

New Community in Christ

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Ephesians 2: 11-22

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)—¹² remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. (Eph 2:11,12 NIV)

-Once upon a time We Were “*Odar*” 2:12

Five statements used by the apostle describe the spiritual condition of the **Gentiles before they came to Christ.**

-First, they were **“separate from Christ,”**

-Second, they had **no citizenship**: they were **excluded from citizenship in Israel**

-Third, **no covenant** with God: **foreigners to the covenants of the promise...**

-Fourth, they had **no hope**: **they were without hope and without God in the world.**

And fifth, **they did know God**: they were **“without God in the world.”**

How strange feeling to be somewhere where you don't know anyone, you don't know the culture, you don't share their promises...

Illustration: I felt that way when I arrived to **Kansas.**

Although I knew one person, but the entire culture and language was foreign to me. I was in a strange land, with a new culture, new friends to make, a new church, new....

I wonder how your grandparents felt when they came to Fresno?

-Called uncircumcised 2:11

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision”

Calling names is bad. I hated it in my school days....

Do you see the tension between the “clean” and the “unclean”, those are circumcised and uncircumcised. The circumcision was sign of a covenant with

God; it was not given to the Israelite to boast over others that they are the privileged people.

No, in fact they were called to be a light to the nations.

Thus, the division between Jews and Gentiles was extremely bad. It reminds me with some of our divisions in our society.

William Barclay says: "The barrier between them (Jews, Gentiles) was absolute. If a Jewish boy married a Gentile girl, or if a Jewish girl married a Gentile boy, the funeral of that Jewish boy or girl was carried out. Such contact with a Gentile was equivalent to death."¹

-But NOW 13-15

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, (Eph 2:13-15 NIV)

But now... I love that **Conjunction BUT**. It also appeared in v 4:

But God...

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, (2:4 ESV)

There is turning point...you were like this like that But, But, But God, and here...
But Christ...

-Once far away, now near

How beautiful is to see God's plan for the Gentiles to be brought near.

- "Mr." Jesus, tear Down the wall

The image of Jesus destroying the walls, barriers, and bringing peace is so valuable for the community life (church). For those days and for us today...

Jesus himself is PEACE.

Who made two groups ONE... and destroyed the barriers.

-The temple had courts and walls. Women could enter certain places, Gentiles could enter certain places, the priest, the high priest could enter to the main place...

Illustration: Imagine how Armenians of Fresno felt when they first arrived. Jews, Blacks, Armenians were not allowed....

-Paul explains further by giving the purpose of this was to become one body

His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two.

Do you see how important is for Jesus the unity of the church?

But we all are sinners and insist our ways, how can be reconciled?

-One Body for reconciliation 16-18

¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. (Eph 2:16-18 NIV)

There are some facts Jesus did that I would like to bring forth:

-On the cross Jesus put to death our hostility...

-Jesus took upon himself our hatred and enmity.

-Destroying barriers, breaking down the wall.

-Where did Jesus die?

Not in the temple, outside the temple, on Calvary. If you remember how THE Temple was the center of everything.....

Temple is not effective anymore. All the walls, the holy of holies, the sacrifices, all these are not effective anymore...

HE put to death our enmity, hostility.

What was the result of this reconciliation?

PEACE *eirene*

In this short passage four times the word peace comes, four times

The word for peace (*eirene*) occurs forty-three times in Paul's letters, eight of which are in Ephesians. (1:2; 2:14-17; 4:3; 6:15, 23)

"Peace is a central and fundamental component of Paul's theology. Virtually every topic of doctrinal significance is brought into relation to peace."²

We see a similar image about bringing peace in the story of **the prodigal sons**. The younger son left; the older son remained. One was far away, and one remained close by.

He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near (17)

Both needed to repent, both needed the peace of Jesus.

Every time I read this parable, I see myself in the house, not the one who left, and I examined myself. Am I ready to reconcile with my “younger” brother who left and now is back? Think about the implication of that today in the church?

What does it mean for us who are in the church?

- Jesus creates a NEW Community. (19-22)

¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (Eph 2;19-22 NIV)

-Same status, position.

¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household

I know exactly what it means not to be full citizens of a country

My family and I did not have full citizenship of the US when we arrived. We were allowed to do some things and not allowed other things.

Until one day we became fellow citizens...

I have same status with all of you.

Paul says: We are not foreigners and stranger, we are fellow citizens, members of a household.

I love this community. There are no second-class citizens. There is no caste system as some cultures have.

-Same Foundation

built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. (20)

Apostles are the ones who are sent with a message, the message of Jesus Christ. Prophets are the ones who were the voice of the Lord. They told the people about God's judgement, or a warning from God, or guidance from God. On the other hand, they were messengers and voice of the people to God. This is our foundation and Christ is the corner stone.

-Same holy temple in the LORD (His Spirit dwell in us)

In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

This is the new community; it is the church.

So, some of you ask, is it important that we should belong to a local church?

Yes, it is. How can one be in this NEW community without being a member in a local church? It is biblical to be an active member in the church.

Application:

Citizenship comes with responsibilities

If you feel good that you are citizen of this place, it comes with **responsibilities**. We serve together for the Lord, we share the Good News with the outside world. We are hospitable to others and to each other; we care for our society; we care for our city; we pray for our schools, teachers; we pray for our mayor and city workers; we pray for our law enforcement and firefighters...

In this NEW community called church, when you become member, you submit to the family of God.

"This is the particular group of Christians I'm inviting into my life and asking to keep me accountable for following Jesus. I'm asking them to take responsibility for my Christian walk. If I'm discouraged, it's now their responsibility to encourage me. If I stray from the narrow path, it's their responsibility to correct me. If I'm in dire financial straits, it's their responsibility to look after me."³

It means you are also responsible for others as well.

**May the peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be in you and
And May the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:7 NIV)**

1. William Barclay, The Daily Study Bible The letters to the Galatians and Ephesians P 107)

2. Klyne Snodgrass, NIV Study Bible Commentary Ephesians, P 130

3. Collin Hansen & Jonathan Leeman, *Rediscover Church*, p 76

In addition to occurrences in greetings and blessings, note the following:

- God is a God of peace (Rom. 15:33; 16:20; 1 Cor. 14:33; 2 Cor. 13:11; 1 Thess. 5:23).
- Christ is the Lord of peace who gives peace (2 Thess. 3:16).
- The gospel is a gospel of peace (Eph. 6:15).
- The mindset of the Spirit is life and peace (Rom. 8:6),
- Peace is an eschatological reward (Rom. 2:10),
- Peace is equivalent to salvation and describes relation to God (Rom. 5:1),
- The kingdom is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17),
- Peace is the goal for human relations (Rom. 14:19; Eph. 4:3; 2 Tim. 2:22).
- Peace is the foundation for problem solving (1 Cor. 7:15; 14:33).
- The fruit of the Spirit is peace (Gal. 5:22).
- Peace guards our hearts (Phil. 4:7) and rules in them (Col. 3:15). Klyne Snodgrass, NIV Study Bible Commentary Ephesians, P 130