

Ephesians: Lesson #36: Growing Into a Holy Temple

Notes for Parents to Study with Their Children

For Wednesday, Sept. 3rd

Read Eph. 2:11 - 3:21 (a simplified explanation of the text is supplied at the end of these notes).

Memory Verse: Eph. 3:21 “To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

God Was Very Kind to Offer Us Salvation

- Sin is like poison, it can cause us to die. But I’m not talking about dying physically -- sin will cause us to die spiritually. That’s because sin kills our friendship with God.
- When people sin they are living in a way that makes God very unhappy. God has given His laws to help us, but sin ignores God’s law and does what pleases it pleases. Even worse, doing bad things is exactly how the Devil wants us to act. The Devil hates God. The Devil has never done anything good for us and God has given us all the good things we’ve ever had.
- But because God is a good and kind God, He still wanted people to have a way to be saved, even though they had disobeyed Him. When we believe in Christ and are baptized, we can be saved. We aren’t saved by doing our own works, but by doing what God says to do.
- God gave us a way to be saved so that we can turn around and live for the Lord and do the good things He wants us to do.

The Gentiles Were Made Part of God’s People

- In the Old Testament, God’s people were the Israelites or the Jews as they are also called.
- “Gentiles” is a word that means all the other nations that were not Israelite. Unfortunately, the Gentiles worshipped idols and didn’t know much about the true God. Gentiles weren’t included in God’s people.
- Jesus died to take away our sins, but He also died to bring the church into existence. Jesus intended the church to be made up of more than just Israelites, He also wanted to offer it to Gentiles who would believe in Him.
- Even though Gentiles had been a long way off from God, they were brought to God by Christ’s blood.
- In the book of Acts we studied how Gentiles began obeying the gospel and becoming Christians. The church, the body of Christ, would include Jews and Gentiles.
- Because of Jesus Christ, Gentiles that served Christ could be made part of God’s household, just like Jews that believed in Christ.
- Preaching to Gentiles to win them to Christ was Paul’s main job.

Built Into a Temple

- We remember in the Old Testament about how Solomon built the first Temple to worship God in. That Temple would get messed up and had to be rebuilt two different

times. In Jesus' time there was an even bigger Temple in Jerusalem that the Jews came to worship in.

- But Paul told the Ephesians that Christians are growing into a Temple. Not a real physical temple made of stones, but a temple made of people.
- He said this Temple was built on what he apostles and prophets had taught, but that Jesus was the cornerstone of the Temple. That means that Jesus was the stone that all the other stones had to match up to.

Paul Again Prays for the Ephesians

- He prayed that they would get even stronger in their inner man. Our outer man is our body, but our inner man is our spirit.
- Paul wanted them to think about how wide, how long, how deep and how high the love of Christ is. Those are measurements. Of course you can't really measure Christ's love. That would be like asking your mother or father to get a ruler and measure how much they love you. Paul is really saying that we couldn't possibly measure how great Christ's love is.
- Paul reminded the Corinthians again about how powerful God is, how He is able to do above and beyond anything we could think about or ask for.
- God has been kind to us. He is willing to do things to help us go to heaven. Let's always remember to give God glory in the church through Jesus Christ.

Simplified Explanation of the Text

Christ Brought the Gentiles into God's Household

Eph. 2:11 Since we are God's workmanship, created for good works, let's remember how at one time you were Gentiles in the flesh. And those who are called "the Circumcision" (a circumcision in the flesh, done by human hands), the Jews, called you "the Uncircumcision."

12 And we recall how as Gentiles, when you lived without Christ, you were excluded from being citizens of Israel. You were just strangers who had no part in the promises of God's covenants. You did not have the true God and you were without any hope in the world.

13 But now that you are in Christ, you who were at one time far off have come near by the blood of Christ.

14 For Christ is our peace, having broken down the wall that divided us and made us into one.

15 And as His body hung on the cross, Jesus broke down that wall by doing away with the Law of Commandments written in decrees, for it kept us hostile to each other. Taking both Jew and Gentile, He made them in Himself into one new man, and that made peace.

16 Also, by means of the cross, He was able to bring both Jew and Gentile back to a complete fellowship with God in one body, bringing all that separated us in hostility to an end.

17 And once Christ had come and fulfilled His work, He brought the good news of peace to those of you who were far and near.

18 For it is through Christ that both Jews and Gentiles can approach the Father in one Spirit.

19 So then you Gentiles are no longer strangers, no longer those who live outside God's house, but now you are fellow citizens with the saints, you are part of the household of God.

Growing into a Holy Temple

20 You've been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ Himself being cornerstone, the main Stone which determines the layout of the foundation.

21-22 From that cornerstone all the building is fitted and framed together and is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, which also includes you Gentiles, being all built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Paul's Work of Preaching Among the Gentiles

Eph. 3:1 This is the reason that I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, work in behalf of you Gentiles.

2-3 I'm sure you have heard of the responsibilities God has given to me towards you in regard to His grace: That things which God had kept secret and hidden from man, have been now made known to me by what He revealed. You remember that I've written a few words about this once before.

4 So when you read what I've written, you will be able to realize what I've come to understand – things that at one time were a mystery about the will of Christ.

5 In other generations this information had not been made known to mankind, but now God has revealed it to His holy apostles and prophets by means of the Holy Spirit.

6 The revelation is this: Gentiles are to inherit the promises along with Jews. They will both be in the same body. Both will partake of God's promise in Christ by the gospel.

7 This is what God has given me the responsibility over. In His great grace, He has granted me the opportunity to be a servant, according to the working of His power.

8 He gave this gracious privilege to me, even though I am least of all saints, the privilege to preach among the Gentiles the good news about the riches of Christ -- riches that were beyond man's ability to find on his own.

9 My work is to help enlighten everyone about this mysterious fellowship. A fellowship that has been hidden through the ages in the God who created all things through Jesus Christ.

10 But now the many colorful shades of God's wisdom can become known through the church, demonstrating it to the highest rulers and authorities in the heavenly realm.

11 And all this happened according to the eternal plan God had decided on in Christ Jesus.

12 In Christ Jesus we all have the freedom to speak to God and approach Him with confidence because we have faith in Him.

Paul Prays Again for the Ephesians

13 So as you think about the work God has appointed me to do, and how it has caused me to be suffer imprisonment, I beg you not to get discouraged and down-hearted.

Remember, my service will result in your glory.

14-15 That causes me to bow my knees before the Father from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

16 and I pray that God would grant (in accordance with the riches of His glory) that you would be made even stronger in the inner man with power that comes through His Spirit.

17-19 I pray that Christ will dwell in your hearts by faith and that being rooted and grounded in love, you will be able to understand along with all the saints how wide, how long, how deep and how high the love of Christ is. This love really goes beyond what we can fully comprehend and it will cause us to be filled with all the fullness of God.

20-21 As we think about the God who powerfully works in us, who is able to do above and beyond anything we could think about or ask for, let's remember to give Him glory in the church through Jesus Christ. And let that continue on throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen.