

070923
Jason Henderson
Market Street Fellowship

Eph 2:13 - 18

We spent last week looking at the covenant of circumcision. In Ephesians 2:11-12, Paul makes reference to the Gentiles as those who were formerly known as "the uncircumcision" by the Jews, who were known as "the circumcision". And we noticed how Paul was very intentional in describing such fleshly distinctions as fulfilled in Christ, and thus done away in the flesh. In other words, the circumcision of the flesh by a flint knife which once signified the people in relationship with God had given way to **the circumcision of the soul by the cross**, by which all people, Jew and Gentile, now can have relationship with God through Christ.

Paul says:

Col 2:11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,

Php 3:3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God **in the Spirit**, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have **no confidence in the flesh**,

And, if you'll remember, we spent much of the time talking about the reality of the New Covenant, and how it is that we can have come out of the Old Covenant and yet not have the Old Covenant come out of us. In fact, this is necessarily so until the Spirit of God teaches you the New Covenant.

I might just mention, as a side note, that there is no person in the world that can teach you the New Covenant. A person can read you the New Testament. In fact you could memorize the New Testament and still not know the New Covenant. The New Covenant is a relationship with God in Christ, and it is not written on pages. It is written on the heart by the finger of God. Words on pages can describe it. That's what the New Testament is – the infallible written description of the reality of the New Covenant. But in order for you to walk in the reality of the New Covenant, you must come to know it where it is written.

What I'm saying is that it is a relationship. A relationship with God wherein you have died and your life is joined to Christ, hidden with Christ, in God. How is a book going to teach that to your soul? A book can only describe that to your mind. Only the Spirit of God can make it real. Now the Spirit of God can and does reveal it while you read the book that describes it if you have a heart to know Him. But many people read the book and never come to a Spirit-given understanding of the relationship. In other words, many people read the New Testament, and still are miles away from walking in the New Covenant.

And so we spent the latter half of last week's message talking about a few of the enumerable ways that we still try to relate to God according to a relationship, a covenant, that God no longer has with humans. Here's a fact: God is no longer

relating to humans according to the Old Covenant. That is not the nature of the relationship that He has with any man. He doesn't just wink at us when we try to relate to Him according to an Old Covenant relationship. He simply doesn't acknowledge it. It doesn't exist to Him, though it exists in the vanity of our unrenewed minds. And, that being the case, it behooves us for so many reasons, to learn to walk in the reality of the relationship that He does have with us – the New Covenant. A relationship with God in Christ that is taught by the Spirit who knows the "deep things of God".

Alright, so Paul mentions that what was formerly known as "uncircumcision", the ones who were strangers to the covenants, without hope, and without God in the world, these ones have been reconciled to what was called "circumcision" through the cross. And more than that, both groups have been reconciled to God in what he calls "one new man" through the cross. We'll look at both of these realities of reconciliation. But let's make sure that we understand that there are two reconciliations talked about in our verses today. First there is the reconciliation of man to man through bearing Christ's death and living by His life. Then there is the reconciliation of man to God by bearing Christ's death and living by His life.

Let's read the verses. We looked at this section already when we discussed the reality of peace in Ephesians chapter 1. So, some of this should be familiar. I'm going to read the next 6 verses all at once. It's a big chunk of Scripture compared to what we're used to covering, but it all is one thought.

Eph 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. **14** For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, **15** 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, **16** and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. **17** And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. **18** For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

Before we jump in, let me make a rather sweeping statement. There is nothing of spiritual reality that we can understand without first coming to the Spirit-given recognition of our death with Christ. The verses that we just read make absolutely no spiritual sense without realizing that all men, Jew and Gentile, were brought into the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. We were baptized into His death.

There is an order to spiritual comprehension. I'm not saying there are levels or ranks of spiritual achievement. That doesn't make sense. But there is an order to spiritual comprehension. It is the order in which God can instruct the human soul. It is the order that is laid out in Scripture time and time again. You see it in the story of Noah. You see it in the Exodus from Egypt. You see it in the tabernacle of Moses and the Temple of Solomon. You see it in the kingdom of David. Here's the order – death, burial, resurrection. Unless we understand that we have died with Him, we have been judged together, that all flesh is put away, that all flesh has been circumcised, then we cannot understand what is beyond that death. We cannot understand resurrection.

I'm not trying to sound clever. I just don't know of a better way to say it. The verses that we just read have to do with reconciliation with man and with God, but

the key element, the foundational reality that makes sense out of any of it is the reality that all flesh was judged and put away from God through the body of Jesus Christ. Jesus says in John 12 "when I am lifted up, I will draw all men to myself". Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5 "when one died, all died".

The cross was Adam's end. The end of the first man. All flesh collides with the cross and meets its end. And everything that comes out of that depends upon that end. Forgiveness, life, peace, love, covenant, church, all of that is meaningless unless the flesh is judged and put away.

