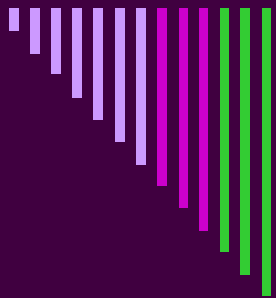


EPHESIANS

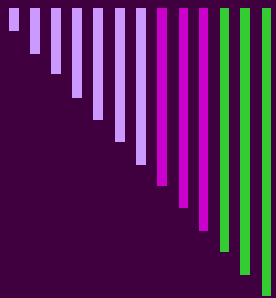
Chapter 2:11-21

Jim Hoffman



Gentiles and Faith

- The first half of this chapter laid out for us the gospel of grace.
- The need to be saved is common to all men, both Jew and Gentile alike.
- There was no difference in the spiritual needs of Jews versus Gentiles.



Gentiles and Faith

- However, Paul is careful to point out that while all are lost apart from Christ, the Gentiles were even further from the Lord.
- Paul calls upon them to remember where they once were and how far from God they were.
- They were Gentiles ‘in the flesh’; that is they were not only on Gentile heritage, but they had also not converted to Judaism with the mark of circumcision.



Gentiles and Faith

- Far more was made of the mark of circumcision than God ever intended. Circumcision was given as a sign of God's covenant with Abraham.
- It was a picture of what was needed spiritually in that it pictured the cutting away of the flesh.
- In God's mind, the circumcision that counts is the circumcision of the heart. (Romans 2:28-29)





The Gentiles were disadvantaged in (5) ways.

- *They were separate from Christ*, in a very real way so were the Jews, but the Gentiles had little hope of finding Him in Old Testament times.
 - The Jews were privileged to have the scriptures and were at least looking for a Messiah. **They were, in that sense, pre-disposed to faith in Christ.**
 - The Gentiles had no such teaching in their pagan religions.
-



The Gentiles were disadvantaged in (5) ways.

- *They were aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel* ; God chose to be known in Israel like he would be known no where else in the Old Testament.
 - In Old Testament times it would be fair to say that no one came to know God without first coming in touch with Israel.
 - For the one born an Israelite, the chances of trusting in the Promised One was extremely more likely than it was for one born as a Gentile.
-



The Gentiles were disadvantaged in (5) ways.

- **Foreigners from the covenants of promise;** the Gentiles had no promises from God. All of the O.T. promises came through the covenants God made with Israel.
 - To be a Gentile in the O.T. economy excluded one from God's covenants and therefore put one in the mind that the God of Israel is not for me. He is only 'the God of the Jews'.
-



The Gentiles were disadvantaged in (5) ways.

- *They were without hope;* since they were not connected to Israel, and since they had no promises from God, they were also without hope.
 - Anyone who pauses and thinks about life, death, and eternity becomes very pessimistic about the future apart from Christ.
 - God has given each of us such a keen sense of eternity that we cannot ignore the fact that **we are on a collision course with God and we know instinctively that we are unprepared.**
-



The Gentiles were disadvantaged in (5) ways.

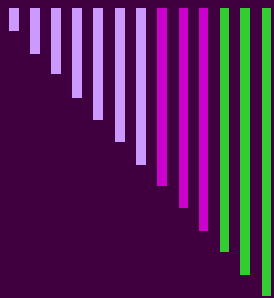
- **They were without God;** to be in this world without God is a sobering truth; which is precisely why most lost people choose not to think about it.
 - His point here is much the same as it was when he said they were 'without Christ'.
 - For the Old Testament Gentile, placing your faith in one who has promised you nothing, who had clearly favored Israel over all others, and who was not even mentioned in your religion; the chances of that happening were almost nonexistent.
-



Eph 2:13

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off
have been brought near by the blood of Christ
NKJV

- All of those disadvantages notwithstanding, Gentiles were, and still are, being saved at rates higher than the privileged Jew.
 - We can cry ‘foul’ all day long about our disadvantaged Gentile ancestors, but the fact is that when Israel rejected Jesus, the tables were turned.
 - Their familiarity with the scriptures became a stumbling block for them and our ignorance allowed us to believe with much less encumbrance.
-



