

Eph 2 15-22

Good morning and thank you so much for joining us. We're continuing our study through the book of Ephesians, so would you please turn in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 2?

Before Jesus, Jews and gentiles were separated by many things. Pedigree, circumcision, but perhaps most noticeably diet.

God had commanded His people, the Jews to be set apart. All of life was to be separated as clean and unclean. Holy and not holy. Pure and impure. Acceptable to God and unacceptable to God. This is what the entire book of Leviticus is about!

This distinction was the measuring stick applied to every part of Jewish life. The OT law provided a means for differentiating between good and bad.

That's the purpose of all religions. Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist. Every religion has standards and taboos and rituals that allow you to label people pure or defiled.

Often, liberal critics attack religion as the enemy of unity. They claim that religion is the great divider instead of the great unifier. And you know what, they're right.

Every religion provides criteria that divides people into holy, and unholy. And no other religion did this as rigorously as Judaism.

Kosher Jews were reminded at every meal time of right and wrong. The good guys ate the clean, kosher food. Bad guys, the gentiles, ate the forbidden, non-kosher food.

Of course this expanded beyond food. There are 613 commands by God in the OT law. The OT law worked exactly as God designed it to. The law did such a thorough job of identifying good from bad that by the time you subjected your ENTIRE life to

the ENTIRE OT law, you were forced into an uncomfortable conclusion.

No one could fulfill the righteousness that God requires. All are sinners. All fall short of God. This was the conclusion you arrived at while being under the OT law.

And that's precisely why Christianity is not a religion.

Religion chooses sides. Religion picks the good guys, and assigns merit badges for accumulating filthy rags.

But that's not Christianity. The gospel declares we're all bad guys! **Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**

Religion wants to define and label and categorize each of us. Whether you're a Buckeye fan or Michigan fan. Republican or Democrat. Even Skyline or Goldstar.

But no matter what we're labeled, we all need Jesus.

This morning we'll pick up our study in verse 15 and finish the chapter.

Let's read verses 14-22 in its context

**14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, 16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. 17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. 18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.**

19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

The title of this mornings message is Better Together  
Let's pray

15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, (hostility) that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, Pause here.

The OT law stopped being God's standard for regulating the life of His people when Christ died. **Romans 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.**

Jesus fulfilled all the demands of the OT Law. **Matthew 5:17 Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.**

As we saw last week, before Jesus, the Law of Moses was a wall between the Jews and the gentiles.

God ended this hostility between jews and gentiles by creating one new entity, the church.

In the church believing Jews are Christians and believing Gentiles are Christians. God deals with both believing Jews and believing Gentiles equally: as Christians.

Lets read all of verse 15

15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, ” **SHOW**

**PIC** In 1991 the world watched in amazement as the Berlin Wall came down. That concrete barricade stood between east and west Germany for 40 years. People were shot crossing the wall.

**CLOSE PIC**

Back in 1989 East Germany allowed its citizens to visit relatives in the West. And it was the joy of friends and family - the power of unity - that caused Germans to rise up and dismantle the former wall of separation.

The Berlin Wall stood for just 40 years. The wall Jesus abolished, “the Law contained in ordinances,” stood for 1500 years. Many people thought it was an unscalable wall because it represented fundamental differences that could never be resolved between Jew and Gentile.

Even more than East and West Germany, there was no way Jews and Gentiles could ever hammer out an agreement, and establish a unity. But what negotiations could never do, a Savior does. The peace we experience in Jesus lifts us above all our dividing lines and walls of separation.

On the cross - by His blood - Jesus paid for our unity. But thats not all. Ever since Jesus rose from the dead, He’s been breaking

down walls, and uprooting hedges, and taking apart barriers and kicking in fences. Because there's unity in Jesus!

Notice the word "abolish" in verse 15 it means "to nullify or make irrelevant." Christian unity eclipses our differences by giving us an overarching commonality. The sacrifice of Jesus creates such a powerful bond between us, we're willing to overlook our peculiarities.

**16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.** Since we're saved through One Body sacrificed on the cross, we're one body of believers . The cross is how we're all forgiven. The cross is how we all come to know God.

Which means in the grand scheme of all things, in Christ, we have a commonality greater than all our differences.

When the Berlin Wall did come down, there were no more East Germans and West Germans - just Germans. There was now one new, unified Germany.

Satan has been doing a masterful job over the decades of dividing the body of Christ hasn't he? There's so many side issues, splinter groups, special interests, hobby horses that the body of Christ divides itself upon. Unless we stay true to Christ's claim on our lives, and not get distracted, we're doomed to build up walls that Christ tore down.

