

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

4. God's People are One



Introduction

One of the greatest problems in the world today is racial tension. We hear about it every day in the news. However racial issues are not new. Even at the time when the Bible was written there were similar problems. There was prejudice between Jew and Gentile. In the Book of Ephesians Paul tells us that this racial wall is broken down by the Lord Jesus Christ and the blood He shed. He has become our peace, making one new man out of two!

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2:11-22

- † What did the Jews call the Gentiles, and what did this mean? V11

(The Jews called the Gentiles the uncircumcised. Circumcision was the sign of God's covenant with the Jewish people. However the Gentiles, up until the time of Christ, did not know the true God or have a covenant with him. Therefore they were called the 'uncircumcised'.)

- † We are also Gentiles! What does Paul want us to remember about our past life before we knew Christ? V12-13

*(V12 We were separate from Christ.
V12 We were excluded from citizenship in Israel.
V12 We were foreigners to the covenants of the promises.
V13 We were far away.)*

- † How were these barriers between Jews and Gentiles broken down? V13, 15, 16

*(V13 Through the blood of Christ.
V15 He abolished in his flesh the law.
V16 Through the cross.)*

- † The phrase 'in Christ' has already been used many times and it is used here. What do these phrases show us about what Jesus has done for us? V13-18

*(V13 In Christ we have been brought near.
V14 The dividing wall of hostility has been destroyed.
V16 We are both reconciled to God.)*

There is only one way both Jew and Gentile can come to God and that is through the cross of Jesus Christ. In v18 it says, "Through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit." This is a message that many people would say is 'narrow', and there may be some who don't like us for believing this.

- † Have you been criticized for believing Jesus is the only way to God? Share your experience.

- † The words 'peace' and 'one' are used a number of times in these verses. What can we learn about peace between one another from these words? V14-18

(Since Jesus is our peace, the wall between people is broken down and we become one. It is only through Jesus that we can come to the Father, with the help of the same Holy Spirit. This makes us all equal, all one in Christ.)

- † When we accept this message of peace, what or who do we become? V19

((We become fellow citizens with God's people and members of his household.))

- † Paul describes the church as a temple in v20-22. Who represent the different parts of this building?

(Christ is the cornerstone, the apostles and prophets are the foundation, and we are the stones. The Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us.)

- † Now people of every race and nation can belong to God's family through the Lord Jesus. What can we do that helps maintain that unity we have in Christ? What are some of the things that could destroy that unity?

(We help maintain the unity by loving others, forgiving them, encouraging them, etc. However we can destroy that unity by gossiping, criticizing others and by refusing to forgive them when we are hurt.)

Conclusion

As we have already seen, there was a huge gap between the Jews and the Gentiles at the time of Christ. However Paul shows that Jesus came, and by shedding His blood on the cross, He bridged that gap, making Jew and Gentile one. We may come from diverse cultural backgrounds or different strata of society, we may be of different ages and do differing kinds of work, but in Christ we are one family. Let's make sure we are never guilty of destroying that unity by gossip or unkind words, but let's work to keep the unity of the Spirit, so that Christ is honored and people see that we truly belong to Jesus.