

**Living in Resurrection Power  
(Week 3)  
Ephesians 2:11-22  
“The Power To Love”**

**Introduction**

**“By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.”**

**John 13:35**

We are learning in the book of *Ephesians*, that the very same power that rose Jesus from the dead, the power of The Holy Spirit, is living within us. When we became believers in Christ, God “resurrected” our dead spirits to life in Christ, and re-established our connection to The Spirit of God. This access to The Spirit has given us power for living according to God’s plan, which we were previously unable to do, because we were dead in our trespasses and sins (**Ephesians 2:5**). **“But God, Who is rich in mercy, because of His great love that He had for us, made us alive with Christ...” (Ephesians 2:4-5a)**. Now that we are alive in Christ, we have been empowered by Him. A benefit of this “great awakening” of spirit is that it enables us to love as God loves. Remember, it was His love that reached out to save us in the first place, so now that we have the power of His Spirit living in us, we also have been given His capacity to love. It is a love that is far beyond the love that the spiritually dead can ever hope to achieve. The believer is endowed with “agape love” as a part of their inheritance. It is a love that is out of this world and changes the very heart of a person. It isn’t a love coming from ourselves, it is God loving **through** us.

As we read the book of *Ephesians*, it is worth mentioning that it was written by someone who was raised as a devout Jew. The Apostle Paul had been schooled by the very best. His Jewish upbringing was steeped in the traditions of The Law of Moses. He was led to believe at an early age that the Jews, the chosen people of God, should have nothing to do with pagan Gentiles. In fact, the prejudice against non-Jews was so very bitter that a Jewish midwife would not help a gentile woman during childbirth, because she did not want to aid in the process of another Gentile coming into this world. When Jews entered into the holy land, they would shake the dust off their shoes and clothing to avoid bringing unclean “Gentile dust” into a holy place. Any Gentile who wished to pray to the One True God of Israel was only allowed to do so in the outer court of the temple. There was a wall there to separate them from entering into the holy places reserved only for Jews. To cross that barrier was punishable by death. These are but a few examples of the contentious relationships between Jew and Gentile.

And yet, in *Ephesians* we see Paul, this former devotee of Judaism, preaching the truth to a church in Ephesus made up almost entirely of Gentile believers! What had changed? Paul’s spirit, that’s what. No longer was he Saul of Tarsus, renowned Jewish rabbi. No, his dead spirit had been resurrected in Christ, and he had become “Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of the Gentiles (**Ephesians 3:1**)! What a change had been made in this man. His animosity for those whom he considered unworthy had been turned into love, because it was God, loving the Gentiles, **through** Paul!

We, as believers, have been given the power to love, to love unconditionally, those who we might have previously considered unlovable. There can be no prejudices of any kind associated with the Church of Jesus Christ, for all are made equal before Him.

**“There is no Jew of Greek, slave or free, male and female; since you are all ONE in Christ Jesus.”** **Galatians 3:28**(emphasis added)

The “oneness” that we have in Christ is exactly what He prayed for in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before He went to the cross (**John 17**). In Christ, no matter who we are or where we are from, we are of One Faith, One Family, built upon One Foundation. This is what Jesus gave His life to accomplish. Let us examine today, this awesome power that we have been given to love... to love as **He** loves.

## One Faith

**“So then, remember that at one time you were Gentiles in the flesh— called “the uncircumcised” by those called “the circumcised,” which is done in the flesh by human hands. At that time you were without Christ, excluded from the citizenship of Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”**  
**Ephesians 2:11-13**

God had never intended that the nation of Israel be the only people that would come to faith in Him. In fact, He set Israel apart so that they would be a witness for Him to the nations. This is why He promised Abraham that he would have a “promised son” and that all nations would be blessed through him.

**“I will indeed bless you and make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your offspring will possess the city gates of their enemies. And all the nations of earth will be blessed by your offspring because you have obeyed My command.”**  
**Genesis 22:17-18**

You see, God had always planned for Israel to not only follow Him, but to lead other nations to follow as well. He gave the Jewish people Laws and special observances, so they would be set apart for His glory. It was by observing these commands from The LORD, that His chosen people would be able to bear witness of His glory to the nations. He gave them the covenant of circumcision to further set them apart as a testimony to God’s faithfulness. However, instead of becoming humbled by such a great calling, the Jews became prideful and considered themselves to be an elite people, the only people that God truly loved. Therefore, instead of being a witness to the Gentiles, they became a stumbling block. They referred to the Gentiles as “the uncircumcised”, when in fact they had mistook what the covenant of circumcision was all about.

