

EPHESIANS 2

With the exception of John 3:16, perhaps the most famous passage in Scripture is “by grace you have been saved, through faith,” found in Eph 2:8 (see also 2:6). The challenge is to hear this verse anew, to have it speak afresh. With that goal in mind, let us imagine ourselves as part of an early second-century Christian church in a little town about fifteen miles from Ephesus, a small community of perhaps a dozen or so like-minded Gentiles. We heard the gospel from a traveling missionary, and had a copy of Ephesians as our main guide to the Christian life. Paul’s letters to the Romans, the Corinthians, the Philippians and the Thessalonians were unknown to our tiny group. What would our Christian life look like, what would be its major contours and emphases?

As we have seen, the resounding note that rings loudly in the opening chapter of the epistle, which reverberates and echoes in the remaining chapters, is God’s amazing plan of sonship for his people through Christ as part of an overarching design to redeem and renew creation. Chapter 2 picks up the melody line, and adds accompaniment, filling out the purposes of God for the church. I think our second-century community would expect that the gospel gives new hope by granting membership into a special group—the people of God. Salvation by faith was viewed as having two dimensions to it, equally important and explaining each other. Salvation in Christ took our little group from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light by giving each of us new life in Christ. This new life in the new kingdom was actually a new humanity, realized in Christ through the Spirit by faith. Salvation was understood by these early believers not only in individualistic terms, nor as merely a private decision, nor as something that affected only the human soul. Paul instructs all believers that salvation brings us into God’s family, it makes us part of his holy temple, and its blessings usher us into the next, new age.

RAISED WITH CHRIST (2:1–10)

¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in 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. ³All 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 deserving of wrath. ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

These ten verses contain crucial theological truth, ethical challenge, and exegetical puzzles. To understand the former two, we need to pay attention to the latter. One central question affecting the reading is Paul’s use of the pronouns “you” and “we.” If we attend carefully to these pronouns, the depth of Paul’s argument will become clearer.

You and We in Paul’s Argument

Who are the “you” in Paul’s argument? While of course the scripture speaks to each of us, and we can all place ourselves in the shoes of the “you” who are dead in trespasses and sins (2:1), Paul has in mind here not the generic human, but the Gentile. It is the Gentile who lived as part of this present age, ruled by evil forces and sinful attitudes. This age is dominated by abuse of power, greed, hatred—summed up as disobedience against God. In 2:3 Paul shifts his gaze from Gentile to Jew, and notes that “we” Jews are not innocent of wrongdoing, because we operated under the

influence of the flesh. A similar toggle between “you” and “we” is found in Col 2:11–14. Paul notes that the Gentile believers were (spiritually) circumcised in Christ, paralleling this image with that of their baptism. He continues that their uncircumcised nature was made alive in Christ. But then Paul speaks of Christ’s forgiveness, and here he uses “we” to celebrate the canceled debt that had condemned all humans. Paul’s message in Rom 7:5 is relevant here: the flesh (sinful nature) works against the good law of God, causing Jews who love the law to disobey it. Jews and Gentiles are equally guilty before God, but they arrive at their guilty status from different paths. Gentiles are idolaters; they have forsaken the one true God and follow idols. Jews know God’s revelation, and have the advantages of the Law, the prophets, the temple, the promises, the covenants (see Rom 9:4–5), but they have not all acted from the wellspring of faith. So in the end, all are in need of God’s grace.

Why is it important to emphasize this difference between Jews and Gentiles? First, because it is the best way to make sense of Paul’s later argument that Christ’s power is seen in making the two groups into one people. Paul believes that the two becoming one body is a powerful mystery, mysterious because it is so grand, so bold a plan, and powerful because through this one body, the church, God is declaring to the rulers and the authorities his unsearchable grace and unfathomable love. The miraculous creation of a new people, holy and wholly devoted to God, stands against the claims of the present age. The world calls for domination, selfishness, and independence from others and God, but God’s grace given without respect of person (to Jew, Gentile, free, slave, male, female, and any other division humanity can think up) decisively ends all conversation (3:10). In and with Christ, the church, the two being one, stands as a testimony to God’s love and power over against the social and political divisions that characterize our world. In a similar vein, Paul declares to the Philippians that by standing in one spirit for the faith of the gospel, they prove their opponents’ destruction, and the Philippians’ own salvation (Phil 1:27–28).

