

General Study Of Ephesians – Part 2

Ephesians 2:11-12 [New King James] *“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands, that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”*

The former world, before Jesus Christ entered into the physical world of humanity, the world was divided into two hostile groups of Jews [who knew God’s Commandments] and Gentiles who did not know the One True Eternal Creator God.

But since the death and resurrection of our Saviour, Jesus Christ the Son of God, both groups are being reconciled into a third group, the new humanity in Jesus Christ, Christians.

In the new group united by the active indwelling of the Holy Spirit [verse 18] which had not been available to human beings in general, [John 7:37-39].

In the ancient world there were many ways in which to classify people.

There were the rich and the poor, free persons and slaves, Romans and Barbarians, and so on, but from a theological point of view, there were only two major divisions, Jews and Gentiles, [verses 11-12].

Israel [Jews] was a privileged nation under the One True God, a chosen people. To them were granted the oracles [wisdom] of God, the covenant law at Sinai, the temple worship and the promises invested in Israel’s coming Messiah, [the anointed Jesus Christ as their Saviour].

The Gentiles in general were left to grope in darkness without hope in their twisted pagan religions.

However, even Israel’s understanding was limited at best, for God’s greatest glory had not as yet been revealed in full and many internal barriers between people and God existed.

The Temple in Jerusalem was itself a structure of several barriers.

Outside the Temple itself was a yard called the court of the Gentiles, and a wall. On the wall at intervals was placed a warning for a Gentile **not** to enter further on the penalty of death. On the other side of that wall, the next court was reserved for Jewish women, another barrier kept them from going any further in. Inside that barrier only Jewish men were permitted, but only to find another barrier for the priests alone to pass.

But even then, a final barrier existed where only the High Priest could enter the sanctuary of the Holy of Holies and that **only** once a year, on the Day of Atonement!

How could there be peace and unity as long as all these distinctions remained?

However, in God’s eternal plan and wisdom He made a way to eventually remove these barriers and allow full access to Himself, not only for all Jews but for Gentiles as well.

Ephesians 2:13-18 [New King James] *“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 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, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.”*

The covenant law given at Sinai was only temporarily a way to show humanity what was sinful, [Romans 7:7] we could **not** become justified in God's sight but it pointed us towards what was sinful, [Romans 3:20] it could **not** make atonement for our sins.

On the cross, Jesus Christ who was without sin, [2 Corinthians 5:20-21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:21-23; 1 John 3:5] and being the very Son of God was able to make full atonement for the sins of all humanity.

Believers of all walks of life now have immediate and uninterrupted access through the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ, [Matthew 27:50-51; Mark 15:33-38; Luke 23:44-46].

We as Christians have so much to be grateful for when we consider how we are blessed with this knowledge of what God has done for us through Jesus Christ.

This should also motivate us to seek to share this understanding with all who as yet do not know the true God and His Son Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:19-22 [New King James] *“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”*

A church building is sometimes called God's house, in reality God's house is **not** a building but a group of people, within whom the Holy Spirit is actively at work.

This promise of one church on one foundation cancels out the disability under which Gentiles suffered, [Ephesians 2:12]. Their admission to the church implies no second class status within the covenant community but full membership as fellow citizens with the saints, [Jewish Christians]. Both classes then constitute a single entity, “the household of God” with equal rights, privileges and responsibilities.

Ephesians 3:1-7 [New King James] *“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles, if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.”*

Paul's plan was to establish himself in the west of Rome as he had done in the east in Antioch, [Romans 15:14-32].

Paul planned to blaze a trail from Rome all the way across the Western Roman Empire to Spain, planting churches in every place he would stay along the way.

However, God had other plans for Paul. Paul was to go to prison on account of his preaching to the Gentile world, and eventually die a martyr's death. Paul did arrive at Rome, but in chains awaiting trial, [Acts 28:16-30].

Nevertheless, the power of God was manifest even while Paul was in chains, Paul penned what are termed the “*prison epistles*.” The letter to the Ephesians stands among them.

The divine mystery of Jesus Christ is fully disclosed and preserved in the written Word of the Christian Bible.

The mystery was not fully unveiled in the past, even though glimpses of it are present in the Old Covenant scriptures.

Ephesians 3:8-13 [New King James] *“To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.”*

What was hidden was that there should be one holy, universal church, the chief custodian as a teacher to the Gentiles is Paul, [1 Timothy 2:7].

In a telling snatch of autobiography and self-revelation Paul confesses to his own inadequacy and need, yet rejoices in the supply of God’s power through the Holy Spirit to enable him to accomplish his task of preaching to the Gentiles a message which is one of *“unsearchable riches.”*

This self-confession was written out of his painful recollections of his past persecution of the church, [1 Timothy 1:12-13].

The physical church on earth is the witness to and the vehicle of this revelation, [verse 10] and the hostile angelic powers are not only held in wonder at this message but their death-knell is sounded with the proclamation that God in Jesus Christ has decisively acted for cosmic salvation and so brought their malign regime over human life to an end, [Ephesians 1:21-22; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19].

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross and His resurrection from the grave brings to an end Satan’s control over human destiny, [Hebrews 2:14-15].

Ephesians 3:14-21 [New King James] *“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, **being rooted and grounded in love**, may be able to **comprehend** with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height, to know the love of Christ **which passes knowledge**; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. **Amen.**”*

Paul is requesting prayers of his readers partly on the ground of the freedom of access which the Gentiles now have, and because they have a special place in his ministry, for he is their apostle. Paul knows that he can confidently count on their intercession.

The content of this petition is twofold –

1) **An empowering of the Holy Spirit whom Paul calls to fortify the Christians “inner life” especially when under trial, [Philippians 1:19; Colossians 1:11].**

This is needed renewing on a daily basis, [2 Corinthians 4:16-18].

2) **The indwelling of Jesus Christ who comes to make His physical home in the believer’s heart, mind and human spirit, [Job 32:8; Proverbs 20:27; 1 Corinthians 2:11].**

This is accomplished by the active presence of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, [Romans 8:9] that the very characteristics of God may be developed in every Christian as a result of their following the lead of the Holy Spirit, [Galatians 5:22-25].

The end result of these two parts of Paul's prayer.

“Rooted and grounded” – *“rooted”* is a horticultural term denoting the firm bed in which plants are set. *“Grounded”* means foundation in, [Ephesians 2:20] borrowed from the language of architecture and ensures a strong base on which a superstructure rises.

Love is both the soil in which the plant grows and the firm ground on which it rests.

“Comprehend” God's redemptive plan in all its richness and profundity, hence the quadratic dimensions, [width, length, depth, height].

Christ's love of which this redemptive plan is the consummate expression.

So amazing is that love which God's purpose for His Church in the world reveals, that it eludes our full grasp.

It *“surpasses knowledge,”* yet at the same time beckons us on to a progressive experience as we are more and more filled with God's Holy Spirit leading us in our new life, [verse 19].

The Church is to celebrate the confidence that God is both able and willing to do all that Paul's prayer asks for, *“abundantly,”* indicates that God will do even more than our prayers ask.

“Amen” meaning we can trust our Eternal Creator God to fulfil all that He has promised.

Amen is a word direct from the Hebrew, meaning *“Jehovah is faithful.”*

In **Isaiah 65:16** it is literally rendered *“God of the amen.”*

If God is faithful [amen] then all His testimonies and precepts are sure, [Psalms 19:7; Psalms 111:7] as are all His warnings, [Hosea 5:9].

Revelation 3:14 [King James] *“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;”*

Amen is the title given to Jesus Christ.