



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Ephesians 2:11-22

“Made Nigh by Christ’s Blood” -- TRANSCRIPT

We are turning again to the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians, and we’re looking at verse 11 through verse 22 of Ephesians chapter 2, and our subject is “Made Nigh by the Blood of Christ.”

The Apostle in verse 10 Ephesians chapter 2 has considered the believer’s past, and then he has considered what has taken place by virtue of the atonement. And he has spoken of the principle of our salvation, particularly in the last few verses; a salvation by the principle of grace.

Now that which the Apostle considered individually in verses 1-10, he now considers collectively, and he looks at the past of the church, and the present of the church, and in the process, spends some time on the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ which has made the difference in the church collectively.

The historical background out of which the Apostle writes is very interesting and it’s very important for the understanding of this section. You may remember from the study of the Scriptures that in the Old Testament God spoke to the children of Israel. In the beginning he spoke to the fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and called them, and made them the fathers of the nation. And then as time went on, he gave to them the revelation of God, not only through Moses but also through the Prophets, through David, who was himself also a Prophet, so that salvation can truly be said to be of the Nation Israel, in the sense that they were the mediators of the revelation of God.

In the Old Testament times, or old covenant times, if a person became a believer, related to the true God, Yahweh, the God of Israel, he became a Hebrew. There was a definite means by which he would meet with them, and he entered into a relationship of becoming a member of Israel, even though a proselyte.

Now when the apostles came on the scene in and as result of the rejection of the revelation of God in the Nation Israel, and God turning to the Gentiles, it was natural that

a question would arise, and that question, first was, what about the salvation of the Gentiles? And the early chapters of the Book of Acts deal, essentially, with that question, and the apostles and others, through their experiences, establish the truth that the Gentiles are to be saved just as the Jews.

Well, that raised the question of the basis on which they stood in the Lord Jesus Christ. Was it necessary for them, as it was in Old Testament times, to become circumcised and thus enter into fellowship with the Nation Israel, or was the Law done away with? Now that was a question that caused a great deal of difference of opinion, a great deal of concern, and we see some of the effects of the struggle in the epistle Paul wrote to the Galatians, in Corinthians, in some ways in the Epistle to the Romans also; we see it in the Epistle to the Ephesians here and particularly in certain chapters of the Book of Acts. The 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Book of Acts, on through the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter – these chapters deal with that question. And the thing that was established was not only that Gentiles might be saved, but that they might be saved on the same basis as Israelites, and furthermore, it was not necessary for them to become circumcised in order to have complete fellowship with the Lord God.

So the equality of the Gentile is really in the background of this section, here. The Apostle has just spoken about what we were, or what the Ephesians were, he has spoken about what Christ has done and what is going to be their future, in verse 7. And then he expatiated, I said, on the principle by which they were saved, the principle of grace.

Now in verse 11 of Ephesians chapter 2, through verse 12, he speaks on the alienation of the Gentiles from God’s blessings in time past. Now you know when you study the Bible, that the opening words of verses are extremely important. And here is a case where we have a word that is extremely important in the following of the Apostle’s thought. He says:

“Wherefore, remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands, that at that time, ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”

Now the important word is the word “wherefore.” Wherefore – in other words, in the light of the preceding. The blessings of verses 4-10, that he’s just outlined, lead to a remembrance of the former state, and then to thanksgiving for what has happened.

You know, it is never bad for us to take a look back at what we were and what we have become by virtue of the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Never bad to shed a tear or two for the salvation that has come to us. John Newton, who is known for many things, was known also for the fact that he had on his desk a text from the Book of Deuteronomy, chapter 15 verse 15, it stayed on his desk after he had become a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ:

“Remember that you were a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee. Therefore...”

And then he goes on to speak about the things that have to do with response to the revelation to God. So it is always good to remember the place from which we have come. Wherefore: that’s a good thing to apply, too. If you know what it is to be lost, and then to be saved, “wherefore” remember what you were. It always, I think, has a most salutary effect on our Christian life.

