



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V21 N50 December 22, 2019

ALL IS WELL

“Tearing Down the Walls”

Ephesians 2:11-22

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Peace

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, others, and myself.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:6-7



How has the relationship of Gentiles to Jews changed ?

God has made peace between Jews and Gentiles through the work of Jesus Christ. Jews traditionally had nothing to do with Gentiles (cf., Ac 10:27, 28). Circumcision, emblematic of the reason for that segregation, often led to hostility towards Gentiles on the part of Jews and hatred towards Jews on the part of Gentiles. Jews were put off by the abominable unlawful practices of Gentiles (cf., Ac 15:20, 21, 29), and Gentiles were put off by the self-righteous legalism of Jews.

The segregation of Jews and Gentiles is evident in an episode involving Peter, the Jew, and Cornelius, the Gentile, in the book of Acts. One day an angel appeared to Cornelius in a vision directing him to send for Peter, who was in Joppa at the time (10:1-8). The next day Peter was given a vision directing him to “kill and eat” animals he had always considered “impure.” When he resisted, the voice that Peter believed to be the voice of the Lord told him, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean” (v. 15). This happened three times: after which the Spirit told him that three men were looking for him – men sent by Cornelius. The next day Peter went with them to Caesarea where Cornelius was waiting for them. When he entered the centurion’s house, Peter said: “You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean” (v. 28). And while he was testifying to the death and resurrection of Jesus (vv. 39-41), to his surprise and the surprise of the Jews with him, the Holy Spirit came on the crowd of Gentiles gathered in the house (vv. 44-45). Later in

Jerusalem, when Jewish believers criticized him for going into the house of a Gentile and eating with him, Peter explained what had happened, which silenced their objections. “So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life” (11:18), they mused.

One writer explains the current status of Gentile saints this way: “The saints are fellow citizens with the redeemed of all ages. Before Abraham, there were saints who were members of the household of God. After Abraham, the saints were those Jews who truly believed God, as did their father Abraham (Rom 4:12). These were fellow saints of former generations who were members of the household of God. In the present time, those Jews and Gentiles redeemed by Christ’s death have formed a new entity called the church. Those in the new entity are saints who are fellow citizens with all the saints of past generations, who are also members of God’s household. None of the succeeding generations of saints replaces the former generation, but all join as members of God’s household or family. Though there may be distinctions, they are all fellow citizens. Though there may be differences, there are no inferiors or superiors. All the saints of every generation believed that God was involved with their redemption and reconciliation. They all had access to God, and they all had fellowship with God and other saints. The believers today are neither Jews nor Gentiles but are Christians who pray and give praise to God as all the saints in former generations” (Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 396).

1

EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

11 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. 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, 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.

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.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Box "therefore" indicating *result* in v. 11.
- Underline "formerly" in v. 11, "at that time" in v. 12, "now" in v. 13, and "no longer" in v. 19 indicating *time*.
- Circle "uncircumcised" and "circumcision" in v. 11.
- Number what Gentiles "were" in v. 12.
- Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 13.
- Bracket "far away" and "near" in vv. 13, 17.
- Box "for" indicating *explanation* in v. 14.
- Circle "peace" in v. 14.
- Box "to" indicating *purpose* in vv. 15, 16.
- Circle "body" in v. 16.
- Box "for" (Gk. *hoti*, "so that") indicating *result* in v. 18.
- Box "consequently" indicating *result* in v. 19.
- Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 19.
- Circle "chief cornerstone" in v. 20.
- Circle "holy temple" in v. 21.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What is one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. To what time does “formerly” and “at that time” refer?
2. List the five privileges God had given to the nation Israel not given to Gentiles.
3. Explain the *contrast* in verse 13.
4. What did Jesus destroy and how did he destroy it?
5. Verse 15b refers to him “making peace.” How so?
6. Verse 16 refers to “their hostility.” Whose hostility?
7. How can Paul say what he said about Jesus in verse 17? He never preached to Gentiles, did he?
8. Explain the *contrast* in verse 19.
9. Christ Jesus is called the “chief cornerstone” in verse 20. Explain the *significance* of that metaphor.
10. **Discussion:** Paul refers to a building under construction in verse 21. Discuss what he is talking about.

Commentary On The Text

It's next to impossible to jump into the middle of one of Paul's letters without jumping into the middle of one of his logical arguments. Ephesians 2:11-22 begins on the note of "therefore" (v. 11) and ends on the note of "consequently" (v. 19). Clearly what he says in these twelve verses is logically connected to what he said in the first ten verses. In these opening verses Paul tells his Gentile readers that they, who were once dead in their transgressions and sins, as well as Jews, who were in the same condition, have been made alive with Christ (v. 5) and have been seated with him in heavenly realms (v. 6). God did this, Paul says, in order to demonstrate the "incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus" (v. 7).

