

GOD'S BUILDING PROGRAM

Ephesians 2:11-22

People often experience something which is hard to believe at first but which later becomes accepted as normal.

Not many years ago space travel was unknown except in science fiction tales. Then came the space program. Everyone was excited about the first few flights. Now we pay little attention to the launching of a satellite. Satellites go into space without announcement. The space program has become routine.

When we first fell in love and in early days of marriage, every moment was filled with excitement. After several years, the initial excitement subsides. We're no longer surprised to go to breakfast in the morning and find that the water isn't burned! We seldom buy flowers or candy, except on Valentine's Day!

Many things in our lives that once surprised us have become routine, ordinary, *boring!*

In spiritual realm this is true also.

Many things that excited us as new Christians, we now accept as normal; or, we take for granted; or, we may even forget about them.

We take for granted truth concerning the church which, when Paul first told it, amazed his Jewish audience who had never heard it before.

Thoughts revealed in Eph 2 and 3 were unheard of when Paul revealed them. Yet we assume their validity today.

Jewish listeners were incredulous when they heard it!

One shocking statement Paul made, that we take for granted, is the removal of the barrier between Jews and Gentiles.

In Christ we have all been made one.

Sometimes we forget that it wasn't always that way!

[Paul describes this change in Ephesians 2.]

PAUL PRAISES GOD BECAUSE OF THE CHANGE IN OUR LIFE 2

Life given to us by grace 2:1-10

Our former condition: DEAD 2:1-3

- We were dead.
- We deserved NOTHING! –except God's wrath!

[In spite of our condition, God gave us life.]

Our present condition: ALIVE 2:4-6

He raised us and gave us a new position, seated with Christ.

God's purpose 2:7-10

He did it to show the greatness of His love and grace.

We could never *earn* our salvation.

It is based on *Christ's work*.

We receive this salvation **BY FAITH**.

Therefore, **GOD GETS ALL THE GLORY**.

[Paul looks in greater detail at what we were, to show the change God produced in us]

OUR FORMER CONDITION 2:11-12

"Therefore, REMEMBER" – *Don't forget where you came from—your roots!*

What did we look like BEFORE God started to work on us?

WE WERE DISTINGUISHED BY OUR LACK OF ALL THE PROPER CREDENTIALS to qualify for God's program.

We lacked *EVERYTHING* we needed!

"The church is only organization in the world that has requirement for membership that those who desire to join must be *UNWORTHY!*

5 key words depict how bad off we were until Christ intervened:

- **We were SEPARATED from the promised Messiah**

While we use Christ as a synonym for Jesus, the Jewish person thought of Christ as Messiah.

Prior to origin of the church, pagan Gentiles had no Messiah for whom to hope.

Gentiles were "Christless"

We had nothing to do with Messiah; no part in His coming.

- **We were EXCLUDED from God's people**

Our citizenship was in *pagan* lands; we didn't have the right passport; we weren't citizens of Israel—God's people

- **We were STRANGERS to the covenants** which contained God's promises— the promises were for Israel, not pagans.

- **HOPELESS – we had NO HOPE**— state of despair, our view of life was hopeless.

- **We were WITHOUT GOD in a lonely, fearful world**—lit., "ATHEISTS" – *source* of our word, not other way around.

There was no God in our world—we had no knowledge of Him, and no relationship with Him.

Recent report from those Russia—hopelessness and depression has overcome the people in the last 6 months. They have no hope; they have no God to give them hope. ***That's what our state was like, before Christ!***

We were on the outside – *without hope – without God!*

The meaning of estrangement – of separation – had been seared like a burning brand upon our souls.

We had nothing to do with God; hopelessly lost and alone!

OUR PRESENT CONDITION 2:13-22 BUT NOW . . .

IN CHRIST—we have been brought near—we are "INSIDERS"!

We lack nothing. Every barrier has been removed

We are one, together with the people of God!

