

**Ephesians 2: 21; “The Church Fitted Together”, Message # 18 in a series entitled –
“The Exceeding Greatness of His Power”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on April 7th, 2024, in the Morning Worship Service.**

Verse 21 is not to be isolated from the verses which go before it. Indeed, it is the culmination of all the verses which went before it in this chapter. That is, that there is a spiritual building which God is building out of the raw materials of sinful people whom He is transforming by His grace to become a holy temple in the Lord. God the Father and God the Spirit in connection with the finished work of God the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, is building an everlasting building made up of people, Jew and Gentile, who are now, and will continue to be forever, His Church; to worship Him forever. So, at this time, we want to think together 1st of all – About how the whole building is being fitted together. And 2nd – About how this whole building is growing together into a holy temple in the Lord.

1st – Let’s think together about how the whole building is being fitted together.

We have seen in past messages that Christ died to abolish the enmity between Jew and Gentile. By His death, He tore down the old spiritual building of the Jewish people as being the only covenant people of God. And He began building His Church. We Gentiles were brought near by the blood of Christ. In dying on the cross, He brought the whole Old Testament Jewish system and dispensation to an end. In its place, He established the beginning of His Universal Church, composed of believers called from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. This spiritual Israel is what is spoken of here as being a building fitted together.

But how are we fitted together? It is that we Gentiles are fellow citizens with the Jewish saints. We are citizens of the same spiritual City of God because we have been built on the same spiritual foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone. The Lord Jesus fulfilled all of the law, both Moral and Levitical, but He only abolished the ceremonial law. The Moral law stands forever because it has its origin and basis in the Divine nature. God therefore expects all believing men to keep His law, in relation to Christ’s having fulfilled it, so that they themselves might learn to keep it better.

I hope that you can see that learning to keep the moral law is your duty in relation to learning Christ, who had it in His heart, and then He kept it in relation to all of His words and actions. The moral law is unchanged and unchangeable. But the ceremonial law was given as a positive law. That is, it has its foundation simply in the Divine will. And it was established for a period of time among one people. And since then, its purpose had been fulfilled among them, it would be set aside.

Now, since Christ fulfilled the ceremonial law and set it aside, all Jews and Gentiles are together on the same spiritual level in regard to all the spiritual privileges and blessings of salvation. Some real discernment in our day is needed with regard to this truth, as to what this implies. So turn with me over to Galatians chapter 3, verses 26-29. “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” “And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Now, what I want you to see is the truth in relation to the outworking of these verses in the way that we see the various categories of persons who are mentioned here. All those whose are in Christ have put on Christ. They have clothed themselves, spiritually speaking, in His righteousness, by faith in Him. They have been spiritually baptized into Christ, and put on the spiritual garments of Christ, in terms of their being one of His holy children. Paul is saying here that God would have them to change their prejudiced view of how they were to see racial and ethnic distinctions. They were the change their prejudiced view of civil liberty distinctions and

gender distinctions. They were to do this in relation to their now being a part of Universal Body of Christ.

These distinctions were not to be held on to, in the body of Christ, in terms of excluding any person from the privileges and blessings of their being seen as a Christian. Or in terms of their participating in the spiritual fellowship of the church. For we are all one in Christ. This is a very important and encouraging truth for every Christian; to know that we are one in Christ, and not excluded from any of the ordinances of all of the services of worship and the fellowship of the church. But what we must also recognize in relation to this important truth, is that Paul is not saying that these distinctions must be eliminated completely in our minds.

We are not to think that there is no longer any such thing as a Jew or Gentile, for example. For Paul specifically addresses Jews in Romans 9, 10, and 11. He maintains that he, himself is a Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin. He calls them his brethren and his countrymen. Paul says that their conversion to Christ will be life from the dead to the Church, and their “fulfillment riches to the Gentiles, in Romans 11: 12 & 15. And we are not to think that somehow that those who were slaves in Paul’s day were supposed to rebel against their masters because there was no such distinction any longer. In fact, Paul says the very opposite in Ephesians 6: 5 – “Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not men.”

