

## *Ephesians – Part 5*

God has done a tremendous work in us by creating us in Christ. This work has dramatically changed us from being excluded by sin from every blessing and promise of God. Previously we all were dead in sin, now in Christ, regardless of our background or race, we have been brought into God's family and have been made His temple.

### *We are reconciled in Christ (2:11–22)*

This text speaks of the new creation - the church.

***Ephesians 2:11-12 NIV84*** Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (that done in the body by the hands of men)— remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

God has done an amazing work for believers. We were separate from Christ and excluded from God's covenant and promises. Before Christ, God dealt with humanity through the Jewish nation and everyone else was excluded. In Christ, God takes both Jew and Gentile believers and makes them citizens of His new race, nation, and creation.

### *In Christ, God has brought all people into unity.*

Now, He is dealing with a new body of people who make up the true citizens of His Kingdom. These citizens are individuals from all nations, kindreds, tongues and people of the world who now come to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. This work has broken down the wall of division and has united Gentiles and Jews in Christ. It is important to remember what we were before Christ.

### *What the Gentiles were (vv. 11–12).*

- **They were without Christ** — they had no covenant or promise of a Messiah. They were not a part of the nation of Israel and were not partakers of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Old Testament laws made a great gulf between Jews and Gentiles.
- **They were aliens and strangers**— instead of being “the people of God,” they were without hope and without God in the world.
- **They were separate from Christ** — excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of promise.

In general, sinners were spiritually dead (vv. 1–10). In addition, Gentiles were at a spiritual distance from God and His blessings. In the Jewish Temple, there was a wall that separated the “Court of the Gentiles” from the rest of

the structure. On this wall was a sign giving warning that any Gentile who passed beyond it would be killed. This wall of separation was made clear in Jesus' ministry. He specifically came to minister to the household of Israel. When Jesus did minister to Gentiles, he did it at a distance, (Matthew 8:5–13; 15:22–28). He even told His disciples to not go into the way of the Gentiles or Samaritans, (Matthew 10:5). Jesus tore down the physical wall, for in Christ all are made one (v. 15).

#### *What God did (vv. 13–17).*

**Ephesians 2:13–14 NIV84** But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,

#### *“But now” in v. 13 parallels “But God” in v. 4.*

When Christ died on the cross, He broke down every barrier that stood between Jews and Gentiles. This made it possible for whosoever will to come to Him.

**Ephesians 2:15–17 NIV84** by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.

**Galatians 3:28–29 NIV84** There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

#### *We were far off and separated from God.*

Jesus Christ tore down the **physical wall** that excluded Gentiles from accessing God! He tore down the **spiritual wall** and brought Gentiles who were “far off” near through the blood of Christ, (v. 13). He tore down the **legal wall**, for He fulfilled the Law in Himself and ended the reign of the Mosaic Law that separated Jews and Gentiles (vv. 14–15). Before Christ, we were separated from God and from heaven. We were without God and without hope in the world.

#### *We were barred from God by the Jews.*

The Jewish nation was Abraham's seed and heirs of God's promises, (Genesis 12:2-3). God made Israel missionaries to the world. God wanted them to proclaim and prove that God was the only true and living God. They were to announce the coming of the Messiah to save the world, but the Jews failed in their mission. They became exclusive, super-spiritual, prideful, and

boastful in their religion. They failed to reach out to the other people of the world.

*Gentiles were barred from God by religion.*

The religion of the Gentiles could not bring mankind to God. Gentiles could not participate in the religion of the Jews.

*We were "without Christ."*

Gentiles neither knew nor expected the Messiah. We had no hope of a Savior coming for the world. We were linked to this world and the gods of this world. We were "without Christ."

*We were "strangers from the covenant and promises of God."*

We were not God's covenant people. God had made promises to Abraham and His seed. Gentiles did not have that covenant relationship with God.

*We had "no hope."*

We lived in all the fears and the anxieties of life. We had no hope of a life beyond this world. Eternity with God in heaven was out of the question.

*We were "without God in the world."*

We stood alone in this world. Our only strength and hope was what we could muster or what others could provide. Their thinking was futile being darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God. Having lost all sensitivity to God and right and wrong, they gave themselves over to sensuality to indulge in every kind of impurity, (Ephesians 4:17-19).

