



Ephesians - Chapter Two

Summary of Chapter Two

Paul commences with a stark reminder of the hopelessness of life for the Gentiles without God, for they were heading down the wrong road of life, alluding also to the fact that even the Jews fared little better in principle because of the state of the human nature and its natural inclination towards the worldly desires of the flesh. Yet God is above all things and he has reached out in the richness of his grace and mercy by giving his Son to the world so that those who would turn to him would become a new creation.

Paul reminds them that the Gentiles and the Jews were once poles apart, with the Jews looking down on their pagan neighbours. But Christ had come and abolished the need for the written law of God, uniting all of mankind into one body, his church. Yet this new united church carries with it the promises made before its conception - the promises made to Abraham and the resulting nation of Israel. All are now citizens of a new reborn nation.

Paul goes further still. Not only are Christians a united nation, they are now both individually and corporately the new Temple of God, the place where his Spirit will dwell. To the Jews the Jerusalem Temple was where heaven and earth met - that is now in the heart of each believer because God has given them his Spirit to indwell them.

III Ephesians 2:1-10 - From Death to Life

This section, like 1:3-14 and 1:15-23, is a single sentence in the original Greek. The overarching theme is that God lavishes his grace on Christians through his saving initiative.

III.a Ephesians 2:1-3 - Hopelessness and helplessness without Christ

‘God helps those who help themselves’ is not a phrase taken from the Bible but from the ancient Greeks. As Paul emphasises in this section, the truth is the exact opposite: God helps the helpless! Even more, he helps his enemies who have transgressed his holy law. God revealed his true nature in Christ and in doing so he also revealed the true state of humanity without him.

¹ You were dead through the trespasses and sins

Ephesians 2:1

You were dead. Human beings as sons and daughters of Adam enter the world spiritually dead. They have no inclination or responsiveness toward God and no ability to please God. Paul begins with this phrase then breaks off with other thoughts until he returns to it again in v.5.

Trespasses are violations of divine commandments, while sins are offences against God in thought, word and deed. Yet God dealt with both: *<<And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross>>* (Colossians 2:13-14).

² in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient.

Ephesians 2:2

In which you once lived does not mean that believers no longer sin but that they have been freed from its guilt and shame: *<<Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience>>* (Romans 11:30), *<<And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God>>* (1 Corinthians 6:11), *<<These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life>>* (Colossians 3:7), and: *<<For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, despicable, hating one another>>* (Titus 3:3).

Following the course of this world. One of the saddest facts of the human condition apart from God is that they are travelling on the wrong path to righteousness with God; another is that many of them don't even know it! In fact, they are so often convinced they are living the good life. A lesson that has never been learned is that just because a lot of other people are living in a certain way does not mean that it is a good way to live. Paul calls for a change of mindset: *<<Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect>>* (Romans 12:2).

The ruler and the spirit refer to Satan as he dominates his human subjects, here called those who are disobedient, literally 'sons of disobedience' or: *<<the children of the evil one>>* (Matthew 13:38c), which is a Hebrew-inspired phrase like 'the sons of this world' in contrast to 'the sons of light', something Jesus spoke of: *<<The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light>>* (Luke 16:8 ESVA). They belong to the family of those who rebel against the holy and true God.

By following the ruler of the power of the air Paul means that they were daily and continually active, engaging in the practices and values of their world. This they would have continued until death even though Jesus had indicated Satan was to be defeated by the Cross: <<*Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out*>> (John 12:31).

³ All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else.

Ephesians 2:3

All of us, like everyone else indicates quite clearly that no one was exempt from the passions of our flesh, the human sinful nature. Yet God always had a rescue plan: <<*We must all die; we are like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up. But God will not take away a life; he will devise plans so as not to keep an outcast banished for ever from his presence*>> (2 Samuel 14:14).

By nature. To be sons and daughters of Adam is to be born into a fallen state: <<*Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me*>> (Psalm 51:5), and subject to God's condemnation as children of wrath, God's wrath because of their sin. To escape this hopeless imprisonment requires nothing short of a new birth: <<*Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again"*>> (John 3:3 NIV), or a new creation (v.10).

