

A Place Built on Christ

Saturday, March 3 at 6:30 and Sunday, March 4 at 10:00

Third Sunday in Lent – 2018 | Zion, Painesville – 125th Anniversary

Introduction: Dear Members of Zion: Grace to you and peace... Amen! Thank you to Pastor Ziemann and Pastor Riley for giving me this opportunity today.

I was a Zion member for 35 years – baptized, confirmed, and married by Pastor Bickel; then, during the last 6 of those 35 years, the Holy Spirit used Pastor Zinkowich and the Bible – *which is all about the Christ*, to radically change my life!

This sermon is based on [Ephesians chapter 2](#). When Paul wrote to the believers in Ephesus, *some were Jews but most were Gentiles*. The chapter follows this progression: **from** death and wrath, **to** life in Christ, **to** oneness in Christ, **to** membership in the one household of God. The foundation of that house is **✦ Jesus Christ, the Cornerstone**, and **✦ God's Holy Word, in reference to Jesus Christ!**

1. **2:1-3 – Death and Wrath:** Paul reminds all of us of our **horrible condition prior to being made alive in Christ**. Because of the fall of Adam and Eve, *we all inherited sin and death from our parents (Rom. 5:12)*. Therefore, *at conception*, when God made us *physically alive*, we remained **✦ spiritually dead (Ps. 51:5)** **and ✦ deserving of His wrath!** So the Holy Spirit works through God's Word of Law to impress upon us that **✦ we have fallen short of God's righteousness, ✦ apart from Christ we are facing eternal condemnation, and ✦ we are completely helpless to change our horrible situation!**

2. **2:4-9 – Mercy and Grace:** This section contains good news, but is it GOOD ENOUGH to fully overcome our spiritual death and the wrath we deserve? **The answer is “Yes!”** The word **“But”** at the beginning of this section is SO BIG that it overcomes all of the bad news: **“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions... (Eph. 2:4-5 NIV).** Since we were dead, **God** took *radical action* to save us *through Word and Sacrament!* Regardless of **the degree** or **the quantity** of our sins, *the blood of Jesus has washed us clean (1 John 1:7)!* But wait, doesn't God saving us have something to do with our own goodness? No! Consider this old story from Dennis the Menace – about Dennis, his friend Joey, and Mrs. Wilson...
3. **2:10 – Good Works:** ¹⁰ For we are [God's] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. // Think about the order of **Ephesians 2:** Death ➔ Life ➔ Works! Yet so many in the world believe in: Works ➔ Death ➔ Life. Why is that impossible? The writer of **Hebrews** explained: **“And without faith it is impossible to please [God] (11:6 ESV).** When our works are *first* in line, we *think* we can *earn* heaven. But when they are *last* in line, we *know* heaven is God's *gift* and we are *expressing our thanks!*
4. **2:11-18 – One In Christ:** Think about the history of the descendants of Abraham: **“The whole Mosaic law and system of legal regulations kept the Jews away from the Gentiles” (Lenski, 439).** Therefore, *in this section,* Paul reminded the Gentile believers in Ephesus of their

former separation from Christ, that they had, ¹² ...no hope and [were] without God in the world. That was true during the 2,000 years prior to Christ, *beginning with Abraham*. However, *in the fullness of time*, the Messiah **came** and **lived** for EVERYONE; Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets [the OT Scriptures]; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Mt. 5:17 ESV). Then He received **every** sin of **every** person of **all** time; then He received God’s wrath in our place; then, He declared His victory; then, on Easter, God showed us His victory! Since Jesus did His work ONCE for ALL, all believers – whether Jews or Gentiles – are ONE in CHRIST!

5. **2:19-22 – An Unshakeable Foundation:** ¹⁹ So then you [you Gentiles] are no longer strangers [excluded from the family of God] and aliens [not members of the family of God], **but** you are fellow citizens with the saints [τῶν ἁγίων, the holy ones] and members of the household of God, ²⁰ [having been] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole [building], being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place [of] God [in] the Spirit. // As the Spirit worked through Word and Sacrament to make the Ephesians alive in Christ, so He did the same for those faithful men and women who began this congregation, Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, back in 1893. Since that time, *multiple building foundations have been constructed on this property*; however, the only unshakeable foundation is *God’s Holy Word in alignment with Jesus Christ!* What does that mean?

- a. Christianity is the OLDEST religion: God made a perfect world, but, *very shortly after the six-day creation*, Adam and Eve fell into sin; so, *right away*, God promised to send a descendant of the woman (Jesus) *who would defeat the serpent!*
- b. The Bible is GOD’S Word: “...prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21 NIV). Many doubt, *but we believe!*
- c. God’s Word is THE TRUTH: “The sum [head, top, chief] of Your word is truth” (Ps. 119:160 NAU).
- d. The Bible is ALL ABOUT Jesus: That’s obvious in the NT; regarding the OT, Jesus said that the Scriptures “bear witness about me” (John 5:39 ESV). We *rightly* understand the Bible *only when we see its alignment with Jesus, the Cornerstone!*
- e. God’s Word is the ANSWER: My life *without* God’s Word – trust in self, then *with* GW – trust in Jesus! Then: 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Methods: Daily Devotion and Scripture Memory (Pastor Zinkowich). Talk with P. Ziemann and P. Riley about DD and SM; *the Holy Spirit will certainly work through the Word to save us, grow us, and use us!*

Conclusion: Let us pray: Father in heaven, thank You for the ministry of ZELC, *through which I and countless others have been blessed!* Now, going forward, *dear Holy Spirit*, keep us in the Word, aligned with Jesus, and sharing the good news!