

Built Together

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[0 : 00] Well, like I said, it'll be necessary for me to leave it to you to do much of the work that goes into understanding the background and setting of this passage in Ephesians.

And I assure you, if you take the time to do that, it will be a fruitful study for you. I know some of you of recent times have done specific studies through Ephesians.

Mark and I have talked about this, maybe even in relation to your podcast. Did you guys do Ephesians recently? You will find that we could spend many, many weeks just in these first two chapters.

And if you were to take your time and really look through it and study it and digest it, you will be blessed for sure. We don't have time to do all of that today. But it would probably be helpful to our purposes this morning to make just a few contextual notes.

This is a letter written by the Apostle Paul as he was imprisoned in Rome. It's one of the prison epistles in that sense. And the audience to whom he is writing were Christians in the very pagan city of Ephesus.

[1 : 06] And you will remember through our readings through the book of Acts, Ephesus experienced a tremendous revival as the gospel was brought there through the preaching of Paul and his team.

About a year and a half, it seems, that Paul stayed in Ephesus discipling these people. We see the relationship that he had with the church there as he was on his way to Rome in his imprisonment or on his way to Jerusalem, knowing that he would be ultimately arrested there.

Remember, he stops and he meets with the elders of the Ephesian church. It's in Acts chapter 20 and there's such tenderness and intimacy and love. There is wonderful relationship between Paul and these Christians.

And this letter really has two major themes that we would point to. Both of them are seen in the passage that we study today. The first one is this, that in the gospel, Christ has reconciled us to God.

That we, by nature, are enemies of God. But through Christ and what he has done in the gospel of the cross and of his resurrection, he has made us no longer enemies with God, but he has reconciled us to God.

[2 : 19] And you see that all through this letter to the Ephesians. And the second major theme is that in the gospel, Christ has united people from all nations as his new kingdom people.

What we call the church. So not only has God reconciled, Jesus reconciled us to God as individuals, but in reconciling us to God as individuals, he has created a new people.

The church of God, citizens of the kingdom of God. And he has united us who were not only enemies of God, but who were also enemies of one another.

And we see these two themes coming to the surface very quickly in these verses that we've just read. Now, beginning at chapter 1 and verse 1 through chapter 2 and verse 10, Paul beautifully describes God's grace and salvation.

Beginning in verse 11 of chapter 2, he explains that this gospel of grace that unites believers from all nations to be a dwelling place for God's spirit.

[3 : 27] Again, we who were once enemies of God are now the very people of God. Not separated from him, dead in our sins and in our trespasses, but united with him in eternal life.

And so we begin this series with this passage because before we can ever really understand what God has called us to be as the church, we must first understand who we are in Christ as the church. And at the root of it all is the gospel. That Jesus, the perfect son of God, who died on the cross for our sins and he rose from the dead to give us life.

That is the gospel. It is the gospel that makes us what we are. Jesus makes us what we are. And his gospel must be at the forefront of all we do.

So it makes sense that as we consider what are the things that we care about the most as a church, as it relates to our study of the scripture, how could we begin anywhere other than a gospel focus?

[4 : 43] The person and the work of Jesus. I've divided this particular passage for this time into three sections. Three things I think that Paul is communicating to the Ephesians to encourage them.

Three things that he, by extension, would be encouraging us to do as we think on these things. The first thing is this. Remember what you were. Remember what you were.

Look at verse 11. Remember what you were.

Undergirding this section is the natural hostility that existed and continues to exist in some cases between Jews and non-Jews.

Jews and Gentiles. And you know enough about your Bibles to understand what this was like. We saw this in our study of the gospel of Mark. There was such hate for the Gentiles in the Jewish nation that Jews traveling from outside of Israel back into the proper borders of Israel.

[6 : 00] Remember what they would do. They would shake off the dust from their clothes and shake off the dust from their feet so as not to let the contaminated Gentile dirt intermingle with the soil of the nation of Israel.

