

## Ephesians Chapter Two Continued - Verses 16-22

Let's read verses 16-22

Verse 16

Christ not only removed the sin-barrier between God and man through the sacrifice of His body on the cross, but He also tore down the dividing walls of partition, that separated Jew from Gentile - uniting them together in brotherly love ... and making them 'one new-man' in Christ.

Israel was chosen by God to be the people through Whom God would bless the nations of the world, and they were entrusted with the Word of God - which was spoken through the prophets of old. And from Judah was born the promised Seed of the woman - the Messiah of Israel and Savior of the world, who was to reconcile the world to Himself and remove all that was dividing man from man.

Christ also removed the spiritual barrier between Jew and Gentile so that by grace through faith in Him, those that were afar off were brought near. His message of peace with God and the brotherhood of believers... reconciled them both into one body to God... through the cross, so that Jew and Gentile alike are justified through faith and have peace with God - through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ further removed the legal wall of partition for He fulfilled the unattainable Law on behalf of all who would believe on His name, so that we are no longer under law but under grace. He canceled out the certificate of debt, which was against us, taking it out of the way, and nailing it to the cross - on behalf of who would believe in His name.

Through time and into eternity we must never forget the grace of God that has been extended to all who trust in Christ for Salvation - for by His blood he reconciled both Jew and Gentile into one body, which is the Church. One new group which incorporates Jews and Gentiles. Heaven's new community reconciled to God through the Cross. Through Christ's sacrificial death and glorious resurrection, Jew and Gentile alike have been united, putting to death forever the enmity that once existed.

*Question...based on this information do Gentiles have just as much access to God as Jews?*

## Verse 17

The reason we have racial, ethnic, gender and class divisions in the church is because we have not fully and properly understood the cross. Christians divided along illegitimate lines don't see themselves as part of the one new man. All barriers based on factors such as race and gender are obliterated by the cross. This does not mean these distinctions don't exist; instead, these legitimate distinctions are absorbed into something bigger. In terms of spiritual relationship and development, a white man has no advantage over a black man. A man has no spiritual advantage over a woman. We can embrace our differences with a common commitment to Christ because we are at peace with one another through our peace with God.

If you do not see yourself belonging to this new race, this one new man you will follow the world's agenda. The atoning death of Jesus is God's method to bring into harmony those who wouldn't otherwise mix. Every physical, mental, ethnic, and spiritual barrier that ever-separated Jew from Gentile was forever torn down in the body of Christ. The middle wall of partition in the Temple court was irreversibly removed as the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from top to bottom. The legal wall of Mosaic Law, which divided God's chosen people from Gentile dogs was permanently removed at the cross - when Christ perfectly fulfilled the Law on account of all who trust in Him as Savior.

Christ tore down legalistic walls and ethnic walls and He even rent asunder the entrenched spiritual wall by making peace between the two - as He married sinful Jew with sinful Gentiles - baptizing them by the Spirit of God into the one New Man in Christ - which is the Church.

*Question...now that we know this, what is the church's responsibility toward racial harmony?*

*Question...Jews were superior or chosen before Jesus, do those Jews that don't believe in Jesus still feel superior?*

## Verse 18

Both Jew and Gentile need to be reconciled to God. Both need God's forgiveness of their sins. Both need to be justified by faith in Christ. Both need to be redeemed and both need propitiation from their sins - i.e., both need to have God's righteous wrath turned away from them due to Christ's blood sacrifice at Calvary - which brings all who believe in Jesus Christ, into full fellowship with the Father.

Both Jew and Gentile have fallen short of the glory of God and both need to be redeemed, forgiven, justified, born again - both need propitiation for their sins. And now through Jesus both Jew and Gentile have access to the Father - by means of the Holy Spirit - because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, for our sins.

His blood paid the price for our sins and we are declared righteous, simply by believing on His name - and it is by the power of the Holy Spirit that we are born from above and become a new creation in Christ, which gives us access into the very throne-room of our Father in heaven.

Through Christ we have unity, not uniformity. Unity is uniqueness working toward a common goal. Christian unity is a spiritual issue.

*Question...if we took the denominational names away from our churches would we move closer to Christian unity?*

*Another question might be - do Christians mainly have the same beliefs, not religious rules, but beliefs?*

Verse 19

Where the Spirit is working, there is oneness. If there is disharmony and division, the Spirit is not at work. Believers are no longer foreigners and strangers but have been made fellow citizens and members of God's household. The church is a family.

The church is the body of Christ and can be compared with a building of living stones that is being built up and fitted together in a beautiful way, by the Holy Spirit, into a holy temple -a permanent dwelling place for God. The church of Christ is made up of the family of believers that have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior and God, in this dispensation.