Now what were they? Ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, called uncircumcision by the circumcision, in the flesh, made by hands – that’s the way the Jewish people spoke of Gentiles. They were the uncircumcision; they were the circumcision. Now circumcision had a special meaning for them. It was the sign, in the flesh, that they were a covenant people of God. It was the sign that they belonged. It was the sign that God had spoken through them, that he had called Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Circumcision was the sign of that Abrahamic Covenant.

We, not too long ago, studied the Book of Genesis, and in chapter 17, in the account of Abraham’s life, there is given the account of the institution of the rite of circumcision. Now it did not mean salvation. Abraham had already been justified before he was circumcised, and Paul uses that argument, you know, in Romans chapter 4, to show that circumcision was not a saving ordinance, but it was the ordinance that identified them with the Abraham covenant promise. So he says, remember what you were. You were Gentiles, you Ephesians. You were the uncircumcision. You were not part of the Abrahamic promise program of God. You weren’t part of the circumcision.

By the way, that rite became so important in Israel that that was how they were known by: by the rite that distinguished them from other peoples. Just as today, one might think of baptism as the rite which identifies us as belonging to Christ, and you could speak of all Christians as “The Baptism”—that is, those who are distinguished from

all other peoples by the fact that they have been baptized in water. So, remember, you were the uncircumcision.

And then in the 12<sup>th</sup> verse, Paul goes on to say what that really meant. He said at that time you were without Christ. You didn’t have the Messiah. He says, “You were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.” You were Christless. You were homeless, spiritually. You were strangers from the covenants of promise. You were covenant-less. You had no promises; those promises were given to the Nation Israel. They were not given to the Gentiles. The new covenant itself was given to the House of Israel and the House of Judah, and if you weren’t a member of the House of Israel or the House of Judah, you weren’t included in that covenant, directly; that covenant was not made with you. There were provisions within it for others who were not members of the House of Israel or the House of Judah, but Gentiles were strangers to the covenants of promise.

And further, for that reason, you had no hope. So, you were hopeless. And you were without God in the world. You were in the world, and you were without God. So, the alienation of the Gentile from God’s blessings is set forth very strongly in these verses by the Apostle: Christless, homeless, covenant-less, hopeless, godless. As one of the Gentile commentators from Scotland has put it, “Their future was a night without a star.”

But having spoken of the alienation, the Apostle goes on to speak of the reconciliation of the Gentile to the Jew, and of the Gentile and the Jew to God. Notice the thirteen verse: “But now”—how often, in Paul’s writings, do we have this “but now,” or simply, “but.” Well, look up at verse 4: “But God, who is rich in mercy”—after he has spoken of the lost condition of men outside of Christ—“But God, who is rich in mercy,” now here, “but now, in Christ Jesus.” This marks the important contrast: God has intervened. Now he’s just said you were without God in the world. Now he says “in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been made near by the blood of Christ.” So, in the world, godless; in Christ, brought near.

To explain, the Apostle goes on in the following verses to speak of the reconciliation of the Gentile to the Jew. And he points out that the thing that brought them together was the doing away with the Law:

“But now in Christ Jesus, ye who were once far off were made near by the blood of Christ, for he is our peace who hath made both one and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandment contained in ordinances.”

Now, that is a reference to the Mosaic law. And you will see that the Apostle has said that he has abolished the Mosaic law, to make in himself of two, one new man, so making peace. This is the thing that has brought the Gentile and Jew together. The thing that separated them, the Law of Moses, has been done away with, and now Jew and Gentile stand on the same basis before the Lord God.

It was a very interesting discovery in the city of Jerusalem not too many years back now – well, quite a few years back, but in relatively modern times. M. Claremont Geneau, an archaeologist, was excavating on the site of the Temple area in the city of Jerusalem. And when he was excavating on that site where the Temple had been, he found one of the stone pillars which was set up as a barrier between parts of the Temple area in the early days of the present era. And this barrier was about five feet high.

Now before I tell you what was on that barrier, let’s remember that in the Temple area, in the city of Jerusalem, in the day of our Lord, there was an outer court, which was the court of the Gentiles, and the Gentiles could enter that court. And then there was a court of the women, and the women could get a little bit closer if they were members of the Nation Israel. And then there was a court of the priests, there was a court of the men and a court of the priests, and of course the most holy area where only the priests, as they carried out their ministry, could attain to.

