

Ephesians - Fullness: One New People

Dr. John Carmichael

[Eph 2:11-22 NASB95] 11 Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," [which is] performed in the flesh by human hands-- 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. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both [groups into] one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, [which is] the Law of commandments [contained] in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, [thus] establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. 17 AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; 18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner [stone,] 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

- We live in a world that has become incredibly good at dividing people.
- We divide by race. Politics. Generation. Education. Economics. Culture. Denomination. Social class.
- Almost everything around us asks: "Which group are you in?"
- And increasingly, disagreement doesn't simply mean: "You see things differently than I do." It means: "You are my enemy."
- But Ephesians 2 announces that Jesus is building something radically different.
- Paul is writing about one of the deepest divisions imaginable in the first-century world: Jew and Gentile.
- There were centuries of religious, ethnic, cultural, and historical separation between them.
- Yet Jesus doesn't merely tell them: "Try harder to get along."
- Jesus does something supernatural. Through the cross, He takes people who were separated from God and separated from one another and creates: "one new man" —Ephesians 2:15
- Paul's argument moves through four incredible transformations: Far away → Brought near. Enemies → At peace. Strangers → Family. Individuals → God's dwelling place.
- This isn't merely Paul's description of the first-century Church. This is the Church Jesus is still building.

What does the Church Jesus is building look like in a world determined to keep people divided?

In Ephesians 2:11–22, Paul shows us four things Jesus does to create One New People.

- I. JESUS BRINGS US NEAR - [Eph 2:11-13 NASB95] 11 Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," [which is] performed in the flesh by human hands-- 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. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.**

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- a. Paul begins by reminding the Gentile believers what their lives looked like before Christ.
- b. Five descriptions of spiritual alienation. They were: "separate from Christ" "excluded from the commonwealth of Israel" "strangers to the covenants of promise" "having no hope" and "without God in the world."
- c. But then comes one of the great gospel transitions: "BUT NOW..." "But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." Ephesians 2:13
- d. You were far away. BUT NOW... You have been brought near. Not because you found your way to God. Not because you became religious enough. Not because you cleaned yourself up. THE BLOOD BROUGHT YOU NEAR.
- e. [Heb 10:19 NASB95] 19 Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus,
- f. The distance between sinful humanity and a holy God has been overcome through Jesus Christ.
- g. The Presence of God is no longer reserved for a priest entering the Holy of Holies once a year. Through Jesus, we have access.
- h. APPLICATION: Maybe you feel far from God. Your feelings may tell you: "God doesn't want me." "I've messed up too badly." "I don't belong here." But your standing with God isn't determined by your feelings.
- i. THE BLOOD TURNED "FAR AWAY" INTO "COME NEAR."

II. JESUS TEARS DOWN THE WALLS - [Eph 2:14-18 NASB95] 14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both [groups into] one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, [which is] the Law of commandments [contained] in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, [thus] establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. 17 AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; 18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.

- a. Paul moves from our separation from God to our separation from one another.
- b. "For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall." Ephesians 2:14
- c. Notice: Jesus doesn't merely give us peace. HE IS OUR PEACE.
- d. Then Paul says Jesus: "...might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace." Ephesians 2:15; "...might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross..." Ephesians 2:16
- e. The cross works in two directions. VERTICALLY: God reconciles us to Himself. HORIZONTALLY: God reconciles us to one another.
- f. Sin, pride, prejudice, bitterness, offense, self-righteousness builds walls. JESUS TEARS DOWN WALLS.
- g. [Gal 3:28 NASB95] 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
- h. Our differences don't disappear. Our differences stop determining our worth and our belonging.
- i. At Pentecost in Acts 2 lists people from nations and cultures scattered across the ancient world. Pentecost gathers people through the Spirit.
- j. A genuinely Spirit-filled Church should demonstrate supernatural reconciliation to a divided world.
- k. APPLICATION: Ask the Holy Spirit: "Is there a wall in my heart that Jesus wants to tear down?" The pain may be legitimate. But don't let the wound become a wall.

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- I. IF JESUS DIED TO TEAR THE WALL DOWN, DON'T SPEND YOUR LIFE REBUILDING IT.

III. JESUS MAKES STRANGERS FAMILY - [Eph 2:19-21 NASB95] 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner [stone,] 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,

- a. Now Paul's language changes dramatically: "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens..."
- b. NO LONGER. That's identity language. You were an outsider. But you're not anymore.
- c. Paul gives them three new pictures of their identity.
 - i. "...fellow citizens with the saints..." YOU HAVE A KINGDOM.
 - ii. "...and are of God's household..." YOU HAVE A FAMILY.
 - iii. "...having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone." YOU HAVE A FOUNDATION.
- d. You aren't visiting God's family. YOU BELONG TO GOD'S FAMILY.
- e. [1Co 12:13 NASB95] 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.
- f. Different backgrounds, personalities, generations, gifts, experiences, yet the same Spirit places us into the same Body.
- g. I need what God has placed in you. You need what God has placed in me. Spirit-filled Christianity cannot be individualistic Christianity.
- h. APPLICATION: We need to change the way we think about Church. Church isn't primarily: "A service I attend." Church is: "A PEOPLE TO WHOM I BELONG." Consumer Christianity asks: "What did I get out of church?" Biblical Christianity asks: "What did I contribute to the Body?"
- i. JESUS DIDN'T SAVE YOU TO SIT IN A CROWD; HE SAVED YOU TO BELONG TO A BODY.

IV. JESUS FILLS THE HOUSE - [Eph 2:21-22 NASB95] 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

- a. Now Paul reaches the climax. "...the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord."
- b. Then: "in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit." Ephesians 2:22
- c. Don't miss the words: BUILT TOGETHER.
- d. Paul's "you" is plural. We rightly emphasize: "The Holy Spirit lives in me." Absolutely. "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit..." 1 Corinthians 6:19
- e. But Ephesians 2 emphasizes another dimension of God's Presence. GOD DWELLS AMONG US.
- f. There is a personal Presence of God. But there is also a corporate Presence of God.
- g. [2Ch 7:1-2 NASB95] 1 Now when Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the house. 2 The priests could not enter into the house of the LORD because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD'S house.
- h. [Act 2:1, 4 NASB95] 1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ... 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.
- i. Notice the sequence: ALL TOGETHER. ALL FILLED.

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- j. Pentecost wasn't merely an individual experience. Pentecost was a corporate encounter.
 - k. Victory and Strength when we are unified:
 - i. [Lev 26:7-8 NASB95] 7 'But you will chase your enemies and they will fall before you by the sword; 8 five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall before you by the sword.
 - ii. [Ecc 4:12 NASB95] 12 And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three [strands] is not quickly torn apart.
 - l. APPLICATION: DON'T JUST COME TO CHURCH. COME READY TO BUILD THE HOUSE.
 - m. Because when God's people gather in unity, faith, hunger, and expectation, we make room for the manifest Presence of God.
 - n. WE DON'T JUST GATHER IN GOD'S HOUSE; TOGETHER, WE ARE GOD'S HOUSE. Bring something into the room.
- **Through the cross, Jesus brings outsiders near, tears dividing walls down, builds us into one family, and fills His Church with His Presence.**
 - From just "Holy Spirit, fill me." to: "HOLY SPIRIT, FILL THIS HOUSE."
 - "I belong. I need to let go of walls. I need the Church and the Church needs me. My presence affects His Presence."