

Better Way Apostolic Church- Bible Class

Subject: Growth is Working in Unity Ephesian 2:19-22

Responsible for Growth

God made you essentially what you are. Don't find fault with Him because you are different from others. Discover what you are and grow in the pattern He has designed for you. We are responsible for growing, but not for the essential element of our being. A little girl expressed it beautifully when she said, "Mother made me this much"— indicating the smallness of a baby—"and I grew that much" — showing how tall she had become. How tall have you grown in your Christian life?

BARRIERS

HARMFUL BARRIERS

WHAT BARRIERS CAN KEEP US FROM GOD AND OTHERS?

KEY BIBLE VERSE: When Jesus heard this, he was amazed. Turning to the crowd, he said, "I tell you the truth, I haven't seen faith like this in all the land of Israel!" (Matthew 8:10)

LIFE IS FULL OF NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL BARRIERS.

The centurion could have let many obstacles stand between him and Jesus—pride, doubt, money, language, distance, time, self-sufficiency, power, race. But he didn't. If he did not let these barriers block his approach to Jesus, we don't need to either. What keeps you from Christ?

KEY BIBLE VERSE: The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?" (John 4:9)

SOCIAL AND SPIRITUAL BARRIERS ARE REAL.

This woman (1) was a Samaritan, a member of the hated mixed race, (2) was known to be living in sin, and (3) was in a public place. No respectable Jewish man would talk to a woman under such circumstances. But Jesus did. The gospel is for every person regardless of race, social position, or past sins. We must be prepared to share this gospel at any time and in any place. Jesus crossed all barriers to share the gospel, and we who follow him must do no less.

Building Factories

An engineer who was responsible for building great factories said that all such construction is now planned with the machines that are to be housed in the factory in mind. The walls and floors of the buildings are constructed so that a machine can be built into the very foundation and structure of the building, rather than set in as an afterthought.

This is the way the Lord builds believers into Christ. We are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, and in Him all the building is fitly framed together, so that it "groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:20,21). That is surpassing even the modern engineers. They can frame their building and foundation and machines together "fitly,"

but they cannot make the building "grow." The true believers are fused in Christ and grow in Him together with Him and together with one another.

Colossians 2:11-15

In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ,

12 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,

14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. NIV

Look Up

A house painter was at work atop a tall ladder that leaned against the second-story gable of a house. A small boy playing about the yard discovered the ladder, and as is natural for small boys, he began to climb it. His mother, checking on her child, was shocked to find that he was more than half way to the top of the ladder.

As the woman stifled a scream of panic, the man at the top looked down, saw the child, and instantly perceived the danger. Signaling the mother to be silent, he calmly said to the child, "Look up, sonny, look up here to me, and keep climbing." Rung by rung, he coaxed the child ever higher: "Come on now, keep looking up, keep coming." At last, the child safe in his arms, the painter carried him safely to the ground.

Well, each of us is somewhere on a ladder. If we look down, we may be terrified. God is saying, "Look up to me; keep looking up, and you will never be dismayed or undone by whatever is down there." So let's look up, up to where our safety lies; let's look up, and take heart, and keep climbing.

Unification: What Jews and Gentiles Are in Christ (Eph. 2:19-22)

Paul has repeated the word "one" to emphasize the unifying work of Christ: "made both one" (Ephesians 2:14); "one new man" (Ephesians 2:15); "one body" (Ephesians 2:16); "one Spirit" (Ephesians 2:18). All spiritual distance and division have been overcome by Christ. In the closing verses of this chapter, Paul gives three pictures that illustrate the unity of believing Jews and Gentiles in the church.

One nation (v. 19 a). Israel was, God's chosen nation, but they rejected their Redeemer and suffered the consequences. The kingdom was taken from them and given to "a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matthew 21:43). This "new nation" is the church, "a chosen generation . . . a holy nation, a peculiar people" (Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9). In the Old Testament, the nations were reckoned by their descent from Shem, Ham, or Japheth (Genesis 10). In the Book of Acts, we see these three families united in Christ. In Acts 8, a descendant of Ham is saved, the Ethiopian treasurer, in Acts 9, a descendant

of Shem, Saul of Tarsus, who became Paul the apostle; and in Acts 10, the descendants of Japheth, the Gentiles in the household of the Roman soldier, Cornelius. Sin has divided mankind, but Christ unites by His Spirit. All believers, regardless of national background, belong to that "holy nation" with citizenship in heaven (Philippians 3:20-21).

