

Pastor Dave – Sunday 14th April 2024

Ephesians – Where the rubber meets the road.

Strangers No More.

Ephesians 2:11-22 Christian Standard Bible

Unity in Christ

¹¹ So, then, remember that at one time you were Gentiles in the flesh—called “the uncircumcised” by those called “the circumcised,” which is done in the flesh by human hands. ¹² At that time you were without Christ, excluded from the citizenship of Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he is our peace, who made both groups one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility. In his flesh, ¹⁵ he made of no effect the law consisting of commands and expressed in regulations, so that he might create in himself one new man from the two, resulting in peace. ¹⁶ He did this so that he might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross by which he put the hostility to death.^[a] ¹⁷ He came and proclaimed the good news of peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So, then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God’s household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building, being put together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you are also being built together for God’s dwelling in the Spirit.

Human beings – Rivalries – Factions – Divisions - Hostilities –

Rivalries – examples – Toronto v Boston, Yankee’s v Red socks

- Innocent sometimes and in good fun.

Factions – not so innocent.

- Political factions – Progressive Republicans etc. – Tea Party Republicans

Not always amounting to much.

- Although sometimes amounting to civil war.

Divisions in the church.

New Testament times definitely divisions Christians masters looking down on Christian slaves.

- Spiritually equal – a struggle then.

Husbands and Wives.

- Wives looked down upon as inferior.
- Sometimes divorcing their wives for making decisions without considering their husband.

Greeks v Everyone!

- Jews v Arabs

Paul informs us in the Corinthian church it was even as far as people following certain individuals.

The early church had to navigate these things.

- Current hostilities – Israel v Iran

All around us are – Rivalries – factions – Hostilities.

These should not ever be a part of the church.

Paul is talking about a distinction between Jew and Gentile.

- They did exist.
- But they shouldn't.

Verse 11

¹¹ So, then, remember that at one time you were Gentiles in the flesh—called “the uncircumcised” by those called “the circumcised,” which is done in the flesh by human hands.

- A similar language to the last part of chapter 2
- A reminder of what people were like before they were saved.
- Jews looking down on gentiles, because they were uncircumcised.
- Asking what has God done in saving you?

We were like this - dead in our trespasses.

Ephesians 2 Christian Standard Bible

From Death to Life

³ We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also.

- Talking about himself and all Jews – Jews and Gentiles together.
- As individuals – new from ethnic backgrounds.
- Talking to them as a Jew.

Jews and Gentiles – how were they going to talk to each other?

- Jews know that they were the chosen people – that salvation came through the Jews.

Question – How did that work now when they trusted Jesus as saviour, recognising Him as messiah?

We can break this passage into 3 sections.

Point # 1 – We are Cut Off.

Ephesians 2:11-13 Christian Standard Bible

Unity in Christ

¹¹ So, then, remember that at one time you were Gentiles in the flesh—called “the uncircumcised” by those called “the circumcised,” which is done in the flesh by human hands. ¹² At that time you were without Christ, excluded from the citizenship of Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Five things to look at.

1. Without Christ
2. Excluded (alienated) from the citizenship of Israel.
3. Foreigners to the covenant promises.
4. Without hope.
5. Without God.

As gentiles they were not Jewish – (outsiders) excluded from the Jewish Community.

- They had to become a proselyte – in order to worship and be a follower of God.

Ruth 1:16 Christian Standard Bible

¹⁶ But Ruth replied:

Don't plead with me to abandon you
or to return and not follow you.
For wherever you go, I will go,
and wherever you live, I will live;
your people will be my people,
and your God will be my God.

Question – What is Ruth saying?

3. Foreigners to the covenant promise.

Paul talks about this in two other places.

Romans 9:4-5 Christian Standard Bible

⁴ They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the temple service, and the promises. ⁵ The ancestors are theirs, and from them, by physical descent,^[a] came the Christ, who is God over all, praised forever.^[b] Amen.

