

Week 4

Ephesians 2:11 - 22

Paul was writing to groups of people who were struggling to get along. The Jewish leaders “the circumcision” considered all non Jews “uncircumcised” to be unclean and less than. They thought of themselves as pure and clean because of their history with God and religious ceremonies. Paul makes it clear, we are all the same, both Jew and gentile are unclean before God and need the cleansing power of Jesus! Last week we studied the amazing gift of salvation and Paul is reminding us again that in order to understand this gift, we must remember how “dead” we were before Jesus saved us. Remember the amazing gift of salvation and the significance of this change in our status and identity.

****Read Ephesians 2:11-22****

Before and after Jesus

1. Write out who we are before and after Jesus.

- Verse 11: (before)
- Verse 12 (before)
- Verse 13: (before/after)
- Verse 16: (after)
- Verse 18: (after)
- Verse 19: (before/after)
- Verse 21: (after)
- Verse 22: (after)

Do not forget the power of God that raised Jesus from the dead is the same power at work in us! That power, we talked about in last week's study, has taken us from being 'dead in our sins' and has 'raised us up together' with Jesus! This is our new identity and we are forever changed.

In Christ

Before Jesus arrived, Jews and Gentiles kept apart from each other. To the Jew, the Gentile was beyond saving and there was no hope for them. Because of this, the relationship between the two groups was very bad. Jesus revealed to both groups their sinfulness and need for a savior. Jesus breaks down the walls of prejudice, hate and brings us together as the body of Christ.

2. Is there any difference in sin, salvation and how we come to know God? Read and discuss.

- Ephesians 2:1-10
 - Romans 3:22-24
 - Galatians 3:26-29
 - Colossians 3:11
- *Answer: Nope! No difference in sin; no difference in salvation, no difference in present status or identity!*

Even though the Jewish people were used by God in the past, each one of them as individuals still needed the same saving work of Jesus a Christ. We are all the same. We all need Jesus!

GIT r DONE

Through Jesus, God not only achieved our salvation, but also removed the Jew/Gentile division.

3. Look at the verses below (found in Ephesians 2:11-22) and list what God accomplished in and through Jesus. What specifically was the result of each listed item?

- A. 'Through the blood of Christ' (verse 13)
- B. 'In Himself' (verse 15)
- C. 'Death on the cross' (verse 16)

Answers:

- A. **Brought near.** *Through the blood of Christ.* This teaches us that Gentiles are now the same as Jews, the Jews are described as being 'near' in verse 17. Take note, it is 'through the blood of Christ' that this happens. The Gentiles didn't earn it, they didn't perform well enough, they didn't convert to Judaism or conform to Jewish law. It is an act of sheer grace - God's amazing grace!
- B. **Creating one group out of two.** *In Himself.* God removed the division between Jew and Gentile. He made one new people from two groups; thus, destroying hostility and the barrier between the two. He ended 'the system of law with its commandments and regulations'. The Jew's possession and keeping of the law, distinguished and separated them from the Gentiles. This distinction and this separation was more than a legal theory; it was lived out in daily practice in their lives.

- C. **Reconciled to God.** *Death on the cross.* Jesus in his death for both Jew and Gentile, made it clear that Jew and Gentile are equally sinners - both need his atoning sacrifice. God made it clear that both are accepted in his presence on the same basis and for the same reason: this once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus.

**4. Read Ephesians 2:18, list four expressions of the oneness we find in Jesus.
(Answers below)**

Answer:

1. *"Through the same"*
 - a. There is only one means of access
2. *"All of us"*
 - a. There is a shared access
3. *"To the Father"*
 - a. There is a common Father
4. *"Same Holy Spirit"*
 - a. All happens by one active person

What this means for us...*Nothing remains of the former distinction, we are made new!*

5. In Ephesians 2:19-20, how does Paul speak of our shared identity?

- *Answer: No longer strangers and aliens, you are citizens along with all God's holy people.*

THE CHURCH

6. Read Ephesians 2:19-22 again, what are some different images Paul describes the church?

- *Verse 19: God's citizens*
 - The original language means 'fellow citizens with the saints' - that is 'fellow citizens with those set apart by God for God'.
 - Historically the Jews were known as God's set-apart people, but now through Jesus, the church contains both Gentile and Jew, God's family
 - Read 1 Peter 2:10, what does this say?
- *Verse 19: God's Family*
 - In original Greek it reads literally 'but you are fellow citizens with the saints and those of the household of God'.
 - Both 'saints' and 'household' are adjectives previously referred to the Jews. Now, they are referred to the church, all who believe.
 - Read Galatians 6:10 what does this say?

- *Verse 21: A Holy Temple*
 - Paul refers to this in other places
 - Read 1 Corinthians 3:9.
 - Read 1 Corinthians 3:16
 - Calling the Gentiles the 'temple' of God, would have been shocking and offensive to the Jewish people.
 - The temple was extremely sacred.
 - God's presence was in the temple.
 - Jews were not allowed into the inner sanctuary.
 - Only the High Priest could enter once a year, and only under strict religious conditions.
 - Paul has the boldness to state that, in Christ, Gentiles and Jews, actually are the temple, the dwelling place of God.... crazy!!!

Questions for further thought and discussion:

- Knowing the boldness and radical nature of Paul's statements about the church, how do you think the Jews and Gentiles felt about this?
- Read Ephesians 2:19-22, what does this mean for us? Is God's house a church building? What is it?
- Read Ephesians 2:20 What does it mean for Jesus to be the cornerstone? What does that imply for us? Read the following to answer
 - 1 Corinthians 3:10
 - Luke 20:17