

THROUGH THE BIBLE

EPHESIANS 1-2

Sergey Sudev is a student in the country of Moldova.

One day in October, 2008 Sergey got a knock on his door. A messenger was there with *good news and bad news*. *The bad news...* his uncle in Germany had died.

But there was also some *good news...* The uncle he hadn't seen in 10 years left Sergey an inheritance of 950 million euros - nearly \$1.3 billion - a sum of money equal to the budget of the entire country of Moldova.

Overnight Sergey Sudev became one of his Moldova's richest citizens. When first told of the news, supposedly Sergey remarked, "*Is this a Joke?*"

And when you read in the book of Ephesians of the inheritance we've received in Christ Jesus, we too are prompted to ask, "*Is this a Joke?*" The answer to our question is "*No! To the contrary, it's the Word of God.*"

As a believer in Jesus you've hit the jackpot... You've found the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow... You've hit the motherlode... You're a spiritual tycoon... And it's all because Jesus died and left you an inheritance.

Paul lists our spiritual blessings in Ephesians 1-3...

He begins, "*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus...*" I'm glad this letter was delivered to the Ephesians by a courier. If it had been sent by the post office it would've caused

confusion.

What do you do with a letter that has two addresses?

Paul writes to believers who are *“in Ephesus,”* and at the same time *“in Christ Jesus.”* These believers were living simultaneously in two locations. Physically they were *“in Ephesus”* - but spiritually they were *“in Christ.”*

And we also have two locations.

If Paul were writing to us today it would read, *“to the saints who are in Lilburn, and faithful in Christ Jesus.”*

Paul greets the Ephesians, *“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

When my wife use to send me love letters she would seal the envelope and squirt a little perfume on the flap. I could tell by the scent that it was a love letter.

This is the problem with email... they don't smell.

Well, Paul also squirts his letters with a special fragrance. They always smell of *grace and peace!*

Verse 3 declares, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ...”*

Wherever you're stationed physically you'll find the location to be limited. In Lilburn you can't go to the beach, or snow sky. Physically, we're limited, but not so spiritually. All God's blessings are available to us.

In Christ our lives butt up against another world.

We're connected by the Holy Spirit to a spiritual realm where we can draw upon the love, and power, and presence, and peace, and joy of Almighty God.

This means the key to living the Christian life and overcoming sin - is to avoid getting landlocked - from getting tied down to what's tangible and temporal. We need to see ourselves not just *in Lilburn*, but *in Christ*.

We've got to stay focused on *who we are and what we have as a child of God*. If we know who we are, we'll live like it. If we know what we have, we'll use it.

Now for the rest of the chapter Paul takes us on a tour - to get us acquainted with our blessings in Christ.

Our tour begins in verse 4, “*Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love...*”

The first blessing in the benefit package is that we've been chosen. Among the hordes of humanity who have walked this planet God picked you to be His child.

This means you didn't just wander into the family of God - your conversion was no fluke - God had His eye on you before the foundation of the world. Here's a mind blower - *Jesus went to the cross with you in mind!*

He continues verse 5, “*having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself...*”

It's true, the Bible teaches that our salvation depends on us choosing God - but the Bible also tells us that when we do, we discover that God chose us first.

It's been said when we walk through the gates of heaven we'll look up and read a

banner over the pearly gates, "Whosoever will may come!" - then after we've entered we'll look up at the other side and read the words, "Chosen before the foundation of the world."

And Paul also adds, we've been predestined for "*adoption.*" If you're in Christ God has adopted you as His son or daughter! *And the adopted child has one big blessing - he or she always knows they were wanted.*

An adopted child knows he's no accident - she's not a mistake. And we weren't forced on a reluctant God.

He cherishes us, and sacrificed to make us His own.

And here's why God adopted us, it was "*according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace...*" God chose you, to show off His grace.

When you were saved everyone knew there's no way a Bozo like you deserved such favor - there's no way you did anything to earn it - it was given freely.

We're proof that God is full of grace and mercy!

