

Date: 9 July 2023

Scripture Passage: Ephesians 2:11-22

Title: Once Separated, Now United

Introduction

- Paul wrote this appraisal to the Ephesian church when he was under imprisonment under house arrest in Rome. We read of this in Acts 28. Now he was taken to Rome and he was placed under house arrest. And as the apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he began by saying to them that there is this plan of God from eternity past to eternity future, of God choosing for himself a people and wanting to redeem them through the coming of a savior Jesus Christ, by the work of the Holy Spirit. From eternity in the past, God had already made this plan to call out for himself the people who would be redeemed by the savior, who would be transformed by the Holy Spirit, and they would be prepared for life with God in heaven. Paul has revealed that he has been praying for the church for their welfare and he revealed to them that they had been saved by the power of the Holy Spirit. The same holy spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the dead, has raised us from our spiritual death and made us alive together with Christ. We were once spiritually dead, but we have been made alive through faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. Once we are saved, we are to show good works as the fruit of our faith. And we are placing the heavenly realm to share in the blessing of Christ.
- So the apostle Paul has shown us what has happened to us spiritually. Now he is going to show us what has happened to our status. There are 3 sections involved here. In verse 11 to 13, we are told that we were once separated. Then in the second section we are told that we are now united in verse 14 to verse 18. And finally in verse 19 to verse 22 we are shown that together we are the children of God. Let us follow through each section in turn.

I. You were once separated (11-13).

- *Despised by the Jews, who called them Gentiles, even Gentile dogs, & the Uncircumcision. You did not belong to God's family, & were ignorant of the word of God. Jews may be from far-flung parts of earth, but they belonged to commonwealth of Israel. A Jew is exposed to, & taught, God's law fr young. Knew of covenants, & promise. Gentiles different. Without hope, & without God (arranged chiastically). Did not belong, because without God. Ignorant, therefore without hope. Now everything has changed. In Christ, brought near. Before that, far off. Not geographically, but in relationship & knowledge. Strangers, no hope, without God. Observing from distance.*

We first look at verse 11-13, that is the first section “you were once separated”. **Read v11.** So the contrast and comparison here is between the two groups.: the Jews and the non Jews. The non Jews are referred to as the Gentiles of the nations in the Bible. The Jews prided themselves as being circumcised people. They were proud that they were descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They were the circumcised people. They were members of the Covenant People of God. And when they referred to the Gentiles, they refer to them as uncircumcised people. They did so in a derogatory manner. They despise their uncircumcised people. Remember when David was confronting Goliath, how did he address them? In 1 Samuel 17:16 *Then David spoke to the men who stood by him, saying, “What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?”* .

The Apostle Paul is comparing the two group of people. The Jews had the privilege of knowing the law of God, knowing that there was going to be a savior coming and that that they knew the special covenant relationship that God had made with his people. They were raised from young in the knowledge of scriptures. Whereas the Gentiles did not have all these privileges. There were some Gentiles in those days who were attracted to the God of Israel. They were searching, as it were, and they knew that there was something about the teaching of the Jewish scriptures, so they drew near to listen to to the preaching in the temple. **These Gentiles were called proselytes.** The Proselytes when they came to the temple, they had to stay in the court of the Gentiles. There was that wall of division between the Jews and the Gentiles. The Jews and Gentiles were basically separated.

The Apostle Paul is basically saying to the Christian in Ephesus that before you were saved, you did not belong to God's family. You had no hope, and you were aliens from God's family. You were ignorant of the word of God. That division between Jews and Gentiles was so clear.

- *The blood of Christ speaks of His death & resurrection. Lamb of God, offered up as sacrifice (John 1:29). By death on cross (John 3:14). Blood of covenant (Luke 22:20). Sealed by Spirit (1:13). Belong to God (1 Cor. 6:19-20). A spiritual, formal, legal act no one can annul.*

And in v13 it says "But now". **Read v13.** But now that you have come to faith in Jesus Christ, whether you are a Gentile or a Jew, it is as though that wall of division between you has been removed. You who were once far off, are now brought near together as one. How did that happen? It is by the blood of Jesus Christ. The blood of Christ is an expression that is full of meaning in the Bible.