Eph 2:13

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off
have been brought near by the blood of Christ
NKJV

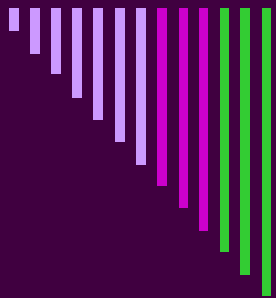
- What a change! Those who were once so far away and so unlikely to believe have been brought near by the blood of Christ.
- The Jewish Messiah of the Jewish God died for those who had no interest in Him and for those that were ignorant of His existence.
- They had no idea that a blood sacrifice was needed, but that which they knew nothing about was just as effective for the uninformed as it was for the informed.



Eph 2:13

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off
have been brought near by the blood of Christ
NKJV

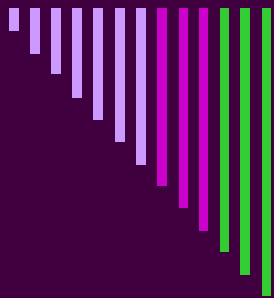
- There is yet another point to be made from this verse; not only were Gentiles brought near to God, but it was also God's intention that they be brought near to the Jew.
 - The church is in view; God wants no division in the His church. He wants the Jew and Gentile, the rich and poor, the black and the white to be one in Christ.
-



Eph 2:14

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

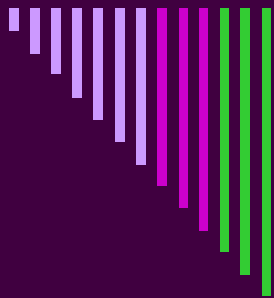
- In the temple set-up there were all sorts of walls and separators. Places for Gentiles, places for women, places for Jewish men, and places for the priests.
- Over time a whole system of valuing people was established in and around the temple.
- There were literal walls separating these different types of people based upon some fleshly standard.



Eph 2:14

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

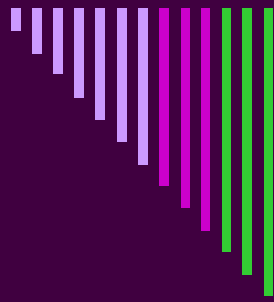
- The main point of separation in the temple was to illustrate the 'wall' that stood between God and men; their sin.
- When Jesus died on the cross you will recall that the veil of the temple (that walled off the Holy of Holies) was torn in two from top to bottom.
- This, the scriptures tell us, was done by God to show that the ransom had been paid and no longer would a wall separate God from His people.



Eph 2:14

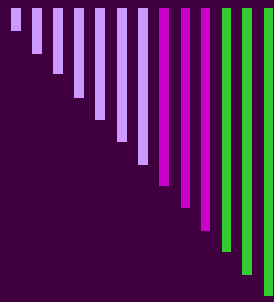
For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, NKJV

- Interestingly enough, the Israelites had no problem at all seeing the need for a wall that separated them from the Gentiles.
- However, they like all of us, had a problem understanding the necessity of a wall to separate God and man.
- It is our all too accommodating view of sin that obscures our view into how dark and evil we really are. This is why we need God's help to even see a need to be saved, much less want to be saved.



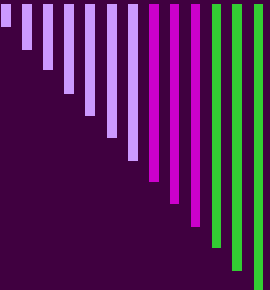
Eph 2:15 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility NIV

- Jesus accomplished with his death what hundreds and thousands could not do with their lives; unite Jew and Gentile.
- In Christ, there is no office called 'priest' for we are all priests. There are to be no classes, no hierarchy, no distinctions whatsoever in our standing before God.
- And if God has made us all equal, then shame on us if we ever see one person or one group as being somehow superior to the rest of God's children.



