

Rock Solid Faith
Strangers No More
July 26, 2020

I have the extreme privilege of getting to close out our time in Ephesians 2. I say this every time I'm up here, but I do understand the weight of this tremendous responsibility given me in teaching God's word to you and I pray today that it is He who speaks through me by the power of His spirit and that He is made much and I am made less. We've been reading through Ephesians 2 and seeing this epic story unfold of how God has been redeeming us and that it's been His plan all along. This is really the overarching theme of all 66 books of the bible. Creation...Fall...Separation...Redemption....Or as we have described it in Ephesians as ALIENATION...JUSTIFICATION....RECONCILIATION...AND FINALLY UNIFICATION . I would like to go back and just read what we've been learning in the previous verses before we get to what I will be teaching today.

Read Ephesians 2:1-22

Here's today's passage. Read 19-22

Would you guys pray with me before we get started?

How many of you guys have ever done any traveling? Let's start with within the U.S.? What about outside of the U.S? There's a big difference in the 2 right? When we travel within our own country, we may find that some aspects of culture are different, but otherwise we're in the same land. We don't feel too ostracized right? We can notice that Rural Appalachia and Los Angeles, CA are vastly different, but we don't feel like we are outsiders too much. We can still blend in a bit, until we speak, then we're ousted.

But what about another country? Those of you that have been outside of the US, do you remember how that felt? Being a stranger in a foreign land? I was in Peru this past February doing some work with the missions organization I work for, and my boss had gone to the airport to meet another youth leader that was flying in from Costa Rica. It was my job to go to the city center in Trujillo and meet some other leaders arriving by bus. Well, most latin american men are around 5'6 to 5'7. I'm 6'0 tall and another north american that came along with us is about 6'5. So we're standing 6 to 12 inches taller than most...everybody. So needless to say we stick out a bit.

We were warned by our partners that we were in the 2nd most dangerous city in all of Peru and police were corrupt and would try to extort us. I remember being in the middle of this city center with me and another north american, and realizing that I was a stranger in a foreign land. I didn't hold the same rights that locals did and as a matter of fact, I might be singled out by police for some kind of extortion. I speak some spanish, but I was told if confronted by police to act as gringo as possible and not try to speak any spanish at all.

This is a very odd feeling, and not comfortable in the least. But, Paul is telling the Ephesians that this is no longer the case with them. The church at Ephesus was primarily gentile believers in Jesus. They had lived their whole life cut off from the Jewish believers. Can you imagine living your whole life feeling like a 2nd class citizen? Always hearing of God's chosen people but never being a part of them. Can you imagine the bitterness that might develop there and the lack of hope, thinking that you had no access to this freedom? Can you imagine the tension that must have been felt. I think we can get a taste of that by looking back at our own country over the past few

months. The racial tension in America has been highlighted and put the the forefront of our conversations. It's been going on for thousands of years, even since the time of Christ. But, that is why Jesus came. To unify a people group for himself. Jesus broke this mold and tore this veil through his accomplishment on the cross. (talk about the veil and how far removed people were)

*INSERT PICTURE OF TABERNACLE HERE (NELSON). FOUND ON LAST PAGE.

Let's take a look at the text again. "Consequently" Some versions say "So then". This is an important phrase because it is drawing a conclusion from the previous statements. This conclusion is centered on the word "one" in the previous verses. Last week Drew showed us where the distinctively different Jews and Gentiles are now "one" in Christ. Those that were far and those that were near were both taught peace through Christ.

Paul is telling them that they are considered locals now, even more than that, they are considered a part of God's own house. They are polar opposites of Strangers and Exiles, they are fellow citizens now. He's encouraged them that they aren't just locals, they are even considered God's own family!! They are members of His household. There is no distinction anymore!! They have the same rights as God's chosen people, in fact, they are God's chosen people too, and they are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone!! What great news this was and how liberating this must have been!

You see last week Drew spoke of how the gentiles and jews had been reconciled to GOD, and this passage is saying that they have been reconciled to one another through Christ.

Point 1: Our faith becomes rock solid when we know that we BELONG, not only to God, but to EACH OTHER.

Doesn't that encourage you? Knowing that you belong! Isn't that what we all desire? To know and be known? That we aren't foreigners or strangers, But instead that we are citizens and members of God's family! We are built on a firm relational foundation with God and His people.

Tell story of my early church encounter..Because of tattoos and being unmarried with a child, we felt like outsiders.

You see, we weren't just alienated from God in the garden, we were alienated from one another. Not only was unity with God broken at the fall, unity with man was broken. Do you remember that?

When Eve ate the apple and gave it to Adam God showed up in the garden as was looking for them, and they were hiding because they were naked. God asked, "How do you know that you're naked, did you eat from the tree?"