The blood of Christ speaks to us of the Lord Jesus Christ being sacrificed on the cross of Calvary. In the OT, animal sacrifices were being made. The animal sacrifice was pointing to that perfect sacrifice which is Jesus Christ, the savior who would die and His blood will be shed for his people sins of His people. And the coming of Jesus Christ was to fulfill those prophecies of the Old Testament, and what was spoken of in the animal sacrifices. So John 1:29, John the Baptist pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ and said, "behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world". The Lord Jesus died on the cross as an offering for the sins of His people. His death shown by the flowing out of the blood makes atonement for our sins. It pays for the punishment we deserve for our sins and his blood is regarded as cleansing our hearts. Our hearts are made clean by the blood of Jesus Christ when we repent and believe in him. So Jesus Christ perfect righteousness is now considered ours, so that we are accepted by God as his children.

Therefore, our salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone is not only a spiritual work of God. It is also a formal and legal act that no one can annul. We are now children of God, adopted into his Kingdom. This is the assurance given to us. The blood of Christ has accomplished our salvation. It is done, it is secure. Satan cannot make any claim on you. You are no more under the bondage of sin. The Holy Spirit, who dwells in us seals us. **1:13** You having believed are now sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. We who were once separated are now saved by the death of Jesus Christ and he has given us new life by his resurrection. All these have been accomplished in Christ death. All these concepts are involved in the in the expression, the blood of Jesus Christ.

So what does the blood of Christ do? That is the second section that we will consider now.

II. You are now united (14-18).

- *Jews and Gentiles were separated are now united (15-16). In temple, wall separated court of Gentiles from Jews. Proselytes not fully accepted. Required by law of commandments & ordinances, do's & don'ts. Christ came to fulfil the law's demands, by His death on the cross. Making one new man from the two, reconciled to God, & become one body (i.e. the church). The active & passive obedience of Christ. Redemption accomplished by cross.*

You are now united. You who were once separated and especially the Gentile believers you before your conversion. You were not within the Commonwealth of Israel and they were the special covenanted people of God who had so many privileges. But together you have come to faith in Christ, and the wall of separation is now broken down. You are now one. So you are now united, you see. **Read v14.** Paul here is reminding the Christian in Ephesus what they used to be. They used to be far off from God, but now they were one. The Jews and the Gentiles were now one in nature. There was no longer a wall of separation between them that used to exist there at the temple. When Jesus came and he died upon the cross, that wall was indeed torn down so that they might be one. The Jew not being more privileged in Christ than the Gentile. What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.

Read v15. Jesus Christ is the one who has put an end to the enmity that existed. That hate between the Jews and the Gentiles, that was a feeling that went both ways. And one of the sources for that

enmity we see is found in the second phrase of this verse. And it is the law of God, the Law of God divided him, the Gentiles. That thought the Jews were weird and strange because of these customs that they kept the things that they did. And the Jews looked at the Gentiles as unclean, unfit for even talking to. You see the law divided the Jews and the Gentiles. So scripture here in this verse says that Christ put an end to that entity by abolishing the law of the commandments contained in the ordinances. The law was done. It was finished. There was no more peace offerings that needed to be made. There was no more sacrifice for sin. No more need for all of those things that that dealt with temple worship there in Jerusalem.

And by the way, we should say this when we talk about abolishing the law, it doesn't mean that the commandments about sin were done away with. Christ never abolished those commandments about sin. The Gentiles were expected to keep those as much as the Jews. By the way, those laws concerning right and wrong, we often call those **the moral law**. You know, those were given to the Jews on tables of stone. But you know what they were given to the Gentiles in their heart. Romans 2: 14-15 tells us "for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them". All men are born with a conscience to know right and wrong. God spelled it out again on the tables of stone for the Jews, but to the Gentiles they were written on their heart. Understand Abraham knew right and wrong and did not have the tables of stone. Cain knew he had done wrong when he murdered Able.

But As for the ceremonies, that was all fulfilled by Christ death on the cross. It was no longer a necessity. It didn't mean that the Jew would stop being a Jew and live the lifestyle of a Gentile. But it did mean that there should be no division between them. It did mean that there was to be equality in the House of God. The Gentile was not considered to be unclean. The law that was to bind the both of them was to be the law of Christ. Which is a far better law. Scripture here says "so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace". What the law had once divided between the Jew and the Gentile, Christ has brought together and made a new man. And that new man we call a Christian. And in that new man, we should have peace with one another. I am no better a Christian than another because of the color of my skin. I am no better of a Christian because of my gender. I am no better a Christian because I am a Reformed Baptist. The same blood bought us all bought us all. And we are equal in the sight of God.

