

引言 INTRODUCTION

It is easier for people to get close to others who share similar characteristics. I am an introvert and a shy person by nature. If I attend a meeting alone, the first thing I do is to look for somebody I know. If I find none, then I will see if there is any oriental face – Chinese, Korean, Indian or whatever. If I still cannot get a hit, then I will look for other non-American people. I will feel more comfortable to talk to someone who does not speak perfect English. We are naturally drawn to people with common background. We welcome those who are “my type” but keep a distance from people who are “other types.” That was exactly how the Jews looked at others in the Biblical world. They called all non-Jewish people Gentiles, meaning foreigners. But God sees people with a different perspective. To Him, there are only believers and non-believers in the world. God’s hearts is to change seekers into His children. As such, the gospel is both inclusive and exclusive. The Lord welcomes everyone to join His family. But they can only get in through Jesus. The church is a microcosm of God’s family. God’s work in the church is a major theme in this letter. Paul was writing to mostly Gentile Christians in this letter. Paul told them that they were blessed. God gave them a new life when they were still spiritually dead. He treated them the same as Jewish Christians. God received both groups of believers into His family regardless of their background. He is doing the same thing today. He sends us out to attract people from everywhere to join His big family.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 藉基督得接近 Brought Near by Christ (v. 11-13)

The Ephesian believers were blessed because they were brought near to God by Christ. In verses 11-12, Paul uses seven phrases or words to describe their hopeless situation before they were saved. First, there are some external barriers. In verse 11, we see the terms “**Gentiles**” and “**uncircumcised**.” “Gentiles” was how the Jews called them. It is just like the Cantonese address all western men as “ghost guys” because their eyes are lighter in color. Unlike the Jews, Gentile males are not circumcised after they are born. It is a sign for the Jews to show that they are in God’s covenant. Besides, in verse 12 Paul also says they were “**alienated from the commonwealth of Israel**.” The Gentiles are excluded from certain privileges that the Jews enjoy. For example, in Jesus’ time, a Gentile must be converted to a Jew through circumcision before he could worship Jehovah. There was an outer court in the temple for Gentiles to meet and worship God. Only the Jews could go further into the temple. Perhaps you have that feeling of a second class citizen before. You go through an immigration checkpoint when you travel by air from overseas. Permanent citizens will go to one side of the lobby area. A custom officer may smile at them and say “Welcome home!” There are other counters designated for non-residents. The agent puts on a poker-face and asks them: “Why do you come to the U.S.?” The recipients of Paul’s letter were separated

from God not only because of the external barriers. There were also some internal barriers. There are four other descriptions in verse 12. First, Paul says they were “**separated from Christ**.” They knew nothing about the prophecy of the Messiah in the Old Testament. Then they were also “**strangers to the covenants of promise**.” Since they did not know the Bible, they were ignorant of the blessings that God had promised to Israel. Moreover, since the Gentiles were outsiders, they had “**no hope**” and were “**without God in the world**.” They did not know Jehovah. They might worship idols. Their hope was in this life, and nothing else. Such a gloomy picture is turned 180 degrees as we come to verse 13: **But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.** The true separation is not between the Jews and the Gentiles, but between mankind and God. Every person is isolated from God due to sin. The Jews are better than the Gentiles because they have the Old Testament. But knowledge alone cannot save anyone. Only Jesus can save us. He died for the sin of mankind. The cross is like a bridge that connects sinners to God. Today, we are brought near to God in the same way. God saves you and He wants to save others through you. The first place to share the gospel is very likely your home. Kids grow up in a Christian family have certain privileges. They come to the church and hear Bible stories. However, they must receive Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord like you did. We must show them Biblical values at home through our actions. Then they know that the Bible is relevant to life. When the right opportunity comes, help them make a decision to accept Jesus. It is never too early! From your home, you should also tell people about God wherever you go. That needs a lot of patience. Non-Christians do not live by God’s standard, they may talk in a different language and they have a secular worldview. Do not look down on them as if they were unforgiveable sinners. Remember you used to be that way too. God shows you grace and you should show God’s grace to them. You can accept them without condoning their values and actions. They need Jesus as much as you do.