Unless we see that end, these six verses of Ephesians are meaningless. In truth, unless we see that end, the entire New Testament is meaningless. But everything that Paul describes here of enmity destroyed and reconciliation with God...all of this is the direct consequence of his understanding of the death of all mankind in the body of Jesus Christ. If you look at these verses you have to notice how it is that Jew and Gentile are reconciled. How did God do it? How did God make Jew and Gentile one? Did he lobby for equal human rights? No, that's how we try to make unity in the flesh. Did he point out all the natural and biological similarities between the two groups?...things they have in common? Did he appoint a unity committee? No, that's how we do it.

How did God bring Jew and Gentile together? Through the blood of Jesus Christ. Through the death of His Son. In other words, he brought both of them to an end in the flesh, and raised up Christ as the life of all who live. He ended the divisions and distinctions in the flesh by putting away the flesh, and then becoming the life of every soul that would live – thus establishing peace.

Flesh cannot ever be truly reconciled to flesh. Now don't take this as an excuse to be mad and grumpy with people. You can be nice. You can be kind. But you can't know true union or complete reconciliation because in the flesh we have separate lives with self-seeking wills. So the flesh can find things in common and it can relate based upon those things. It can share time and space. But so long as we seek to relate in the flesh, unity is really an illusion. There may be the appearance of unity in a group of people for a time, but it's really only a temporary situation that exists because of convenience to individuals. As soon as it is no longer convenient or mutually beneficial for individual people to come together, they split apart – showing that they were never truly one in the first place. This is true of friendships, churches, marriages, social groups, etc. People act surprised that the divorce rate in the church is the same as the unbelieving world, but if we are only relating to one another in the flesh, how could you expect anything different?

Unity in the flesh is only as real and as important as it is beneficial to individuals. It is not a true oneness. It is not a true sharing of life. It is flesh coming together for personal, individual gain.

Nevertheless, God gave a type and shadow of true unity in the natural through Old Covenant Israel. Though they were not really one in Him, God demonstrated oneness through them by having them all be of the same seed – Abraham; of the same covenant – circumcision; in the same land, of the same Law, relating to God in the same priest. This didn't really bring them into the oneness of sharing the life of Christ, but it was a picture of it. And they were commanded not to intermingle with those outside of this covenant relationship with God. They were commanded in the Law to keep themselves separate from the nations, the Gentiles. And so there was

enmity, hostility, antagonism between Jew and Gentile throughout the years of the Old Covenant. And, as we know from watching the news, it is a hostility that continues today by those who have not had the veil removed in the Person of Christ.

So again? How did God destroy the enmity that existed between them in the flesh? By destroying the flesh. God offered reconciliation, unity, to all humanity by offering them an end to the flesh, and a new life altogether. In offering them the cross – an end of themselves and the newness of Christ's life, God was offering them what Paul describes in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12.

Rom 12:4-5 For even as we have many members in one body, but all members do not have the same function, (5) so we the many are one body in Christ, and each one members of one another,

1Co 12:13 For also by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free, even all were made to drink into one Spirit.

One Spirit, one life, one body – Christ all and in all. This is how God abolishes the enmity. Remember our verses today.

14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, **15** 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,

This word peace is so important, but so misunderstood. It is true that Scripture calls Jesus the Prince of Peace. But just like everything else, we try to make him the prince of whatever peace is most important to us – and that is almost always a peace in the flesh and in the natural realm. We want Him to bring peace in our relationships, peace between nations, peace where there is war, or peace with our in-laws. But you see that is not the kind of peace He offers, nor the realm in which His peace is known. He was very clear about that when He said

Luk 12:51 Do *you* suppose that I came to give peace **on earth**? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. **52** For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. **53** Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

Peace isn't even some THING that Christ gives to us in the flesh. Peace is something that He IS to us, with each other and with God. By destroying the flesh through the cross, and filling our soul with His life, peace is actually many made to dwell in the One. Peace is the One as the life of the many.

And so you see why verse 14 says "He Himself is our peace". It doesn't say "He Himself will give you peace", or "He Himself will make you peaceful". No, by dying to the flesh and becoming alive to God in Christ, He becomes our reconciliation with each other. How are we going to have enmity if we are members of the same body? How could division and hostility remain if we have both been made to drink of one Spirit? You see? **He is** our peace.

And not only our peace with each other. That is almost a fringe benefit compared with the reality that He is also our peace with God in the same way. Because we have died, and our life is joined to Christ, hidden with Christ...then we can live forever in the Father, joined to the Son. This is the true picture of reconciliation. We are joined to Christ, sharing one Life, living in the Father.

Joh 17:21 I pray Father that they all may be one, as You *are* in Me, Father, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us,

Now that is peace. That is reconciliation. You can't get more reconciled than one life. "You are in Me, Father, I in you, they also are one in Us". Unfortunately, I know that when many people think of reconciliation with God, they have this picture in their head of a big mad God with a gigantic hammer. And that hammer is about to fall on us. And just before the hammer reaches us, Jesus bumps the hammer so that it slides over and lands on Him. God looks down at us and says..."well, I guess since I got out my anger on Jesus, I suppose I'll let you live. Congratulations, you're reconciled to me."

