

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	Ephesians		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	4		Josh Walker
Text:	Ephesians 2:11-22		
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ONE IN CHRIST

If you have spent any time in the past few years reading the news, or even reading social media, you will be well aware of the fact that our country is very divided. Socially, we are often divided politically, economically, racially, and so on. In fact, sadly, these divides – these walls of hostility – have even made their way into the church. Often, there are churches that are based on many of these identifying marks. In our passage this morning, however, Paul is clear that these walls that might divide people socially have no place in the church. The Gospel, at least as far as Paul is concerned, breaks down these walls so that people of all kinds (all races, political stripes, and economic status) can be united – can be one in Christ.

In our text this morning, Paul continues his thought from verse 10 (hence the “Therefore” of verse 11), and draws out a key important implication of the fact that we are all saved by grace alone through faith alone. Namely, we are all one in Christ because we all get to Christ in the same fashion. One noted commentator summarizes our passage with these words,

“This passage provides one of the most wonderful descriptions of peace and reconciliation within the Pauline letters. Here both the horizontal and vertical dimensions to the central salvation blessing are treated within the framework of God’s saving plan. Further, the central piece of this comprehensive reconciliation, and the fundamental theological understanding of the whole letter, is . . . believers ‘come near’ to God and to one another through the saving death of the Lord Jesus Christ.”¹

With this in mind, we will take up this passage under two points. First, *Formerly*, and second, *But Now*. That is, we will see, first, the former division, and second, the new unity.

I. *Formerly* (2:11-12)

2:11: “‘Therefore’ grounds this passage in 2:1-10 and draws out some of the significant implications of their salvation for the unity in the church and closeness to God. He directs his comments specifically to the Gentile members of the church. Whereas previously in the letter whenever Paul uses the second person plural ‘you,’ he addresses all the readers of the letter (consisting of both Jews and Gentiles), here he specifically signals that he is narrowing the focus to Gentiles by saying, ‘you Gentiles.’”²

2:12: It seems rather obvious to say that before someone believed in Christ they were separated from Christ. But Paul’s point here is an objective one, grounded in the covenant. That is, Gentiles, since they were not part of Israel, they did not partake in the covenant hope of the Messiah.³

II. *But Now* (2:13-22)

2:14: “His understanding of Jesus as the fulfillment of key messianic texts in Isaiah continues here and throughout this passage. Paul sees Jesus as the one who has brought the Gentiles near to God and has thus created a relationship of peace. His statement here is also dependent on his Christological interpretation of Isaiah 9:6 and Isaiah 52:7. With the coming of Christ, the anticipated eschatological era of the Messiah has arrived and brought with it an entirely new situation for Gentiles who put their faith in Jesus Christ. In his farewell address, Jesus himself announced the bestowal of this peace when he said, ‘Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you’ (John 14:27).”⁴

2:15: “While Paul does not specify it here, it is clear that the commandments of Christ ‘invalidated’ [‘abolished’] are those that kept Jews and Gentiles apart.”⁵

2:20: “There are several views about the apostles and prophets referred to here: (1) Some think that they were ‘foundational’ because they proclaimed the very words of God, and some of their words became the books of the NT. Since a ‘foundation’ is laid only once there are no more apostles or prophets, but their function of speaking the words of God has been replaced by the written Bible, which is the foundation today. (2) Others argue that these ‘prophets’ are very closely tied to the apostles in the phrase ‘the apostles and the prophets,’ and that these prophets do not represent all who had a gift of prophecy in the early church; they were a small group closely associated with the apostles (or else identical to the apostles) to whom God has revealed the mysteries of the Gentiles’ inclusion in the church. In this case, ordinary Christians who have the gift of prophecy in Ephesus and other churches were not part of the ‘foundation’ but were part of the rest of the building that was being built and would continue so throughout the church age. (3) Finally, some think the ‘prophets’ here could be the OT prophets, though the same words in Ephesians 3:5 point to prophets of the NT era.”⁶

ENDNOTES

¹ O’Brien, Peter T., *The Letter to the Ephesians: The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Eerdmans, 1999), 182.

² Arnold, Clint E., *Ephesians: Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Zondervan, 2010), 153.

³ Baugh, S. M., *Ephesians: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Lexham Press, 2016), 183.

⁴ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 158.

⁵ Baugh, *Ephesians*, 192. Although he does not say it explicitly, Baugh seems to think this refers to the civil aspects of the law. This, however, does not seem to fit with the point Paul is making. Jews and Gentiles are brought together through Christ because the ceremonial aspects of the law have been undone. This is why Gentiles no longer need to be circumcised to be part of the people of God.

⁶ *ESV Study Bible*, note on Ephesians 2:20.