

# ἐκκλησία

called out | called together

EKKLESIA

Part 2 - Don't Make It Difficult

Pastor Dave Patterson

**[1 Peter 2:9]**

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who **called you out** of darkness into his wonderful light.*

***What God is building in the earth, you have not seen the best of it yet!***

**[Ephesians 2:20-22]**

*Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. We are carefully **joined together in him**, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. And in him you too are **being built together to become** a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

***God always provides plans for what He's building. The New Testament Church has a certain identity and atmosphere about it!***

**[Psalm 127:1]**

*Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labor in vain.*

**[Acts 15:1-19, NLT]**

*While Paul and Barnabas were at Antioch of Syria, some men from Judea arrived and began to teach the believers: "Unless you are circumcised as required by the law of Moses, you cannot be*

saved.”<sup>2</sup> Paul and Barnabas disagreed with them, arguing vehemently. Finally, the church decided to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, accompanied by some local believers, to talk to the apostles and elders about this question.<sup>3</sup> The church sent the delegates to Jerusalem, and they stopped along the way in Phoenicia and Samaria to visit the believers. They told them—much to everyone’s joy—that the Gentiles too, were being converted.<sup>4</sup> When they arrived in Jerusalem, Barnabas and Paul were welcomed by the whole church (EKKLESIA WORSHIPPERS), including the apostles and elders. They reported everything God had done through them.<sup>5</sup> But then some of the believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and insisted, “The Gentile converts must be circumcised and required to follow the law of Moses.”<sup>6</sup> So the apostles and elders met together to resolve this issue.<sup>7</sup> At the meeting, after a long discussion, Peter stood and addressed them as follows: “Brothers, you all know that God chose me from among you some time ago to preach to the Gentiles so that they could hear the Good News and believe.<sup>8</sup> God knows people’s hearts, and he confirmed that he accepts Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us.<sup>9</sup> He made no distinction between us and them, for he cleansed their hearts through faith.<sup>10</sup> So why are you now challenging God by burdening the Gentile believers with a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors were able to bear?<sup>11</sup> We believe that we are all saved the same way, by the undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus.”

<sup>12</sup> Everyone listened quietly as Barnabas and Paul told about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.<sup>13</sup> When they had finished, James stood and said, “Brothers, listen to me.<sup>14</sup> Peter has told you about the time God first visited the Gentiles to take from them a people for himself.<sup>15</sup> And this conversion of Gentiles is exactly what the prophets predicted. As it is written:

<sup>16</sup> ‘Afterward I will return.

and **rebuild the tabernacle of David**, which has fallen down;  
I will rebuild its ruins,

*and restore it,  
17 so that the rest of humanity might seek the LORD,  
including the Gentiles—  
all those I have called to be mine.*

*The LORD has spoken—  
18 he who made these things known so long ago.'*

*19 “And so my judgment is that **we should not make it difficult** for the  
Gentiles who are turning to God*

### **[Ephesians 2:14-15]**

*For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. <sup>15</sup> He did this by **ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations**. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups.*

### **[Ephesians 2:15]**

*He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, **he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us**.*

### **[Galatians 3:27-28]**

*And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. **There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female**. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

### **[1 Peter 2:5]**

*And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. **You are his holy priests** and through Christ Jesus, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God.*

**[Hebrews 10:22]**

*So, let us go right into the very presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him.*

***You need to know what walls have been built that were not in the original blueprint; tear them down, so you can enter fully into the presence of God.***

### **The Divides that Must Be Broken Down**

**Ethnic & Racial Divide | Gender Divide | Qualified to Minister Divide**

#### **Discussion Thoughts**

- 1. What is something that you've seen built from start to finish? Were there any barriers? If so, discuss its impact on the progress.**
- 2. What are some "blueprints" that God lays out in His Word? How closely have you seen them followed out by believers around you?**
- 3. How do you think we sometimes make things difficult for people to come to God? How do we resolve that?**
- 4. Why do you think the religious (or in the New Testament: largely the Pharisees) default to rules and regulations?**
- 5. What are some factors that make the church attractive?**
- 6. Of the three Divides (Ethnic/Racial, Gender, and Ministry Qualifications), which ones have you personally experienced? What practical steps helped to combat those?**

**7. Take time this week to evaluate if there are any manmade walls in your life that need to be knocked down.**

**Ongoing Questions for Ekklesia**

**What are you building with your life?**

**Whose plans are you using?**