Neither are we annihilate gender distinctions as has become common in our own day; thinking that it is somehow good to raise our children in a gender-neutral way, and let them choose for themselves whether they want to be male or female. Such confused teaching undermines many of the gender role responsibilities that Paul inculcates, in relation to children being taught the importance of what it means to fulfill God’s holy will, in relation to how we ought to think and act in relation to ourselves, and others. And indeed, it affects our whole society in terms of what is right for a man to be doing, or what a woman is to be doing in church, in the home, and in our society.

So, in relation to the church, let us see that although Christ has broken down the barrier between Jew and Gentile, making them one New Man in Himself, that this does not mean that there is no such thing, any longer, as an ethnic Jew. Or that the promises of God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will not have a much greater fulfillment in years to come in relation to national Israel’s conversion to Christ. These things do need clarification. Because there is a spiritual Israel, composed of Jews and Gentiles. And spiritual circumcision is of the heart, for both, in all generations. But clarifying of these things is not found when it is said that Gentile believers are true Jews as though the ethnic distinctions no longer exist.

I want to show you this, and so turn over with me to Romans chapter 2, and verse 28. Paul says here – “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart in the Spirit.” “And then in chapter 3, verse 1, Paul says – “What advantage then has the Jew, or what profit is circumcision?” “Much in every way!” Now, it must be understood that there are some Christians who use verse 29 to suggest that we Gentile Christians are also the true Jews, when Paul says that “he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart.”

No, the ethnic distinction between Jews and Gentiles is not eliminated at all in this verse, nor all through this letter, nor in any other place in the whole New Testament. In the context of this verse Paul is addressing the Jews only. He began addressing them in verse 17 of chapter 2, and he continues making the distinction between Jews and Gentiles all the way through chapter 3, verse 31. In fact, in verse 29 of chapter 3, he says – “Or is He the God of the Jews only?” “Is He not also the God of the Gentiles?” “Yes, of the Gentiles also.” So, the reason that I bring this up, is because I want you to see how this spiritual building of the church is fitted together.

The whole building consisting of Jews and Gentiles, is fitted together by all of them believing in Christ, and by all of them receiving the same spiritual blessings. Jesus said that the gospel was to be preached to the Jew first, and then to the Gentiles. Not that the gospel would stopped being preached to the Jews. For God still has a purpose in relation to the Jews all the way from the call of Abraham on until the Last Day. And in the future, we are told that all of Christ's Church will be blessed in a mighty way, through the calling of the Jews to salvation as a nation of ethnic people, in the future. And thus the temple of God will be built in a most glorious way in the future.

2nd – I want us to think about how this whole building is growing together into a holy temple.

“In whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.” This holy temple is all of the New Testament Christians, all of the believing Jews and Gentiles which make up the Church Universal, all during this whole Church age. Every believer is spiritually placed, first of all by God, into to the Universal Church, when they are baptized into Christ spiritually. And then as time goes by, following their conversion to Christ, the Holy Spirit will lead them to consider their involvement with a local church.

A new believer will seek to find a local church in which they themselves believe that they can grow by receiving the word of God as it is preached. They will seek to be baptized with water baptism, to show forth their identification with Christ, in His death, burial, and resurrection. And then they will seek also to formally join that church in which they have been baptized as a believer. They will be longing to partake of the spiritual things of worship, and the Lord's Supper, and fellowship with the other believers there. This is how the individual believer grows together with other believers in this holy temple. Over time, Lord willing, there will be a favorable response in their heart to the preaching of God's word. They will be joyfully learning to do has commanded in His word.

Turn also over to 1st Peter 2, verses 1-5. “Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” “Coming to Him, as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” So you can see here how a local church grows together as a temple of the Lord. Each member of the church has to lay aside malice.

You have to stop thinking bad thoughts toward other Christians around you. You say that you love the brethren. But then you find that you are speaking against them at certain points; maybe many points. But all evil speaking, Peter says here, needs to be laid aside. So, what is the answer to this? It is to desire the pure milk of the word that you may grow thereby. Take in all the principles and precepts of truth concerning what is right and wrong, and pray to shun the wrong and do the right. Your brethren around you, perhaps they want to help you with your learning to obey the truth of the word?

