The Unity of the Body, Part 3
Ephesians 2:16-22
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I'm sure you're aware we're studying together the book of Ephesians, and so I would invite you at this time to turn with me to Ephesians Chapter 2. If you don't have a Bible with you, I hope there's one there on the seat beside or in the pew rack in front so that you can follow along. And let me say that our study this morning is very theological. One person said to me one time he said, "You know, you're very cognitive." So I hurried back to my office to find out what that meant. And that's true, I like to deal with the mind. I think that it's important that we understand things before we attempt to live them.

Now, I supposed there could be another approach in preaching. You could just take the cheerleader approach and try to get everybody really jazzed and excited and turned on and hepped up and emotionally traumatized to go out and force their way through the Christian life, but I would much rather teach you the principles of the word of God because if you understand the Bible, you can open it up and you can generate your own emotion and you won't be dependent upon me.

I feel that God really has called me to help you to understand what the Bible means by what it says and then as you read it with understanding, the Spirit of God can energize it in your life. And the passage we're looking at this morning is a very cognitive passage. It's a very mind oriented passage. You must understand these things. This is not emotion. This is not a pep talk. This is a theological statement that is very detailed and very carefully woven by the mastermind the apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

And yet it's one of those things that if we commit ourselves to understand has incredible ramifications to a practical kind of life. Now you have to keep in mind that Ephesians is broken into two parts. The first three chapters deal with the position of the believer. They really don't ask us to do anything. They just state what is true about us. The believer's position, because we know Jesus Christ this is true of us. Then Chapters 4-6 discuss how we ought to act. And that's why Chapter 4, verse 1 begins with the word therefore.

Because of who we are therefore this is how we live. And so we're still talking about the believer's identity. We must lay this foundation of theology, this foundation of doctrine, this foundation of understanding. We must have a renewed mind. We must know these things before we can begin to live them. And as we're looking at Chapter 2, verses 11-22, which is our text for this morning as it was the last two Sundays as well, we are noting that Paul is helping us to understand the unity of the body. We saw in Chapter 1 that God master-planned the body of Christ before the world began. We saw in the first ten verses of Chapter 2 that God brings people into the body through salvation. And then we begin in verse 11 to see that once we're in the body we're one with each other. And this

great concept of unity is being taught here. We are one.

Now practically speaking, we don't always act like it, we don't always live it. In the church today, it's fragmented and fractured and split and disintegrated and so forth. We know that. But that is not the outworking of our position. That is an adulteration of our position. Our position is one of oneness. We are one. And that is the message of verses 11-22. And Paul particularly focuses on the concept of the Jew and the Gentile, because that was divisive point in his particular world. And he is saying there that Jew and Gentile verse 15 at the end have become one new man. There is one body, verse 16 says. We have been reconciled into one body.

Verse 14, "God has broken down the thing that separated us, the middle wall of partition." Verse 16, "The system of commandments and ordinances, the Jewish ceremonies have done away with in Christ." And so all of the barriers between Jew and Gentile are done away that the church would be one new man made up of Jew and Gentile. And we've been showing you that this is basic to an understanding of the church. We're one in Christ. We are all one in Him. Now this is the essence of what Paul is covering here, this concept of unity. And in order for us, you see, to live as one and to act as one and in humility to look upon the things of others more than our own things in order to serve each other and love each other equally, we've got to understand that this is who we are.

It's kind of like an athlete. You don't know what to do. Take a baseball player, for example, you don't know what to do until you know what position you play. Then you know what is required of you. If somebody blindfolded you and told you to take the field and somebody hit the ball to you and you didn't know where you were or what your position you were, you wouldn't know what to do when you got the ball. The same thing is true in the Christian life. You must have a clear definition of your position. This is what it is. This is how it acts. This is what is expected, and that's exactly what the first three chapters are doing.

And Paul here is saying we are one in position now we must act like it. It's no different than a coach would say to his team. We are one team, that's how it is. We're all on the same team. We all wear the same uniform. We've all got the same coach and the same manager. We're all trying to win the game the same way. We're trying to do it together, now if everybody does what is required our function will match our position and that's exactly what is true in the Christian life. We are one. We've got to play as one. We've got to function as one and that'll come later when we get to Chapter 4.