III.b Ephesians 2:4-10 - Hope in Christ

In contrast to the hopeless state of the unbeliever, Christians exult in hope because of God's incredible grace and free salvation. Paul accents this grace in contrast to the pre-Christ hopelessness analysed in vv.1-3.

⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us ⁵ even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved –

Ephesians 2:4-5

No hopeless fate looks any grimmer than that which awaits the forlorn company of mankind marching behind the 'prince of the power of the air' (v.2) to their destruction under divine wrath. Just when things look the most desolate, Paul utters the greatest short phrase in the history of human speech: But God, who is rich in mercy. God's mercy on his helpless enemies flows from his own loving heart, not from anything they have done to deserve it.

Out of the great love with which he loved us is echoed by another apostle: <<*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life*>> (John 3:16).

When we were dead. Paul resumes his original thought, which began with: <<*you were dead*>> in v.1.

Made us alive. That is, God gave regeneration to those who believe, new spiritual life within by removing the grip of sin: *<<as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us>>* (Psalm 103:12). This and the two verbs in v.6, 'raised up' and 'seated with', make up the main verbs of the long sentence in vv.1-10. Since Christians were dead, they first had to be made alive before they could believe, and God did that together with Christ. This is why salvation is by grace alone. Refer to the comments made on v.8 and vv.9-10.

By grace you have been saved is repeated in v.8 and is commented on there. Peter spoke very similar words at the Jerusalem Council in relation to the effects of the Gospel on both the Jews and the Gentiles: *<<On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will>>* (Acts 15:11).

⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:6-7

Raised us up with him means that, because of Christ's resurrection, those who accept and believe in him are given new life spiritually in this age, i.e. regeneration: *<<For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his>>* (Romans 6:5). They will also be given renewed physical bodies when Christ returns, the future resurrection. The words of Paul elsewhere should bring encouragement to all his readers in all ages: *<<For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord for ever. Therefore encourage one another with these words>>* (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

Seated us with him in the heavenly places. God has allowed his people even now to share in a measure of the authority that Christ has, seated at the right hand of God: *<<God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church>>* (Ephesians 1:20-22), *<<Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you>>* (James 4:7), and: *<<Little children, you are from God, and have conquered them; for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world>>* (1 John 4:4), a truth that would be especially important in Ephesus with all of its occult practices noted in the Purpose section of the series introduction and commented on in Ephesians 1:18-19.

The immeasurable riches of his grace. Paul recognises that God's plan was according to his perfect timing in the ages to come, which no person was to know. Paul's point is that God was making certain that the historical and factual Gospel of salvation through Christ needs to be spread by those then living, and by their

written testimonies, just as this epistle has done. The message always remains the same, by God's immeasurable grace, the unmerited loving-kindness toward people, is his gift of eternal salvation through the sacrifice of Christ Jesus for the sins of everyone.

These verses answer the question why God lavished such love upon his people: so that they will marvel for all of eternity over the incredible kindness and love of God. It will take all of eternity to fathom God's love, and those who are saved will never plumb the depths of it.

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God — ⁹ not the result of works, so that no one may boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

By grace refers to God's favour upon those who have transgressed his law and sinned against him. But grace may also be understood as a power in these verses. God's grace not only offers salvation but also secures it.

Saved refers to deliverance from God's wrath at the final judgment: <<***Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God***>> (Romans 5:9); by grace you have been saved is repeated from v.5 for emphasis. The verb form for have been saved, Greek *sesōsmenoi* in the perfect tense, communicates that the Christian's salvation is fully secured.

Through faith. Faith is a confident trust and reliance upon Christ Jesus and is the only means by which one can obtain salvation. Unlike accounts in Romans, Galatians and Philippians, where Paul writes of justification by faith, which explains how people are made into God's family, salvation through faith has to do with people being rescued from the fate they would otherwise have incurred. These verses answer the question as to how that rescue has taken place, and who is ultimately responsible for it.

This. The Greek pronoun is neuter, while grace and faith are feminine. Accordingly, this points to the whole process of 'salvation by grace through faith' as being the gift of God and not something that that believers can accomplish for themselves. This use of the neuter pronoun to take in the whole of a complex idea is quite common in Greek, for example: <<***Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right***>> (Ephesians 6:1); its use here makes it clear that faith, no less than grace, is the gift of God.

