

## Episode #1014 Ephesians 2 Part 3: What Wall?

I. The purpose of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians is to tell us what God's present purpose is in all His work today. This includes His work in the world and in the individual believer. Ephesians is the book of God's present purpose, the book of being "in Christ," and the book of God's grace.

II. In Ephesians 2:1-10, we learned that, even though we in Christ still sin and at some time or other walk like the world around us, still God raises us up and seats us with Christ in the highest seats. Now, we learn that He also breaks down the walls between us.

III. Ephesians 2:11. Paul is starting out on the road that is going to lead to the truth of Ephesians 3:6, which tells us that all nations are now equal in the sight of God, and so Israel no longer has the first place. But is that what this is talking about?

A. Once = Greek *pote* = indefinite as to time, "at some time or other."

B. "Gentiles in the flesh" is a very strange phrase, since we do not stop being Gentiles once we believe. Also, the Greek word for "Gentiles" is *ethnos*, which really means "nations." What does this mean?

C. "Circumcision" is the Greek *peritome*, literally "cutting around," whereas "uncircumcision" is *aperitome*, "without cutting around." Yet here, the word is *akrobustia*. A crude term, an epithet, hurled against these people, "foreskinners."

D. Epithets are hurled against those who care. Gentiles never minded being uncircumcised. Circumcision seemed to them like an odd ritual Jews performed whereby they mutilated their baby boys. They were proud of the fact they were not circumcised. Why would they care if they were called *akrobustia*?

IV. Ephesians 2:12. These people are called apart from Christ, aliens from Israel, strangers from the covenants, having no expectation, and without God.

A. Gentiles generally do not lay awake nights because they are not citizens of the nation of Israel. Why would these have cared so much?

B. There was a very real wall between Jews inside the land and Jews outside.

1. You could not keep the law outside the land. You could not worship God, you could not be a part of the covenants, you could not dedicate your children, you could not keep the feasts, etc. Deuteronomy 16:2. Passover could only be kept in the chosen place. Numbers 9:13. Not keeping Passover meant you were out of Israel. James 2:10. Failing at one point is to fail at the whole law!

2. There were no jobs for you to support yourself and your family. If your ancestors had lived for hundreds of years outside the land, you could not just go back there and call yourself a citizen. It would be like me going to Europe and claiming citizenship! I am an American. It does not matter if my ancestors came from Europe. The locals would look at you as a foreigner. Only rich retirees really could ever hope to go back to the land

V. Conclusion: While Ephesians 3 tells us that the wall between Jews and Gentiles is broken down, Ephesians 2 is telling us that the wall between Jews inside the land and Jews outside is also broken down. This was a very real wall in the past, based on the fact that Jews outside the land could never truly keep the law, and yet they were required to in order to have a true relationship with God. Yet praise God that in Christ we can all have a relationship with Him, no matter who we are or where we live. Praise God that we can all come to Him in Christ!