Now, I realize that in today’s society, talk of circumcision is considered “improper”, but if you will indulge me for a moment, I would like to explain the covenant of circumcision, so that we can fully understand its significance. You see, God had promised Abraham a great inheritance. This inheritance was to be obtained through his offspring. Therein lies the problem, for Abraham had no offspring. He and his wife Sarah had tried to conceive for many years, but she was barren. The situation seemed hopeless, so Abraham and his wife took matters into their own hands. They decided that Abraham would have God’s promised heir by their own devices. We all know the story. Sarah forced her slave girl, Hagar, to bear Abraham a child. They mistakenly believed that in order for God to keep His promise of an inheritance, that they would need to find a way in their own strength to make it happen. Nothing could have been further from the truth. We cannot “work” in our own strength to receive the inheritance that God has for us. It is a work of grace, and that not of ourselves (**Ephesians 2:8**).

Hagar, Sarah’s slave, did in fact conceive and bear Abraham a son, but he was not the son that God had promised. He was a result of Abraham and Sarah’s own feeble attempt to work their way into God’s grace. Paul reminds us that this son, Ishmael, was born as a slave woman’s son and represents mankind’s attempts to please God under The Law (**Galatians 4:21-31**). No one can please God by their works, they are simply insufficient for salvation. We need to receive our promised inheritance by the grace of God.

When Abraham was 100 years old, God kept His promise and Sarah herself, though she had been barren, brought forth the son who had been predestined to become Abraham’s rightful heir. They named him Isaac, which means “laughter”. No doubt this child had brought great joy into the lives of his aged parents, whose ability to reproduce was long dead, apart from a miraculous work of grace.

There is an important detail which is often overlooked in this story, a covenant made between God and Abraham after the birth of Ishmael, but before the birth of Isaac. It is the covenant of circumcision. Now, we are all adults here, so we know what circumcision is, but many of you may not realize what it symbolizes. Without being completely graphic in detail, allow me to explain that circumcision is a picture of the cross of Christ. Bear with me for a moment and allow me to explain. It is done by cutting **crosswise**, making the sign of the cross, and therefore, by the shedding of blood the flesh is removed. It was after the covenant of circumcision that Abraham was given the means to receive his inheritance. Jesus died upon a cross and shed His blood, so that we would be set free from our enslavement to our flesh, and thereby, receive our inheritance.

So let me spell it out completely. Between the Law and Grace came the cross, just as between Ishmael and Issac came the covenant of circumcision. Our attempts to please God in our own flesh had only proved that we were enslaved to the flesh. We were powerless in our own strength to bring about the promises of God. But the cross “cut us loose” from the flesh, and now, Jesus, the promised Son, has enabled us to receive our inheritance. So you see, circumcision was merely a foreshadowing of the cross, this is why it was unnecessary for Gentile believers to be circumcised in order to be saved. They had already received the “real thing”, not just a symbol. That which the Jews believed had made them superior had simply pointed to the very thing that would make us all equal!

God has foreordained that Jews and Gentiles be brought together in Christ, through the cross of Calvary into One faith. Thanks to the cross, we are all now the children of Abraham. We were unable to cross over the wall that separated us from true faith... **But now**, in Christ, those who were once considered “far away” have been brought near.

### One Family

**“For He is our peace, Who made both groups one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility. In His flesh, He made of no effect the Law consisting of commands and expressed in regulations, so that He might create in Himself one new man from the two, resulting in peace. He did this so that He might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross by which He put the hostility to death. He came and proclaimed the good news of peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access in one spirit to The Father.”**  
**Ephesians 2:14-18**

When we receive Christ, we also receive His ability to love everyone the same. Gone are the divisions of the past. Prejudice is a worldly vice. Christ has made us all one family in Him. We who believe are now children of Abraham. Paul actually calls this a great mystery in the next chapter. And by mystery, he means a truth revealed that no one had seen coming, Gentiles and Jews being made into one body! Even if they had completely understood the writing of the prophets that proclaimed God would bless the nations through His chosen people, no-one would have ever imagined that the two would become one and the same. God has made us family!