What's Adam's first response? Lord, the woman that YOU gave me gave me the apple to eat from. He places blame on everyone but himself. The place where we should be unified the most, with our spouse, he was the first to turn on her. It didn't stop there. It continued with their sons,

Cain and Able. Cain was jealous of Able and he killed him.

Issac and Ishmael, Issac was the child promised to Abraham in his hold age and the one to which he would establish his covenant, but Ishmael was Abrahams son by

Sarah's servant Hagar and Sarah was indignant with her son's brother and mother and had them banished from the family, Issacs two sons Jacob and Esau. Esau was the firstborn and rightful heir, but Jacob fooled his father and stole his brothers blessing and birthright. All the way to Jews and Gentiles. Jews were the chosen people of God to receive His covenant and law while the Gentiles were outsiders and unclean because they didn't know and worship the Hebrew God Yahweh.

The point here is that Sin destroys relationships. That's why we have been disunited since the fall of man. But Jesus Christ came and died so that we might not only be unified to God, but unified to one another.

This was surely good news to those who heard. And this good news was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

Now, when we think of a foundation, that's the primary structure in which a building is built upon. If we just started building a skyscraper 100 stories tall, and just started on top of the ground..how many of you would want to work on the top floor of that building. No one! The first breeze would knock it over. But, workers spend a lot of time digging down deep to pour rebar, and concrete and establish a deep foundation that will support the weight of the building above the ground. Tree root's act in this same way. They begin digging down deep so that as the tree grows, it can stabilize and support the branches, canopy and fruit that will come one day.

SO why does this say that the apostles and prophets are the foundation? Don't let this text confuse you. It is referencing their ministry and living example of Christ's life that the apostles witnessed firsthand. Paul is connecting Jewish customs and dispensation by giving regard to the prophets of which represented the old and the apostles are now representing the new. All of their work and teaching, the apostles and prophets, have pointed to Christ.

Paul is painting this picture of God's household as being a building of which His people are the actual structure. First and foremost beginning with the apostles and prophets as being the foundation. What does that mean that the apostles were the foundation? You see the early church was established on the teaching and preaching of the apostles and prophets. The apostles had walked and talked with Jesus. They had seen him with their own eyes. We just went through 1 John a few weeks back where he was reminding people of this very thing. The prophets, they received direct revelation from God and it was their job to not just foretell the future events revealed to them, but to exhort God's people back to Him. Their job was to proclaim the message of God to people. Paul is saying that the office of apostle and prophet is foundational in it's nature. When we look at how a house is constructed, the foundation is only laid once and upon that is built the rest of the house. Their job was to set us up with these revelations and truth revealed to them from God so that God can continue to build upon it through His people. Paul himself says in **1 Corinthians 3:10** ***"By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ."***

2nd point: If you want a rock solid faith, it must be built upon a rock solid FOUNDATION, which is found in CHRIST ALONE.

So not only does God do the building of His household, the foundation is based on the word's God gave to his messengers. God's household is built on God's word, made by God's hands and made of God's people.

Paul describes Christ here in verse 20 as the chief cornerstone. What exactly is the cornerstone? Have any of you ever tried to build something? Not like an erector set or anything. Some of you Gen Z'ers just looked at me like "What's an erector set?" When you're building something, like a house, or framing a wall, it's pretty important to get it square. What does that mean? It means that 2 elements or walls are at perfect right angles to one another. If something is not square and you continue to build on it, you will waste hours trying to accommodate for the initial miscalculation down the road. It's a pain and a hassle, and quite frankly it can compromise the integrity of the structure. That's a lot like what the cornerstone in traditional Jewish construction was. The cornerstone (or foundation stone or setting stone) is the first stone set in the construction of a [masonry foundation](#). All other stones will be set in reference to this stone, thus determining the position of the entire [structure](#).

King David prophecies about Christ in this very terminology. This psalm was written, as best as scholars can tell, in 1044 BC. Jesus was crucified and resurrected between 30-36 AD. David wrote this Psalm around 1075 years before it occurred.

"The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." Psalm 118:22

So Paul is saying that Jesus is the primary stone for all other stones to be referenced to and thus determining the entire position of the household God is building on Him, what we call the Church. Without the cornerstone a building wouldn't have been able to stand. It would have collapsed and been just a pile of lifeless rocks. It's the same with Christ, without Him we are dead in our trespasses. In my opinion the western church today has a skewed view of this. We want to have Jesus and....we want to have our view point on things too. We live in a society that is telling our young people "your heart should lead the way" "Listen to your heart"...NO, our heart is deceitful above all things (Jeremiah 17:10) When we want Jesus AND our hearts desires, what we build can never stand. Because no one can serve 2 masters (Matthew 6) It must be Christ ALONE.

If we look back to Joels message a couple of weeks ago we see that we were ALL "dead in our transgressions and our sins." Naturally we want to gratify our flesh, like Cole spoke about. We are all infected with this sin disease. That is why it is so important to build our faith, our rock solid faith, on Christ alone. Only then can we build a faith that will stand sure.