Well, this court of the Gentiles was separated from the rest of the Temple area, and there was this barrier, five feet high, and the inscription on the stone pillar found by Mr. Claremont Geneau said this: “No man of another nation is to enter within the fence and enclosure around the Temple, and whoever is caught will have himself to blame that his death ensued.” That’s a very striking picture of “wherefore remember of what you were.”

Christum, when he speaks about the fact that the Law has been done away with and that Jew and Gentile have been reconciled, he says it’s not that they’ve brought us to that nobility of theirs, in other words it’s not that he’s made the Gentiles simply partakers of the nobility of the covenant people of God, as if one should melt down...no rather, he says but he has brought both of us to a greater nobility, as if one should melt down a statue of silver and one of lead, and the two should come out gold. So, we have been reconciled, “He has been the peace that hath made the both one and hath broken down the wall of partition between us, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances.”

The word reconciled is used in the 16<sup>th</sup> verse when he speaks about the reconciliation of the Gentile and the Jew unto God: “And that he might reconcile both

unto God, in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.” In other words, the Apostle says, by virtue of doing away with the Law, Jew and Gentile now stand on the same basis before the Lord God. And the purpose of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus, in which the Law is done away with, is to ultimately reconcile Jew and Gentile together, not only to one another, but to God himself. And that he might both unto God in one body. What does it mean to be reconciled? What does it mean to be reconciled unto God?

Well, to reconcile is to bring two people together who have been at enmity. So in a sense, to put it very simply, reconciliation is a movement from a status of enmity, where we’re enemies, to a status of amity, where we are friends; or, from being an enemy to being a friend. From enmity to amity: that’s what it means to be reconciled.

When we think of an illustration in the New Testament, one of the illustrations that comes to my mind is the parable of the forgiving father, often called the parable of the prodigal son. But the important person in the parable is not the son, the important person is the father. That’s the way we do, we tend to want to look at things so selfishly that by the time we read one of the Lord’s parables we’ve turned it around and made it something else. In the parable of the forgiving father, the father with the two sons, one of whom is the prodigal and the other is the one who stayed at home, in that parable, the climax of the parable is when the father sees the son finally returning, and races down the road in order to fall upon his neck. It’s Jesus Christ’s picture of God. And the picture of the return of the prodigal, who forgives beforehand – who has already forgiven – is the picture of the reconciliation of the Jew to God and the Gentile to God, and of both together to the Lord God. “That he might reconcile both to one God in one body.”

We often think of God as a God who requires that we do certain things before he will love us. But that is so foolish. The Bible does not present to us a God before whom we must do certain things in order for him to love us. The Bible presents a God who has loved us before, and has given the Son as the redeeming sacrifice in order to save his people. Sometimes we sing Wesley’s “Arise my Soul.” It has a stanza that goes, “My God is reconciled, his pardoning voice I hear.” Occasionally, in order to stress the fact that it is not God who needs reconciliation but man who needs reconciliation – you’ll notice the text in verse 16 says “and that he might reconcile both unto God,” – we changed the first line of the hymn, “To God I’m reconciled, his pardoning voice I hear.” I think that’s much more harmonious with Scripture.

Occasionally, in connection with this too, you’ll find individuals who will say, “I don’t really think that’s so. I think there must be something done by the Redeemer in

order for God’s anger and wrath to be turned away.” That’s not reconciliation. That’s propitiation, and occasionally men do confuse the two. It is by virtue of the propitiation provided by God that his reconciling purposes are accomplished. But we must not confuse propitiation, the satisfaction of the righteous requirements of God, with reconciliation, which is directed toward man – the work of God by which he changes us from being enemies to being friends, by bringing to bear upon us by the Holy Spirit the work that the Lord Jesus Christ has done.

Now notice he says that he might reconcile both unto God in one body – that’s the church, of course – by means of the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. So it is through the cross that men are reconciled to God. It’s through the working of the cross in the lives of individuals that God transforms them from being enemies to friends. And, of course, the response that we have to that is the response of gratitude. “Were that the whole of realm of nature mine, that were an offering far too small; love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my love, my all,” that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross. What a magnificent statement that is.