Perhaps you want a more worldly or selfish solution. You would like some easy fix for problems and difficulties that you might have. What these verses are saying is that you have to lay aside thinking badly of them, the brethren around you, as though they are the problem, when they tell you what is right! Pray to have a renewed mind, where you listen to the voice of the Spirit in your heart, who is leading you in your thoughts, to think of ways that you might love them. This is God's way of building holiness into your life.

As you examine your own heart and life, this will be revealed to you by God's Spirit at times. Study to do certain things. Study how to love the brethren. Study also to participate in the worship of God with all of your heart. Think of your fellowship and communion with God when you come to church. Not just fellowship with the saints, but fellowship with God Himself. When the church is gathered, you come here with the attitude that you are going to give to Him your worship from

a sincere and loving heart. And when you do this you will find that you will be coming to realize that God's presence is there with you, ministering to you. As we all do this, we will find that God's Presence will be known and felt among us more, in our worship. He will manifest Himself to you in your heart and mind, in relation to the preaching of the word and your interaction with the people of God. It is here in our services of worship that you will learn to offer up the spiritual sacrifices of praise. But each of us must see the importance of loving God with all of our heart. We must seek to know and appreciate the beauty of holiness.

Turn with me over to 2nd Corinthians 6, verses 11-16. "O Corinthians!" "We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open." "You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections." "Now in return for the same (I speak as to children) you also be open." "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers." "For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?" "And what communion has light with darkness?" "And what accord has Christ with Belial?" "Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?" "And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?" "For you are the temple of the living God." "As God has said: 'I will dwell in them and walk among them. 'I will be their God, and they shall be My people.'"

Perhaps you see what the problem was here. Some of these Corinthian believers were always looking for excitement in their Christian life. And it wasn't always a holy kind of excitement. They sometimes thought of their old pagan worship. It was more worldly. It was more sensory oriented. They knew that the old idols were not true gods. But it appears from what Paul is saying here, that they began to look back and long for the festivals of their old worship. Because of this drifting back to the past, they actually began to be restrained in their affections toward others in the body of Christ. Even Paul himself who had taught them so much about Christ.

We can apply this to our own time in this way: If you don't guard your heart from idols, those like money, or seeking too much for earthly pleasures, or pride of knowledge, or desiring to be popular with people of the world, or even those in false religions, it is possible that your heart may become cold towards the very people that you ought to fervently love. I am talking about your pastor, or other wise and mature believers who are in your local church. Paul had to say to these believers in verse 11 – "O Corinthians!" "We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open." "You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections." "Now in return for the same (I speak as unto children), you also be open."

There is a growing love that always needs to be taking place between the people and their pastor in the church. And this is what Paul was writing about to the church at Corinth. There were some Christians there in Corinth who apparently were receiving the grace of God in vain. Their affections towards Paul and Silas, and Timothy, the ones who had preached the gospel to them, had waned. They were not seeing how important it was to fervently love the ones who were ministering to them. Paul had to show them that they were a part of a holy temple. He had to tell them that God would indeed dwell in them and walk among them, if they would put away their compromised thinking, and their idols, and then they could truly glorify Him.

Do we have idols nowadays? Yes, I am sure that we do. For whatever is more important to you than communion with God, and fellowship with the brethren, is an idol. Do we need to repent in regard to a lack of love for the brethren, or pursuing the vain things of this world's philosophies, methods, and ways of thinking. Perhaps so. But repentance will always bring the best things for you, as a Christian. For you are pursuing righteousness, peace, and God's blessing.

Light and darkness cannot have communion with each other. Righteousness and lawlessness cannot have fellowship together. Therefore, as a Christian, will you pray to learn to love the assembly of God's people, and the place where His glory dwells? Then you will be able to say the words of Psalm 26: 6-8 – "I will wash my hands in innocence; so I will go about Your altar, O Lord, that I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Your wondrous works." "Lord I have loved the habitation of Your house, and the place where Your glory dwells."

