

Title: We Are United in Christ

Passage: Ephesians 2:11-22

Introduction:

Divisions has long existed in society (race, class, gender, economic, etc.) that has made reconciliation difficult and elusive through government means.

- Reconciliation can only come through The Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Fact: I am a Christian before anything else
 - Therefore, all other characteristics should come down (race, class, gender, economic)

Context:

- Question: How can we accomplish all that we are called to do?
- Answer: Remember who you were and who you are.

Ephesians 2:11-12

Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Overview: What do we remember?

- What we once were
- What Christ has done for us

I. REMEMBER WHAT YOU ONCE WERE

Ephesians 2:12

remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

You were once separated from Christ

- Christ was the Messiah to come out of Israel
- Reminder: Gentiles did not know Christ.

Romans 9:5 (reference how Messiah came out of Jews)

To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

You were alienated from Israel

- Gentiles were not part of Israel.

John 4:22

You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.

Strangers to the covenant of promise

- Covenant of promise = God will send a Messiah

- Reminder to Gentiles: You were not previously part of it. They did not have any hope for this life or the life to come.

You were without God

- Reminder to Gentiles: Previously did not have God in their lives. Had nothing without Jesus. Had nothing good apart from Jesus.

Question of Reflection: Do you mind in any of these positions?

- Without hope?
- Without God?
 - There is good news in the Gospel!

II. WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US.

Ephesians 2:13-22

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

He brought peace among different ethnic groups (Jews and Gentiles) (v.13-19)

- “dividing wall of hostility”
 - References to how the temple was built, which carried many symbols.
 - Many courts:
 - Courts at same level
 - Innermost court: Court of Priests
 - Next court: Court of Israel (only male Jews)
 - Next court: Court of Women (only male and woman Jews)
 - Another surrounding court - several steps down, barricaded all around: Court of the Gentiles
 - Any Gentile who crossed barricade: death
- What did Jesus do?
 - “reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility”

Galatians 3:26-29

for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

He brought peace with God (v.15)

- “hostility”

- Between God and mankind (Jews and Gentiles)
- Because of sin
- Apart from Christ: we are enemies to God.
- Our experience with reconciliation with God is measured by our unity with others.

APPLICATION:

If you are God's child, you are united with Christ's larger family.

- You are equally loved by God and equally cared by Him.

Galatians 3:26-29

for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

- Three categories by which society is divided but do not exist in Christ:
 - Race (Jew vs. Greek)
 - Ethnocentricity is a sinful temptation. (Thinking one's own country or culture is superior while others are barbarians)
 - Gospel: we accept one another regardless of race or culture. Appreciate other racial and cultural strengths. Build it all up in Christ.
 - Economic/Status (slave vs. free)
 - Rich and poor treated differently. Preferential to rich.
 - Gospel: we treat all as valued in Christ.
 - Gender (male vs. female)
 - Women were previously treated inferior.
 - Gospel: Women are equal heirs and loved in Christ
- Gospel: We are called to appreciate and embrace diversity in the body of Christ.
 - Prejudice and snobbery must be confessed and repented.
- Church should be the safest place on earth. We should strive to love each other as Christ loves us.

Ephesians 4:32

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

If you are a Christian, you are God's child and heir.

- God sees you as His son/daughter.
- Because of what Christ has done, other Christians are your brothers/sisters. You will spend eternity with one another.

Romans 12:9-13

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

If you are a Christian, be reconciled to others

- put down your own desires and preferences and seek reconciliation with fellow Christians where there is conflict.

Romans 12:18

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.