For now, we're looking at simply the definition of unity. Now believe me, unity in our world is a real problem. The world is literally filled with strife. You know recently what has happened when the PLO came down and massacred those Israelis in the bus on the northern coast of Israel, a place where I've been several times. Came in off the sea and did that and you know what's happened since then. The reprisals of the Israeli government. They have literally blitzed the border of Lebanon and they're pushing further and now there is a refugee mass rush into the city of Beirut which causes looting and all kinds of things. And it just reminds us again of how thin the thread of peace is in the world.

The paper this morning talks about the fact the Russians are now saying that the way the Americans are acting, they're threatening the peace that exists between Russia and America. And you and I know very well that it's a very thin peace. That's true all over the world. We're reading constantly and hearing constantly again and again about the problems the United Nations are having. We're hearing constantly about the problems of the coal miners who are unwilling to settle for what is being offered to them and the problem going back and forth. There's a constant strife. We know that the process of

divorce is escalating in our country as people find it more and more difficult to commit themselves to any lasting and meaningful relationship to anybody.

Now all of this stems from one basic problem. And that one basic problem is expressed in the Old Testament as well as the new. The prophet Jeremiah said the "heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." And Isaiah said "There is no peace to the wicked." In other words, built into wickedness is the impossibility of peace. Where you have sin, you have discord. And the reason is this, sin is basically by definition selfishness. And where there is selfishness, there can never be harmony.

Where you've got everybody looking out for himself, you cannot have harmony. Where you've got everybody looking to get what he can get, no matter what it does to somebody else, you can't have harmony. And so as man is a sinner, man is selfish, and as man is selfish, man will never know peace. And the only place where peace occurs is where self dies. And the only place where self really dies is at the cross of Jesus Christ. For therein does the apostle Paul say, "I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live, yet," what, "not I." Christ lives in me. In other words, it is at the cross whereby faith I am in Christ crucified that self dies and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. And when self dies, selfishness dies, and peace becomes a possibility. Now in terms of our position, peace has been made. We're one. We may not act like it. We're one. We're on the same team. We all wear the same uniform. We all have the same coach. We're all playing the same game. We're one. And we're one not only with each other, but with God Himself.

Now that's Paul message here. It is a basic definition of the church. God never invented all the different denominations. God never wanted Christians to fight and squabble and hassle and wrangle. The church is one. Jesus even prayed that they would be one that the world would know that He was sent from God. That we would be one that the world would know we were His children. And unity is basic, peace is basic, but peace never comes until self dies.

James says in Chapter 4, "Why do you have fights and why do you make war? It's the lusts in your members." Because you lust to have something that you don't have. You see it's that basic selfishness that creates every level of strife. And when self dies, peace becomes a reality. And self dies in Christ, that's his message. When Christ came along, He was crucified. And when He was crucified He removed the alienation. He removed the barrier. Verse 14, "took the middle wall down." He tore it apart. He removed the things that separated it and He made them one...two, one new man.

Now verse 13 is the key here, because verse 13 says that it was in Christ Jesus that those who were far off would be Gentiles were made near that is placed in a covenant relationship with God. And it was all done by the blood of Christ. The thing that separates men is their sin and selfishness. The thing that separates us from God is our sin and selfishness. So when sin is removed then we can be one with each other and one with God. That's the basic theological principle here. Now let me tell you something, if you want a word for it, the biblical word is the word reconciliation. That's the theological title for this concept. In Christ, we are reconciled to each other. We are brought together with each other.

Now we saw in our last couple of studies that verses 11 and 12 tell us how men are socially and spiritually alienated. They're alienated from each other. We talked about the Jew and Gentile, didn't we? And then we talked about the Greek and the Barbarian, the bond and the free, the male and the female. Man has always had these classes and stratus and categories of people that they fit them

into. And men have always had this separation problem, this strife and conflict problem. Over all kinds of meaningless things. And that's true in society, but in Christ it all comes together in a wonderful unity. And it's illustrated here in this text by what happens between the Jew and the Gentile. Because in Paul's day that was the greatest area of discord. That was the greatest place of bitterness and animosity and hatred and strife.

And if God can do that with the Jew and Gentile and a Greek and a Barbarian and the bond and the free and the male and the female, He can do it with every category. And He does in Christ, because He makes us one. And so we saw that those who are socially and spiritually alienated in verses 11 and 12 became in the rest of the section socially and spiritually united. And verse 13 is the key, the blood of Christ removes sin and sin is the problem. And we've come together in the common life of Christ.