2. 靠基督而連結 Blended In through Christ (v. 14-18)

The Gentiles were brought near to God by Christ. But God’s purpose is bigger than saving them. He intends to blend all the believers into one family through Christ. In this section, Paul uses the word “hostility” to describe the relationship between the Jews and the Gentiles. The Jews may hold onto their national pride and despise fellow Gentile believers. Jesus’ death did not only remove the penalty of sin. He also served as the mediator between the two people groups. Look at verses 14-15: **14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace.** The Old Testament Law is like a wall that divides the two sides. God gave the Law to the Jews as a rulebook to regulate their life. However, the Jews turned it into a tool to discriminate against the Gentiles. It is like people who drive cars think that they are more civilized than people who still travel on a carriage pulled by a horse. Worse still, the Jews thought that they could earn salvation by obeying the Law. Jesus’ death canceled out the man-made restrictions imposed by the Law. People can only be saved by accepting Jesus and not by practicing the Law. Once Jesus was asked what the greatest commandments in the Law were. He answered that the whole Law could be summarized into

two requirements: love God and love people. We are fulfilling the commands in the Jewish Law if we keep those two principles. God's idea is not to save the Gentiles and puts them in a church by themselves. Nowadays there are African-American churches, Chinese churches and Hispanic churches where people worship God in their particular culture and languages. People feel more comfortable to mingle with believers of a similar background. But God's plan is to blend in the Jews and Gentiles to form one family. In God's eyes there is only one form of Christians – the born-again ones. Sadly, while God loves diversity, some people prefer division. At one time, Peter and a few Jewish Christians were eating with some Gentile believers. When Peter heard that some Jewish church leaders were coming, he quickly left the table. Fellow Jewish Christians followed what Peter did. Peter was afraid that those church officials might criticize him for mingling with Gentiles. Paul mentions the incidence in Galatians 2:14 – **But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?”** Paul did not hesitate to rebuke Peter for acting like a hypocrite. Peter was a Jew. He believed in his heart that there was no difference between Jew and Gentile Christians. But in practice he drew a line with the Gentiles because he tried to please other Jewish believers. There should be no distinction between people of various background. God accepts everyone who comes to Him. In our church we need to ask ourselves whether we are building a bridge or a wall with others. Do we wholeheartedly welcome everyone who comes through our doors? Do not judge them by their appearance. See them through God's eyes. They are created in God's image too. It does not matter whether they are young or old, well-educated or less-educated, came from a big city or a small village, and with a lot of hair or no hair. Our goal is to help blend everyone in to God's family.

3. 在基督被建造 Built Up in Christ (v. 19-22)

God intends to bring Jews and Gentiles near to Him by Christ. He also blends the two people groups into one family. But God has a higher purpose. He plans to build this body of believers up in Christ. Read verses 19-20: **19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.** Paul uses a home and a house to illustrate this universal church God builds. A home is where a family lives. Members love and accept each other, and they care for and support each other. They work as a team toward common goals. Once became believers, Jews and Gentiles are no long enemies but one family. Besides, a house is more than a building. It provides safety against rain and wind. It also gives people security from intruders. But this house that God builds is not an ordinary structure. Paul tells us that its foundation is the apostles and prophets. They are both messengers of God. They received information from God, taught people God's truths and wrote down those contents to become the Bible. It is the basis for our faith. Any church that faithfully teaches the Bible is a good church. Besides the foundation, the cornerstone of this spiritual house is Jesus. People at that time put down a cornerstone as they laid the foundation. That rock is a reference point for future structures. Whether the floor would be level and the walls would be straight depend on that stone.

Likewise, our beliefs are solid only when we claim Jesus as our cornerstone. All false doctrines have the same common errors. They have incorrect understanding of the identity and works of Jesus. For example, some people claim that Jesus is just a good man, a wonderful teacher and an excellent role-model. They say that Jesus died on the cross as an example of love and sacrifice. But the Bible tells us that Jesus is the only true God. He died to redeem us from sin. Salvation can only be found in Him. Jesus calls us to follow Him as our Lord. That is a lifelong commitment. Our relationship with Jesus should continue to grow. We increase our faith through daily Bible reading. In addition, God intends to build us up together as one people in Christ. The church should be a dynamic entity. We are always “Under Construction.” When we talk about growth it is not just about adding members. The more important factors are our knowledge of God, our love for Him and our relationship with each other. Whether you have joined this church for one year or ten years, are you still actively growing? Do you have a constant hunger for God’s Word? We said earlier that a church is God’s spiritual home. Do you see yourself as a member or a guest? Or do you just come here to enjoy services such as food, child-care and Bible study lessons? Do you see fellow brothers and sisters as family members? Do you care about their needs? Are you eager to encourage others with God’s Word and offer practical help? Let us all contribute ourselves to keep building this spiritual family up. God gives every believer spiritual gifts to serve in the church. Do not remain idle, but use those talents God has given you to build others up. I am sure the more you participate, the bigger the sense of belonging you will have. There will be fewer complaints about the problems you see. Instead, there will be more involvement for improvements. When you help others grow, you will grow at the same time. You will stop acting like an outsider but you will see yourself as an insider.

