

IN the company of CHRIST



EPHESIANS

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. **Ephesians 2.10**

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. **Ephesians 2.13**

¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. **Ephesians 2.18**

²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. **Ephesians 2.22**

¹⁷I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe. **Ephesians 2.17-19**

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Introduction

In the reflective sermon on Ephesians 1.3-14, I recently suggested that the process by which Paul came to write this long-sustained-single-sentence of blessing to God, was an unhurried reflecting on what God had done; the internalisation of that message and a returning to God of specific points of praise.

This responsiveness comes from growing deeper and requires two interconnected contexts; time and solitude. We are too easily distracted and enamoured by every other agenda and even Christian agendas can be as shrill, demanding and crushing to developing a relationship with God.

Evangelicals do not need to know more. Our desire for the acquisition of knowledge when not balanced by relationship betrays a susceptibility to compulsion and addiction that is as unhealthy as the alcoholic.

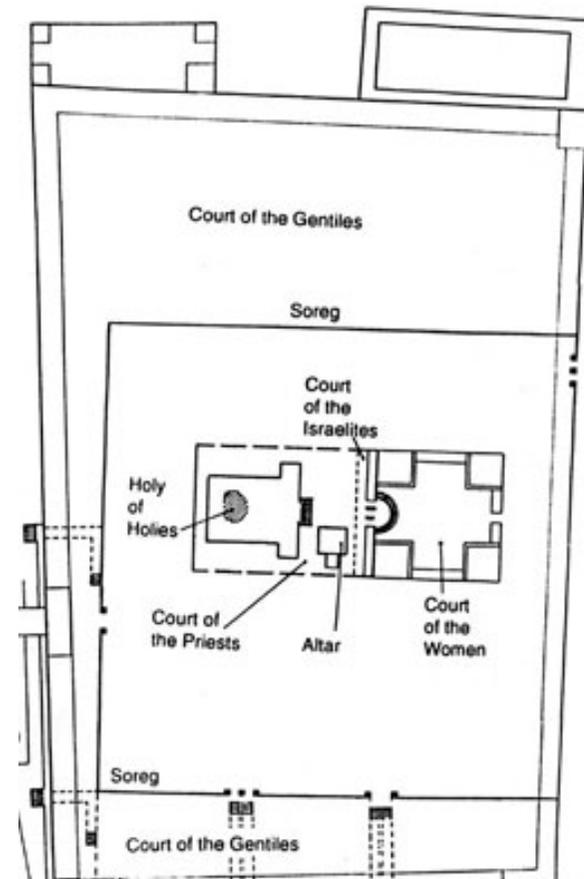
The way Christians have avoided this in the past is through spiritual reading, which comprises Reading, Meditation, Prayer and Living. I think it is helpful to connect each of these disciplines with an aspect of Jesus' answer to a person who knew much and wanted to test Jesus:

***Luke 10:25-27** ²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" ²⁷ He answered: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'"*

Qualifying each of the four components in Spiritual Reading (Read, Meditate, Pray and Live) with a means of loving God with an aspect of our being Mind, Heart, Soul and Strength moves us from just 'knowing' in the sense of the acquisition of certain facts to, 'knowing' in the biblical sense — a fruitful relationship,

Genesis 4:1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, (KJV)

Therefore, when we read, we aim to love the Lord our God with all our mind; when we meditate, we seek to love the Lord our God with all our heart; when we pray, we desire to love the Lord our God with all our soul and as we live, to love the Lord our God with all our strength and our neighbour as ourselves.



Plan of the Temple

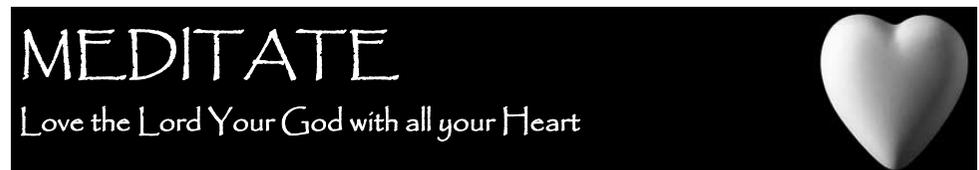
Prayer week 5

Our aim is a Spirit inspired, well rounded response of loving worship to our Lord Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father.

