

Judy Pilgrim-Hector- NT636: Ephesians (English text) Written Assignment#1

A. Two major arguments presented in Ephesians 2:1-22 is Jesus died and was resurrected to give the gift of eternal life to all people and the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross was intended to create unity among Jews and Gentiles who believe in salvation through God's grace. Paul supported the argument by suggesting people were born in sin and they are saved by God's grace through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Secondly, this grace is extended to both Jews and Gentiles. Paul argues "You were dead through the trespasses and sins".¹ This means people experience spiritual death because of Adam's disobedience and human desire to continue with sinful behavior. However, the love of God and his unmerited favor (grace) saved humans from sin. The text also states "But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved"². Paul emphasized salvation as a gift from God "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God"³ Paul proposed cultural differences for example Jews and Gentiles caused division among humans. Then, Jesus's death and resurrection created spiritual unity. It was stated in the text, "For he is our peace; in his flesh, he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us"⁴ Also, Jesus has redeemed and transformed humans so that we can have access to God. "For through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.

In whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God".⁵ Salvation and

¹ <https://www.biblegateway.com/Ephesians2:1.NRSV>

² <https://www.biblegateway.com/Ephesians 4-5. NRSV>

³ <https://www.biblegateway.com/Ephesians 8. NRSV>

⁴ <https://www.biblegateway.com/Ephesians 14. NRSV>

⁵ <https://www.biblegateway.com/Ephesians 18, 22 NRSV>

unity among people of different cultures is a gift from God and the argument presented in the text.

The idea a proposition is a statement and subordination has a dependent relationship to the initial statement is a concept presented by Schreiner.⁶ Paul's argument to the Ephesian church suggests they experienced spiritual death and the first major proposition in the text is “You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived.” While the subordination of ideas is “following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else”. The second major proposition in the text is “But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses.” While the subordination of ideas are “made us alive together with Christ—by grace, you have been saved— and raised us with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life” This shows humans are born in sin but we are saved from spiritual death and separation from God because of the gift of salvation from Jesus.

Unity in Christ is the second theme in this section and the first major proposition in this section of the text is “So then, remember that at one time you were Gentiles by birth” called “the

⁶ Schreiner, Thomas R. *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*. 2nd Edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011. 122-124

uncircumcision” by those who are called “the circumcision.” While the subordination of ideas is—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh, he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So, he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So, then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him, the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.” Paul is asserting the Jews were called the Children of God and Gentiles were not initially considered children of God but Jesus's blood paid the price for salvation and now both Gentiles and Jews are united as children of God and together they have access to God’s grace and favor.

B. The word gift is a keyword to study within the context of Paul’s writings. According to the NASB Lexicon, the Greek word for gift is δῶρον and the meaning is a specific present or a sacrifice. the origin is didómi.⁷ Ephesians 2:8 states “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” The gift Jesus gave to the world was sacrificing his

⁷ <https://biblehub.com/lexicon/ephesians/2-8.htm>

life and resurrecting so all humans can have eternal life. This gift was grace, God unmerited favor. The gift was free to anyone who would accept the gift. People needed to demonstrate faith in God and believe in God to receive the gift. According to Barclay grace was antithetical to Judaism as second-century Judaism believed in good works and animal sacrifice for the redemption of sins.⁸ Therefore, most Jews rejected the gift of grace because they believed in working to earn redemption.

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Question 1 Why are people experiencing spiritual death?

- People are experiencing spiritual death because they continue to follow the plan of the devil by engaging in sinful behavior.

Question 2 Why are people saved by grace?

- People are saved by grace and not the result of works, so that no one may boast of their ability to earn their salvation by what they do or their ability to pay the cost of salvation.

Question 3 Why is there hostility between Jews and Christians?

- The hostility is caused because the Jews revered the Laws, commandments, and ordinances and the Christians promote and believe in salvation by grace.

Question 4 Who is the cornerstone of Christianity?

- Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone of Christianity.

Question 5 Why are the Jews referred to as the circumcision and the Gentiles the uncircumcision?

- The Jews made a promise with God to do circumcision as a symbol of their covenant. The Gentiles were not required to do circumcision because they came under the covenant by the Grace of God.

⁸ John M. G. Barclay (2014) Pure grace?, *Studia Theologica - Nordic Journal of Theology*, 68:1, 4-20, DOI: [10.1080/0039338X.2014.906064](https://doi.org/10.1080/0039338X.2014.906064)

D

According to Arnold, one of Paul's theological positions is God gave salvation to humanity through Jesus.⁹ Arnold suggests human beings are separated from God because of their sinful nature and Paul confirmed humans were spiritually dead because of sin. Therefore, Paul proposed Jesus Christ died and shed his blood for the remission of sins and he was resurrected and went back to heaven so all people can be reconciled to God. Paul indicated to the Gentiles salvation was God's gift of unmerited favor and he confirmed to the Jews salvation is not earned by works but it is a gift from God "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God not by works so that no one can boast"¹⁰.

1. My faith community shares the theological belief present by Paul which indicates salvation is a gift from God. Therefore, the practical or ethical implications are people are aware salvation is a gift and they are educated on the theological belief that implies they cannot earn salvation by doing good things.
2. The steps I would take to support spiritual formation in my faith community is to share my belief in my faith community so other people can hear and learn about my belief. Then share the text on salvation with my faith community. Finally, I will live my life according to my belief system and I will make life choices accordingly so that my choices can be an example for other people. The goal is

⁹ Arnold, Clinton E. *Ephesians*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010. p237-238

¹⁰ <https://www.biblegateway.com/Ephesians2:8-9.NRSV>

for people to know about Jesus and for them to accept the gift of salvation to
reconnect their relationship with God.