Israel, that's quite a hatred to take it so far. And of course, that was a message that they were sending to those Gentile nations, that you are not the people of God.

And remember, Jesus confronted this. He sends his disciples out to the villages and he says, anyone who will not receive you, shake off the dust from your feet. A message to the Jews that you are not the people of God either, so long as you reject the Son.

The Jews had hate for the Gentiles. Some Jews believed and wrote that the Gentiles were the fuel for the fires of hell.

At times, the portions of their law forbade even assisting a Gentile woman in giving birth so that they would not be complicit in bringing another heathen into the world.

[7 : 08] There's hatred, hostility, animosity between these groups. The Gentiles weren't innocent in this.

There was just as much hate for the Jews as there was hate in the Jews. And it's against this backdrop that Paul begins to write about how Jesus has united the nations of the world through the gospel.

And he reminds them of what they used to be. He brings to the surface who they were in the eyes of the Jews. They had names for you.

They just called you. They identified you based on the fact that you were uncircumcised. And he could have taken that much further. But then he goes further.

He reminds the Ephesians, not only did the Jews view this way, not only were you at enemies and hostility between you and the Jewish nation, but then he reveals to them, reminds them of their true condition before Christ came in.

[8 : 16] Verse 12, remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Now, Paul's not insinuating there that the Jews were saved just by nature of their birth, but that they were the blessed people of God to be his conduit of revelation in the world.

It's not hard to see that that was a blessing to the Jews, a blessing they took for granted, but it was a blessing. They were near to God in the sense that God had chosen the children of Abraham to bring the Messiah, to establish the covenants, to reveal himself and his word to the world.

They had the prophets. They had everything that they needed to point them to the truth of God and salvation. But that didn't mean they believed God and obeyed the promises. It just means that they were blessed in what God had done in their lives.

On the other hand, the Gentiles were given no revelation from God. Before Christ, Paul said they were separated from messianic hope.

[9 : 37] The Jews are given promises of a Messiah who would redeem them. The Gentiles have no such messianic hope in their lives. Paul says they are alienated from the commonwealth of Israel.

In other words, they were alienated from the people of God. They were on the outsides as far as God's people were concerned. He says they were strangers to God's covenant promises.

They had no promise from God that was given by revelation to them. They were without hope. And what a miserable place to be, to live without hope.

And all of that summed up simply, he says, you're without God. You're without God. The Gentiles weren't just lost.

They were as far from God and his truth as anybody could possibly be. And that's a fitting description of each and every one of us, actually.

[10:38] Apart from Jesus, we are without hope. We are alienated from God's people. And we are without God in this world. Which is when Paul begins to echo something he says early on in chapter 2.

Look at verse 1. You were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you once walked. Following the course of this world. Following the prince of the power of the air.

That's Satan. The spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh.

Carrying out the desires of the body and the mind. And were by nature, Paul says, children of wrath. Like the rest of mankind. And there's no distinction in those first three verses between Jew and Gentile.

He says we were all the children of wrath. We were all sinners destined for the wrath of God in our lives. We were without hope. Alienated from God.

[11:42] And without him in the world. Before Christ, our existence can be summed up in one word. Enemy. Enemy.

We are enemies of God. And we're enemies of man. We have no hope for peace. No promise of rest.

No experience of love. And before Paul rehearsed. Before Paul rehearsed the glories of the body of Christ with the Ephesians.

I think quite helpfully he says. Remember what you were before the gospel ever came in. You know, if we're going to understand who we are in Christ. Best that we take just a moment and consider what we were before Christ.

So he says, remember what you were. Then he says, I think, is what he's saying here. Is rejoice in what you are. We can rejoice now in what we are. It's helpful to remember what you were before Christ.

[12:53] But then Paul quickly turns to address what the Ephesian believers now are because of Christ. The at one time of verse 11 is set in contrast with the but now of verse 13.

