

## INTRODUCTION

- Sit, Walk, Stand – Ephesians series intro.
  - Knowing where we sit – sitting at the feet of the Lord
  - How to walk with the Lord
  - How to stand against challenges.
  
- I would like to point back to the first lesson a few weeks ago
  - Identity in Christ
    - ❖ There we concluded that our identity in Christ is that we are Chosen (desired by God), Redeemed (Valuable to God), Sealed (Obtained inheritance)
- Today, looking at the last part of chapter 2, Paul comes back to the idea of identity and he adds another layer to it.
  
- I really can't get over how important this idea of Identity is.
  - Big philosophical implications – not to mention the psychological elements.
- Identity root is Latin *Idem* (the same) – statements of equality (synonyms)
  - Mathematics: An equation in which is true for all values of variables. [additive identity]
  - Modern: essential character
    - ❖ In all situations I am Kylan – no matter the variable.
    - ❖ But what does that mean? My equations is quite a bit more complex than  $x + x = 2X$ 

[Equation]
- I have been in a little bit of a psychology kick lately and I notice psychologist state how imperative ones identity is. One's identity influences what they think and how they act.
  - It is an important part of the culture of a people: example: rite of passage.
    - ❖ Something greatly lacking in this culture. (Catcher in the rye)
      - (drinking or driving a car – vs. – boot camp or off to college)
  - Personally. USMC, BSME, Marriage...
    - ❖ Not only adolescence to adulthood, but adulthood (mid-life crisis – caught up in culture
    - ❖ Eventually asking why all this – purpose – who am I (Finding yourself)
  - Philosophically: object or subject :: Being and becoming
    - ❖ Let me applying to the scripture were going to read.

## SET UP

- Ephesians 2:11-22.
- Paul makes three remarks :: Remember, Now, So ...
  - Remember who you were: Who you are now and So what – what should we do with that.
    - ❖ Psychology: search the past that formed you: Now where to go.

**Ephesians 2:11** Therefore **remember** that at one time you, Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands —

**12 remember** that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

- Therefore: (where we left off)
  - Since - God being rich in mercy and great in love makes us alive (v.9)
  - Since - We are His workmanship (masterpiece) created for His good works. (v.10)

## Remember

- A bit strange wording there...let's work through that – then talk about ‘remembering’
- You were formerly given the title “THE uncircumcision”
  - A title and identity :: like “THE unrighteous”
  - Like two gangs. Sharks and Jets
    - ❖ Uncircumcised – Circumcised
- Now there are two understandings here.
  1. Physically; The Jews label – we are in (with God) and you are not.
  2. Spiritually; The righteous; those marked by God
- In Rom 4:9-13 Paul lays out the deeper meaning behind circumcision by referencing Gen 15
  - Abraham believed and it was counted to him as Righteousness.
  - Gen 17, God presents the covenant of Circumcision.
    - ❖ Righteousness through faith before the covenant.
  - Paul calls this the Circumcision of the heart.
    - ❖ The Covenant shows that something has changed, there is a mark, you are set aside, made holy. One is physical - One is spiritual.
- I think that is part of the interesting wording Gentiles in the flesh called THE uncircumcision.
- By THE circumcision gang (though circumcision is just in the flesh) - tongue and cheek -
  - ❖ Let me come back to that.
- Ok, ‘remember’
- Often we hear the idea of forgive and forget. God forgets our sins entirely.
  - ❖ I really think that is not presented accurately
    - There are some things it is likely very good to forget.
    - There are some things we should not forget. Even some unpleasant things.
- All the time through Deut. God stated to the Israelites: Remember you were slaves (Ex 5)
  - I am who I am because of who I was
    - ❖ All the Positives and all the Negatives.
    - ❖ How God used negative experiences to transform me – provide wisdom through them.
      - SIDE NOTE: YHWY (I AM) – He is BEING – Unchanged – unchanging.
  - That idea of Being and Becoming (consistent self – but constant change)
    - ❖ Identity (Idem: the same) – but what is actually remaining the same through it all?

### *Family devotional story about clippings from the funny papers*

- It can be valuable to link your past sins with Gods miraculous renewal.
  - The previous state of despair compared to the fullness of riches from the Lord.

**Ephesians 2:12 remember** that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

- Remember you were Excluded
- *Commonwealth*: Strange wording there. Makes me think of colonial states in New America.
- (G4174) Politeia: citizen, part of the community within the jurisdiction of the state.
  - Certain rights and privileges are allotted to citizens.
  - Acts 22:28; stretched out to be flogged. But he is a citizen of the empire. He has an identity that carries rights.

