

p 33 WEEK 5: ONE NEW MAN

Ephesians 2:11–22

The Place of the Passage

Ephesians 1 reveals that salvation consists of multiple blessings that began in eternity past to bring God glory through Christ. The blessings come to believers through their union with Christ, being experienced in the present life when one believes the gospel. Ephesians 2:1–10 explains that believers have no cause for boasting in the process, because they were wrath-bound sinners who had no inclination toward God; God alone interrupted the dead life with grace from Christ. In 2:11–22, Paul shows how this work of Christ creates one united identity among believers, foreshadowing the fullness of the union believers will share with God and one another for eternity.

The Big Picture

Ephesians 2:11–22 explains *reconciliation* and its implications for the common identity of Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ for the present and future ages.

p 34 Reflection and Discussion

Read through the complete passage for this study, Ephesians 2:11–22. Then review the questions below concerning this section of Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus and write your notes on them. (For further background, see the *ESV Study Bible*, pages 2265–2266; available online at www.esvbible.org.)

1. Remembering Separation (2:11–13)

“Therefore” indicates that on the basis of God’s gracious work (2:1–10), Paul is exhorting the Gentile believers in Ephesus to remember the depth of their separation from God. What is the significance of the references to Old Testament ideas like the “commonwealth of Israel” and “covenants of promise” in relation to the Gentiles’ spiritual past? Why did the Gentiles’ past identity as “the uncircumcision” render them hopeless before God?

In Christ’s work of salvation, unbelieving Gentiles have been “brought near” to those who were circumcised “in the flesh by hands” (e.g., Israel). What, then, is one effect the death of Christ had on the ethnic relations of Jews and Gentiles? In what sense(s) were Gentiles “far off”? In what sense(s) are they now “near”?

2. Christ Made Peace (2:14–18)

In 2:14, “in his flesh” is a reference to the death of Christ on the cross. By dying on the cross, Christ achieved peace between Jews and Gentiles and so removed the source of their hostility with one another. What was the source of this hostility, [p 35](#) and what does it mean for it to be abolished? In what sense are Jewish and Gentile believers “one new man”?

Christ proclaimed the message of peace to those “far off” and “those who were near” (2:17). What is the content of this message of peace? When did Christ preach to each of these groups in Ephesus?

Being “far from the commonwealth of Israel” rendered the Gentiles in need of the message of peace. Why did “those who were near” (Israel) also need this message of peace?

As a result of the preaching of peace, what is new about the Jews’ means of access to the Father? What is new about the Gentiles’ access to the Father?

[p 36](#) **3. The Church as God’s Temple (2:19–22)**

Christ’s work of peace removes the believing Gentiles’ status as “strangers and aliens.” When Paul includes the Jewish believers in the new status of “no longer strangers and aliens,” what does he reveal about the spiritual status of those who had the “covenants of promise”?

The Ephesians’ secular citizenship provided them with the responsibilities, rights, and benefits of the Roman city. Paul borrows this political language to describe the church as a new community formed by Christ—as a new citizenry and a new household. How does the language of 2:19 emphasize the corporate nature of this new community? What does such language intend to communicate about relationships between members of the body of Christ?

What would Jewish and Gentile believers in Ephesus have understood about the gospel’s effect on race relationships, nationalism, and individualism?

[p 37](#) The cornerstone of a building was the stone ensuring a straight and stable foundation. How did the apostles and prophets act as the foundation for the church? What does Christ as cornerstone mean for the church?

“In him” repeats the theme of the believers’ mysterious union with Christ. How does the Spirit’s work in the temple fulfill the work of the head of this union, Christ (from 1:22)?

Read through the following three sections on *Gospel Glimpses*, *Whole-Bible Connections*, and *Theological Soundings*. Then take time to consider the *Personal Implications* these sections may have for you.

Gospel Glimpses

PEACE. Since the time of the fall, mankind's fellowship with the Creator has been broken. The sins of each individual continue the breaching of this relationship with a holy God. The reestablishment of the broken relationship depends upon one making an offering of peace and our own admitting to the brokenness of the relationship. On the cross, Christ sacrifices himself as the peace offering on behalf of mankind (Isa. 53:5). His death reconciles believers to God (Rom. 5:1). In him alone is the breach between each of us and the Creator repaired.

p 38 Whole-Bible Connections

GOD DWELLING AMONG HIS PEOPLE. In a world without sin, God dwelt among his people, and they enjoyed friendship and fellowship with one another (Gen. 3:8). After mankind's fall, Adam and Eve were banished from the garden and from God's immediate presence. Since then, the hope of God's people has been that God would again dwell among them. In the coming of Christ into the world, the hope of God's presence among his people is renewed as the "Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). Uniquely, in the person of Jesus Christ, God was dwelling among his people. All believers can personally experience God's dwelling among them through the person of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16–17).

THE LORD'S CORNERSTONE. The concept of a strategic cornerstone within the plan of God has ancient roots. One psalmist, possibly a Davidic king of Israel, identifies himself as the Lord's cornerstone, rejected by the nations but exalted by God (Ps. 118:22). Later, through the prophets the Lord speaks of laying a cornerstone in order to counter scoffers and poor leadership in Israel (Isa. 28:16; Zech. 10:4). Jesus interprets the cornerstone prophecies as references to himself and his ministry on behalf of Israel (Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10; Acts 4:11). He is the rejected cornerstone that will be exalted above Israel's leaders and the nations through his death and resurrection. As such, he will crush those who oppose him (Luke 20:17–18; 1 Pet. 2:7–8).

Theological Soundings

NEW CREATION. The hope of the world is that God has promised a renewal of all things. This renewal includes a new heavens and earth (Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1). The renewal also has personal and present dimensions anticipating those cosmic dimensions. In salvation through Christ, God brings about a "new creation" in believers, giving them a new disposition—a desire to live lives pleasing to God and to crucify sinful desires (Rom. 6:4; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:20–22; Col. 3:10). Corporately, believers express this newness as a redeemed humanity of loving and holy citizenship—as "one new man." This new man is the visible demonstration of the renewal Christ

will make of the full creation (Rom. 8:23). Christ will lift the effects of the curse from the present world, even as he lifts the effects of the curse from individual believers.

p 39 Personal Implications

Take time to reflect on the implications of Ephesians 2:11–22 for your own life today. Consider what you have learned that might lead you to praise God, repent of sin, and trust in his gracious promises. Make notes below on the personal implications for your walk with the Lord of the (1) *Gospel Glimpses*, (2) *Whole-Bible Connections*, (3) *Theological Soundings*, and (4) this passage as a whole.

1. Gospel Glimpses

2. Whole-Bible Connections

3. Theological Soundings

4. Ephesians 2:11–22

p 40 As You Finish This Unit ...

Take a moment now to ask for the Lord’s blessing and help as you continue in this study of Ephesians. And take a moment also to look back through this unit of study, to reflect on some key things that the Lord may be teaching you—and perhaps to highlight and underline these things to review again in the future.