

Reconciled to God & to Each Other

Text: Ephesians 2:11-19

Introduction:

1. Review: In verse 1-10 of this chapter Paul has described the salvation experience of individuals. Now he expands the theme further, exploring how that as believers we are not left by ourselves but are united with other believers into one body, the church.
2. Harold Hoehner summarizes it well, "Individual sinners have obtained the gracious gift of salvation on the basis of God's grace by faith. That is not the end. They are not left alone but are united with other believers into a corporate unity. In Eph. 2:11-22 Paul discussed this union of redeemed Jews and Gentiles in the church, Christ's body." Or as Harry Ironside puts it, "We have already examined the past, present and future of the individual believer. In this section the Apostle addresses converted Gentiles collectively and speaks of converted Jews collectively."
3. These verses delve further into other facets of our salvation. Central to the theme of this section is that fact that saved Jews and saved Gentiles have been united in one body. In short, we have been reconciled to God and to each other through Christ's work on the cross.
4. We will consider this theme of our union with Christ and each other in 3 headings:

I. THE REALITY BEFORE THIS UNION (VS. 11-12)

In these verses Paul again reminds the Gentile believers of their past before they were saved. Notice the phrases "in time past" and "at that time". They were...

A. Despised (Vs. 11)

1. The Uncircumcision – a reference to the Gentiles.
 - a. There was a mix of both Jews and Gentiles in the Ephesian church but it was predominately Gentile.
 - b. "who are called" = the Jews called the Gentiles 'uncircumcision' in a derogatory way. It was an ethnic slur. "The name Uncircumcision! – a name of contempt, was flung at them." (Wuest) The Jews looked down on the Gentiles because they were uncircumcised.
2. The Circumcision – a reference to the Jews.
 - a. Circumcision was given by God as a token of His covenant with the nation of Israel but it had become a point of religious pride, something God never intended.
 - b. Paul had to remind His Jewish readers elsewhere "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God." (Rom. 2:28-29)

B. Destitute (Vs. 12)

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We could summarize the past existence of the Gentiles (and our past too before salvation) in one word – **‘without’**. They were destitute of 5 blessings/privileges...

1. Without Christ – “without Christ” (Vs. 12a)
 - a. Think about how much Christ means to you as a believer. Christ is your life, your all in all. Imagine being without Him! But this is the reality of those who are unsaved and it was our reality too before we were saved.
 - b. ‘Christ’ is the N.T. word for ‘Messiah’. The Gentiles were not only separate from Christ personally they also did not have a national hope of the Messiah as Israel did. But praise God Jesus Christ came not only as the Messiah for Israel but as the Messiah for the whole world.
2. Without the Commonwealth – “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel” (Vs. 12b)
 - a. ‘alien’ = the same word as ‘alienated’ in Eph. 4:18 (also Col. 1:21). The word ‘alien’ means “foreign; not belonging to the same country, land or government.” (Webster) Today we refer to “illegal aliens”. In other words, people living in a country who have no legal right to be there. They do not have the rights and privileges of citizenship.
 - b. ‘commonwealth’ = the same word is translated ‘freedom’ in Acts 22:28 in reference to being a free citizen of Rome. “The word has two main senses – a state or commonwealth, and citizenship or the rights of a citizen.” (Wuest)
 - c. Illustration: Australia is a part of the British Commonwealth.
3. Without Covenants – “strangers from the covenants of promise” (Vs. 12c)
 - a. ‘strangers’ = means “one who is not a member of a state or city, foreign to a thing, having no share in it.” (Expositors)
 - b. ‘covenants’ = likely a reference to the unconditional covenants such as the Abrahamic, Davidic and New covenants. God’s covenant to Abraham in Gen. 12:1-3 did have the blessing of the Gentiles in view (“in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed”) but God had not made a covenant with the Gentiles directly.
 - i. Romans 3:1-2 “What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit *is there* of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed **the oracles of God.**”
 - ii. Romans 9:3-5 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom *pertaineth* the adoption, and the glory, and **the covenants**, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose *are* the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ *came*, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.
 - c. “of promise” = the covenants promised blessings for the Jews. One of the mysteries that was unknown in the Old Testament

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was the fact that one day both Jew and Gentile would be united in one body in the church (Eph. 3:6).

