

Made One in Christ – Part 1

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul expresses the unity of all believers in Christ as a temple for the dwelling of God
2. aim – to cause us to recognize our unified nature as followers of Christ despite our differences
3. passage – Ephesians 2:11-22

b. outline

1. The Predicament of the Gentile (Ephesians 2:11-12)
2. The Peace for the Gentile (Ephesians 2:13-18)
3. The Place with the Gentile (Ephesians 2:19-22)

c. opening

1. a refresher on the concept of **context**
 - a. because chapter/verse breaks have a tendency to cause us to:
 1. assume that the writer *intended* for a break or change of thought to take place, or
 2. lift verses out of their context and “make” them say things not originally intended
 - b. because this passage can only be understood within its larger context
 1. Paul starts with “*therefore*” – assuming a conclusion from the preceding thought
 - c. levels of context that are necessary to understand any given passage
 1. **immediate** = the words *immediately before or after* a word, phrase or verse in question
 - a. in this case, “*therefore*” implies that Paul is drawing a conclusion from either 1) us being the workmanship of God to do good works (**v. 10**) or 2) the entirety of God’s power exerted to save us by a radical grace through a radical faith (**vv. 1-10**) – **i.e. the latter**
 2. **structural** = the *flow of the argument* up to and including this word, phrase, verse or passage
 - a. “*remember*” = not just having a “memory,” but actively contemplating upon and considering the ramifications of what has happened (and what Paul is reminding them of)
 1. to know that something unique has happened and to be *utterly* affected by it
 - b. in this case, “*remember*” implies that Paul is thinking about what God has done
 1. part 1: the divine decree of God as he chooses a people to be his own and blesses them
 2. part 2: the prayer of Paul that the Ephesians would know the full power of God
 3. part 3: the power of God executed to raise them as dead sinners by grace through faith
 4. **now**: the power of God executed to accomplish **something else (see below)**
 3. **historical** = the *circumstances* of both the writer and the audience affecting this passage
 - a. Ephesians was written c. 60AD **by a Jew** who had been threatened, accused, arrested, and jailed **by fellow Jews** for teaching Jesus as Messiah and God
 1. **i.e.** a man who was thoroughly Jewish and understood the *unique nature* of Israel
 - a. specifically, the Jews as the chosen people of God and subject to his blessings
 - b. the church at Ephesus was largely *non-Jewish*, and was (probably) experiencing the same ethnic divide that was present throughout the early church (**e.g.** Acts 6, Galatians, Romans)
 1. **e.g.** Paul uses the term “*you Gentiles*” as a descriptor for the church
 - a. “*Gentiles*” (*ethnos*) = peoples or nations; others (not us); lit. non-Jews
 - b. the term was often used as a *pejorative* (**i.e.** insulting) against non-Jews *by Jews*
 - c. here, Paul clarifies that these Gentiles are called “*the uncircumcision*” by Jews
 - d. denoting that they are unclean, to be separate from, foreign, despised
 - e. and, by the 1st C., Romans et. al. considered circumcision to be odd and disgusting
 - f. creating a great wall of division between Jews and non-Jews (**note v. 14b**)
 2. **i.e.** a church started by a Jew with Jews, but greatly expanded to be very *multi-ethnic*
 - a. “*remember*” again in **v. 12** implies that all of **v. 11** is a *descriptor* of his addressees
 - b. so, Paul addresses *both groups* in the church, who are deeply divided ethnically
 - d. **conclusion: what Paul has already written, combined with his position as a First Century Jewish man and the multi-ethnic state of the church, helps us understand why he takes the turn he does here – specifically, another way God’s power has been exercised over them**

2. an introduction to the **next section** of Ephesians
 - a. **vv. 11-22 parallel vv. 1-10** – a past condition, the power of God, then a new reality emerges
 1. in **vv. 1-10**, the **vertical** nature of the power of God coming against our spiritual deadness
 - a. our former nature whereby we were spiritually dead and enemies of the Living God
 - b. God's radical grace comes to reconcile our relationship with him into one of faith
 - c. **i.e.** spiritual deadness → grace and resurrection → preordained good works
 2. in **vv. 11-22**, the **horizontal** nature of the power of God coming against our human brokenness
 - a. our former nature whereby we were enemies of one another and religiously scattered
 - b. God's radical grace comes to reconcile humanity into a new religious structure
 - c. **i.e.** human separation → reconciliation in the blood of Christ → a new household of God
 - b. Paul starts (**in vv. 11-12**) with an overview of this separation motif between Jew and non-Jew
 1. **i.e.** this is the **real** separation – not an *ethnic* one, but a separation of humanity from the tangible expressions of the grace of God given only to a *very tiny* group of people (historically)
 2. **e.g.** every form of religion on this planet is attempting to pursue some “ideal” of spiritual perfection or nirvana, but the true ideal is found *only* in a very exclusive path through a very specific people (first, historically) and (then, redemptively) a very specific individual