And he continues, by His grace "*He has made us accepted in the Beloved.*" There's no sweeter emotion than to feel accepted. To be granted full membership.

And "*in Christ*" we have been accepted into the most exclusive club in the universe - *the family of God.*

Also, "*In Him* (or in Christ) *we have redemption...*" The word "*redemption*" means "*to buy back.*"

Remember the story of the gingerbread man.

As soon as he came out of the oven he popped up from the cookie sheet and began taunting the grandma who'd baked him. He shouted, "Run, run as fast as you can, but nobody can catch a gingerbread man."

And off he ran with the grandma at his heels.

She chased him through the city streets until she found him trying to hiding in the window of the bakery.

She grabbed the gingerbread man, and was leaving when the baker said, "Wait, that'll be ten cents." The grandma pulled out a dime and handed it to the baker.

As she took him home, the grandma held the gingerbread man to her chest, and whispered, "First I made you, then I bought you - now, you're really mine."

And if you'll listen closely you'll hear the Spirit of God make the very same statement to you. *"First I made you, then I bought you, and now your really mine!"*

And notice how we're redeemed - "through His blood." The shed blood of Jesus is the purchase price.

Joe Kerkofsky was America's blood donor champion.

Joe lost an arm when he was six, so when WW 2 broke out he was rejected for military service. But Joe could give blood. Over his lifetime, Joe Kerkovsky gave 31 gallons, and saved the lives of countless people.

Remember the human body only holds 10-12 pints of blood, so Joe gave all he had more than 20 times.

Joe made the comment, "Giving blood makes you feel like you're contributing life itself. There's no more precious a gift than life. Money can't buy the joy of giving blood to help someone who needs it."

And those words could've been taken right out of the mouth of our Lord Jesus. Only one person has given more blood - and experienced greater joy from doing so - than Joe Kerkofsky - and that's Jesus Christ.

Millions have received life, and been redeemed by Jesus' blood. As the hymn puts it, "Would you be free from the burden of sin? Would you o'er evil a victory win? There's wonder-working power in the blood."

Next Paul tells us that God redeemed us for "the forgiveness of sins." He purchased our rights, not to enslave us and make us miserable - but to set us free!

God redeems us to forgive us!

There's a company in Michigan that posted a notice on its bulletin board... "Too err is human. To forgive is company policy!" And forgiveness is company policy in God's Kingdom. God is all about forgiveness.

In fact, the end of verse 6 tells us the extent of His forgiveness. It's "according to the riches of His grace."

When I write a check I sometimes get depressed. *My bills exceed my balance.* But what if I'm Bill Gates, Jr., and dad is paying my debts? I can breathe a sigh of relief. *Bill has more than enough to cover my bills.*

We need to realize that if we're in Christ, God is our Father, and He's the One who pays our debts. He's writing checks out of "the riches of His grace." This is why

there's more than enough to cover me! Trust Him. He forgives us according to **His riches**, not **our merit**.

Verse 8 tells us God made His grace to “**abound (or spill over) toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself...**” In other words, this lavish grace was God's idea, and no one else's. It pleases Him to be so kind.

“**That in the dispensation of the fullness of the times...**” Or when *the time is right* and *the age is over*.

Then “**He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth in Him.**” All history is headed for a grand climax.

Everything will mesh “**in Christ,**” and the redeemed of all ages will live forever together with our Lord Jesus.

Verse 11, “**In Him...**” And I hope it's sinking in. Where are our blessings found? Always “**In Him... In Christ...**”

“**In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will...**”

Sergey Sudev had a rich uncle. And you have a rich Father. And it's God's will to write you into His will.

It reminds me of the heirs who were just a little too eager to see their old man die and inherit his fortune.

After his death, they were sitting at the table, when the lawyer open his last will and

testament, "I, John Jones, being of sound mind and body, *spent it all.*"

Don't worry that won't happen to you. God has for us an inheritance. His blessings are for now *and eternity.*

"That we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation..."

Note how the Ephesians were saved... they "*trusted.*"

And 2000 years later, people are still saved the same way... through grace - by faith - in Christ - for His glory.

