

The Pearl of the Epistles – Ephesians

We Are His Workmanship

Ephesians 2:10-13

***Ephesians 2:10-13** For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. **11** Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; **12** That at that time ye 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: **13** But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*

Introduction

When I was in the seventh grade I took a Woodshop course. For one of my projects, I chose to make my dad an organizer for his wallet, change and keys. After choosing the plans I needed to select the type of wood and I chose mahogany, even though it was the most expensive. Now the time came to begin working on it. First I had to make a pattern and transfer that pattern to the wood. I cut out the wood and began sanding it in preparation of applying the finish. After the first polyurethane coat, I rubbed the wood down with steel wool and applied the second coat. I repeated these steps five times until I could see a deep shine that seemed to go right to the heart of the wood. After assembly I turned the finished project in for a grade. I was so happy to present it to my dad for Father's day. The final result of my dedicated hard work, knowledge and materials used was the look on my dad's face: priceless.

Today we will find that like the wood in the example above, God is performing a finished project in the believer.

We Are Created Unto Good Works (v. 10)

***Ephesians 2:10** For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

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There is a lot of confusion surrounding works for God. There are those that believe that in order to enter heaven, a person must have “worked” his way there by doing good deeds and being a good person. But those kinds of works are through man’s efforts and have nothing to do with the effort of God. The whole of chapter two of the book of James considers works and faith.

James 2:17-20 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. 18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. 19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

A believer is a believer because of his faith...but God says we are fashioned to do the good works of the Lord Jesus.

Eugene Peterson, pastor, poet and author wrote “The Message; The Bible in Contemporary Language.” His rendering of this verse is very interesting:

“He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing.”¹ (MSG)

We are the LORD’s workmanship. He is working on each believer to make a finished product and that product produces good works. The works are the work of Jesus Christ. Jesus said: “...Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 4:17)

That was the work of Jesus the Messiah; namely to enlarge the kingdom of God! And that is the work that God is fashioning the believer to continue on earth.

We Were the Un-Circumcision (v.11)

Ephesians 2:11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

¹ Peterson, E. H. (2005). *The Message: the Bible in contemporary language*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.

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In these next two verses, we have a dispensational change because of the work completed on the cross and Pentecost; there was now no difference between the Jew and the Gentile. Circumcision was the covenant sign between God's chosen people and Himself. The Gentiles did not circumcise their young, only Israel. It was a mark of the covenant relationship. Paul is writing to the Gentile Christians in Ephesus to remind them of the work of God at Calvary.

There are many passages in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles to show how important and decisive this one point was. The early Gentile Christians were constantly hounded by Jewish Christians to be circumcised as that was God's commandment to His people. Their reasoning was since Jesus was God's Son and He died as the perfect offering, they would want to follow the covenant agreement and become circumcised. Therefore, becoming a Christian, they were merely an extension Israel.

It was so hotly contested that a special council was called in Jerusalem to decide this matter in Acts 15. The outcome of that council set the stage for the acceptance of all Gentiles as brothers without undergoing circumcision. As a good faith effort, the Gentiles were to "...abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood." (Acts 15:20)

In this new dispensation, the seal of the covenant agreement between the Lord and with Christians was not the "circumcision in the flesh made by hands", but the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Believer.

We Were Aliens (v. 12)

Ephesians 2:12 That at that time ye 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 draws their attention to five areas about their spiritual past:

In time past they were without the God's Messiah. They were separated from God by their unbelief in Jesus

In time past they were not citizens of the nation of Israel and therefore the promise of the Messiah

In time past they were strangers from the covenants of promise given to Israel

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In time past they had no hope

In time past they were without God in the world.

All of these promises were for the nation Israel and all others had no part.

We Were Far Off (v. 13)

***Ephesians 2:13** But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*

“BUT!” Christians were once outside the camp so to speak. At one time they were aliens, not part of the covenant and had no hope. “But now in Christ Jesus...” Everything changes for the person who becomes a believer and follower of Yeshua Ha-Mashiach, translated “Yahweh is the Messiah”.

Once we were “far off” but now are made close. Only the shed blood of Jesus as the perfect offering unto God can make this kind of difference. Only the sacred blood of the Messiah can Jew and Gentile meet on even ground before the LORD of LORDS and KING of KINGS. Not by anything that we have done, but by the atoning work of God’s Son, Yeshua!

Conclusion

John Phillips writes:²

“God made this nearness possible through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus. What Grace! Men put Him to death on a cross of shame. It was the crime of the ages. No greater crime could have been conceived. The crucifixion of Christ was the ultimate expression of man’s hatred of God, an act of high-handed rebellion and outrage. Yet God turned the crucifixion into the means of His grace, the ultimate expression of His love for us. No greater manifestation of kindness can be imagined.”

In light of this passage of Scripture let us remember that:

We are created to do good works

² Exploring Ephesians & Philippians, An Expository Commentary, John Phillips, Kregel Publishing, p 70

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We were once standing on the outside looking in

We were aliens to God's promises

We were far from God

But now the Christian kneels at the feet of God because of the relationship we have with
Jesus the Messiah!

Bless the Lord Oh My Soul!

Robert C. Crowder