

One New Man

Ephesians 2:11-22

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 corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being joined 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. (Ephesians 2:11-22)

A question to begin our study of these truths . . . When God, through Abraham, first began to set apart a people to be His own special family, was it always His plan to, later on, adopt and in-graft the “wild branch” of the Gentiles into His family, or were His efforts with the Jews, as some bible historians claim, just a failed experiment that needed to be rethought?

May I quickly and plainly say that neither of those words, “failed” or “experiment” is within the realm of possibility of God!” He is the Almighty God who knows and plans every detail of life. He cannot “fail” and He is never left to “wonder” how a matter might “turn out”.

Those sorts of responses are only at our human level and are simply the best kinds of answers that the limited and often foolish “wisdom of the wise” can manage. So then, no, God didn’t try something that didn’t work out well for Him and so had to “fall back” to “Plan B”. While we can’t in this life know all of God’s plans and purposes, we can, through these scriptures, know that God did “set apart” a Gentile man, Abraham, along

with certain of his family members, to become a whole new family of people, a people after God's own heart. And God called those people, Jews.

And those people, the Jews, though they would never attain to the conditions of holiness and righteousness that God desired for them, they still remained His family. And now here, in these simplest of words, God is telling us that "yes, the Jews, the Israelites, are still His family. And then, here also, in what is called, "the fullness of time", God is also inviting all the remaining Gentiles of the world, you and me, to freely join in and also become part of His special family, part of the Children of Abraham, part of the Children of Israel, part of the "Children of God".

And again, no, God did not "disown" or "set aside" His people, the Jews, as some do claim. And that is very clear within these and other words like them. No, the Jews remain God's children. What is being told to us here is that we, the Gentiles, are now being in-grafted into that branch, adopted into God's family, becoming "one" big family. I realize that the way I am saying these words seems repetitive, but I want us to clearly understand the truth that God is conveying to us here in these words. Why would I find need to do that? It is because, there are many, many people across our world, some of them "devout believers in Christ", who misinterpret the scriptures and believe that God has abandoned the Jews. And we, the modern-day Christians, are now the "new Israel", the only Israel that God now accepts, and that the people of the modern-day nation of Israel are no longer God's people.

But here in today's passage, God is simply telling you and me that He has purposed to be generous to us Gentiles. And much as He did with the people of Israel, He has done with all of us Gentiles. Listen, this from Hosea 1 . . .

9 Then God said: "Call his name Lo-Ammi, For you are not My people, And I will not be your God. 10 "Yet the number of the children of Israel Shall be as the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There it shall be said to them, 'You are sons of the living God.' (Hosea 1:9-10)

And here, in this passage to the Ephesians, God is saying to you and me that "we who were not His people" are now being invited to come and join in to His family and become "sons of the Living God". And in God doing that, we can see just one more fulfillment of His loving gift of "grace", His "generous, free and totally unexpected, undeserved, divine favor, love and pardon.

I have said to you often that my usual way of thinking through matters such as these involves visual imagery. And my thoughts go to those scenes of old when royal families

would parade through the streets in their elegant carriages throwing out trinkets and candies to the less-fortunate common folk lined along the way. Or perhaps the scene where Priests and Bishops carry their censers of incense, dispensing God's blessings out into the air with the intent that some of the smoke will fall on some of those who are near.

May I say, that is not God's intent here as He tells us about His special offer of grace! Here, God is telling us that it is His deepest desire that you and I, and the other Gentiles of the world would actually come into His home, live and abide with Him and become His beloved children, fully "accepted in the beloved", receiving all the rights and privileges that are afforded to the "natural born" Son, the Lord Jesus. And no, God is not saying that we will have all the power, position and authority that Jesus has. But He is inviting us to be "sons of God" with all the grandest of privileges that inheritance provides. Listen! This from Galatians 4 . . .

4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. (Galatians 4:4-7)

Folks, these are words that should astound us and fill us with joy and thankfulness. Just look where we are coming from! Verses 12 and 13 of Ephesians 2 describe us by saying that we were once aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. What a blessed thing has taken place, how unfathomable is the "loving grace" of God, His "free and completely unexpected, undeserved, divine favor, love and pardon".

Why would God do such a wonderful thing for us? The only answer I can find to that question is that it is simply His blessed nature to "love". And so, with great love, compassion and pity, He looked down upon our miserable existence, saw us wandering about, "poor, wretched, naked and blind", lost within our own personal wilderness. And He lovingly reached in and not only saved us out of our gloomy despair. He adopted us and brought us into His home to live with Him forever.

Was this special act of kindness shown to us in Christ the only time that God ever blessed and provided for the Gentiles? No, it isn't. We can see many other moments of grace throughout the Old Testament. God has always loved the Gentiles and made specific provisions for many of them. We see His love and compassion being shown in

the lives of Ruth and Rahab and even Nebuchadnezzar. And we can assume that there were also many others.

But with that being said, it was only in Christ and in His shed blood on the cross that the floodgates of heaven were fully opened wide to all people, both the Jews and the Gentiles, to come in and become “sons of the living God”. I confess that I don’t know the mind of God regarding the separation that He had formerly put between His family, the Jews, and the rest of the Gentile world, but He did. And that separation was very real, so real that He prohibited even one Gentile to remain within the borders of the new “Promised Land” that He had set apart and given to the Jews.

So what then can this “breaking down” of the barriers between the Jews and the Gentiles now mean? Is it that God has changed His mind? I believe not! Rather, it is simply that God’s plans and purposes come about within a timetable known only to Him. And for that earlier season of time, God, for His own purposes simply “set apart” a portion of His family, into a land that will always be “set apart” for that portion of His family, the Jews.

And no, in breaking down the barriers between the Jews and the Gentiles, God is not inviting you and me to go and move into the land of Israel and live there.

The invitation for “unity” that Jesus has provided is of an altogether different kind. It is a “Spiritual” unity provided through His precious blood and by His Holy Spirit. Listen . . .
Verses 17

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.
(Ephesians 2:17-18)

The Jews and the Gentiles have always been brothers. But for a while in God’s plan we were estranged and separated from each other. And because of our sin, we were also both estranged and separated from God, going our own way. But thanks be to God, in what is called “the fullness of time”, Christ came and shed His blood, breaking down the wall of separation between the Jews and the Gentiles, reconciling us all, both Jews and Gentiles alike, back to God the Father, making us “one new people”, “one family” in Christ. Listen!

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. (Ephesians 2:15-16)

While the enmity spoken about here has some to do with the enmity between Jews and Gentiles, it has most to do with the enmity that had come about between us and God. The minds of the Jews and the Gentiles alike had become carnal, desiring only the things of the flesh and were hostile towards God. But thanks be to God, we read here in verse 17,

17 And He (Jesus) came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. (Ephesians 2:17)

What was this “peace” that Jesus came preaching and why was it so important to us? It was the “Gospel”, the good news of salvation to both the Jews and the Gentiles. We read about that in Mark 1:14-15,

14 . . . Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." (Mark1:14-15)

Why is the “gospel” so vitally important to our salvation? It is because, as we read in Romans 1:16, the gospel is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. Folks, the “Gospel” has a singular power residing within it that is found nowhere else. And here in today’s text, we find that power bringing salvation to both the Jews and the Gentiles, bringing us both together in Christ and making us “one new man” in Him.

Now, in Christ, there truly is no difference between us. Both the Jews and the Gentiles have complete and free access to God the Father. Now, all of us can come boldly before the throne of God and there call Him Abba, Father. And His Holy Spirit binds us together as one in Him.

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, (Ephesians 2:18-19)

One more thought concerning these words . . . and again my imagination has taken over. I can imagine God’s face as He looks upon all that His Beloved Son has done, and smilingly He says, “It sure is good to have all my family together now”.

As we close our time of worship for today, may I say that some of these words of today’s text resonate with some thoughts that I have been reading in a book by Martyn Lloyd Jones. There, he expresses how so many believers and “would-be believers” alike seem to struggle with wrong direction and wrong purpose for their lives. He comments that most people truly are searching for the meanings of life. But they end up only chasing after the wind, never finding the elusive meanings they are seeking.

Why would that be! It is because they are looking in the wrong places.

Folks, every answer to every question of life can be found easily within the pages of these scriptures. And these words, beginning in verse 20, express that truth very clearly. Listen . . .

20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being joined 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. (Ephesians 2:20-22)

This is where everything that we will ever need is to be found. The “truth” is not “out there” somewhere to be chased after and pursued. It is in here! And here, God is saying to you and to me that we do not have to go to the ends of the earth to find Him and His truth. It is here, verse 20

20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone. (Ephesians 2:20)

Praise be to God!