"In whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise..."

In the ancient world a seal was a mark of ownership. A merchant would plant his ring into hot wax, and the impression it left was that merchant's mark. It denoted what belonged to him.

Likewise the Holy Spirit is God's mark of ownership.

The Spirit's power and influence in us is proof that we belong to God. How can we consider ourselves "*in Christ*" if we're not effected by *the Spirit of Christ*?

The Holy Spirit is a big deal! Verse 14 says He's "*the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.*"

The Greek word translated "*guarantee*" refers to a purchaser's "*earnest money.*" The Holy Spirit is God's downpayment - the foretaste of the joys of heaven.

But the word, "*arrabon,*" has another meaning. Today in Greece, it's the word used

for an engagement ring. In ancient times it referred to the dowry or bridal price.

A dowry was a financial pledge given by a man to the family of his bride-to-be. It proved that his intentions to marry and support the daughter were genuine.

This makes for a beautiful picture when applied to Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is our engagement ring - He's our promise from Jesus - our assurance - that He intends return and take us as His bride!

You and I have been given tremendous blessings in Christ Jesus, but are we accessing those riches...

Henrietta Green, or "*Hetty*" as she was called, has the reputation of being the world's greatest miser

When Hetty died her estate valued \$95 million, yet she was so tight with her money she ate cold oatmeal each morning because she didn't want to pay to heat up her stove... Her son was forced to have her infected leg amputated because she kept putting off treatment to search for a free medical clinic, she was so stingy...

And I'm afraid the church is full of Hetty Greens! Folks who don't utilize the blessings they're given.

So what if there's wealth in the bank if you never draw it out. There are Christians who are spiritually starving while the pantries are stocked to the brim. In the rest of the chapter Paul prays a prayer designed to help these believers take advantage of their blessings.

Verse 15, "Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your

love for all the saints..."

Notice the two go together - faith in Jesus and love for His people. E. Stanley Jones describes the change the day he knelt to receive Christ. He recalls, "When I was converted and rose from my knees, the first thing I wanted to do was put my arms around the world."

And when Paul remembered their faith in Jesus and love for each other, he prayed for them, "(I) do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him..."

The Scriptures convey to us truth about God, but that's where a lot of Christians stop. *Knowing about God* and *actually knowing God* are not the same.

God wants us to sense His presence, be awed by His glory, warm ourselves by the fires of His love. He wants us to encounter Him not only academically in Bible Study, but spiritually as we open up our hearts.

There's an old hymn that reads, "Beyond the sacred page, I seek Thee, Lord - My spirit pants for Thee, O living Word." *Beyond the sacred page* - Paul prays that God will reveal Himself to us personally and intimately.

He also prays, and "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened..." Not only that we'll know the truths of Scripture, but we'll have the insight to apply them.

How many people saw apples drop from trees, but Isaac Newton deduced from it the law of gravity...

James Watt wasn't the first person to watch a steam kettle boil. But from the idea

he invented an engine...

I've seen apples fall and steam rise, but that's all I saw. My understanding lacked eyes to apply the truth in beneficial ways. We can't afford to be this dense when it comes to the blessings we have in Christ.

And next Paul lists three truths that we need to apply.

“That you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places...”

Notice, Paul asks God to help us apply: *“the hope of our calling...”* *“the riches of His inheritance in the saints...”* and *“the exceeding greatness of His power...”*

First, realize **the hope of your calling.**

You're a child of God, an heir of the King. That truth makes you somebody! What could better boost a sagging self-worth? So what if you missed Salesman of the year? Or Susie didn't invite you to her Pampered Chef party? Wake up, you're a child of Almighty God.

Second, realize God considers you **His inheritance!**

We mentioned God gives us an inheritance, but He too has an inheritance. God has an endowment for which He eagerly awaits. *And guess what it is?*

Hold onto your hat - *It's you!* You are what God longs for - to spend eternity with

you. Imagine, you are cherished by the one person who really matters.

