

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

Outsiders No More

Ephesians 2:11-22

1998

Introduction

Last week in Ephesians 2:1-10, Paul pointed out the moral condition of unbelievers before their conversion to Christianity. We marveled at the gift of eternal life that we have through Jesus Christ! There's nothing we could do to merit or achieve salvation; God expressed his wonderful grace in providing salvation - Eph 2:1-10.

Now, in verses 12-22, Paul outlines the consequences of the Gentiles' moral condition -- social and religious deprivation from the community of God's kingdom. He uses more general or corporate terms when addressing the salvation of the Gentiles and how they became "fellow heirs" - Eph 2:12-22. This is an important passage, as it pertains to the "mystery" - Eph 3:3-6. This section also describes "us", as most of us are "Gentiles".

The concept of immigration is very helpful as we explore this passage. Just as there is a protocol for becoming a citizen of the U.S., there's a protocol for becoming a heavenly citizen.

- a. "Push" immigration: prompted by hardship in one's own country--famine, political/religious oppression.
- b. "Pull" immigration: motivated to move to a country that is so attractive--freedom from excessive taxation, religious freedom, etc. Example: United States.

I The Plight of the Gentiles

A. The life of a Gentile

1. Socially rejected

- a. Non-Jews or pagans in heritage

2. Spiritually underprivileged

Rom 9:4-5 "Theirs [the Jews] is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen."

Outsiders - "God-fearers"; only allowed in the outer court of the temple

3. Physically uncircumcised - Gal 5:6; Col 2:11; Rom 2:25-29

Gal 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."

Col 2:11 "In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ ..."

Rom 2:25-29 "Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. If those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker. A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God."

Instead of regarding the other nations as those with whom they should have shared their knowledge of God, the Jews simply spoke disparagingly of them as Gentiles. The physical, outward sign of circumcision was missing -- and therefore, in the Jewish mind, grounds for exclusion and rejection.

It is so important that we are careful how we view ourselves and those who are outside of Christ. "Pre-Christians" vs. non-Christians

B. The spiritual condition of Gentiles (11-12)

1. "Separate from Christ"

Separate = "Without" or "apart from"

Eph 4:18 "They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts."

Col 1:21-22 "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation ..."

2. "Excluded from citizenship in Israel"

Excluded = alienated

Politea = polity, society

Rom 9:24-26 "As he says in Hosea: "I will call them 'my people' who are not my people; and I will call her 'my loved one' who is not my loved one," and, "It

will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"

The Gentiles were not entitled to the benefits of the covenantal community. In this respect, they were in the position of aliens who could not claim the prerogatives of nationals.

- a. They were not part of the state of Israel
 - b. They were not included together with God's "chosen people"
3. "Foreigners to the covenants of the promise"
- a. Promises and covenants were not made with them
 - b. Promises such as "...to be God to you...and I will be their God" - Gen 17:7-8

Gen 17:7-8 "I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."

4. "Without hope" - 1 Thess 4:13
- 1 Thess 4:13 "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope."
- a. Hope springs forth from promises made
 - b. Being strangers from the covenants of promise, they did not have the hope the Jews did.
5. "Without God in the world"
- a. In one sense, they did have God, as "He did not leave Himself without witness..." - cf. Ac 14:17
 - b. But they did not have the true knowledge of God, a knowledge that provides righteousness, peace and the joy of salvation. They were ignorant of Him.

Gal 4:8 "Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods."

BUT Now ... !! In Christ ...

II The Inclusion of the Gentiles

A. Jesus brought them near through His own blood

Brought near = a rabbinical term referring to Gentiles who were far from the privileges of the covenant, becoming proselytites -- or "God-fearers".

B. Jesus gave them peace - Is 9:6-7; 53:5

Isa 9:6-7 "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this."

Isa 53:5 "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."

"Christ and no other has solved the problem of our relationships with God and man."
(Barclay, p.120)

C. Jesus destroyed the barrier of hostility

Barrier = "fence or railing"

The Jewish Rabbies often referenced the law as a fence dividing the Jews by their observance of the law from all other races and thus arousing hostility.

Dividing wall = "middle wall"

Josephus used each of these terms separately with reference to the wall in the Jerusalem temple separating the court of the Gentiles from the inner courts of the temple. On it was an inscription in Greek and Latin that read: "No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the sanctuary and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death."