“Having slain the enmity by the cross.” Now when he says he has slain the enmity he means that the Lord Jesus has taken upon himself the judgment that the broken law required, that he has paid to the full for the people of God. And that’s why the people of God go free: their penalty has been paid. Therefore, heaven can exact no further penalty, and we must remember that. Everything was procured for us by the work of the Lord Jesus Christ – forgiveness of sins, reconciliation to God, propitiation for sins – all secured by the cross.

Plus, he secured the faith by which we receive, by which there is an appropriation of those benefits made. Faith is not something extra which we provide, it’s something that Jesus Christ has secured for us by the blood that was shed in his reconciling death. Don’t forget that. The Bible never presents the salvation of Jesus Christ as a conditional salvation. It’s always something that has definitely occurred. He has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us. It’s not that he may redeem us, or he has potentially redeemed us, but he has redeemed us. That’s the language of Scripture.

Now in verse 17 we read, “And came and preached peace.” That seems strange, isn’t it? You would think that he would’ve put, “And he came and preached peace, and then he reconciled men to himself by the death of the cross.” In fact, if you were in a Bible class with the Apostle Paul you might raise your hand and say, “Paul, haven’t you got the order reversed there? You say, he’s abolished in the flesh the enmity by means of the cross, he’s reconciled us through the cross slaying the enmity, and then say, and he

came and preached peace. Shouldn’t you reverse those?” Paul would probably say, “I’m not surprised you asked a question like that. But, I want you to understand what I mean by “and he came and preached peace,” is this is preaching by means of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who is the means by which men preach Christ, so that we preach him, by means of the Holy Spirit. And that, I think, is the force: “and he came and preached to you who were far off and you who were nigh.” Ultimately, it is the word of Christ through the messenger.

Those of you who were here Sunday, and let me say this for those who were not, in the course of the message of Romans chapter 10, we looked at the text, “Faith cometh by hearing and hearing through the word of Christ.” And in the course of the exposition, I tried to make the point that faith comes by the message, but it’s a message through Jesus Christ. In other words, it’s Christ in the word that is the saving instrumentality. So the word is an instrumentality by which Christ himself, in his messages, reaches us. That, I think, is perfectly harmonious with this: “he came and preached peace.” Men were doing it, Apostles were doing it, but they were giving out the word and Christ himself was coming to them through the word of the apostles. So he came and preached peace. I think the order of the words demands that interpretation.

The verse, the 18<sup>th</sup> verse then begins with “for.” Access proves that the peace is a reality. He came and preached peace “for through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” That’s the proof that peace did come through the preaching of the Gospel. We now have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Now I would also like you to notice, carefully, that in this 18<sup>th</sup> verse when the Apostle says that we have access, it’s access unto the Father. Now this is an interesting thing. We have the Son, who has accomplished the reconciling work. And then we have the Son preaching through the Spirit in verse 17; he came and preached peace. And the ultimate goal of this work is that we both – Jews and Gentiles – in one spirit, we might have access unto the Father, through Christ. Look at that 18<sup>th</sup> verse. We have all three persons of the Trinity: through *him* (Christ) we both have access through one *Spirit* unto the *Father*. So it is through the instrumentality of the Son in the sphere of the Holy Spirit that we are brought to the place where we have access to the Father. All the persons of the Trinity working in beautiful concert: the Son, laying down his life; the Holy Spirit applying the ministry; and it is the Father who has chosen us as he said in the beginning and has determined the whole means by which the program shall be carried out. So that the electing Father, the atoning Son, the administering Holy Spirit – all work toward the same end, and that is that the people of God may have access. That’s why to me, the



doctrine of the sovereign grace of God in our salvation is so beautiful: the whole Trinity working together in beautiful unison, in beautiful harmony.

