

Ephesians 13-11-24b

We pick up our study now in Ephesians, we're in chapter 2 and we resume at verse 14. There is one other quick thing I want to say back at 8 and 9. Ephesians 2, 8 and 9, our memory verse, you know it well. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves.

It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. Interestingly, that's where we always stop the quotation. But the next verse says, for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

And in the same breath, by grace you have been saved, not of yourself, gift of God, not of works, but we are created unto good works. Does that strike your mind at all? It is not of works, lest anyone should boast in verse 9, but we are created in Christ Jesus for good works. It is not by good works, but we're created in Christ Jesus for good works.

And we lose a little bit by cutting off at verse 9 and leaving off verse 10. We are His workmanship. His salvation is not our workmanship.

We are His workmanship, Paul says. And again, being sensitive to the pronouns, understanding that at first blush, and in the first instance, I think Paul is talking here specifically about Israel, it nevertheless applies. We look at Israel and we see truths that pertain to us.

And salvation has never been by works. By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. And it is not by works that we are vindicated, even after salvation.

I think there's been a huge misunderstanding. People think that the Israelites thought that their good works would save them. And they thought they were saved because they were in Abraham.

We are Abraham's children, so we're saved. It didn't have anything to do with works. They thought that their good works would justify them, would make them reward worthy.

And it isn't actually the good works, it is the thought behind them, the thoughts and intents of the heart, the motivations that God is judging. And of course, they thought that a lack of bad works was also justification. If I don't actually take my neighbor's wife, then I'm good to go.

And Jesus said, no, if you're wishing you could do so in your heart, it's the same as if you have done it because that's where the judgment takes place, both for good and for ill. You can't have one without the other. It is the thoughts and intents of the heart.

And it has always been that way. God will judge the hearts of men on that day. But you have works mentioned three times in verses 9 and 10.

Salvation is by grace through faith, not of works. We are His workmanship created for good works. God does a work in redeeming His people, and then He works in and through them to

produce actual good works.

Well, if you go back to, if you keep your finger here and turn back to Romans 3, another very well-known passage. Look at verse 19, Romans 3:19. We know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law. Are the Gentiles under the law? Quick pop question.

Are the Gentiles under the law, yes or no? No, they're not under the law. What the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God. Even though only Israel is under the law, their example of failure under the law condemns the whole world because if these are the people that God dwells among, and if God has given them guidance and has made promises and leadership and deliverances all down, and if they fail, it's an a fortiori argument.

If these people are condemned before God, well, the rest of the world, forget about it. What are you talking about? So it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore, verse 20, by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

But now, verse 21, the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, it is witnessed by the law, and it is witnessed by the prophets. By the law comes the knowledge of sin, and also the law and the prophets bear witness to righteousness apart from the law. Interesting, no? The law gives us the knowledge of sin, and the law also gives us knowledge of righteousness.

What did the fruit do that Eve ate? What was the tree called? The tree of the knowledge of what? Good and evil, sin and righteousness. So the law gives the knowledge of sin, and also righteousness apart from the law is revealed, witnessed by the law and the prophets, even, verse 22, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all and upon all who believe. Notice how he's talking about those who are under the law and the whole world, and the law and the prophets show the knowledge of sin, but also reveal the righteousness of God apart from the law.

And that righteousness through faith in Christ Jesus comes to all and upon all who believe, for there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Now, in this context, what does all mean? Looking at the Jews and the Gentiles, all. We have always sort of understood this as meaning every single person, there is none that doeth righteousness, no, not one.

But when he says all in this context, he's really talking about you've got your two categories. And everybody in both categories is under this description. All have sinned, all fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

All are justified freely by His grace, all Jews and all Gentiles, all Israel and all of the uncircumcised. His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God sent forth as a propitiation by His blood through faith to demonstrate His righteousness because in His

forbearance, God had passed over the sins that were previously committed in order to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Now, all of these previous types that were in Israel didn't have the chance to have faith in Jesus because Jesus was not revealed except in type, in foreshadowing, in prospect.

So how are they going to receive that justification? Well, they're all coming back. All Israel shall be saved, Paul says. And this makes sense to us because He is the justifier of those who have faith in Jesus.

