

Book	Ephesian – Study 8
Topic	
Reference	Ephesians 2 : 1-12
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Last week we actually looked at Ephesians 2:1-12 and the difference between the Jew and a gentile there are basically five differences.

- Uncircumcision
- Separated from Christ
- Alienated from the commonwealth of Israel
- Strangers to the covenants of promise
- No hope without God

So that describes all of us. So we are different from the Jews, the Jews had got all those things, they are circumcised, they are not alienated, they have a covenant of promise, they've got hope and they've got God, but because all of this is now removed by the body of Christ, we are now one. That's the difference.

17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.

So the ones who are far are gentiles, the near ones are Jews. So he preached peace to both.

18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

So he is describing both Jew and gentile had a common experience. They have one access in one spirit to basically God.

19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

When you have a common experience, you have a common access to God, but if you were an alien and when you live in a foreign land, you have basically very-very few rights. This describes people who are here for short period of time with basically few to no rights, they are not accepted, they have huge language barriers, huge culture shock because you don't know what everyone is talking about. You become a prey to both police and thugs. The mosaic law actually categorizes aliens at the same level as orphans, widows, the poor, that means basically people who cannot fend for themselves. That's the difficulty with that.

So we were like aliens, who are treated badly. Then you have got *Perioikos* which is strangers, these are people who are resident aliens who have been here for a longer period of time, but have actually no rights.

20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

Here Paul actually describe them as citizens, members of the household of God, the temple. Here you can actually see the metaphors that have been used. There are few metaphors, one is a country. So you actually have citizens. Then from citizen you become a family, from family then it narrows down to become a temple. As the circle get smaller and smaller, you see these three metaphors to describe who we are.

When the gentiles joined, we are actually joining the household of God. It goes all the way down. So there is a universal household of God, which is basically the church. Now the church is built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the cornerstone. So basically he is talking about the church, everybody has a foundation. No matter what happens in life, the foundation is absolutely consistent and is unchanging and is absolutely stable. What makes us united is actually the foundation. The foundations are apostles and the prophets. So the foundational role is Paul with the 11 apostles which are there and the prophets. It cannot be Old Testament prophets, because when you look at the Old Testament, the Mosaic Law divides Jew and gentile. When you talk about Mosaic Law, you have to wash yourself, you have to be circumcised, gentiles have a barrier which they cannot cross. So the court of the gentiles is a court of Israel. So therefore, it cannot be Old Testament prophets, it must be New Testament prophets.

Jesus Christ is described as the capstone or cornerstone, a very unique work in Greek which is only seen one time in Septuagint in Isaiah 28. We don't exactly know what it is, we think it is either a capstone or a cornerstone. A capstone is a stone at the top of the arch. So it holds your whole arch together, a cornerstone is down right at the bottom of which you lay first on top of your foundation. The data seems to favour the cornerstone, because we are talking about foundation and the foundation is at the bottom. The capstone is the last stone to be put up. The cornerstone is the main stone which you lay down and then you start putting all the stones in relationship to the cornerstone. So Jesus Christ is the cornerstone. So we are saying that the basis of the church is the work, revelation of Jesus Christ. That's the cornerstone and the foundations will be the apostles, as well as the prophets who actually take the gospel which is the revelation and the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and explain it and establish and transmit the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is the only foundation of the church.

*1 Corinthians 15:1-3 (ESV) Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, 2 and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I **also received**:*

Paul doesn't create his own gospel. His gospel is given by the cornerstone. The job of the apostles and the prophets are to actually explain the gospel; they explain the revelation given to them by Jesus Christ.

Galatians 1:6-8 (ESV) I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed

So the gospel is actually the foundation of the church, laid by Jesus Christ and Paul says if anybody else comes and tells you a different gospel then that is not even the gospel, let him be accursed.

*Ephesians 4:11-12 (ESV) And he gave **the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12** to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for **building up** the body of Christ,*

So we are always building up the body of Christ, but the building up is based on the first two, the prophets and the apostles. So that we got foundations. There are three ways in which you can look at the foundation. You can look at absolute truth from God, which is unchanging. The original meaning by the author which is eternally applicable and you cannot add to this foundation. Or you could say, the Bible contains the chief truth from God which means it is relative to people with different times, some are true, some are not true, science has made some parts obsolete, so you take some bits out, or the last one which is very common nowadays, truth is determined by the reader. Truth is relative, determined by the readers' preference. Truth is no more than a perception and not bound to authors intent as we cannot know. This is the most common way in which we destroy the church.

Jesus attitude towards scripture is that

*Matthew 5:17-18 (ESV) Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but **to fulfill them.***

Jesus came to fulfil the law. The law is like black and white picture, it gives you a scaffolding of God's plan for you and when it comes in the New Testament, Jesus Christ puts it in colour.