In other words, a dramatic transformation had taken place in these Ephesian Christians. And it's the same dramatic transformation that has occurred in any of us who have come to know and follow Christ.

This is what we were. But now this is what we are. And what does he say we are now? One, he says we are redeemed by the blood of Jesus.

We're redeemed by the blood of Jesus. Verse 13. But now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Far and near in this sense doesn't refer to religious proximity, but relational access. The blood of Christ doesn't get you close to the kingdom.

[14:07] The blood of Christ doesn't get you close to heaven. And then you got to figure out a way to make it the rest of the way in. No, the blood of Christ gets you in. He's not talking about religious proximity.

He's saying now you were far from God, but now you are brought under the wing of God. You are his now. Why? Because of the blood of Christ, you have been redeemed by his blood.

And he calls them to rejoice, I think, in this. How could they not rejoice? How could we not rejoice in this truth? At one point they were as far from God as they could possibly be.

Now they are as close to God as they can possibly be. They're no longer strangers and aliens without hope and without God. Because of the shed blood of Jesus on the cross, they now have direct access to him through the Son.

The blood has redeemed them. Peter picks up on this in 1 Peter 1. Knowing that you were ransomed from the futile sinful ways inherited from your fathers.

[15:16] Not with perishable things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. Like that of a lamb without blemish or without spot.

You know why the gospel has to be the focus of everything that we do? Because the gospel of Jesus is what makes us what we are. It is the gospel that has redeemed us. This is the blood of Christ that has redeemed us.

How could we turn our focus as a church on anything else? Hebrews chapter 9. But when Christ appeared, he entered once for all into the holy places.

Not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of his own blood. Thus securing an eternal redemption. We are redeemed eternally by Jesus through his blood.

And this is the gospel message that we proclaim. On the cross, his precious blood was shed as a perfect sacrifice for sin.

[16:22] And all who believe have eternal access to God through him. We who were at one time far from God have been brought near by the blood of Jesus.

And we can rejoice in that. It doesn't make sense to me. Why we would gather from Sunday to Sunday. Why there are some Christians that we know in our lives that the overall aroma of their life is one of just hatefulness and spite and depression.

We have the hope of Christ. We must rejoice in that hope. What a wonderful truth.

Are you in Christ today? Are you in Christ? Can you rejoice that Jesus has redeemed you by his blood alone?

Or are you still far from God? Trusting in your own goodness. To get you as close as you can get. And you're going to cross your fingers and hope for the best. That's not how this works.

[17:56] No, it is in Christ alone. By grace alone. Through faith alone. That we are redeemed by his blood. We're not only redeemed by the blood of Jesus.

Paul says we can rejoice because we are reconciled by the peace of Jesus. We're reconciled. Paul now turns his attention to the peace that Jesus brings.

You know what reconcile means? It means to take two enemies and to bring them together. And through the gospel, Jesus reconciles us in two ways. Number one, he reconciles us to one another. To one another. This isn't the first reconciliation, but it's the first in the order that Paul writes it. So that's how we're going to deal with it. To one another. Verse 14. For he himself, that's emphatic. This peace comes from no other place. It is he himself is our peace who has made us both one. And has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.

[18:56] And he did this by abolishing the law of commandments that were expressed in ordinances. That he might create in himself one new man in the place of the two.

So making peace. There's an allusion here in Paul's writing to the temple in Jerusalem. Perhaps you remember again in our study of the gospel of Mark.

The way that the temple was set up. There was the holy place, the holy of holies. Only the high priest had access to that. And he only had it once a year. And it was in terms of a blood covenant. And he would make an atonement for the nation. The closest any Jew could get was a courtyard outside of the holy place. And that's where the Jews would go and worship.

But then there was a dividing wall between that courtyard and what they called the courtyard of the Gentiles. Gentiles couldn't go further than that wall. This was the courtyard that the Jews had turned into a marketplace.