Second, focusing on the use of “you” and “we” helps explain why Paul declares “you have been saved” in 2:6, 8, rather than “we have been saved.” Note that in 2:4 Paul introduces the subject of this long sentence (the sentence in Greek runs nine verses), namely God, and in 2:5–6 we have the main verbs: made alive, raised, and seated. Each of these verbs is in the past tense (aorist), indicating that God has done and finished

with the deed. We will return to look more closely at the meanings of these verbs below, but here I want to note that Paul includes himself and all Jewish believers (“we”) together with the Gentile believers (“you”) in these acts of God. But in the middle of this great claim, he switches to using the second-person plural—“by grace you have been saved” (2:6). Why not say “we have been saved”? I think the verb tense is important. The verb is in the perfect tense, both here and in 2:8, which indicates that a past action has continuing relevance at the present. Unlike the other three verbs, which indicate a past action finished and done with, this verb indicates a continuing activity. That is why some translate the verb as “you are saved” rather than “you have been saved.” The verb carries both meanings. An analogy might help. I am married; that is my current state, but it implies a past starting point, my wedding. The effect of the wedding is that I am currently and have been married. The power of my vows and my husband’s vows remain in effect. So too God’s promises in Christ remain effective against sin. Thus the present state owes itself to a past action by God in Christ, but that past action is not the whole story. The action is an ongoing one, you were saved and are saved—salvation has a beginning, middle, and end.

Salvation for Paul is not a ticket into heaven for your soul, but the entrance into fellowship with God and his people. As such, Paul is assuring the Gentiles that *you* are part of that salvation plan, *you* are now a citizen of God’s kingdom, *you* are part of God’s new temple. In Paul’s day, Jews who believed in Christ would have already appreciated that they were part of God’s family, and they would have understood the community aspect of God working through his people to reveal his love and mercy to the world. But for Gentiles, this was a staggering, astounding concept. Therefore twice Paul states it, so the readers would be clear: *you* Gentiles are saved by grace; all the promises, hopes, power, and responsibilities of citizenship in God’s kingdom have been advanced to you in Christ.

One further pronoun shift should be noted, the shift from “you” in 2:1, referring to those “being dead in transgressions,” to “we” in 2:5, “being those dead in transgressions.” The same Greek participle and nouns are used, only the pronoun varies. At first glance it might appear that Paul in these verses is generalizing all humanity into believer and non-believer categories. However, in 2:1 those being dead in trespasses are further explained as walking in the ways of this world and following the ways of this present age. Jews have God’s revelation, so they can discern truth

from falsehood (idols). But because both Jews and Gentiles ultimately sin by either following the gods of this world or their own fleshly desires, the end result is that all are in need of God's grace. The transgressions might look different, one pursuing idolatry, another lusts of the flesh, but both paths take one far from the center of God's love. That is why Paul can also say that both *we* (Jews) and all the rest of humanity were children of wrath by nature (2:3). The emphasis is not on how each group came to such a situation (original sin discussion) or on whether people have been created for wrath (double predestination discussion). Rather, Paul's focus is on what state humanity is in at the present: they are under the power of sin and death.

