

RELEASE DATE: **8th October 2024**

“One in Christ” - Ephesians Chapter 2 Verses 11-22

In Sam Gordon's message on Sunday 22nd September, he covered the first 10 verses of this chapter as referred to last time we met. In it he opened up the rich blessings God, in His abundant love for us, poured out on us as His children. In verse 8 Paul adds this reminder *“ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ”*



Now in verses 11& 12 Paul reminds the Ephesian church and us, of the state that we were in prior to our encounter with the saving grace of our Saviour and His shed blood on the cross. *“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 (of men), 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.”*

Race, culture, traditions, and geography tend to separate and cause prejudice among people. Israel was called to bless the nations (see Genesis 12 v 3) and be a kingdom of priests for the nations (Exodus 19 v 6). They used their calling instead to separate themselves from the nations. In Jesus Christ, God broke down all human barriers and created the church as one body of sinners in relationship to one another and to Him. Sin is the only barrier among people.

The church is a reconciled community. Reconciliation is part of Christ's work. He brings all people to Himself. Jews possessed the promise of God through the covenants, but in Jewish understanding Gentiles possessed nothing to bring them to God. Through Christ's death God brought both Jew and Gentile unto him, fulfilling his promise to Abraham (Genesis 12 v 1 to 3).

The church has no basis for excluding any groups of people. The church is called to invite all persons to follow Christ in faith. Gentiles who were once far away from God are brought near to God through the death of Christ. All three Persons of the Trinity work in our salvation and in our continuing Christian life. The division between Jews and non-Jews, providing all people the opportunity to be saved by grace. In his death He reconciled sinners to God destroying our hatred for Him. Thus, Jesus opened the way for us to live in God's presence. The Holy Spirit is that presence of God with us.

Jesus founded the church and is the uniting power for it. He joins Christians together so that God may live in us. He lives in his church in the Person of the Spirit. Thus, the three Persons of the one God work together for our salvation and maturity.

Christ reconciled to God and to each other both Jews and Gentiles in his death on the cross. Their hostility to God and to each other is crucified with Christ. Christ opens the door to God for all people, whatever their background.

“God’s people” can be literally translated “saints”. Christ established a new kingdom with new citizenship requirements. **No** race of people have a natural advantage, all citizens of the kingdom are equal. The church is founded on the eyewitness testimony of the apostles, now preserved in the New Testament. Jesus is the cornerstone holding all believers together. He empowers believers to serve with other believers in the church and develop together to be His holy people.

The Greek word for cornerstone, is only used twice in the whole of the New Testament, here (Ephesians 2 v 20), and in 1 Peter 2 v 6. In ancient buildings the cornerstone supported the main weight of the structure.

Christ commissioned the apostles directly as the first ministers of the church. They remain first in honour, because the Church’s understanding and teaching is based on their trustworthy witness to Christ. They possessed a special knowledge of the mystery of Christ and revealed it to the church.

They laid the foundation (see 1 Corinthians 3 v10). Hence, they come first in the lists of church officers. Their pre-eminence is confirmed by the twelve foundations of the Holy City which bear their names (Revelation 21 v 14). Inspired prophets revealed God’s will and proclaimed God’s message to the early church. Their proclamation laid the pattern for the church’s witnessing ministry and guided the church in its mission strategy.

The Holy Spirit is the presence of God among His people. To be indwelt by the Spirit is to live in the presence of God and to have God living in you. The gift of the spirit to the church is the ultimate fulfilment on earth of the covenant relationship, summarised in the teaching that God would live among His people and be their God and they would be His people (Leviticus 26 v 12).

As we are now coming to the season of harvest we are reminded by the hymn “We plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the ground”, that “All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above: then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord for all His love”.

Paul, until his dying day, had many gifts from God, the one he appreciated least was a “thorn in the flesh” that despite repeated requests God did not “remove”. This kept Paul humble and reliant on God to get him through each day. We all have our “thorns” to remind us we are nothing without Him.

May our God bless us and keep us close to Himself. That we might praise and thank Him for all the gifts he bestows on us each day.

Transcript of the presentation given by Deacon Rodney Burge and discussed at the church home group on Tuesday 8th October 2024. Scripture is from ESV Translation.