So those who were in Israel, those who were positive toward God, who were interested in His salvation, who didn't reject His knowledge outright when they looked at the universe, when they heard the witness of eternity in their hearts, the voice of God, the Holy Spirit in their hearts, they were interested, they were willing, they were receptive. But that's about as far as many of them got in the Old Testament age. Some of them got further.

Your great believers knew God and God gave revelation to those who were seeking it. But it was a very limited, partial, incomplete kind of life. Well, that is all going to change when they all come back and are raised at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom.

And they will come back in their flesh. It will be an enhanced version. This will be the 2.0 version of human flesh but still subject to death, still fatigable, still corruptible, still killable.

There will be murders. There will be crimes. There will be the same sorts of things that could happen in the earliest days of the human race.

But it will be a wonderfully enhanced environment and a wonderfully enhanced existence. These people will be capable of living throughout pretty much the entire Millennial Kingdom, the entire thousand years. People will live for centuries.

To demonstrate at the present time His righteousness. Where is boasting? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but the law of faith.

Verse 28, Romans 3, We conclude that a man is justified, vindicated, declared righteous by faith apart from the deeds of the law. Vindicated, justified, declared righteous apart from the deeds. The same deeds that he's talking about in Ephesians 2, that God has foreordained that we should walk in them.

But it is not the execution of the deeds that constitutes righteousness. It is faith. Is He the God, verse 29, of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also.

Is this not what we're talking about? What Paul is telling us in Ephesians 1 and 2. He is the God of the Gentiles also, since there is one God who will justify, vindicate, declare righteous, the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. Do we then make void the law through

faith? Certainly not. On the contrary, we establish the law.

Well, you remember Romans is a college book. It's not an elementary school book. It's not a junior high book.

It's not a high school book. Romans is a college book. And it is perilous to dip into Romans and then leave, taking things out of context.

But this particular part is so pertinent. Talking about the unification in Christ in this age of God's plan of justification for both Jews and Gentiles. It is not by works.

It is not by the law. And yet the law is established. Its validity, its message is established.

What does the law point out? We just read it. By the law came the knowledge of sin, and the law and the prophets bore witness to the righteousness of God through faith. Both.

So that message, that insight is established. Back to Ephesians chapter 2, verse 14. He, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, is our peace, who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of separation.

There used to be a middle wall of separation between those inside Israel and those outside. That distinction has been abolished. It has been done away.

It was done away in and through Christ. Having abolished in His flesh the enemyship, the opposition, if you will, the law of commandments in ordinances, creating in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace. There is a new man being created.

And this is the addition. But notice it's a new man. He doesn't expand the old man.

He doesn't add on to the old man. He doesn't sew a third arm or a second head or additional parts to the old man. This is one new man.

And this puts to rest all of the false ideas. And depending on how much reading you do, you will run across this idea that the church is really just a broadened and extended Israel. That we can still expect to function under the Old Testament and we just add on the new.

That there's been no diminishment or no cancellation or no setting aside of the Old Testament. Israel has just been expanded to include the Gentiles. That's not what Paul says here.

It is one new man. The distinction has been abolished. The middle wall of separation has been abolished.

So you do not look at people now as Jew and Gentile from the standpoint of spiritual things. People can claim culturally or historically, hereditarily to be a Jew. People can convert to the faith of Judaism and call themselves a Jew like Sammy Davis Jr. did and many others.

Fine. That's not what's being spoken of here. In God's eyes, when He looks at people inside the church, outside the church, He doesn't see a distinction.

Here's a Jewish person. Here's a Gentile. That distinction is gone.

Christ rubbed it out. Erased it. The division in the middle wall has been taken away.

So anytime the question surfaces, well, isn't there something special about being a Kohen or a Goldstein or a Rubenstein or any other Jewish family name? Doesn't God look with some sort of special favor or special interest on Jews and the Jews in Israel? No, He does not. God doesn't give a hoot and a rain barrel about who your parents were or whether your mother was Jewish or not. He totally doesn't care.