Now our friends who have that other system of theology – which I don’t like at all [laughter], and most of you know that – in their system the Father is carrying out one purpose, electing certain people. The son is carrying out another purpose, trying to save everybody, but failing. And the Holy Spirit working as the Father works, applying the redemption to the elect. So we have confusion in the Godhead, frustration in the Godhead. I don’t like that doctrine. I don’t think that’s honoring to God. I think, ultimately, that dishonors our triune God, to affirm that God tries hard, but cannot accomplish what he tried to do. No, I don’t have a God like that.

The God that I worship, as the God of holy Scripture, is a sovereign God who accomplishes his purposes. What a great comfort that is. He accomplishes his purposes. So we have here, all three working in beautiful concert in unison. “Through him, we both have access by the Spirit unto the Father”—that’s the great end of the Trinity in redemption.

Now I don’t think we ought to pass this by without a practical word. Access; what does that mean? What does it mean to have access? He’s saying here that it’s not just salvation, in a narrow sense, that is the aim of the Trinity in salvation. But access – what does that mean? What’s implied in that? Well now, of course, it’s a great thing to have the forgiveness of sins. It’s a great thing to know the penalty for sin, past, present and future, has been paid for by our substitute. But that is a means to an end. In fact, if you just looked at it from the standpoint of heaven and the life of the future, you would see that the atoning work is simply a means to an end. Now, it’s something we’ll always remember, for he’s the lamb of God who leads the flock to ever lengthening pastures throughout all eternity. But, what about in the meantime? Access.

Now access means that we have the remarkable, glorious privilege of carrying on a relationship with our Father by virtue of what Christ has done through the Holy Spirit, in all of the days and months and years that transpire between the time of our salvation and the time of our catching up to be with the Lord Jesus. Daily, our life is a life of access. We’re able, at night, to get down by our bedside, or in our beds, as we may pray, and lift our voices and say, “Father, we thank Thee for this day, that you’ve preserved us and kept us, that you’ve used us, that you’ve provided for us.” And then in the morning, you may offer your prayers as you read the Scripture. And throughout the day, in the experiences of life, you have a companion, one who is always with you. Every day for the believer is the Emmaus road experience. We travel with the Lord Jesus by our side.

Now it is true that for many of us, he is about as unknown to us in our daily life as he was to his two disciples, until he revealed himself. They turned to him – here he is walking along with them, the Lord Jesus, about whom they were speaking – they said to him, “Haven’t you heard what happened in Jerusalem over the weekend?” Why he was the one to whom it had happened! And it was not until their eyes were opened that they saw him for what he was. That’s one beautiful picture of the life of a Christian; it’s an Emmaus road experience from conversion to translation to heaven. Access. We have access. We can call God, Father. We can say, “Our Father.”

We don’t have any record of any individual Jewish man until the days of the Lord Jesus, lifting up his voice to heaven and saying, “Father.” The Lord Jesus is the first one who used that term in the individual sense, so far as we know. Isn’t that amazing? We take it for granted. Don’t we pray in our churches, “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name”? Yes, we do. That’s what’s called saying the word of God and not really hearing it. I said that many times in our Presbyterian church, and I didn’t even know what it meant. You can say good Scripture words and not know what they mean. Don’t say the word “access” and not come to know what it means. Access: the opportunity and privilege to enter into the presence of this God who is no potential, provisional Savior, but a definite Savior and Lord. Access.

I guess one of the most vivid things, an illustration, was the experience of the Apostles on the Sea of Galilee when the sea arose. That wonderful time when the miracle of the walking on the water took place. I don’t want to go into the exposition of it, because you are very familiar with it. But you’ll remember that after the Lord Jesus had walked on the water, and after Peter had walked on the water and after he had begun to sink, the Lord Jesus had taken his hand and saved, that the both came to the boat and the wind ceased. And then they that were in the boat came and worshiped him, saying of the truth, “Thou art the Son of God.” That’s the proper response, to worship. Access. Oh, what a privilege it is to have access to the Father.

