

## **Walking on Water – A Study in Ephesians Clash of Cultures, Ephesians 2:11-22**

As we continue our study in Ephesians we come to a place where Paul is explaining to the Christians in Ephesus how God worked to pull together two different groups into one. The Gentiles and the Jews.

I sure every one knows this but a Jew or an Israelite is a direct decedent of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his twelve sons. This is the original family tree of the Israelites. In fact, God renamed Jacob Israel and this is where the name of the Nation came from. Israelites.

So a Jew or a Israelite is the same thing and they can trace their ancestry back to Abraham.

A Gentile on the other hand is everybody else who does not have Jewish blood running through their veins. So you have two groups mentioned here. Jews which are also called the “Circumcision” and the Gentiles which were the “Uncircumcised.”

Two groups...

I usually don't like to tackle this much scripture but it is good for us to read it all this morning.

I have it broken down in sections and instead of me reading it all would a couple of people like to read a section each.

Read with me verses **Ephesians 2:11-12**, **“Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “Uncircumcision” by the so-called “Circumcision,” which performed in the flesh by human hands – remember that you were, at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”**

**Ephesians 2:13-16, “But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new person, this establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to the death the enmity.”**

**Ephesians 2:17-22, “And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”**

The first thing I think Paul was doing was sharing the excitement of what occurred. There was no longer this group and that group but through Christ both groups were brought into one new group.

This was especially exciting for the Gentiles, Gentiles being everyone who was not Jewish by birth.

Think about the things in this passage Paul said

## **Truths about Gentiles, non-Jews before Christ**

**They were separate from Christ**

**They were strangers to the promise of being in an eternal relationship with the Creator of the Universe**

**They were without hope and without God**

**But now...Here is one of those great transitional statements like we saw back in verse 4, but God.**

**All of these things were true but now God has done something different.**

**But now you have been brought near through the blood of Christ**

**But now Christ is our peace between us and God**

**But now He made the Gentiles and the Christian Jews into one group, into one new person, into one family**

**But now He broke down the walls between you and Him**

And it goes on and on. But now God has done a new thing that brings you Gentiles into all the blessings of being in a relationship with Creator of the Universe.

This is good news for us as well isn't it? We, in our own way, were far away from worshipping the one true God. We were nowhere near being in a relationship with the Creator of the Universe, the One who holds all things including the future of all creation in His hand.

But somewhere along the way the good news of Jesus's sacrifice, death and resurrection was preached to us and we now have access to Him through one Spirit. So we sing, we celebrate, we give, we serve and we learn how to love as He loves.

Pause...

I think Paul may have been speaking to the Gentiles believers in Ephesus about something else as well. I think he was teaching about the importance of unity.

Look back with me at verses 19-22.

**“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”**

Christ is our cornerstone. We just sang about this didn’t we? What does it mean to be the cornerstone?

In the construction of a masonry foundation the cornerstone is the most important stone since all other stones will be set in reference to this stone thus determining the position of the entire structure. If the cornerstone is not true, plumb, perfectly positioned then the entire structure will be faulty.

But since Christ, the Son of the only One True God, is the cornerstone, we can be sure that the building process that is taking place is not only going to be the best thing but it is the most perfect thing that could ever occur.

And guess who He has decided to use as building material? You! Verse 22 tells us that you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

Now here comes the rub and it is the rub I think the Gentile Christians in Ephesus were dealing with.

**verse 21. “in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,”**

Do you know where the Gentile Christians were probably struggling in this process? Do you know where we probably struggle in this process?

It is in the phrase,

### **1. The rub...being fitted together**

I think the Gentile Ephesians were having a hard time being fitted together, assimilating into the Jewish culture and I know the Jews were having a hard time having a hard time receiving these new Gentile Christians.

It is the age old problem isn't it? Mixing something new with something that has been in place for a time. This is true in our nation, in our city, in our church, in our marriages, in any new relationship we come into.

And I think what Paul is expressing is how to we handle ourselves when something or somebody new comes into our lives. Someone new with new ideas, new ways of doing things, new ways of thinking and expressing themselves.

I think this what Paul was fighting. Some of the Jews had accepted Christ but they thought they were more elite because they had a long standing relationship with God.

The Gentiles on the other hand looked at the Jews with suspicion because it was because of them that Jesus was crucified. Not only this but the Christian Jews wanted them to conform to the way they were doing things and they were being very verbal about it. This is the way we have always done it so it must be the right and only way.

Sounds familiar doesn't it? This is the way we have always done it so it must be the right and only way. And guess what? If the Gentiles didn't do things just right guess what happened? The Christian Jews began to get angry, which made the Christians in Ephesus angry and round and round it would go...creating terrible disunity.

Again, this is a little of what I spoke about last week and what I think God would have us look at first and always and that is our relationship with Him.

I find it interesting that in the first part of this chapter, Paul would be speaking of how good our relationship with Christ is and then as a transitional statement he give us **Ephesians 2:10**. **“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”**

As I asked last week, when we think of good works we think about what can we do for God. What great ministry, what great work we can do for God. But I believe

**2. Good works - is not what we can do for God but who we can be for God.**

Who can we be for God.

And it is this fact that Paul is challenging the believers in Ephesus about.

Don't get caught up building walls of division between each other. Christ did such an excellent job of pulling the walls of division down, not only between the Jews and the Gentiles but between you and God.

Think about it this way. The biggest wall of hostility in the universe is the wall built between us and God. How many times have we hurt God by our pettiness, anger, disloyalty, sin and so on. If anyone had the right to be hostile towards us it would be God.

But God looks at you and says, “I have died to the wall. I have died to your sin and the many times you have hurt Me and others. I forgive you, and I love you. I have proclaimed peace between you and Me.”

Then He asks us, How about it? How about the walls that you are tempted to erect between you and others. Don't you want to pull those down too, and keep from putting up anymore walls?

I think this is where Paul was going with the church in Ephesus. God has been so good to you, now share that goodness, forgiveness, patience and kindness with others.

Let's look forward at a couple of the teachings Paul has for the church in Ephesus and for us.

**Ephesians 4:1-4a, “Therefore, I (Paul), the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit...”**

How does Paul say they are to walk in a manner worthy of the calling that we have been called into?

He challenges them to be humble and gentle. To be patient with each other and to show tolerance for one another in love. And to be diligent, to purposefully strive for unity in the Spirit.

This was the deal for them wasn't it? This is the deal for us as well.

First, we..

- 1. Realize what God has done for us**
- 2. Realize who we now get to be**
- 3. Realize and intentionally live it out**

Now, up to this point, like Paul, I have tried to help you realize what God has done for you. I have spent time helping you realize who you now get to be, His workmanship, seated in the heavenly places with Christ. And now, we move into place where we can understand what it means to walk in the good works God has prepared beforehand for us so we can walk in them.

In the next several weeks and months, as we move through the rest of the book of Ephesians we turn a corner into the how to's, how to live out our Christian life. How to walk in a manner of our calling, how to be a part of the body, how to allow ourselves to be fitted into a temple so the glory of God can be shone to the world. How to be unified in our life, in our marriage, in our family and in our church.

These are not do it or else type of teachings. No, these are in line with what Paul said in **Ephesians 5:8**, “**But now you are the Light in the Lord...**” They are wonderful opportunities for us to be the light of Christ in this life.

Church, this is the honorable place you get to be. This is the place we as a church get to be. Fit together, growing into a holy temple, a dwelling place of God. You are a blessed people and now we get live out of that blessed place. Amen