[19:57] And Jesus came in and drove the money changers out. You remember that? Why? Because that courtyard was to be a place for the Gentiles to come and hear of God. And they had turned it into a place of a den of thieves, Jesus said.

There was a dividing wall of hostility. Not only could these people not get to God, but there was no fellowship between them and the Jews either. Paul's drawing on that image here as he writes this. At the heart of this hostility between the Jews and the Gentiles, this wall of hostility, Paul says, was the law of commandments expressed in ordinances?

What's he talking about there? He's not talking about the moral law of God. He's talking about circumcision, ceremonial cleanness, Sabbath laws, dietary restrictions.

These were the things that the Jews made so divisive. This was the wall of hostility, what it was built upon. But Jesus broke down this wall.

[21:05] And how did he do it? He abolished that law by fulfilling that law. And again, this isn't the moral law of God. This is the Mosaic covenant.

This was the ceremonial law and all the things that went along with that. Jesus perfectly fulfills the law and then he abolishes that law in order to make one new person.

Now notice what Jesus has accomplished by breaking down this wall of hostility. Imagine, you remember perhaps some of you in the Cold War era and the breaking down of the Berlin Wall. Two people then become one as a result of the destruction of this dividing wall of hostility. Imagine you're in the temple complex in Jerusalem.

You're a Gentile in this courtyard. There's the Jews in that courtyard. You have no access to one another. And then suddenly someone comes in and demolishes that wall. And then the two people are then made one. That's what Paul says Jesus has done in the gospel.

[22 : 08] He has broken down this dividing wall of hostility. And he has created in himself one new man in place of the two.

Do you see where Paul's going with this? You are enemies with one another. Well, what Christ is doing is not trying to just purify the two different groups so that they'll get along.

No, he's making a whole new group, a whole new race, a whole new people through the gospel. Jesus doesn't Judaize Gentiles and then Christianize Jews.

He isn't creating a mixed people. He is creating an entirely new kingdom people. And this is what we call the church.

In the gospel, Jesus provides the peace that takes bitter enemies and transforms them into a unified kingdom for the glory of God.

[23 : 13] And we see this all through the scriptures. 2 Corinthians 5. If anyone is in Christ, he's a new creation. Not a better one, a new one.

The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. And all this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

Now, if that's true of us as individuals, is that not true as the people of God? Galatians 3. Paul echoes that to the Colossians.

He says, Christ is all and in all. We've been reconciled to one another. But then he says we've been reconciled to God. Verse 16.

And that he might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to those who were far off and peace to those who were near.

[24 : 32] For through him, we both have access in one spirit to the Father. Now, here's the point that I want to get to with this. We've talked a lot about what the gospel does in salvation already.

We won't rehearse that over and over and over. But let me just say this. Breaking down the barrier between Jew and Gentile doesn't matter at all.

If there's still a barrier between God and man. Do you see that? What good is it if we get along if we're still enemies of God?

This is actually why all secular efforts to bring peace and harmony to the world will ultimately fail. They cannot succeed.

I'm grateful for people that want global peace. And I'm grateful for the desire that people have to give a message of love and of kindness and all of those things.

[25 : 33] But without God and without Christ, that's impossible. It's not possible. And it will always, always fail. We must start first with the reconciliation with God.

Because only through the reconciliation to God, through the personal work of Jesus, can enemies in this life then become friends? Can we then be made one person?

Can we then be at peace? The Bible makes it clear. Sin is what separates us from God. It makes us enemies destined to face his eternal wrath.

But on the cross, God's wrath is then poured out on Jesus, the perfect sacrifice for sin. And it is only through Christ that we can have peace with him and have unfettered access to God through his spirit.

Because the sinless Savior died, my sinful soul is counted free. For God the just is satisfied to look on him and pardon me.

[26 : 40] We are reconciled to God in this gospel. And Christ transforms us and then unites us into one kingdom people, the church.

