Herod the Great’s temple, a wall runs right round the central Jewish courts. This wall, a metre and a half high, keeps the Gentiles at a lower level and far away from the sanctuary. It separates the Gentiles both from the Jews and from God. Notices in Greek and Latin warn that any Gentile who passes this point will be executed.*

As Paul writes, two famous temples dominate the popular imagination. In Ephesus, the temple of Artemis (‘Diana of the Ephesians’) is one of the seven wonders of the world. In Jerusalem, the temple of Herod the Great is also mightily impressive. But Paul says that God dwells not in a statue of a goddess, nor in an empty sanctuary, but in the lives of his people—his new creation in Christ.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Knowles, A. (2001). *The Bible guide* (1st Augsburg books ed., pp. 615–617). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg.