

Ephesians 2:11-22

Remember Who You Are/ A Unified Church

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Genre:

- **Letter:** sometimes referred to as Epistles
 - Written in response to a specific need or circumstance.

Context:

- **Author:** Written by Paul, the apostle, around 60 AD. One of the 4 letters written while in prison in Rome.
- Written after Christ's death and resurrection, when the new churches of Christian believers are being formed and undergoing heavy persecution.
- **Original Audience:** new Gentile Christian believers in Ephesus and the general Mediterranean area. Written to encourage them in their new faith and to encourage unity. (Gentile simply means "not Jewish")
 - Listeners would have known that Paul was currently imprisoned in Rome after being accused by Jewish leaders that he brought an Ephesian Gentile beyond the temple's outer court (see Acts 21:27-29)
- Ethnic and cultural differences between the Jewish and Gentile believers had become an area of contention in the Ephesian church. This brand new church was in danger of becoming 2 separate churches.
- When we enter the scene, this new church is fragmented, and Gentile Christians are being made to feel lesser than because they're not Jewish (and not circumcised). Paul comes in and makes it very clear about their worth in the kingdom of God.

Observe: What does the passage say?

- Vs 11 & 12: Remember what life was like before Christ!
 - Before Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Jews did not realize that salvation would ever be extended to the world, to people outside of themselves. This was a big deal for Gentiles! (word for a non-Jew)
 - Without hope
- Vs 13: Jesus dying on the cross changed everything. Jesus allowed them to be part of the family.
 - Ephesians 1:5- "*he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ*"
- Vs 14/15- Jesus is our peace. He destroyed the barrier, between people and with God. Jesus brought reconciliation/atonement for our sins.

- 1 John 2: 1-2 “*But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father-- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*”
- Vs 15/16- Create a new humanity from the two = means to reconcile the two sides.
- Vs 17- Christ's message of salvation was for *everyone*; Jew and Gentile.
- Vs 18- *Both* have access to the Father *because of Jesus*.
- Vs 19- All part of God's family; citizens.
- Vs 20-22- Jesus holds it all together; the cornerstone; he's the unifier. Everything is built off of Jesus.

Interpret: What does the passage mean?

- Jesus' atoning work *was* and *is* a big deal! It changed a lot of things!
 - We tend to take this for granted in our era, but this was and is life-changing. Jesus' death and resurrection ushered in a new era of relationship with God; the turning point in God's rescue plan.
 - *We* are Gentiles. We would have been excluded prior to Jesus.
- Theme: remember who you *were*, so you can remember who you *are*.
 - Remember what you've been saved from.
 - Those who receive Jesus are called members of God's family; adopted, heirs; no second-rate citizens.
- Theme of unity:
 - The body of Christ should not be at war with itself anymore.
 - The church, reconciled to God through Christ, is to live in a way that exemplifies the ultimate restoration
 - Jesus is our peace; the one who holds things together. But that also means we need him to hold things together; can't do it on our own.

Application: What does it mean for me?

- When is the last time I reflected on Jesus' saving grace and atoning work?
- How do I identify myself? Do I realize I am a valued member of God's family? Do I see other believers in the same way?
- In what ways can we apply this message of peace and unity to our cultural climate?
- What else spoke to you from the reading?
- What is God challenging you to do or pray?