

Displays of power, physical power, are always fascinating to me....especially natural power....hurricanes, volcanoes, the vastness of the universe. One power that has especially been intriguing recently is just considering what is at the core of the earth.

Core of the earth is believed to be made of a nickel-iron alloy; is 760 miles across, and has a temperature similar to the sun: 9800 F.

There's another sort of power at work in the world....i like the power of the core, it goes largely unnoticed....

### God Is (Powerfully) Building a House

Read the Text

This morning I want to talk with you from Ephesians 2 about the Church that God is Building. And I want you to invite into that work.

The first thing you'll need to **see is the context**.

At the end of chapter 1 Paul prays that the **Ephesians would come to know the POWER that raised Jesus** from the dead. **Read 1.18-23**. And then in chapter 2 Paul describes how that power has already been at work in and around them. He gives **two examples of this power**. Surely there are others, but these are foundational displays of God's power.

If you are like me, when you see that text, that prayer, you are thinking, "Give me that power....in my life, I need some power....i need you to move in this thing God...." Well....here it is this morning....that power is available. Stick with me and I'll show you.

Over the last 2 weeks, Rod taught us concerning the **first display of power**—namely that sinners who were dead in trespasses and sins, were made alive, as a free gift of God's grace....not because of good works, but because of grace. And those newly born sinners were empowered, and commissioned for good works prepared for them before the foundation of the world. This is the display of **God's power at the individual, internal level**. You got saved....you are serving the Savior. I am too. He, she....they are also.

Our text for today brings to us the **second display of God's power**. And instead of being a display of power at the level of **the individual level, it is a**

**display of power at the corporate, group level**. You see this in how it is groups that are being referred to and contrasted in **verse 11**: the Gentile, uncircumcision group v. the Jewish, circumcision group.

It is a display of God's power in a groups: **Jew and Gentile (two groups) are made into one group (or one new man), through God's power**. This new group is called **the church**.

Now, at first glance, creating the church, may not seem like such a great display of power. I hope that in a minute, you'll see that is very wrong.

But first, I need you to be convinced that what is being discussed in this text is in fact the creation of the church.

### 1. The Church is Created

We are going to skip to the end of the section for our first, and **most obvious clue**.

Beginning at verse 19. Notice the, 'so then,' indicating that what he's about to say is an effect of what has been said. So the effect of what has been said is 3 things. Notice them quickly:

-19—we are no longer strangers and aliens, but fellow **CITIZENS** with the saints. That means that **Christians have become part of a new city or kingdom**.

-19—we are now members of the **HOUSEHOLD** of God. That means Christians have become **part of a new family**.

-20-22— we are built on the **FOUNDATION** of the prophets and apostles where Christ is the **CORNERSTONE**....we are part of a structure...a temple....and are being built together as a place for God to dwell. That means that Christians are **part of a new building**.

Now, **take each of these metaphors**....a city...a family...a building. Those are all metaphors for the **church**. The church is all people from all time who have been brought near to God through the death of Jesus. This universal body of believers find expression in local churches where they gather together....like the church in Ephesus. Or this church.

We don't have time to go to each of these passages, but if you are taking notes, jot down these references:

- The city or nation metaphor is used of the church in **Hebrews 12.22-23**.

- The family metaphor is used of the church all of over the NT...God is our Father, and Jesus is our firstborn brother. Other Christians are our brothers and sisters.
- The building metaphor is used of the church in **Hebrews 3 and 1 Corinthians 3**.

Do you see it? **The power display that Paul is talking about here is the creation of the church.**

Now, notice a couple of things about the creation of the church.

- First, it's a real miracle.
- Second, the power display in you individually—ie, your transfer from death to life (the text from the last 2 weeks) is intrinsically linked to the creation of the church.

**Ok, so first, the creation of the church is a real, genuine miracle.** Now, you may be **tempted to think its not**. Some would look at the church and not be that impressed--some **likeminded people get together**, have regular gatherings, support causes, etc. That's the church...a spiritualized version of a **political action group**, and an **environmental group**, or **Moms of Preschoolers**. But, that is not it at all.

What God did in creating the church, would be **impossible by any human measure**. When God created the church, he brought **Jews and Gentiles together into one body**: two groups that had been separate from one another and hostile to one another for centuries.

This may not seem like a big deal to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but it was/is a very big deal. I read **one commentator** this week that said that the **greatest triumph of the gospel in the first century** was that Jews and Gentiles came together into one city....one family...one building....one church.

**\*ill.\*** I heard the story this week of a **school bus driver** who was having behavior problems on his bus....blacks&whites....you are green, etc. but pretty quickly...I want all the light green kids over here, and all the dark green kids over here.