And so Christ's atoning death brought us to a place of unity with each other. Your sins are paid for. My sins are paid for. You've been crucified with Christ. I've been crucified with Christ. The Holy Spirit lives in you. The Holy Spirit lives in me. The eternal life of God lives in you. The eternal of life of God lives in me. We're one. There's no difference. There is no difference. You know something there was really no difference before we were saved either. We were both just the same ungodly sinner.

In Romans Chapter 3 it says, "There's no difference for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Romans 3:22 says, "For there is no difference." 23 says "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Then when we come to Christ it can be said again, there is no difference, for the righteousness of God, verse 22, says has been imputed to us who believe by our faith in Jesus Christ. So there was no difference before. We were all incapable of knowing God. There's no difference now. We are all in Christ and one with each other. Great, great truth.

Now, as we look at verses 13-22, the main thought here is that those who were socially and spiritually alienated had become socially and spiritually united. And there are two aspects of this. First of all, verses 13-15 speak of us being united with each other, one new man. Peace between Jew and Gentile. The second part of it is, that we are not only reconciled to each other, but verses 16-18 tell us we are reconciled to God. Okay? So when you become a Christian your position is you're one with each other and you're one with God. And this is just incredible truth. To think of it people. That God doesn't just save us. God doesn't just promise us certain things and keep us at arm’s length. He makes us one with Himself.

Now listen, this is only possible because He puts in us His very life. The Holy Spirit dwells in us. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us. The very eternal life of God is ours. We'll find in Chapter 3, verse 19 that he says, "We can be filled with all the fullness of God." It's a staggering thing. The life of God and the soul of man. We are one with God, the eternal God of the universe. And I think it's what Paul is trying to say here is get a grip on who you are people. Don't go stumbling around thinking you're less than something that you are. You must understand that you are one with the eternal God. What a resource.

Well, let's look at it, verse 16. "Christ came and by His death on the cross, not only reconciled man to man, but He reconciled both unto God in one body." Do you see it there? He made Jew and Gentile one with each other and them drew them to God so that by His cross He slew the enmity that was there. Did you know that there was enmity and still is between an unsaved man and God? They're enemies. That's right. They are enemies and I mean they are hot enemies. Christ in Revelation 1 is

pictured with burnished, burning, blazing, white hot heat of molten brass with which He treads in judgment on those who are His enemies.

And in Ephesians Chapter 2 it says that the one who is without Christ is a child of wrath. The fury of God will be spent on such. To be an enemy of God is a serious, serious thing. The eternal hell is designed to be occupied by the enemies of the eternal God. Man is separated. There is enmity. That just means there is an enemy thing there. That means there is animosity. There is hatred. That is antipathy. There is rebellion. And you know something, as a human being, you can't do one thing about it to change it in your own strength.

Look at Romans Chapter 5 for a minute. This factor of being at enmity with God, you know, people think it's...they think that if they're just good, if they're a good neighbor or work with their job fairly well or take care of their wife and kids within reason that God is really their friend and everything's going to be fine, but that isn't true. There are only two categories of human beings and Jesus put them this way. "He that is not with me is," what, "against me." You are either with Christ or you're against Christ. And if you're against Christ, you're against God. So you cannot be for God and against Christ. You know Christ, you're for God. You don't know Christ, there's no other way to be on God's side.

So you're alienated. You're an enemy. You're an enmity, antipathy. Notice the inability of man to do anything about it. Romans Chapter 5, verse 6, "For when we were yet without strength," now here's man's first problem, a lack of strength. Man in a desperate situation of being an enemy from God has not the strength to change it. There's nothing he can do. He is impotent. He is weak. He is without strength. Not only that verse 6 says, "In due time Christ died for the ungodly." He not only lacks strength, he lacks merit. He is ungodly. He is ungodly. He is not just pro God, but doesn't know Christ, he is without Christ ungodly. He doesn't know God. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me," Jesus said. So a man is without strength and he's without God. He is ungodly. He has no merit to commend him.

He's done nothing to earn God's response or respect and he has no strength to change his circumstances. Not only that, verse 8 says "God commanded His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners." He lacks strength. He lacks merit, and he lacks righteousness. He is a sinner by definition. And then in verse 10, "If when we were enemies," He is an enemy. Now here is the picture of an unregenerate man. Impotent, without merit, unrighteous and an enemy. That's the status of a person without Christ. But notice what it says in those same verses. While man couldn't do anything about it, "when we were without strength," verse 6, "in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

Verse 8, "But God commanded His love toward us that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Verse 10, "When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." You notice the point? You can't do anything about it, but Christ did all. You see? He removed the barrier between a man and God. He is the one who makes reconciliation possible. Look at Colossians Chapter 1 for another passage that maybe will help you to understand this great doctrine of reconciliation.

