

Bible Basics Conference 2009: "Walk Worthy of the Calling!"

Part 4

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Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:01] Perhaps we could just read the scriptures together. Ephesians chapter 2, beginning at verse 11. Wherefore remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made 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, but now in Christ Jesus ye who were some time afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandment contained in ordinances, for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace. [00:01:03] And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby, and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

For through him we both have access by one spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. In what Mark brought before us in the previous verses, we have what we were morally before God, [00:02:07] we were dead, and God's grace through Christ quickened us.

And here in this passage we have what we were, what we might say positionally as Gentiles, we were afar off, and God in Christ has brought us near.

The apostle begins by speaking of the separation between Jew and Gentile.

He says, remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands. Circumcision was given to the Jew as a sign of the covenant that God had made with Israel, [00:03:14] given to Abraham initially.

Genesis chapter 17 verse 11, God tells Abraham, you shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you. Genesis 17 verse 11.

And so circumcision as it were was an outward sign that God had brought this nation into covenant with himself. And also it was a sign of the fact that they had been separated from everything that was not of God. In order that they might walk with him and that he might be their God and they might be his people. Now the Gentiles, we the Gentiles had no such position before God. [00:04:05] And Paul speaks of us here as being without Christ.

Christ had been promised as the deliverer to the Jew.

The Gentiles had no such promise from God.

Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, in other words those who did not belong to that administration under God, having none of the blessings and the privileges that a citizen of Israel had, because they were Israelites and they had a claim to those things which had been promised to Abraham. [00:05:02] The Gentile nations had no such claim upon God. They were at a distance. Strangers from the covenants of promise.

Those promises were Israel's only.

There were some promises to Israel which referred to the nations. As God said to Abraham, in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. But they were not promises made to the nations, they were promises made to Israel. And that through Israel's seed the nations also were coming to blessing. But those covenants of promise were not given to the nations, they were given to Israel. We as Gentiles had no such promises. Having no hope.

That doesn't mean hopeless, but it means that Israel had a hope. They had been promised a deliverer who would bring them into their blessing, bring them into their inheritance. [00:06:02] That was their hope.

The Gentiles had no such hope. Without God in the world.

This means that they had no knowledge of God. I think the word actually means atheist. Not only having no knowledge of God, but no belief in God. They were marked by idolatry.

Worshipping the gods of their own invention. And so when the Lord Jesus spoke to the Gentile woman, the Samaritan woman in Samaria by the well, he would say to her in John chapter 4 verse 22, he says, Ye worship ye know not what.

We know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. This was the distinction between the Gentile and the Jew. [00:07:01] The Jew knew the God that he worshipped because the God whom he worshipped had revealed himself to him. But the Gentile had no such revelation from God concerning himself. Salvation is of the Jew. Deliverance was theirs, not the Gentile.

And so we had no claim upon God.

And so the fact that he has brought us near in the Lord Jesus is all of his grace. Just as Mark has brought before us the fact that we have been brought into life and made to sit with the Lord Jesus in heavenly places, this is all of grace. And this position we have of nearness now is all of his grace because we had no claim upon him. So verse 13.

[00:08:04] We now in Christ Jesus, who sometime were far off, are made near by the blood of Christ. This is his death upon the cross. This is his redemptive work upon the cross.

God has brought us near on this righteous ground that the Lord Jesus has died for us. And through his death there is the ground that God now can forgive us of all our sins. His blood, that which sanctifies, that which cleanses, that which removes guilt. And he has brought us near.

And so we read in verse 14, he is our peace.

The Lord Jesus himself is our peace. This is a wonderful thing to take hold of.

[00:09:03] It's not here a matter of peacefulness.

Peacefulness, that's a state that we should have because he is our peace.

In other words, our peace is something settled. It is our standing before God.

God now contemplates us as being near to him.

There's no enmity anymore between us and God. We are reconciled to him because the Lord Jesus himself is our peace. And so the Lord Jesus cannot fail.

He cannot be, as it were, dislodged from that place that he now has at the right hand of God. And so our peace is fixed. Nothing can change it.

Nothing can affect it because he himself is our peace. [00:10:02] And so by faith receiving that, believing simply what the scriptures say, this will give us peace in our hearts as to our standing before God. And we will not have fears or doubts about the security of our salvation because how can it be affected if the Lord himself is our peace?

How can it change?

Press the button.

And so the Lord Jesus has broken down that middle wall of partition between the Jew and the Gentile.

That which once separated us has been removed by the Lord.

[00:11:01] And how has that been done? Well, verse 15, it's been abolished in his flesh.