One family (v. 19 b). Through faith in Christ, we enter into God's family, and God becomes our Father. This wonderful family of God is found in two places, "in heaven and earth" (Ephesians 3:15). Living believers are on earth; believers who have died are in heaven. None of God's children are "under the earth" (Philippians 2:10) or in any other place in the universe. We are all brothers and sisters in the one family, no matter what racial, national, or physical distinctions we may possess.

One temple (vv. 20-22). In the Book of Genesis, God "walked" with His people (Genesis 5:22,24; 6:9); but in Exodus, He decided to "dwell" with His people (Exodus 25:8). God dwelt in the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-38) until Israel's sins caused "the glory to depart" (1 Samuel 4). Then God dwelt in the temple (1 Kings 8:1-11); but alas, again Israel sinned and the glory departed (Ezekiel 10:18-19). God's next dwelling place was the body of Christ (John 1:14), which men took and nailed to a cross. Today, through His Spirit, God dwells in the church, the temple of God. God does not dwell in man-made temples, including church buildings (Acts 7:48-50). He dwells in the hearts of those who have trusted Christ (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), and in the church collectively (Ephesians 2:20-22).

The foundation for this church was laid by the Apostles and New Testament prophets. Jesus Christ is the Foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11) and the Chief Cornerstone (Psalms 118:22; Isaiah 8:14). The cornerstone binds the structure together, Jesus Christ has united Jews and Gentiles in the church. This reference to the temple would be meaningful to both the Jews and the Gentiles in the Ephesian church: the Jews would think of Herod's temple in Jerusalem, and the Gentiles would think of the great temple of Diana. Both temples were destined to be destroyed, but the temple Christ is building will last forever. "I will build My church" (Matthew 16:18). The Holy Spirit builds His temple by taking dead stones out of the pit of sin (Psalms 40:2), giving them life, and setting them lovingly into the temple of God (1 Peter 2:5). This temple is "fitly framed together" as the body of Christ (Ephesians 2:21; 4:16), so that every part accomplishes the purpose God has in mind.

As you look back over this chapter, you cannot help but praise God for what He, in His grace, has done for sinners. Through Christ, He has raised us from the dead and seated us on the throne. He has reconciled us and set us into His temple. Neither spiritual death nor spiritual distance can defeat the grace of God! But He has not only saved us individually, He has also made us a part of His church collectively. What a tremendous privilege it is to be a part of God's eternal program!

This leads to two practical applications as we close this study.

First, have you personally experienced the grace of God? Are you spiritually dead? Are you distant from God? Or have you trusted Christ and received that eternal life that only He can give? If you are not sure of your spiritual position, I urge you to turn to Christ by faith and trust Him. Like the nation of Israel, you may have been given many spiritual privileges, only to reject the God who gave them. Or, Like the Gentiles, you may have turned away from God and lived deliberately in sin and disobedience. In either case, "there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:22-23). Call on Christ - He will save you.

Second, if you are a true believer in Christ, are you helping others to trust Him? You have been raised from the dead - do you "walk in newness of life"? (Romans 6:4) Do you share this Good News of eternal life with others? You are no longer at enmity with God, but are you spreading the Good News of "peace with God" with those who are still fighting Him?

Jesus Christ died to make reconciliation possible. You and I must live to make the message of reconciliation personal. God has "given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18). We are His ambassadors of peace (2 Corinthians 5:20). Our feet should be shod "with the preparation of the Gospel of peace" (Ephesians 6:15). "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

A missionary was preaching in the village market, and some of the people were laughing at him because he was not a very handsome man. He took it for a time, and then he said to the crowd, "It is true that I do not have beautiful hair for I am almost bald. Nor do I have beautiful teeth, for they are really not mine; they were made by the dentist. I do not have a beautiful face, nor can I afford to wear beautiful clothes. But this I know: I have beautiful feet!" And he quoted the verse from Isaiah: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace" (Isaiah 52:7). Do you have beautiful feet?