

Eph 2 11-14

Good morning and thank you for joining us! We're continuing our verse by verse study through the book of Ephesians, so would you please turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 2?

We'll also be partaking in communion this morning...

We left off last week in verse 10, so this morning we'll pick up in verse 11. We're not gonna make it through the whole chapter, but let's read verses 11-21 then we'll begin our study.

11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands— 12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, 16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. 17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. 18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

We're gonna study verses 11-14, and the title of this morning's message is No Longer Separated
Let's pray

We need to spend a few minutes introducing this next section. It's important to know that when the letter to the Ephesians was written, there was a deep undertow of not just racism, but absolute animosity between Jews and Gentiles.

Ephesus was in Greece, and the Greeks looked down on all non-greeks, they called anyone who was a non-Greek a "barbarian." It was their name for an uncivilized brute.

For the Jews, if you weren't Jewish it didn't matter what nationality you were, you were disparagingly called "a Gentile dog."

SHOW PIC Being called a dog wasn't referring to your cute cuddly pets - but the wild, mangy dogs that scavenged and terrorized city streets. **CLOSE PIC**

In fact Jews believed that Gentiles were fuel for the fires of hell. **SHOW PIC** If you were a Gentile, a Jew looked at you like a Duraflame log. That's all you were. **CLOSE PIC**

The animosity was so deeply rooted between Jew and Gentile that it was against Jewish Law for a Hebrew woman to help her Gentile neighbor give birth to her baby, since it would be bringing one more heathen into the world.

Why does this matter for our study this morning? Because in the rest of chapter 2 we see how Paul is beginning to outline what the Church is, and he's reminding us, and the Ephesian Christians that we are all one in Christ.

SHOW PIC Remember, in the city of Ephesus the featured deity there was Diana, the temple of Diana, one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient World. But we also know there were at least 25 other temples to Pagan gods from the Greek and Roman pantheon. **CLOSE PIC**

Ephesus was a Pagan City, a wealthy city. And all these factors were stumbling blocks that Paul was constantly facing in ministry. The challenge of seeing the wall of prejudice be broken down between Jew and Gentile.

Today we see friction between blacks and whites, Red and Blue, Occupiers and One-Percenters, even Buckeyes and Wolverines. But today's tensions pale in comparison to the hostility that existed in the first century between Jews and Gentiles.

All this separation I've mentioned is the sinful, divisive nature of all humanity. Yet Paul writes to the Ephesians to demonstrate how God used the breach and animosity between the Jews and Gentiles to prove that Jesus is able to overcome all forms of polarization - and bring about unification. And how is unity achieved? Spoiler alert-through the blood of Jesus on the cross.

11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands— Recall, in the OT God chose one nation, Israel, to be His special people. God made promises to and covenants with Israel that He didn't make with any other nations.

A significant part of the law that God gave to the Jewish people including the command to circumcise their children. Circumcision was the mark of the covenant God made with Abraham, father of the Jews. **Genesis 17 10 This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; 11 and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. 12 He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. 13 He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14 And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."**

In Israel God chose one family to win the whole human race.

Through these covenants, or agreements with God, Israel was to be a light - a beacon, a witness to the other nations of the goodness and love and character of God. Deuteronomy 4 7 “For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? 8 And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?”

But rather than be a light to the nations, Israel failed in the mission God intended. Rather than witness to the Gentiles, the Jews self-righteousness became a major obstacle-and it kept Gentiles away from worshiping the one true God.

In verse 12 Paul lists five privileges that Gentile believers did not enjoy that Jewish believers did enjoy before the Cross

12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. Verse 12 describes what we every one of us were before Christ, and there's five negatives here.

- You were without Christ
- You were aliens from the Commonwealth or citizenship of Israel.
- You were strangers from the Covenants
- Having no hope and without God in the world, that's how unbelievers are today.

If you are without God in this world, you have no hope. Unbelievers are searching everywhere for hope and coming up empty.

People are deceived and think alcohol brings hope and freedom. If it were true that alcohol brings joy, then alcoholics would be the happiest people in the world. People believe the lie that sex fulfills. If that were true, prostitutes would be the happiest people in the world.

People believe the lie that heroin's gonna take your problems away. If that were true, junkies would be the happiest people on the planet.