4. Without Confidence – “having no hope” (Vs. 12d)
 - a. The word has the sense of “utterly without hope”. Historians tell us that a great cloud of hopelessness covered the ancient world.
 - b. In the Bible, hope is a confident expectation for the future. It is “an objective hope based on the promises of God” (Hoehner).
 - c. Before salvation they had no hope – no hope in this life and no hope of eternal life. “Their future was a night without a star.” (Macdonald)
5. Without the Creator – “without God in the world” (Vs. 12e)
 - a. They had many false gods and goddesses (e.g. the goddess Diana) but they did not know the One True God and Creator of all.
 - b. “in the world” = “the domain of their life was this present evil world.” (Wuest)

II. THE RECONCILIATION OF THIS UNION (VS. 13-18)

Observe four truths about this reconciliation:

A. The Payment for our Reconciliation (Vs. 13)

1. “But now” = parallels the “But God” in Vs. 4 and again highlights the gracious intervention of God in our lives to bring us out of our lost and hopeless state.
2. “in Christ Jesus” = they used to be “without Christ” and “in the world” but now they are “in Christ”!
3. “made nigh by the blood of Christ” = our sins separated us from God and kept us “far off” from Him. We could not come to God in our sinful state. But the cleansing of the blood of Christ has made it possible for us to be drawn near to God. We need cleansing because we are sinners (Rom. 3:10, 23). He did the work (note the words “**made** nigh” which are in the pass. voice) and now we are “in Christ” which means we are as close as we can be.
 - a. We are purchased by the blood (Acts 20:28).
 - b. We are justified by the blood (Rom 5:9).
 - c. We are redeemed & forgiven by the blood (Eph 1:7, Col 1:14).
 - d. We are washed in the blood (Rev. 1:5; 7:14).
 - e. We have peace by the blood (Col 1:20).
4. Consider the words of an old hymn: “So near, so very near to God, Nearer I could not be; For in the person of His Son, I am as near as He. So dear, so very dear, to God, Dearer I could not be; the love wherewith He loves the Son, such is His love to me.”

B. The Peace from our Reconciliation (Vs. 14-16)

1. Horizontal Peace (with each other) (Vs. 14-15)

Prior to salvation ‘enmity’ (meaning hostility, hatred) existed between Jew and Gentile. But through the work of salvation Christ brought peace. We note that Christ “is our peace” (Vs. 14) and that he “made peace” (Vs. 15). Christ is...

 - a. The Embodiment of Peace (“he is our peace”) (Vs. 14a)

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- i. “he is our peace” = Christ is the Prince of peace (Isaiah 9:6). Outside of Him, there can be no real and lasting peace.
 - ii. ‘peace’ = The word peace means “to join together that which is separated.” It “indicates a lack of hostility and a mutual acceptance between those who were hostile or appeared to be hostile. It is not only a lack of hostility but it is also acceptance or friendship.” (Hoehner)
 - iii. “who hath made both one” = both Jew and Gentile were now “in Christ” through His work of salvation. Notice the word ‘one’ is repeated 4 times in Vs. 14-18.
- b. The Effector of Peace (“making peace”) (Vs. 14b-15)
How did Christ make peace between Jew and Gentile a possibility? At the cross, he broke down the wall that separated Jews and Gentiles. Consider...
- i. The Illustration of the Wall (Vs. 14b). The division between Jew and Gentile is described as the “middle wall of partition”. The word wall means “fence or hedge”. It could be that Paul had in mind as an illustration the 1.5-meter wall that separated the court of the Gentiles from the court of the Jews in the Temple precincts upon which an inscription was written in Greek and Latin prohibiting the entrance of a foreigner under threat of death. According to Josephus it read, “Let no foreigner enter within the partition and enclosure surrounding the temple. Whoever is arrested will himself be responsible for his death which will follow.”
 - ii. The Explanation of the Wall (Vs. 15a). Paul now elaborates on the details of this wall. This wall consisted of the Mosaic law which formed a barrier between the Jew and Gentile. At the cross it was ‘abolished’ which means nullified, rendered inoperative. The same word is translated “make void” (Rom. 3:31), “made of none effect” (Rom. 4:14), “bring to nought” (1 Cor. 1:28), “done away” (1 Cor. 13:10), “put away” (1 Cor. 13:11), ‘abolished’ (2 Cor. 3:13) etc.
 - iii. The Dissolution of the Wall (Vs. 15b). In Christ (“in himself), saved Jews and saved Gentiles have been unified (‘one’) and made a “new man”. This “new man” is a reference to the church (See Eph. 3:3-6). The word ‘make’ means “to create” (ktizo) and is the same word used in Ephesians 3:9 to describe the physical creation and again in Eph. 4:24 to again describe the spiritual creation.
2. Vertical Peace (with God) (Vs. 16)
Not only was there ‘enmity’ between Jews and Gentiles but there was also ‘enmity’ between sinners and God.
- a. To whom we were reconciled – “unto God”
 - i. “**he** might reconcile” = Christ took the initiative to reconcile us to God.

