

Every Spiritual Blessing

Lesson 4

Ephesians 2:11-22

Near to God

Day 1

1. First Impressions: Read through Ephesians 2:11-22. Looking at it in sections, write one thing that speaks to you from these verses:

vv. 11-13

vv. 14-17

vv. 19-22

2. This portion of our text in Ephesians can actually be summed up by a few verses here in Ephesians. Complete the following:

v.13: Now in Christ, you who were once _____ have been brought near by the _____.

v. 14: He Himself is our _____ who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of _____.

v. 18: For through Him (Jesus) we both have _____ by one Spirit to the _____.

v.19: Now, therefore, you are no longer _____ and _____ but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of _____.

- a. From these verse above what truth did you learn and how does this encourage you?

3. The Jews put confidence in the ceremonial act of circumcision and they looked down upon those who were *uncircumcised*, but Paul addresses the futility of this explaining that circumcision was an external mark made to identify one as a Jew, but it was the inward mark of the committed heart that meant anything to God. Christ came as Messiah and before He departed for Heaven He said He

would send the Holy Spirit to those who believed in Him. Those who by faith are born again receive the Holy Spirit, who gives them a new mind and changes their heart making it new! The Holy Spirit is the identifying “mark” of believers. That act of circumcision was never enough to save but was supposed to be for the Jew an act of obedience and commitment to God with their whole heart. Now, because of the finished work of Christ, circumcision is no longer necessary. God is not just looking for a ceremonial outward mark—He never was. God is looking for a heart marked by being set on Him in faith, trust and obedience to follow Him. Look up the scriptures below and write what they teach us about circumcision as it relates to Christ’s followers:

Romans 2:25-28

Philippians 3:1-3

Galatians 5:5-6

- a. After reading these verses how would you describe the “circumcision” that matters?

*Today the act of physical circumcision might be suggested for sanitary reasons, but whether a person is circumcised or not makes no difference to their spiritual condition—it’s all about the heart!

4. Paul reminds these Christians that they were once themselves separated from God. Christians must never have self-righteous pride in their salvation. We should celebrate and be happy of our assured position in Christ, and it should create humility and thanksgiving in us as we consider all that we have been forgiven of and how Jesus has made us righteous. In Ephesians 2:1, how does Paul describe the believer’s condition when they were without Christ?

In order to understand what Paul is saying we must take it into context and understand what was to be of Jewish heritage and bloodline connecting to the covenant promises of God. God’s chosen people were the Jews and the Messiah was promised to the nation of Israel to save them and deliver them to victory. The Gentiles were not God’s chosen people, they were far from God and did not know Him: *“In addition to being without the Messiah, the Gentiles were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. An Alien is one who does not “belong.” He is a stranger and foreigner, without the rights and privileges of citizenship. As far as the community of Israel was concerned, the Gentiles were on the outside looking in and they were strangers from the covenants of promise. God made covenants with the nation of Israel through such men as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David and Solomon. These covenants promised blessings to the Jews...The Gentiles were without hope, both nationally and individually. Nationally they had no assurance that their land, their government, or their people would survive. And individually their outlook was bleak; they had no hope beyond the grave...Finally, they were without God in the world. This*

does not mean they were atheists. They had their own gods of wood and stone and worshipped them. But they did not know the one and only true God. They were God-less in a godless, hostile world.”-
Believer’s Bible Commentary

The Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah. God always had a plan to save the Gentiles through Jews “salvation will come through the Jews” (John 4) and the Lord offered the same access of salvation to the Gentiles through Jesus (Romans 11), giving those grafted in the same promises and hope to all who would believe upon Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Hallelujah! For those who are in Christ, there is no difference between any man or woman (Jew or Gentile) all are saved by Jesus. He is the way to eternal life and the Father for all who would receive Him! We are all equal at the foot of the cross and our pride and our adoration is in the Lord alone.

5. Write out Ephesians 2:13:

6. Take a few moments to prayerfully ponder what this verse is declaring. By this realize that as a Christian you are no longer “far off” from God, but now you are “near” to Him because of the cross—Jesus has shed His precious blood for you on the cross—you are redeemed. How does that make you feel? What strength and encouragement do you receive to live your life for Him?

Day 2

1. Read Ephesians 2:14-17 in the New Living Translation written below. Underline each occurrence of the word “peace” with a highlighter or colored pencil.

14 For Christ Himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles in to one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. 15 He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. 16 Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death. 17 He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near. 18 Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.