There isn't anything out there that satisfies. If you're without God, then you're without hope in the world. It says here in verse 12 you're aliens, which means you're alienated.

But in Christ that all changes. Paul is about to lay out how we're members of the body of Christ, the church, which is a vastly different experience than the world.

Remember the Jews were to be set apart, as a witness to the world. And that's how the church, the body of Christ is to be as well. So that when the world sees us, they're to say 'wow God is real and I want to know Him'

But here's the temptation that can creep into every church congregation. It's the sinful pride of mankind to look for ways to

draw boundaries among people, even among the body of Christ. We do it by age, or accent, or bank account, or politics, or musical tastes, or clothes, or even allegiance to a college.

Rather than acknowledge our commonalities as human beings, we tend to emphasize our differences.

But Jesus died to bring people together, not push people apart. Never forget Jesus' goal is to turn outsiders into insiders. Look at verse 13...

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Before Jesus we were alienated, separated, without hope and without God. But now as Christians, it's all changed! We were in the world, now we're in Christ. We were far away, now we're near.

And how was this accomplished? Through our good works, our charitable deeds, our amazing effort we put forth to impress God?

Nope. End of 13 says-by the blood of Christ. All of this is possible because Jesus died for our sins.

Listen, the church is not a human institution. It's not an organization. It's an Organism. And it's created by the work of Christ himself, the Church.

The Greek word for church means Ecclesia. It means the called out ones. The idea is Christ saves us and He calls us out from the

world. It isn't that He's called us to try to be slick and savvy and cool like the world.

He's translated us from the Kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of light. From the Kingdom of Satan to the Kingdom of his own dear son, He's taken us out of all our hopelessness, our alienation, our not belonging to anything.

And he's brought us into Himself, and He's done this by Himself, by His blood.

I know it's not exactly popular to talk about the blood nowadays. But it's critical we do! Now we're only covering a few verses this morning because we're gonna spend significant time talking about the old covenant-the law of Moses. Because if we don't understand the OC, and the sacrificial system, then we won't begin to grasp the depth of these verses.

Remember the best commentary on the Bible, is the Bible!

Sacrifices played a huge role in Hebrew history prior to Christ. The word atonement is used over 100 times in the Old Testament, The idea is that a person is unclean due to sin. Then, with a sacrifice, atonement is made for that person or thing, and it is now holy or acceptable. Innumerable individual sacrifices were made in Hebrew history because people are sinners.

But then once a year, the priest was to make an offering of the blood of animals on the altar of the temple for the sins of the entire nation on the day of atonement. Why was blood sacrifice

necessary? **Hebrews 9:22** And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

But all the sacrifices in the OT were blood offerings that were limited in their effectiveness, which is why these sacrifices had to be offered again and again year after year.

See all the sacrifices ever performed in the OT were all foreshadowing of the “once for all” sacrifice which Jesus offered on the cross **Hebrews 7:26** For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; **27** who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

Once Jesus’ sacrifice was made, there was no longer a need for the blood of bulls and goats. The OT sacrificial system was obsolete, because the perfect sacrifice was made.

14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, Pause here. You'll notice that word one in verse 14, verse 15, and 16, and 18.

Jesus is who has made both Jew and Gentile one. This unity, this coming together is possible through only one avenue, it’s Jesus Christ, the one who shed His blood.
Jesus is our peace.

Listen Calvary Chapel is not your peace. Religion is not your peace. Catholicism, Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, that's not your peace. Jesus is our peace and it's Him alone.

We'll spend the remainder of our time diving into verse 14. Let's read all of verse 14

14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,

Jesus is our peace and has broken down the separation not only between us and God, but us and others.

SHOW PIC Never forget the cross has two bars - vertical and horizontal. It's a reminder that Jesus died to reconcile mankind to God (the vertical), and mankind to our fellow mankind (the horizontal). **CLOSE PIC**

Which means as believers, Jesus died not only to forgive us of our sin, but also to deliver us from that "Us Versus Them" mentality. And nowhere was the "us vs. them mentality" on display more than the temple.