Now we would never say anything like that, but that's sort-of how our heart perceives reconciliation. It's almost like an external transaction that we hope is binding because we sure know we don't deserve it. And when we read of Jesus as the great intercessor or the mediator, we picture Him standing between us and that hammer reminding his Father that the hammer already fell on Him. God reluctantly puts the hammer away because Christ intercedes on our behalf.

It is nothing like that. Intercession is not really something Christ is doing for us. He's not holding back God's wrath. And He's not praying for us, despite what you might have heard. Why would He need to pray for us after granting us His death, burial, and resurrection? Was the work not finished? Maybe you haven't heard that concept taught in the body of Christ, but I have heard many times that Christ is called the great intercessor because He is praying for the church. Or because He continually and faithfully holds back the hostile arm of God. But that is nonsense in view of the finished work of the cross.

Christ is the intercessor, the mediator because of what He has done and what He forever will be. He is the intercessor because He came out from God, gathered up a people in Himself, brought them all into His death, was raised from the dead, and brought those who by faith accepted His death as their own back to where He was before. He brought a people in Himself, out of the realm of death, back to His eternal abode, His eternal resting place. He is the mediator in that He has prepared a place in the Father for His body through the cross. He is the intercessor in that He will forever be the one in Whom we have died and with whom we are hidden in God. As verse 18 says "For **through Him** we both have access by one Spirit to the Father."

So I hope this is making sense. This is one of the most wonderful descriptions of the work of God in Christ. The cross destroys the enmity by reconciling us in one Spirit to the Father. What was the enmity that Jew had with Gentile? It was the flesh. It was a division required by the Law – circumcision versus uncircumcision. Seed of Abraham versus non-seed of Abraham. And beyond that, all of the enmity between man is in the flesh that cannot be truly reconciled. How do you get rid of the enmity? Destroy the flesh. Put Adam to death and you break down the middle wall of partition.

Well, what was the enmity between man and God? Same thing. It was the flesh. The adamic man. The nature of sin working in the natural man that was contrary to righteousness. So by crucifying the flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, and by faith coming to live in and by Christ, we are joined to Him and brought into the Father – which is where you are no whether or not faith has seen it.

So how did God destroy the enmity with man? The church answers: He forgave us!! Wrong! Well, its true if you understand that forgiveness is only possible because of death. But we think we still live and are forgiven. We think God killed Jesus so that we could still live before God. Wrong. God did not pardon our iniquity except by crucifying us with Christ. There is no forgiveness without the removal of the cause.

Alright, the last thing I want to make mention of from these verses is this term – “one new man”. This is something of God’s view of what He has accomplished in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the heart of God, the view of God, salvation hasn’t achieved a bunch of saved sinners. It is true that many find salvation in Him. But, if you can hear what I’m saying, God’s view of New Creation isn’t just a bunch of escapees from hell. It’s not really a bunch of anything. God’s view of salvation is one new man. A head, a body, both sharing the same life, redeemed, raised from the dead, seated with Him in heavenly places.

There is a huge emphasis in the body of Christ on the believer’s “personal relationship with God”. I’d like you to think, for a minute, this morning about that concept. It’s not wrong to think you have a personal relationship with God. Indeed it is very personal. It is the life of His Son filling your personal soul. And yet, somewhere in our emphasis on the personal relationship with God, I think that we often fail to realize that we are corporately one new man. We fail to understand that we, as individuals, have become one body in Him. We are individually partakers of one another because we have one life. And these are not just Christian terms and concepts and theologies. This is the reality of our spiritual state of being.

And I think that we, as a fellowship, have only just begun to relate to one another in this way. And that’s ok. It’s ok where we are. We’re at the beginning of a journey. And I realize that finding unity in spirit, and relating beyond the flesh, is just as foreign and awkward to the natural mind as anything else that faith sees of Him. It doesn’t come naturally. It is, in fact, contrary to nature...and only happens when nature is dealt with at the cross, and the mind is renewed. So again, its ok that we are just beginning to relate as one new man.

But, I guarantee that this is absolutely where we are going as a fellowship. We are headed towards a deeper reality of relating one to another as one new man. How do I know that? I know that because it is what is real and true in the view of God, and as we grow in truth it will necessarily be what we see. The truth as it is in Christ must become the truth as it is in us. And it will, if we will continue to turn to Him. We will always be headed towards a greater realization and experience and expression of what He has already done. And He has already made us who believe into one new man in Christ.

So this one new man, this isn’t a nice mental picture for Paul. This is the reality of one Christ being the resurrection and life of all who believe. There aren’t a bunch of lives. There are many souls sharing one life. I’m not saying that you are Jesus. I’m saying that Christ is your life. Christ is the life of your individual soul. And the

renewing of our mind brings us to His mind on all things. The renewing of our mind will cause us to relate to one another according to this reality. The revealing of Christ as our life will cause us to see each other, not according to the flesh, but according to the judgment. What judgment?

2Co 5:14 For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died;

And now He is the life of all who live.