Eph 2:21 says that it is "In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord."

The idea of us being "joined together" here pictures Roman construction. Laborers would turn huge rocks around and around until they fit each other perfectly. This would mean that they were chipping and chiseling away at the stone until it fit perfectly with another stone. That's what begins happening the moment we start walking with Christ. We certainly have new life the very moment we believe, but that doesn't mean that our sinful nature magically disappears with it. Quite the contrary, it becomes a thorn in our side that we have to deal with. What does Jesus do? He begins chipping away at our fleshly nature and chisels away at our sinful desires. And this doesn't just paint a picture of individualism, we ALL are being shaped and chiseled away so that we can be joined

TOGETHER. And one day, on the other side of eternity, we shall be made perfect in the same way that our savior was. Not by our works but because of His grace and mercy. This occurs because when we “God’s people” are joined together this verse says we rise to become a holy temple in the Lord.

Point 3: Rock solid faith is established in BIBLICAL COMMUNITY where AUTHENTIC and ABIDING FAITH is encouraged.

God didn’t just stop with reconciling us to himself and one another, he wants to UNIFY us. We can be reconciled to each other, but never be in relationship with one another. God desires unity which leads to deep relationship with each other. Why does he desire this? **Hebrews 3:13** says this **“But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sins’s deceitfulness.”**

Some translations say Exhort

Websters say’s that it means “to urge strongly or to warn/give advice.”

What does that word mean? It means to point each other back to Christ. This idea paints a picture of a perfectly unified body. That our concern is not just with ourselves, but with our brothers and sisters. This means that we are going to be a diverse body. There will be democrats and republicans. There will be black and white. There will be Tennessee and Alabama fans all worshipping together and becoming a holy temple for the Lord to dwell in by his spirit.

To know that our brother and sister are being shaped, being formed and being pruned for our good is an abstract thought. But, it paints a picture of our brokenness through sin being restored to wholeness in Christ.

That takes us to our last verse of this chapter, **verse 22** and it says **“And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit”**. While we are on this earth, God himself dwells within us by His Spirit. This word “dwelling” means an abode or habitation. God is setting up his Home to live in us by His spirit. That...is....amazing... But we also know that that isn’t where this ends..While we are here on earth, those of us in Christ should exemplify what eternity will look like through our unity. We are united with God and united with one another, and that is the message that we should show the world. But while we are here, the scripture says that we “are being built” that implies that it’s a continual process. We will not be perfect, and we will still struggle with sin in our lives and fleshly desires, but in Romans 8: 8-11 Paul tells us that we don’t live according to the flesh, but rather according to the spirit. And that because the Spirit lives in us, He will give life to our mortal bodies. That until the day we die, Christ will be chipping away at our sin nature.

What does this look like in the end? What is the full picture of that to which we are trying to attain? We can find that in **Revelation 7: 9-12** where it says this

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were

holding palm branches in their hands. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." 11 All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!" Revelation 7: 9-12

That is our goal. That is what we are striving towards. To stand with a great multitude of people from all ethnicities, all languages and all colors proclaiming that Jesus Christ is King.

The last thing that I want to say before we close up today is this, Having a rock solid faith is meant to be for our good and for Gods glory.

It's not a checklist we need to complete, it's not a church attendance policy that we have to maintain, it's not an amount of money that we must give, it's simply so that God might be glorified in us as we are most satisfied in Him.

Are you most satisfied in Him today? If everything were stripped away from you right now, would you be content with Jesus. Or are there things that you are putting before him? Do you feel that you're foundation is built more upon sand or is it upon Christ who gives us a rock solid foundation?

If it is anywhere other than Christ, I pray that He reveals himself to you today. That he is drawing you close to himself. I pray that you would heed that call and that you would respond with handing over your burdens to the one, Christ

Jesus, who can bear them and has bore them on the cross of calvary.

If you are here today and you've accepted Christ but he isn't the cornerstone in which you've been building from, I pray that you repent and fall back at the foot of the cross where He is waiting to give you his irresistible grace.

This is our last week in this series and each week you guys have been taking home different points of how you can have a Rock Solid Faith. And while all of these points are great and help you become more knowledgeable about what a healthy relationship with Jesus looks like, if you don't apply it, then they are just words on a screen. During this series we've seen that God extends an invitation to us for a life of faith that is given through the grace of Jesus. We can be assured of our salvation and stand firm in Him because it is a gift given to us by Him, not based on our merit or our works. Your faith becomes rock solid when you understand that you have been reconciled to God AND His people. You are no longer outsiders, but you belong with God, in His kingdom and with His family. Your faith is rock solid as you are living life with other believers and encouraging them to stay rooted and abiding in their faith, while carrying each others burdens and sharing the hope of the gospel in each others hearts.

TEMPLE IMAGE ON NEXT PAGE

Interior of Jerusalem's Temple

