

Small Group Study Guide

Peace within You Is Possible
Ephesians 2:11-3:21

August 22, 2010

Leader's Notes

PLEASE NOTE: These “Leader’s Notes” are a resource to the Small Group Leader to help you in preparing for this study. They are meant to be supplemental. You do not need to cover all the information in these notes with your group. They are simply provided as a resource to you.

Welcome and Introduction:

- Encourage group members to bring their study guide with them that they use on Sunday to take notes on the sermon, but also have extra copies available in case they forget.
- Open with prayer.

A Closer Look:

The following notes are to help you better understand the passages you will be looking at in this study.

Notes from ESV Study Bible on Ephesians 2:11-3:21:

Eph. 2:11–22 Unity and Peace of Christ. Paul continues the theme of the new creation which he introduced in v. 10. In the previous sections God had been the main subject of the action, but now the focus falls on Christ Jesus and his redemption. There are three subsections: vv. 11–15, 16–18, and 19–22.

Eph. 2:11 the circumcision. That is, the Jews. To be called “uncircumcised” was a Jewish term of derision (see 1 Sam. 17:26 and note on Acts 15:1) and signified that one was a Gentile, outside the covenant people of God.

Eph. 2:11–15 Unity of Christ's People. Christ makes peace between Jew and Gentile to unify both in the church. There is only one unified people of God.

Eph. 2:12 separated. To be separated from OT Israel was to be separated from Christ, because “salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22; Rom. 9:4–5). **commonwealth**. For “citizenship” and **strangers**, see note on Eph. 2:19. **covenants of promise**. God administered his OT redemption and promises by his oath-bound covenants (Luke 1:72–73), the chief of which were the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants. The new covenant fulfills all the divine promises (2 Cor. 1:20; Heb.

7:20–22; 8:6; 9:15). Note that Paul believed that all Gentiles apart from Christ were unsaved and **without God**.

Eph. 2:13 in Christ Jesus. The old division of all people into two classifications, Jews or Gentiles (Acts 14:5; Rom. 3:29; 9:24; 1 Cor. 1:23), or Jews and Greeks (John 7:35; Acts 14:1; 18:4; Rom. 3:9; 1 Cor. 1:22, 24; etc.), has been transcended by a new entity in Christ: “the church of God” (1 Cor. 10:32). **near.** To be brought near means to have access to God (see Eph. 2:18). **blood.** Christ's substitutionary death. He died not only for the Jews but for all his sheep (John 10:16), even those who are **far off** (cf. Acts 2:39).

Eph. 2:14 peace. This refers to the state of harmonious friendship with God and with one another in the church. **made us both one.** That is, Jews and Gentiles. The opposite of peace is the **hostility** that Christ has quenched. Christ created a unified new people from the old hostile camps (Col. 3:15; cf. John 17:20–21). **in his flesh.** This refers to Christ's bodily death on the cross (see Eph. 2:16). **dividing wall.** There was an inscription on the wall of the outer courtyard of the Jerusalem temple warning Gentiles that they would only have themselves to blame for their death if they passed beyond it into the inner courts. Paul may or may not be alluding to this wall, but it well illustrates Christ's reconciliation of all people into a new humanity (see v. 15).

Eph. 2:15 law. The additional mention of **commandments** and **ordinances** identifies this as the Mosaic law, which included many commandments that served to separate Israel from the other nations. Thus the law was a “dividing wall” (v. 14) which Christ has abolished or rendered powerless both by fulfilling it and by removing believers from the law's condemnation (see Matt. 5:17; Rom. 8:1; Heb. 9:11–14; 10:1–10). The result is a **new man**, denoting a new human race under the second Adam (Christ), in whose image the Christian is re-created (1 Cor. 15:45, 49; see also Eph. 4:24).

Eph. 2:16–17 reconcile. To bring two parties into peaceful relations, in this case, to satisfy God's wrath against his enemies (see Rom. 5:1–11). They are now friends (John 15:13–15) **in one body**, the church (see Eph. 4:4–5). Paul describes Christ's reconciliation very vividly as **killing the hostility** that stood in the way of peace with God. **preached peace.** Paul refers to Christ's messianic ministry to the whole world both **far** and **near**, alluding to Isa. 57:19.

