

**Ephesians 2: 21; “The Church Fitted Together”, Message # 18 in a series entitled –  
“The Exceeding Greatness of His Power”, A Bible Study prepared  
by Pastor Paul Rendall on January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020,  
for those gathered at his home.**

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, this evening we want to think together 1<sup>st</sup> of all – About how the whole building is being fitted together. 2<sup>nd</sup> – About how this whole building is growing together into a holy temple in the Lord.

**1<sup>st</sup> – Let’s think together about how the whole building is being fitted together.**

Let’s back up a few verses to verse 19 so that we might understand the context in Paul’s explanation of this glorious living building which God is building. “Now therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. Paul tells us here that we Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners, but we are fellow citizens with the saints. Who are the saints? The saints were the Jewish believers in Christ in the kingdom of God. If you look back to verse 12 it tells us what Christ did for us Gentiles. Before the Ephesian Gentile believers came to Christ by faith, they were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world, Paul says. But now, he says, they were brought near through faith in their believing in what Christ did on the cross, shedding His precious blood for elect Gentiles as well as elect Jews, in order to make them saints together in one body. In chapter 1, verse 22, Paul says that His body, the Church, is the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

In verses 14-16 of chapter 2, we are told that Christ Himself is our peace; that is, Christ brings peace between Jew and Gentile by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, that is the law of commandments contained in the Jewish ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two ethnic groups of Jews and Gentiles. In so doing this, what did Christ do? He fulfilled the law on their behalf and He brought Jewish believers into His New Testament Church. At the cross He fulfilled the law on behalf of believing Gentiles and thus He made one new spiritual people in the Church; having taken away the enmity between the two. There was a very great enmity, a very real hostility between Jews and Gentiles; the Jews knowing themselves to be the only people of God before Christ came.

This enmity involved sin on their part. There was no doubt hostility in the hearts of many Gentiles; their seeing how the Jews were favored by God with so many rich spiritual and temporal blessings because they were the only chosen people of God. Christ died to abolish this enmity in Himself. He tore down the old building of the Jewish people as being the only covenant people of God; and 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.

This spiritual building, consisting of called Jews and Gentiles, those who have believed in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, are fitted together. But in what way specifically? 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 it, in relation to Christ's having fulfilled it, so that they themselves might learn to keep it. Learning to keep the moral law is therefore the believer's duty in relation to learning Christ, who had it in His heart, and then 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 then, since its purpose had been fulfilled among them, it would be set aside. (See John Eadie's comments on this in his commentary on Ephesians 2: 15)

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 says that they are to change their prejudiced view of how they were to see racial and ethnic distinctions, civil liberty distinctions, and gender distinctions in relation to their being a part of the people of God. These distinctions were not to be held onto in the body of Christ in terms of excluding any from the privileges and blessings of being seen as a Christian or in terms of 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 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 such thing as a Jew or Gentile, for example, for Paul specifically addresses Jews in Romans 9, 10, and 11. We are not to think that somehow those who were slaves in Paul's day were 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 and thinking 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 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.

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, and they do not find it when it is said that Gentile believers are true Jews. If you will turn over to Romans chapter 2, I will show you what I means by this. 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 true Jews, when it 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 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 consists of Jews and Gentiles fitted together by all of them believing in Christ, and all of them receiving the same spiritual blessing. Jesus said that the gospel was to be preached to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles. Was this discriminatory on Jesus’ part, to say such a thing? Never! It simply shows us that God has had a purpose in relation to the Jewish nation all the way from the call of Abraham on, and it should show us that His good purpose continues on in relation to them in that all the nations of the world will be blessed in relation to the blessings of Christ who descended from Abraham ethnically. All of Christ’s Church will be blessed in a mighty way, through the calling of the Jews as a nation of ethnic people, and their being brought into the Church of Jesus Christ in a national ethnic conversion is clearly taught in Romans 11 and in many places of the Old Testament Scriptures. If you are Christ’s then you are Abraham’s seed spiritually, and you are heirs of salvation according to promise.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – 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 during this whole Church age. They are all first placed spiritually by God into to the Universal Church, and then individually, the Holy Spirit will lead them to consider their involvement with a local church of the body of Christ; a local church in which they themselves believe that they can grow through receiving the word of God as it is preached, and then partaking of the fellowship with the other believers there. This is how an individual believer grows; together with other believers in this holy temple. If, over time, there is a favorable response in their heart to the preaching of God’s word, to learn to do what God has commanded, and if they are living by faith in the Son of God who loves them and has given Himself for them, then there will take place in their lives a most certain growth in holiness in relation to their walk with Christ, and their holy spiritual interaction with other members in the local body.

Turn also over to 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2: 1-10. “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.” “Therefore, it is also contained the Scripture, ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.’ “Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who disobedient, the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.”

Here we see how a local church grows together as a temple of the Lord. Each member of the church has to lay aside malice; thinking bad thoughts toward other Christians around you because they are not feeding your ego; not helping you in the way that you think that they ought to help you. They want to help you with your obeying the truth of the word. You would like a more worldly or selfish solution; some easy fix for your difficulties and problems. What these verses are saying is that you have to lay aside trying to be a tricky person; trying to get what you want by tricky and deceitful means. Can this happen to a true Christian? Well, yes it can. A Christian may not realize that they are acting this way. They may think that they are smarter than others around them. They may have a good observational mind, and so they want to point out everything which they think is not right about other people around them. But this is not God's way of building holiness into your life. You, as a Christian must learn to attempt to deal with the hypocrisy that you will find in your own life at points, as you examine yourself. You say that you love the brethren, but you speak against them at certain points; maybe many points. And all evil speaking needs to be laid aside, it says here.

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 be filled with the love of Christ towards everyone that you meet and everyone that you know. There is much fellowship and communion which takes place between God and His people in this temple of the church gathered together to worship Him. The Lord will know when you are making progress in holiness and righteousness and truth. Study not only how you might love the brethren, but study also to participate in the worship of God within your heart. Think of you and God, when you come to church. When the church is gathered, you go with the attitude that you are going to give to Him your worship from a sincere and loving heart. And you will find that you will be coming to realize that God's presence is there with you, ministering to you. And you will find that it will be there, in the house of worship, that 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 there that you will learn to offer up the spiritual sacrifices of praise.

Turn with me over to 2<sup>nd</sup> 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. It was more worldly.

Sometimes you may feel restrained in your affections toward others in the body of Christ. Your heart becomes cold towards the very people that you ought to fervently love; your pastor or other spiritual leaders in the church. You must remember that there is a personal growing in the Lord which comes from not receiving the grace of God in vain. And then there is a growing together in the things of Christ in relation to your pastor and others in the church. This is what Paul was writing about, to the church at Corinth. There were some Christians who were receiving the grace of God in vain, and they had not seen 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, and that God would dwell in them and walk among them if they would put away their thinking that they could serve God and have worldly idols.

Repentance will always bring the best things for the Christian. Light and darkness cannot have communion. Righteousness and lawlessness cannot have fellowship together. Therefore, as a Christian learn to love the assembly of God's people, and the place where His glory dwells. 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 love the habitation of Your house, and the place where Your glory dwells.”