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Main Idea: Our Lord has made it possible for us to have peace with God, because He is the peace who broke the barriers. Those who could never come to God can now be in right relationship with Him. Jesus Christ did for us and for the Father by being the once and for all sacrifice to pay our debt of sin, satisfying the law. Thus, when we are in Christ, we are no longer hostile in our relationship with God. In Christ, we have the power to build healthy relationships with God and others. So, we are a new humanity because of the cross with access to God. We are even called His citizens and children--people of God, for God--built from the foundation of what Christ has done. This is the Truth and has been preached by the apostles and the prophets who came before them. We are His new holy temple. Christ is our Cornerstone, so we are also His dwelling for the Holy Spirit.

Contexts and Background:

The *two groups, one*, is extremely significant in the history of Jewish redemption and how God works His plan. Non-Jews could not participate in the Temple or in God's covenant unless they were circumcised and converted; after this, they would be grafted onto, adopted in. Also, each section of the temple was divided in this manner: the Gentiles, women, men, priests, and, finally, the high priest. Now, God *destroyed the barrier!* He adopts all people who accept Christ as Lord. No longer is there division between the people and God; there is no division between priests and people or between priests and high priests. (Only the high priest--once a year--had access to the Holy of Holies.) How wholehearted and endearing Paul's exhortation is, especially considering how diverse the early church was! While there are certainly divisions today, in Paul's time and before, the division was far greater than we have now. Here were aristocrats, slaves, trades people, artists, political officials, outcasts, and people from all walks of life, cultures, and skin colors, all coming tighter together in Christ! Now we all come to Him (1 Kings 8:41-43).

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Our peace.* This means God who is the *Author of peace*, our encouragement! This is usually a benediction and a title for God. Even in the face of struggles and hardships, we are to refer to and focus upon God as comfort and know that He is in control, even when we do not see it! If we just live our lives with the attitude of how things affect "me" and not "others," then we are living with the devil, and not with God (Micah 5:5; Rom. 15: 33; 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:11; Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 5:23-28; 2 Thess. 3:16; Heb. 13:20)!
- *Wall of hostility.* This is our barrier to God and to other people, men, women, Gentiles; this barrier is removed because of Christ.
- *New humanity.* Because Christ offered Himself up as the once and for all sacrifice, we are new. Man, woman, young, old, black, white, European, Asian--there is no to God, and we all can have an intimate relationship with Him!
- *Reconcile.* This means that God has paid our penalty, so the severed relationship between humanity and God is repaired and restored! This is the basic Gospel message. We are all sinners and have no worth, merit, or ability to receive salvation. So, in God's mercy, He sent us His Son, whose sacrifice paid our debt of sin. We were once enemies; but, by being reconciled, we are brought back to a perfect relationship. This also refers to order and not just salvation,

God *reconciles* all things and is supreme over all things (Gen. 3; Rom. 3:21-26; 5:10-12; 8:18-21, 37-39; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Eph. 2:2; 6:12; Col. 1:19-23; 2:9-15; 2 Pet. 3:10; 1 John 2:1; Rev. 21:1).