Eph. 2:16–18 Peace with God. On the cross, Christ put to death the hostility between Israel and the other nations. In this section the focus shifts to the new, unified group being brought near to God.

Eph. 2:18 access. To draw near to God and to enjoy him forever in a new creation is both mankind's greatest good and the ultimate accomplishment of Christ's earthly work of redemption. **one Spirit.** See note on 4:4.

Eph. 2:19 So then. Christians have to know and be thoroughly convinced of who they are as **saints and members of the household of God** if they are to live accordingly. **strangers.** As in v. 12 (“commonwealth”), Paul employs a term that was common to political life in ancient cities like Ephesus. Strangers (also v. 12) were complete foreigners with no rights or privileges (see Acts 16:20–23); **aliens** were non-citizens who dwelt in the city and were accorded customary privileges as neighbors. Only **citizens** had full protections and rights in the city (see Acts 21:39).

Eph. 2:19–22 Implications of Christ's Peace. Paul indicates with “So then” that he is drawing out key implications of what he has taught in vv. 11–18. The Christian's assurance is based on these facts.

Eph. 2:20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. There are several views about the apostles and prophets referred to here: (1) Some think that they were “foundational” because they proclaimed the very words of God, and some of their words became the books of the NT. Since a “foundation” is laid only once (i.e., at the beginning of the church) there are no more apostles or prophets today, but their function of speaking the words of God has been replaced by the written Bible, which is the foundation today. (2) Others argue that these “prophets” are very closely tied to apostles in the phrase “the apostles and prophets,” and that these prophets do not represent all who had a gift of prophecy in the early church (see note on 1 Cor. 12:10); they were a small group closely associated with the apostles (or else identical to the apostles) to whom God had revealed the mystery of the Gentile inclusion in the church (see Eph. 3:5, where the same phrase, “the apostles and prophets,” occurs). In this case ordinary Christians who had the gift of prophecy in Ephesus (4:11) and other churches (cf. Acts 11:27; 19:6; 21:9–10; Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10; 1 Thess. 5:19–21; 1 Tim. 1:18; 4:14) were not part of the “foundation” but were part of the rest of the building that was being built (that is, the church) and would continue so throughout the church age. (3) Finally, some think the “prophets” here could be the OT prophets, though the same words in Eph. 3:5 point to prophets of the NT era. **cornerstone.** The critical stone in the corner of the foundation that ensures that a stone building is square and stable.

Eph. 2:21 joined together. Christians are the temple of God corporately; belonging to the visible church is not optional for followers of Christ. **holy temple.** Where God meets with his people in joyful worship and fellowship. Believers do not have to worship in Jerusalem today because they themselves have become the new temple of God (see John 4:21).

Eph. 3:1 For this reason. Paul breaks off his thought here only to resume it in v. 14, where the opening phrase is repeated (cf. the similar break in 2:1, 5). **prisoner for Christ.** Paul suffered imprisonment or confinement several times in the service of Christ (4:1; Acts 16:23; 24:23; Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 1:8; Philem. 1). **on behalf of you Gentiles.** Paul was the apostle, teacher, and preacher to the Gentiles (1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11), so the sufferings he experienced during his ministry were on their behalf (2 Cor. 6:5; 11:23).

Eph. 3:1–13 Revelation of the Gospel Mystery. Paul explains his calling and ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. This was to assure his Gentile readers that their share in the inheritance is authentic because of its divine origin.

Eph. 3:1–7 Paul's Apostolic Ministry. Paul elaborates on his call to apostleship. He was sent as a gracious gift to the Gentiles.

Eph. 3:2 assuming that you have heard. Cf. 4:21. Paul may not have known the recent Ephesian converts, especially in the outlying villages (see Introduction: Author and Title), though he had spent three years in Ephesus (Acts 20:31).

Eph. 3:3 mystery. See note on Col. 1:26–27. This mystery is now revealed: Christ has come to unify Jew and Gentile in one body through the gospel, about which Paul had just **written briefly** (see the parallels with Eph. 1:9, 17). Christ revealed this mystery to Paul **by revelation** on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1–7) and more fully at other times (cf. Acts 22:17–21; 2 Cor. 12:1–7; Gal. 1:12; 2:2).

