

Ephesians 2:17-22

Today's text is really a continuation of the previous passage (v. 11-16). The culmination of this chapter deals with the newfound unity of the body of believers in Christ. The overarching point is that those who were "near" (meaning those who had received the covenant promises through Abraham) and those who were "far off" (meaning Gentiles who were not incorporated into the old covenant people by and large, are now united in Jesus who preached Himself and instituted His New Covenant. Today's passage constitutes a reminder of what unites us and how God has designed us to live in unity.

1. Founded in Christ

- a. Paul labors to remind the Ephesians that the church is founded and built upon the cornerstone that is Christ
- b. Jesus is the source of:
 - i. Our peace (v. 17)
 - ii. Our ability to access the Father (v. 18)
 - iii. Our unity (v. 22)
- c. I realize that this sounds basic, but it needs to be internalized
- d. Sociologically speaking, people tend to congregate around what they love the most
 - i. People create "affinity" groups that are based on passion and devotion to all kinds of things
 - ii. The problem, of course, is that none of these passions are ultimate and truly satisfying but this does not mean that they don't testify to something
- e. Men desire to belong, but they struggle to find something to unite them
- f. Christ alone is the answer
 - i. How is this true? Two reasons:
 1. First, Jesus meets our most basic need
 - a. Whether the person in question was a Gentile or Jew, their fundamental problem was alienation from God by virtue of their sin
 - b. Whereas the Jews were graciously given a provision for momentary reconciliation, something greater was needed to atone for their sin and the Gentiles were totally in the dark as to the identity, requirements and hope of relationship with God
 - c. The answer to both of their quandaries is the same... Christ

- d. Jesus takes away sin
 - i. He makes it possible for us to be reconciled to God and, in light of His finished work, He unites us with others who also base their hope upon Him
 - ii. This is a lasting union because it is a fundamental need

2. Second, Jesus fulfills our deepest longings

- a. Notice here that Jesus came and preached but others spoke about Him as well (the prophets and apostles)
- b. What they had to say is incredibly rich
 - i. The Bible is full of information and all of it terminates on Christ
 - ii. The goal of this information is worship and that worship comes from seeing and savoring Jesus
 - iii. Here's the connection, when we see and savor Jesus, we share more in common with others who love Jesus just as much and this is an incredibly sturdy foundation

2. Undergirded by Scripture

- a. The prophets and apostles did not simply reveal Christ to us in general, instead they provided His instructions to us as Lord
 - i. This means that the church is “built” upon the foundation of the law and prophets
 - ii. Our unity is not left to our own devices or sensibilities, instead our unity is the product of our shared commitment to the Lordship of Christ and fidelity to His Word
- b. This is how the church can bridge the gap between people from such diverse backgrounds
 - i. There may be cultural differences and discrepancies of personality or interests but those pale in comparison to the rich and comprehensive structure that we hold in common
- c. When churches are not built upon the Word, they will inevitably try to erect a structure on something else
 - i. This might be political affinities or musical preferences or cultural pursuits but all of those are subject to failure
 - ii. These things are flimsy precisely because they are insufficient in their ultimate cohesion

1. We need something more comprehensive, something more glorious and something more fundamental
2. That something is Christ
3. Indwelt by the Spirit
 - a. How do we know what Scripture says? Well, Jesus has sent a “paraclete” (helper) to teach us what God says
 - i. In this way (amongst others), Christ is the source of our unity
 - ii. He has broken down the wall of hostility between us and God, He has made it possible for God to indwell us and now, by virtue of the Spirit, we can have unity in the truth that He reveals and teaches to us both individually and corporately
 - b. This is one of the reasons why it is so imperative to labor to ensure that believers alone join the church
 - i. Those who are not “in Christ” have no Spirit, no love of Jesus and no commitment to the Word
 - ii. They seek to turn the church towards their own agenda and infiltrate the spirit of the congregation by attempting to build on a foundation other than Christ
 - c. The Spirit of God is the key to unity of God’s people