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- ii. 'reconcile' = means "to bring back together again" (Wiersbe). It contains the idea "of a restoration to a condition which had been lost." (Wuest) Sin separated us from God but the cross made it possible for us to be brought back to God.
- iii. Note: The Bible never states that God needs to be reconciled to man. He is the offended party, not an offending party. In human relationships reconciliation is needed in both directions but between the sinner and God, the reconciliation is in one direction. God is always the one who reconciles and the human being is the one being reconciled (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Col. 1:20,22).
- b. How we were reconciled – "in one body by the cross"
 - i. "in one body" = the church which is Christ's body.
 - ii. "by the cross" = there is no reconciliation to God without the cross. At the cross the price of our reconciliation was paid in the life blood of the Son of God. What a price was paid! He paid it all! We can contribute nothing!
 - iii. "having slain the enmity thereby" = the word 'enmity' means hostility. It is "the quality of being an enemy; the opposite of friendship; ill will; hatred; unfriendly dispositions; malevolence." (Websters 1828) We get a sense for the meaning of the word in Luke 23:12 where it describes Pilate and Herod being made friends "for before they were at **enmity** between themselves." The same root word is translated 'enemies' in Col. 1:21. There was enmity between Jew and Gentile (Vs. 15) but even more seriously there was enmity between sinners and God.
 - iv. William Macdonald: "The cross is God's answer to racial discrimination, segregation, anti-Semitism, bigotry, and every form of strife between men."

C. The Proclamation of our Reconciliation (Vs. 17)

- 1. Notice the progression in these verses in relation to the theme of peace. It is all centered in the Person and work of Christ. He "is our peace" (Vs. 14), he "made peace" (Vs. 15) and he "preached peace" (Vs. 17).
- 2. "preached peace" = the word 'preached' means "to announce good news, to proclaim. The same word is translated "shew these glad tidings" (Luke 1:19), "bring good tidings" (Luke 2:10), "preaching the gospel" (Luke 9:6) and 'declared' (Rev. 10:7). The message that peace with God is available through Christ is good news indeed! Christ proclaimed peace to both Gentile ("you which were afar off") and Jew ("to them that were nigh"). He proclaimed peace in His earthly ministry and then by the Spirit through the Apostles.

D. The Privilege of our Reconciliation (Vs. 18)

- 1. The Picture of our Access
 - a. The word 'access' means 'entrance'. "The word was used of a solemn, unhindered approach to a deity and of access to a

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- king's presence." (Linguistic Key) The word speaks of "freedom of approach" (Hoehner) and "was used of those who secure for one the privilege of an interview with a sovereign (Wuest).
- b. The same word appears in these verses: Eph. 3:12 "In whom we have boldness and **access** with confidence by the faith of him" Romans 5:2 "By whom also we have **access** by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."
 - c. Imagine having constant, unhindered, unrestricted access to an earthly monarch. Imagine you could come before them every time you had a need or burden, knowing that their disposition towards you was to come to your aid and help you with their vast resources. Dear believer, you have access into the very throne room of heaven, to the highest throne in the universe and to the King of kings and Lord of lords. He has invited you to come boldly to "obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. 4:15-16) (See also Heb. 10:19)
 - d. Illustration: Contrast this with the O.T. system where only the High Priest could enter the holy of holies. It was the privilege of one man of one tribe of one nation on one day of the year. Now in Christ every believer has access to God's presence. The veil has been rent in two signifying the way is open for us to enter.
2. The Persons connected with our Access
We note the 3 Persons of the Trinity in this verse and the role they each play in our prayers to God:
 - a. The Son is the **Mediator** of our Prayers – "through him" (Vs. 18a). It is only through Christ that we have the privilege of access.
 - b. The Spirit is the **Helper** of our Prayers – "by one Spirit" (Vs. 18b)
 - e. The Father is the **Receiver** of our Prayers – "unto the Father" (Vs. 18c)
 - f. So, the believer prays to God the Father, through Christ with the help of the Holy Spirit. Think of it! The Triune God is involved in my prayers!

III. THE RESULTS OF THIS UNION (VS. 19)

A. What we are no longer (Vs. 19a)

1. "Now therefore" = "Paul brings to their conclusion the statements made in Vs. 14-18, and draws from them the natural, comforting inference." (Expositors)
2. "no more strangers and foreigners" = all who were not citizens. This connects back to Vs. 12 where their previous life is described as them being "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise".

B. What we are now (Vs. 19b)

We are now...

1. Fellow citizens
 - a. The word means "a native of the same town, figuratively, a fellow Christian." (Strong's)

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- b. When we get saved we get a new citizenship! You are no longer a European, Asian, Indonesian, Englishman, Indonesian, Australian, Indian, Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, African, American etc. you are a CHRISTIAN!
- 2. Family – “the household of God”
 - a. ‘household’ = one’s own household, family. When used of persons it means “of one’s family, strictly of kinsmen, sometimes loosely of familiar friends.” (A.T. Robinson) “It implies a close intimate family” (Hoehner). The same word is translated “household of faith” (Gal. 6:10) and “those of his own house” (1 Tim. 5:8).
 - b. You might say “I am saved but I am not sure if I fit in or if I am a part of the church family.” The truth is if you are saved, you ARE a part of the family!

Conclusion:

1. Have you been reconciled to God? Have you been cleansed by the blood of Christ and brought to a right standing with God?
2. As a believer, do you hold animosity and hostility towards other people groups or worse still, towards other blood washed saints of God? That all ended at the cross!