

One Voice:
Diligently Guarding the Unity of the Church
Part 2: In Christ We Have Reconciliation
Ephesians 2:11-22
Kindred Community Church
Pastor Dan Nah

I. **Introduction**

“A study of the history of the ancient world tell us that none of today's social distinctions -- none of our racial barriers, our narrow nationalisms, our iron curtains -- are more exclusive or unrelenting than the separation between Jews and Gentiles in biblical times. The Jews believed the Gentiles were created to fuel the fires of Hell. A common motto was, ‘The best of the serpents crush. . . the best of the Gentiles kill.’ It was not lawful to aid a Gentile woman in giving birth, for that would bring another heathen into the world.

The Gentiles, even apart from their animosity for Jews, had their own parochial hatreds for anyone not like them. Plato said that the barbarians (anyone non-Greek) were his enemies by nature. The Roman Livy confirmed this in his day, saying, ‘The Greeks wage a truceless war against people of other races, against barbarians.’ And of course this was eminently true of the imperialistic Romans. The collision of Gentile/Jewish exclusiveness was monumental. The Gentiles were dogs in Jewish parlance, and the Jews were homicidal enemies of the human race in Gentile terms. . .

What was the reason for this alienation? The answer is not social or cultural but spiritual. . . both Jews and Gentiles were spiritually alienated from God, [and] there was in one sense an even greater distance to the Gentiles’ alienation.” (R. Kent Hughes, “Alienation to Reconciliation” in *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*)

Ways Gentiles were Alienated from God¹:

- The Gentiles were *Christless* (aliens to the Messiah): they were not part of the Messianic people. They had no thought or hope of a Messiah.
- The Gentiles were *stateless* (alien to God's nation) - they were alienated from the commonwealth of Israel. Israel was a nation under God, a theocracy, but the Gentiles had no part or franchise in this.
- The Gentiles were *friendless* (alien to the covenants) - strangers to the covenants of promise. God had bound himself unconditionally to bring blessing upon Israel But the Gentiles had no promise of covenant blessing.
- The Gentiles were *hopeless and godless* - alien to hope and to God. Having no hope and without God in the world.

"The word that describes all of this is alienation. The Gentile dilemma (which is the world's dilemma) produces alienation from God and alienation from man with all its dehumanizing and debilitating results. This is the root of racism. It is the basis for the great national cleavages in Ireland and Korea and Europe and Africa. It is the reason so many well-intentioned people cannot get along. The answer to this lies in the remedy that [the Bible] prescribes for the alienation between Jews and Gentiles. The answer given to them is also the answer for our world." (R. Kent Hughes, “Alienation to Reconciliation” in *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*)

- **Key Idea: Alienation in our relationships with one another has its root in our alienation in our relationship with God.**

¹ Hughes, *Ephesians*.

Alienation between Jew and Gentile:

- The daily prayer of a strict Jewish male was to thank God that he was neither a woman, a Samaritan, nor a Gentile.
- A rabbinic writer tells of an incident that explains the common Jewish attitude toward Gentiles. A certain Gentile woman came to a Rabbi, confessed that she was sinful, and told him that she wanted to become righteous. She had heard that the Jews were near to God. The rabbi responded "No. You cannot come near," and then shut the door in her face. . .

"When a Jew entered Palestine he would often shake the dust off his sandals and clothing in order not to contaminate the Holy Land with Gentile dust. Because Samaritans were partly Gentile, most Jews would go far out of their way to avoid traveling through Samaria. If a young Jewish man or woman married a Gentile, their families would have a funeral service, symbolizing the death of their child as far as religion, race, and family were concerned. For fear of contamination, many Jews would not enter a Gentile home or allow a Gentile to enter theirs. For many hundreds of years the animosity between Jew and Gentile had festered and grown. Although they were not always in open conflict, their mutual contempt continued to widen the gulf between them." (John MacArthur)

Ephesians 2:11 - Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—

Deuteronomy 30:6 - the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live."

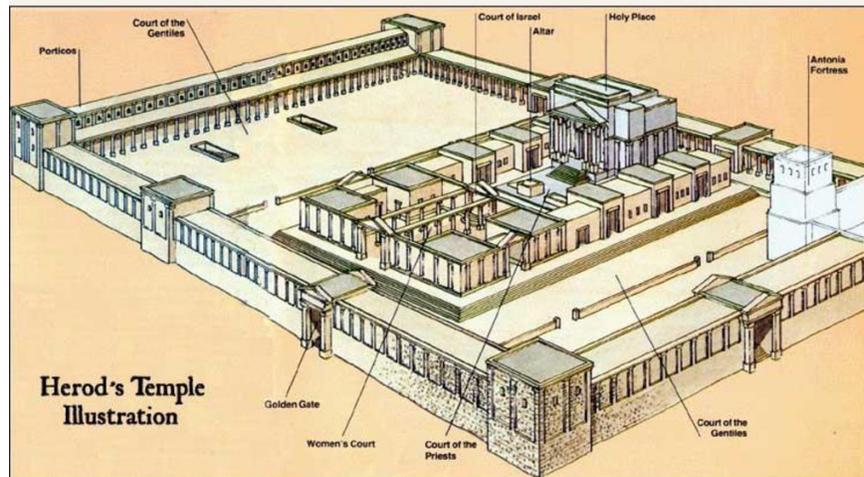
1 John 4:7-8 - Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

II. Implications of Ephesians 2:11-22 for Relational Reconciliation

A. Implication #1: As Gentile believers, we have reason for double humility and double gratitude.

Ephesians 2:11-13 - Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Herod's Temple



Mark 7:24-30 - And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house and did not want anyone to know, yet he could not be hidden. But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. And he said to her, “Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.” But she answered him, “Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.” And he said to her, “For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter.” And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.”

