

Living Access to the Living God

Thomas Robinson, *Ephesians – Growing Up Into Christ* 8, November 6, 2011

Ephesians 2:14-22

- ¹⁴ For **he himself** is **our peace**, who has **made both one**
and has **broken down the dividing wall** – the **hostility** – **in his flesh**
¹⁵ by **abolishing the law** of commandments expressed in ordinances,
that he might **in himself create** the two into **one new human being** so **making peace**,
¹⁶ and might **reconcile us both to God in one body** through **the cross**,
thereby **killing the hostility**.
- ¹⁷ And **he came** and **proclaimed good news of peace**
to **you** who were **far off** and peace to **those** who were **near**.
- ¹⁸ For **through him** we both have **access in one Spirit to the Father**.
¹⁹ So then you are **no longer strangers** and aliens,
but you are **fellow citizens** with the saints
and members of the **household of God**,
²⁰ built on the **foundation** of the **apostles** and **prophets**,
Messiah Jesus himself being the cornerstone,
²¹ **in whom** the whole structure, being joined together,
grows into a holy temple in the Lord.
²² **In him** you also are being **built together**
into a **dwelling place for God by the Spirit**.

Ephesians 3:11-12

¹¹ This was according to the **eternal purpose** that he has realized in the **Messiah, Jesus our Lord**, ¹² in whom we **have boldness and access with confidence** through **his faithfulness**.

1 Corinthians 3:16

¹⁶ Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

Isaiah 57:19

"Peace, peace, to the far and to the near," says the LORD, "and I will heal him."

Psalms 118:22-23

²² The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

²³ This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

Isaiah 28:16

¹⁶ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, *"Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: 'Whoever believes will not be in haste.'"*

Growing Up in the Aftermath of God's Grace

Often we are aware of events before our birth that shaped our lives: WWII, 60's, 9/11.

Events that changed the structure of life on a large scale, and we strive to understand.

Paul wants the believers to realize they are in such a new situation, on a cosmic scale.

We were dead, but now God has made us alive. We were excluded aliens, but now the Messiah Jesus has destroyed the hostility and created peace. He has brought Jew and Gentile together, and thereby all humanity. He is creating a new humanity.

He did all of this before any of us humans had the capacity to grasp what he was doing.

Because of his unique identity: Messiah embodying Israel, Son of Man embodying humanity, Logos-God dwelling among us. He took on himself all that separated us from God and distorted our humanity (personal and cosmic), all focused in his death and resurrection (life created through death) and his pouring out the Spirit of God on humans.

He proclaims the result of what he has done: Peace to those far and near. There was a time when separation was real. Now all divisions are transcended in a greater unity.

The Impossible Chasm Bridged

But that unity is not just bringing people together in communities of shared interest. It is creating a firm access for all humanity across the impossible gulf between us and God.

We are here on an island. We depend on bridges/tunnels. How much further away Brooklyn or NJ were before the first bridges were built! Humans feel after God but can't reach him.

There could be real peace because humans are brought together in the one real access we have to the Creator who made us all. Jesus emptied himself and created the bridge. God crossed the bridge to be with us permanently in the Holy Spirit, God's own life in us.

Paul describes the change in human images of nation, clan, and temple. No foreigners, no aliens, rather fellow citizens. Even more: part of the same family/household of God.

No visas and green cards, now all can have full citizenship/inheritance in God's people.

But the place that had symbolized the bridge between God and humanity was the temple in Jerusalem. There in the holy of holies, God's presence with Israel had been symbolized by the space between the wings of the cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant, the mercy seat. But that room had long been empty and the Temple controlled by corrupt priests.

A Living, Growing House for God

Paul envisions our growth into Christ not only in individual terms but even more as a shared organic growth together, embodying the peace that is Jesus and the access to God he opens and the living presence of the Spirit working to enliven this new humanity.

It is a new living temple, a meeting place between God and humanity. It has solid foundations: The Prophets carrying the whole story of Israel. The Apostles chosen by the Messiah to symbolize the new Israel and bringing the whole story of Jesus.

But it is Jesus himself in all he has done that unites it all in an everlasting cornerstone.

We become part of a growing, living temple – no isolation in individualism – each with our place and particular contribution to the beauty of the whole. We are seated in heavenly places in the Messiah (2:6). God is seated in earthly places in his living temple in us!