**Ephesians 2:13 NIV84** But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

*Now we have access to the Father through the blood of Jesus Christ.*

**Ephesians 2:14 NIV84** For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,

We have been brought into a place of peace and unity in Christ. The practical proof that peace exists is that we all **have access** at any time into the presence of God.

*In the Old Testament, the High Priest could go into the Holy of Holies and the presence of God once a year.*

That access was limited and only provided through sacrifice and blood.

*Now, access to the throne room of heaven is through Christ and by the Spirit.*

Jesus is the Mediator between God and man. In Christ, every believer, without regard to race, has the privilege of access into the holy presence of God, (Hebrews 10:19–25). Through faith in Christ's blood, Jews and Gentiles are justified and given access to God.

*Jesus death, burial, and resurrection removed every legal obstacle to our admission to God's presence.*

Now, Christ our Mediator lives on high to maintain us in a condition of fellowship with the Father. We can approach God in His name. We have no worthiness of our own, so we stand in His worthiness. Through Jesus Christ, we have access by the help of the Holy Spirit.

**Romans 8:26 NIV84** In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

*What we are now (vv. 18–22).*

**Ephesians 2:19 NIV84** Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,

*Six word pictures are given in verses 18-22.*

*We are fellow citizens with God's people (v. 19).*

We are no longer strangers and foreigners to God but now share citizenship with all the saints. The word "stranger" means "an outsider, an unknown person, a person who does not belong." We are now fellow citizens with all the saints of God. The word "foreigner" means sojourner, alien, migrant, an exile.

Before we came to Christ, we were...

- *outside God and His kingdom.*
- *unknown to God and His kingdom.*
- *did not belong to God and His kingdom.*
- *sojourners, living outside God and outside His kingdom.*
- *alien to God and to His kingdom.*
- *migrants, not belonging to God nor to His kingdom.*
- *exiles to God and to His kingdom.*

*We are no longer strangers and foreigners to God.*

Jesus Christ has brought us to God. We are now fellow citizens with all of God's people. We now have a home and all the rights of citizenship in God's kingdom.

*We have been made members of God's family (v. 19).*

Note the phrase "**HOUSEHOLD OF GOD.**" Jesus Christ has brought us into the family of God.

**Romans 8:15–17 NIV84** For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

**1 John 3:1 NIV84** How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

*As members of God’s household, we have the privilege of responsibility and service.*

The change that has been made in us causes us to behave as God’s own children. You are of God, little children, (1 John 4:4; 1 John 2:12).

**Galatians 5:13 NIV84** You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

**Galatians 6:2 NIV84** Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

**Galatians 6:10 NIV84** Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Ephesians 2:19 *“We have been made God’s people and members of God’s household.”*

*We have been made God’s building (v.20).*

**Ephesians 2:20-22 NIV84** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Believers are pictured as being the building stones which are used to construct a building for God.

*Jesus Christ Himself is the chief cornerstone.*

*The chief cornerstone refers to three significant things.*

*The cornerstone is the first stone laid.*

All other stones are placed after the cornerstone. Christ is the beginning of the Church and Captain of our salvation. All others are living stones laid upon this foundation.

*The cornerstone is the supportive stone.*

All other stones are placed upon it and held up by it. They all rest upon it. Christ is the support, power, and foundation of God’s Church.

**1 Corinthians 3:11 NIV84** For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

*The cornerstone is the directional stone.*

It is used to line up the whole building and all the other stones.

**1 Peter 2:6 NIV84** For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”

*The church is a growing, living organism (v.21).*

**Ephesians 2:21 NIV84** In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

The church in all of its various parts is a living being, a dynamic body. This whole building is joined together and grows and grows and continues to grow until the Lord Jesus Christ returns.

**1 Peter 2:4–5 NIV84** As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

*The church is a worldwide holy temple (v.21).*

All believers make up a holy temple of God, a building structured for God's presence.

*The church as a local temple, the local church (v.22).*

**Ephesians 2:22 NIV84** And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Each believer and local church is a building structured and joined together for God's presence (v.22). Our stability and strength lies in each stone being placed, fitted and cemented in Christ and by each stone holding up its load and fulfilling its purpose in the structure. We have become a habitation for the presence of God through His Spirit. The Spirit of God dwells within us to conform the whole body of believers into the image of Christ. The whole building being fitted together describes the unity and function of the church. Although there are many members, we constitute the building.