

## **Sermon Notes: *But God...* (Ephesians 2:4-6)**

**Intro:** Ephesus was a center of the occult and worship by the Diana cult. The greatest city of Asia Minor (modern day Turkey), it existed under the powers of deep spiritual darkness and death. The condition of the Ephesians had been deplorable and desperate. “But God” had intervened in the believer’s lives with grace and power. The difference he made in their lives is the same one he has made in all of us who believe. Let’s consider what that means by asking three questions.

**#1: Who is God?** The message of salvation from sin and death through Jesus Christ begins with God. Our God is “mighty to save” (Is. 63:1). Not only is he mighty to save those who repent, but he is able to make men repent. He is not only mighty to save those who believe, he is mighty to give men new hearts and empower them to believe. Mighty to make the man who hates holiness love it, to compel the despiser of his name to bow humbly before him and happily confess him as Lord! Many ideas about God in the church today do not measure up to the God of Bible. Who does it say God is? Our God is Sovereign. Boice: “The most important thing that can be said about the God of the Bible is that God is sovereign. In fact if God is not sovereign, God is not God.” God is sovereign because God’s rule is absolute (Dan 4:34-35)! God wills as he chooses and accomplishes all that he wills. Nothing happens without his permission; all he has ordained from the beginning will come to pass (1:11). God ordained Christ’s reign over all (1:20ff.) and that future is sure because our all-powerful, sovereign God has determined it. Our God is holy. Sinners are children of wrath (3). God’s wrath is his righteous anger, holy displeasure, and fearful justice directed against man’s sin and disobedience. God’s wrath is his crowning sinners on the last day with justice they deserve and eternal destiny they have chosen. “But God...” God the Judge whom we were at enmity with, astonishingly that God intervened and saved us! Our God is merciful. Why did God intervene and save? Because he is rich in mercy and great in love for the undeserving. This is the astonishing “why” of our salvation. We were dead but God gave us new life with Christ because he loves those who have broken his laws, loves those whose hearts are bent out of shape, loves those who deserve eternal banishment from his presence. This is why the two words “But God” contain in a sense the whole gospel and are so comforting to those who believe. They remind us of God’s sovereign love declared in 1:4-5. God chose us and predestined us to salvation. God’s grace is not simply a vague good-will towards everyone in general and no one in particular. It is sovereign, choosing, and predestinating. Nothing so puts the emphasis in salvation where it belongs—on God—as does sovereign grace! We were dead “but God” made us alive with Christ by giving us faith in him (2:8).

**#2: What did God Do?** We were dead in our hardness of heart, with no desire to know God, no aspirations for holiness. Once we were dead “but God” made us alive with Christ. He gave us understanding when there had been confusion, desire when there had been indifference and hostility toward him, faith in Jesus Christ as Savior when there had been unbelief. We received Christ as Savior and trusted in his blood as payment for our sins (1:7) and God united us in living communion with Christ! Understand! God saves us individually but not solitarily! Believing in Christ’s cleansing blood, we are joined to Christ like a branch to a trunk, a brick to a foundation, a limb to a body. I am in Christ and he is in me! The most important truth about us concerns not our gender, ethnicity, or social status but our union, communion, and solidarity with Christ (Gal 3:28)! In 1:19ff. Paul spoke about three successive historical events in the

saving career of our Lord—his resurrection, ascension, and session. We affirm our belief in them regularly by using the “Apostles’ Creed.” But here it is said of us who are united to Christ that these things which are true of Christ are now true of us! All in him is mine! *We have been: Raised with new life from God.* “Made alive together...” Forgiveness through Christ’s blood cannot be separated from new life through his resurrection. Like Lazarus (Jn. 11), Christ has called us forth to new life from death. We have shed the grave clothes of our old life! Exalted into highest favor with God. “Raised up with...” Christ was raised from the dead, but forty days later he was also taken up into heaven (Acts 1:2, 9). Having accomplished the salvation God sent him to do, Christ ascended into heaven and advanced into highest favor with God. “But God” has crowned us with similar favor in him (Jn 17:23; cf. Mk 14:36; Rom 8:15). Seated with all authority from God. Because we share in his authority over all things, we will share in his coming triumph over God’s enemies (Rom 8:37). Nothing will separate us from God’s love! **#3: What must we do?** Receive new life from God. May God’s love for sinners revealed in Christ woo you to trust in him alone for salvation (Jn 3:16). Walk in new life from God. Walk by faith in what God says is now true of you through faith in Jesus. You are not only pardoned of your sin (Col. 2:13), but in him you have been raised to new life, exalted to highest favor, seated in the heavenlies