That distinction has been eradicated. No book in heaven says J by the side of certain names and G by the side of others. Your name is either in the Book of Life or out of the Book of Life, the Lamb's Book of Life, based on faith in Christ or lack thereof.

And that's it. Well, but doesn't God have to keep track of the Jews? Of course. But that's in His own providences.

It has nothing to do with salvation, faith, our interest in people. It doesn't matter. It's fine to have the American Board of Missions to the Jews if you want to.

Jews for Jesus. That's fine. But you have to understand that this is a cultural.

You might as well have missions to Japan or missions to China, missions to Korea, missions to South America, missions to the Middle East and Arab cultures, missions to Egypt. Fine. You can make those sorts of distinctions.

But be aware it's not God's distinction. God isn't tracking the Jews for spiritual purposes. He's tracking believers and unbelievers.

You're either in Christ or you're not. And that's the only identifier. He Himself is our peace who has made both one.

And notice the peace is lateral. The peace is horizontal. Now, what would be the equivalent today? It's been a long time since people put their elbows in the air and said, Well, I'm Jewish and I'm from the law and I'm God's chosen people, blah, blah, blah, and you're not.

And therefore you're on the outs and I'm going to segregate and reject you. What would be a similar situation today if we were going to try to draw some sort of modern parallel? What they're basically talking about is people who grew up in a religious environment and those who didn't. You've got people that are born into a Christian family, Christian parents, raised in church, learned the Bible stories, did the memory verses, wordless book, flannel graph, summer camp,

know all the words to the hymns.

Just kind of steeped in Christian tradition and practice. And then there's people that grew up as something else, anything else. And there is a similar cultural divide in many cases where there are people that just don't know, don't know anything.

They don't know the difference between Noah and Moses. They might have heard Psalm 23, they might have heard a couple of the Ten Commandments, and that's about the extent of their biblical knowledge. And there is a distinction that we make in denominations.

We say, well, you're from this church, you're from this tradition, you're from this persuasion, and I'm not. I'm from a different one. And so we have these walls that we build and we say, well, you're one of them.

Paul says, look, these distinctions have been broken down and eradicated. Where? Everywhere? Are you not to distinguish a religion or a background or a division? Where are these distinctions to be ignored? Where is there to be complete peace between people? It's in Christ. It is fine to observe that here is a Mormon, here's a Jehovah's Witness, here's a Church of Christ, here's an Episcopalian, here's a Catholic, whatever it may be.

Name your 400-odd denominational designations. No problem noting that distinction. Seventh-day Adventist, whatever it may be, that's not a problem.

But at the point that someone joins the fellowship, at the point that we are in Christ and we are together pursuing the common goal of faith and obedience, all references to the past are out the window. It doesn't matter where you came from, it matters where you are. You were dead in trespasses and sins.

You once walked according to the course of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit of the working and the sons of disobedience. We all once conducted ourselves in a bad way. That was then, this is now.

God, having done these things, has given us this potential, so that. And that's the emphasis and that's the focus. Don't hold the past against anybody.

God doesn't hold our past against us. We shouldn't hold our past against us. All of us, I'm sure, can think back on, oh, gracious sakes, in the past, embarrassing, humiliating.

I sure hope there's not a big movie screen at the judgment. I don't want to be seeing that stuff replayed. I don't even want to see it replayed in my own mind.

If I could delete that file and all of its backups everywhere, I would. I don't want that stuff coming up. I'm horrified at the prospect of my life in the past being reviewed.

There are some heinously, horribly embarrassing, shameful, I wish it hadn't happened, what was I thinking moments. He is our peace. And this peace is specifically with reference to the past.

What has He been talking about in the first half of this chapter? We all came from somewhere. And He is our peace. He has broken down the wall that separated us in the past.

He has delivered us from those forces that controlled us in the past. He is our peace. Now, there is this Dr. Phil business about you've got to forgive yourself.

No. Give yourself permission to, you know, grieve. All of this psycho babble is nonsense.

We don't forgive ourselves. God has forgiven us. We don't give ourselves permission.

God has released us. God allows us. God defines us.

The Lord Jesus Christ defines us. This arrogant self-forgiveness and self-permissivizing is just that. It is the flesh.

