

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

1. What is something you recall from the previous study?

- Last study, we explored the idea of God's mighty salvation which results in a regenerated life; one that is holy and pleasing to the Lord.
- We once were dead, destined to be objects of God's wrath for eternity, but because of God's grace we have now been made alive and called to be saints.
- Make no mistake, we did nothing to deserve salvation and we played no part in securing it!

Read Ephesians 2:11-22

2. Salvation is not earned or based on any of our works. However, salvation is in fact earned by works – from Eph 2, whose work and what was done to secure man's salvation(c.f. Rom 5:10-11; 1 Pet 1:18-19)?

- Salvation is by Christ's work which was determined and put into place by God the father
 - Eph 2:4-6 God's intervention
 - Eph 3:13-16 Christ's work on the cross to reconcile us to God
- Christ's work involved living a holy perfect life in obedience to God's commands (see this in the verses)
 - He kept the law perfectly
 - Was crucified
 - His blood paid the penalty for sin
 - The law demands atonement for sin which is blood (death)

Rom 5:10-11

- We once were separate from God
- Reconciled to God by the death of his son
- Saved by the life (blood) of the Son
- United to God through Christ

1 Pet 1:18-19

- We were ransomed by the blood of Christ
 - Price is paid
 - Christ is the spotless lamb

Eph 2:11-12 – Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands — remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Notice that the passage begins with “therefore” in verse 11 as Paul shifts his attention and addresses the Jews and Gentiles directly. It reminds the readers that this portion of scripture is a continuation of the previous section. In light of God's grace demonstrated in Christ's work, we, God's workmanship are called to walk in good works. With this in mind, we read on further to find implications of how the church that is now comprised of Jews and Gentiles ought to live and conduct themselves in light of this common salvation in Christ.

3. Paul calls the Gentiles the “uncircumcision”. What are the implications of being called this (c.f. Gen 17:1-14; Rom 3:1-2)? How does this passage relate to what we’ve previous studied in Ephesians 2:1-10?

- Circumcision – “cutoff”
 - Jews are cut off, separated for God as his people
 - Gentiles are referred to as swine, dogs, outsiders by the Jews
- Gentiles are strangers to the covenants, they are not part of it
 - Covenant = promises of God

Gen 17:1-14

- Covenant made with Abraham
 - Abraham is the father of the nation of Israel (Jewish nation) – father of many
- Circumcision is the sign of God’s promises, God’s people
 - It is tied to the covenant
 - Privilege and blessings come from the covenant of God
- To be the “uncircumcised” indicates
 - Cut off from God’s people, separated from God, without hope
 - Without hope or identity
 - No provisions and the promises of God have no bearing

Rom 3:1-2

- Jews are entrusted with the oracles of God
 - They are at a great advantage as they are entrusted with God’s word, principles and commands

Eph 2:1-10

- Tie this idea of being separated (cut off from God) back to the idea of being dead and without hope
- Salvation for the Gentile could only be accomplished by God

Eph 2:13-16 – But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

4. Once separated from God, what is the hope for the Gentile? Summarize the verses above in your own words

- For these Gentiles, everything had become different, because from being ‘separated from Christ’ (v12) they had come to be in Christ Jesus
- They had once been far off, and were brought near
- Price has been paid, the blood of Christ
- The Jewish law and the ordinances have been abolished
- Reconciled to God, reconciled to their neighbor (Jews)

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5. Reread the verses above, what is this hostility that Paul is writing about? Who is it addressed to?

Paul is talking about a hostility that exists between two groups of people; the Jews and the Gentiles. Historically, the readers (us Gentiles) are reminded of God's redemptive history; salvation comes from the Jews. For the Jews, Gentiles were an abomination, unholy pagans who lived in the flesh opposed to the commandments and regulations of God. There was previously no hope for salvation. Although Christ had died and was raised up, which resulted in the tearing down of the institutions of the law, there continued to be divisions and tensions in the early church between these two groups of believers (ex. Gal 2:11-13).

6. Christ is the very peace that overcomes this enmity, he is the common ground. What is the significance of this? What is the significance of Jew and Gentile becoming one person in Christ (c.f. John 10:16; 1 Cor 12:12-13)?

- God has made a way for the divided to become one
- Paul reinforces his point, this barrier, and this hostility that has existed historically and continued to exist in the early church has all been torn down by the work of Christ
- He tears down the legal demands of the law and creates the common ground for Jew and Gentile to enter into the presence of God
- Jew and Gentile are now united together, salvation is available for both
- We are a new humanity under grace

John 10:16

- There is one group of believers
- United together under one shepherd

1 Cor 12:12-13

- There is diversity in the body of Christ (the church)
- The body works together, putting aside their differences
 - Same end goal
 - Same heart and desires
 - Same identity
 - Previous identity no longer matters
 - True identity in Christ has been revealed

7. In small groups, consider what reconciliation means? Give an everyday example of it. There are two types of reconciliation in the passage above – can you identify them?

- Reconciliation
 - Restoration of something that is lost
 - Making peace -> killing the hostility
 - Bridging the gap
 - Setting differences aside and making amends
- Example
 - When I was a child I would say when angry (parents took away my Gameboy and forced me to play piano) "I will never talk to you again for what you did to me"
 - Usually, I would come to my sense and apologize for my behaviour and plead that my parents would forgive me

- Two types of reconciliation
 - Peace between Jew and Gentile because of this hostility
 - Peace between man (Jew and Gentile united in Christ) and God

8. What are the implications for our relationships today with fellow believers? What are the implications of being reconciled to God mean? See Eph 4:1-5, Matt 6:14-15 and 2 Cor 5:20-21 to help shape your thoughts.

- If time permits, have this done in small groups as well. PRACTICAL section that should impact day to day life
- Realize we are sinners
- Realize the cost of the reconciliation to God and in light of that, all things seem so petty
 - Forgive each other and do not hold grudges
 - Be united to one another, remembering we are united together in Christ

Eph 4:1-5

- Called to live in a certain lifestyle
 - Humble
 - Gentle
 - Patient
 - Loving
 - Eager to be united to one another
 - Recall that you are united in one body, faith and Lord

Matt 6:14-15

- Forgiveness is at the heart of the Christian's calling
- Is your life marked by forgiveness?

2 Cor 5:18-21

- We are God's ambassadors, messengers carrying out the ministry of reconciliation to the world
- We are declared righteous by Christ's substitutionary atonement
- Should have an increased appetite for that which pleases God and a growing distaste for that which does not please him

The Lord's coming meant making peace between Jew and Gentile by taking away the cause of the division. The law could no longer be the way by which Jews, and Jews alone, could try to come to God. The way of approach is now by grace for both Jew and Gentile. The implications are clear, all believers should rejoice, seeking to be united together as we are one body, living in light of what Christ accomplished on the cross.