Salvation is not the result of works. If it were, then those who are saved would get the glory. These two verses are some of the most frequently quoted as they simply, yet completely, state the most vital truths of the Gospel. When Paul speaks of justification, the thing which marks people out is their faith. When he speaks of salvation, the responsibility is God's, i.e. it comes about through the free gift of grace. Salvation, therefore, in every respect, is not a believer's own doing. This is not a passage about who the Ephesians are, its about the rescue from what they once were before they knew Jesus.

So that no one may boast. When people believe they have achieved something by their own skills without acknowledging the role of God they risk falling into a prideful state that is unhelpful to them and is a failure to give God the glory he deserves. Israel were guilty of this: <<*The Lord said to Gideon, 'The troops with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand. Israel would only take the credit away from me, saying, "My own hand has delivered me"'*>> (Judges 7:2). It would be the same with the church: <<*Your boasting is not a good thing. Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough?*>> (1 Corinthians 5:6).

One important understanding concerning faith being the gift of God is that God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, awakens in mankind the possibility and power to believe. It is then left up to each person to act and use that power to believe, or not.

¹⁰ For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

Ephesians 2:10

For we are what he has made us. This is not about the natural self but the person one becomes in a new life in Christ. It cannot be used by people who continue in their old ways and then try to blame God by saying, 'Well, it's the way I am, the way God made me!'

Created in Christ Jesus for good works. Salvation is not based on works, but the good works Christians do are the result and consequence of God's new creation work in them, achieved through the life and death of his Son. Although such good works could be described as an individual calling, something Paul clearly understood in his own life and work, and that of others too, it can also represent the appropriate levels of moral behaviour that are expected of all who would call themselves a Christian.

Which God prepared beforehand again alludes to the planning that went on before Creation even took place: <<*For when he sees his children, the work of my hands, in his midst, they will sanctify my name; they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and will stand in awe of the God of Israel*>> (Isaiah 29:23), <<*Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world*>> (John 17:24), and: <<*just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love*>> (Ephesians 1:4).

To be our way of life. The Christian is expected to live their lives in a manner that reflects the love that Jesus has bestowed upon them, for it is through their example that others may then turn to Christ for their own salvation.

IV Ephesians 2:11-22 - One in Christ

Paul continues the theme of the new creation which he introduced in v.10. In the previous sections God had been the main subject of the action, but now the focus falls on Christ Jesus and his redemptive work.

Paul reminds them of what their life was like before they encountered Christ through the Gospel, a life under the corrupt human nature, and of the sneering they received from the Jews who looked down on them for not knowing God. Paul emphasises the shallow and pointless bragging by the Jews about their circumcision. It is an outward act of the flesh made by hands. Spiritually, it had no effect. It was a representation of what must take place in the heart, in covenant with God.

IV.a Ephesians 2:11-14 - Unity of Christ's people

Christ makes peace between Jew and Gentile to unify both in the church. There is only one unified people of God.

¹¹ So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called 'the uncircumcision' by those who are called 'the circumcision' – a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands – ¹² remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Ephesians 2:11-12

The circumcision, that is, the Jews. To be called 'the uncircumcision' was a Jewish term of derision: <<*David said to the men who stood by him, 'What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine, and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?'*>> (1 Samuel 17:26), and signified that one was a Gentile, outside the covenant people of God. Refer also to the comments made on Acts 15:1. To the Jews, male circumcision was a badge of membership to the family of God. Even some of the early Christian converts tried to insist on the circumcision of Gentiles if they wanted to come to faith in Christ. This forms much of the discussion in Paul's letter to the Galatian churches.

Without Christ indicates separation from him. To be separated from OT Israel was to be separated from Christ, because: <<*salvation is from the Jews*>> (John 4:22b), and: <<*They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen*>> (Romans 9:4-5).

The commonwealth. For comments on citizenship and strangers see the comments on vv.19-20.

