

Ephesians, Chapter Two, Lesson Two

BROUGHT NEAR IN CHRIST Ephesians 2:11-16

STIMULATE

** Thankfulness toward our gracious God needs to be a part of our everyday life as Believers. At the end of last week's study we saw something we should be eternally grateful for, do you recall what that was?

"For by grace you have been saved" (V.5)

All relative to God's eternal plan of redemption, we saw that **our position** was that we were dead in our trespasses and sins. **God's pardon** came through Christ's death, because He was willing to nail our guilt to the cross of His beloved Son and that **our practice** should be to live thankfully by walking in the good works that God has planned for us from before the foundation of the earth.

** Just before our closing prayer last week, we made a commitment to "apply our thankfulness" each day to the things we experience so that we might produce an even greater glory for His name sake. How did you do in your effort to walk in thankful obedience?

It was wonderful to be reminded all week of God's amazing grace and my need to be truly thankful, even unto application of His Word to the daily events of my life.

MOTIVATE

** As the unsaved world around us views Christianity, what kinds of things do they see?

Ritualistic religion, emotional outburst, ridiculous miracles, money, greed, false piety, self-righteousness, etc.

** What should be the one true characteristic of the church of Christ as it relates to itself?

Our unity, a sincere love for the Brethren. cf. 1Peter 1:22-23

** Paul continues in our passage for today by showing us the blessed reality that we have been "Brought Near in Christ". Like last week, our study will break down into three parts.

They are as follows:

Our Description V.11-12

Our Deliverance V.13

Our Destiny V.14-16

Let's turn our hearts toward the Word of God as we read through our passage in anticipation of all that the Lord has for us in our study for today.

Read passage (V.11-13) (V.14-16)

Opening Prayer

Brought Near in Christ

INVESTIGATE

V. 11 to 12 - Our Description

V.11 ** What question comes to mind as we begin this verse?

What is the "Therefore" there for? It is because Paul wants us to reflect on what he has just said concerning **our position, God's pardon and our practice** in the eternal plan of redemption.

** What does Paul use to begin his description of the Ephesians (and us as well)?

The cultural difference of circumcision.

** What two groups have been represented by the terms used by Paul here in verse 11?

Jewish Believers and Gentile Believers.

** How did they feel about each other prior to their common salvation?

They were extreme enemies. cf. Jonah 3:10 - 4:3

** Why do you suppose Paul used the phrase "so-called Circumcision" to describe the Jews?

He knew that the true circumcision was one made on the heart by God Himself.
cf. Romans 2:28-29

** How does Paul expand his meaning of circumcision in reference to the Jews?

Their's had been the circumcision "which is performed in the flesh by human hands". It had become a social, cultural identifying mark as much as it was religious identification.

** How does that compare to our salvation?

God always looks upon the heart. He had planned for that which was performed externally to represent what He had done on the heart, creating a people set aside to God. cf. 1Samuel 16:7, Deuteronomy 10:16, 30:6 and Colossians 2:8-11

V.12 ** Paul now adds five components to "Our Description", lets look at them one at a time.

We were:

- 1) Christless - separate from Christ (John 8:12 and Ephesians 5:8)
- 2) Stateless - excluded from the commonwealth of Israel (Psalm 147:19-20 and Deuteronomy 33:27-29)
- 3) Friendless - strangers to the covenants of promise (Genesis 17:7-8, Galatians 3:8-9 and James 2:23)
- 4) Hopeless - having no hope (Romans 5:3-5 and Hebrews 11:1)
- 5) Godless - with out God in the world (Acts 17:23)

That was an incredible description of our lives before knowing Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior. For a refreshing viewpoint, let's move on to "**Our Deliverance**".

V.13 - Our Deliverance

V.13 ** Like last week in verse four, we are given a very refreshing contrast in this verse. Even though we were Christless, stateless, friendless, hopeless, Godless sinners - Who was God willing to use to bring about our deliverance?

His own Son, "But now in Christ Jesus..." This is such a powerful statement. Before we were dead in our trespasses and sins, but now we are alive in the person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. cf. 2Corinthians 5:17, Colossians 3:3

** From what have we been delivered?

Death, sin and the hopelessness of false religion! Romans 6:10-11, Galatians 5:1

** Looking ahead for a moment, what manifestation of the sinfulness of man is referred to in verses 14-16?

Bias, prejudice, division in the human race. In that passage it is specifically referring to the gap that existed between Jew and Gentile, but the sin of division goes way beyond that to every aspect of our lives.