I. The Predicament of the Gentile (Ephesians 2:11-12)

Content

a. the predicament of the Gentile

1. “*separated from Christ*” = without any reality of a Messiah (or savior)
 - a. “*Christ*” = not *Jesus Christ*, but the Greek titular form of “the promised One”
 1. **i.e.** the individual promised to Israel that they looked to rescue them (politically and spiritually)
 - b. no other nation was ever promised a Messiah or savior (even in the *political* sense)
 1. true, certain kings were raised up by God for a purpose (**e.g.** Cyrus), but none as a Messiah
 - c. only the Israelites were promised a Messiah specifically as a promise of God (**John 4:19-22**)
“The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.”
 - d. **the Gentiles had no Messiah coming to aid them in their spiritual quest**
2. “*alienated from the commonwealth of Israel*” = without any access to the Word of God
 - a. “*commonwealth*” – a socio-economic group; a political unit with a common investiture of power
 - b. for Israel, the investiture of power was by virtue of God's law over them – they were a nation because God had “called” them out and held them together by virtue of his own standard
 1. thus, the Israelites knew God and his ways because he had **spoken** to them
 - c. no other nation had ever been given the Word of God directly and as a matter of existence
 1. true, other nations had heard God's pronouncements (**e.g.** Nineveh via Jonah)
 2. true, other nations had law systems that were inspired by the nature of God (**e.g.** Hammurabi)
 3. but, none had ever received any codified outline of God's moral, civil, and ceremonial demands
 - d. **the Gentiles had no access to the fullness of God's revelation to humanity**
3. “*strangers to the covenants of promise*” = without any promises from God regarding redemption
 - a. no other nation was ever the recipient of a major redemptive covenant from God
 1. true, various promises were made to other nations (**e.g.** under Ishmael, Esau)
 2. true, the *new covenant* would include people of every nation and ethnicity
 3. but, no non-Israelite ethnicity had ever been included covenantally in the redemptive plan of God prior to the final covenant established in Christ
 4. and, the new covenant itself would be fulfilled through one coming specifically from Israel
 - b. **the Gentiles had no promises of salvation given specifically to them**
4. “*having no hope*” = without any chance of redemption or salvation
 - a. “*hope*” = a concrete assurance in the face of (future) certainty (**see 1:18**)
 1. not wishful thinking, but an absolute confidence in what is already established
 - b. a **summary statement** of the above: with no Messiah to aid them, no knowledge of God's word, and no promises from the Creator, no other nation could have any assurance of salvation
 - c. **the Gentiles had no confidence that they could escape the righteous judgment of God**
5. “*without God in the world*” = without any possibility of a saving relationship with God
 - a. “*in the world*” = in this earthly existence; in the human experience; lit. in life
 - b. **the Gentiles had no chance of ever knowing God in this world**

b. the problem of the Gentile *and* the Jew

1. **question:** is Paul “bragging” here about being a Jew, that they have some *intrinsic* advantage just by virtue of their ethnicity or religiosity? or, does the Jew have a natural advantage *in the church age*?
 - a. no, Paul will (albeit subtly) point out the “failure” of the Jewish system of “*ordinances*” (**in v. 15**)
 - b. no, for Paul, in other places, these advantages actually *work against* the Jew (**see Rom. 9:1-8**)
 1. they “numb” the Jew to his true need in arrogance and ignorance
 - c. no, Paul’s point is to demonstrate that even if we were spiritually “able” to seek out our own salvation (as the Jew and the synergist assume), the target would still elude us:
 1. because we would attempt it completely on our own, without assistance
 2. because we would have no knowledge of the standard we need to keep
 3. because we would have no promise behind the achievement
 4. because we would have no real chance of accomplishing anything
2. **the power of God has *also* been exercised towards people of *no advantage* to include them in his *greater plan* of saving a people from every ethnicity and religious background**
 - a. **just as those *dead* need to be *raised*, those *far off* need to be *drawn near* by his power**