The enmity between Jew and Gentile, that which separated them, has been abolished in his flesh, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances. And why?

What was the object in doing it that in himself of the two, Jew and Gentile, he might make one new man?

The Lord Jesus, we read that he was born of a woman, that he was come of a woman, come under

the law. And it's in his flesh that he has abolished the law contained in ordinances. The Lord Jesus was born of a woman, he became a man. We read in Hebrews that he took not of angels by the hand, but the seed of Abraham. [00:12:06] He became a Jew.

He took a place in the nation of Israel.

He took a place under the law.

And in his death, he did away with that order of things completely. He abolished it in his flesh.

And he brought in a new order of things, a wonderful new order. And in himself, he made Jew and Gentile, having removed the enmity between them, he brought them both into one body, making a new man.

Now that word new, it means that it's of a different order to that which went before.

[00:13:02] Completely new.

A different order entirely.

We get this word, or these words, a new man, later on in the epistle. And there it's applied individually.

Having put off the old man, having put on the new. There it's individually, but here it's corporately. We, both Jew and Gentile, have been brought in Christ into one new man. And that order of things is after himself.

It's that new creation order.

And so, the church, this new man, is marked now by that wonderful moral order which is of God.

And which is seen in Christ and in his church, that new man.

[00:14:06] So, making peace.

That's, I think, peace, not peace with God here, but peace between those who are Jews, those who are Gentiles. The enmity is removed. They've been brought into one new man, thus making peace. Those who previously were forbidden by God to walk together, the Jew, could have no dealings with the Gentiles. Now, they have been brought into the same body, that new man in Christ.

And the enmity between them has been dissolved. The wall of partition has been broken down. Now they are together in Christ on that new ground. That he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. And it's the same glad tidings of peace now, which go out to the Jew and to the Gentile.

[00:15:07] He came and preached peace to you, which were far off, that's the Gentile, and to them that were positionally as a nation near to him. And to them that were positionally as a nation near to him, but sadly in heart, far from him. They too needed that gospel of peace, the gospel of the glad tidings

of peace, preached to them in Christ. So both the Jew and the Gentile now, brought into one body on that same ground, the death of Christ, the wonderful gospel of the glad tidings of peace. The Jew, previously, he had access to Jehovah through the law given in ordinances.

[00:16:08] And it was through his own efforts that he would keep the law, and therefore he could draw near to Jehovah.

But of course he could not, because the law only manifested the state of his human heart. But now in Christ, it's not a question of drawing near to Jehovah, it's a question of drawing near to the Father. Because in Christ, God has been revealed to us as his Father and our Father.

How near we are in that place of intimacy with him, that relationship of children, of sons that we've had, sons by adoption. We have access into the very presence of the Father as a child has access into the presence of his Father. [00:17:07] Because of our relationship that we've been brought into, both Jew and Gentile, in Christ, by the Spirit. He is the power, as it were, through which we draw near to God. In Christ, that's the ground, it's in him, we're accepted in him. By the Spirit, we have access into the very presence of our God and Father. And so, in Christianity we have a new ground completely, we've been brought into a new position completely. That which is spiritual, that which is heavenly. And we've been brought into a relationship with God, not as Jehovah. We have not been made fellow citizens of the Israelites, we have not been brought into Israel. No, we've been brought, we've been made fellow citizens with the saints, the sanctified ones. [00:18:01] Those who have been cleansed by the precious blood of Christ and brought near to God. And so, we read, we are the household of God, we've been brought into the very family of God. We're no longer foreigners and strangers. Fellow citizens with the saints, we have all the rights and the privileges now that belong to the children of God. Those whom he has set apart for himself because of the Lord Jesus Christ through his death upon that cross. And we are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Now, we know who the apostles are, but who are the prophets? Are they, would that include Old Testament prophets? Well, I think, not wishing to intrude on another brother's portion of scripture. But if we go into the next chapter, we get these apostles and prophets spoken of again. [00:19:05] And it's quite clear who the prophets are. Verse 4, whereby when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. So, these prophets are not Old Testament prophets, but they are New Testament prophets. And God has revealed to his apostles and prophets the revelation which was hidden before, which was not known in previous ages of the mystery, Christ and the church, Jew and Gentile brought into one body. And this is the foundation of the apostles and prophets. It's not the apostles and prophets personally, they are not the foundation. But rather, it's their revelatory ministry, which they were given by God, concerning his purpose in Christ. [00:20:08] And that he would, as we've had before, not be alone, but would have for himself, himself alone, his assembly, his bride.

