

# Paul's Letter to the ***EPHESIANS***

## CHAPTERS 1, 2, 3: *God's Plan for Everyone Who is In Christ* (CONTINUED)

### Benefits of Being "In Christ" (1:3 – 3:21) (continued)

#### **Unity** (2:11–3:13)

2:11-12 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men) – remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded<sup>1</sup> from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

[<sup>1</sup>*apallotrioo*: to alienate from (lit)] There were two types of alienations faced by the Gentiles (the "uncircumcised"): First, social alienation resulting from thousands of years of animosity between the Jews and Gentiles. Second, spiritual alienation in five ways, the Gentiles were (1) without Christ <sup>Exodus 3:13-17</sup>, (2) excluded from God's chosen people (the Jews) <sup>Psalms 33:12</sup>, (3) strangers from God's covenants of promise (land/priesthood/nation/kingdom) <sup>Psalms 105:8-11</sup>, (4) lacking a divine promise of hope <sup>Genesis 12:1-3</sup>, (5) without God presence <sup>Matthew 15:21-24</sup>.

In a similar statement concerning the Jews, Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans:

"Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen." <sup>Romans 9:4b-5</sup>

One of the ways Jewish people refer to the Gentiles is by the phrase "the uncircumcised". The Bible states Christians are also circumcised, but in a different way. <sup>Romans 2:29, Colossians 2:11</sup>  
Physical circumcision was a sign of being chosen; spiritual circumcision is a sign of salvation.

2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. Those who were "far away" (a rabbinical term for Gentiles <sup>Isaiah 57:19b, Acts 2:39</sup>, but also a description of the spiritual condition of the Gentiles), but are "now in Christ", have experienced the reconciliation <sup>2 Corinthians 5:17-22, Romans 5:6-11</sup> which was accomplished by "Christ's physical body" through His shed blood when He died on the cross <sup>Colossians 1:19-22</sup>.

## Ephesians F: Chapters 2b

2:14-16 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man<sup>2</sup> out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility<sup>3</sup>. [<sup>2</sup>*anthropos*: man, as distinct from gods and the animals, <sup>3</sup>*echthra*: hatred]

The phrase "he himself" emphasizes Jesus is the only source of peace <sup>Isaiah 9:6, 53:5, John 14:27</sup>.

The "barrier" and "dividing wall" refer to the wall on the temple grounds separating the Jewish areas from the court of the Gentiles. Paul used the wall that physically divided the Jews and Gentiles to also be a symbol of the social, religious and spiritual issues that separated them.

Through His sacrifice on the cross, Christ abolished the OT ceremonial laws, feasts and sacrifices <sup>Hebrews 10:1-10</sup> that also alienated the Jews and the Gentiles (the moral laws are affirmed in the New Covenant <sup>Matthew 5:17-19, 22:37-40, Romans 3:31, 13:8-10</sup>). All who are "in Christ" are the same ("out of two": Jews/Gentiles, comes "one": saints) <sup>Romans 10:12-13, Galatians 3:26-29</sup>.

Jesus became a curse <sup>Galatians 3:10-14</sup> in order that God's divine justice could be satisfied and reconciliation with God <sup>see notes on v.13</sup> would become a reality. The "hostility" mentioned by Paul is that the law condemned mankind, but once Jesus paid the penalty of sin <sup>Romans 6:23</sup>, the law could no longer condemn anyone who is "in Christ" (*tetelestai*: paid in full <sup>John 19:30</sup>).

Here in Ephesians, Paul chose to use the visual image of "one new man out of two" to describe God's combining His Jewish & Gentile followers. In his first letter to the church at Corinth, Paul used the image of "one body" to describe the collection of all believers <sup>1 Corinthians 12:12-13</sup>. So, "man" and "body" are both metaphors for the church as the Body of Christ. <sup>Ephesians 1:22-23</sup>

Josephus described 13 stone tablets that were on the "dividing wall", warning Gentiles not to enter the Jewish area under the penalty of death <sup>Antiquities 15.11.5 [417]</sup>. In 1871, a tablet was found that read: "No foreigner is to enter within the forecourt and the balustrade around the sanctuary. Whoever is caught will have himself to blame for his subsequent death."

Paul chose to use the illustration of the "dividing wall" in this letter in spite of his having been beaten by a mob of Jews and arrested by the Romans after he was falsely accused of defiling the "holy place" by taking "Trophimus the Ephesian" into the "temple area". <sup>Acts 21:27-36</sup>

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2:17-18 He came and preached<sup>4</sup> peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access<sup>5</sup> to the Father by one Spirit. [<sup>4</sup>*euaggelizo*: proclaim good news, <sup>5</sup>*prosagoge*: to come toward (lit)] "Faith comes from hearing"<sup>Romans 10:17</sup> for both the Jew (near) and Gentile (far away). No one has the right to approach God on their own; only by faith in the finished work of Jesus<sup>John 19:30, Romans 5:1-8, Ephesians 3:12</sup> can saints approach God<sup>Hebrews 4:14-16</sup> through the Holy Spirit<sup>Galatians 4:6-7</sup>. Jesus Christ "is our peace"<sup>v.14</sup>, He "[makes] peace"<sup>v.15</sup> and He "came and preached peace"<sup>v.17, Luke 24:36, John 16:33, 20:19-27</sup>. Here<sup>v.18</sup>, Paul mentioned the interworking of the Trinity: "Father", Son ("him") and Holy "Spirit".

2:19-22 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple<sup>6</sup> in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. [<sup>6</sup>*naos*: habitation of God] Redeemed sinners are members of God's family<sup>Ephesians 1:4-5, 2 Corinthians 6:18</sup> and citizens in His kingdom<sup>Philippians 3:20</sup>. Jesus is the cornerstone<sup>Psalms 118:22, Isaiah 28:16, Acts 4:11, 1 Peter 2:6</sup> of the building Paul mentioned, while elsewhere he referred to Jesus also as the foundation<sup>1 Corinthians 3:11</sup>. In this passage, Paul's calling the apostles & prophets the foundation<sup>Revelation 21:14</sup> seems to be referring to the drawing of people to Christ by the divine revelation they taught<sup>Romans 15:20</sup> (as demonstrated in Peter's declaration of Jesus as the Christ<sup>Matthew 16:15-18</sup>). Both Jews and Gentiles who are "in Christ" are temples of the Holy Spirit<sup>1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 2 Corinthians 6:16</sup> and stones in the spiritual building<sup>1 Corinthians 3:9, 1 Peter 2:4-5</sup> that the Lord is patiently constructing<sup>2 Peter 3:9</sup>.

When God, through Daniel, interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream about his kingdom and the kingdoms that followed, He described Jesus Christ by saying "a rock was cut out, but not by human hands"<sup>Daniel 2:34,44-45</sup>. Also, God directed Moses and Joshua to make altars out of "uncut stone"<sup>Exodus 20:24-25, Joshua 8:30-31</sup>. In both cases, God would be the stonemason, because His Son was perfect and He wanted His altars also to be perfect, so He was indicating that if man adds anything to His perfect creations and plans, they will be defiled<sup>Exodus 20:25</sup>.

The "building" mentioned in these verses is a living organism that grows over time.<sup>Matthew 13:45-46</sup>