Colossians 1:20, well, look at verse 21 and we'll take it a little bit backwards, but it'll help us to understand it perhaps more clearly. Colossians 1:21, "And you that were once alienated and enemies in your mind because of your wicked works yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death to present you holy and unblameable and unreprovable in His sight." Now stop right there. The point is this, you couldn't do anything about the situation you were in, but He did it

through His death and your position is before God you are holy. You are unblameable, you are unreprovable in His sight.

What happens to you now that you're a Christian when you sin? What's the first thing God does? Forgives you and keeps the slate clean. You're holy, unblameable, unreprovable in God's sight. You couldn't do anything about it. Christ did it. You say how did He do it? Verse 20, He made peace between you and God. He made peace. He said the war is over, there was a truce and "it was signed in His blood. The blood of His cross and by that He reconciles all things to Himself." Okay? You got it now.

It is the blood of Christ, you see? You say well why does that do it? Listen, what stands between a man and God? Sin. Same thing that stands between a man and a man. It's the selfishness that stands between man and man. It's the sin that stands between man and God and when Jesus comes and bears the sin away and takes the curse and removes the sin the path is open, the truce is signed and I am at peace with God. Now it doesn't just mean that I'm on God's side. It also means God is on my side.

I mean, just imagine if you were a little kid playing a game and you got first choice for your team and you said, "I take God." And God said to you, "Good, I'm on your side and I will put all of my power at your disposal." Well, that's exactly what happens in the case of Christianity. When you become a Christian, you take God on your team.

Look at Ephesians 6:15 for a minute. And we'll get into this in great detail some time in the future, we'll get there. But in Ephesians 6:15, it's talking about the armor of the Christian and how you fight against Satan. And it says, "your feet are shod or prepared, your feet are prepared with the gospel of peace." The gospel of peace. I love that. Some places in the New Testament it's called the gospel of grace. Romans 1, it's called the gospel of God. Many places, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. But here, it's called the gospel of peace. And what it means is this, you've made peace with God, the war's over.

There was animosity, bitterness, war, fighting against God. Christ came along removed your sin. In Christ, He gives you His righteousness. God looks at you, you're holy, unblameable, unreproveable in His sight. You are as righteous as Jesus Christ and God says I'm on his and her side. And all of His power and love and everything is amassed on your behalf. The barrier is gone. And so we are not only reconciled according to Ephesians Chapter 2 with one another, but we are reconciled to God, because Christ slew the enmity as it were. The cross was sufficient to do that.

So when two parties come to God, they come to each other too and then together are joined to him. Beloved, the result of all of this is that Christianity is indeed a gospel of peace. Peace with each other, peace with God. Christians shouldn't be fighting with each other, they shouldn't be fighting with God. Sometimes we do both, did you know that? Christians are really good at fighting each other, terrific at it. You know, I mean, we can level some real shots even in our own families we do. In the church, splitting and fracturing. I mean, it just...we just do that. Sometimes we're unkind to each other. We definitely don't all follow the pattern of Philippians 2, loving everybody the same because we all have the humility of Jesus and we look not on our own things, but on the things of others and we consider others better than ourselves.

We really have a lot of trouble with that. But listen, positionally we are one, but we sure make a lot of problems for that. And you want to know something else, we are one with God, but we don't always act like that either, because even though we're at peace with God, sometimes we get a little uptight with Him, don't we? Sometimes we hassle Him. Sometimes we doubt Him. Sometimes we deny the power that He says is available to us. Sometimes we argue with God. Sometimes we question God. We don't always manifest this peace and that's where the dichotomy comes.

But aren't you glad that it's there anyway? Aren't you glad that the peace of God that our relationship to God depends upon what He's done, not on what we do? I'm so glad that the Bible teaches position and practice, because if they were the same thing every time you goofed up your practice, you'd lose your position. Wouldn't that be a mess? So Christ has brought us to God. Verse 17, "He came and preached peace." He did. I mean that was basic. Christ is peace, verse 14 says. Christ made peace, verse 15 says. Christ preached peace, verse 17. It's a beautiful way it's expressed here. He preached. The word for preach here is euangelizo. It means to preach the gospel or to evangelize. The English word for euangelizo is evangelize.