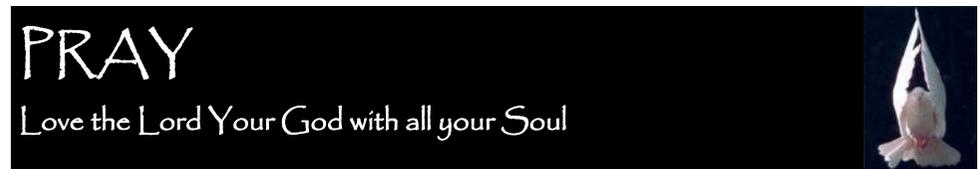
The layout of these studies reflects these aspects. The four banner titles keep this before your mind, heart, soul and strength:



Loving God with our mind means that we 'listen' to his 'speaking', we read the Bible, we wrestle with the words on the page wanting a blessing. We learn to pay attention, ask question, take notice and make connections.



Loving God with our heart means we slow down and metabolise the words of scripture so they are internalised. This will most often take the form of spending time each day in quietness, away from the distractions and demands of phone and family, thinking on a passage of Scripture. We cannot grow deeper without quietness and time.



Loving God with our soul requires a response to what we have read and internalised. We return to God, not simply with the words he spoke to us, but our response to those words, our words spoken to him. This is what the Psalms are - the cries of the soul. Cries of joy and lament, bewilderment and insight.

LIVE

Love the Lord Your God with all your Strength



Loving God with our strength requires our living. Response is spoken and then lived. Our living is the consequence of God's speaking and is its fruit.

My prayer is that over the time you spend looking at this part of Ephesians you will have the opportunity to grow deeper in your love of God.

Prayer week 3

Prayer week 4

Prayer Points

Prayer week 1

A Further Word on Meditation

Given that meditation is normally associated now-a-days with eastern religions I thought it would be helpful to write a few words of the very old tradition of Christian meditation. Here is where it occurs in the Old Testament—Gen.24v63; Jos.1v8 Ps 1v2, 39v3, 48v9, 77v12, 119v23,27,48,78,97,99,148, 143v5, 148v5.

It becomes immediately obvious that the book of the Psalms—the Prayer book for the People of God in the Old and New Testament, contains the majority of occurrences. The fact that the greatest amount of occurrences with in the book of the Psalms clusters in Psalm 119, a Psalm that focuses on God revealed word reminds us that between God's speaking to us and our speaking to God is internalisation.

These are some reflections based on

The Way of the Heart Desert Spirituality and Contemporary Ministry

Henri J.M. Nouwen ¹

There are two conditions or movements for meditation;

Solitude and
Silence

Prayer week 2

SOLITUDE

We must go away from our business and the demands of our life. Solitude is not privacy as if this is a technique it is coming to a place where we are confronted with who God is and who we are. We enter into solitude away from family, friends, telephones, meetings, music and books. We come to God naked vulnerable, weak, sinful, deprived and broken. We enter into wilderness.

It is wrong to see this as a withdrawal into ease it can be a place of testing. The solitude of Jesus in the wilderness shows us this and shows us that it is in the wilderness that the nature of who we are is forged, for in the wilderness of solitude we may meet our fears as we long to be in God's presence. It is from this place we have insight into our heart and mind. In the crucible of solitude silence and meditation we long for our life to become our ministry.

SILENCE

The German hyperinflation following World War I, though not the worst hyperinflation in the 20th Century, is certainly the most famous. There are many stories of people carrying money in wheelbarrows, however suitcases were the preferred method of transport.

¹ Note what Nouwen calls prayer I will refer to as meditation

The enormous amounts of paper were useless and government sources tried to deal with the suitcase problem by printing money representing greater buying power. The German note below represents 100 billion



In November the 1st 100 Billion could buy three pounds of meat, by November the 15th 100 Billion could buy two beers and 80 billion one loaf of bread.

We live in a world where this has happened to words— we see and hear too many words and as a consequence they are devalued and have very little impact on us.

But we have become uncomfortable with silence, we avoid it with radios, iPods and televisions. Many experience silence not as a place of fullness and richness but of hollowness and emptiness.

Once again in silence as in solitude we face our fears and we fill the solitude and the silence not with many words but a few - so they become part of us.

Solitude leads us to Silence, Silence leads us to Meditation on God's Word which leads us to the heart and God.

MEDITATION

Meditation is a movement from the head to the heart—the internalising of God's Word. Another image is that overtime we dig out a cave to be with God in solitude and silence and the Word.

Meditation is directed toward God it is made up of short simple words—the emphasis is not on insight but indwelling.

Two well used meditation statements are:

The Lord is my Shepherd ... and Lord Jesus have mercy on me.

I want to challenge you to begin 'digging out a cave in your life' that you can access at any time of the day or night, in times of trouble and hardship as well as in times of joy.