- Gentiles new that they were not included in this.
- Hostility and resentment in the church due to this.

Galatians 3:7-9 Christian Standard Bible

⁷ You know, then, that those who have faith, these are Abraham's sons. ⁸ Now the Scripture saw in advance that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and proclaimed the gospel ahead of time to Abraham, saying, **All the nations^[a] will be blessed through you.**^[b] ⁹ Consequently, those who have faith are blessed with Abraham, who had faith.^[c]

4. We were without hope.

- unsaved – blind – lost.

5. We were without God.

- following Pagan gods - idols

It was very easy for Jewish believers in their sinful pride to say – salvation is from the Jews!

Paul is the addressing the issue of unity between the Jews and the Gentiles.

- Gentiles were worshipping idols.

Verse 13 –

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

- Built on from verses 14-15.

Point # 2 – We have been brought near – because of the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:14-18 Christian Standard Bible

Unity in Christ

¹⁴ For he is our peace, who made both groups one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility. In his flesh, ¹⁵ he made of no effect the law consisting of commands and expressed in regulations, so that he might create in himself one new man from the two, resulting in peace. ¹⁶ He did this so that he might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross by which he put the hostility to death.^[a] ¹⁷ He came and proclaimed the good news of peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

- By the blood of Jesus.

It is important to us that we don't lose sight of the shed blood of Jesus Christ it is fundamental to our salvation.

We are to be aware of and warned about the fact that it is being taught today that if we teach our children about the atoning work of Jesus Christ and that he was the propitiation for sins, the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ - that this is abusive to say that Jesus went to the cross in our place.

Picture painted by Paul for each group what God has done for them.

- a) Through the saving work of Jesus Christ – important that we don't lose sight of this.

Hostility still can exist in the church.

- Recommended to study further on our own in this section.

Verses 13-14

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he is our peace, who made both groups one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility.

- We now have peace.
- Jews and gentiles now made one.

¹⁴ For he is our peace, who made both groups one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility.

Hostility.

1. Jews and Gentiles – we don't sometimes realise.
2. Between us as sinful people and God.

Jesus brought down this hostility.

This is at the core of the gospel.

- What Christ is to us.

Hendrickson – quote – in his commentary...

Humanly speaking the wall of hatred and contempt that divided Jew and Gentile had been strengthening by centuries of mutual disparagement and mudslinging. A few more years and the pent-up hostility of generations would burst open into open flame in one of the most cruel and bitter wars which would be fought. It would result in destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70. To the Jews the Gentiles were dogs. Many other vituperative expressions were used – non-Jews were considered unclean, people with whom one must have almost none but unavoidable dealings. By many prominent Jews and Rabbis even proselytes were despised, host association with gentiles meant defilement.

- This was the attitude that Jews had between gentiles.

Galatians 2 –

- This came up amongst the apostles – to the point where Paul had to confront Peter on this.

Ephesians 2:11 Christian Standard Bible - Unity in Christ

¹¹ So, then, remember that at one time you were Gentiles in the flesh—called “the uncircumcised” by those called “the circumcised,” which is done in the flesh by human hands.

- Not a pleasant conversation – a pretty harsh statement.
- Why, what was the issue?

Was it faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ? – or

All these things plus Old Testament traditions/ceremonies

- Circumcision.

A works-based faith.

Derek Thomas – Study in Galatians...

“Works based faith...

- Real in the early church

This can still be an issue.

But it is important to realise that Jesus broke down this hostility.

- Between man and God.
- Unity in the church.

We are not divided anymore.

Jews and Gentiles were to be unified – one body – reconciled.

But there are factors that come up.

Older believers v New believers an example.

It is important that we speak to this.

Ephesians 2:15 Christian Standard Bible

¹⁵ he made of no effect the law consisting of commands and expressed in regulations, so that he might create in himself one new man from the two, resulting in peace.