He gospeled peace is what it says. It's the same thought as the gospel of peace. He gospeled peace. He evangelized peace. Listen His message was peace. And boy you get a clue for that one right at the very start. Luke 2:14, the angels appear in the sky and the first thing they say is "Glory to God in the highest and on earth," what, "peace." Listen, almost like an aura around Jesus was the concept of peace. It was a constantly recurring message. He gospelized peace. In Luke 10, He sent 70 people two by two and He said, "whatever house you enter first say peace to this house." That was always the message.

That God was offering in Christ peace. Peace with Him and peace with men. That was the magnanimous offer. Jesus in departing the last night He spent with His disciples before His death said to them, "Peace I leave with you. Peace I give unto you." Not the kind the world gives. Stop letting your heart be afraid. Stop letting it be troubled. In John 16 He said, "You're going to have persecution in this world. You're going to have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." And He said, "These things I've spoken unto you that in me who might have peace."

Christ always, always offering peace. In Acts 10:36, we hear the early church and what do we imagine their message is going to be? Well, it's simple. Acts 10:36 says, "they were preaching peace by Jesus Christ." Peace was always the message. When you come to Christ, the animosity's gone between you and God and between you and other people. And the church was a wonderful fellowship triangular. The life of God flowing out of him through Jew and Gentile and between the two of them. A harmony of peace between man and man and man and God.

It's kind of like the prodigal son who first came home and was reconciled to his father and then he was reconciled to his brother. The same thing is true in Christianity. We're reconciled to God and then to each other. The apostle Paul in Romans said "now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace." And he said in Romans 14, "The kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace." The fruit of the Spirit is love and joy and peace.

1 Corinthians 7:15, "God has called us to peace." "God is not the author of confusion," 1 Corinthians 14, "but of peace." It's all over the place. The book of Hebrews climaxes in a great statement, "Now the God of peace that brought again our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead that great shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the everlasting covenant make you perfect in every good work to do His

will." The God of peace. Beloved, we're at peace with God and each other. There's more than that.

Go back to Ephesians again. Not only are we receiving the blessing of peace with God, but verse 18 introduces another thing. We have been reconciled to each other and to God. And in being reconciled to God, we have peace and access is the second, verse 18. "For through Him," that is through Christ and what He's done, "we have access by one Spirit to the Father." The whole Trinity's in that verse incidentally. The Him is the Son, the Spirit is the Spirit, the Father, the Father. That's a good verse to speak of the Trinity. "Through Christ we have access by the Spirit to the Father."

You know, it's a great thing to realize that we have instant access. Hebrews says "We come boldly into His presence," doesn't it, "in time of need." We have access by a great high priest who's opened the way to Him. Think of it, we have access. And the word is such a beautiful word. It's only used three times in the New Testament. Once here, once in 3:12 of Ephesians, and once in Romans Chapter 5. And the word is a word above all else, now listen to this, that was used in ancient times for the person who introduced somebody to the king. A prosagogeus was what it is. Funny word. prosagogeus, a person who was that was the official introducer to the king. If you wanted to see the king, the prosagogeus is the one that took you to the king.

The Persians had such a person with such a title in their courts to introduce people to the king. Sande and Hedlum say the idea is that of introduction to the presence of a monarch. The rendering of the word access is inadequate as it leaves out of sight that we do not come in our strength, but need an introducer. In other words, our access is not on our own. Really what it should read is this. Through Him we both have an introducer. And who is the introducer? Who is the great high priest who opens the way for us? Who's the advocate? The Lord Jesus Christ. He is the door. He is the one who brings us into the Father.

You know there's a beautiful word on that in John 10 where Jesus is talking about the Good Shepherd. He says, "I am the Good Shepherd, I know my sheep." In verse 7 he says, "I am the door." And some people will say that's kind of mixing your metaphors. Not at all. It's not mixing metaphors a bit, because in those days when the flock went out on the Judean hillside at night, they wouldn't come all the way back to town to wherever the fold was in town. They would simply build a little fold out on the hillside with mud or bricks or with wood or something a little circular thing and the entrance would simply be an open space. And all the sheep would come into the fold and then the shepherd would lie down across the open space. He literally was the door. He was the way in and the way out. And Jesus is simply saying that.