We are what we are because God loved us. Because he chose us. Because he prepared away in the fullness of time and sent his only begotten son in the flesh to die for us, for his sheep. I am what I am not because of me, but because of him. And in his family, that family that I've been adopted unto that we read about in chapter one. The only greatest in the Kingdom that we need to be worried about is Jesus Christ. He alone Is the greatest.

Read v16. Understand that in the time period in which Paul wrote, many of the Jews believe that they can obtain salvation through works. And now Paul is salvation is by Grace. Showing the Jews that works could never save. So Paul tells them. Very clearly here. That Christ died for the Jew and the Gentile both. Reconciling both through the cross. Understand that there wasn't one way for the Jew to be saved, and another way for the Gentile. There's only one way. And it's through Christ alone. And for that matter, it's not just the Jews. It's anybody who believes that they can obtain the favor of God through good deeds and moral lifestyle, and yet reject his son at the same time. They're sadly mistaken. There is one way to peace with God, and that's through the power of the Cross of Christ. Now through that cross, we become one body, as verse 16 tells us. What is that one body that we're all put in? That's the family of God. The Church! God's plan for his church is local visible bodies. The word that is used is ecclesia, which means an assembly or congregation of people for a purpose. When we are saved and cleansed by the blood of Christ, we are part of the family of God. And the local and visible body is what God wants his children assembled. We are reconciled to God through the blood of Jesus Christ, and we have become one body in Christ. And there should be no enmity within the body of Christ, because Christ has put to death the enmity.

- *The one way of salvation applies to both Gentiles & Jews (17-18). Paul explains in greater detail in Roman & Galatians. See Gal 3:26-29; 6:16. Christ preached this peace to you, through the preachers (17). Receiving the sent is as receiving the sender. Rejecting also. When both Jews & Gentiles believe, they have access to the Father by the same Spirit (18). Put another way, Jews saved by the same resurrection power of the Spirit (cf 1:19-20). Gospel needs to be proclaimed to Jews as well. Temple, & Palestine, pilgrimages worthless.*

Read v17. Paul here is quoting from Isaiah 5:19. But I want you to think about something . When Jesus Christ came to this earth, what did he come for? He came for the lost sheep! He said my sheep hear my voice. Those who believe and have faith in Christ are His children. It says in this verse that he came to preach to those afar off and to those who were near. Afar off is speaking about the Gentiles right, they were far off from the temple. So the word of God was preached to them that were far off. The same gospel was also preached to the Jews who went near. The same gospel that saved the Jews is the same gospel that saved the Gentiles. ~~Paul explains in greater detail in Roman & Galatians. See Gal 3:26-29.~~

Read v18. For through Christ Jesus, both Jews and the Gentiles have access by one spirit. What is this spirit that is mentioned here? Well, you notice that capital letter that is there. That word should clue us in. It's not talking about the general spirit of man. It isn't speaking about some act of force of God. Here we have the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. Through Christ Jesus, both Jews and Gentiles have access by the same Holy Spirit unto the Father. All three parts of the Trinity are involved in your salvation. The father chose you, and He gave those chosen children, or those sheep, to Christ Jesus who died for his elect, and all of those that the father gave to the son came to Christ through the working of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that Kindles the mind to salvation. It is the spirit who breaks the hearts of man to show them their loss to state and their need for Christ. It is the Holy Spirit that births us in to the Kingdom. Without the Holy Spirit, no man, no woman could ever be saved. It takes all three parts of the Trinity in salvation. Put another way, both Jews and Gentiles are saved by the same resurrection power of the Spirit (cf 1:19-20).