That may not impress us any more—but it sure impressed Paul and his Jewish audience everytime they thought of it!

Everything has changed because God sees us **IN CHRIST!**

1) Those who were far away have been made near. 2:13

Now, *in Christ*, we have been drawn near to God

- It's still not based on our works!
- We still don't deserve it!
- It's based on *the blood of Christ*

Here's a real love story for **Valentine's Day!** God loved us while we were still in our sin, alienated from Him. He sought us out and changed our lives! That's God's kind of love.

2) The two have been made into one. 2:14

3) The barrier has been removed. 2:14-16

How did He break down the barrier? 2:15-16

He died to remove that which produced the enmity—i.e., the law

He did this so that;

- He could make 2 distinct peoples into 1, and so make peace.
- He could reconcile them both to God (through the cross)

In Herod's temple a wall separated Court of the Gentiles from rest of the temple. On that wall were inscriptions in Latin and Greek forbidding Gentiles to enter: "No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the sanctuary and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death."

Barricade symbolized the division between Jew and Gentile—**Christ destroyed the barrier!**

John Reed tried to do away with racial distinctions while driving a school bus in Australia. The bus carried whites and aborigines. Tired of the squabbling, he pulled bus over and said to white boys: "What color are you?" "White" "No, you are green; Anyone riding my bus is green." Then he went to Aborigines: "What color are you?" "Black." "No, you are green; Anyone riding my bus is green." So they all responded, "Green." Several miles down the road he heard one boy announce: "All right, light green on this side, dark green on that side."

Human discrimination is hard to tear down. But Christ has torn down the barriers. We are ONE PEOPLE in Christ,

4) The peace has been announced. 2:17-22

HE proclaimed peace. –to BOTH parties! 2:17

We both come to God through Him 2:18

"Access" means "to bring to". In Persian court an official introduced people who desired an audience with the king. Paul uses that title. Through Christ we have such an introduction to the Father, whether Jew or Gentile.

Instead of being outsiders, we are now fellow citizens and members of God's family. 2:19-22

Solution to our problem of separation was the formation of a new people of God. God formed the church—a united people—there's no

difference between Jew and Gentile. *We are all ONE in Christ!*

As a result, we are **NO LONGER**:-

- **STRANGERS** (= foreigners)
- **ALIENS** (= "home"-related root; "outside the family") ∴, "sojourners" or "aliens"

Instead, we are **NOW ALREADY**:-

- **FELLOW CITIZENS** (Opp. "strangers")—*one nation*
We have a new passport—from GOD's kingdom!
- **MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY** (opp. "aliens")—*one family*
We belong to GOD's family.
- We are **PART OF GOD'S BUILDING**—*one building, temple*
Foundation: apostles and prophets—God's spokesmen who laid
basis in God's Word, on which we continue to build
Jesus is the cornerstone of God's building 2:20
WE are blocks from which God makes His building
What kind of building is it?
 - Well fit together
 - Growing
 - A temple
 - HOLY!
 - A dwelling place for GOD!

What a change! God has created a complete turn about!

When we start feeling discouraged, we need to REMEMBER where we have come from! And why!

It doesn't matter where you've come from!

God has torn down the barriers and made us one in Christ!

It doesn't matter what your **race** is: black, white, red, or yellow,

It doesn't matter what your **social status** is: rich, poor, middle class, working class, or professional.

It doesn't matter how **old** you are: senior citizen, boomer, buster; child, youth, parent, or grandparent

It doesn't matter what your **religious background** may be.

It doesn't matter how **sinful** your past may be.

It doesn't matter how often you've **failed**, or how often you've **achieved success**.

Christ has torn down the barriers. He has made us **ONE**!

Paul wants to make sure we get the point:

We've never been able to earn this relationship by being good enough!

We still can't! It's all based on Christ!

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THIS TRANSFORMATION MAKE IN OUR LIFE?

=> The Family of God