Verses 11-22 can be divided into three parts. In the first (vv. 11-13), Paul contrasts the relationship of Gentiles to Jews *before* Christ with their relationship to them *after* Christ. Their before and after relationship is evident in the words "formerly" (v. 11) and "at that time" (v. 12), on one hand, and "now" (v. 13) on the other. Five things were true of them. One, they were "separate from Christ," which means as Gentiles they had no messianic hope; they were not looking for the coming of the Messiah. Two, they were "excluded from citizenship in Israel," which means they were not sons of Jacob whom God had formed into unique nation. Three, they were "foreigners to the covenants of the promise," which means they had no claim to the promised blessings contained in the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New covenants. Blessings promised in these covenants might accrue to Gentiles (e.g., Ge 12:3), but they had to right to them. Four, they were "without hope," which means that the sure expectations guaranteed in the covenants did not belong to them. Five, they were "without God," which means while they may have believed in gods, they did not know the one true God. Paul uses the Greek adjective *atheos*, from which we get our English word "atheist," to describe them.

That is what Gentiles were *before* Christ, "but *now* in Christ" Paul says things have changed dramatically. Gentiles who were once "far away" are now "near" as a result of Christ's death on the cross. These terms, "far" and "near," were used in the Old Testament to describe Gentile nations as "far off" (Dt 28:49; 29:22; 1Ki 8:41; Isa 5:26; Jer 5:15) and Israel as "near" (Ps 148:14). In the present context they're used to describe believing Gentiles who have been brought near to God, not by being turned into Jews but by being included

with believing Jews in Christ Jesus.

In the second (vv. 14-18) Paul explains *what* Christ did to change the relationship of Gentiles to Jews and *why* he did it. What did he do? In a nutshell, Paul says Christ, "our peace," ended the hostility between Gentiles and Jews and made the two one by replacing the hostility between them with mutual acceptance (v. 14). Christ put an end to that by nullifying the law. Since neither Jews nor Gentiles in Christ are governed by its commandments and regulations, it can no longer divide them (v. 15a). Why did he do it? In a nutshell, Paul says Christ did it to "create in himself one new man out of the two" and to "reconcile both of them to God through the cross" (v. 15b, 16). What's more, following his death and resurrection, Christ preached peace to both through his prophets and apostles, both of whom now have equal access to the Father by the Spirit.

In the third (vv. 19-22) Paul describes the results of what Christ did especially as it pertains to Gentiles. "Consequently" looks back to verse 13. "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ . . . Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household . . ." No longer are Gentiles *outsiders* without spiritual privileges; now they're "fellow citizens." Together with the saints of all ages (i.e., "God's people"), they belong to God's family (i.e., "are members of God's household").

Paul goes on to *metaphorically* describe the new relationship that Gentiles enjoy. He speaks of the members of God's household being built into a single building "on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone" (v. 20). A building's cornerstone was no mere decorative stone. "In ancient building practices 'the chief cornerstone' was carefully placed. It was crucial because the entire building was lined up with it. The church's foundation, that is, the apostles and prophets, needed to be correctly aligned with Christ. All other believers are built on that foundation, measuring their lives with Christ" (Harold W. Hoehner, "Ephesians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 627). That one building (cf., 4:4) now under construction "rises to become a holy temple in the Lord" in which Gentiles, who were once far off, are being built together with Jews "to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" (v. 22). Praise be to Christ in whom both believing Jews and believing Gentiles are truly blessed!

Word Studies/Notes

v. 11 *uncircumcised* Jews used this contemptuous nickname to refer to Gentiles. “The Jews were widely known in the ancient world as those who were circumcised. They were proud of the distinctive of circumcision, a God-ordained covenantal sign that goes back to Abraham (Gen. 17:9-14). Paul, in his preconversion days, was proud to state that he was ‘circumcised on the eighth day’ (Phil 3:5), and it seems that Jews were zealous to have Gentiles circumcised so that they could come under the covenant (Gal 6:12-13; cf. 5:2-6, 11; Phil 3:2-3)” (Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 354).

v. 12 *Christ* Cf., “without Messiah” (NET). Gentiles had “no expectation of a Messiah to light up their darkness. They knew nothing at all about him” (A. Skevington Wood, “Ephesians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 11:39).

v. 12 *covenants* I.e., the Abrahamic (Ge 12:1-3; 15:18-21; 17:1-8), the Davidic (2Sa 7:16; Ps 89:1-4), and the New (Jer 31:31-34; Eze 36:24-30).

v. 14 *peace* “Not only has he reconciled his people to God through his death but he has reconciled them to each other; in particular, he has reconciled those of Jewish birth to those of Gentile birth . . . It is in him, as fellow-members of his body, that his people enjoy their twofold peace” (F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT, 295).