Now, the Apostle, after having said that, sums it up in the last four verses by reminding them of what they were and now what they have. “Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but fellow citizens with the saints and the household of God.” They have come from strangers to fellow citizens. In other words, they have the civil franchise in the Kingdom of God. They have come from being foreigners, they have come to be members of the household. They have the domestic franchise. No more strangers and sojourners but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

Now what I think that Paul means by this is the same thing that he means in Romans chapter 11, the chapter to which we are coming in our expositions, and I want to belabor that point a little more fully when we reach that chapter, devoting three or four of the messages in the Roman series to it. But it’s in Romans 11 that the Apostle gives the parable of the olive tree, in which he describes the olive tree as the Abrahamic promises, essentially, he describes the cutting off of the natural branches (the children of Israel, the Nation Israel), the grafting in of the unnatural branches into the olive tree – contrary to nature, he says. And he says that when they are grafted in, these Gentiles, they are partakers of the root and fatness of the olive tree, so that they are grafted in among those Jewish believers and partake of the Abrahamic promises. That’s so plain, that it’s amazing to me that some believe that the church does not inherit Abrahamic promises. Well, the church does inherit Abrahamic promises. The Apostle puts it as plainly as it possibly can be put. They do inherit those promises, as Gentiles. That’s what he means here when he says “now therefore, you are no longer strangers and sojourners but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.”

We will, in our next study of Ephesians, be referring to verse 5 and verse 6, in which the Apostle says that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and of the same body and partakers of the promise in Christ by the Gospel. So, Paul says you’ve been strangers, you’re fellow citizens, you’ve been foreigners, you are of the household of God, “and you’re built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.”

Now what does he mean when he says “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets”? One might think, at first glance, that what Paul is saying is we have been built upon the foundation of the Prophets of the Old Testament, and the Apostles of the New Testament. But notice the order: it’s not prophets and apostles, it’s apostles and prophets. And then when we read in the New Testament that there are New Testament prophets, like Agabus, and Silas. Agabus has had recorded in Scripture two of his prophecies.

They’re quite a bit different from those who claim the gift of prophesy today (those are most supercilious prophecies). Teaching at seminary in Chicago, recently, on the gift of prophesy, I made the comment, and tried to expound the reasons why I thought prophesy was a temporary gift, and not given today. Aside from the most obvious reasons there are just no prophets around that command the attention of anyone. Who do you know could be called a prophet? Well, if your mind is kind of blank, it’s because there is no one. There are some guys – there are some men excuse me,

[laughter] I shouldn’t used the term “guys.” I forgot I was standing behind this pulpit here. There are some men today who are preaching the word with power, but they’re not prophets. A prophet is a person who gives out revelation, new truth from God, either regarding the future or regarding the present, new truth. There are no such prophets today. When men say, “Oh, that we had a prophet, or that men spoke like prophets,” they’re just referring to the fact that some men speak with authority and some don’t. Sure, we should have men who speak with authority: the authority of the Scriptures.

But the New Testament had prophets also. And in the light of the fact that the order here is apostles and prophets, and again in the next chapter, apostles and prophets, I think that what he means is that the church is built upon the foundation of the New Testament apostles and the New Testament prophets who were used of God in the days they did not have the completed New Testament revelation that we have today.

But someone else might ask, “But wait a minute. The church built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets – doesn’t Paul in another place say that Jesus Christ is the foundation? ‘Other foundation does no man lay than that which can be laid, Jesus Christ.’” Yes, that’s true. In what sense, then, can apostles and prophets be the foundation and Christ, too, be the foundation? Well, I think that what he means is that Christ is the foundation, but it’s by means of the teaching of the apostles and the prophets that we are given revelation and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ as the head of the church. And so it’s upon the apostolic teaching concerning Christ. Thus, you can speak of Christ as the one foundation, but the church also built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets in their teaching concerning Christ.

Now here, the Apostle, there is the metaphor again, “Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone.” Now the cornerstone in a building, occasionally in ancient times, was identified with the foundation, and some have suggested that the Apostle here is using that ancient identification. Let me read you one statement of one of the commentators: “the answer to this, that is a problem, is that as Orientals, the cornerstone was reckoned as greater importance than the foundation, and was connecting and concentrating upon itself the weight of the building.” And then John Edie, a Scottish commentator, has said that “the cornerstone was a foundation also, possibly he [Jesus Christ] is both, too.” Well, that may be so. I am inclined to think that the Apostle just varies the metaphor. He is a foundation stone in the sense that the church is built upon him and the teaching about him. He’s also the cornerstone of the church, and the cornerstone of a building was what held the walls together and gave the building its proper balance.