It is the devil. It is anything to put you in the place of God. What is the one and only true source of forgiveness? It's God.

Even when we forgive one another, be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as, since, because God in Christ has forgiven you. And I don't have any business holding something against you if God is not holding anything against either one of us. Right? I'm not going to arrogate to myself the power to hold something against someone when God has forgiven both you and me.

What business do I have undoing the work of God in forgiving all of us? He is our peace. He has forgiven the Gentiles from their heinous pagan practices and lifestyle, their horrible fornications and travesties of immorality, and He has forgiven us our self-righteous, lustful operations under the law. We Jews, Paul says, He's forgiven all of us.

He is our peace. Our peace. Everybody.

And it isn't me forgiving myself. It is me recognizing that in Christ I have peace. I have peace with my own past.

You have peace with your past. We have peace with each other's past. Just as I am forgiven of my sins, you are forgiven of your sins, and we can forgive each other of whatever sins may affect or impact or connect to one another.

It is arrogant. It is violating the first commandment of the Old Testament law to arrogate to ourselves God's position in making an issue out of sin, either my own or someone else's. You don't have the right.

You don't have the authority to hold someone's sins against them that God has forgiven. Now again, I am talking about in Christ. Can I hold people outside the fold responsible for what they do? Can I hold people in government? Can I hold other peoples and other nations accountable for what they do in my mind? Can I pray down God's vindictive wrath and judgment on evil here and elsewhere? Absolutely.

But in Christ, I have no such right. In Christ, He is our peace. He has made both one.

He has broken down the middle wall of separation. Now, if we're both one, this is in many ways partaking of the principles of a marriage. The two become one flesh.

And when Paul is talking to the husband about loving his wife, he says no man hates his own flesh. I mean, you've got to be a psychopath to do harm to yourself. And if you love your neighbor as you love yourself, if you love your wife as you love yourself, then you shouldn't be doing harm because the two have been made one.

And in Christ, the two have been made one. And the same principle of love that is sacrificial towards self and beneficial towards others applies and applies emphatically, applies exponentially in this case. He has abolished in His flesh the enmity, the law of commandments in ordinances to create in Himself one new man from the two.

And this is in Christ. Now, if it's in Himself and in Christ has made the two one, if you judge, if you malign, if you are critical of, if you do harm and despot to someone else in the body, who are you doing it to? If it's in Christ, if you have done it to the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me. And God is going to have something to say about the injury that we do to one another because we do not respect this principle of peace.

This is a big deal. We had better not be casual about the way we treat each other because we are in Christ. And in Christ, what you do to others, you do to Him.

And He will take it personally. By the way, what others do to you, Jesus will take personally. We don't need to take it personally.

We don't need to try to find a way to even the scales or exact retribution or implement punishment of some kind. You just remember, if you're wronged, if you are hurt, if you are in some way impugned or maltreated in the body by a fellow believer, just sit tight, commit it to God, do no harm, do no wrong. Just remember, the Lord Jesus Christ is taking that personally on your behalf.

Leave it alone. Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. God will look out for Himself.

God the Father is going to look out for God the Son. And it is not our place, it is not our authority. Judge not, lest ye be judged.

The measure with which you try to measure to someone else is the measure with which it will be measured back to you. So you know what? I don't even want any measuring cups. I don't want any of them within reach.

I would rather just not measure anything because I can't afford to have it measured back to me the way I deserve. Leave it in God's hands. This ought to give us peace.

There's nothing more disruptive, there's nothing that is more disturbing, there's nothing more stressful than being wronged. Now there's a time when you get socked in the jaw and you say, you know what, I mouthed off, I had that coming. You know, I really can't blame you for doing what you did because I earned it and deserved it.

It is when we receive what we do not deserve, when it is an injustice and it is a bad thing that is done that we didn't earn, we didn't deserve, why on earth should I be suffering for this? That's where this principle, anytime we feel that way, we should come to this passage. He is our peace. He is the realm in which we now exist.

We are in Him and He is in us. And if something bad happens to us, Jesus said, look, they hate me, they're going to hate you, don't be surprised, but be patient. Just be enduring, I'll handle it.