The covenants of promise. God administered his OT redemption and promises by his oath-bound covenants: <<*Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham*>> (Luke 1:72-73a), the chief of which were the Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic covenants. The new covenant fulfils all the divine promises: <<*For in him every one of God's promises is a 'Yes.'* For this reason it is through him that we say the 'Amen', to the glory of God>> (2 Corinthians 1:20), <<*This was confirmed with an oath; for others who became priests took their*

office without an oath, but this one became a priest with an oath, because of the one who said to him, 'The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest for ever"' – accordingly Jesus has also become the guarantee of a better covenant>> (Hebrews 7:20-22), <<But Jesus has now obtained a more excellent ministry, and to that degree he is the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted through better promises>> (Hebrews 8:6), and: <<For this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, because a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant>> (Hebrews 9:15). Paul clearly believed that all Gentiles apart from Christ were unsaved and without God.

No hope and without God in the world describes the Gentile human condition before the revelation of Christ. The Jews naturally had the hope of the promises made by God. However, they now need to recognise Jesus as their Messiah.

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Ephesians 2:13

In Christ Jesus. The old division of all people into two classifications, Jews or Gentiles: <<*Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also*>> (Romans 3:29), or Jews and Greeks: <<*The Jews said to one another, 'Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?'*>> (John 7:35), has been transcended by a new entity in Christ, the church of God: <<*There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus*>> (Galatians 3:28).

To be brought near means to have access to God, see v.18.

The blood of Christ is a reference to his substitutionary death. He died not only for the Jews but for all his sheep: <<*I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd*>> (John 10:16), even those who are far off: <<*For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him*>> (Acts 2:39).

¹⁴ For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.

Ephesians 2:14

Peace refers to the state of harmonious friendship with God and with one another in the church. What this verse clearly states is that all of the former differences in attitude and condition are now erased, bringing peace. Whatever wall separated people is now broken down. The Church accepts all believers equally. Refer also to the comments on Ephesians 1:2.

Made both groups into one, that is, Jews and Gentiles. The opposite of peace is the hostility that Christ has quenched. Christ created a unified new people from the old hostile camps: <<*I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me*>> (John 17:20-21), <<*And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful*>> (Colossians 3:15).

In his flesh refers to Christ's bodily death on the Cross, see v.16.

The dividing wall. There was an inscription on the wall of the outer courtyard of the Jerusalem temple warning the Gentiles that they would only have themselves to blame for their death if they passed beyond it into the inner courts. Paul may or may not be alluding to this wall, but it well illustrates Christ's reconciliation of all people into a new humanity, see v.15.

It seems almost incomprehensible that the church that should be truly united through Christ should have found it so difficult not to become universally divided over issues during the past 2,000 years, yet Jesus' enemies, a leader of the Jewish nation and a Gentile, became united: <<*That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies*>> (Luke 23:12).

IV.b Ephesians 2:15-18 - Peace with God

On the Cross, Christ put to death the hostility between Israel and the other nations. In this section the focus shifts to the new, unified group being brought near to God.

¹⁵ He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.

Ephesians 2:15-16

The law. The additional mention of commandments and ordinances identifies this as the Mosaic Law, which included many commandments that served to separate Israel from the other nations. Thus the law was a 'dividing wall' (v.14), which Christ has abolished or rendered powerless, both by fulfilling it and by removing believers from the law's condemnation: <<*Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil*>> (Matthew 5:17), and: <<*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*>> (Romans 8:1); refer also to Hebrews 9:11-14 and 10:1-10.

The result is one new humanity, denoting a new human race under the second Adam, Christ, in whose image the Christian is re-created: <<*Thus it is written, 'The first man, Adam, became a living being'; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit*>> (1 Corinthians 15:45), <<*Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven*>> (1 Corinthians

15:49), <<*and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness*>> (Ephesians 4:24).

Reconcile both groups is to bring two parties into peaceful relations, in this case, to satisfy God's wrath against his enemies, see Romans 5:1-11. They are now friends: <<*No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father*>> (John 15:13-15), in one body, the church: <<*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism*>> (Ephesians 4:4-5). Paul describes Christ's reconciliation very vividly as killing the hostility that stood in the way of peace with God.

¹⁷ So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; ¹⁸ for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Ephesians 2:17-18

Proclaimed peace. Paul refers to Christ's messianic ministry to the whole world both far and near, alluding to: <<*Peace, peace, to the far and the near, says the Lord; and I will heal them*>> (Isaiah 57:19). It was a message announced by the angels at the birth of Jesus: <<*Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!*>> (Luke 2:14). To those who were near were the Jews; to those who were far off refers to both the Diaspora Jews and, in this case, all the Gentile nations as well.