2. There is a progression of the “peace” that Christ gives and it begins with each of us individually (v.14). How should this “peace” we have personally with Christ affect our relationships with others who are followers of Christ, regardless of nationality, demographics, gender or anything else (v.15)?

Because we have peace with God, we should now have peace with each other.

3. According to Ephesians 2:16 (NLT), how did Christ reconcile us to God?
 - a. What was put to death at the cross?
4. Paul gives this reminder that all believers are a part of one body if they are truly in Christ. The opportunity to become one in Christ is an invitation that goes out to all who would by faith believe in Christ. How do these verses expand on this truth?

Galatians 3:26-29

Colossians 3:11

5. Read Colossians 3:1-17. Paul reminds us to “put off” and “put on” certain characteristics as evidence that we are new in Christ. What are those things we are to:

Put OFF:

Put ON:

- a. Review Colossians 3:12-17. What do these verses tell you about your part in keeping real unity in the body of Christ? Personally what are some things you can work on to do your part in keeping the unity?
6. Jesus reconciles all believers to God in one body. The collective group of believers are the body of Christ. According to Ephesians 2:18 how do we have access to the Father?
 - a. What was Jesus prayer for all believers in John 17:20-23?

We are not just unified with one another, but we are made one with the Father and the Son—just as Jesus prayed!

- a. What does unity with other believers ultimately show the world according to what Jesus prayed in these verses in John 17?

There are two distinct groups of people on the planet—those that are saved and those who are not. God does not view us by our race, ethnicity, geographic location, profession, social position, or bloodline. When one comes to Christ their previous identity becomes secondary to their new identity, which is now *in Christ*, because the Holy Spirit now dwells in them. Take a moment to ponder the realization that Jesus broke down *walls of hostility* and reconciled all believers to God by way of the cross. We are redeemed and forgiven of sin and now have a new heart and mind and the Holy Spirit. As such, no matter what our nationality, color of our skin or demographic, we must not allow any root of racism to exist—we're a new creation in Christ, a holy people unified in Him. If we allow any form of racism to affect our perception of others, then we are not allowing the Holy Spirit to reign in our hearts. Examine your heart today and ask God to reveal any ungodly attitude of hostility you may have toward another person or people group. Confess it and let the Lord fix that attitude so that you will be free from it and your witness will not be hindered and you will bring Jesus glory.

“Racism among believers cannot be justified, and it must be resisted...Diversity in the church is a glorious demonstration of the work of Christ. It is to be celebrated as it pictures heaven. It demonstrates the one new man.” – Christ Centered Exposition Commentary

Day 3

Paul's heart was for the body of believers to be united in Christ, because oneness among them was crucial to the health and survival of the church. Jesus said a house divided would fall. So it is important to be “united” and “one,” especially regarding things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. A people who are of the same mind can be a powerful force, for good or for evil. We must be wise in discerning the difference and move according to good as defined by God and not man.

1. What do you learn from Ephesians 4:1-6 about the importance of the Holy Spirit working in the life of all believers and our part in maintaining oneness (unity) of the body of Christ?
2. Believers in Christ are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and united as one. However we don't always see that oneness and unity in the body of Christ. What do you think is the main reason for division in the body of Christ?
3. What do these scriptures reveal as protection from division in the body of Christ:

Romans 15:5-7

1 Corinthians 12:25

Philippians 2:1-4

4. We are to pursue unity, but true unity and peace in the Spirit is not kept by uniting with intentional ungodly behavior for the sake of “keeping the peace.” Overlooking false doctrine and behavior, or heresy of the Word of God does not promote unity in the Spirit. We see this happen when some may claim to be in Christ but their actions, lifestyle, and or teaching reveal otherwise. What do these verses say about this and what actions to take?

1 Corinthians 5:9-13

2 Timothy 3:1-5 (5)

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

*Dig Deeper...(Optional) Look up what it means to be “yoked together” and share what you find:

There are many scriptures that would support the idea that there is a time to be separate from ungodly influences, and even to separate from believers who choose to habitually indulge in biblically defined sinful activity. It is not about having a ‘holier than thou’ attitude, but rather a decision to live to please God, not joining or being united with others in their folly if it hinders our own witness.

5. How would avoidance or exposure of such people protect the unity of the *body of Christ* and the work of the Holy Spirit in the church?
6. Jesus has abolished the enmity (hostility or animosity) that separated us from God. He has done everything necessary for us to stay united with Him! But we must watch who or what we unite ourselves with. Read James 4:4-6. What does this warn believers to avoid and why?

This is a warning to be very careful of worldly living. In fact, Paul says to us that friendship with the “world” puts us back at enmity, or as an enemy with God. A believer cannot lose their salvation, but they can make foolish choices. None of us would want to act as God’s enemy! The “world” refers to the unsaved practices and principles of the world system that are against the holiness of God. He is not saying we should not love people or share the gospel with them; rather we are not to engage in their habits, or love what they do by doing it ourselves! We are definitely not be united by those worldly practices, because we are called to holiness and indwelt with the Holy Spirit. Lord help us to be loyal!

Day 4

1. As we conclude Ephesians 2, read verses 19-22. How does Paul describe the believer in verse 19?
2. It is so strengthening and affirming to be part of the body of Christ and members of the household of God. How important is it for us to work together and encourage other believers so they are built up and affirmed in their walks? How does it affect the body of Christ if we don't?

Paul uses the metaphor of a building, built on a foundation, with stones being fitted together with Christ as the main Cornerstone. This example may not mean much to you as a modern day Christian in a land of prefabricated buildings, but it would have been a vivid picture for the audience in Ephesus that Paul addresses. The Jews would perhaps be mindful of the great temple built by Solomon, or even more familiar with Herod's temple; and the Gentiles might think of the great temple Artemis dedicated to Diana. Those temples would eventually be destroyed, but the temple Christ is building will last forever! Previous temples were made of stones that were cut and placed by men as they built these massive structures. The temple of God is not made of stones by men. It is made up of God's people, being built upon the foundation of the WORD of God as taught by the Prophets and Apostles, who by the Spirit, established early church doctrines and the teaching of the Word, just as we see in Acts 2:40-42. The cornerstone is the most important stone in the building. A building would not be able to stand without the corner stone because it assures proper alignment and structural integrity for every other stone that is placed. Jesus is the Cornerstone, and it is by Christ alone that we are built up and aligned with God.

3. Read these verses and share what you learn about the "stones" that are now being fit together and now make up the temple of God.

1 Peter 2:4-8

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

2 Corinthians 6:16-18

Think about the Gentiles perspective, knowing how historically in the past they would not have been allowed to enter the temple of God because they were not Jews, but now they are a part of the living temple of God through Christ, by the indwelling of His Spirit in them! What an incredible revelation! Not only for the gentiles but for all who believe in Jesus as Lord and Saviour—God dwells in us personally and also corporately unifying together—being united in Christ, in One Spirit in all.

4. All believers are now joined together, just like the stones fit together making the walls of the temple building, every person matters and every person having the indwelling of God and the seal of his Holy Spirit. God has given all of His children access to a heavenly inheritance, a new purpose in life, and spiritual gifts to edify and build up the body of Christ and give God glory. Prayerfully consider

these things as they apply to your own life. How does this speak to you personally and what is God urging you to do about it?

5. How often do you just stop and express gratitude to the Lord for saving you and for every blessing that is now yours in Christ? As you review your answers to the questions from this week's study, think about the reality of what has happened. We were once far off, and now He has brought us near; He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing; we are citizens of heaven, members of God's family! We are joined together with Him, becoming a holy temple being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit! Process that! Close this week's lesson by writing a prayer of gratitude to your Heavenly Father:

Day 5 Review and Reflect - Read through Ephesians 2:11-22 once more.

1. Review Day 1: Apart from Christ, you were once far from God, being described by Paul as people without hope. However because of the finished work of Jesus Christ at Calvary, we are now near to God; in fact, He dwells within you! How does this give you hope?
2. Review Day 2 and Day 3. As you studied the concept of protecting unity in Spirit and how it affects the body of Christ, what spoke to your heart the most about your part in keeping true unity?
3. Day 4: Paul describes Jesus as the chief cornerstone, and believers as being "stones" of a building, fitted together with other believers becoming a holy temple in the Lord...a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Eph 2:21-22). What would happen if a stone is missing in a wall? How does this encourage you or challenge you to know that you have a place that God has planned for you in the His church?
4. Paul has reminded us that we belong to God, we are fellow citizens and members of the household of God that have received privileges, promises and purpose. What promise is most precious to you now? What assurance do you have now that you didn't before you became a child of God?
5. Is there something you learned this week that has enlightened your understanding of the hope that you have in Christ and the calling He has on your life? What are some practical ways you can implement what God has been showing you?