v. 14 *barrier* Cf., “who destroyed the middle wall of partition, the hostility” (NET). “Various interpretations have been given regarding this ‘dividing wall,’ which is mentioned only here in the New Testament . . . The structure of the Greek words suggests that the dividing wall describes not a physical barrier, but the spiritual enmity between Jews and Gentiles, which separated them. Since Christ destroyed this enmity (cf., v. 16), Jewish and Gentile believers should have no hostility” (Harold W. Hoehner, “Ephesians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 625, 26).

v. 14 *abolishing* The verb [*katargeō*] can readily have the meaning ‘to cause something to lose its power or effectiveness’ (BDAG 525 s.v. 2, where this passage is listed), and this meaning fits quite naturally here within the author’s legal mindset. A proper English term which communicates this well is “nullify” since this word carries the denotation of ‘making something legally null and void.’

This is not, however, a common English word. An alternate term like ‘rendered inoperative [or ineffective]’ is also accurate but fairly inelegant. For this reason, the translation retains the term ‘nullify’; it is the best choice of the available options, despite its problems” (the NET Bible, 29^{tn} on Eph 2:15).

v. 17 *preached* Peace “was proclaimed by him to Jews and Gentiles by means of the ministry of the Holy Spirit through his apostles (cf. Eph 3:5-6)” (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 385).

v. 19 *foreigners and aliens* The two terms are nearly synonymous. “The first is like a tourist traveling in a foreign land which has an agreement with the traveler’s land of origin that gives him travel rights. The second is like a person who is legally residing in a foreign country with a residence visa. Neither are citizens nor do they have all the privileges of the citizens in that land” (392).

v. 19 *God’s people* Lit., “the saints” (ESV, NRSV, NKJV). “Believing Gentiles together with believing Jews have become ‘fellow citizens with the saints’ of all ages, even those before the formation of Israel” (394).

v. 20 *prophets* I.e., NT prophets (Eph 3:5; 4:11) (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 397-404).

v. 20 *chief cornerstone* “The cornerstone was the first stone laid. The builder was very careful to properly set this stone. Lloyd states, ‘The *acrogoniaios* here is the primary foundation-stone at the angle of structure by which the architect fixes a standard for the bearing of the walls and cross-walls throughout.’ In fact, in Isa 28:16 it is called a testing stone or literally ‘a stone of testing.’ It is that stone by which every other stone in the foundation and the superstructure must be measured. Thus, the building of the new person, the church, must be in conformity with the cornerstone, Jesus Christ” (407).

Other Texts to Consider

Ephesians 4:4-6

“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you too were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Gentiles, who are no longer far away, having been brought near by Christ who made both Jews and Gentiles one and reconciled them both to God, are being built together with Jews into one holy temple in which God lives by his Spirit.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

Christmas. It should be the most wonderful time of year, but sometimes we don't feel it. Some of you are celebrating a season of "firsts" with a newborn baby in the house. For others, this will be the first Christmas without a beloved family member or friend. Some of you are doing the same old thing you've always done while others are breaking from tradition and traveling or hosting the Christmas feast for the first time. This might be a year of plenty for some where others might struggle to get a tree, much less a present under it. As we focus on our circumstances, Christmas can bring a range of emotion from excitement to dread and everything in between. This can be a season of simultaneously feeling deep loss and extreme joy. Right now, today, I encourage you to take your eyes off your circumstances and lift them to the hills, to the Maker of heaven and earth who promises hope, joy, and peace. Like Peter in Matthew 14:22-33, when we take our focus off the Prince of Peace, we begin to sink in our own surroundings. Jesus Christ is big enough to handle whatever you're going through. Today, spend time in worship, reading God's Word, and prayer. Fifteen minutes can change the trajectory of your day, month, and holiday season. Focus on the One who can do infinitely more than we hope or imagine. We are praying you and your family enjoy a holiday season filled with peace as you abide in the One who came to save.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Ephesians 2:11-22

1. What two things are we without when we are separated from Christ?
2. What did Christ preach (v 17)?
3. Who do we have access to through Christ?

What Do You Think?

Think of some friends that go to another type of church (Baptist, Methodist). How is their church different? How is it the same?
Can we go to different churches and still be followers of Christ?

What Do You Do?

Make cookies this week! The ingredients even of cookies aren't all that great by themselves but put them together and they make something wonderful! How does this describe your church or the whole body of Christ?

CORE COMPETENCY: Peace

I live without worry because things are good between God, myself and others.

MEMORY VERSE: Luke 2:14

Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests.

KidPIXCOUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week's verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME _____

GRADE _____

PARENT SIGNATURE _____

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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