And so, in the church of Jesus Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ is the one who holds its walls together and gives it balance. There’d be no church, no building, without Christ. And there’d be no church of Jesus Christ properly without Jesus Christ. That’s why in our preaching we must constantly preach Christ. We don’t preach men. We don’t lay our stress in Believer’s Chapel on the Law of Moses – that has disrupted more Christian churches in recent months and years, in my opinion than anything else – to turn the ministry of the word of God toward the Law of Moses is to turn the ministry which should be on Jesus Christ to that which is a secondary or a tertiary matter. And the result is, the saints become disturbed and upset, and we lose our emphasis upon the preeminence of the Lord Jesus Christ. May, in Believer’s Chapel, he always be preeminent. And when I’m sitting out there in the audience so feeble and infirm that I can’t do any preaching at all, I want to hear from whoever’s preaching, I want to hear the Lord Jesus Christ lifted up. I think that’s where the ministry always prospers.

Now he says, “In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.” That’s another of the beautiful metaphors. The church is a temple, and the Temple was where worship was carried on. He’s speaking collectively, of course, and the church as a collective temple is something we need. It’s especially something that we need in a church like Believer’s Chapel where we do try to follow the apostolic method. And that is to gather around the Lord’s table, have the Lord Jesus as the head of the church, the Holy Spirit as the administrator of our worship, and act as a holy temple in which worship is carried out, as we observe the ordinances. So, in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.

That’s what the church is. We should think of ourselves as a holy temple of the Lord – that’s the figure. That means that everything we say should be thought out before we utter. We shouldn’t bound up on our feet and say things without thinking. We should observe what is transpiring, how the Holy Spirit guides our meeting, how the things that are said meet together and create a teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. It’s very important. Habitation of God. God dwelt in Israel, they were his habitation. The Tabernacle was his figure of it. And he dwelt in Israel for communion, that they might have communion with him. And he has this great temple of which we are apart that we might have communion with him. He dwelt in Israel in order to instruct them, and we, too, meet as a holy temple of the Lord with the gifted men to give us instruction. And he dwelt in Israel that they may serve him properly. And we, of course, meet with the Lord for the same purposes.

Finally, he says, “In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” Habitation of God. That, I guess, is the highest thing that you could say concerning the church. Without Christ, then, we were, in Christ we are now. Aliens we were at one time; we’re now fellow citizens. Strangers we were at one time; we are now of the household of God. At one time, we had no hope; and now we have peace. And at one time we were without God, but now we have access. And the invitation to enjoy this is given to all, for it’s to those who are afar off, and to those who are nigh.

There’s a wonderful little story that I want to close with, because there is a reason why we say all of these things, always, and that is that there should be the appropriation of faith. The things in the Bible are to become ours through the appropriation of faith. That is, we believe them. We rely upon them. We trust them.

Many of you have read the books of William R. Newell. Mr. Newell was a man of great influence. He was, at one time, a Presbyterian minister. He was sent to Moody Bible Institute by his father. Now Mr. Moody, I mean, Mr. Newell, sent his son to Moody in order that he might be converted. His father was a Presbyterian minister, but his son was not converted, thinking like so many do, that I’ll send him to a Christian school and maybe he’ll get converted there.

Well, he believed, Mr. Newell, the son, believed that he had committed the unpardonable sin. Strange, isn’t it, this man who wrote the fine commentaries on Romans, Hebrews and Revelation, there was a time when unsaved as a young man at Moody Bible Institute with a Presbyterian minister as a father who was a godly man, and he believed he had committed the unpardonable sin.

Well at the time, R.A. Torrey was the head of Moody Bible Institute, and they first refused to accept him because he wasn’t a Christian. But finally, they agreed to accept him. Well when Mr. Torrey first saw him, he confronted Mr. Newell with John 6:37: “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” But Newell couldn’t see the light. Finally, Torrey sent him to his room, sent to his room the young man, and days and weeks passed by. They had many conversations on John 6:37, but no results. Torrey says, “One day, I met him in the hall of the institute and made up my mind that the time had come to have the battle out. I told him to sit down, and I sat down beside him. I said, ‘Do you believe the Bible?’