Many years ago, I wanted to start up a church for Spanish speaking people. As most of you know, Sandi and I lived in Guatemala, and we have a deep love for the people there. When we returned home, I had a notion to begin a Hispanic ministry in my church. I met with some so called “experts”, who I had hoped would advise me on just how to go about starting such a work. I was shocked by one of the men’s “counsel”. He asked me if I was planning to start a church for Guatemalans, or Hondurans, or Mexicans, to which I replied, “I want to start a ministry for all Spanish speaking people, who do not understand or feel comfortable in our English speaking churches.” I will never forget his reply. He told me that what I wished to do was impossible, for these people groups would not worship together, because they did not get along with one another! His advice was for me to pick a group that was native to one specific region and not to attempt to bring together different Spanish speaking cultures. That was the day that I learned that prejudice comes from all walks of life on this earth. No one group of people has a “lock” on bigotry. We all find reasons not to associate with people that are different from us. As believers, we should truly be ashamed of ourselves, for this is the exact opposite of what Jesus died for!

**“I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in Me through their word. May they all be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us, so that the world may believe You sent Me.”**  
**John 17:20-21**

You see, when we decide that one group of people are somehow “less than” another, then we are the very antithesis of what Christ died for us to become. Now, I’ve been in the ministry for many years, and there are sins that you can preach against that will cause people to stand up and cheer, but when you start preaching that in Christ all of us are the same, and there is no such thing as a Christian bigot, then the room often times will grow a bit quiet. Jesus says that the way the world will come to believe that

we are truly His, and that He is in fact God, is that they will see the love of God shining through us to **everyone** we meet. Any fool can wall themselves away from those who are different, it takes a person who is "In Christ Jesus" to recognize that God has made us family. Jesus died on the cross to **"reconcile us all into one body" (vs. 16)**. This means much more than we will just "tolerate" one another. The Greek word that Paul uses here means *to fully and completely reconcile*. This means that in Christ all division is eradicated. We have the power to show agape love to everyone, because we are made one in Him. We are not merely acquaintances, we are family, made so by the sharing one blood; The precious blood of Christ. This is why we call the people at church our "Church family", for in Christ we are become one!

For God so loved... THE WORLD, *The Bible* tells us (**John 3:16**). So if God loves the world, and God is **in us**, then should we not love the world as well? This is why Jesus says that people will be able to tell that we are His by how we love! If He is in us, then He is loving through us! I don't care this morning how many commandments that you think you are keeping well, if you don't keep the one that says "love your neighbor as yourself", then you are nothing like Him! God has made us into one family. In Christ, we are given the power to love, not just the ones who look and talk and act like us, but ALL mankind created in God's image. Christ died to make us ONE, both in Faith and in Family. Can others see this truth lived out... in you?

### **One Foundation**

**"So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and with Christ Jesus Himself as the Cornerstone. In Him the whole building, being put together, grows into a holy temple in The LORD. In him you are also being built together for God's dwelling in The Spirit."** **Ephesians 2:19-22**

Not only are we all one faith and one family, but we share one foundation. His name is Jesus Christ, and it is only by His strength that we are able to maintain this agape "oneness" that he gave His life to provide for us. The only way The Church can stand is because of its strong foundation. Jesus is the Chief Cornerstone for this spiritual temple. The apostles and prophets came along to make up the "first layer" of this great temple, and we all are being added as God sees fit. After all, it's HIS house, and therefore, only He gets to decide what goes in it. We must make "every stone" that He chooses feel welcome and allow them to take their place alongside of us.

**"You yourselves, as living stones, a spiritual house, are being built to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."** **1 Peter 2:5**

I LOVE that verse. I suppose it is because the guy who wrote it, Simon the Apostle, had been renamed "Peter" which literally means "little rock". He was one of the first stones put in this house we call the Church. And He is reminding us that just like him, we are being added to the foundation as we are chosen by Christ Himself, the Master Architect. Who are we to refuse the stones that He has carefully selected for His glory? His church, in all its diversity, built upon The Rock will stand the test of time and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (**Matthew 16:18**).

The very thing that makes for a beautiful home is the many different materials put together in such a way that the entire structure is inviting as well as functional. God is using all kinds of different people to build His spiritual house, and this diversity is what makes the Church of Jesus Christ like no other living organism. We are made one in Him, and without Him, nothing could hold such a multidimensional coalition together. SO you see, in Christ, we have been given the power to love. In Him, we are of One Faith and One Family, being built upon One Foundation. Now, I can't speak for you this morning, but I love being a part of this great spiritual house that God is building. Thank God for The Church of Jesus Christ!

And let ALL of God's "little rocks" say... **TRUTH!!!**