SHOW PIC The center of Jewish life was the Temple in Jerusalem. And the Temple was actually a series of sectioned off courts. There was a court, within a court, within a court. Moving from outside in - there were six courts... the Court of the Gentiles, and of the Women, and of Israel, and of the Priests, and the Holy Place, and the innermost court, the Holy of Holies. **CLOSE PIC**

From each court to the next, certain people were disqualified from admission. Until finally only one man, the high priest, on one day a year, was allowed into the Holy of Holies to offer a sacrifice for all the nation on the day of atonement. (Leviticus 16).

SHOW PIC In 1871 Jerusalem archeologists working on the Temple Mount discovered a placard on the wall separating the Court of the Gentiles from the Court of the Women. This placard threatened death to any Gentile who dared to enter further!

CLOSE PIC

In fact, this was the very reason Paul was in prison. In Acts 21 he was accused of bringing a Gentile beyond this very wall. Paul was being punished for ignoring a wall God already tore down.

In Christ, ALL the walls between God and man, and even us and them, have been torn to the ground. And here's the difficult question we have to ask ourselves this morning-is there a chance we're trying to build walls up? Do we focus more on our differences with other Christians, or our commonalities in Christ? We must never forget that the ground is level at the foot of the cross.

Let's read verse 14 one more time

14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, The Bible tells us that in the temple a giant curtain, a veil, separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple where men dwelt. The HOH was where God's presence dwelled, so the temple veil was a constant reminder that man was separated from God by sin **Isaiah 59:2 But**

your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you,
So that He will not hear.

SHOW PIC It's estimated that the veil in the temple that separated the holy of holies was about 60 feet high, 30 feet wide. An early Jewish tradition says that the veil was about four inches thick. **CLOSE PIC**

The size and thickness of the veil make the events occurring at the moment of Jesus' death on the cross so much more momentous. **Mark 15:33 Now when the sixth hour had come,**

there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"[fn]

35 Some of those who stood by, when they heard that, said, "Look, He is calling for Elijah!" 36 Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying, "Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down."

37 And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last.

38 Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom

As Jesus cried out Tetelesti, or it is finished, He then breathed His last breath. And as Jesus died, the veil in the temple tore from top to bottom. Can you imagine the sound-you know the sound of tearing a piece of clothing. Now imagine it's 60 feet long and 4" thick.

The tearing of the veil was the definitive dramatic display of the fact that Jesus' sacrifice, the shedding of His own blood, was the sufficient and complete atonement for sins. The tearing of the veil, that middle wall of separation here in verse 14, signified that now the way into the Holy of Holies, God's presence was open for all people, for all time, both Jew and Gentile.

Acts 17:24 God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.

Hebrews 10:19-20 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, We don't need priests to intercede between us and God, no once we put our faith in Christ we have access to God through Jesus.

This brings us to the communion table this morning. When we take communion we're reminded of who God is, and what He has done for us.

All of this was done, for you, by the blood of Jesus.

That's what makes John 3:16 so powerful and amazing! KEEP SLIDE OPEN "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Whoever believes in Jesus. Aren't you glad the verse doesn't say for God so loved the rich?

Or God so loved the famous
Or God so loved the attractive
Or God so loved the sober.

No it says **For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.** **CLOSE SLIDE**

How big is God's love? Wide enough for the whole world.

Sometimes in our world today, we're left out. The restaurant excludes you if you're not dressed up enough.

The college excludes you if you're not smart enough.

Businesses exclude you if you're not qualified enough,
and it seems like some churches in America will exclude you if you aren't "good" enough.

But although they may exclude you, on the cross Jesus included you.

You and I would think there has to be a limit to His love. But Abram never found it. David the adulterer never found the limit of God's love. Paul the murderer never found it, and Peter the liar never found it.

We it comes to God's love, search all you want and we'll never find the end of it.

The same God who created you and formed you, is the same one who put all of my sins, and all of your sins upon Jesus. **2 Cor 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

Jesus died for my sins, and yours too. He paid the penalty I deserve! All we have to do is accept Him by faith. **Romans 10:9**

that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

While you have a few moments, remember that it cost Jesus everything on that cross. As you hold onto the communion elements, remember that He did it for you. And before we partake remember the forgiveness of sins we have, and the hope of heaven in our midst, because of Jesus.

1 Cor 11:24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat;[fn] this is My body which is broken[fn] for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

1 Cor 11:25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."