So remember what you were. You were enemies of God. You were enemies of one another. Now rejoice in what you are in Christ. Reconciled to God.

Reconciled to man. And that brings us to the third portion. Recognize what you are becoming. Recognize what you are becoming.

Now Paul's logic is quite easy to follow if you step back and look at the bigger picture of the text. Verse 11. At one time. That's what you were.

Enemies. Verse 13. But now. In Christ. That's what you are. Now we get to verse 19.

[27 : 43] And I love these first two words. So then. At one time. But now. So then.

There's an ongoing work happening here. God has done something wonderful in the person of Christ in providing us salvation and making us one.

But his work is not through. He is continuing to do something in this world. He is continuing to do something in and through his people by the gospel.

The same gospel that saves us is the same gospel that now drives us. Verse 19. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens.

But you are fellow citizens with the saints. You are members of the household of God. Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.

[28 : 43] In whom the whole structure. Being joined together. Grows into a holy temple. In the Lord. Do you see the fixation on Jesus in the gospel through all of this?

You are separated from Christ and without God. But now in Christ. You've been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace.

He is reconciling us. He has preached peace to those who are far off. He has preached peace to those who are near. And through him we have access to the father. Father. And then he says we are built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets.

Which Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone. Do you see this? What is this all about? It's all about Jesus. And who we are in him.

And what he is making us for his glory. You see. When we start to think of our church. Or any church. Or any dynamic of this Christian life. In terms of anything that we are.

[29 : 48] That we're trying to do. Or some kind of effort that we have. Or something that we're trying to do. And in our own purposes. And in our own will. We've immediately gone wrong.

Because none of this is actually ultimately about us.

All of this is ultimately about Christ. And what he is doing in us. And what he is doing through us. And what a travesty for churches all around our town. And what a travesty for churches all around this world.

Who have lost focus on that gospel. Who have lost focus on Christ. And who they are in him. And it's all about what they're doing. And it's all about the things that they can come up with.

And it's all about the impact that they might can make on somebody. That's not the gospel. That's not the gospel. We must be a gospel people. Paul gives us three illustrations here.

Three illustrations that tell us what Christ is doing in us on an ongoing basis. What's he doing? The first one he says we're a kingdom. We're a kingdom. Verse 19.

[30 : 45] You're no longer strangers and aliens. You are fellow citizens with the saints. First we're united in the kingdom of God. You can study how important the dynamic of citizenship was to people in the ancient world.

Suffice it for our purpose this morning to say that whereas modern western culture emphasizes the individual. In expressive individualism.

In expressive individualism. Ancient eastern culture and probably even modern eastern culture in some ways does not emphasize the individual but rather the community. A person's identity was wrapped up in the people to whom they belong.

When we talked about citizenship in our study of the book of Philippians. And it would have been the same thing for the people in Ephesus. What they were as Greeks and as Romans and as an Ephesians and as Philippians was everything to them.

That was their life. That's what really mattered to them. And now Paul says you can forget about all the Ephesian citizenship and all the Roman citizenship and the Greek citizenship.

[31 : 56] Because you are fellow citizens of a greater kingdom. You are fellow citizens of God's kingdom. And our true citizenship is not in this life.

It's in the heavenly kingdom of God. And it is that kingdom for which we are to live. As grateful as we are for our earthly citizenship as Americans.

The fact is we are still but pilgrims and strangers in this world. And the wonder of it all is as we gather Sunday by Sunday. We can look around the room.

Especially on a Sunday when we take the Lord's table. We do this in a really significant way. We can look around the room and we can say hey. They have the same passport that I have. And it's not a United States passport.

It's a heavenly passport. We belong to a kingdom that is not of this world. Our king doesn't sit in the White House day by day. He sits on the throne of heaven.

[32 : 57] We're a new people. Christ is doing this in us. We have a different people to which we belong. We have a different kingdom for which we serve.

