

Ephesians

Lesson Eight Reconciliation in One Body

2:11-22

Introduction:

1. The church – the body of Christ – is made of members who were once dead in sin, but now are alive in Christ.
2. Salvation – by grace through faith, makes one a new creation of God – ready to work and serve the Savior.
3. However, salvation also results in other blessings; namely, a peaceful unity among brethren in the church.
4. Salvation brings reconciliation in one body.

2:11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands

- A. After emphasizing their salvation (by grace through faith), Paul encouraged the Ephesians to remember who they were before they were saved.
 1. Sense of humility
 2. Sense of obligation
- B. Before they were Christians, they were Gentiles in the flesh.
 1. By physical descent, they were Gentiles.
 2. They were not Jews; thus, they were separated from them.
- C. Before they were Christians, they were called “Uncircumcision” by the Jews.
 1. Though this was a statement of fact, it had become a term of reproach.
 2. They Jews looked down upon the Gentiles while they gloried self-righteously in their own circumcision.
- D. But, Paul declared that the Jews were called “the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands.”
 1. Circumcision was a part of the Law of Moses.
 2. However, under the New Testament, it was no longer binding and no longer carried the promises of old.
 3. Thus, their circumcision was now merely a fleshly act.
 4. Furthermore, it was an act of man, not God (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; Col. 2:11).
- E. The Gospel of Christ had made great changes for both Gentile and Jew.

2:12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world

- A. Since the majority of Christians in Ephesus were from a Gentile background, Paul continued to emphasize the changes that affected them.
- B. Before they were Christians, they were without Christ.
 1. As Gentiles, they had little or no understanding of the promise of the Messiah.
 2. Before they heard the Gospel, they were without knowledge of Jesus.

3. Thus, they were without the salvation and hope brought by Christ.
- C. Before they were Christians, they were aliens from Israel.
 1. The Gentiles were not citizens of Israel.
 2. Thus, they were not a part of God's chosen nation – His holy people.
 3. Furthermore, they were separated from spiritual Israel, the church.
- D. Before they were Christians, they were strangers from God's covenants.
 1. The promises of the Old Covenant were not given specifically to them.
 2. Though those promises included the salvation of the Gentiles, they had little if any knowledge of them.
 3. Also, they had been separate from the promises of the Gospel.
- E. Before they were Christians, they were without hope.
 1. They had no hope for the promise of redemption.
 2. They had no hope because they were without salvation.
- F. Before they were Christians, they were without God.
 1. They did not know or honor the one, true God (cf. Rom. 1:18ff).
 2. They did not enjoy fellowship with God.
- G. Before they were Christians, they were in the world.
 1. This phrase refers to the Gentile world of which they were a part.
 2. They were worldly and separated from true spirituality.
- H. All of those who are outside of Christ are in the same sad condition the Ephesians had experienced.

2:13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ

- A. "But now" – one of the greatest phrases in the Bible (Luke 16:25; John 18:36; Acts 17:30; Rom. 6:21-22; 7:5-6; 16:25-26; 1 Cor. 12:17-20; 15:19-20; Eph. 5:8; Col. 1:26; Philemon 11; Heb. 8:6; 11:15-16; 1 Pet. 2:10).
- B. Their remembered past is contrasted with their joyful present.
- C. Now as Christians, they are in Christ.
 1. In His body, the church, they are citizens of the spiritual kingdom.
 2. Instead of being separated, they belong – they are a part of the family.
- D. Now as Christians, they are made nigh (near).
 1. Separated from the Jews, they were considered "far off" (cf. Isa. 57:19; Psalm 148:14; Acts 2:39).
 2. There is no longer an exclusion based upon birth, race or circumcision; thus, the Gentiles are made near – brought close.
 3. The word "are" indicates a present, continuing state.
- E. Now as Christians, they have contact with the blood of Christ.
 1. It was the blood that made them near, not circumcision.
 2. The same price was paid for all mankind.
 3. Thus, all have the rights of citizenship when washed by the blood.
- F. There is a joyful present and a bright future for those who are obedient to the Gospel.

2:14-15 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace

- A. Note that this passage begins and ends with “peace.”
 - 1. The Greek word for “peace” is *eirene* (εἰρηνη).
 - 2. It means, “Quietness, rest; joined as one again; tranquility, exemption from the rage and havoc of war; harmony, security, safety.”
 - 3. Thayer wrote: “*Of Christianity, the tranquil state of the soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of whatever sort that is.*”
 - 4. Foy E. Wallace, Jr. gives the following definitions of “peace”:
 - a. *Reconciliation with God*
 - b. *Satisfaction – propitiation of sins committed against God, by vicarious suffering*
 - c. *Peace in conscience from sense of being in state of reconciliation*
 - d. *Cessation of hostilities (Isaiah 2:2-4)*
 - 5. This concept of peace is essential to our understanding of salvation from sin and unity in the church.
 - a. First, it is peace with God by the remission of sins.
 - b. Then, it is peace with one another in the body of Christ.
- B. By His death upon the cross, Jesus was able to make the Jews and Gentiles “one.”
- C. He did this by breaking down the “middle wall of partition” that stood between the two groups; namely, the Law of Moses.
 - 1. The word for “broken down” means, “To loosen, dissolve, untie.”
 - 2. “Loose” – Matt. 16:19; Mark 11:2; John 11:44; Acts 24:26; Rev. 5:2
 - 3. “Broken” – John 5:18; Acts 13:43
 - 4. “Destroy” – John 2:19; 1 John 3:8
 - 5. “Dissolved” – 2 Peter 3:11-12
 - 6. “Melt” – 2 Peter 3:10
 - 7. Thus, Jesus loosed or dissolved the authority of the Law of Moses – it is no longer bound upon man.
 - 8. The Law of Moses had made a distinct separation between Gentile and Jew; but, that separation is now removed.
 - a. This separation was seen literally in the Temple with the wall that divided the outer court (of the Gentiles) from the inner Temple.
 - b. Josephus wrote that there was a tablet affixed to that wall forbidding the Gentiles from advancing beyond it.
- D. Jesus took away the Old Law by abolishing it in His flesh.
 - 1. As used here, the word “abolish” means, “To do away, to void, to annul; to render idle, inactive or inoperative.” (Cf. 2 Cor. 3:13; Col. 2:14; Heb. 10:9)
 - 2. Jesus did not destroy the Law of Moses, but fulfilled it (cf. Matt. 5:17).
 - 3. However, by living and dying in human flesh, Jesus removed the authority of the Law of Moses.
 - 4. Thus, He took away the hostility between Jew and Gentile – and between God and man.
- E. Paul specifies that Jesus abolished the Ten Commandments; but, his language includes the entire law (cf. 2 Cor. 3:7-14; Rom. 7:7-10).
- F. The reason for the removal of the Old Law was that peace might be made in the church – Jew and Gentile becoming “one new man.”