Third, pray to realize **the greatness of His power.**

According to Paul, the same power that raised Christ from the dead and exalted Him to heaven is available to you! Acknowledge your weakness and hold up your tin cup under the spigot until God fills it to overflowing!

In verse 21 Paul tells us that Jesus has been exalted **“Far above all principality and power and might and dominion...”** He’s above the ranks of men and angels.

“And every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come...” Jesus is King of the Jungle. He rules the universe - for time and eternity.

Verse 22, **“And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all”**

Jesus has authority over men and angels, over time and eternity. Thus, let's not ever forget who is the head of our church - it's not the pastor, or board of elders, or deacons, or even the members - it's Jesus Christ!

Ephesians 2 is a rags to riches story and the main character is you! It describes how you grew up on the wrong side of the spiritual tracks, but in Christ you've overcome impossible odds to gain a glorious future...

The story begins, **“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins...”** Notice our problem is not just that you were maladjusted, or immature, or even sick - before you came to Christ you were dead!

Death in essence is separation. Physical death occurs when the spirit leaves the

body. Spiritual death is the state of the spirit being separated from God.

Spiritually speaking we came into this world stillborn. Since we all inherited the sin of the first man, Adam, we're born in sin and isolated from the life of God.

And understand the characteristics of dead people...

First, dead people are **unconscious**. They're unaware of what's going on around them. A corpse in the funeral home has no idea who comes to see him. They're not hearing the conversation in front of them.

Likewise those who are spiritually dead are oblivious to what's going on *"in Christ."* God may be at work - He may be speaking - but dead people don't realize it.

Second, dead people are **inactive**. Spent a little time with a dead guy, and you'll realize he's boring - no fun.

The conversation is usually *stiff*. People who are dead spiritually lack enthusiasm and energy to serve.

And third, dead people **decay**. There's an old joke. *Have you heard about the musical composer who died?... Now he spends all his time de-composing.*

There're no degrees to death - you're either dead or alive. Either you're in Christ or not. The social deviant and the sophisticated socialite are different on the outside, but inside they're equally dead. The only difference is their rate of decay. Some folks are more rotten than others, but everyone without Christ is dead.

Paul continues his description of us before we came to Christ, *"in which you once*

walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience..." Dead in sin, cut off from God - we fell under the influence of Satan and this wicked world.

"Among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others." Dead to God, sinners by nature, we sought fulfillment in sensual pleasure and material gain. *We were looking for love in all the wrong places.*

We made **the age-old mistake of trying to meet a spiritual need with a physical thing or thrill.** Yet all our attempts only led to more and more emptiness.

Verse 4... The first two words of verse 4 are some of the most comforting in all the Bible. **"But God..."**

To catch the essence of it, turn the words around, **"God butted in..."** He saw us partying on a sinking ship. He could've allowed us to have our way and stumble into eternity without Him, **"but God!"** He crashed the party. He loves us enough to intervene in our misery.

God sent Jesus, and offers to save us. **"But God"** - may be the most important two words in the Bible.

"But God who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us..." Notice, God is rich in what we need most - *mercy!* It's been said, **"God's throne isn't made of marble, but of mercy."**

In fact, God's throne is called, **"the mercyseat."**

Imagine, His throne - the place from where He rules - is the very place where

wayward people come to find forgiveness and hope... *That tells us a lot about God.*

An old man was on his deathbed, when a relative in the room whispered, "he's going to receive his reward."

The dying man heard it, and mustered up enough energy to correct him, "No! I'm going to receive mercy."

Only a fool wants what's coming to him, what he deserves - *I want God's mercy!* Long before we ever thought of God, or took any initiative toward Him - He loved us, and did the work necessary to save us.

Paul explains that "even when we were dead in trespasses, (God) made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)..." I like how the Old King James puts it, "(God) quickened us..."

He jump started us with a spark of spiritual life. Like a car thief hot-wiring a car. Jesus took hold of God's wire in one hand, and our wire in the other, and caused a connection. He arced a spark. He created life in us!

