

A New Race

I. Therefore remember....

A. Ephesians is all about our riches in Christ:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places," (Ephesians 1:3, ESV)

B. In Chapter 1 Paul tell us those blessings are

1. We are Chosen by Father
2. We are Redeemed by the Son
3. We are Sealed by the Spirit

C. In Chapter 2: 1-10 Paul prays the Ephesians might understand their future inheritance, and the almighty power that has caused them to believe the gospel. All that happens to Christ physically, happens to us spiritually, because we are in Him.

- Christ was dead: We were dead in our sins
- Christ was raised: We were made alive together with Christ
- Christ was seated at the Father's right hand: We were seated with Him in the heavenly places in Christ

D. "therefore" – Paul has explained our new individual position with God and now he is going to tell us our position corporately.

II. Remember what we originally were: Alienated – (v. 11-12)

"Uncircumcision" was a term of derision by Jews. It was an ethnic slur.

"... For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1Samuel 17:26b)

A. Without the Commonwealth of Israel:

1. The Israelites knew God and his ways because he had spoken to them. For Israel, their power was by virtue of God's law over them – they were a nation because God had "called" them out and held them together by virtue of his own standard
2. No other nation had ever been given the Word of God directly and as a matter of existence
3. The Gentiles had no access to the fullness of God's revelation to humanity

"They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen."
(Romans 9: 4-5.)

- B. Without the Covenants: A covenant is an agreement in which God binds Himself to carry out certain promises to His people.
1. In His covenant with Abraham God promised to give them a land and provide a Descendant who would bless all the nations. (Genesis 12:1-3; 15:18-21)
 2. In His covenant with Moses God promised to provide physical blessings to Israel as long as they were obedient to Him. (Exodus 19-24)
 3. In His covenant with David God promised to provide a Descendant to sit on his throne forever. (2 Samuel 7, 1 Chronicles 17:11-14, 2 Chronicles 6:16)
- C. Without Christ: the Gentiles had no promise of a Messiah or savior. No one to rescue them either politically or spiritually. Only the Israelites were promised a Messiah (2 Samuel 7:12 – 16)

Without God: Because they were without Christ, they were also without God. They were not atheists. They believed in many gods.

"Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

- D. Without Hope: Because they had no knowledge of the true God, the Gentiles had no hope for the future.
1. Most Gentiles believed death ended all existence, or released their spirit to wander aimlessly in the nether world through eternity. Death brought nothingness & everlasting despair.
 2. Hope is based on a promise. It arises out of confidence in someone who can perform what they promise.

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1)

"The word "hope" in ordinary English vocabulary is generally distinguished from certainty. We would say, "I don't know what's going to happen, but I hope it happens."

When you read the word "hope" in the Bible (like in 1 Peter 1:13—"set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ"), hope is not wishful thinking. It's not "I don't know if it's going to happen, but I hope it happens." That's absolutely not what is meant by Christian hope.

Christian hope is when God has promised that something is going to happen and you put your trust in that promise. Christian hope is a confidence that something will come to pass because God has promised it will come to pass." – (Piper, 2008)

III. Remember the results of what Christ has done: Reconciliation – (v. 13-18)

A. Jesus abolished the law

The Law of commandments expressed in ordinances was the Mosaic law consisting of circumcision, Sabbaths, feasts, sacrifices, laws of purification, dietary laws, etc. All of these laws brought separation between Jew and Gentile. Christ's death fulfilled the ceremonial aspect of the Mosaic Law and thereby broke down the barrier between Jews and Gentiles.

B. Jesus Broke Down the Barrier of the Dividing Wall

There was a four and one-half-foot wall in the Temple with an inscription that warned any foreigner that if he went beyond the barrier, he would have himself to blame for his death. Paul was mobbed and almost killed when the Jews thought that he had brought some Gentiles inside that barrier (Acts 21:28-31).

C. Christ forms a new unity between Jew & Gentile (Both) and made them One (the Church).

"Jesus didn't Christianize the Jews or Judaize the Gentiles. He didn't create a half-breed. He made an entirely new man. "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus . . ." (Ephesians 2:10). We are God's masterwork, a new race, in Christ Jesus! This must not be watered down. This is the answer to alienation, to racism, to prejudice, to hatred, to estrangement." – (Hughes, Kindle Locations 1475-1478)

D. Christ is the means by which we are in a peaceful relationship with God. - We cannot make peace with God. In fact, in our flesh we are at war with God. In us lies no good thing. Jesus Christ gives us peace with God and the peace of God.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." (John 14:27)

E. Christ made it possible for us to have access to God the Father through the application of the Holy Spirit

F. How did all this happen? Through the Cross of Christ:

Sin is what causes all of the problems in our relationship with each other and with God and when Christ died on the cross, He paid the penalty for our sin. When sin was eliminated, there was no barrier left and we all became one in Christ.

IV. Understand the Consequence: A Unified new Creation – (v. 19-22)

A. We Are Citizens in God's Kingdom - fellow citizens with the saints. All believers are included in a new Kingdom in Christ

1. The kingdom of Christ is the power of God in Christ over the world

"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Romans 14:17)

"For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power." (1 Corinthians 4:20)

2. The Church is a holy nation

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9)

3. The Church (made up of Jew and Gentile) has become the True Israel. There are no 2nd class citizens in God's kingdom. All Christians are 1st class, whether they are Jews or gentiles – each has all rights of citizenship as the other does. There should be no racial or class distinctions within the church, even if they exist in the society at large.

B. We Are Members of God's Family: Believing Gentiles have now become members of God's household.

1. A member of a family is a much more intimate relationship than a citizen of a kingdom.

"he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved." (Ephesians 1:5-6)

2. We were born into the family of Satan, but transferred by free grace into God's family. All saints are part of the same family no matter what their ethnic distinctions may be.

C. We Are Stones in God's Temple: in the Old Testament God walked with His people (Adam, Enoch, Noah), then He dwelt in the tabernacle, then in the temple. In the New Testament, He dwelt in Jesus Christ, and then after Christ's ascension, He dwelt in the Church.

1. The foundation for this temple is not the apostles & prophets themselves, but rather the truth they taught about Jesus Christ in the Word.
2. The cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. He is the anchor-block upon which the rest of the structure depends for its support, consistency, levelness, straightness, etc.

"therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation:" (Isaiah 28:16)

3. The building-blocks of the new temple are being built out of *believers*, joined together from every walk of life. In 1Kings 6:7 we are told that the stones

for the temple were cut exactly to specification, hammered & chiseled before being brought to the temple site and erected. There was a special place for every stone in the building. So too, the Holy Spirit has special place for every believer in the Church. He hammers and chisels away to prepare us for our place and function in the body.

"As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:4-5)

4. A Holy Temple

"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple." (1 Corinthians 3:16-17)

References

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