And we have to trust Him to do so. It is an important point of application to commit these things to God and don't try to snatch them out of His hand. We don't snatch evangelization out of His hand.

We don't snatch conviction of sin out of His hand and try to do it ourselves. And we do not take judgment out of His hands. Jesus said, all authority has been given to me in heaven and in earth.

Let the Lord deal with it. He is in the business, verse 16, of reconciling both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the opposition, the enmity. Now why would there be opposition and enmity? We think that there's some justification, don't we? I am down on Islam as a religion.

I think it's violent, I think it's oppressive, I think it's wrong, I think it is a distortion and corruption derived from both Judaism and Christianity. I think it's an awful thing. But I stop myself short of enmity.

Why? I can disagree with it, I can object to it, I can find it to be wrong, I can calculate that it is erroneous, but I do not go find a Muslim and beat him up. I don't egg his house, I don't refuse to serve him. If I'm in a place of public service, I would be courteous, I would be kind.

If he extends his hand, I will shake it. If he lives in my neighborhood, I will treat his property and his presence with the same respect I would anybody else. Why? Because it is one thing to observe, to identify, to note error.

It is something else to try to take it upon myself to punish it. It's not my place, I don't have that

authority. That is in God's realm.

Immorality. Two people in a, this is hypothetical, two people in a house next to me are shacked up without the benefit of marriage. Maybe they are of the same gender and they are shacked up together.

I think, well, that's an evil and that's just a wrong, that's eroding and corroding the fabric of our country. So, do I chuck a rock through their house? Do I try to take some sort of action? Do I try to make it miserable so that they will move out of my neighborhood? No. I am courteous.

I treat them with the same distant level of respect that I would anyone else that I don't know and is not on my list of friends. But I am respectful of their property and their privacy. Why? These things are in God's hands to judge.

I can observe, I can note, I can be aware, I can keep a distance from things I know God is going to judge. But I do not take it upon myself to punish. Because the measure with which I measure that punishment is going to be poured on my own head, and rightfully so.

Because I have usurped and I have irrigated to myself what belongs to God. He is our peace. And those who are in Christ, those who have an interest and are seeking and following, I have a much greater responsibility to be an encouragement and not a discouragement.

To be a fellow citizen and saint. To treat as a brother those who are in Christ regardless of any other factor. Because in Christ He has reconciled us and made us one in His body through the cross, putting to death the opposition, putting to death the enmity.

Now that enmity is not put to death and gone outside the body. It is inside, it is in our fellowship, it is in our church. There should be no divisions.

Paul is never more disappointed than when he's writing to the Corinthians, I hear there are wars and divisions among you, it should not be so. Just as there should not be a war and a division in a marriage, where the two have become one flesh, there shouldn't be wars and divisions in a fellowship. In the Christian community it is one body.

And the enemyship and the enmity have been put to death. And that's one thing God is not going to raise up, is that enemyship. He raises us up together with Christ, He does not raise the death of the enmity.

Now therefore, this is what all of this is there for. Verse 19, you Gentiles, still using that second person, plural, you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners, you are fellow citizens with the sanctified and you are members of the household of God. Fellow members, everybody is in the same household on the same level.

Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, notice that used to be the

exclusive claim of the Jews, well to us belong the prophets, we are stewards of the oracles of God and so on. You Gentiles are built on the foundation of God's apostles and prophets that came out of Israel. Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building being fitted together, who is doing the fitting together? Who decided you would be here and not somewhere else? Not some other place in time, not some other place in family, not some other place in locality.

Who fitted us together? It's God. Being fitted together, it grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God by means of the Spirit. Dwelling place of God by means of the Spirit, profound truth, we being a place of habitation, a place of presence for God Himself.

Well, that brings us to the threshold of chapter 3 and that's where we will resume next time. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for the mercy and grace, inexpressible and beyond imagination that You have expressed toward us.

We pray that in some small way we, through comprehending that mercy, will be enabled and empowered to express it toward one another, so that Your glory and Your purpose will be fulfilled in us as we exist together as body and bride of Christ. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.