

Ephesians, Chapter Two, Lesson Three

BUILT TOGETHER IN CHRIST Ephesians 2:17-22

STIMULATE

** In our study together last week, we saw a five fold **description** of the nations (which of course includes us). Do you recall how we were described prior to our salvation?

We were: Christless, stateless, friendless, hopeless and Godless.

** Having been "Brought Near in Christ" by our gracious and loving God, we now enjoy peace with our fellow Christian and peace with the God we serve. Were you aware this past week of the closeness you have with others in the body of Christ, which He accomplished through the shedding of His blood?

Absolutely - Understanding that our gracious Lord has brought us near to one another has given us cause to view each other with the love of Christ!!

MOTIVATE

** What is the significance of the body of Christ? For what purpose did He create His church?

Today we are going to learn, from the pen of the apostle Paul, the importance of having been "Built Together in Christ". Let's open our Bibles to Ephesians 2:17-22, as we conclude our look at this marvelous second chapter.

Read passage (V.17-22)

Opening Prayer

Built Together in Christ

INVESTIGATE

V.17 ** Paul opens our passage for today by quoting the Old Testament. Who is he quoting?

The prophet Isaiah - Chapter 57:19. The prophet was calling for all people both "far and near" to come to the Lord and receive spiritual healing.

** Why do you suppose Paul would quote the Old Testament with reference to what Jesus Christ had accomplished?

Because of the importance of the Lord fulfilling prophecy as a verification of who He was, in this case, specifically the prophecy of making peace.

** Does the New Testament speak of the vital peace making role that Christ played out as He fulfilled His Father's will?

Yes!

John 14:27 "My peace I give to you"
John 16:33 "in Me you may have peace"
cf. Matthew 10:34-39 (Luke 14:26)

** We learned last week the identity of the two groups that Paul again mentions here, who are they?

Far away ones - The Gentile Believers
Near ones - The Jewish Believers

** How many other types of Christians are there?

None, we all come from either a Jewish ancestry or from one of the "nations". The point being that the gospel of peace is for everyone! cf. 2Peter 3:9 and 1Timothy 2:3-4

V.18 ** This brief little verse is one of many that not only conveys an important truth, but also indirectly refers to an important doctrine of Scripture. Do you see the doctrinal statement contained here in Paul's statement that is often refuted by religious cults of our day?

The doctrine of the Trinity. We see Paul referring to Him (Jesus Christ), the Spirit and the Father all in one indivisible statement.

** What has been accomplished in this verse by our Triune God according to Paul?

Our access - both Jew and Gentile! We you consider the desperate **description** of our unsaved status that we saw last week, it becomes all the more miraculous for us to have access to a Holy God.

** How did we gain this access?

- 1) through Jesus Christ - Ephesians 3:11-12, Romans 5:1-2
- 2) in one Spirit - Romans 8:15-17, Galatians 4:6-7

** Realizing what vile sinners we were, now saved by grace, how should we approach the throne of our Heavenly Father?

With boldness and confidence, because of the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf!
cf. Hebrews 4:14-16 and Philippians 3:3

V.19 ** To which of our two groups is Paul referring in this verse?

To the Gentiles - cf. V.12 "remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."

** Leaving our verse for just a moment, how does the apostle Peter describe Christians in reference to their relationship to the unsaved world around them?

He calls us strangers and aliens!
cf. 1Peter 1:1 and 1Peter 2:11

** Now in our verse, is Paul disagreeing with Peter when he says, "you are no longer strangers and aliens"?

No, Paul is saying that we are no longer to be described in this manner in **reference to our relationship to God.**

** There is actually a dual contrast going on before us in this verse. Let's look at it together.

Strangers (Outcasts, kept at a distance) **vs. Fellow Citizens** (Joint heirs with all Believers)

Aliens (guest of a country with no rights of citizenship) **vs. God's Household** (Part of God's own family - Philippians 3:20)

We have received a blessed transformation from disaster to deliverance, from despair to delight, all because of the love shown toward us by our Triune God!

V.20 ** At the end of verse nineteen, Paul introduced the metaphor of a building with the phrase "God's household". What does he now say to expand that thought?

The building has "been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone..."

** What do you think of when you consider the properties of a building foundation?

It provides strength, support, stability for the building. All see - Luke 6:46-49, cf. Luke 11:28

If we are God's household we should build our lives upon the bedrock of obedience to the Word of God!