Individually and corporately all Christians are the habitation of our holy God Who has taken up permanent residence with our very bodies and so we are no longer foreigners and strangers, but are fellow citizens with the saints, and by grace are now members of God's heavenly household. Is this not the privilege of all privileges that we should be called the children of God, made joint heirs with Christ, and be raised up to sit with Him in heavenly places as members of God's family.

*Question...when we realize division and disharmony is in our churches, what should we do?*

## Verse 20

The Bible is the Word of truth and was written for our learning by God's appointed apostles and prophets... and their inspired teachings should be the only foundation upon which our Christian faith; our spiritual life and our fundamental doctrine should stand - knowing that Jesus Christ is the Chief Cornerstone.

A chief cornerstone is the mainstay and linchpin upon which a firm foundation must be laid... and Christ is our Chief Cornerstone upon Whom all the fundamentals of our faith are laid, and the teaching of the New Testament apostles and prophets is the non-negotiable, foundation upon which our Christian faith must be anchored.

From the gospel writers and the letters of Paul to the apostolic epistles and the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave through Him to John (telling His Church things which must soon take place) - the unquestionable foundation upon which our faith is grounded is the Bible. The Bible is the inerrant word of God and must remain the foundation upon which our faith is fastened.

Let us study to show thyself approved unto God, as workman that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth - knowing that God's Word is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness

Let us remember that all Scripture is breathed out by God and must remain the foundation upon which our Christian faith is rooted and grounded - being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.

*Question...what do you do when you read the word but don't understand it or find it boring?*

## Verse 21

The union of Jew with Gentile has resulted in the Church becoming one nation under God, for we are the Body of Christ - and God has called us during this Church dispensation, to be His chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession - that we may declare the praises of Him, who called us out of darkness into His wonderful light.

Individually and collectively the Church is the temple of the living God and each one is a living stone, that is being built up into God's own spiritual temple, for we are one in Christ...and in Him we are being carefully fitted together. And together we are growing day by day into His beautiful holy residence - without spot or blemish or any such thing.

It is in Christ that both groups been formed into one... breaking down the dividing walls of animosity between us... and abolishing the enmity which came from the Law. It is Christ Who has established peace between us and Christ Who has reconciled us together in one body to God... through the cross. Christ has given us access by one Spirit to the Father... and only through Christ are we no longer strangers and aliens to our Creator God... but fellow citizens with all the saints - having been made children of God and accepted into His heavenly household.

It is the gospel of Christ upon which our faith is founded, and it is Christ Jesus Himself Who is the Foundation Stone upon which His church is being built... and it is through Christ that the whole building is being fitted together and growing into a holy temple, in the Lord.

As we reflect upon the glorious gospel of Christ and the amazing grace by which we have been accepted in the Beloved, should we not seek to walk worthy of our calling every moment of the day, with lowliness of heart and gentleness of spirit... as in His grace and strength we seek to glorify God in our bodies.

*Question...why is grace so amazing?*

Verse 22

It was Christ Who said that He would build His church and one by one... down through centuries of time men and women have come to faith in Christ Jesus - and one by one they have each been fitted into the growing Temple of the living God.

It was the apostle Peter who described this growing body of believers as living stones, who are being built up into a spiritual house. He identified the Christian Church as a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, which are acceptable to God through our Savior Jesus Christ.

And here Paul also describes the beautiful way that this slowly growing body of believers are being gradually built up into a magnificent spiritual house, and fitted together into a holy structure, in order to form that fixed abode of God, the holy Temple - through the Spirit.

Peter and Paul saw the very first living stones of God's holy dwelling place being fitted together into this living Temple of God and we who have trusted Christ for Salvation are lively stones that have been added to this amazing 2000-year-old spiritual structure - which Christ Himself is building up into a holy Temple, as a sanctified residence for God.

And we who are part of this holy construction, which will soon be completed, have the permanently indwelling Holy Spirit as a guarantee of our promised heavenly inheritance, which is being kept for us in heavenly places. Praise His Holy Name.

In conclusion for Chapter Two, in the Old Testament, the glory of God was manifested in the temple. It was where God hung out. Today He's in the new temple, the church. Together we believers are the temple of God. God wants us to have a complete view of the cross. God's dwelling in the Spirit meant to display God's glory. But that glory isn't on display when we are not aligned with Christ. The church is more than a corporate gathering!

The Church is the temple of God who dwells therein. The prophets worked to build the church and Jesus Christ is the foundation of the church and the Holy Spirit is the architect.

*End Chapter Two Ephesians*