- *Far..... near.... Access to the Father.* A fulfilled prophecy by Isaiah, God's peace extends to all people. Gentiles were far off and the Jews near. Whereas the Jews were to be the chosen people to be God's Light, now all have access to God (Isa. 57:19).
- *One Spirit.* Our unity in Christ. In context, this is a stand against racism, classism, tyranny, and segregation, as all people are the same under God. There is NO distinction. Meanwhile, during this time, there was civil unrest of Syrians, Jews and Christians killing one another, and, so it goes today (Acts 23:23).
- *Foreigners.* The outcast Gentiles now can take part with the Patriarchs, while Abraham's own children are being left out, because of willful disobedience. This is a challenge to prejudice, as many Jews saw God and heaven was for them only; only they are 'chosen' to be entitled to God. When they were chosen for a special relationship with God to be His Light to all peoples. Paul deals with Jews who harden themselves to the Gospel, as the Gentiles are being grafted in. It is faith that determines our eternal destiny, not our birthright. When we are in Christ, we are all foreigners as the world is not our real or permanent home; rather, our true home is to come. We become scattered from all that we know and need to honor and embrace our Lord Jesus Christ more firmly, more fully, and more joyfully--to enjoy Him (Gen. 12:1-3; Isa. 25:6; 56:3-8; 57:19; Matt. 8: 5- 13; Acts 2:39).
- *Foundation.* We, as Christians, stand on the shoulders of those who come before us, building on their work as others will build upon ours. This alludes to the total Divine Sovereignty of our Lord; He is in control! This also means we have the responsibility for our faith and actions (Rom. 9:14-24).
- *Cornerstone.* This was a large stone laid at the foundation of a building to be a "footer," and to "plumb" the rest of the building so it was square and secure. This was essential to the structure of the building. Buildings were laid by cut stones, interlocked by gravity and force, and without mortar, all relying and leaning on one another. Without proper stone placement, buildings in the ancient world would not last long or would fall during construction. Here, we have an image of how our Lord is our *cornerstone*, our Hope. He is our All in All--we can trust in Him! This means Jesus is the Spiritual Temple. He is the place and focus of worship. It is no longer a building; it is a community in relationship to Him. Jesus was a carpenter in His human occupation and perhaps frequently worked with stonemasons or did masonry, too. Paul picks up this image from the Gospels. Christ is the Stone, our Giver of life, our Source and Substance for all we are and do (Psalm 118:22; Isa. 8:14; 28:16; Matt. 21:42; Mark 11:10; 12:10; Luke 20:17; John 1:4; Acts 4:11; 1 Cor. 3:10-11; 15:20-28, 45; Eph. 2:20; 1 Peter 2: 4-10)!
- *Holy temple.* The image in Scripture is as God dwelt in His Temple, so He now dwells in our hearts, minds, and actions; we exhibit His faithfulness by our faithfulness (Luke 11:1-13; John 15:16; Acts 1:11f; 2; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21; 1 John 5:14; Rev. 3:20).
- *Dwelling.* We are now the temple of the Holy Spirit! This is a Greek term meaning *where a god chooses to go or a place to live*. Jesus being fully God, there is only One God and the Father's interpersonal relationship with the Trinity. Here it refers to God Who dwells in the Temple and now in us, too. The Tabernacle, God's dwelling place prior to the Temple being built, was about God dwelling amongst man, being with them. This was to show the Promised Land was not just

about the possession of the land; rather, it was about God possessing our hearts and minds. The Temple was a man's idea so to place God in a permanent location--a God of limitless boundaries. On the contrary, we can't possess God. It is He who desires to possess us. It is about being humble, so we are dependent upon Him and His dwelling amongst us, as we are full in Him (2 Chron. 7:1-18; Eph. 2:16; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 1:8)!

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

Because of His Love that we receive, we are called, not obligated, to pay it forward. We have the responsibility to act on Christ's work; once God elects us and the Gospel message is proclaimed, we receive this by faith alone. Therefore, our response to His work further fuels our faith and our disposition and character. This is also a call that we can persevere in Christ; nothing can move us from Him when we are in Him. If we have real effectual faith, that faith will stimulate, endure, and carry us through all things. Our faith anchors us to God, sets us upon Him as Lord, and takes our eyes off our circumstances so we see hope and joy. Thus, this real kind of faith is in Christ alone; the world may mimic it, but this is only an imitation to facilitate emptiness and despair. Is your faith real? The answer will signify your hope and confidence in Christ! This is the faith that produces more faith, devotion, obedience, and glory to our Lord (Mark 16:15; Acts 11:23; 14:22; Rom. 8; 1 Cor. 3:11; 7:37; 15:58; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Phil. 1:6; 2:11-13)!

Church Leadership Tip: We are God's living stones, so let's live it! Remember, God is also our Peace. Nothing will destroy a church or ministry quicker than when peace is absent, because strife, competition, dissension, power plays, personal agendas and gossip will take root, all of which eventually lead to divisions in a church (Rom.13: 13; Gal. 5:19-20).

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions, see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. What has been your response to the Gospel?
2. How our Lord, your *cornerstone*, your Hope? How does this help you with conviction to know He is our All in All-we can trust in Him?
3. Have you realized that when we are in Christ, we are all foreigners? This world is not our real or permanent home; rather, our true home is to come! What does this mean for your trust and growth in Him?
4. How has Christ helped you rise above and overcome your fears, hurts, expectations, and circumstances? How can He be more so?

5. What took place in your life for you to believe Who and what Christ did for you? Why do most Christians not like the fact that we have a "condition" attached to His grace?
6. How do you feel that anyone who is far away from God now has the opportunity to know God? What if someone you hated became a Christian? How would you/should you respond?
7. What do we have to do for this work of grace to happen? If grace is free when we do not deserve it, why do we have to do something to receive His work?
8. How can your faith stimulate, endure, and carry you through all things in life? How can you better anchor yourself to God and take your eyes off your circumstances so you can see more hope and joy?
9. What does it take to remain faithful and true to God in Christ by the Way of the Spirit? How can you do this better? So how do you live now? How can your eyes be upon Christ?
10. What happens when a Christian, even a church collectively skips its responsibility to act on Christ's work?
11. How important is diversity to you and your church? Why do most churches only cater to one ethnic group? Is that biblical? What does God see and want in your church?
12. Because of Christ's Love that we receive, what do you feel you are called, not obligated, to play forward?