** Back in Ephesians 2:20, what are the components of Paul's metaphoric foundation?

The apostles, prophets and Christ Jesus Himself!

** Are the apostles and prophets that Paul speaks of actually the foundation?

No, they were the ones who laid the foundation. The Greek grammatical structure of this sentence indicates that they were the originating agency, but were not the foundation itself. It is referring to the divine revelation that they taught, which we now have in the New Testament.

cf. 1Corinthians 3:10-11

** What distinctions do you see between the two offices of apostle and New Testament prophet?

Both were to authoritatively speak the word of God to the church in the years before the New Testament canon was complete. Their function was limited by the passing of time and they would ultimately be replaced by the evangelists and pastor/teachers mentioned in Ephesians 4:11.

Specifically - Apostles (sent ones)

preach the Word - 1Corinthians 1:17

teach and pray - Acts 6:4

work miracles - 2Corinthians 12:12

build leaders - Acts 14:23

write the Word - Ephesians 1:1 e.g.

Prophets (to the church)

delivered God's message in a specific manner - Acts 11:28, 21:10 (Agabus)

** Then if the apostles and prophets themselves were not the foundation of the church, Who is the bedrock upon which the household of God has been built?

"Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone"

cf. Isaiah 28:16 - Jesus is the One who provides the strength, support and stability for our lives, therefore we are not "disturbed"! The Hebrew word used by Isaiah means "in a hurry" and the Greek Septuagint interprets that word with a sense of "put to shame". We can see that use where Isaiah's words are quoted in the New Testament (Romans 9:33, 10:11 and 1Peter 2:6).

V.21 ** Who is the "whole building" that Paul speaks of?

Again, this is the Jew and Gentile Believer now seen as one building.

** What unusual expression does Paul use to describe the building's activity?

Having been fitted together by Christ, the building is growing!
cf. 1Corinthians 3:6-7, Colossians 2:18-19

** According to Paul, what are we growing into?

"a holy temple in the Lord", Paul always saw holiness as part of the normal Christian lifestyle.
cf. 1Corinthians 6:19-20

V.22 ** Besides "a holy temple in the Lord", into what else are we being "Built Together in Christ"?

"a dwelling of God in the Spirit". The Holy Spirit takes up residency in the heart of every Believer. Paul use a word (katoiketerion) that speaks of a permanent home.

** Can you think of other passages that speak of God's Holy Spirit living in us?

Romans 8:9 - the Spirit of God dwells in you

2Corinthians 6:16 - I will dwell in them

Galatians 4:6 - God sent the Spirit into our hearts

Ephesians 3:17 - Christ dwells in your heart

1John 3:24 - He abides in us

** How does knowing that our loving and gracious God is "dwelling" in us effect your awareness of Him?

He is ever with me - **a positive** when I know that He is observing His life changing work in my heart, but **a negative** when I realize I can grieve that same Holy Spirit with my stubborn disobedience.

EXTRICATE

** As you look back over today's passage, what do you see for which you find your heart to be thankful?

- 1) We have been given peace.
- 2) We have access to a Holy God.
- 3) We are no longer strangers and aliens to Him.

- 4) We are members of His household.
- 5) We are growing - He is not finished with us yet.
- 6) God is pleased to dwell in us!

DELINEATE

** Earlier in our study we asked the question, "For what purpose did God create His church?" How would you answer that now?

So that He could dwell in His church, which He has made pure through the blood of Jesus Christ.
cf. Ephesians 5:27

EVALUATE

** How should the reality of God Himself dwelling in you effect your everyday actions and attitudes.

Since He is with me at all times, I need to strive to make Him comfortable within my clean heart that He has created. By not feeding my flesh, I can walk by the Spirit and be pleasing to Him.
cf. 2Corinthians 5:9

ACTIVATE

** It will always be our "ambition" to apply the truth of God's word to our daily walk with Him.

For today we need to prayerfully consider the significance of having been "Built Together in Christ". Are we willing to live each day with a heightened awareness of our gracious God's presence in our life? Imagine walking through your day, side by side with your best friend, and totally ignoring him or her - never speaking to them and even denying your friendship by the things you say and do. How much worse is it when we ignore the One who gave His life for us so that He might dwell in our hearts by faith?

Let's thank Him for allowing us to be His building and commit our way to His glory.

Closing prayer