

Ephesians: What's God Saying to You? What are You Going to Do About It?

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I. Introduction

When it comes to studying the Bible, we don't want to walk away with some more cool information about God and the Christian life. God wants us to pay close attention to what He has to say. He wants us to walk away having heard His voice saying, "This is who I am, this is who you are, and this is what your life is supposed to look like. Now, go do what I've told you."

II. Ephesians: What is God Saying to You and What are You Going to Do About It?

God's Word is supposed to be life-shattering and life-altering. That is, it should shatter your old idea of who you are and what your purpose in life is. It should then alter the path you're on: whatever you believed about yourself, your life, and God should now be different because you've now heard His voice. If God speaks—and He does—doesn't it make sense that studying His Word should be this dramatic, this earth-shattering, this life-changing?

If you've paid attention to what God said to you in Ephesians 1:1–2:10, you should've heard Him say something like this, "My child, who you were doesn't matter. I know how bad you were; how utterly confused and lost you were, how Satan deceived you and guided your life. But none of that matters now. You're now My child and everything My Son, Jesus Christ, has is yours. He is and always will be the Ruler of this universe. No one is greater or more powerful than He. And do you know who you are now because of His death on the Cross? The moment you simply believed in My Son, you were thoroughly forgiven and given a brand new life. You don't have to rely on yourself anymore because My Son is now your power and strength. Your life has been so thoroughly united to His that you now sit with Him at My right hand. And this brand new life which I've given you free of charge comes with a purpose. Therefore, you no longer have to wander aimlessly through this life wondering what it's all about. Your purpose is waiting for you to fulfill, but the work I have for you can only be done through My Son; you must listen to His voice and act on what He tells you."

God's message to you continues in Ephesians,

Chapter 2

2:11-13, did you know that there are only two races as far as God is concerned: Jews and Gentiles. And since God made the Jewish nation of Israel His people—promised to be their God and they His people—Gentiles were completely and totally without any hope in this world. They were excluded from having any kind of relationship with God. This left them without God and without Israel's Messiah—their Christ, the Anointed one of God who would save God's people from their sinful and condemned state. Basically, Gentiles were without any hope of salvation whatsoever. They were known as the Uncircumcised because that was the sign of the eternal Covenant God made with His people Israel.

Now, even though Gentiles didn't start out being part of God's people, God's plan of salvation always included the Gentiles (Genesis 12:3; Hosea 1:10; 2:23; Isaiah 49:6; 1 Timothy 2:1-4).

But now, *in Christ Jesus*, the Gentiles, who were so far off, so separated from God, His people, and their Messiah, have been brought near by the blood of Israel's Messiah, by Jesus Christ. Jesus died in order to reconcile the Gentiles to God. If you are a Gentile who has believed in Jesus Christ (2:4-9), you are no longer separated from God. Through Christ you have access to God once again; He is no longer your enemy; He is your Father.

Do you ever feel like you have no hope? Like life is just one big struggle with no end in sight and God's not coming to your rescue, in fact, it feels like God's abandoned you, like He doesn't care one bit about what happens to you, or perhaps like He's the one punishing you? If you are a Christian, that is not the way life is supposed to be for you. That may've been the case before you believed in Jesus, but it's not supposed to be anymore. You are no longer without hope in this world.

2:14-18, the Mosaic Law that God gave to His people Israel, which is made up of 613 commandments (not just the Ten Commandments), was a barrier between Jew and Gentile. All those laws were designed by God to keep God's people separate from the Gentiles. God's people weren't supposed to dress like the them, eat like them, or worship like them. And if a Gentile wanted to become part of Israel so that he too could have a relationship with God, he had to become a proselyte, a convert to Judaism. The way it was supposed to work is that Israel was supposed to introduce the rest of the world to God; they were to be a holy nation of priests (Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2) who would bring the Gentiles into God's family. As we've been commanded to make disciples of the nations (Matthew 28:19-20; John 17:20-21; 1 Peter 2:9-12) so was Israel, but they failed.

However, Jesus has forever removed the barrier that existed between Jews and Gentiles (the answer to the eternal animosity between the Arabs and the Jews in the Middle East is Jesus not a peace accord). The Law that demanded their separation is now gone. In fact, though it cost Him His life, Jesus has brought permanent peace between Jews and Gentiles by uniting them to Himself as the New Man, His Body, the Church. And it wasn't just the Gentiles who needed reconciliation with God, it was also the Jews (2:3); Jesus brought peace between both of them and God. This gave them both complete access to God through Jesus Christ by means of His Spirit. Do you see God as disinterested, as your punisher, as your enemy or your Loving Father?

2:19-22, what does all this mean that Jesus suffered and died to reconcile both Jews and Gentiles to God? It means that Gentiles are no longer strangers to God. It means that both of them are now part of God's permanent family. It means that Jesus is the foundation upon and in which they are all being fitted together like building stones into a holy temple where God now dwells! It means that God's Spirit lives in you! The Law demanded that only one person, once a year, on the Day of Atonement, could enter God's holy presence. But now, God dwells in you and you dwell in Him!! Is this what you feel and experience as you live your daily life or is God still separated from you?

III. Conclusion

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.