He was **trying to create a third race....but it didn't work**. What **God has done in creating the church, is to create a new race....a third race**. We are not Jewish, firstly....We are not Gentile firstly....we are sons of God, first and foremost.

To see how amazing this is, we have to go **backwards a bit**.

Long before Jesus lived, died and rose, **God had chosen Israel** from all the peoples on the earth for his own **special possession** and had given promises to this people unlike those given to any other people. For example in **Deuteronomy 14:2** Moses reminds the people of Israel, "You are a people holy to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth."

And not only are they his people, but **he is their God in a very unique** and special way. The heart and essence of the covenant that God made with Israel in **Genesis 17:7** is this: "I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you . . . to be God to you and to your descendants after you." And when he reaffirms it at the Exodus, he says to them, "I will take you for my people and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God" (**Exodus 6:7**).

So Israel was God's chosen people, he was their God. Part and parcel with this unique relationship with God was a **separation from Gentiles**.

- We see this in **verses 14 and 15**: this dividing wall of hostility is a **figurative description of the very real hostility that existed between these two ethnic groups**. When Paul writes this he may have in mind the **actual wall** at the Jerusalem temple that separated the court of the Gentiles from the actual sanctuary. At various places along this wall there were signs in Hebrews and Greek **forbidding Gentiles to pass beyond it, less they face death**.
- Paul continues in 15: Christ abolishes the law of commandments expressed in ordinances. This is **the law of Moses that was intended, in large part, to keep the nation of Israel separate from the surrounding Gentiles world**. It had morphed into a source of Jewish pride and arrogance. But **Christ has come, in his flesh, and perfectly obeyed that law, thus fulfilling it, and removing believers from its condemnation**.

The divide here was as big or bigger than any we see today between black and white or red and white or Asian and African, etc.

**Notice in verse 12** how far away Gentiles were from Israel, and Israel's God.

But, God had a plan to make a church out of Jews and Gentiles together. This plan is the mystery of Christ that Ephesians 3 is going to talk about.

Now, its **very common among Christians to believe that God's effort to rescue Israel and his effort to rescue Gentiles are parallel, non-intersecting works**. God does good to Jews apart from Jesus. And does good to Gentiles through Jesus.

But that isn't what we see in this text: **2.13-15, 19**

**As Gentile Christians, you and I have been brought into a Jewish inheritance. We have our salvation because we are fellow citizens with Israel and have become heirs of the promise of Abraham.**

- At one time we were **separated** from Christ, but now Christ has come near to us.
- We were **alienated** from the commonwealth of Israel, but now are fellow citizens with the saints.
- We were **strangers** to the covenants, now the promises are our inheritance.
- We were without **God and without hope**, but now we are members of his household; heirs of all that he has to give.

And the whole picture here is **not that we move into these blessings apart from Israel but as one new man with Israel**—through one Savior, one cross, into one church...all with access to the Father through his son Jesus.

The picture here is that **the true Israel becomes the church of Christ and the church of Christ emerges as the true Israel**. And what unites this new people is Jesus.

Not Jew and Greek, not slave and free, not male and female, not barbarian, Scythian, free, but Christ is all and in all, Galatians 3.28.

**So, if you are a Gentile who is trusting in Jesus, you are an heir of the goodness promised to God's people Israel.** You can read of your heritage in the Old Testament. You can **await the Messiah's return** when he will establish the glorious kingdom of the Son of David.

So, that is the **first thing to see** about the creation of the church...it's a true display of divine power because it **brought hostile people together into one family**. And it is still doing that today as people from every tribe and tongue and nation are declaring the greatness and glory of Jesus Christ together.

Its why I hope **our church only increases in its diversity** across ethnic, political, and social lines.

The more that our church displays the diversity of the universal church, the more the power of God is put on display here for the glory of God.

**\*ill.\***That is one of the reasons that we are so excited to be able to teach the **English as a Second Language** class this fall....

But don't think that diversity is only ethnic....it can take other forms....and you are to be commended in this way....

At the **nursing home** on Wednesday we had **parents and young people** serving together.

Its not uncommon to see **single people and married people** interacting as close friends in this church.

We have people whose **spouse is not a Christian who are close knit** part of the body here.

We have **college students serving in key places** here.

I think we need **more worship music celebrating the corporate nature of the Christian life**. One such song by Keith and Kristen Getty contains the line, "Beneath the cross of Jesus His family is my own— Once strangers chasing selfish dreams, Now one through grace alone."

This **truly is the power of God put on display**. God's church is created from peoples formerly hostile to one another. But through Jesus they are reconciled to God, and to one another.

**[Now, let me stop here and make two applications of all that we've seen so far.](#)**

First application: the power of God is put on display in that peoples hostile to one another are **reconciled**. And not only reconciled, but together are made **into one new man**....a third race, if you will.