LIVE

Love the Lord Your God with all your Strength



MEDITATE

Love the Lord Your God with all your Heart



This week spend some time this week meditating on Ephesians 1.17-19 thinking on how the Lord has already answered this prayer and hungering for it to be answered more and more in your life and the lives of your brothers and sisters.

¹⁷I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe. **Ephesians 1.17-19**

Below write a prayer based on Ephesians 1-2 offering yourself to the Lord in his service because of his offering up of himself for you.

PRAY

Love the Lord Your God with all your Soul



Like all disciplines it will not just happen. My suggestion is that to start with you write out the section you are meditating on and find a place and a time that is appropriate.

Begin with five or ten minutes. I suspect at first that will seem like an eternity , done give up, the aim is not insight but indwelling.

Set aside two hours this week end to spend time with God as a gift to him. You need to plan this out some hymns or songs, some scriptures to read and meditate on and a place to be quiet in.

Study 7 Ephesians 2.1-10

Saved on Purpose with a Purpose

READ

Love the Lord Your God with all your Mind



Ephesians 2.1-10

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions— it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith— and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Big Idea

What we need to grab a hold of is that we have been saved to do what God has called us to do - we can be enthusiastic about that.

Saved for Good Works ... not saved by Good Works

1. How does Paul ensure that his readers have no basis in thinking that they are saved because of anything they have done?

He says it in v9 'not by works'

2. Can you identify the different elements of this in Chapter 2 of Ephesians?

God's resurrection power has raised us up from the dead

We are included in the inheritance of the saints (Jews) even though we don't deserve it (neither did they)

God is revealed in this as gracious, loving, merciful in Christ

3. 'The Spirituality of Ephesians is the difficult discipline of recognising that being lost and last and least in Christ becomes an invitation to being found, invited to the place of privilege and significance'. Show how this is so from chapter 2

You can work this out yourself

4. How does the church demonstrate that it is the true Temple—the presence of God in the world and how as a child of God do you live that out?

By living out a live of grateful good works—the point is here that the good works as detailed in the rest of Ephesians touch our whole life, all our relationships and as such are very ordinary. This is the secret of Christian Spirituality.

Study 11 Ephesians Ch. 1-2

Christian Spirituality - The Art of Living Responsively

READ

Love the Lord Your God with all your Mind



Ephesians 1.15-23

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²²And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Big Idea

An overview of Eph 1-2 and an opportunity to reflect on Biblical Spirituality - the embracing of our lost-ness, last-ness & our deadness and the opening up in Christ to found-ness, inclusion and life in him.

1. What are the three requests Paul makes in the prayer above?

Know God Better

Know the hope to which he has called us

Know his incomparably great power at work in us

2. Three great slogans of the Reformation were:

Christ alone

Grace alone

Faith alone

Determine how accurate these statements are from this passage.

Christ alone—v5, 6,7,10 with Christ, in Christ Jesus, in Christ

Grace alone—v5 by grace you have been saved; v8 for it by grace you have been saved

Faith alone—v8 for it is by grace you have been saved through faith.

3. How does Paul ensure that no body will think that 'faith' is a work?

Paul qualifies faith as not being from ourselves but as a gift of God, not works so we can't boast about it.

4. Why must this emphasis on what God has done in Christ, and not we do make sense in the light of v1?

Because we were dead in our sins and trespasses!!

5. What are the good works God has prepared in advance for us to do? Hint: read through the rest of Ephesians.

The Gospel is the declaration that God the Father has acted to reconcile those who are his enemies, who have wronged him and rebelled against him – this is an act of grace that has brought about peace.

6. In verse 10 we are told about our creation in Christ. How and why did God create human beings in Genesis 1.26-28?

Created them in his image—now he creates them in Christ

Created them to rule the world fill and subdue it

7. How might the good works we are called to do in the new creation relate to the original tasks human beings were given in the first creation?

There is still subduing and filling—subdue sin and chaos in our life through the power of God and fill our lives with righteousness—so we will show the image of God who is Jesus.

MEDITATE

Love the Lord Your God with all your Heart



This week spend some time this week meditating on Ephesians 2.10

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.
Ephesians 2.10

LIVE

Love the Lord Your God with all your Strength



Jesus acted like a walking Temple on this earth, the place where people got a sense of the presence of the living God. Think of three contexts you inhabit, pray and then work ways you can demonstrate you are part of the Temple and an expression of the God who made himself known in Jesus.