We look different than the kingdoms of this world. We behave different than the kingdoms of this world. We worship different than the kingdoms of this world. We love different than the kingdoms of this world.

And so on. He says we're a kingdom. Then he says we're a family. We're a family. Look again at verse 19. You're no longer strangers and aliens.

You are fellow citizens with the saints. Members of the household of God. So Paul takes this illustration a step forward in intimacy.

And he says we're of the household of God. In Christ we are in the family of God. Alistair Begg said it's one thing to have the same passport. But to have the same father is quite another thing.

[33 : 57] And oh how true that is. Because blood is thicker than water isn't it? Last year my brother and his wife Kathleen had the privilege of adopting a little boy that they named Jaden.

You've met Jaden here before. Perhaps you'll see him again in a few weeks. When the adoption was finalized they were given a decree of adoption by the state of North Carolina.

Can I just read a portion of it to you? Here's what it says. Now therefore it is hereby ordered, adjudged, and decreed by the court. That from the date of the entry of this decree herein.

The said minor is declared adopted for life by the petitioners. And that said child shall henceforth be known by the name Jaden Harold Blankenship.

That the decree of adoption affects a complete substitution of families for all the legal purposes.

And establishes the relationship of parent and child together with all the rights, responsibilities, and duties between each petitioner and the individual being adopted.

[35 : 12] That from the date of this decree of adoption, the adoptee is entitled to inherit real and personal property by, through, and from the adoptive parents.

In accordance with the statutes on interstate secession. And has the same legal status, including all legal rights and obligations of any kind whatsoever.

As a child born, the legitimate child of the adoptive parents. Do you realize that in Christ that's exactly what God has done with us?

He becomes our true father. We are not all the children of God. Only those in Christ are the children of God. Only we have him as our father.

And in Christ, we become joint heirs with the son. And that includes all the rights and legal purposes of inheritance in our future.

[36 : 20] That we will reign with him and we will be with him. And we will be seated at his table forever. And then we look around the room again and we say, Well, Marty really is my brother then.

He's not the crazy uncle. He really is the brother. This is where we draw on that verbiage in the Christian church.

That we truly are brothers and sisters in Christ. I won't read it, but you can go to Galatians 4 to see this expressed more clearly. There's a uniqueness to the way that we pray.

No other religion in this world, as far as I understand, ever gets on their hands and knees and says, Oh, Father. Oh, Father. But we do.

You know why? Because in Christ, we are being made the household of God. Finally, he says, we're a temple.

[37 : 23] We're a temple. The Ephesians were very familiar with religious temples. One of the seven wonders of the world, of the ancient world, the temple of Artemis was in Ephesus.

They were profoundly religious and they were profoundly pagan in the way that they lived their lives. They had many, many temples to many gods and to many even rulers.

Earthly rulers. And of course, what is a temple? It is a place where a deity is believed to dwell on earth. Now, Solomon said at the building of the temple in Jerusalem that the true God cannot be contained on this earth.

We can't contain him in a house. But the temple in Jerusalem represented the dwelling place of God among his people. And here, Paul says that together, we are being built as the new temple of God.

Each believer becomes a dwelling place for God in the gospel by the Holy Spirit. But then the apostles draw a unique vision of this as the church becomes a dwelling for God among his people collectively.

[38 : 40] It's an interesting picture. Peter says it. As you come to him, a living stone, rejected by men in the sight of God, chosen and precious. You yourselves, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood.

To offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus. Now, we can't pass by this and not at least mention that Paul says that this temple is built on the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets.

The word order here suggests that Paul intends to say the New Testament prophets, not the Old Testament prophets. Not that they were irrelevant, but he's getting to something specific here. Now, notice the apostles and the prophets are not themselves the foundation. They are the builders of the foundation. What's the foundation?