The body of Christ is a body where **unreconciled relationships are so at odds with the reality of what Christ has done** in creating the body that they **cannot continue without casting doubt on a person's true participation in the body**. This may be THE GREAT practical challenge of applying this text in our daily lives.

Are you unreconciled to any brother or sister in this church?

In light of how God has reconciled you...how can you not lay aside your pride and self-protection, and seek to be reconciled to others?

**It does not, frankly, surprise me when Christians sin and hurt one another.** But what it **really shocking** to me is when Christians exist for years on end in the same church with a brother or a sister, and are never reconciled to one another.

Please stop denying the gospel with your actions—be reconciled to a brother or sister.

Second Application: **this is a political issue, though I don't mean in any way to come down on either side of a political question.** The issue is that of immigration. And people are lining up on **both sides of the fence** about what to do with all of the immigrants, many of them illegal, who have come to our country. Whatever your position on this issue, **as Christians, the primary thing about immigration that should be our concern is that the nations are now at our door...God is making missions and evangelism easier for us.....IMMIGRATION IS A TOOL FOR US TO ADVANCE THE GOSPEL.** This is cause for thanksgiving. Whatever your position on immigration it is sinful for us to hold anything resembling a racist view....God has brought us near to Himself because of his great love....**let's be sure that we have the same kind of love for the nations that God has brought to us....w/o respect to our position on immigration.**

At the end of the day this world is not our home anyway. Right? We have marching orders until our king comes back. And he will build his church in spite of the policies and laws of any given country.

[There is a second item to see here regarding the creation of the church.](#)

Do you remember how Paul wrote about our individual salvation at the beginning of chapter 2....verses 1-3...and then one of the great 3 letter words in all the Bible in verse 4, 'But God...'

Now, notice our text today...vs. 11-12.....doesn't that sound very similar to 1-3 above? Basically, *you are hopeless in your sin.....*and now verse 13: But now in Christ Jesus....it's gloriously good, isn't it?

But here's the thing I want you to notice. The first half of chapter 2 shows us the power of God in transforming dead sinners into alive, converted Christians. **That is internal, individual change.** The **second half shows us the power of God transforming hopeless sinners into members of the household of God.** **That is corporate, external, relational change.** Both are miracles.

**In other words, when you become a Christian, its not just God that you get right with. You also come into the church.**

It is very important to see that one immediate effect of being reconciled to God, is that **you are reconciled to the people of God.** You are brought near to God, and immediately brought near to other blood-bought sons and daughters of God.

This kind of teaching really **flies in the face of the American ethic** of our day.

If you are honest, **it may be that it flies in the face of your own personal ethic.**

While there is a **great spiritual hunger in America.....**there is no hunger for religion, or church....its a very **individualized hunger.....**

Now, this raises the objection: **are you saying that I can't be saved unless I'm a member of the church?** *no that's not what I'm saying. But neither is that the question that is being asked here.*

**Here's the question:** can the power of God work through your life individually and internally w/o working through your life corporately and relationally?

Or to say it **another way**, can you be changed from outside the community? *My answer....I believe the answer of this text is, 'no, you can't.'*

If you are looking to be **changed by God**, than recognize that you are a stone, and get yourself cemented into the building where God dwells.

When asked the question, “**Do you think you can be a good Christian or Jew w/o attending a church or synagogue?**” 81% of Americans answer, ‘yes.’

**\*ill.\*** Rod/Peeler anecdote from Baltimore

That is where we are as Americans. That may be where you are. But the Bible says no.

We may be able to fabricate a **God in our minds that helps us individually w/o connecting us to a community**. But that is not the God of Ephesians 2.

**How involved do I have to be?**

## **2. the Church is Connected**

I don’t have an **exact formula** to answer that question. Like you need to be on the phone with other Christians this many times a week, and you need to have coffee with a small group of Christians friends this often, and you better come to Bible study, etc.

I don’t have answer to that. But **in this text we see that the church is connected network of relationships that together form a dwelling place for God**. Let me make **2 observations** about the connectedness of the church from the text, and you be the judge of how we should prioritize our time and energy.

### **a. The corporate dimension of our relationship with God**

In verses 11 and 12 we saw that we were strangers and aliens, separated and far off. Many of you have experienced this in your lives. You’ve felt far off; alone.

**\*ill.\*** boy lost at KD...found by Mom, and then the rest of the family.

Notice that we are **connected to God along with others**:

- v.16—reconcile us BOTH to God in ONE body
- v.19—both have access in ONE spirit
- v.19—FELLOW citizens and MEMBERS

And then maybe most profoundly, **God dwells in a building...not in stones**.  
-We experience God most profoundly, together.

