

“God’s New Man—The Church” (Part Three)

Ephesians 2:13-18

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Introduction:

1. I expect that everyone here has had the experience of having something new at some time or another—a new home, a new car, a new sound system, a new computer, a new job, and so on. You know how it is when you first have it. You appreciate it, what to find out everything about it, and tell others how good it is. Then one day it somehow begins to lose its luster and fresh quality, and your appreciation begins to diminish.

2. Perhaps part of our problem in our affluent society is that new things constantly surround us. The disease of the Athenians of old has infected us—“doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas” (Ac 17:21). Certainly, those who follow Christ should rise above such worldly attitudes and appreciate what is true, holy, godly, pure and right. But it is a struggle, isn’t it?

3. It seems that many Christians have lost “the wonder” of being a part of God’s new society, the church. Too many have stopped marveling at being saved by grace and being a member of God’s family and of enjoying life with God and his people. It has all become rather “boring” to them. I hope that by God’s grace you can recapture “the wonder of it all” as we look at this letter to the Ephesians.

Exposition: To bring back the wonder, let’s see...

I. The purpose of God in forming the church (2:15b-17).

A. To create a new humanity.

1. Christ ended the fleshly distinctions of the old covenant. In the new covenant there are neither Jews nor Gentiles. All are members of the body of Christ, the church. Christ took **two** and made them **one** (2:15). This explains a statement like Gal 3:26-28.

Point: It is very wrong to speak of either a Gentile believer or a Jewish believer. Neither one exists now or ever will again. In the church there are only **Christians**. Every true and wise follower of Christ begins to explain what he or she is by saying, “I am **in Christ**.”

2. Christ established the basis of unity for God's new covenant people—our peace with God (Rm 5:1). God's peace is to rule the church (Col 3:15).

Apply: Turn and look at your fellow saints. Consider the blessing each one has—peace with God. Now, since God is at peace with him or her, don't you think that you should be?

B. To reconcile this new humanity to God.

1. Alienation from God is ended and friendship with God put firmly in its place. God determines never to treat us as foreigners again. One of the happiest moments in the Gospels occurs when Jesus calls the disciples his friends (Jn 15:12-17).

Apply: By the way, how is your friendship with God progressing? Are you getting to know your faithful Friend better? How is your relationship with the friends of your Friend?

2. An attitude of peace and friendship lies at the roots of the church because of the spiritual reality of peace and friendship with God. This is one of the great blessings of the gospel in Christ.

a. Notice carefully that Christ's preaching ministry was a proclamation of peace, and that his apostles continued to proclaim peace. A gospel ministry offers peace with God to the lost and assures the saved about that same peace.

b. It is almost a fundamental mistake to think that God delights in slavish fears, since the fruits of Christ's kingdom are peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. From this mistake come weak, slavish, superstitious ways of thinking and living. [Paraphrase of Sibbes, Vol. 1, p. 40]

Apply: Everything we do must be to keep this peace purchased and proclaimed by Christ (4:1-6).

Apply: This is one of our building blocks for being "a spiritual shelter of truth and love".

Compare Mt 5:23-24.

Apply: Strive to introduce someone to this peace and friendship this week.

Transition: To bring back the wonder, let's also see...

II. God provides the church with full access to him (2:18).

Comment: Access to God means that we have freedom of approach to the Creator and Ruler of the universe. We have a friendly relationship in which he assures us that he accepts us and cares for us.

A. This access is through (διὰ) Christ Jesus. When we want to approach God, we go to him through his Son. We make this approach through Christ in two senses.

1. We approach on the basis of his finished saving work. Notice Paul's emphasis on this in the text: "blood" (2:13), "flesh" (2:15), and "cross" (2:16).

2. We approach through Christ's intercession for us at the right hand of the Father (Heb 4:14-16; 7:25; 10:19ff; Rm 8:34).

Apply: Do you have a proper regard for Christ when you want to draw near to God? This means much more than tacking "in Jesus name" onto the end of your prayers.

B. This access is by (ἐν) the Spirit. We should learn two things from this phrase.

1. It speaks of the principle of unity in the church and its worship. Before the new covenant, there were two divisions of humanity. But now in Christ, the church is one new man. Everyone in the church has access to God by the same Spirit, who lives in and guides each one.

2. It speaks of the principle of dependence on the Spirit for a proper approach to God. "The inward change by which we are enabled to believe in Christ, the feelings of desire, reverence, filial confidence which are essential to our communion with God, are the fruits of the Spirit." [Hodge]

Apply: Are you consciously relying on the Holy Spirit as you pray?

C. This access is to (πρός) the Father.

1. The "ultimate goal of salvation, *the object of salvation, is that we might know God as our Father.*" [Lloyd-Jones, his emphasis] Consider 1 Jn 1:3 and Mt 6.

2. We must grasp our relationship to God in his family as adult sons. This is one of the chief blessings of being a Christian (Jn 4:23-24; 14:6; 1 Pt 1:17; etc.).

Apply: We are not worshiping properly unless we come in the confidence that God is our Father.