Verb Tenses in Paul's Argument

Returning to the main verbs in 2:5–6, Paul describes God's actions towards believers who were once dead in trespasses as having made them alive with Christ, raised them with Christ, and seated them with Christ. Paul uses the past tense (aorist), which some suggest speaks against Pauline authorship. They argue that Paul focused on the future hope we have in Christ. The point Paul makes here, however, is that believers are *with* Christ, and so if they are with him, then they will share his current status and situation. Since Christ was indeed raised from the dead, if we are then *with* him, we share that resurrection status (see Col 2:12; 3:1). The reality of the resurrection life does not begin at Christ's second coming, it is occurring right now. Often in Pauline studies this eschatology is identified as a "now, not yet" position. *Now* in Christ we have all we need for living a holy life in the power of the Spirit, but *yet to come* is the resurrected body and new heavens and earth. And over all this is the reality that because we are in Christ, we share with Christ all the blessings of God through Christ. Such language is found in Rom 6:8, where Paul uses the future tense to speak about our hope in Christ, and past tense in Rom 8:30 to describe our standing in Christ as predestined, called, justified, and glorified.

Salvation Is God's Gift

Paul insists that God's grace is what provides salvation. In 2:8 he continues his claim in 2:5, "by grace you have been saved," with the additional

clause “through faith.” He follows with the qualifier “and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.” Several questions rise to the surface, including the meaning of “through faith” as well as the antecedent of “this” and the meaning of “gift.” To the first point, many understand “through faith” to be the individual’s subjective appropriation of God’s salvation. Paul’s point is that God’s salvation is accepted on the basis of trust and confidence in God’s promises and deeds worked in Christ Jesus that make possible salvation (Gal 2:16). However, some point to Phil 3:9 as a parallel (“through faith in/of Christ”) and argue that the genitive construction “faith in/of Christ” is best understood as the “faithfulness of Christ.” In Eph 2:8, they argue that Paul’s meaning is best conveyed as “you have been saved through the faithfulness of Christ.”¹ The latter position has the advantage of reinforcing Paul’s overall point that it is God who saves; human effort is not part of the equation. Weakening this interpretation, however, is the fact that the genitive phrase “of/in Christ” is not found in Ephesians. To the second point, Paul speaks of “this” which is not of ourselves. To what is he referring? “This” is a neuter word, while both “faith” and “grace” are feminine. It is not grammatically impossible that “this” refers back to either of these words. The immediately previous noun “faith” is often pointed to as the antecedent; Paul thus is saying that faith itself is God’s gift. However, this is not the most natural reading of the grammar. Some point to the verb participle “you have been saved,” as the reference, but this participle is masculine, which again makes it less likely the antecedent. Most probably, “this” refers back to the entire argument Paul has made in the last few verses, namely, that one’s salvation is God’s gracious act done from and through his abundant love and mercy.

The third feature of this passage to be highlighted is Paul’s term “gift.” The word used here for “gift” (*dōron*) is not found elsewhere in Paul, although it was a common term in his day. The word is used by other New Testament writers often in the context of offering sacrifices (Matt 5:23–4; 23:18–19; Heb 5:1; 8:3–4). A related term (*dōrea*) is used in Eph 3:7; 4:7 (see also Rom 3:24; 5:15, 17; 2 Cor 9:15) and has the sense of an unmerited or undeserved gift or benefit. A third word for gift, *charisma*, is related to the word for “grace” (*charis*). *Charisma* is frequently used when speaking of the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit (Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12:4) or a gift of office through the laying on of hands (1 Tim 4:14). We cannot

1. For a brief discussion of the options, see O’Brien 1999: 175.

know conclusively why Paul used *dōron* in Eph 2:8; however, its closeness to *dōrea*, used by Paul to express the extreme generosity of God's salvation, suggests this was Paul's intention as well in 2:8.

Grace through Faith, Not Works

Paul stresses that salvation is by grace, through faith, not works. If the analysis above is accurate, then at this point Paul is especially focused on the Gentiles' salvation in Christ. So why would Paul contrast grace and works? Typically the term "works" is understood as deeds done to earn merit before God. Would a Gentile be thinking like this? Paul cautions the Corinthians that God's choice of the foolish and weak was to prevent anyone from boasting before him (1 Cor 1:28, see also 4:7). And in Rom 2:1–16 a strong case can be made that Paul is talking about Gentiles (he first mentions Jews specifically in 2:17). If so, then Gentiles appeared to be tempted to focus on deeds; Paul speaks of those deeds done with evil intent being condemned by God. Gentiles have not earned God's approval, any more than Jews earn God's approval. Paul cautioned the Roman Gentile believers not to be haughty over against Jews (Rom 11:18), and the same attitude might be in view here. Ethnic pride and identity ran quite deep in the ancient world, and Paul addresses it head-on as it presented a grave danger to the church's unity. There is no place for boasting in oneself in the church.

