

## 7. We are 'IN'

October 28, 2012

In France, an evening of late September, 1944 during the World War II, some U.S. Army soldiers with their squad sergeant brought the body of a dead comrade -in-arm to a French Catholic church which had its cemetery in the back to give him a decent burial, because they couldn't let his body be eaten by wild animals as they had to continue to advance.

The priest told them gently that he was bound to ask if their friend had been a baptized adherent of the Roman Catholic Church. They said that they did not know. The priest said that he was very sorry but in that case he could not permit burial in his church cemetery. So the soldiers took the body of their comrade sadly and buried him just outside the cemetery fence.

Early morning of the next day they came back to say a final goodbye to their friend at the grave. To their astonishment, they could not find it. Search as they might they could find no trace of the freshly dug grave.

As they were about to leave in bewilderment the priest came up in his dirt -soiled shirt and pants. The priest told them that his heart had been very troubled and couldn't sleep because of his refusal to allow their dead friend to be buried in the church cemetery; so, throughout the night, with his own hands had moved the fence to include the body of the soldier who had died for France.

Remember, the famous John 3:16 that starts with "*For God so loved the world...*"? It doesn't say, "*For God so loved a few selected rich and famous and good looking people...*" If that is the case, I have a snowball's chance in Sahuarita/Green V alley during our summer season which is about 11 months of the year.

All of us, believers and unbelievers alike would love to be included in important things. God wants to include everyone. Our God says, "The door is open, you can come into My household. But you have to come in with the Way I provide, not in your own." As you know, the vast majority of people say, "No" to God, but "Yes" to the devil without realizing.

As Paul continued to explain the new unity we have in Christ, he identified ways in which God's people would change as a result of Christ's breaking down the dividing wall of spiritual and cultural alienation. Paul centered all of these changes on one core truth: Reconciliation to God's family.

### A. PEACE AMONG US, PEACE WITH GOD

*Ephesians 2:17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.*

As reconciliation with God transforms lives, reconciliation with others can mend the broken relationship. It can repair years, decades, or even centuries of bitter conflict and restore wholeness. It can occur between individuals, families, or whole nations. Paul affirmed to the believing Gentiles in the Ephesian church that in Christ, reconciliation had already been made.

How did Jesus reconcile God's chosen people, the Jews, with those outside of it, the Gentiles? Through His Crucifixion and Resurrection, on the cross, Jesus put to death the enmity between the two, proclaiming that it had come to an end as we learned.

Human's peace treaties don't mean much. Because before the ink of the signatures of many of the Middle East treaties got dried, Israel and Arabs already were fighting. But the peace with God is permanently made through Jesus Christ once and for all.

## **B. FOUR THINGS WE MUST NOTICE ABOUT THE PEACE WITH GOD**

### **1) One access to God**

*Ephesians 2:18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.*

Especially living in the United States where just about everyone has some sort of mixed races in the family line, this may not seem like an important development for those of us today who have known one access to God through Scripture for nearly two thousand years, but it was a huge change in Paul's day. Because Jews could access God only through their high priest, who entered God's presence once a year on the Day of Atonement according to Leviticus 16. But the Gentiles had no access to God whatsoever.

The Greek word for 'access' is "prosagoge". Its definition is "the act of bringing to, a moving to" in relationship with God whereby we are acceptable to Him and have assurance that He is favorably disposed towards us.

It is like Jesus making an introduction between God the Father and us, the believers for the first time. As so often in this Book the work of the Trinity is seen. Here believers have access to God the Father through the Holy Spirit because of Christ's death on the cross.

What does this mean to the 21st Century believers in the U.S.? It means that we have a complete, unhindered access to the Throne of God where we can go with boldness and confidence in Jesus Christ. We no longer need the high priest to intercede for us with bloody animal sacrifices, nor do we need to confess our sins to some priests or beg to dead saints to intervene on our behalf. The newest believer of Jesus Christ has the exact same total access to God the Father as Dr. Billy Graham does.

### **2) One citizenship**

*Ephesians 2:19a Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints*

In June 28th, 1985, I swore as an American citizen. It was one of my proud moments. Here is my Certificate of Naturalization that proves I am an American. I can show this to anyone, unlike someone who has to hide his own birth certificate and college transcripts, because they are not legit.

What Paul is telling us is that the Gentiles now have the same rights as Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Elijah, and every faithful followers of the Lord throughout the history.

When Paul wrote these words to the believers in the Ephesian church, the kingdom of Rome was at the height of its territorial expansion and glory. Rome dominated its known world. Roman armies conquered her enemies everywhere. Roman roads linked the far-flung reaches of the Empire. Rome had stood for hundreds of years and was thought to be able to stand for thousands of years more.

But Paul looked at Rome and saw it, not as one great united Kingdom, but as a brute force imposed on mutually antagonistic factions: rich and poor, free man and slave,

man and woman, Jew and Gentile. And in its place he saw this new humanity, created by God Himself, transcending these boundaries. This Christ's kingdom was destined to grow and permeate all nations, drawing from all peoples. It is a kingdom that cannot be shaken or destroyed, EVER.

In the Old Testament, the nations were established by their descent from Shem, Ham, or Japheth who were the sons of Noah according to 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 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.*

### 3) One family

*Ephesians 2:19b and members of the household of God,*  
My daddy had my older brother and me in his late age. He was living in the old fashioned Korean society where a man having more than one wife was socially accepted. In other words, my brother and I were illegitimate children and we were treated differently by his first wife's family which was understandable. In result, our family get-together times were very uncomfortable for my mother, brother, and me.

But not in God's family. In His eyes, God doesn't see the Jews or the Gentiles; rich or poor, intelligent or uneducated; male or female, we are all equally His children. 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. Living born-again believers are on earth; believers who have died are in heaven. None of God's children are under the earth or in any other place in the universe – like the place called 'purgatory'. I know that the Catholic theology talks about this, but there is absolutely no reference mentioned anywhere in the Bible.

Just for a side note, two people asked me about the dead believers' souls last week. They were wondering what happens to the soul of our loved ones who are born-again and they also wonder if they know what is happening on earth. Here are two Bible verses we can use to understand:

*2 Corinthians 5:8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.*

*Revelation 6:9 When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"*

### 4) One faith

*Ephesians 2:20-22 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, 21 in whom the*

*whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.*

It's important to note several special features of this building . Our foundation is the apostles and prophets. Their teachings – the New Testament Scriptures – form the basis on which we build our lives and our churches. They all must line up with the Lord Jesus, the cornerstone, which is a rich image.

*Psalm 118:21-22 I will praise You, For You have answered me, And have become my salvation. 22 The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone.*

In ancient building practices the chief cornerstone must be carefully placed. It was crucial because the entire building was lined up with it. For the church's foundation, that is, the apostles and prophets, needed to be correctly aligned with Christ. All other believers are built on that foundation, measuring their lives with Christ.

### **C. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO US?**

So what does this one access, citizenship, family, and faith in Christ mean to us now?

We may not see eye to eye with every other Christian on everything . No one, including the Lord, expects us to be in uniformity. But we must not break with them. And we must realize that regardless of our differences of opinions, the unity that we have with other believers is greater than the unity we will ever have with anyone else in the world, even if the unbeliever is of the same class, race, nationality , sex, or whatever as you are.

**Our duty is to live in harmony with these brothers and sisters in Christ, and to let the world know that we are members of one spiritual family . That in its self should be a large portion of our witness of our Lord Jesus Christ.**