PRAY

Love the Lord Your God with all your Soul



Below write a Prayer based on this passage, specifically making yourself the object of God's action in Christ—be specific about your own lost-ness.

MEDITATE

Love the Lord Your God with all your Heart



This week spend some time this week meditating on Ephesians 2.22

²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.
Ephesians 2.22

PRAY

Love the Lord Your God with all your Soul



Below write a Prayer based on this passage attempting to capture the privilege of being through Christ incorporated into the place of his dwelling.

LIVE

Love the Lord Your God with all your Strength



If you believe the God in Christ is at work in you, what are you going to do about the good work God has prepared in advance to do?

Study 8 Ephesians 2.11-13

The Spirituality of the Underprivileged

READ

Love the Lord Your God with all your Mind



Ephesians 2.11-13

¹¹ Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)—¹² remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

Big Idea

It is only as we see ourselves as aliens (very difficult for us to do given our privileged status in the world) that we can appreciate what we owe Jesus our LORD.

1. When have you ever felt like an outsider?

2. How does it make you feel to be described as 'separated, excluded, a foreigner without hope and without God'?

It feels strange and uncomfortable to be described in these ways strange because I seem to occupy a place of privilege; it makes me feel uncomfortable because I hate being excluded.

3. What are the two words that define the divide between Jew and Gentile?

Circumcised and uncircumcised

How would you describe the movement of 11-22 (a hint: use the plan of the Temple on page 33)?

It is the movement from no where to privilege. No where—hardly a blip on the screen, not a Jew, the dividing wall destroyed reconciled with Christian Jews, together reconciled with God, access into the temple to the Father by the blood of Jesus through the Spirit, now becoming the Temple the place of God's presence.

3. In v19, Paul outlines the extra ordinary change in status that is conferred upon us through God's gift in Christ. Come up with an illustration that captures the huge change in status.

It like a Mexican crossing over to America being made the President of the USA

4. Paul loves this illustration of the Temple, nearly every aspect of the Temple is explored and developed. The Temple in Jerusalem was the centre of Israel's life even though access to God's presence was hedged with barriers. How has what Jesus done eclipsed the physical Temple?

The barriers are down, the High priest once a year isn't the only person to have access to God together we live in God's presence.

5. What point is Paul making when he is saying the foundation is the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus as the chief cornerstone?

The story of the Bible what we know as OT and NT takes its shape from Jesus—the New Temple is based on the teaching of apostles (NT) who give the authoritative teaching of the prophets (OT) which if fulfilled in Christ.

6. How would people who understood this teaching have reacted to the news in 70 AD that under Vespasian and Titus the Temple had been destroyed?

The Temple had already been eclipsed.

It is important to note the image of the Temple is not that of just the individual it is corporate,

Study 10 Ephesians 2.19-22

Our Lives God's Home

READ

Love the Lord Your God with all your Mind



Ephesians 2.19-22

¹⁹Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²²And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Big Idea

Paul pictures being saved as becoming part of a new Temple. The church is to be an experience of the presence of God in the flesh.

1. Re-read Ephesians 2.1-22. Paul goes to great pains to ensure that the Gentile Christians he is writing to understand that through the death of Jesus Christ they have moved from desperation to privilege. Describe the points along the way.

Dead in sins and trespasses

Made alive in Christ and seated with Christ in the heavenly realms

Once far off

Brought near

The dividing wall broken down

Access to the presence of God

Becoming the Temple where God's presence is revealed.

2. Ephesians 2.1-10 is a movement from death to life from the grave to heaven.

4. What is the significance of these terms?

Circumcision was the sign of the covenant what defined someone as a Jew.

The Shape of the Gospel Story

The only people who knew the true God in the Old Testament was Israel. Israel knew God because the LORD God revealed himself to Israel. The Lord did this so Israel could be the saviour nation among the nations and bring the nations into a relationship with God. The vision of the Old Testament is of the nations coming to Israel to find out who God is and worship him. So if you weren't part of Israel you were on the outside. Being part of Israel was a matter knowing the law and the covenants the sign of the covenant was circumcision.

Israel's story is not a stirring story of obedience and faithfulness rather it is a story of unfaithfulness.

The Saviour nation needed saving all her God given aids and helps couldn't stop the rot. Jesus came to save Israel by being the obedience son on her behalf so now membership in Israel is no longer defined by circumcision or the law but by trust in Jesus.

In this sense, and under these circumstances, Christians need to understand that they have become part of Israel—they are in Christ, incorporated into the true Israel.

