

Made One in Christ – Part 2

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul expresses the unity of all believers in Christ as a temple for the dwelling of God
2. aim – to cause us to recognize our unified nature as followers of Christ despite our differences
3. passage – Ephesians 2:11-22

b. outline

1. The Predicament of the Gentile (Ephesians 2:11-12)
2. The Peace for the Gentile (Ephesians 2:13-18)
3. The Place with the Gentile (Ephesians 2:19-22)

c. opening

1. the **real life** application of the next section of Ephesians
 - a. the importance for a pastor of reading and listening to various cultural voices
 - b. the appearance of two (2) new “revolutions” in American life:
 1. the moral revolution – the overthrow of any and all moral standards (particularly sexual)
 2. the racial revolution – the abandonment of cultural assimilation for a more “segregated” view of race relationships, particularly the advancement of a divided *church* on the basis of race
 - a. because (as non-whites) 1) white Christians can’t understand the oppressions we have endured and 2) we can’t fully express who we are in the context of white Christianity
2. the **lead-up** to the next section of Ephesians
 - a. in chap. 1, Paul prays that the Ephesians would fully come to understand the power of God
 - b. in chap. 2, Paul explains to the Ephesians how the power of God has come to bear over them
 1. in **vv. 1-10**, the **vertical** nature of the power of God coming against our *spiritual deadness*
 2. in **vv. 11-22**, the **horizontal** nature of the power of God coming against our *human brokenness*
 - c. Paul starts (**in vv. 11-12**) by specifically addressing non-Jews, and a **real** separation
 1. considered by Jews to be “foreign,” with no Messiah, no promises from God, no access to his revelations, no hope in the world and outside of the love of the Creator
 2. **note:** Paul is not suggesting that Jews are “better” – rather, he is simply pointing out the very real existence of *human division* (**i.e.** ethnic, cultural, social, class, etc.) that exists in the world
 - a. **remember:** non-Jews considered Jews to be “disgusting” too!
 3. **point:** whereas the Fall destroyed the relationship between man *and God* (**2:1-3**), the Fall also destroyed the relationship between *man and man* (**e.g.** Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel)
 - a. no proofs of this point are necessary – we have all experienced the brokenness of our world
 - d. Paul continues (**in vv. 13-18**) by demonstrating the power of God that has come to bear
 1. **i.e.** the power of God that has been exercised to **redeem** this human brokenness

II. The Peace for the Gentile (Ephesians 2:13-18)

Content

a. the repetition of terms

1. “**both**” (**vv. 14, 16, 18**) = a work of God on behalf of all who are broken from one another
 - a. in the introduction of **vv. 11-12**, Paul divides the world up into 1) the Jew and 2) the non-Jew
 1. (**again**) from his perspective as a *Jew*, this is the best example to use for his purposes
 - b. **clarification:** **vv. 13-18** are **not** about the division between us and God (**an acontextual use**)
 1. those “*far off*” (**v. 13**) are those far from *the Jews* and their God (**see above**)
 2. the use of “*our*” (plural; **v. 14**) suggests a combination of human beings
 3. the “*hostility*” (**v. 14**) is between Jews and non-Jews, not men and God (**unlike 2:1-3**)
 4. the “*two*” (**v. 15**) strongly suggests two equal sides at enmity with one another
 5. **LOW:** there is nothing in this text to suggest that Paul is speaking about *divine* reconciliation
 - c. so, “**both**” represents the two sides of *his* equation (**i.e.** Jew and non-Jew)
 1. as a strictly First Century, early-church problem that he would be intimately familiar with
 - d. but, “**both**” also represents the two sides of *all human discord* (**i.e.** in the larger sense)
 1. **i.e.** the application of this text to all believers is obvious by virtue of its inclusion in Scripture