**Ephesians 2:13 But now** in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.<sup>14</sup> For He Himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility <sup>15</sup> by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.<sup>17</sup> And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.<sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

### But Now

- But now – through the Atonement there is inclusion.
  - **Imagery** of the curtain being torn.
    - ❖ Once we were separated from God. He resided in the Holy of the Holies. Addressing only the high priest, once a year – **exclusive**
      - Gentiles, so estranged from God, couldn't even get near the temple.
    - ❖ At the moment of Jesus death. The sins of the world are paid for, in full.
      - The curtain separating the Holy of the Holies in the temple is torn from top to bottom. God is accessibly!
- **Inclusion!**
  - Paul writes 'the dividing wall of hostility is broken down.' –perhaps– is reflecting on his arrest in Jerusalem. (Acts 21) Accusation of bringing Gentiles past the "dividing wall"
  - Now they were all citizens together in Gods kingdom, adopted, saints
    - ❖ This is a really big idea! The Jewish people saw themselves as the elite – an exclusive relationship with God. For millennia
    - ❖ **But Now**. God ushers in the full inclusion that He promised from the beginning.
      - All nations will be blessed (Gen 18, 22)
      - That all nations would come to Him and worship (Isa 56)
  - Jesus **exclusivity** and **inclusivity**
    - ❖ **Jn 14:6** "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me
    - ❖ **Col 3:11** Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

"Christianity elevated the individual soul - placing slave and master, commoner and nobleman alike on the same metaphysical footing, rendering them equal before God and the law. It's nothing short of a miracle." -- Jordan B. Peterson

- There is no exclusivity among us. We are all made new through the Atonement
  - Reconciled with God and reconciled to each other. New relationships
  - He Himself is our **peace**, who has broken down *in his flesh* the dividing wall of **hostility**
    - ❖ “In His flesh” In Christ flesh – Propitiation – we are brought **peace**
      - Wrath appeased.

**Ephesians 2:19** **So then** you are no longer strangers and aliens, **but** you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,<sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,<sup>21</sup> in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.<sup>22</sup> In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

- Peter echoes Paul’s imagery.

**1 Peter 2:4** As you come to Him, a living stone rejected by men, **but** in the sight of God chosen and precious, **5** 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.

- From being separate, strangers, aliens, outsiders –to– members of the household, citizens, saints even!
- **So then**, be living stones, build on the foundation that has been laid and build together the dwelling place for God – which is the church.

### So then: build the temple

- Build the Church by building the church
  - Big “C” church comes out of little “c” church
  - Build on history – the teaching of the apostles, know the history of the prophets
    - ❖ Know the Bible – it is the history of the relationship between God and humanity.
    - ❖ Build on it – there lies wisdom abound, best answers to philosophy, psychological explanation ...
    - ❖ Build on the knowledge that God has prepared.
  - When building the first thing that is placed on the foundation is the cornerstone.
    - ❖ Christ that **cornerstone** (Exclusivity) [Cornerstone]
      - Squares up the entire building. Carries the most weight.
      - All things come off it. When the cornerstone is not set correctly all is askew.
        - That is why I say: If you don’t get Christ right – then your theology isn’t right.
        - If you don’t have your theology right – your life isn’t right.
          - ⊕ Now I don’t mean theology of end times or freedom of will.
          - ⊕ I mean theology on who is God – what is my relationship with Him.
          - ⊕ “But my life is fine” – well maybe for now, but what about eternally?
  - Then what goes up. The walls, the structure - the bricks.
    - ❖ You are those bricks.
    - ❖ Be the temple together – become the indwelling of God (v.22)
  - Without the correct cornerstone it all crumbles. [Crumble]
    - ❖ It is unstable and dangerous.

- This is the mystery revealed (1:9)
  - 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ
  - 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.
- Be steward of the mysteries of God. (1Cor 4:1)

## Application

- Be the church!!
- Wherever your identity is:: Jesus is calling you to be included. He has torn the veil, broken down the barriers. He has revealed the mystery.
  - The Holy Spirit is building something wonderful.
  - The Church.
- The human problem is an identity problem.
  - We are this unique cross roads of material and spiritual – Nothing like it in creation.
  - Imperfect, but knowing perfection.
  - We try to deny it by all sorts of means – but the problem will not go away.
- The Church is very similar.
  - A unique institution, an intersection of flawed human and divine purpose and power.
  - Transformative power.
- Even though this letter to the Ephesians is written to believers, I see it also as an invitation –
  - Remember your alienation
    - ❖ Maybe you don't have to remember, maybe you are living it now.
  - Jesus bled for you – to cleanse you. He has paid your due, propitiated Gods wrath
    - ❖ He is offering you peace. He is offering forgiveness. He is offering inclusion.
- The Jews awaited for God to come to earth and save them
- The Gentiles (We) wonder how to reach God from our condition on earth.
- For through him we both have access in **one** Spirit to the Father (v.18)
  - And Jesus lays the foundation for the bridge. He reveals the mystery
  - The church – God works through the church when His people serve together.
    - ❖ Worship together, Pray together, Build together.
- Be the church!!
  - ❖ If don't you know Him it is an invitation for inclusion.
  - ❖ If you know Him come -
    - Build on Him.
    - Build relationships
    - Be involved :: help others become more alive in Christ, as you become more alive in Christ
- From lost identity to deep meaningful eternal purpose – Be the church.