

The One True Church, The Body of Christ

Ephesians 2:11-18

Ephesians 2:11-18 - *“Therefore remember, that you once Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision made in the flesh by hands; 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: But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation; 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; and that He might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity: and He came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.”*

Background Notes

The church at Ephesus was composed of both believing Jews and believing Gentiles. Ephesians 1:12, 13: *“that we [Jewish believers] who first trusted in Christ, should be to the praise of His glory, in Him you [Gentile believers] also trusted after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. In whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.”*

Ephesians 2:17-18 explains: *“He came and preached peace to you who were far away [Gentiles by birth] and peace to those who were near [Jews by birth]. For through Him, we both [Jewish believers and Gentile believers] have access by one Spirit to the Father.”* So the great divide between Jews and Gentiles was eliminated in Jesus Christ! Notice verse 14: *“for He himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation.”*

The “middle wall of separation” is probably an allusion to the wall in the Temple area that separated the outer court of the Gentiles from the inner courts, closer to the Temple, where only Jews were allowed. That wall of separation still stood in Judaism - but it was eliminated in Christ! Because of Christ, the wall of separation was demolished and there was now peace between Jews and Gentiles in the body of Christ. Jewish and Gentile believers were now on an equal footing in the one true Church, that forms the Body of Christ. This is the main theme of Ephesians.

Doctrinal Point

Believers are the body of Christ.

1. The history of the Body (v11-13)

In verses 11 and 12 we have our past status, and in verse 13 we have our present status. Verses 11: *“Therefore remember, that you who are Gentiles by birth, who are called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision...”* The Jews referred to themselves with pride as “the circumcision” – God’s special people - and they referred to Gentiles in a derogatory way as “the uncircumcision.” Look at the “B.C.” (Before Christ) description of Gentiles in verse 12: *“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.”* That’s a pretty sad situation, isn’t it? Without Christ, separated from citizenship with God’s chosen people, no covenant promises from God, no hope and without God. Could we be more lost?

But look at our present status in verse 13: *“But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”* What a difference! What a change! We who were far off have now been brought near.

Here’s a small illustration of this great truth: Our family once rescued a little beagle mix dog from the pound just before she was about to be put to sleep. We named her Rebekah. Rebekah was lost, with no hope in this world and scheduled for death - but we came along and rescued her! Rebekah was brought into our home, and she was not only given life, but also showered with love, attention, and status. What a change! This poor little dog was “once far off but now brought near.” Perhaps this story helps us to think through what our past status was, and what our present status is. Of course the illustration falls far short, because it didn’t cost our family anything to rescue the poor little dog - but in the case of our salvation, it cost the life of our Lord Jesus. We have been brought near at great cost - by the blood of Christ (v13).

How near have we been brought to God? In the words of an old hymn - “So near, so very near to God - nearer I cannot be. For in the person of His Son I am as near as He!” We are now in Christ Jesus, accepted by God “in” His beloved Son. Once far off, but now brought near in Christ - what a blessed position!

2. The formation of the Body (v14-18)

In verse 14 we have the *basis* of the union of Jewish and Gentile believers, and in verses 15 through 18 we have the results of the union.

a. **The basis of the union** in Christ: Jesus Christ Himself is the basis of our union.

“For He himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation” (v14). Notice - the basis of the union of Jew and Gentile in one body is not the teachings of Christ, but Jesus Christ Himself. Only in Jesus Christ can there be peace and oneness. And only true believers become one in the Body of Christ.

b. **The results of this union** in Christ: now there is no hostility.

“Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, the law with its commandments and regulations” (v15). The Old Testament Law was good – it was given by God. 1 Timothy 1:8 says, *“We know that the Law is good if one uses it lawfully.”* But the Law caused a barrier - a wall of hostility - a wall of separation between Jew and Gentile. Jesus Christ removed this wall of hostility. He satisfied the Law's righteous demands and thus He removed the Law as a means of approaching God. That's what Romans 10:4 means: *“for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”*

A few weeks ago we were in Israel, and what a blessing it was to see Jewish Christians and Arab Christians worshiping and fellowshiping together – one in Christ! What a miracle! The wall of separation between Arab and Jew that exists outside the Body of Christ was gone. Only in Christ is such peace possible.

- **Now there is one new man (v15).**

“So as to create in himself one new man from the two, thus making peace.” The one new man here is the Church, the Body of Christ. The Greek word “new” that's used here means something “new” that is unique - it's something totally different. The Church, the Body of Christ, is brand new. It's unique. It's different from anything that went before.

In Galatians 6:15 says, *“for in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything but a new creation.”* There was no Church in the Old Testament. The Church is not the “new Israel” - it's a totally new entity. That's why the Church as the Body of Christ is described as a “mystery” - something that was concealed in the Old Testament, and revealed in the New Testament. The Church began at Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Church is one “new man” - all believers together, forming the Body of Christ. And the head of this “one new man” is Christ in Heaven.

- **Now there is reconciliation (verse 16).**

“...that He might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.” What does reconciliation mean? It means to be brought back into a harmonious relationship. The main thought here is that both believing Jews and Gentiles have been reconciled to God. In being reconciled to God, they are at peace with one another – there is no more enmity. In the same way, two pianos that are tuned with the same tuning fork will be in tune with each other. That's the way the unity of the Spirit works in the Body of Christ. If we are truly reconciled to God, we will be reconciled to one another. We will be at peace with one another.

- Now there is access to the Father (verses 17-18).

“And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.” Notice that it’s access to God - but not just to God, but to our Father. What a difference from the relationship in the Old Testament! Listen to the words of Hebrews 10:19-20: *“Therefore brethren, having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh.”* Because of the work of Christ for us on the cross, all believers have access into the very presence of God - not just into the “suburbs” of Heaven, but into the “sanctuary” of Heaven!

Practical Application

Let’s turn our walls into tables!

The wall of separation that once separated Jews and Gentiles has been replaced with a table of peace in Jesus Christ. There’s an application here for Christians who can’t seem to get along together. What wall separates us from other Christians? Are there ethnic or social barriers? Are there barriers because of failure to forgive one another? Are there barriers because of unwillingness to reconcile? These barriers should not exist in the Body of Christ!

Let’s try to break down these walls! Let’s turn them into tables for dialogue and communion. That’s the way Christians should operate. And it’s really possible - because as believers, we are one in Christ. There shouldn’t be any walls. We should be able to talk things out, forgive one another, and come to reconciliation. There shouldn’t be any ethnic or social or jealous or angry or hurt feelings barriers. Let’s do whatever it takes to turn our walls into tables!