Access means to draw near to God and to enjoy him forever in a new creation that is both mankind's greatest good and the ultimate accomplishment of Christ's earthly work of redemption.

One Spirit. Just as a human body has one spirit that animates it, so Christ's body, the church, is enlivened by one Holy Spirit who enlivens Christians to eternal life.

Without using the word that became widespread in the church in the 3rd Century, Paul is clearly speaking of the Trinity.

IV.c Ephesians 2:19-22 - Implications of Christ's peace

Paul indicates with 'So then' that he is drawing out key implications of what he has taught in vv.11-18. The Christian's assurance is based on these facts.

¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, ²⁰ built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.

Ephesians 2:19-20

So then. Christians have to know and be thoroughly convinced of who they are as saints and members of the household of God if they are to live accordingly.

As with commonwealth in v.12, Paul employs a term that was common to political life in ancient cities like Ephesus. Strangers were complete foreigners with no rights or privileges; aliens were non-citizens who dwelt in the city and were accorded customary privileges as neighbours. Only citizens had full protections and rights in the city.

Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. There are several views about the apostles and prophets referred to here:

1. Some think that they were foundational because they proclaimed the very words of God, and some of their words became the books of the NT. Since a foundation is laid only once, i.e. at the beginning of the church, there are no more apostles or prophets today, but their function of speaking the words of God has been replaced by the written Bible, which is the foundation today.
2. Others argue that these prophets are very closely tied to apostles in the phrase the apostles and prophets, and that these prophets do not represent all who had a gift of prophecy in the early church, refer to the comments made on 1 Corinthians 12:10; they were a small group closely associated with the apostles, or else identical to the apostles, to whom God had revealed the mystery of the Gentile inclusion in the church: <<*In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit*>> (Ephesians 3:5). In this case ordinary Christians who had the gift of prophecy in Ephesus (4:11), and other churches, refer to Acts 11:27, 19:6, and 21:9-10, Romans 12:6, 1 Corinthians 12:10, 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21, 1 Timothy 1:18 and 4:14, were not part of the foundation but were part of the rest of the building that was being built, that is, the church, and would continue so throughout the church age.
3. Finally, some think the prophets here could be the OT prophets, although the same words in Ephesians 3:5 clearly point to prophets of the NT era.

The cornerstone is the critical stone in the corner of the foundation that ensures that a stone building is square and remains stable. It had been prophesied that the Messiah would be the cornerstone of God's Kingdom on earth: <<*The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone*>> (Psalm 118:22), <<*therefore thus says the Lord God, See, I am laying in Zion a foundation stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: 'One who trusts will not panic'*>> (Isaiah 28:16), and: <<*Out of them shall come the cornerstone, out of them the tent-peg, out of them the battle-bow*>> (Zechariah 10:4). The NT authors used this reference to Jesus, as did Jesus to himself, particularly referring back to Psalm 118. These are: Matthew 21:42, Luke 20:17, Acts 4:11, Romans 9:33, and 1 Peter 2:4-8; the early Christians were constantly searching and pondering the ancient scriptures to understand what the events concerning Jesus really meant. This was certainly the case with those in Berea: <<*These Jews were more receptive than those in Thessalonica, for*>>
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they welcomed the message very eagerly and examined the scriptures every day to see whether these things were so>> (Acts 17:11).

²¹ In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; ²² in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God.

Ephesians 2:21-22

Joined together. Christians are the temple of God corporately, with each new believer adding a stone to the structure; therefore, belonging to the visible church is not optional for followers of Christ.

A holy temple is where God meets with his people in joyful worship and fellowship; it is a dwelling-place for God. Believers do not have to worship in Jerusalem today because they themselves have become the new temple of God: <<*Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem'*>> (John 4:21), and: <<*Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?*>> (1 Corinthians 3:16).

This new temple of God has Christ as its capstone, the apostles and prophets as its foundation, and then a myriad of different stones completing the building, with total disregard for race, gender or cultural background: <<*for all of you are one in Christ Jesus*>> (Galatians 3:28d).

Paul will now continue his appeal of the absolute necessity that he proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles, without regard to anything anyone does to oppose him, even as he writes this letter from a Roman prison.