Quite the opposite of boasting, grace has been a central theme from the beginning of the epistle, emphasized in 1:6–7 in connection with God's glory and his generosity. Grace is that favor which is unmerited, undeserved, and even unexpected (from a human standpoint). The muscular arm of God reaching to Adam as painted by Michelangelo on the Sistine chapel's ceiling calls to mind the grace of God inasmuch as God's grace is active, not static or theoretical. God's grace calls, saves, brings life. God's grace pursues those who are running from him (Rom 5:8). God's grace is grounded in and grows from his bottomless love, as Paul stresses in 2:4. In sum, Paul argues that believers are saved in Christ on the basis of grace.

Interestingly, Paul does not use the term "justified" here, but rather "saved." Ephesians is unique in Paul's letters in using the verb "saved" in the perfect tense in this context. Should we treat the terms as synonyms? Like level 5 river rapids, current discussions about the full import of

Paul's message of justification are treacherous waters to navigate, and participants tend to get very wet in the process. But the thrill of exploring the challenging waters of Paul's theology should encourage us to strap on the life jacket and grab an oar. I suggest that Paul uses "saved" here rather than "justified" because the latter term is too restrictive for his meaning. Said another way, I think Paul has already in so many words conveyed the concept of justification when he declared that we were made alive with Christ. God paved the way for new life by rescuing believers from their life of death, in Christ. This is the beginning of salvation, but it is not its sum total. New life today and resurrection life to come are a believer's secure fortune. In Rom 5:9–10, Paul speaks about justification and salvation, noting that the first makes way for the second. Justification comes through Christ's blood, it establishes the forgiveness of sins (see also Eph 1:7); that affects believers such that salvation from God's wrath is sure. Moreover, justification leads to reconciliation with God in the present. In Ephesians, by using the perfect tense, Paul suggests that the present enjoyment of God's salvation and the future assurance of deliverance from judgment are the benefits of each believer. Both Romans and Ephesians reassure the believer that God's covenant promises in Christ, in his death and resurrection, are firm and solid today, and will be on the last day.

Paul describes God's love and grace extended to believers in terms of being made alive with, raised with, and seated with Christ. With such benefits bestowed, a believer might begin to feel pretty special—all this attention, just for me? Paul nips such thoughts in the bud in 2:7. He notes that God has shown his great love and immeasurable grace to us so that in the coming ages, from now until Christ returns, and beyond, his kindness will be known. Paul declares that God's salvation plan was purposed to declare God's unmatched generosity to the ages. Most likely Paul is speaking not just about time, but about the rulers and powers that exist in that time. Christ's death and resurrection stand in stark opposition to the authorities of the present age, and God's abundant grace extended to humans leaves the spiritual forces slack-jawed in amazement. Paul reminds us here that our salvation actually has ramifications beyond our personal and corporate lives in Christ. God's plan of salvation stands as vindication of God's goodness to his creation, his commitment to his covenants and promises, and his power over all evil.

God's Masterpiece

The final verse (2:10) in this section directs the believer's vision from the heavenly realm into the world, and offers the second ramification concerning our salvation in Christ. The believers have a purpose, divinely given and divinely empowered: to function as God's agents of goodness in the world. To fully appreciate Paul's argument, we need to focus on several key terms in this verse, including his description of believers as God's masterpiece or handiwork and the good works laid out before them. And we need to address the idea of works as it relates to believers' lives of faith.

