

United through the death of Christ Ephesians 2:11-22

Key ideas:

We are saved not only for relationship with God but we are saved into a family. This family is also described as a temple in which God lives. Together we are the temple, and each of us is a brick in the temple.

Summary of Ephesians 2:1-10

Once we were dead in sin but now alive in Christ. Once we lived according to the sinful nature, but now we live by the riches of God's grace. Once we were under God's wrath and judgement, but now we are saved through Christ. We are: Alive with Christ, raised up with Christ, and seated with Christ in the heavenly realms. All these phrases strongly express our unity with God. But there is more to the story, we are saved to become part of God's united family.

Gentiles and Jews (v11-13)

How does Paul describe people who were not part of Israel?

Before Jesus came and lived and died, Israel were God's chosen people. To be born as a Gentile meant to be born outside of God's people. What has Jesus' death meant for the Gentiles? (v13)

Two Become One (v13-18)

Unlike the "far away" Gentiles, Israel were "near" because of God's promises. What has Christ accomplished for these two groups (v 14-18)?

So what achievement of Jesus' death is Paul focusing on here?

Nearness to God necessarily includes nearness to his children.

Paul says that Jesus put "hostility" to death (v 16). Are there any brothers or sisters in your church towards whom you are hostile? What is the source of that hostility? How does your hostility reflect a low view of Christ's death?

What would change in your attitude towards that person if you remembered Paul's teaching here?

The Spirit gives us faith in the Son's death for us. The Son's death and the Spirit's work bring us to the Father - whether we are Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, black or white. We are all equally in need of the cross, and are all equally saved through faith in Christ. Paul now goes on to describe God's church in three ways.

Household

Verse 19 describes Christians as members of God's household - family. What does the image of a family contribute to our understanding of the relationship believers have with one another? How is it both exciting and challenging?

The "apostles and prophets" refer to the men and women who first carried God's words and the gospel. So what does it mean for us today to be "founded" on their work?

Answer: Theirs teaching is the basis of what we believe and defines the church. God gave it to them, to give to us.

Temple

In verse 21 the people of God are described as a temple.

Read 2 Chronicles 7 v 11-16. What was the purpose of the Old Testament temple?

Read John 2 v 19-21. What was the ultimate fulfilment of the Old Testament temple?

Dwelling

We can rejoice that some day we will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever (Psalm 23 v 6). But we also need to remember and rejoice in the truth that right now God is dwelling in his people.

The Holy Spirit dwells in us, individually and collectively as local churches.

Think of yourself as a "brick". In what ways are you a fitting dwelling-place for God's Spirit? In what ways do you need to become more pure?

Think of your church as a whole. Are there ways in which you can encourage each other to become more holy, like the Spirit who dwells in you?

Pray

Thank God now not only for saving you, but for saving you to be part of his united people.

The words "rises to become" indicate that the church - the people of God - grows over time. Take time to pray that the Spirit would work through your church to bring more people to Christ and to build up those who are in Christ.