Romans 11:13-14 - Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them.

Verses 17-18 - But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you.

B. Implication #2: The church *is* and *must be* radically different from the world.

Ephesians 4:1-3 - I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Ephesians 2:13-16 - But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

R.Kent Hughes – “From Alienation to Reconciliation”:

“. . .in Herod’s Temple there was a wall that separated the Court of the Gentiles from the rest of the Temple, and on that wall were inscriptions in Latin and Greek forbidding Gentiles to enter. Josephus spoke of these inscriptions, 8 and in excavations made in 1871 and 1934 two of these inscriptions were found. They read: ‘No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the sanctuary and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death.’

These Thanatos (death) inscriptions are now on display in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul and the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem. Paul says that Christ has ripped this odious barrier down by his death, and thus Jews and Gentiles alike have access to God and have spiritual unity. The ultimate answer to vertical and horizontal alienation is not intellectual or political or social but spiritual!

Picture the wall leveled, the Thanatos inscriptions lying under the rubble, and the nations (us!) joyfully stepping across as Jewish and Gentile brothers and sisters. . .

Jesus didn’t Christianize the Jews or Judaize the Gentiles. He didn’t create a half-breed. He made an entirely new man. “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus . . .” (2:10). We are God’s masterwork, a new race, in Christ Jesus! This must not be watered down. This is the answer to alienation, to racism, to prejudice, to hatred, to estrangement.

In Christ there is no East or West,
In Him no South or North,
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth.
John Oxenham

"when we are in contact with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we have peace with all who are in contact with them. This peace and reconciliation is the peace of the Church, not the peace of the world. Peace between Jew and Gentile, the world’s races and ethnic groups, rich and poor, educated and uneducated comes only in Christ."

- Application: How you treat another believer in Christ is how you treat Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:12 - For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

“Love One Another”

John 13:34-35 - A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

1 Corinthians 13:1-8 - If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

1 John 4:7-11 - Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

C. Implication #3: God has ordained diversity in the church *for His glory*.

Expressions of Diversity:

1. The church is diverse in age.

1 Timothy 5:1-2 - Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.

Titus 2:3-4 - Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children,

2. The church is diverse in levels of spiritual maturity.

Rom 14:1-3 - As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.

Romans 15:1-2 - We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.

3. The church is diverse in the spiritual gifting of each member.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7 - Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

1 Corinthians 12:12-18 - "For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.

Romans 12:6-8 – Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Types of Spiritual Gifts being Exercised Today:

1. Administration
2. Exhortation
3. Evangelism
4. Faith
5. Giving
6. Helps
7. Leadership
8. Mercy
9. Teaching
10. Service

Ephesians 2:19-22 - So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

1 Kings 7:13-22 - And King Solomon sent and brought Hiram from Tyre. He was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in bronze. And he was full of wisdom, understanding, and skill for making any work in bronze. He came to King Solomon and did all his work. He cast two pillars of bronze. Eighteen cubits was the height of one pillar, and a line of twelve cubits measured its circumference. It was hollow, and its thickness was four fingers. The second pillar was the same. He also made two capitals of cast bronze to set on the tops of the pillars. The height of the one capital was five cubits, and the height of the other capital was five cubits. There were lattices of checker work with wreaths of chain work for the capitals on the tops of the pillars, a lattice for the one capital and a lattice for the other capital. Likewise he made pomegranates in two rows around the one latticework to cover the capital that was on the top of the pillar, and he did the same with the other capital. Now the capitals that were on the tops of the pillars in the vestibule were of lily-work, four cubits. The capitals were on the two pillars and also above the rounded projection which was beside the latticework. There were two hundred pomegranates in two rows all around, and so with the other capital. He set up the pillars at the vestibule of the temple. He set up the pillar on the south and called its name Jachin, and he set up the pillar on the north and called its name Boaz. And on the tops of the pillars was lily-work. Thus the work of the pillars was finished.

1 Kings 7:51 - Thus all the work that King Solomon did on the house of the LORD was finished. And Solomon brought in the things that David his father had dedicated, the silver, the gold, and the vessels, and stored them in the treasuries of the house of the LORD.

New Testament Temple:

1 Peter 2:5 - you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:21 - in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

- **Being fitted together** - (sunarmologeō from sun = together + harmologeō = join together from harmos = joint) means to be fitted or joined together with, literally used of the parts of the body or the stones of the building.

“The Gentiles were excluded from the Jerusalem Temple by a wall and by signs threatening death. But now in Christ they actually form the wall of the new temple. God reached down and gathered stones from Death Valley and made them living stones. What a fabulous image! Picture Jesus Christ as the massive cornerstone, and see his vitality as causing the stone to glow. Next the foundational teaching of the apostles and prophets is laid upon and around him. He gives it its shape and stability, and the whole foundation assumes his glow. Then one by one living stones are set upon it, and they in turn radiate the symmetry of the chief cornerstone, forming a luminous, ever-growing temple.” (R. Kent Hughes)

Ephesians 2:22 - In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

"The unity and symmetry of the temple are indicated by the expression, the whole building, being fitted together. It is a unity made up of many individual members. Each member has a specific place in the building for which he or she is exactly suited. Stones excavated from the valley of death by the grace of God are found to fit together perfectly. The unique feature of this building is that it grows. However, this feature is not the same as the growth of a building through the addition of bricks and cement. Think of it rather as the growth of a living organism, such as the human body. (William MacDonald)