“And he says, ‘Yes.’

“I said, ‘Do you believe everything in it? Do you believe John 6:37?’ Mr. Newell said yes.

“Do you believe that Jesus Christ told the truth when he said that anyone who comes unto me I will in no wise cast out?”

“Yes I do. I believe everything in the Bible,’ Mr. Newell said, ‘but I’ve committed the unpardonable sin.’”

Mr. Torrey said, “Jesus did not say, ‘He that hath not committed the unpardonable sin that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.’ He said, ‘Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.’”

“But I’ve sinned willfully after I received the knowledge of the truth,’ Mr. Newell said.”

Torrey answered him the same way, “He that hath not sinned willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

[laughter]

Well the same thing happened with Hebrews 6. Mr. Newell went on to say that he had been enlightened, but now he had fallen away. And with Luke chapter 22 and verse 3, “My heart is hard as millstone,” he said, “then I have no desire to come.” And he said I cannot come in the right way.

And every time Mr. Torrey would say, “The Bible says, him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” He said the man’s excuses and subterfuges were exhausted. “I looked him square in the face and said, ‘Now, will you come? Get down on your knees and quit your nonsense.’ He knelt down, and I knelt down by his side. Now I said, ‘Follow me in prayer.’” And so, he followed him in prayer.

This is what he [Torrey] said: “Lord Jesus, my heart is hard as millstone.”

Mr. Newell said, “Lord Jesus, my heart is hard as millstone.” [laughter]

“I have no desire to come to Thee.”

“I have no desire to come to Thee,” he said.

“But Thou has said in Thy word,”

“But Thou has said in Thy word,”

“Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

“Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

“Now, the best I know, I come.”

“Now, the best I know, I come.”

“Thou hast said, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.””

“Thou hast said, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.””

“I believe this statement of Thine.”

“I believe this statement of Thine.”

“Therefore, though I don’t feel it, I believe Thou hast received me.”

“Therefore, though I don’t feel it, I believe Thou hast received me.”

When he had finished, I [Torrey] said, “Did you really come?” He [Mr. Newell] replied, “I did.”

“Has he received you?”

“I don’t feel it,” he replied. [laughter]

“But what does he say?”

“Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” [laughter]

“Is this true? Does Jesus tell the truth, or does he lie?”

“He tells the truth.”

“Then what must he have done?”

“Well, he must’ve received me,” Mr. Newell said.

Now I [Torrey] said, “Go to your room, stand firmly on this promise of Jesus Christ. The devil will give you an awful conflict, but just answer him every time with John 6:37, and stand right there believing what Jesus says, in spite of your feelings, in spite of what the devil might say, in spite of everything.”

He went to his room. The devil did give him an awful conflict, Mr. Torrey said, but he stood firmly on John 6:37 and came out of his room triumphant.

Many years had passed since then, and Mr. Torrey was speaking about it from some time afterwards. He said that though the devil has tried again and again to plunge him [Newell] into despair, he stood firmly on John 6:37, and he is today being used of God to do larger works for Christ than almost any man I know. I don’t know whether you know it or not, but Mr. Newell is the author of the hymn, “At Calvary,” which has the words:

“Years I spent in vanity and pride, caring not my Lord was crucified,  
knowing not it was for me he died on Calvary.

Mercy there was great and grace was free. Pardon there was multiplied to me.

There my burdened soul found liberty, at Calvary.”

And so, you too, may find that freedom and liberty at Calvary. Let’s close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these wonderful texts that the Apostle wrote to the Ephesians, and we rejoice in the relationship that we now enjoy, a habitation



of God through the Spirit, the temple of God, able to worship Thee, access into the very presence of God. O God, how blessed we are.

And we pray, Lord, that we may know, experientially, what it is to live one great, long Emmaus road journey with Jesus Christ, by our side through the Holy Spirit. May Thy blessing be upon each here and upon those who hear this message.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.