God planted *His Holy Spirit* into *our hollow spirit*.

That's why, "Fear not that your life will come to an end, but rather that it will never have a beginning." Real life only starts when you become alive to God.

And God has "raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus..."

Air Force One is the President's private 747. It has a protective thermonuclear shield, 19 TV monitors, 85 telephones, 7 lavatories. The President has his own

stateroom, dressing room, office, dining room, *and all the peanuts, pretzels, and Bischoff cookies he wants.*

In the event of an all out nuclear war on Earth the President can soar off on AF1 and sit comfortably above it all - to make decisions with perspective.

And likewise, God has us seated in heavenly places.

In Christ you have all that you need to sit comfortably and peacefully even when hell breaks loose in the situations around you. You have an eternal perspective from which you can make the right calls here on Earth.

Ironically, the first step in the Christian life is not *a step* at all - it's *a sit!* **The first step is to learn to sit.**

Before we *do anything for God* we need to see *what God has done for us...* Before you *stand for God* first *sit with God...* Before we can impact our circumstances we need to rest in the midst of those circumstances.

We need to rely totally on God and His blessings.

I love verse 7 because it tells us what we're going to be doing for all eternity... Here's a list I found. It's the Top Ten reasons to look forward to heaven...

10) You can begin the Lord's Prayer, 'Our Father, who art here...' **9)** You can get an answer to the question, 'why?' **8)** In heaven '*Touched By An Angel*' isn't just a television rerun. **7)** Soul music for eternity.

6) Real golden arches. **5)** A great view. **4)** '*No pain, no gain*' becomes '*no pain, no pain*'. **3)** When you say, '*Oh God*' you'll hear, '*What?*'. **2)** Mansions with no mortgages. And the **number one** reason to look forward to heaven. "Totally fat free."

Here in verse 7 Paul explains what we'll really be doing in heaven...

“That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” For all eternity Jesus will peel back layer after layer of His amazing grace and love for us.

Here's a quote that's funny, but true... **"Millions long for immortality who don't know what to do with themselves on a rainy Saturday afternoon."**

Eternity is a lot of time on your hands - will you grow bored? How will you spend forever? Well, there's only one thing to keep us mesmerized for eternity - that's the sacrifice of Jesus and the extravagance of grace...

Several years ago Kathy and I took our kids to the nursing home to minister to the old folks. On the way home we were discussing how God will give out rewards in eternity. Zach has always been a thinker. Even at seven years old he was a little theologian.

He asked, **"Dad, if we're going to have everything in heaven, what's left for God to give to us as a reward?"**

That's a good question and it sent dad groping for an answer. My silence though was broken by Natalie. She answered for me, ***"Zach, God will reward us with a hug and a kiss!"*** *Could there be a greater reward?*

God will spend the ages to come showing us ***"the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ."*** He'll fill up eternity with spiritual hugs and kisses. Each day will be more thrilling than the last.

Verse 8, “**For by grace you have been saved through faith...**” What prompted God to *butt in* and save us?

Well, make no mistake about it - it had nothing to do with our performance, our goodness, our righteous deeds, or noble heritage. Paul declares, “**and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God...**” Its prompted by grace, and flows from God’s heart. It’s a gift I receive.

Paul adds, “**not of works, lest anyone should boast.**”

If it were wages earned, then I could brag and take credit. Rather than abolish my pride, salvation would play right into its hands. God is smarter than that...

For me to be saved I have to humble myself - admit I'm slacker. All salvation costs any of us is our pride!

And then verse 10, “**For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.**”

There’s an old saying, “**Good works never make us fit for God, but God does make us fit for good works.**”

Like buying a used car, God accepts me “*as is,*” but He doesn't leave me that way. He works to refurbish my life. He goes to work turning ugliness into beauty.

Paul says, “***we are (God's) workmanship,***” or His “*poema*” - *His poem*. We are God's special work of art.

Our lives are the canvas on which He paints. We’re the scroll on which He writes. When we come to Christ we become the medium through which the Artist of the

Universe expresses His thoughts, intents, and heart.