It is over my prostrate body given in death that you have entrance to the Father. The fold, He is the door. And so Jesus Christ is the introducer. He is the access. And beloved, it's a great thing to realize that we can come to God as Romans 8 says and "cry Abba Father," and prepare to say everything that's in our heart to say without any fear. Open and honest conversation can we share ourselves with God who is on our side, who is not looking for something to condemn us.

Romans 8 says "who shall lay any charge to God's elect, it is God that justifies." God has justified you and nobody's going to take any complaint and it's going to hold any water at all. Even if they go in there with a list of the sins you committed last week, the Father will simply say oh, I've forgotten those. Those were covered in the blood of Christ. When you come in there and He receives you with open arms. His Spirit prepares the way. The Son gives you access.

I don't know the mystery of how the Son and the Spirit and the Father all work together, so I'm not even going to get into it. We'll let you figure it out when you get to heaven. We have access. So those who were spiritually, socially alienated in Christ are spiritually, socially united with each other with God. And with God we have peace. And with God we have an introducer who takes us in and God doesn't hold anything against us and he's not looking for ways to condemn us. Everything is forgiven and forgotten as instantly as a sin is committed. And the way is always open and it's always clear. We never need to fear to go into the presence of God. When you...if you're a Christian and you fall into some sin, don't be afraid to go to God. Be afraid if you don't. Rush into His presence as fast as you can get there and you'll find His love and grace and forgiveness.

Now in a great closing summary and I just want to refer to it very briefly in verses 19-22, Paul closes his discussion of the unity of the body by giving three other metaphors to illustrate it. How Jew and Gentile have been made one. How we're all one body. How there's no more division. No more separation and he does it by three pictures. He calls us fellow citizens, household of God, and a holy temple in verse 21. These are three pictures. First of all, the fellow citizens concept in verse 19. "Now therefore," therefore just coming off of all that he said, "because we're all one, because we've been made one in Christ, because we have access and peace with God, we are no longer strangers." And that word zenoi, means somebody who's an outcast, wretched, vial, rotten, keep them at a distance kind of person. And sojourner, and a sojourner is someone completely different. Paraoikoi means somebody who's a friend. You bring them into the house. He's not a part of the family. He's not really a citizen of anything. You just let him be there as a guest.

So he says you're either wretched outcast that you wouldn't have in the house or you're a houseguest with no rights. But that's no longer true. You now are fellow citizens with the saints. The saints here refers to the godly, the believing people. Listen, we're all fellow citizens. There are no strangers in the family of God. There are no sojourners. There are no houseguests. We're all citizens. We're all members of the kingdom. We've been, if you will, supernaturalized. Made real citizens with the saints. All of us are citizens of heaven. Our citizenship Philippians 3:20 says is in heaven. Listen, we're all citizens of the same kingdom. There's no difference.

Second one, we go further than that citizens also with the saints and the household of God were not only fellow citizens we're family, we're family. We're not just strangers, naturalized and allowed to be in the kingdom. We are family. I believe that God loves us so much that he wouldn't stand for just having us fellow citizens, He had to make us fellow sons, fellow heirs. Hebrews 3:6, I love it, it says this, "Christ as a son over His own house whose house we are." Jesus says in Hebrews 2, "I'm not ashamed to call them brothers." They're joint heirs, sons of the Father, the family. Verse 15 of Chapter 3 calls us the family in heaven and earth. The whole family. Listen beloved, we're in the family.

And I want to tell you something right now, if God can accept everyone of us, then we ought to accept each other right? You say yes, but I know so many things about them. Yeah. You don't know what God knows about them and He loves them. And He knows the same stuff about you too. We aren't guests in God's house, we're family. Household of God.

Thirdly, he says we're built together as a holy temple and the reason he follows in this sequence is because in each of these little sections the little root word oikos appears. It's connected to the word sojourner. It's connected to the word household and it's connected to the word building. And that's

the trigger in Paul's mind that makes him use these three metaphors. That little word keeps triggering his thoughts. So he goes from being in the kingdom to being in the family to being a builder. And he says in 20 that his chief cornerstone of the building is Christ. You know the cornerstone was the major stone that was set down. It had to be so large to support the super structure. It had to be so accurate because the walls were all conformed to the angle of that stone. And every other block in the entire building fit into that stone. So the cornerstone was the thing that framed everything. It was the thing to which everything was adapted. The cornerstone was the support, the unifier, the connector, the strength giver, it was everything. And that is Jesus Christ.