The cornerstone, which is Christ Jesus himself. And you can study the importance of that on your own as far as what a cornerstone actually does. But everything that the apostles and prophets are building is related to Christ.

[39 : 52] This is a clear reference to the New Testament scriptures. Again, not that the Old Testament scriptures are irrelevant, but in Jesus Christ, everything concealed in the Old Covenant is now revealed in the New.

And that's what the apostles and the prophets of the first century wrote about. What can we contain in the New Testament scriptures that we have? And Paul says we are built up as a temple that's founded on the New Testament, founded on the scriptures, founded on Christ.

Therefore, everything the church does must focus on the person and work of Christ as revealed in the Bible. Now, let's finish with verse 22.

In him, you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Now, I think this verse is important because this is where we begin to get much more practical. And understand that the message as a whole has been largely theological.

[40 : 57] When we start to get a little more practical at this point. Why would Paul feel the need to echo or reiterate this word or this statement in verse 22?

Because he's drawing an application for these people in Ephesus. Notice what he says. So then in Christ, you also, he says, you also are being built together.

In other words, everything that is true of the big C church, of the people of God from all nations and from all time and in all places, is true for each local representation of that kingdom.

He's speaking of the application of the local church. He applies these incredible truths specifically to the individual churches in and around the city of Ephesus. The kingdom of God is seen in local embassies of the kingdom.

The family of God has its individual families that continue to grow and be fruitful. The grand temple of God has its expression in local churches.

[42 : 10] And in Christ, Lakeside Bible Church is being built together into a dwelling place for God by his spirit.

Each of us redeemed by the blood of Christ, reconciled to God through the peace of Christ. The kingdom of God is, in Christ, reconciled to God through the kingdom of God by his spirit.

And in Christ, reconciled to God by his spirit. The Bible never speaks of the Christian life in isolation. God desires to build us together.

And we would all do well to remember that we belong to one another. Whether we like that or not, we belong to one another.

And you say, well, what does all this mean practically? What am I supposed to do with this? That's really what the next five studies are for. But this is where we have to start. Christ makes us what we are.

[43 : 38] And through his gospel, he is making us what he wants us to be. He's the foundation. And his gospel must inform all that we do as a people, collective people.

Let me give you three practical things as we close it. Number one, don't live in isolation. Don't live in isolation.

Embrace the church to which you belong on a universal level and on a local scale. Yes, Christ has redeemed you by his blood.

And what he has done beyond that is he has united you with others whom he has also redeemed by his blood. Don't forsake it. Don't forsake the assembly.

Don't forsake the congregation. Don't live your Christian life in isolation. You will fail. We need one another. God has made it so.

[44 : 51] Number two, don't rebuild what Christ has broken down. Don't rebuild what Christ has broken down.

Remember that wall of hostility that was built on the law expressed in ordinances? We have those things. We have those things. And in different church settings, those things take on different shapes and they take on different topics and all the thing.

Be careful that as you keep your focus on the gospel, we don't begin to create divisive walls within our church that are irrelevant to the gospel. Don't rebuild what Christ says. Don't rebuild what Christ has broken down.

Finally, don't let the focus turn away from Jesus. Don't let the focus turn away from Jesus. You know what?

If you get offended in our church, you know what the thing you should get most offended by? When somebody makes it more about them than they make it about Christ. When somebody takes the gospel of Christ and perverts it in some way, that's the thing that will offend us more than anything else.

[46 : 07] But here's the thing. There are so many Christians that they go to church Sunday by Sunday in their churches and the gospel is being twisted and distorted before their very eyes. But they don't care about that as long as they get to sit in the seat that they like to sit in.

And as long as they get to hear the style of music that they like to hear. And as long as this person talks to them every week and as long as this person stays away from them every week. As long as those things work out, they don't really care what's happening from the pulpit.

That's a caricature maybe, but I think it might be a true caricature in a lot of places. Don't let the focus turn away from Christ. This is who we are.

This is what Christ has called us to be.