2:16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby

- A. The Greek word for “he might reconcile” means, “To bring back to a former state of harmony; to reconcile completely or fully.”
 - 1. It is found twice in Colossians 1:20-21.
 - 2. The removal of sin creates full and perfect fellowship with God.
 - 3. The removal of the Law of Moses allows restoration of relationship between the Jews and Gentiles.
- B. Reconciliation unto God is possible only by the cross.
- C. Reconciliation unto God is found only in one body – the church.
 - 1. There is no salvation without the cross (and the blood).
 - 2. There is no salvation without the church (the body).

2:17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh

- A. After the sacrifice of Jesus was accomplished at the cross, the message had to be preached – thus, Calvary and Pentecost are essential to the Gospel.
- B. The word “preached” is *euaggelizo* (ευαγγελίζω).
 - 1. It means, “To announce good news; to evangelize; declare good tidings; bring good news.”
 - 2. It is usually translated as “preach the gospel.”
 - 3. Here, it is joined with the word “peace.”
 - 4. Thus, it means, “To gospelize peace” or “To preach the gospel of peace.”
- C. Because of the reconciliation of the cross, peace was available to all men.
- D. This ties back to the peace mentioned in verses 14 and 15.
- E. Notice that it is said that Jesus preached peace to them; but, in fact, the Gospel was preached to them by the Apostles (cf. 1 Peter 3:19).

2:18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father

- A. Through Jesus – and His blood – both Jew and Gentile have access to the Father.
- B. This access is “by one Spirit.”
 - 1. The word “spirit” may refer to the human spirit – thus, indicating a unity of heart, thought and attitude of those in the one body.
 - 2. Or, it may refer to the Holy Spirit.
 - a. This does not have to mean something miraculous.
 - b. Romans 5:2 declares that access is by faith.
 - c. Ephesians 3:12 states that access is “by the faith of Him.”
 - d. Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17) and “the faith of Him” is a reference to the Gospel.
 - e. The Gospel was revealed by the Holy Spirit; thus, one’s access to the Father is by the Spirit – through the Gospel, the Word of God.
 - 3. If it refers to the Holy Spirit, this verse gives evidence of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit in one verse.

2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God

- A. Because of all of these things, those who were strangers and foreigners are no more!
 - 1. A stranger was separate from the group or community.
 - 2. A foreigner was a sojourner – dwelling nearby but without the rights of citizenship.
 - 3. “No more” means “no longer” and they never again will be.
- B. Now, they were a part of the household of God and citizens in the Lord’s kingdom.
 - 1. As fellow-citizens, they were part of the community and shared in fellowship
 - 2. Their relationship was with the saints – Christians, sanctified from sin.
 - 3. They had become part of the family of God – brothers and sisters in Christ.
- C. Jew and Gentile shared all the rights and privileges of citizenship together.

2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone

- A. But, they did not just belong to a household, they were constituent parts of it!
- B. The “chief corner stone” of the house is Jesus Christ Himself.
 - 1. The emphasis is that He is both the corner stone and the foundation.
 - 2. Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 28:16; Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17-18; Acts 4:11-12; 1 Corinthians 3:9-11; 1 Peter 2:7-8
- C. Though Christ is the only foundation, He was preached and taught by the apostles and prophets.
 - 1. The Apostles were the 12 (plus Paul) chosen to be the ambassadors of Jesus.
 - 2. The prophets were the New Testament prophets who further preached and built up the church (cf. 3:5).
 - 3. Thus, we are able to understand Matthew 16:18-19.
 - a. The rock on which the church was built was not Peter, but Jesus.
 - b. Peter was given the keys by being inspired to preach the Gospel.
- D. A church founded upon anything else is not the Lord’s church.

2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord

- A. In Christ – *the foundation on which the building stands and the corner stone which joins both sides together* – Jews and Gentiles become one united structure.
- B. All fit together perfectly because of God’s flawless architectural plan!
- C. When completed – by uniting Jew and Gentile – it stands as a holy temple, a living spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5).

2:22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit

- A. Thus, the church becomes the habitation – abode, dwelling place – of God.
 - 1. Not a physical, pagan temple – like for the goddess Diana
 - 2. Not a physical, Jewish temple – like in Jerusalem
 - 3. But, a spiritual temple wherein God lives without being seen
- B. 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:15-20
- C. We must never underestimate the importance of the church!
 - 1. It is the kingdom and body of Christ.
 - 2. It is the family, temple and habitation of God.
 - 3. It is the only place of promise, reconciliation and peace.