

UNITY IN THE CHURCH

Ephesians 2:11-22

5/2/10

Conflicts easily arise in any and every group.

Unity is always difficult to maintain whether in a family, in the work place, or in a church.

Divisions arise because of selfishness, envy, jealousy and pride.

There are misunderstandings, misinformation, and assumed motives.

Problems are multiplied by gossip and slander.

God gave us the book of Ephesians through a Jewish Christian apostle to a group Turkish Christians in the port city of Ephesus.

Most of the Christians in Ephesus were Gentiles, not Jews.

There has always been the potential for conflict between Jews and Gentiles over racial and religious differences.

Our passage this morning tells us that Christ has united Christians of all races and nationalities together into one new family.

Racial and personal conflicts among Christians are inconsistent with who we are in Christ.

Most of us here today are gentiles.

That is we aren't Jews by race and nationality.

Our passage begins with telling us our condition apart from Christ.

1. As Gentiles we were formerly alienated from God. 2:11-12

a. Called uncircumcision

God chose Abraham to be the father of the Jewish people.

God promised him a land, seed, and blessing forever.
(Genesis 12,15,17,22)

Circumcision was an outward symbol of a person's identification with God's promises to Abraham and his descendants.

God has used the Jews as instruments of blessing to the nations.

God's messages came through the Jews

God's dwelling place on earth was in Jerusalem

God's promises were to and through the Jews

God's worship system was entrusted to the Jews

God's Messiah came through the Jews

Tragically many Jewish people became proud and arrogant about their privileged position.

They looked down on all Gentiles.

The Gentiles envied and resented the Jews.

Many even today have an unreasonable hatred of Jewish people.

b. Separated from Christ

Jesus is the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

John 8:23-24 And He was saying to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. ²⁴ "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins."

Those who didn't come to the God of the Jews were separated from the Savior.

Many Gentiles proselytes in the Old Testament did come to a saving faith in the God of Israel.

Rahab, Ruth, Namaan, etc.

c. Excluded from the commonwealth of Israel

Gentile nations were not a part of the blessing that God poured out on the nation Israel

d. Strangers to the covenants of promise

We were not specifically included in God's covenants with Israel.

The Abrahamic, Palestinian, and Davidic Covenants

e. Without hope

Apart from Israel's God there was no hope.

f. Without God in the world

The false gods of the gentiles were not true gods at all.

2. But Jews and Gentiles have been reconciled into one body by the blood of Christ. 2:13-18

a. He Himself is our peace 13-14a

Through Christ there is now no distinction between Jews and Gentiles.

God today is not working through a nation, but through His church which is composed of people from every nation.

b. He made both groups into one. 14b

Colossians 3:11 *a renewal* in which there is no *distinction between* Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

c. He broke down the barrier of the dividing wall. 14c-15a

15a *By abolishing in His flesh the enmity which is the law of commandments*

We are no longer under the OT law

Its ceremonial worship

Its specialized priesthood

Its condemnation

Colossians 2:14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

Christ fulfilled the righteous requirements of the OT law for all peoples.

- d. He made the two into one new man. 15b**
- e. He reconciled both into one new body to God. 16-17**
He put the enmity to death through the cross.
v. 17 This was predicted by Isaiah (57:19)
- f. He gave us both the same access to the Father. 18**

3. We are united in Christ. 2:19-22

- a. We are fellow citizens with the saints. 19a**
We are united together as citizens of God's kingdom
- b. We are fellow members of God's household. 19b**
United as brothers and sisters in God's family
- c. We are being built together as God's temple. 20-22**
 - 20a** Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets
 - 20b** Christ Jesus Himself is the cornerstone
 - 21** We are being fitted together and growing into a temple in the Lord
 - 22** We are being built together into a dwelling of God

Spiritual Implications

**1. Christ has united us as Christians. We should live in unity.
Cf Ephesians 4:1-3, 29-32**

We are to bear with one another as we grow and mature in our faith.

Proverbs 6:16, 19 There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: . . . ¹⁹ . . . one who spreads strife among brothers.

2. We should not be divided because of racial differences.

Magi from the area of Iran came to celebrate Jesus' birth.

Jesus spent the first several years of His life in Egypt.

Jesus ministered to various Gentiles including people from Samaria and Lebanon.

The Great Commission instructs us to go out into all the world and make disciples.

From the very beginning the church was comprised of people from all races and nationalities.

The apostles and many of the early Christians were Jews.

The book of Acts records the spread of Christianity to Samaria, Ethiopia, Syria, Turkey, Greece, Cypress, Crete, and Italy

History tells us that in the first century Christianity spread across north Africa throughout southern Europe and as far east as India. (All without an army)

Christians from Africa, Asia, Europe, and the middle-east were all joined together as equal followers of Christ.

There is no place for racism in Christ's church.

Racism is sin.

3. We should not be divided by our selfishness and pride.

Proverbs 13:10 Through insolence comes nothing but strife . .

James 4:1-2 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? ² You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. . . .

4. We need to watch our mouths.

Proverbs 16:28 A perverse man spreads strife, And a slanderer separates intimate friends.

Proverbs 18:6 A fool's lips bring strife . . .

Proverbs 26:20 For lack of wood the fire goes out, And where there is no whisperer, contention quiets down.

James 1:26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his *own* heart, this man's religion is worthless.

James 3:5-6 So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and *yet* it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, the *very* world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of *our* life, and is set on fire by hell.

Colossians 4:6 Let your speech always be with grace, *as though* seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

5. We need to make that we are new creatures in Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.