17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. Both Jews and Gentiles needed the Gospel. Hey Jesus is truly the only one-size-fits-all remedy! For privileged sinners and for orphaned sinners, Jesus is what saves all sinners.

18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Everyone, no matter who they are, or where they're from, can only come to God through Jesus.

If you've never really known God. If you've heard of Him, and wondered if He's real, but aren't really sure... Realize access to God isn't granted because you do good works, or you come to church. It's the blood of Jesus that gives you access to God.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

The word access here in the Greek word *prosaḡōgē* (PRA SA GO GAY) which also means "usher" or "escort." In Christ we're escorted into God's presence.

In those days an official in the court would take someone and introduce them to the king. It's from that word. It's not only describing access to the king it has to do with proper introduction. We have been properly introduced to the King, through the blood of Christ.

**SHOW PIC** You've likely seen pictures of Buckingham Palace. The true story is told that there was a little boy named Willie who went to walk up to the gate and you know those guards are there and they don't say anything. The boy said 'I wanna see the king'

and the guard didn't respond, he just stepped in front of the boy, blocking his access.

And the little kid was persistent, he said, 'I wanna see the king.' I And as that happened another man walked up behind the boy in a suit and he went like this. **CLOSE PIC**

The guard then stepped aside and the man in the suit took the little boy by the hand and walked inside the gates of Buckingham Palace, just walked up into the main entrance, past all the servants, 40 people just in charge of tea for BP.

They started to walk down one of the corridors and the one corridor had 40 rooms in one wing to one side for guests to stay. There was an estate dining room where the dining room table was as big as an ice skating rink to fit 170 people.

They go to the second floor and pass room after room, which is all separated with different guards. Finally they came to a room 1/4 mile from where they walked into the door.

There's a knock on the door and the king opens the door. And there's little Willie. The man that had him by the hand was Prince Phillip, Prince of Wales, the son of the King.

The prince said 'Dad, this is Willie. I found him out front, he wanted to meet you.' And Willie and the king had a conversation that day.

That's the word access here in verse 18. That's what's happened for us. The Son, Jesus, has taken us by the hand, and taken us to the Father.

Jesus has given us access to something we could have never been part of, ever. But by His blood, by His work, His will, both Jew and Gentile, whatever we are, whatever the prejudices are, they should all fall away because we have access to the King by the Son.

**19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,**

Now that we're Christians, we're no longer strangers, we're fellow citizens. And more than that, it says we're members of the household of God

When we go to Israel we go into a church called Saint Anne's Cathedral. It's famous for its acoustics. Christians from around the world will gather and you'll sing a song acapella. Listen even our Jewish tour guides who aren't Christians get tears in their eyes. Because it's the smallest taste of what worship will be like in heaven.

You're only in there for a few minutes, but there'll be German groups there and you hear them singing and you know the melody to the song they're singing. You just don't understand the words. But they're singing a song that we sing here, just in another language. Then there's a Korean group, an African group,



and you leave there and you don't understand the words, but you understand the melody.

And you see these people around the world, and there's tears in both your eyes. You both nod your head because you know what the future holds in store, and this ain't it!!

There's a camaraderie as a family because there's a language that's deeper than what's in the vocal cord. We're God's kids. We're part of His household. How it must break our fathers heart when His kids fight.

Parents-what goes through your hearts when your kids fight? You desire peace and unity in your household, not division!

20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, Because of Jesus there's a foundation here in verse 20, and then in verse 21 it describes the function here for all of us as He's describing the church, the body of Christ.

I'm sure you remember when Jesus spoke about foundations in Luke 6:46 "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say? 47 Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: 48 He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock.[fn] 49 But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell.[fn] And the ruin of that house was great."

Isn't it wonderful to have a foundation? A foundation means that no matter what happens, no matter what comes down, we have something underneath us that's immovable.

I'm around death quite a bit. None of us know when our time is up. When the last moment comes for you on this earth, what's under you, what's your foundation? If it's Jesus then you know you're going to heaven!

If you're here today and you don't know Christ you have no foundation. Look, this is not about church and it's not about phony religious games. Do you know Jesus Christ?

**SHOW PIC** Now if you've ever done construction, you know how important the cornerstone is.

When the very foundation of the building was laid, they put that first stone in place and everything else then in the blueprint in the construction was measured off of that stone. **CLOSE PIC**

Which means, as followers of Christ, with Jesus being the chief cornerstone, everything's measured off of Christ.

The way we live morally should be measured off of Christ. The way we love people should be measured off of Christ. How we forgive people should be measured off of Christ. Our lives should be measured off of Christ.