2. “peace” (vv. 14, 15, 17x2) = a work of God whereby *genuine relationship* is built between the broken
 - a. (again) a term badly misunderstood and misused in the world (and by Christians)
 - b. not simply the “cessation of hostilities” – i.e. not a cease-fire or truce or armistice
 1. a fragile sense of “calm” that continues the *threat* of a recurrence of open hostilities
 2. e.g. a “grudge” = a continuing sense of emotional distance or anger towards another because of a perceived wrong *without* any overt form of outward hostility directed towards them
 - c. rather, a genuine change of *relationship* between the warring parties whereby all hostility is gone
 1. peace *with God* is precisely this form of change: a change of *relationship* between a rebel sinner and a holy God, whereby the rebel gains a new *nature* (God does not change), thus the sinner’s hostility towards God evaporates because he now loves God rather than hates him
 - a. i.e. not just a case where God “accepts” the sinner *as he is* and stops his hostility (justice)
 - b. i.e. rather, a new condition where God is *reconciled* (v. 16) to the sinner *at the core*
 2. peace *with others* is also this form of change: a change of *relationship* between divided human beings, whereby *each party* is brought to a common ground, thus the “standing” for their division is erased by the recognition of their commonality in something *greater* (see below)
 - d. **principle: the goal of the gospel is not just to establish peace with God, but peace between men, as well – to right the brokenness within creation as much as with the Creator**
 3. “one” (vv. 14, 15, 16) = a work of God whereby a new *singularity* is created in the broken
 - a. **note:** given that Paul is writing *to a church* (i.e. to believers), his assumption in these verses is a unity *between followers of Christ* (not a general sense of “peace on earth”)
 1. i.e. the net result of what happens between *us* when we have peace with one another
 - b. not just a commonality of “title” – i.e. that we are all “Christians” and we should just “get along”
 - c. not just a commonality of “culture” – i.e. that we should all look and sound and think the same
 - d. rather, a singularity *in Christ*, a sense of “belonging” to something far greater than ourselves
 1. belonging to the completed work of Christ, to his rule over all things, to the relationship he has with the Father, to the presence of the Spirit, to a new “body” being built up, etc.
 2. **note:** Paul will describe this glorious new “thing” to which we belong in vv. 19-22
 - e. **principle: the goal of the gospel is not just to save us in preparation for heaven, but to form us together into single people in Christ regardless of our inherent differences**
- b. the flow of argument (read vv. 13-18)**
1. v. 13 – a thesis statement on what the power of God has done in regards to human division
 - a. the “*far off*” = those far from the Jews and their God
 - b. are “*brought near*” = brought together with the Jews to receive a common redemption
 - c. by the “*blood of Christ*” = through the gospel, via the finished work of Christ
 - d. **IOW:** a “bringing together” of disparate people has now occurred in Christ – the gospel paves the way for a unity to exist between people who were once separated by many things
 2. vv. 14-16 – an analysis of how this power of God has been exercised in regards to human division
 - a. “*he himself is our peace*” (v. 14a) = Christ *himself* is the embodiment of peace (**ontologically**)
 1. his divine relationship with the Father guarantees that those he brings to the Father have peace with the Father – Christ is the very embodiment of peace by virtue of being one with the Father (i.e. I and the Father are one; **John 10:30**)
 - b. “*broken down in his flesh*” (v. 14b) = Christ as a *human being* has broken down lasting hostility
 1. his human incarnation allows him not only to *experience* human hostility, but to overcome it by virtue of his obedience to his covenant with the Father
 - c. “*abolishing the law ...*” (v. 15a) = Christ *abolished* systems of oppression by overcoming them
 1. “*ordinances*” = the regulations established by Jews as the means of being “right” with God
 - a. and, to which, non-Jews were prohibited (i.e. a system of oppression)
 2. his obedience to the *entirety* of the law (not just regulations) creates a righteousness that can be imputed to all men everywhere, not just the Jewish law-keepers
 - d. “*create ... one new man*” (v. 15b) = Christ brings creates a *unified* human community
 1. not a loss of *uniqueness*, but a *community* of people from various ethnic, cultural, social, economic, or class distinctions in his own body
 - e. “*reconcile us both to God*” (v. 16) = Christ establishes this community around a *divine center*
 1. **reality:** two ways to produce unity: a) try to get everyone to agree or b) focus everyone on something that is beneficial and common to all which overrides their disagreements
 2. the work of Christ reconciles everyone equally – because all are equally sinful (both Jew and Gentile), the redemption of Christ “levels the playing field” – no one can claim a greater standing under the work of Christ – it strips us all down to a single common reality

3. **vv. 17-18** – the benefits of this power of God in regards to human division
 - a. “preached peace” (**v. 17**) = the peace of Christ is available to everyone equally
 - b. “access in one Spirit” (**v. 18**) = all who have the Spirit have equal access to the Father
 1. **note again:** the Trinitarian nature of the gospel in Paul’s thinking
- c. the point of argument**
1. **the obvious:** in the church of Jesus Christ, there is no room for “artificial” forms of division
 - a. although these categories will exist “around” believers, there can be no division in the church by ethnicity, social class, economic standing, skin color, geography, cultural norms, government, etc.
 - b. **why:** because Christ has stripped us of all of these categories to bring us down to the lowest common denominator – we are all rebel sinners in danger of judgment that have been redeemed through something entirely outside of ourselves (**e.g.** it is sinful to separate by skin color)
 2. **the subtle:** in the church of Jesus Christ, there is no room for brokenness, no matter how “righteous”
 - a. **principle: brokenness with another follower of Jesus, no matter how slight or how “biblical” destroys the message of the gospel and the unity of the church**
 - b. **recommendation: if you know of any brokenness that you have with another brother or sister in Christ, even if it’s not “your fault,” run to them (don’t walk) and seek reconciliation**
“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire. So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” (Matt. 5:21-24)