Does that mean that you can **only know God as a part of the church**? No, but it means that the **more alone you are in your Christianity the less intimate your relationship with God is going to be**.

**Intimacy with God depends on the amount and depth of our connection to other Christians**. Jesus **does not inhabit stones, but he does inhabit a building**.

The more you hear from other Christians about **their relationship** with God; how they are **learning about him; walking with him**, the **closer you yourself will grow to God**.

Other Christians **know parts of Jesus that you don’t know**...know them closely, and you will know him better.

**\*ill.\*** Most of you know about the famous friendship between CS Lewis and JR Tolkien. There was a third, less famous member of this group of male friends. His name was Charles Williams.

CS Lewis tells the story of Williams’ death and how he looked forward having Tolkien all to himself as a friend. **But he later discovered that there were things about Tolkien, that only Charles could bring out**. And rather than getting more of Tolkien to himself, he actually got less of him, w/o Charles there to draw it out.

Now think of the infinite, multi-dimensional Jesus.

**The more alone you are in your Christianity, the less of God you are going to come to know**.

Here’s the 2nd observation from this text pointing us to the connectedness of the Church

### **b. The nature of the Trinity**

Look at **verse 18**

When you become a Christian, you are connected to the Triune God.

Some religions have many Gods—**polytheism**...different wills, fight, compete....different personalities

**Monotheistic religions** (Judaism, Islam)—from all eternity he was by himself until he began to create angels and humans....but **relationship was not intrinsic to him**.

In Polytheism, you have **diversity, but no unity**. And on the other side you have **unity, but no relationship**.

In Christianity, we have 1 God in 3 persons. We have a God who is **3 persons, with one soul, one will, one heart**....all working together for our salvation....from all eternity.

Our doctrine of God is that at the essence of **God is love, communication, unity and diversity....relationships**....3 persons loving one another, until one day they created a race beings that could participate in that.

How can you **relate to a God who is a community w/o participating in community yourself?** He is **deeply, intrinsically relational**. That should push us into community....a community of love, and truth and mission in the world.

**If it doesn't, he seems to bring into question how well we know this God.**

**Now, here's something to consider.** Way back in February, we decided to plan a church retreat out of a conviction that as a church, we should seek to grow in our connectedness.

The retreat is not just a fun social event. It's an attempt on our part to live out the doctrine Paul is teaching us about in Ephesians 2.

If you have been on the fence about the retreat, let me ask you: come. Come with a view not just about your own spiritual well being. But with a view to being a part of what God is doing in connecting this body.

**We are drawing to a close now.**

The great truth that we've seen is that **when God reconciles us to himself, he also reconciles us into a family, the church.**

When we come to **grips with this reality, we get connected to this family**, the church. And then we begin to **work to see all sorts of other people** adopted themselves.

Now, **where does the motivation to build our lives in that way come from?** We've been hitting at the edges of this all morning.

### **3. The Church is Cross Centered**

Notice **what God did to bring peace** where there was before only hostility. This is **the power that the bus driver** trying to make everyone think they were green **lacked**.

Notice a particular group of words we have not pointed out yet:

Verse 13---blood

Verse 15—abolish

Verse 16—cross

Verse 16--killing....

**God killed the hostility, both among men, and b/t God and men....by declaring war on his own Son.**

In other words, He killed the hostility by killing his Son.

You see God is not just a **really friendly character standing with open arms** at the gate of the magic kingdom inviting us in.

The invitation God extends to us comes at great cost to Himself...it comes (because of our sin) at the **expense of his Son**.

His death also makes a **way for peace in horizontal relationships** b/c no longer do we view one another through the lenses of **ethnicity, or socioeconomics**, or political affiliation, but through **shared union with Christ**. This is **displayed quite dramatically in our text b/c Jews and Gentiles**—fierce opponents by nature—are made into one new man as they are both joined to Christ.

Please hear me now. **Jesus paid a very high price to bring sinners to himself. He bore the wrath of God on their behalf.**

At the end of the day, **our commitment to loving the other blood bought sinners of this church depends upon our prior decision regarding the value of Jesus blood.**

As Richard Baxter has put it, I hear Jesus asking us, **“Are they worth My blood, and not worth your labor?”**

Jesus **loved the others sinners in this room enough to be killed for them.** Can you love them enough to **care for them**, and be **reconciled to them**, and hold **them up when they are falling**, and **adjust them** when they are straying and build them up when they are discouraged, and know them?

Can you?

The reason we struggle to love people that are not like us—**either ethnically not like us, or ethically** not like us, is that we say about them, **“I would never be like...I would never do that.”**

That is self righteousness.

And the cure is to remember what we were: **far off, aliens**, w/o God, and w/o hope. And then to remember what God has made us at the cost of his son: citizens, sons, a habitation for God himself.

Let's know Him together.