To the first point, Paul describes believers as God's masterpiece or handiwork. The term was used in the larger Greek world to speak of creative accomplishments such as composing a poem. The term carries an exalted meaning. For example, both canoes and yacht are boats, but only the latter would qualify as the kind of masterpiece of creativity Paul is signaling here. Paul has been building to this crescendo for nine verses. In this section, Paul has described believers' pasts as one of death, drowning under the weight of fleshly passions, suffocating under the power of the ruler of the air. All that changes in Christ; believers are greatly loved by God, given the gift of salvation, saved by grace, made alive with Christ, raised and seated with Christ in the heavenlies. It takes one's breath away; no wonder Paul declares that we are God's masterpiece, for God's love, care and glory come together in our salvation.

Connected with the term "handiwork" or masterpiece is the verb "to create." God's work in us can be summed up as new creation. The verb is used only with God as the subject in the New Testament, and it can reference either physical or spiritual creation. The two words are used together here to speak of the believer's new life in Christ, but they are found together in Rom 1:20, which speaks of God's physical creation of the world. We will return to the subject of physical creation in a moment, but we cannot overestimate the importance for Paul of the concept of new creation. Paul insists to the Corinthians that each of them is a new creation in Christ, using the noun form of the verb. The context is that of recognizing that all humans die, and Christ died for all. Thus if one has died in Christ, then that one is a new creation (2 Cor 5:14–17). The phrase "new creation" is found in Gal 6:15, but here the contrast is between those who advocate circumcision of the flesh, and those who cling to the cross.

Paul declares that circumcision and uncircumcision count for nothing, only the new creation matters. The reality of the new creation, then, is seen against the backdrop of both the Jew/Gentile identity struggle, and the battle between the present evil age and the age to come, inaugurated now in Christ.

Good Works

What is the function for which God's masterpieces have been created? Paul describes it as "good works," which have been laid out in advance by God. Christians from diverse traditions today for various reasons seem to have an allergic reaction to the phrase "good works." Heart rates elevate, palms sweat, and people prepare themselves for an onslaught of guilt feelings. Or perhaps eyes glaze over, minds tune out, and people figure that the whole works business is for those who don't really trust God for their salvation. Both reactions are rooted in a bifurcation of our humanity into the saved soul and the damned flesh. This gnostic view, however, could not be more inaccurate. As we saw above, salvation is for the total person. The promise of a resurrected body well suited for life on the new earth signals that our current life as a member of Christ's body provides practice for life in the age to come. I suggest that Paul understands creation as functional, that Paul cannot imagine a new creation without its attending purpose. The purpose gives value and makes sense of the created entity. A new creation without an attending purpose would be like having a golf ball with no clubs. Therefore to see the new believer's life through a template of works for merit versus saved by grace does not capture Paul's intentions here. The point is new creation, which, like the physical creation, is designed with a purpose in mind. The creature is equipped to function as it should by its Creator.

No believer needs to cast about looking for good works, for God has provided a way for each believer to fulfill his or her purpose. What is intended by Paul's claim that God has prepared good works "in advance"? It could imply that before the foundation of the world specific activities were decided upon and individuals' names were attached to each. It is also possible that Paul speaks more generally here of kingdom work which has been prepared for by Christ's death and resurrection. Jesus speaks of the fields being ready for harvest, and needing reapers (Matt 9:37). General tasks such as caring for widows and orphans (Jas 1:27), bearing each

other's burdens (Gal 6:2), resisting sin (1 Cor 10:12–13), loving enemies (Luke 6:32–36), and living by the Spirit (Rom 14:17–18) are laid out in the New Testament as responsibilities to be carried out by followers of Jesus.