Eph. 3:5 not made known. While Moses and the prophets had written of Christ and his salvation to the ends of the earth (John 5:46; 1 Pet. 1:10–12), and while God had even promised to Abraham that

all the nations of the earth would be blessed through him (Gen. 12:3), the full realization of who Christ was and the extent of the salvation that would come to the Gentiles was not clear until after the giving of **the Spirit** (1 Cor. 2:8–10). **apostles and prophets**. See note on Eph. 2:20.

Eph. 3:6 the Gentiles are fellow heirs. Paul explains the content of the “mystery” mentioned in vv. 3–4: Gentile and Jewish Christians are now united in God's new family as equal heirs with one another and with Christ (Rom. 8:17; Gal. 3:28–29).

Eph. 3:7 minister. A servant or official charged with an area of responsibility. Paul was duty bound to proclaim the gospel (1 Cor. 9:16), yet he regards this burden as a **gift of God's grace** because he served out of gratitude for the grace that he himself had received.

Eph. 3:8 very least of. This is not false humility on Paul's part, since he is acutely aware that he had once been a persecutor of Christ and his church (Acts 9:4; Phil. 3:6; 1 Tim. 1:13). **saints**. See note on Eph. 1:1.

Eph. 3:8–13 The Mystery and Wisdom. God's wisdom is revealed in Christ. Before being revealed, it was a mystery.

Eph. 3:10 manifold. Taking various forms, or of many different kinds. God's **wisdom** has many facets and aspects, like an intricately cut diamond (see 1 Cor. 1:26–29). **now**. In this age, in contrast to the time before Christ's first coming. **Rulers and authorities in the heavenly places** refers to angelic beings. God's redemptive purposes are of interest to angels (1 Pet. 1:12) and the whole host of heaven, who are better able to glorify God when they behold in wonder what God has done and does in creating **the church** (Psalms 148; Rev. 7:11; 19:1–8). See note on Eph. 6:12.

Eph. 3:11 eternal purpose. God's redemption in Christ originated in the fathomless sea of eternity with God's “manifold wisdom” (v. 10). See the emphasis on God's plan and purpose in 1:3–14. **realized in Christ Jesus**. God's plan of salvation to the ends of the earth had to be put into effect in human history, which God did through the earthly work of his incarnate Son.

Eph. 3:14–15 For this reason. Paul had broken off his thought in v. 1, so he repeats this phrase to indicate that he is returning to that original thought. **bow**. When Paul considers the majesty of God's worldwide work of redemption in Christ, he responds in the only appropriate way: humble adoration of God **the Father**, the Great King. To be **named** in biblical usage refers to the definition of one's identity. God the Father, the creator of all things (v. 9), is also the one who “names” (i.e., defines the identity of) all creatures, even to the extent of “naming” **every family in heaven and on earth**. God's present action in the naming of “every family” is a further affirmation of his sovereignty over all creation.

Eph. 3:14–21 Paul's Prayer for Strength and Insight. Paul resumes his thought broken off in v. 1 and reports his prayer for the readers' strength and understanding of God's power (vv. 14–19). He concludes by blessing God (vv. 20–21).

Eph. 3:16 Spirit. The Holy Spirit applies to believers the personal presence and power of God. **inner being**. Or “inner man,” referring to one's inner self as a human being.

Eph. 3:17–18 Christ already dwells in Christians, but Paul prays here for his indwelling with power. In v. 16 Paul speaks of the indwelling “Spirit” and here of the indwelling **Christ**, suggesting the deity of

the Spirit as well as the Son. **rooted and grounded in love**. Love is the natural and necessary outcome of a living faith that is the fruit of Christ's work in the Christian. **comprehend**. Godliness leads to greater understanding of God and his works (see Ps. 119:100). **Breadth ... length ... height ... depth** expresses the immeasurable dimensions of God's riches in Christ. On **saints**, see note on Eph. 1:1.

Eph. 3:19 surpasses knowledge. To *know* what surpasses *knowledge* is the sublime privilege of the Christian. The purpose ultimately is to be filled with God's **fullness**.

Eph. 3:21 church. Paul conceives of the church as a unified whole, not as isolated entities (see 4:4–6).