** Alright then, still in verse 13 - How does Paul go about describing the Gentiles?

"you who formerly were far off" cf. Acts 2:36-39

** What two things can you think of that we were indeed far off from before we were saved?

1) From God Himself! Matthew 7:21-23

2) From the fellowship of the saints! Hebrews 10:23-25

** What is the remedy to this two fold problem? What has put an end to the sinful distinctions that men make?

We "**have been brought near by the blood of Christ**". At great expense, the gap has been closed. We love one another because He first loved us and removed all of our sinful distinction. Christ's death on the cross brought peace between men and peace between man and his Creator.

Having seen "**Our Description**" and "**Our Deliverance**" from sinful bias and prejudice, let's bring our study to a conclusion by learning about "**Our Destiny**".

V. 14 to 16 - Our Destiny

V.14 ** With all of the ceremonial and cultural differences between Jew and Gentile, how is peace possible?

"For He Himself is our peace...!" Jesus Christ becomes the common focus for all Believers.
cf. Galatians 2:20

** This verse says that Jesus "made both groups into one". What is that "one" called?

The church, the body of Christ! 1Corinthians 12:12-13, Colossians 1:18, Ephesians 1:22-23

** According to Paul, in order to do this Christ had to break down the barrier of the dividing wall. What is that?

In the temple, they had constructed a wall between the court of the Gentiles and the court of the Israelites. For a Gentile to pass this wall would be asking for the death penalty. It was symbolic of the vast difference between

the two lifestyles, even though these were Gentiles who had become proselytes to the Jewish faith at the hands of the Pharisees. cf. Matthew 23:15, Acts 13:16 & 43

V.15 ** As Paul moves on toward "**Our Destiny**", he says that Christ abolished in His flesh the "enmity". What does that mean?

echthra - "a deep rooted hatred, or irreconcilable hostility". This was no small grievance from one group to another, it represents a life long, life and death struggle!

** How does Paul further describe this enmity?

"which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances"

** Is Paul saying that the Word of God was the cause for the hateful separation between these two groups?

No - He is saying that the Jews' emphasis on the ceremonial law vs. the moral law was driving an irrevocable wedge between them. All see - Matthew 22:34-40 and Matthew 15:3-6

** Now back in Ephesians 2:15, what is the destiny of every Believer, whether Jew or Gentile?

"He might make the two into one new man" - The word for "new" (kainos) does not mean something recently completed, like a new house or car. Rather, it refers to a difference in kind and quality, unlike anything that has existed before.

** When this happened, what was accomplished?

"thus establishing peace" - What a blessed destiny for all Believers! To be knit together in love and to grow together in the bond of peace!

V.16 ** Whether a person is Jewish or Gentile, black or white, rich or poor, male or female, what common problem do they all share?

They need to be reconcile in one "body" to God!
cf. 2Corinthians 5:20

** According to verse 16, how is that accomplished?

"through the cross" of our Lord Jesus Christ.

** Paul now closes his thoughts for today with a single statement that can be applied to two different situations. What is the statement?

That "by it (the cross of Christ)" God has "put to death the enmity".

** And now, what are the two different situations?

1) The enmity that exists between sinful men has been done away with because of the peace available through faith in Jesus Christ.

2) The enmity between man and God has been reconciled because of the blood of Christ making the payment for our sin.

EXTRICATE

** What have you seen today about the Biblical **description** of your life before knowing Jesus Christ?

We were: Christless, stateless, friendless, hopeless and Godless!

DELINEATE

** What effect does your **deliverance** through the blood of Christ have on your life?

It puts us at peace with our God and with all of our brothers and sisters in Christ. It should create in us an every growing love for the brethren and for our Lord Who made it all possible!

EVALUATE

** If we are going to be fair with today's passage, we must ask ourselves - "Do I have any bias or prejudice concerning others? Am I uncomfortable around certain kinds of Christians because I think that they are different?"

ACTIVATE

** To apply what we have seen, realizing the tremendous cost involved, am I willing to live out my **destiny**?

I have been "Brought Near in Christ" and my beloved Savior would have me to show His love to the brethren and to be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
cf. Ephesians 4:3

Let's commit to the Lord our desire to do just that!

Closing prayer