These behaviors, attitudes, and sympathies are to be as natural as walking. Indeed, Paul states that we are to walk in these good works. Interestingly, in 2:1, Paul indicates that the Gentiles walk in their trespasses and sins, in what amounts to a death march. But believers walk in newness of life, moving from one good, holy, blessed action or attitude to another, step by step, bringing God glory in all things. The image of the Christian life as a walk occurs frequently in Paul. He admonishes the Galatians to walk by the Spirit (5:16) and keep in step with the Spirit (5:25; see also Rom 6:4; 8:4; 2 Cor 5:2; Phil 3:17; Col 1:10). In Ephesians Paul repeatedly asks that they walk worthy of their calling (4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15). Some translations (including the TNIV) render the Greek as “live” rather than “walk,” which might lose a bit of the sense of energy, direction, and purpose assumed in the term “walk.” More so in Paul’s time than now, walking was the way one supported life: people walked their animals to the fields and back home, they walked to get water, to attend synagogue or festivals, to plant and harvest crops. Life depended upon walking. Everyone knew that to walk was to live, and to live was to walk (or have a servant do the walking for you). The image of walking in the Spirit, or walking in good works, was a natural way of saying how the believer’s new life, the life of a new creature, was to be nourished and maintained.

If Paul’s life is anything to go on, walking in good works is hard, scary, exhilarating, and exhausting all at once. Paul does not say that God will smooth out the path, or keep the weather sunny and the wind to the back. Paul is walking, doing, being in real time under the power of the Spirit. The Spirit did not carry Paul as a parent might do for a toddler; Paul was walking, acting, choosing, but not alone. Always within, around, and beside is the God who saves—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

CHRIST, OUR PEACE (2:11–22)

¹¹Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call

themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)—¹²remember 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. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. ¹⁹Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²²And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

In the second half of the chapter, Paul identifies two consequences of his previous declarations that believers (Jew and Gentile) are God’s masterpiece. Both these statements are introduced by “therefore” (2:11, 19). The claims made are further elaborated upon in 2:14–18, which discusses how it is that Gentiles and Jews share in Christ. Paul’s argument is more explicit and detailed here than at the beginning of the chapter, for he further defines both humanity’s situation and Christ’s role in God’s salvation plan. To capture these twin emphases, we will look first at Paul’s argument concerning Jews and Gentiles in 2:11–13, 19–22 and then focus on 2:14–18.

No Longer Strangers (2:11–13, 19–22)

Paul addresses the Ephesians directly by asking them to recall their lives before they heard the gospel message. Certain things were true, including that they were without God (2:12), although clearly most of them would have at that time retorted that they were devoted to their gods. But from Paul's (and any Jew's) perspective, Gentiles in the main did not forsake idolatry; they lived without recognizing God in their everyday lives. Again, they were strangers to all that true knowledge of God offered, including the covenants of the promise, the hope that only God brings; they were outside the community that bears God's revelation to the world. Paul describes it as alienated from the citizenship of Israel (2:12). This unique phrase is rich with subtle meaning. First, the term "citizenship" is used elsewhere only in Phil 3:20 (using a cognate term), where Paul contrasts the believer's loyalty to God and his promises of a new heavens and earth, not to earthly things which have about them the stench of death. Paul is hinting at the same truth here, that citizenship within Israel is membership into God's family. Second, Paul uses "Israel" in a specific sense here, focusing on the spiritual Israel, those Jews who know the covenants, the promise and the hope of God. Paul divides Jews into those who are circumcised in the flesh, and those who are circumcised also in the heart (see Jer 9:26). He reminds the Ephesians that they are called the uncircumcised, but that this label has been given to them by those who see things from a fleshly perspective, not those who understand that true circumcision is that which is done to the heart.

But the Gentile Ephesians remain no longer in their former state, for in Christ they are now close to God, they are now fellow citizens with the saints, they are full members of God's family, they are building pieces of God's holy temple (2:13, 19–22). Each of these images brings depth to our understanding of the Christian life. Paul declares that they are no longer outsiders, but are part of the community of saints. Because he speaks here of being fellow citizens, it is likely that the term "saints" is parallel to "Israel" in 2:12. The riches of God's kingdom life, and fellowship with those who worship the one true God, are now counted as well to Gentiles in Christ.