III. Together, you are the children of God (19-22).

- *Gentile & Jewish believers are all citizens of God's kingdom, members of household of God. They are equally blessed, share the same privileges, brothers & sisters in same family (19). How did that come about (20)? Like two walls built at right angles. Will it stand? Yes, Christ the chief cornerstone (20). On foundation of apostles & prophets, i.e. on the teaching, which reveals Christ (1 Cor 3:11). The local church should reflect this. Different ethnic groups, different social classes. Cf. 4:3.*

Now again, let's read on in V19. **Read v19** Paul is contrast the time before they came to faith in Christ, and the time after. He says you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens of the household of God. Through Christ, the veil was torn. The middle wall was broken down. And now we are one. And the family of God is no longer confined to the constraints of Israel. Our worship is no longer confined to Jerusalem. We no longer need a building made with hands to worship. We have come into a household of God not made with hands. We are fellow citizens, and fellow Saints. We are no longer strangers. We are brothers and sisters In Christ. Regardless of whether you are Gentile or Jewish, or Asian , or white, if you have repented of your sins and trusted in Christ alone, and His blood that was shed on the cross has cleansed your heart, you are a citizen of God's kingdom, a member of the household of God. You are equally blessed, you share the same privileges. We are all brothers & sisters in same family.

How did this blessing come about? **Read v20.** Here Paul is making use of metaphors to help us to understand. There once was a temple that was physically beautiful to behold, but that temple of Jerusalem has passed. And this new temple is one that could not be physically touched. It is a spiritual temple. The church of Christ is built on the foundation of the Apostles and the prophets. What Paul is saying is that this spiritual temple that is being built, is being built on the whole entire word of God. The Prophets were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write down the Old Testament and the New Testament scripture. The Bible, consisting of the 66 books, 39 in the Old Testament. 27 in the New Testament together the 66 books form

one book, the Holy Scriptures, the Bible. And the Holy Scriptures revealed to us Jesus Christ as the foundation of our faith. Jesus Christ is that chief the cornerstone that would join the two sides together. This is an illustration that we see a lot in scripture. In **Psalms 118:22-23**, it says “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord’s doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.” Peter preached it boldly of Christ in Acts 4:11-12 and says “This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ 12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Well, my friends, the Jews, they may have rejected Christ, but he has indeed risen and become the chief cornerstone in this spiritual temple of his household that Paul alludes to here. And just as a cornerstone joins 2 walls together, Christ has joined the Jew and the Gentile together into one spiritual temple.

- *Believers are bricks who, together, form the temple of God, indwelt by Spirit (21-22). Note that this temple is still being built, still growing. Many more will be called in. This glorious truth will be unfolded later (ch 3). Preaching, evangelism, outreach, missions, a glorious task to be involved in.*

Read v21. We are no longer Jew and Gentile, no longer black and white, no longer Asian and American no longer whatever kind of division that you want to place upon it. But we are all properly fitted together and joined together In Christ. We are part of this holy temple that is described here. Note that this temple is still being built, and is still growing. Many more will be called in. This glorious truth will be unfolded later (ch 3).

Read v22. Paul comes to this verse building off the metaphor of this spiritual temple that he's been describing and is joined together. And he says “in whom you also”. Who is he speaking to? Who's the letter written to? It's written to the Saints in Ephesus. It's written to the Ephesian church. So now what Paul is saying is like that spiritual temple that I've just described in this metaphor for you of how the Jews and the Gentiles will come together in Christ being the cornerstone. Just like that, you the church at Ephesus. You were built the same way. You were built on the foundation of the Apostles and the prophets. The Jew and the Gentile have come together and are joined together by Jesus Christ in one spirit. Here at this church, we've been built upon the foundation of the Apostles and the prophets, Christ is our cornerstone. We are one. There is to be no divisions, no divisions between rich and poor, no divisions on the color of our skin, no division between Jew and Gentile. We are one. In Christ, who has joined us together in this local body of believers.

Summary

- In today's passage, we learn what is our status before God. We are now no more strangers and foreigners in the Household of God. When we are converted, we are accepted as God's children, and now we are part of the Temple of God.
- Glory in the cross. Gospel of salvation by grace through faith is precious. Hold to it, preach it. The Gospel of salvation by grace through faith is so precious. We ought to share it to Jews and Gentiles, White or Black, Asian or American. Let us built the spiritual temple of god.
- Unity, true unity of the saints, precious. Esp. in local church, need to value & maintain unity. Each person that is precious in the sight of God, and we come to understand that in the church we are one together in Jesus Christ. We who were once far from the king of who God is now brought near. We who were strangers and foreigners from the household of God are now the children of God. Let us maintain that unity that God has given to us in Jesus Christ. We are together part of that temple, and we are together involved in building up that temple. Let us appreciate this truth. May God have all the glory.