結論 CONCLUSION

The gospel is both inclusive and exclusive. We are brought near to God by Christ. We are blended in to God’s family through Christ. We are also built up in Christ. It is all because of what Jesus Christ did for us. If you have received Jesus into your heart by faith, then you are saved. But that should not be the end of God’s work. The Lord wants you to pass on His grace to others, so that more people will become part of His family. Imagine your new life in Christ is a bag of cement. The outcomes of your life depend on what you use it to build. You may feel secure if you use it to construct a wall. But at the same time, you will also block other people out. Instead, you can make a bridge and initiate friendship with others. Then you can connect others to Jesus. But God has a more beautiful goal in mind. He determines to create a home out of all of us. It is a place where people from everywhere can experience God’s love. It is a home where people not just call each other brothers and sisters, but truly treat one another as family members. The question is: are you a part of this building project? If so, do not be indifferent but make a difference. Let us turn our hostility into hospitality. Resist segregation but link together as one congregation. At the end, people who come here do not only believe in the same God, but they can also feel that they belong to the same family.

引言 INTRODUCTION

一般人比較容易和相似的人靠近。我是一個內向、害羞的人。如果我單獨參加一個聚會，我會到處看看有沒有認識的人。如果我找不到，那麼我會找東方面孔：中國人、韓國人、印度人等等。如果都沒有的話，我會尋找其他非美國人。我覺得與英語較為不流利的人交談自在很多。我們自然會接受一些背景相近的人。我們接納「同類」的人，但與「非我類」的人保持距離。這正是猶太人在聖經裡看待其他人的態度。他們稱所有非猶太人為外邦人。但神以不同的角度看待人。對神來說，世界上只有信徒和非信徒兩種人。神的心意是要將尋求的人變成祂的兒女。因此，福音既具有包容性，又具有排他性。主歡迎任何人加入祂的大家庭，但他們只能透過耶穌進去。教會是神家庭的縮影。神在教會中的工作是這封信的一個主題。保羅的寫信對象主要是外邦的基督徒。保羅告訴他們，他們是有福的。當他們在靈性上還是死亡時，神就給他們新的生命。神對待他們就像對待猶太基督徒一樣。神接納這兩群信徒進入祂的家，無論他們的背景如何。神今天也在做同樣的事情。祂差遣我們出去吸引各樣的人加入祂的大家庭。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 藉基督得接近 Brought Near by Christ (v. 11-13)

以弗所教會的信徒是有福的，因為他們藉著耶穌基督得以接近神。在 11-12 節中，保羅用了七個詞語來描述他們在得救之前的絕望處境。首先，他們面對一些外在的障礙。在第 11 節中，我們看到「外邦人」和「沒有受割禮的人」這兩個詞語。猶太人稱呼他們為「外邦人」。就像廣東人稱呼所有西方男士為「鬼佬」一樣，因為他們的眼睛顏色比較淡。與猶太人不同，外邦男士出生沒有接受割禮。這是一個人在神的約中的記號。此外，保羅在 12 節也說，他們「在以色列國民以外」。外邦人沒有猶太人享有的某些特權。例如，在耶穌的時代，外邦人必須先接受割禮成為猶太人，才能敬拜耶和華。聖殿有一個外院，讓外邦人聚集敬拜神。但是唯有猶太人才能進一步進入聖殿。也許你以前也有過二等公民的感覺。當你從海外坐飛機進美國時，你必須經過海關檢查站。公民將前往大廳的一邊。官員可能會對他們微笑並說：「歡迎回家！」非永久居民就安排到其他櫃檯。官員沒有表情地問旅客：「你來美國做什麼？」保羅書信的收信人與神隔絕不只是因為一些外在的障礙，還有一些內在的障礙。第 12 節還