5. Do you think these saved Gentiles knew they were the spiritually underprivileged before they were saved?

No they probably thought they were healthy wealthy and wise.

6. How is telling people the gospel of Jesus a bit like being the little boy in the story of The Emperor's New Clothes ?

The Emperor thought he was dressed in the finest clothing when in fact he was naked—some one believing this is because God is working in their life.

7. How does Jesus blood bring us near to God?

It is our sins that alienate us from God—whether we are Jew or Gentile and Jesus' death removes the offence.

8. How is telling people that Jesus blood makes them right with God sound like telling a man who believes he is clothed to strip off?

Because it sounds stupid but that's how we die to ourselves

MEDITATE

Love the Lord Your God with all your Heart



This week spend some time this week meditating on Ephesians 2.13

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

PRAY

Love the Lord Your God with all your Soul



Below write a Prayer based on this passage, that expresses thanks for the grace that brings us near.

LIVE

Love the Lord Your God with all your Strength



We are to imitate our Father and our Lord Jesus and be peace makers. Consider your relationships are there any that need mending? Is there a way that you can take a step toward that person?

MEDITATE

Love the Lord Your God with all your Heart



This week spend some time this week meditating on Ephesians 2.18

¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.
Ephesians 2.18

PRAY

Love the Lord Your God with all your Soul



Below write a Prayer based on this passage attempting to capture the big picture of reconciliation that happened in the death of Jesus.

LIVE

Love the Lord Your God with all your Strength



In the Old Testament, Israel was to remember they had once been aliens and that was to shape the way they reacted to aliens in their own land ...

Leviticus 19:33-34 ³³ "When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. ³⁴ The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

Who is an outsider you can treat as a native born at work or in your neighbourhood?

Study 9

Ephesians 2.14-18

Peace—Fruit of the Christ Tree

READ

Love the Lord Your God with all your Mind



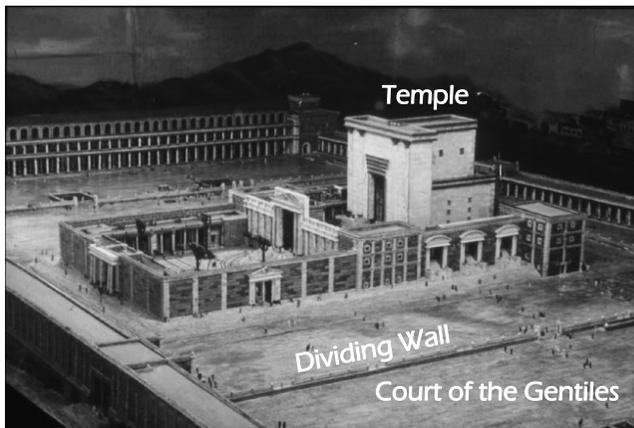
Ephesians 2.14-18

¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Big Idea

The dividing wall of hostility is between God and man whether Jew or Gentile. Jesus' death abolishes the law's condemnation and creates a context where Jew and Gentile can live together. That context is Jesus.

This is a picture of the Temple area. In the centre of the precinct towering above it all was the Temple. The High wall immediately around the Temple is the dividing wall; Jews could go through the gates but a Gentile was forbidden to proceed. He could only go as far as the Court of the Gentiles, the enormous area surrounding the Temple.



1. Read Acts 21:27-31 and describe the hostility that existed between Jew and Gentile as represented by the wall?

Paul nearly got killed on the rumour that he had taken some Greeks (Gentiles) past the dividing wall.

This is a translation of the warning sign on the dividing wall—if you're not a Jew it's not a welcome mat.

"Let no foreigner enter within the partition and enclosure surrounding the temple. Whoever is arrested will himself be responsible for his death which will follow"

2. What did the wall and the sign tell you about how you got close to God?

You became a Jew!

3. There are three estranged parties identified in this passage who are they?

Jews and Gentiles are hostile toward one another. Jews and Gentiles then need to be reconciled to God.

4. How does the law with its commandments and regulations create a dividing wall of hostility?

The commandments made Israel distinct from the other nations. Israel looked down on the other nations and the other nations frequently persecuted Israel.

5. Paul tells us that Jesus' aim in abolishing the law in his flesh was to get rid of what separated Jew and Gentile from each other and make a new man out of the two, but there was still a greater division that needed reconciliation. How did Jesus' death bring reconciliation between God and man (Jew/Gentile)?

The offences that stood between God and us are paid for on the cross so that our guilt is removed so now we can come into the presence of God.

Hebrews 10:19-22 ¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.