- Made of no effect – some translations say – abolished – this isn't particularly good wording as it can create some misunderstanding.

There is clearly moral law that God has laid down in the Old Testament that as New Testament believers we pay attention to.

- Sexual immorality – sexual sins described in the Old Testament – that are heinous sins before God.
- Jesus didn't abolish these things.

Jesus said in Matthew – Christ didn't come to abolish the law.

Matthew 5:17 Christian Standard Bible

Christ Fulfills the Law

¹⁷ “Don't think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.

Hendrickson – quote...

Of course, this did not mean he did away with the law as moral principle embedded in man's very conscience. Or the formalised decalogue. Or the summarise in the rule of law for God and one's neighbor and climaxed in the new covenant.

That Paul was thinking especially of ceremonial law, the very wording the law of commandments with its requirements point in that direction, so that and very clearly does the parallel passage Colossians 2:14.

Colossians 2:11-16 Christian Standard Bible

¹¹ You were also circumcised in him with a circumcision not done with hands, by putting off the body of flesh, in the circumcision of Christ, ¹² when you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive with him and forgave us all our trespasses. ¹⁴ He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly; he triumphed over them in him.^[a]

¹⁶ Therefore, don't let anyone judge you in regard to food and drink or in the matter of a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day.^[b]

- Talking about circumcision of the heart here.

¹⁴ He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross.

- The law and obligations – ceremonies – Jesus did away with that.

¹⁶ Therefore, don't let anyone judge you in regard to food and drink or in the matter of a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day.

- There is no need to follow the Old Testament ceremonial laws.

It's not Jesus plus anything!

Need to explain.

Just because people were Jews it didn't mean they were saved – Jews were not necessarily believers. Just because they were near it didn't mean they were saved.

- Paul is saying "let me be considered a curse should more be saved."

Romans 9:3 Christian Standard Bible

³ For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off^[a] from Christ for the benefit of my brothers and sisters, my own flesh and blood.

Ephesians 2:17

¹⁷ He came and proclaimed the good news of peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.

- Jews...

Point # 3 – Made them into one through Christ.

Ephesians 2:19-22 Christian Standard Bible

Unity in Christ

¹⁹ So, then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building, being put together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you are also being built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit.

- We are full fellow citizens.
- We are strangers no more.

¹⁹ So, then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household,

- As a household a family of God.
- We are part of the same family.

The church has always struggled with division.

- Hostility in Christian homes.

²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building, being put together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you are also being built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit.

- Being built together as believers in the body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Heaven will be a celebration of different ethnicities who have put their faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pastor Dave wanted to leave us with this thought.

Paul confronted Peter because he loved the church.

- Done in love not in anger, judgment or competitiveness.

1 John 4:21 Christian Standard Bible

- ²¹ And we have this command from him: The one who loves God must also love his brother and sister.

We as followers are to...

Romans 12:9-10 Christian Standard Bible

Christian Ethics

⁹ Let love be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Take the lead in honoring one another.

Romans 12:13 Christian Standard Bible

¹³ Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality.

Romans 12:15-17 Christian Standard Bible

¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud; instead, associate with the humble. Do not be wise in

your own estimation. ¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Give careful thought to do what is honorable in everyone's eyes.

To love without hypocrisy.

Showing honor to one another should be a regular practice.

As we continue through Ephesians it will build upon this.

- Paul is setting us up – for where the rubber meets the road.

Question – Are we living as full fellow citizens in this body as we are?

Discussion –

- We take allowance to our families.
- But we are more gracious outside of our families.

This should never be!

Question – Don't we sometimes do this in the church?

Sometimes we need to rebuke in love a fellow family member of the church.

We are strangers no more.

Christ has broken down the hostilities and we build them back up again.

We should not be doing that.

Question – Christian – How are we doing when it comes to Rivalries – Factions – Divisions – Hostilities in the church family.

Go – confess and seek restoration if this is something you are dealing with.