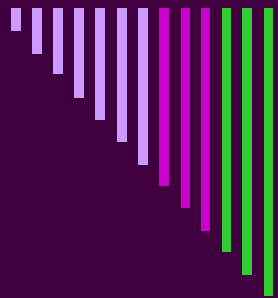
Eph 2:15 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility NIV

- His purpose was to reconcile all men to God and he accomplished it as our 'Vicar' in that when he died he died 'in our place'.
- Two parties are reconciled when the offended party's terms are met.
- Our sin offended God, his terms were a perfect sacrifice, we couldn't meet his terms, so in his grace he met them for us. (remember Abraham and Isaac on Mt Moriah)



Eph 2:15 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility NIV

- We see here also that the one who wished us peace, is also the same one who made peace with God for us.
 - I have heard more than one person say 'I made my peace with God'. Well, that is neither possible nor necessary.
 - We have not the qualifications to make peace with God and since it's already done for us there is no need to even try.
-

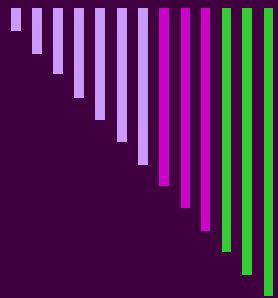


Eph 2:17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. NIV

- We see here that Jesus preached peace to those who were far away (Gentiles) and to those who were near (Jews).
- It is a common theme in salvation testimonies that those who see themselves as far from God are much more likely to trust him than those who think they are close to him.



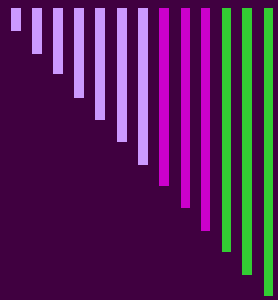
□ Luke 18: 10-14 (two men in the temple)



Eph 2:17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. NIV

- Here is the question for us to ponder; how far are we from God?

- It seems quite clear here that we all have access to God through his Holy Spirit, so what is our problem?
 - Is sin keeping us away?
 - Is laziness keeping us away?
 - Is pride keeping us away?



Eph 2:17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. NIV

□ Another question for us; if we really were close to God, what would our lives look like and be like?

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____





The Church God Seeks

- The church God Seeks recognizes that we are no longer aliens and foreigners to God; he wants us to come close like a family.
 - The church God seeks recognizes that the faith we have is not some new notion, but it is the same faith God revealed to the O.T. saints and it is all founded and centered upon Christ.
-



The Church God Seeks

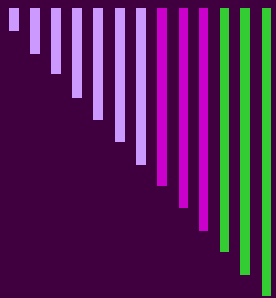
- The church God seeks understands that each one of us is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and collectively we form a vast temple for God on earth.
 - The church God seeks appreciates that God wants to work in and through his people on this earth to enlarge the church and change the world.
-



How can we help?

- We can help by working hard to maintain unity in the body of Christ.
- How silly it seems that children in a family would not stand up and defend our siblings when there is danger to be avoided.
- It surely grieves God when the ones that he loves so much, love each other so little.





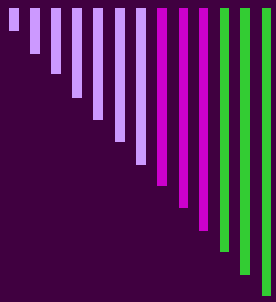
How can we help?

- There will always be times when we will not agree completely on everything with other Christians, but we dare not break with them on matters that are not sin.
- I suspect that the day will come when all of our denominational distinctives will seem petty and childish.
- What is more important, being right on a minor point of doctrine or keeping unity in the body?



We have a duty.

- We have a duty to God, each other, and to the lost world to maintain unity in the body of Christ.
 - John 17:20-23 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us **so that the world may believe that you have sent me.** 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: 23 I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity **to let the world know that you sent me** and have loved them even as you have loved me. NIV
-



What do you think?