So the foundation was laid by the apostles and prophets. Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.

If we read in Isaiah, chapter 28, verse 16, Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation. He that believeth shall not make haste.

I think that could mean, shall not be ashamed, shall not be confounded. But it's also true, of course,

that he who believeth shall not make haste, because we trust in the Lord. [00:21:07] But the point is, the Lord himself is the foundational stone. He is the foundation that God lay in Zion. And he is the cornerstone of the assembly.

And that is the stone that was laid, and the building goes up in reference to the cornerstone.

Every stone that is placed in that building is, as it were, lined up with the cornerstone. The cornerstone governs the whole building, how it goes up.

Everything is brought into reference to that. It's a foundational stone.

And so it is with the Lord Jesus. It is his house.

It is his church.

He is building it.

He is the foundation. [00:22:01] He is the rock that Peter confessed.

Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God. He said, Thou art Peter. You are Peter, which is Petros, a stone.

You are a stone upon this rock. Another word, Petra, upon this rock. That is himself, as the son of the living God. He would build his church.

Peter was part of the material that would make that building. He was a stone.

But the foundation was Christ himself.

And so we are built upon that foundation.

And the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord.

There's a scripture in 1 Kings, [00:23:02] which speaks of how the temple was built and how the stones were prepared. And it says, 1 Kings 6-7, And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither, so that there was neither hammer nor axe, neither any tool of iron heard in the house while it was building. So each stone was made ready for the place appointed for it.

And then it was brought and put into the place that was for that stone in connection with all the other stones of the building. So it was fitly framed together.

And every believer in Christ has his place within that building.

He's prepared before he is brought into the church. He is saved. He is quickened.

[00:24:02] He is converted.

He believes upon the Lord Jesus. That's how he's prepared, as it were. And then, having believed, he's brought into the assembly. He's added to the assembly.

He has his own place, but in connection with all the other believers.

Not independent, but God's, wonderful as we have it here, his master work, the building of the temple, which is for his eternal glory and praise.

Because this is the object of a temple. We have here what's in view.

It groweth unto a holy temple unto the Lord. It's what God has in view with this building. It is for his glory.

And there's a scripture found, I think it's in the Psalms, it's a marginal rendering, [00:25:01] but it speaks of the temple, it says, Every wit of it uttereth glory.

And this is the object of the temple. It's for the glory of God. But, we read, it's a habitation of God.

In verse 22, In whom ye also are builded together, for an habitation of God. And this really is the fundamental purpose, we might say, of this building.

This is what gives it all its character. This is what makes it glorious. This is what makes it holy. Because it's the place in which God dwells.

And the very first reference we have to the house of God in the scriptures emphasizes that very point.

In Genesis 28, verse 16, we read of Jacob.

He'd had a vision.

It says, Jacob awaked out of his sleep and said, Surely the Lord is in this place. [00:26:01] And I knew it not.

And he was afraid and said, How dreadful is this place. This is none other but the house of God. This is the gate of heaven. But why was it, what was it that made Jacob realize this was the house of God? He said, Because the Lord is in this place. And that is what is fundamental to the truth of the house. It is the dwelling place of God, the habitation of God by the Spirit. And just to finally close on the last verse.

There's a practical aspect to this. Because Paul says, In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. He's now saying to the Ephesian believers, Ye also are builded together as an habitation of God through the Spirit. Now, Paul isn't saying that you at Ephesus are in yourselves, [00:27:02] in your assembly at Ephesus, a house of God. He's not saying that at all. But he's saying that in you, the truth of the universal truth of this dwelling place of God should be worked out where you are locally. It should be seen by the world in you where you are there. The world can't take account of the church. Only God can do that, particularly in its present state of division.

But locally, believers can give expression to this truth of the house of God.

Not in independence, but knowing that they belong to the whole, that they are members of the body of Christ, owning the lordship of Christ, [00:28:02] owning his authority, that he is the son over his own house, and to show forth this truth in all that they do, in how they serve him, in the order that they follow, the scriptural order. They can show forth that they are in this building, the house of God, locally, so that Paul could say of the believers in Corinth, when they would come together, when they were ministering unto the Lord, ministering unto one another in the power of the Holy Spirit, and one comes in who's uninstructed, who doesn't know these things, knows nothing of them, and yet he will see how they are going on, and he will say, in 1 Corinthians, chapter 14, verse 25, and thus are the secrets of his heart manifest, and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, [00:29:04] and report that God is in you of a truth. And so locally, the truth that God dwells in his habitation, is given expression to, not in independence, but as part of that one body of Christ.

Thank you.