

Sermon 25 July2021

Good Day All,

We can really feel winter is upon us. It really has become very chilly.

Please keep praying for Drs. and staff of our Hospitals in town. Covid is very rife here at the moment and as a result there have been so many deaths. Please pray for those who have lost loved ones.

Christ's work of reconciliation.

Ephesians 2:1-22

In this section we read this morning the Apostle Paul wants the Ephesians to realise where they once were. Like In the section of Ephesians 2:1-10 where he taught that we were once dead and God brought us to life. Here he wants us to see that we as Gentiles were once separated from God, alienated, but because of Christ we are reconciled to God.

The key focus in this text is reconciliation. Wayne Grudem defines reconciliation as “The removal of enmity and restoration of fellowship between two parties.” Restoration happens between Man and God and between man and man. Christ has removed the enmity between us and God. He has taken our sin away and He has performed His mediatory work bringing us back into fellowship with Him.

Who we were.

In 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 it says, “All this is from God, who reconciled himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sin against them. And he committed to us the the message of reconciliation.”

As believers, we experience the joy of reconciliation. With blessings come responsibility. We are to be ministers of reconciliation. We are tools the Lord uses to bring people to Him and to bring human enemies together.

In Ephesian 2:11-12 it says, “Therefore, remember that formerly you who are gentiles by birth were called “uncircumcised” by those who called themselves the”circumcision”(That done to the body by hands of men)- remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenant of promise, without hope and without God in the world.”

Not only were we dead as we have already learned but Paul goes on explaining to the Ephesians that they had no past, no present, no future, no God and no hope. To be without God is to be without hope. I believe one of the greatest torments of hell will be

that there is no hope. Can you imagine being forever assigned to a place of torment without the possibility of ever finding relief?

An example of true hope that God brings to his people is the hope of heaven. In this hope we are not hoping it happens someday. When Scripture speaks of hope it speak in terms of a guarantee. The truths of Scripture and the love of Christ gives us hope when facing the death of a loved one.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13, “Brother, we don’t want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men who have no hope.”

We have a for sure hope because of the work of Christ in us, reconciling us to God. It is important that we should share the Gospel with others because they are without hope. Those people without the Gospel are without hope and so will remain without hope. If we are to be consistent witnesses for Christ, it's important that we remember where we came from.

Romans 5:13 says the following, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

1.Christ’s work of Reconciliation

A. He is making one people

Ephesian 2;13-18 says the following, “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of two, making peace, and in this one body reconcile both of them to God through the cross by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near, For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.”

Now the whole situation has changed. No longer can the Jews shun the Gentiles. Christ has taken away all the things that divided those two groups of people.

Paul uses two interesting phrases. First he says “you who were once far off and have been brought near” and the second is “broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.” The blood of Christ has brought us near and in His flesh He has broken down the dividing wall.

Both these phrases refer to the Jewish temple in Jerusalem during the time of Herod. In the temple was the court of the Gentiles. This was a place where the Gentiles could go and worship but it was far from the Holy of Holies. The Jewish men were given access to an area quite a bit closer and the Jewish High Priest, on the Day of Atonement

was given access to the Holy of Holies.

Between the Jews and the Gentiles was a dividing wall. The wall that separated Jew and Gentile has been removed. The blood of Christ has taken it away. No longer can a Jew claim to have access to God because he is a Jew. Now both can access God through Jesus. The cross is the leveller. All people are now granted access to God through Jesus alone.

In Matthew 27:51, "At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split." What divided people has been broken down because of Jesus. What divided God from His people has been ripped in two. The curtain is no longer needed because we don't access God through that curtain any longer, but through Christ. Jesus has done the work of reconciliation.

B. He is making one Kingdom

In Ephesians 2:19-22 we read, "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow-citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundations of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as chief corner stone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."

Now we have access through Jesus, He opens the gate and invites us to enter into His Father's Kingdom.

Throughout history there have been great and mighty empires. As with anything that man does, they come and go. Jesus, on the other hand is building a Kingdom which will endure for ever. He is bringing people from all different kingdoms and placing them into His Father's Kingdom.

Paul uses the imagery of the Holy Spirit as a brick layer. The Holy Spirit lays one block at a time. Everyone who is converted becomes another brick in the temple of God. This is a temple that will never be destroyed. This is because, Christ Jesus Himself is the corner stone in whom the whole structure is being joined together. The foundation of this structure was laid by the apostles and the prophets. This building is not finished yet. Jew and Gentiles are being brought into the Kingdom of God. One at a time.

Paul says that we were strangers. In ancient times these were the people who came into the walled city to conduct business but had no legal right to stay. Jesus brings strangers into the walled city of God's Kingdom and makes us citizens. Paul goes on to explain that we were aliens. These were the people who may be permitted to stay for a short time in one's house, they were not family members and had to leave after a short time. In God's kingdom we never have to leave. We can access God all the time because of what Jesus did for us.

We were people with no past, no present, no future, no God and no hope. We were a people who were under God's wrath. Now because of Jesus we have a Past - built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. We have a Present – are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household. We have a Future – being built together into a dwelling place for God by His Spirit. We have a God, Jeremiah 31:33 says, “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time”, declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.” We have a Hope. In Romans 15:13 it says, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Amen