有其他四個形容。首先，保羅說他們「與基督無關」。他們對舊約中彌賽亞的預言一無所知。而且他們「在所應許的諸約上是局外人」。由於他們不熟悉聖經，他們不知道神應許給以色列的祝福。此外，由於他們是局外人，他們活在世上「沒有指望」、「沒有神」。他們不認識耶和華。他們也許敬拜偶像。他們的盼望只在今生。當我們讀到第 13 節時，這樣一幅陰暗的景象就產生 180 度的轉變：你們從前遠離神的人，如今卻在基督耶穌裡，靠著他的血，已經得親近了。真正的隔離不是在猶太人和外邦人之間，而是在全人類和神之間。每個人都因罪而與神隔絕。猶太人比外邦人稍為有優勢，因為他們有舊約聖經。但單單靠知識無法拯救任何人，唯有耶穌才能拯救我們。祂為所有人的罪而死。十字架就像一座橋樑，連結罪人與神。今天我們也是藉著同樣的方式接近神。神拯救你，因為祂希望透過你拯救別人。第一個分享福音的地方很可能就是你的家。在基督徒家庭長大的孩子享有某些優勢。他們來到教會聽聖經故事。然而，他們必須像你一樣接受耶穌基督成為他們的救主和生命的主。我們必須在家中透過行動向他們展示聖經的價值觀，他們才能明白聖經與生活息息相關。當時機來臨時，幫助他們做決定接受耶穌。永遠不會嫌太早！無論你在家中，或是在哪裡，你都應該向人們講述神。這需要很大的耐心。非信徒不會按照神的標準生活，他們可能以不同的用詞講話，並且他們持有世俗的世界觀。不要看不起他們，彷彿他們是罪無可恕的人一樣。記住你以前也是那樣的。神向你施恩，你也應該向他們施恩。你可以接納他們但不認同他們的價值觀和行為。他們和你一樣需要耶穌。

2. 靠基督而連結 Blended In through Christ (v. 14-18)

外邦人藉著基督得以接近神。但神的目的不只是一要拯救他們。神盼望使所有的信徒靠著基督連結成為一家人。在這一段落中，保羅用「冤仇」這個字來描述猶太人和外邦人之間的敵對關係。猶太人因著他們的民族優越感看不起外邦信徒。耶穌的死不但消除了罪的刑罰，祂也成為兩批人的中間人。請看第 14 至 15 節：14 因他使我們和睦，將兩下合而為一，拆毀了中間隔斷的牆；15 而且以自己的身體廢掉冤仇，就是那記在律法上的規條，為要將兩下藉著自己造成一個新人，如此便成就了和睦。舊約律法就像一面牆，將兩邊分開。神將律法賜給猶太人，作為規範他們生活的守則。然而，猶太人卻把律法變成了歧視外邦人的工具。就像開車的人認為自己比坐馬車的人更文明一樣。更糟的是，猶太人認為他們可以透過遵守律法來得救。耶穌的死消除了律法加給人的限制。人們只能透過接受耶穌而不是遵行律法得救。有一次，有人問耶穌律法中最大的誡命是哪一條。祂回答說，整個律法可以概括為兩個要求：愛神和愛人。如果我們遵守這兩個原則，我們就履行了猶太律法中的命令。神的計劃不是要拯救外邦人，然後把他們放在外邦人的教會裡。今天有黑人教會、華人教會和西

班牙語教會，人們用自己的文化和語言來敬拜神。人們覺得與背景相似的信徒交往更自在。但神的計劃是要使猶太人和外邦人合為一體，成為一家人。在神的眼中，只有一種基督徒，就是重生的基督徒。可惜，神喜歡多元性，但有些人卻喜歡分門別類。有一次，彼得和幾個猶太基督徒和一些外邦信徒一起吃飯。當彼得聽說一些猶太人的教會領袖要來訪時，他趕緊離開現場。其他猶太基督徒也效法彼得的做法。彼得擔心那些教會同工會批評他與外邦人交往。保羅在加拉太書 2:14 提到了這件事：**但我一看見他們行的不正，與福音的真理不合，就在眾人面前對磯法說：「你既是猶太人，若隨外邦人行事，不隨猶太人行事，怎麼還勉強外邦人隨猶太人呢？」**保羅毫不猶豫地斥責彼得的行為像個假冒偽善的人。彼得是個猶太人。他心中相信猶太信徒和外邦信徒之間沒有差別。但實際上，他與外邦人劃清界限，因為他想要討好一些猶太信徒。不同背景的人之間不應該有任何區別。神接納每一個來到祂面前的人。在我們的教會中，我們需要問自己，我們是在與他人建造橋樑還是圍牆。我們是否熱情地歡迎每一位進來的人？不要以外表來判斷他們。要從神的角度來看他們。所有人都是按照神的形象被創造的。無論他們是年輕還是年長、教育水平高或低、來自大城市還是鄉村、有很多頭髮還是沒有頭髮，任何條件都無關緊要。我們的目標是幫助每個人融入神的大家庭。