Verse 11, “Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh who are called **Uncircumcision** by what is called the **Circumcision** made in the flesh by hands...” In other words, Gentiles were distinguished from Jews by an external mark called circumcision.

Jews wore it. Gentiles didn't. It highlighted that they were separate peoples. It was the line of demarcation.

Now “that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without **God in the world.**” Since the promise of salvation was given to Israel and since Gentiles were alienated from Jews - the Gentiles had no hope.

Not because God wasn't willing to be gracious, but outside Israel the Gentiles had limited access to God.

In that sense, *race* was a barrier to *grace*.

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

Understand Jews and Gentiles were as far apart as the **North American Hunting Club** and **Peta**. Jews were religious and principled - Gentiles were secular and pragmatic. The two groups had very little in common.

But when a Jew and a Gentile receives the free gift of Jesus the distance between them is covered.

The distinctions are abolished - instantly they're standing on common ground. They're *brought near!* Literally “compressed together.” Through the blood of Jesus people are united who had nothing in common.

Verse 14, “For He Himself is our peace...” Notice, Jesus doesn't give peace. “*He Himself is our peace!*”

It's His presence - it's knowing He's near, holding His hand - that's what brings about a sense of peace, and rest, and security. Don't pray for God's peace - pray that God will reveal in your life the presence of Jesus!

“Who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity (the source of friction and hostility), that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances...”

The Law of Moses was the culprit that kept Jews and Gentiles separated. Its customs and rituals created a different culture for Jews that made it difficult for them to relate to Gentiles, and for Gentiles to relate to Jews.

The myriad of distinctions created by the Law also produced a pride in the Jews, and a judgmental spirit.

But by replacing the Law with Jesus, God tore down the reasons for our division. The Law belonged to Jews, but Jesus belongs to both Jews and Gentiles.

The Law was exclusive to Jews. Jesus is inclusive.

And likewise for us... Some of us are male, others female - some white, some black - some rich, some poor - some married, some single - some boomers, some Gen-

Xers - some like loud music, some like soft music. Some enjoy hot chili, some prefer sweet chili.

We too are as different as Jews and Gentiles. And given the chance we'll find reasons over which we'll divide. **It's Jesus that makes us one!** He's the commonality that's greater than any of our differences.

And Jesus desires **"to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace..."** He doesn't want us to be divided any longer. He died to make us one.

We've missed the point if we separate Christ into various subcultures - "Young and Old" or "Black and White" or "Male or Female." The only division that's allowed to stand is **"in Christ"** and **"apart from Christ."**

Verse 16, **"And that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity."** We all come through the same door.

In Christ we're joined at the cross.

In a spiritual sense, cut any of us and when we bleed it's not *my blood*, or *your blood*, but *Christ's blood!*

"And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near." The Gospel is one size fits all! Its everyman's answer - Jew and Gentile - hipster and button-down - redneck and urban.

"For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." The same Spirit dwells in each of us.

There's not a Holy Spirit for *honkies*, and a Holy Spirit for *homeys*. It's the same

Spirit in all believers.

“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God...” Once we were “*strangers.*” We lacked a passport to God’s blessings.

But now we’re adopted into the family. In fact, we’ve been born again. Now we have the right credentials!

And Jesus is building His house - His Church.

We're told in verse 20, “*having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone...*” The apostles and prophets played a special role in the early church. They established foundational doctrine and practice.

But Jesus is the cornerstone - the one load-bearing rock - on which everything rests. Many a church has learned the hard way - remove Him and it all crumbles.

And *in Christ* “*the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.*” And today, Jesus continues to build. Each of us - you and me - are planks in God’s house.

Notice these last four verses the Church is depicted in four ways... *nation - household - building - Temple.*

We’re *one race, one family, one structure* built with strong underpinnings, and we’re *one Temple...*

In the OT, the Temple was God's dwelling place on the Earth. Today, God's Spirit hangs out in His Church.

Wouldn't it be cool if CC got the reputation in our community as the place where you can find God?