Isaiah said that he would...that God would lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, didn't he? Peter repeats that in 1 Peter Chapter 2. And he says, "that cornerstone to them that believe is precious, but to those that believe not is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense," and it's true. Some people are offended at Jesus Christ. But believe me, He is the cornerstone in the building. And then notice it says that the foundation then is built of the apostles and prophets. Now we could say then that the foundation is the apostles and prophets and that would be true in a sense, but I think more true than that is the fact that they laid the foundation. In Greek, for those Greek students who might be here, we would call it a subjective genitive. And we would say what it means is not so much that the apostles and the prophets are the foundation as that they laid it.

The foundation of doctrine that they laid connected to the person of Christ is the foundation of this holy temple. And yet they're there in a sense as part of that foundation. But you remember in 1 Corinthians 3, Paul said "for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Christ Jesus." And Paul saw himself in that statement not as a foundation stone, but as a foundation layer. And in Romans 15:20, he said, "lest I build on another man's foundation." He saw himself as a foundation builder rather than a foundation stone. Do you understand the difference?

So it was the apostles who laid that foundation. They are really inseparable from it. Christ the chief cornerstone. The apostles and their doctrine the foundation and from there the building goes up, verse 21. "All the building then fitly framed together." And by the way that verb fitly framed together is a rare, rare verb in the Greek language that means every single part fit snug. When God builds His church it fits compact, firm, not loose and ill arranged masonry, unstable and ugly, solid, cohesive, snug, firm. Every stone fitted perfectly into its place without defect. No stone out of place. And no stone broken.

The church positionally before God is perfect, perfect. And it has to be. Why? Because it grows to be a holy temple in the Lord in whom you are built together to be a habitation of God through the Spirit. Listen, if God is going to build a temple in which he will dwell by his spirit that's going to be a perfect temple, right? Back in the book...back in the Old Testament, you'll recall that when God saw the temple was imperfect, God wrote Ichubad and his glory, what, departed. God doesn't dwell in an imperfect place. Now what I'm saying is this, if we are the temple of God, then positionally we are perfect.

You see that? God's spirit wouldn't dwell in imperfection. Get a grip on it people. Our position in Jesus Christ is that we are fellow citizens of His kingdom. We are fellow members of His family and we are living stones. Peter says in 1 Peter 2:5, "Living stones built together firmly fitted in exact perfection to be the dwelling place of the Spirit of God." Get a grip on who you are. And no stone is broken or marred or inadequate. Everyone is perfect and fitted in perfection together by the master builder. And it grows, the temple grows. Why? New stones are added all the time, right? New people

are added all the time. And one of these days it'll be done. And then the Lord Jesus will come.

Listen, what a fellowship we have. What a beautiful unity is ours. Let's do all we can to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Chapter 4 and verse 3 says, we've got this positional unity, let's keep it. Let's live it. Henry George was fighting to be the mayor of New York. He wanted to be elected. He was called on to address a mass meeting of working men at the Cooper Institute. The chairman of the meeting introduced him as Henry George, the friend of the working man. As soon as Mr. George rose to his feet, he said slowly and emphatically, "I am not the friend of the working man." There was an instant of strange silence, bewilderment. And then he said, "I am the friend of man. Man simply as man, regardless of any accidental or superfluous distinction of race, creed, color, class, function or employment."

You want to know something? So is God. He doesn't pick and choose a certain class. He is the friend of sinners the Bible says. And when those sinners in faith come to Jesus Christ, no matter what the past, what the race, the creed, the employment, the economic status, the personality traits, the looks, no matter what, they become fellow citizens, family members, living stones in the temple in which God in His Spirit literally dwell. Now that's what God thinks of you. That's the high position that you have. We are one in a marvelous way. God help us to live it. Let's pray.

Thank You Father for reconciling us to yourself so that we could be reconciled to each other in You. And Lord, if there are some in our midst this morning who have not been reconciled to You through faith in Jesus Christ, some for whom the blood of Christ has never been applied, oh God we pray that today they would in faith believe in the one who died for their sins that that act of faith would result in their immediate reconciliation and access with You. Father help us to practice oneness in humility considering others better than ourselves, loving as Jesus loved, serving as Jesus served. That we may take this incredible positional identity and manifest it as we learn. And we'll thank You for what can be done as we're faithful on our part and thankful for Your part. Amen.

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