3. 在基督被建造 Built Up in Christ (v. 19-22)

神要藉著基督使猶太人和外邦人接近祂。祂也將兩個群體連結成為一家人。但是神有更高的心意。祂希望在基督裡建造這個信徒的教會。請看 19-20 節：**19 這樣，你們不再作外人和客旅，是與聖徒同國，是神家裡的人了；20 並且被建造在使徒和先知的根基上，有基督耶穌自己為房角石。**保羅用一個家和房子來說明神要建造的普世教會。家是一家人居住的地方。成員們互相愛護和接納，互相關心和扶持。他們朝著共同的目標努力。一旦成為信徒，猶太人和外邦人就不再是敵人，而是一家人。另外，房子不只是一棟建築物。它給人安全感，能夠防風和擋雨。它還可以保護人們免受小偷的侵害。但神建造的這棟房子並不是一座普通的建築物。保羅告訴我們，它的根基是使徒和先知。他們都是神的使者。他們從神那裡接收信息，教導人們神的真理，並將那些內容寫下來成為聖經。那是我們信仰的基礎。任何忠實教導聖經的教會都是好教會。除了根基之外，這座房子的房角石是耶穌。當時的人鋪地基時會放一塊房角石。那塊石頭就是以後結構的根據點。地板是否平、牆是否直，就看那塊石頭了。同樣，只有當我們宣稱耶穌是我們的房角石之時，我們的信仰才是穩固的。所有假教導都有相同的錯誤。它們對耶穌的身份和工作有錯誤的理解。例如，有些人聲稱耶穌只是一個好人，一個出色的老師和一個優秀的榜樣。他們說耶穌死在十字架上愛和犧牲的典範。但聖經告訴我們，耶穌是唯一的真神。祂的死

是為了把我們從罪中拯救出來。唯有耶穌才能賜給我們救恩。耶穌呼召我們跟隨祂，視祂為我們生命的主。這是一個終生的承諾。我們與耶穌的關係應該繼續增長。我們透過每天讀聖經來加強我們的信心。此外，神要我們在基督裡被建造成為一個子民。教會應該是一個活的個體。我們一直都處於「正在施工」的狀態中。當我們談到成長時，不只是增加人數。更重要的是我們對神的認識、對神的愛、我們彼此之間的關係。無論你加入這個教會一年或是十年，你還在積極成長嗎？你對神的話有持續的渴慕嗎？我們說教會是神屬靈的家。你將自己視為成員還是嘉賓？你來到這裡是否只是為了享受食物、托兒和聖經課程等服務？你把弟兄姐妹視為家人嗎？你關心他們的需要嗎？你有沒有用神的話語鼓勵別人並提供實際的幫助？讓我們貢獻自己的力量，不斷建造這個屬靈的家。神賜給每個信徒屬靈的恩賜，讓他們在教會中事奉。不要在那裡閒站，要運用神給你的才幹來造就別人。我相信你參與得越多，你的歸屬感就會越強。你看到問題也會減少抱怨。相反，將會樂意有更多的參與來改善。當你幫助別人成長時，你也會同時成長。你不再表現得像個局外人，而是將自己視為家庭的成員。

結論 CONCLUSION

福音既具有包容性，又具有排他性。我們藉著基督得以接近神。我們靠著基督被連結為神的家人。我們也是在基督裡被建造起來。這全都是因為耶穌基督為我們所做的。如果你憑信心接受耶穌進入你的心中，那麼你就是得救了。但這不應該是神的工作的結束。主希望你將祂的恩典傳遞給別人，讓更多人成為祂家庭的一員。想像一下你在基督裡的新生命是一包水泥。你生命的成果取決於你用它來建造什麼。如果你用它來建一面牆，然後你會感到安全。但同時，你也會把其他人拒於門外。你可以蓋一座橋樑並與他人做朋友。然後你就可以把別人與耶穌連結起來。但神有一個更美好的目標。祂要把我們所有人建造成一個家，讓來自各地的人都能在這裡體驗到神的愛。在這個家中，我們不只稱呼對方為弟兄姐妹，而且我們真的像家人一樣彼此相待。問題是：你是這個建築工程的一份子嗎？如果是的話，請不要漠不關心，而要帶來改變。讓我們化敵意為熱情好客。抗拒互相隔離，而是融合成為一個會眾。最終，來到這裡的人們不只是相信同一位神，還能感覺到自己屬於同一個家。