Sadly a lot of Christians spend an excessive amount of time concerned with how others conduct themselves. Let's start with ourselves

21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, Jesus not only gives us the foundation, but He then gives the function. There's a growth in us as a church, as Calvary Chapel Cincinnati because there's growth as individuals in Christ.

You know, some folks are just learning not to cuss. Some are learning to forgive. Some are learning to put others first. Some of us are learning about selfless love. Point being, we're growing, we're changing.

We have a foundation in our lives, and on top of that foundation our lives are being conformed in the image and likeness of Christ. And that growth is causing us individually v 21 says to be fitted together.

This is why the church is necessary for our spiritual health and our spiritual growth. We're told in the book of **Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.**

Coming to church shouldn't be viewed as an option. The Lord didn't say, hey, try church, you might like it. And coming to church shouldn't be about what we get out of it. It should be to

stir up love and good works, and encouraging one another. When we get to chapter 4 we'll see there's gifts given to the church.

But there's lots of other growth that takes place in church isn't there, because in church we can grind against other believers.

In church we learn what long-suffering is. We learn forgiveness, and patience. The Church is a great place to learn that because in the church, there's gonna be people who bless you, and there's gonna be people who drive you out of your mind. And they're both necessary for our growth.

Our last verse this morning...

**22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.** God's purpose is for His followers to be built together for the habitation of the HS!

**SHOW PIC** Think of a fire for a minute. You know if there's one ember, it throws off a little bit of heat amidst a soft glow. But if you gather together a whole big pile of embers it stirs itself up and heat and light pour from it. **CLOSE PIC**

When we gather here, all of us believers, it should have an effect. One thing the world should see if they come in the church is they should see that this is a group of people like no other.

Look around at this crew. There's young, old, hairy, bald. English speaking, Spanish speaking, French speaking, Filipino speaking.

Would you have ever hung out with this crew before you were saved? There's no way!

What Christ has done in our lives and what He's done in our heart that we delight to come, we delight to gather with the family of God. We have brothers and sisters that we would never even have talked to, that have become part of our very heart and part of our family.

And this should cause any non believer in Jesus to walk in here and see something that the world doesn't know anything about, because the world doesn't know how to look past those differences.

And when somebody walks in, we should never be looking down our nose at them or judging them. We should be sharing the love of Christ.

Certainly we're separate, but not because we're better than them. Because we have a destiny. We're going to heaven.

For every non believer, this world is the best it's going to get. Think about that. Isn't that heartbreaking? We're passing through, and how quickly it goes by. One day soon we're going to step into eternity. That's our destiny

My prayer is when an unbeliever comes they should come under conviction and say you know what? 'God is really in this place.'

They would immediately realize this is not just a church building, that none of us are just playing church. They would say 'wow, something real is happening here, I don't know how to put it into words. Everybody there is either nuts or they all know something I don't.' It should be undeniable. V22 **being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit**

Think of what calls itself the Church today. Churches that embrace all types of immoral things and all types of Godless behavior.

There's churches you go there, and they're gonna bang you over the head for money. Or the pastor is gonna be like one of those weird guys on TV swinging a sports coat around. Listen that's what the unbelieving world thinks most churches are like!

The church is supposed to be the place where lives are built upon the word of God. Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. Him working in our lives, not religion, but relationship.

So here's the church. We're not much to the world, but we're precious to God. And we have to remember this is not our house. This is blood bought. Somebody else paid for this in their blood. That's why we're here. We have no right to that.

We can never look down our nose at somebody else. God's called us so we can get under a broken life and lift it up, not look down our nose. Remember, we're His representatives to a lost world. The only thing that judges the unbeliever is the word of

God and the Holy Spirit, not you or I. Listen you make a lousy Holy Spirit, and so do I. Lets let the HS be the HS.

You know I love to come together because this is the one place you can come for rest. You get beat up all week by critics and skeptics and those hostile to God. You get beat up because you believe in creation. You believe in morality. You believe Jesus is coming, and the world despises you for it. That fire can get doused, and can be reduced to just a glowing ember.

But then you get around a bunch of other embers and the fire is stoked.

Christ the cornerstone. Then you and I fitted together, built together, for a dwelling place of the HS.

Folks don't ever believe the lie that God can't use you. Today you might be someone's answer to prayer. Perhaps when you talk with someone you'll provide a word of wisdom or knowledge, or you'll comfort them. We have no idea how God wants to use us, other than building us and fitting us together as His body.

Remember, the same HS who dwelt in Paul, and Peter, and John Wesley, and Billy Graham is the same HS who dwells in you as a Christian. Let the lion out of the cage, let Him work!

1 John 4 8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He

loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

We're gonna close by reminding ourselves of how chapter 2 started by reading verses 1-10

1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.