Matthew Vine is a homosexual pastor. He takes the same verse as we take:

*Romans 1:26-27 (ESV) For this reason God gave them up to **dishonorable passions.** For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are **contrary to nature; 27** and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing **shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.***

What he does, he says, he describes this as unconventional. The issue is sexual behaviour out of self-seeking lust. This is when you read dishonourable passion, contrary to nature, he is saying it is unconventional and this is self-seeking lust. Because he is a homosexual, I will read it not as the original author had intended it but as my situation requires it. Very-very common way in which people twist things around.

*1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (ESV) Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who **practice homosexuality, 10** nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*

Here he says that those who practice homosexuality, what Paul meant and what homosexual's practice are completely different. He just turns it around. What Paul describes in those days is completely different, why because he said

*The predominant forms of same-sex behaviour in the ancient world were sex between masters and slaves, sex between adult men and adolescent boys, and prostitution. In all those cases, men used sex to express power, dominance and lustfulness, not self-giving love and mutuality. **Committed same-sex unions** between social equals represent very different values than the types of same-sex behaviour Paul would have had in view in 1 Corinthians 6.*

He just twisted around to mean a different kind of relationship, but if you will actually look in the ancient world, it is not just paedophilia, there are lots of committed relationship between man and man and woman and woman as well.

Ways in which we refused to build on foundation

*2 Peter 3:15-16 (ESV) And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, 16 as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the **ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction**, as they do the other Scriptures*

So people don't agree sometimes because they take scripture, they either don't know much about it or they twist it to suit their own liking. That's the problem. Apollo was a great preacher.

*Acts 18:26 (ESV) He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God **more accurately**.*

So there is a way in which you read your Bible and the way in which you read your Bible more accurately. So there is room for correction. So therefore that's the foundation on which you need to be working on. So the ways in which we refuse to build on foundation

- Selfishness and pride. Because you think you only know the Bible
- Failure to mature
- Overemphasis on tradition

THE GOAL OF FOUNDATION:

Not only it is important to communicate, the whole goal of this foundation is to form community. This is something that is quite different. A lot of people go to church and they love the music, they love the worship, they love the preaching, it is all done very well but as soon as the church is over, they are on their way home. Then they are home all the time. The way Paul describes the church is completely different. The church communication leads to community.

*Ephesians 2:20-22 (ESV) built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the **whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord**. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*

So there is actually the end purpose. We have truncated it, we listen to the sermon, we get very excited about it, we like it, it helps our life, but we don't grow into the final product. The last step

is, we become a community and that part is absolutely missing. We are supposed to be a part of a greater whole. We are supposed to be part of a building, we cannot be free standing, because if you are free standing that means we are spiritually incomplete.

We like to focus on adoption, predestination, rebirth, blessing, because it is all focused on person, but that is not what the Bible, that's not why God saved you for. Actually, God saved you so that you can be part of his body, which is the church. He doesn't save you so that you will be happy, you will have blessings and you will do well in life. That's not why he saved you. He saved you to be part of His body, as part of his community. So we are supposed to live under greater authority than our feelings. A lot of us when we come to church, we are led by our feelings.

We are involved in a society and the society tells us that you make your own decisions. So we are all individualistic and we are getting more individualistic. We are moving to a society where we are absolutely doing things to please ourselves and we are alone. The problem is that if you are alone then you don't make impact in any society.

In your quest for self-significance you lose any significance to the greater whole

Human beings are made to be part of a greater whole. You are created as one brick to fit in the whole bunch of bricks and we have been influenced by western culture that think that we stand alone. The problem with standing alone is that we are not designed to stand alone. Even if we follow our feelings, our feelings contradict each other.

If you were to follow your feelings, you got a problem because your feelings will conflict all the time. God created us to be a beautiful picture, he didn't created us to be alone, we are part of a greater picture. So we cannot validate ourselves, simply not only because we got conflicting feelings. For example, I don't like to join a church, I don't like to join a life group because I don't like people to be in-charge of me. I want to do everything myself. But the trouble is, you cannot validate yourself.

Most of us make decisions based on what everybody else is doing. We can't actually validate ourselves, because we are not objective, we got to follow what other people do, we got the ostrich effect, which is we tell you bad news, you cannot hear. Or outcome biased, your outcome determines whether the action is good. So that's a bias in human behaviour.

Genesis 2:18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone;

We are created to be in a community. If we are not in community, we will validate ourselves, our feelings will be supreme and we will be supremely wrong. So we need to be part of a church where other people can look at you and tell you, you are false and tell you that you are wrong. When we are in a community, we are able to do that.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

It is very hard to say in today's church. That you actually have leaders and they are responsible for you and you got to be persuaded by them or to obey them, because we are all individual. So we need to be accountable, we need to tie everybody down.

So basically being part of a church is being accountable. Each of us is a rough stone, you don't fit in the church, so before you join the church God is going to chop off the sharp bits and make you all fit, that's what happens in the church. The process of cutting is a way in which we grow spiritually.