When Jerusalem fell in A.D. 70, this partition was demolished along with the temple itself. But Paul saw it as already destroyed by Christ at the cross.

1. By abolishing the law

The "commandments and regulations" that once separated Jews from Gentiles.

Abolishing = to make ineffective or powerless, to bring to a standstill or to put out of action. Ultimately, it means to invalidate, nullify, and quash.

Some believe Paul had in mind here the ceremonial law, verses the moral law. But the context would appear to include the totality of the law - ceremonial and moral.

Commandments = Covers the Mosaic ordinances and statutory legal code.

Regulations = applied to imperial edicts

Much of the law (sacrificial ritual) was preparation for, and foreshadowing of, the Christ, and so was fulfilled by what he did when he came.

Matt 5:17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

What, then, was the purpose of the law?

Gal 3:22-24 "The law was put in charge to lead us [tutor us] to Christ that we might be justified by faith."

"Jesus abolished both the regulations of the ceremonial law and the condemnation of the moral law." Stott

2. By reconciling both Jew and Gentile to God in one body

John 10:16 "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd."

1 Cor 12:13 "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free-- and we were all given the one Spirit to drink."

Now there is no longer Jew or Gentile, but one new man -- the Christian.

a. Through His death on the cross

He abolished that which created "hatred" between Jew and Gentile. A death blow was dealt to the longstanding, division between Jew and Gentile and between man and God.

Rom 5:1-2 "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God."

Col 1:19-20 "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."

D. Jesus gave them access to the Father (17-18)

Access = used of the official who conducted visitors into the king's presence.

Present active tense = continual access

Eph 3:12 "In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence."

Heb 4:16 "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

Access is no longer based on the law, or circumcision or nationality, but by the reception of God's free gift of salvation through faith in Christ.

1. He came and preached peace to those "afar off" (Gentiles) and those "near" (Jews)

The Gentiles needed God's peace because they were without Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and without the covenants of the promise.

The Jews needed peace because, although they were the people of God and had the covenants and the promises, they too needed the ultimate peace that only Christ could bring.

III The Exaltation Of The Gentiles (19-22)

- A. They are now "fellow citizens of God's kingdom" (19a)

1. Before, they were "aliens" from the commonwealth of Israel and "strangers" from the covenants of promise

Foreigners = short term transients

Aliens = a licensed visitor in a town whose protection and status were secured by the payment of a small tax. Although he was permitted to live in the town, he had no inherent rights or opportunity for property ownership

2. But now, they are "fellow citizens" with God's people

Phil 3:20 "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ ..."

- B. They are now "members of God's household" (19b)

1 Pet 2:9-10 "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

1. Before, they were "without God in the world"

2. But now, they are members of "God's family"

- C. They are now part of "a holy temple in the Lord" (20-22)

1 Cor 3:16 "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?"

1. The apostles and prophets are the foundation

2. Christ is the *cornerstone* = capstone or binding stone that holds the whole structure together. Considered more important than the foundation

Isa 28:16 "So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed.

Ps 118:22-23 "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes."

3. We are the individual stones being joined together

Joined together = Points to the complicated process of masonry by which stones are fitted together and aligned to the cornerstone.

1 Pet 2:4-5 "As you come to him, the living Stone-- rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him--you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

a. Rising to become a holy temple

Temple = a special word for temple that references not the entire temple, but the inner shrine.

b. A dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit

The aim of the process is that the church should become God's residence.

The physical temple is no longer among us, but now God seeks as his dwelling place the lives of men and women who will allow him to enter by his Spirit.

1 Cor 2:12 "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us."

Conclusion

A. Understand what one's condition "outside" Christ truly is

1. Alien and stranger, no basis for hope, and without the blessing of God guiding them in this world!

D. Understand what we have become "in" Christ.

1. We have become "fellow citizens with the saints" in the wonderful kingdom of God; let's live accordingly! - cf. Ro 14:16-19

The Bible tells us how to conduct ourselves as citizens of Heaven. We are a "pull" people for God. While Satan "pushes" and destroys people, the church rises up and pulls people to God's kingdom!

2. We have become "members of God's household (family)"; let's behave and treat each other as the family of God! - cf. 1 Tim 3:15; 5:1-2
3. We have become "the temple of God" in which God dwells through His Spirit; let's be careful not to defile God's holy habitation! - cf. 1 Co 3:16-17; 1 Co 6:19-20

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