*Ephesians 2:19-22 (ESV) So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, **20** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, **21** in whom the whole structure, being joined together, **grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22** In him you also are being built together into **a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.***

So you actually have the building continually growing. God is saying that you are all bricks, he is cutting you into size, so that you become part of the holy of holies. We need to understand that we are the holy of holies, we are the very throne room where God actually resides. So when we face God,

It is the emotion of a creature submerged and overwhelmed by his own nothingness in contrast to that which is supreme above all creatures

The feeling that we should actually have are three things; mystery, trepidation and fascination. That God is so wonderful. We are finite and we are trying to understand the infinite and then we tremble, why because He is so great that there is fear. The last part is fascination, this is something that we should feel when we are in church, but the trouble is, nowadays church is so familiar with you, a lot of that feeling is actually gone.

In you actually look in the history, we have always been separated from God. In the Garden of Eden, angel came and kick you out and every time you come close to God in a temple you must bring some animal to kill. It always reminds you that somebody must die. Finally, we are now in the holy of holies because Jesus Christ has died. When Jesus Christ died you can always have access to God, whatever your flaws, whatever you have, the Holy Spirit shows us our sin and the devil accuses us, whatever happens the spirit says we are now in the temple because of what Christ has done. Nobody can take us away,

*Let us draw near with a **true heart in full assurance of faith**, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies **washed with pure water**. **23** Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.*

We are now part of a holy temple.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

A lot of people cannot get their minds around the fact that together all of us form the holy of holies, but you don't have to worry because Christ has died to make you good enough. The attitude that we actually have to have is, a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart. So actually when we

come to church, we come to fellowship, we come to share, it is not your victory that I want to hear about, I want to hear about you failing because every time you come with a failing you actually magnify the power of the blood to cleanse whatever failing that you have. Every time you come to church or a small group and you don't tell you are failing it means you are good enough. You are very righteous, but as you come and interact in a fellowship and the more you humble yourself and the more you share of your sin, then it would be greater tenacity you hang on to the blood of Christ, so therefore the blood of Christ and the glory of Christ is magnified. Some of us are so unhappy about sharing our lives because we want to look macho, I am very spiritual but that is not what is about, when you come to the holy of holies, there is no other attitude then to be humble because you are here because of the blood of Christ. So therefore when we come, being part of a cell group or a live group or a church, we shouldn't be afraid of sharing, because all the evil that we have has been paid for by Christ and the more evil we are actually in our past, the more magnified his blood is that we are saved as it were.

John 2:16-17 (ESV) And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." 17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

The reason why Jesus did it, because he was very zealous for God's house and the background to this is Malachi

*Malachi 3:1-3 (ESV) "Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. 2 But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a **refiner's fire and like fullers' soap**. 3 He will sit as **a refiner and purifier of silver**, and he will **purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver**, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord*

Here is a description of what God is in his temple. The description is a refiner and purifier; God is described as fire. CS Lewis talks about God. He describes,

You ask for a loving God well you have one, the great spirit you so lightly invoked is present not. as the senile benevolence that drowsily wishes you to be happy in your own way, not the cold philanthropy of a conscientious magistrate nor the care of a host who feels responsible for his guest.

What CS Lewis is trying to tell us is that our idea is like God is a nice guy, comes out with a white suit, it is okay darling, everything will be fine. That's not what God is. He describes God as

but the consuming fire Himself the love that forged the world. Persistent as an artist love for her work. As venerable as a fathers love for his child, as inexorable and exacting as love between the sexes

Here CS Lewis describes God as totally passionate and Malachi describes God as fire, refining, every bit. It is creating something absolutely beautiful. Now if God is going to make you part of his temple, you think it will be easy, you think it will be cool, no it will be fire, it will be mess and there will be chaos, your life will be turned upside down and if your life is not turned upside down by the fire of God coming into your life then God is not dealing with you.

This happens because God is very-very passionate about what he is doing in your life. He is looking at every aspect of your life, he is so passionate, he is working every single detail, he is burning the bits off, adding more bits in to make you absolutely beautiful because you are his masterpiece and he only allows masterpiece inside the temple.

The picture of God in our lives is a very passionate God who is working day and night, transforming your life, turning your life upside down, tanning all kinds of prerogatives and values in your life. He wants to have you changed. Our idea of holiness is wrong, we think we should be morally perfect, paid all your taxes, never said one bad word, but that's not what is, if you talk about holiness, it is like all the things in the temple, they are set aside. They are dedicated for the use of God; the whole picture of holiness should be a picture of Chloe Kim. She is an Olympic athlete. She is holy in a sense as she is wholly devoted to only one goal which is to win the gold medal. Her face was bleeding; she is totally dedicated to only one task in life to win that Olympic medal.

When we are called the holy temple of God, it doesn't mean that you are perfect, it doesn't mean you have to be perfect, it means that you are totally dedicated to God, that's all it means. I mean you are totally running towards God, living towards God, you mess up here and there but it is the direction of your life. So when we ask you to be part of the holy temple, we are not saying that it is perfect, one day you will be perfect, but it is an absolute direction of your life which God is looking at.

Zephaniah 3:17 (ESV) The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.

It is a picture of God, totally excited over you, singing, jumping and burning, reorganising your life, turning it upside down, so that you are going to shine as part of his body.