

**AN INTERESTING AND INTENDED FRUIT
OF THE GOSPEL**
Ephesians 2:11-18

Intro: The Apostle Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians, is one of the key letters of the NT. His epistle to the Colossians is almost equal in importance, but probably does not have the same position as this epistle which we are studying now both in our SS classes, and in our Sunday morning service. It is important because it deals with the Church which is called in the last two verses of Ephesians 1, “the church which is His body,” over which the Lord Jesus Christ is the Head. The Lord Jesus is spoken of like the figure of a human body. Christ is the Head, and those of us who are saved during this time are members of His body, and, like the members of our human bodies, the various members are members of each other.

The Church is called here in Ephesians, *a mystery*. Chapter 3 of Ephesians uses this word in verses 3 and 4, and in verse 5 of chapter 3 we have the word *mystery* defined. It is a plan that God had in mind from eternity past, but did not go into effect until after the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. So you have to keep in mind when you read your Bible that a mystery is not something that is difficult to understand, but it is a secret which God had not revealed in detail until after the Lord had returned to heaven.

Probably most of you know that the first mention of the church is in the Gospel according to Matthew, following the answer that Peter gave when the Lord had asked His disciples, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” (Matt. 16:13). After they gave the Lord various answers, then the Lord asked that same question of the disciples. Peter responded with his now famous response: “Thou art the Christ [the Messiah], the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16). Then the Lord blessed Peter, telling him that he had not learned this from any man, but it had been revealed to him by the Father in heaven. And then the Lord said this to Peter:

18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18).

“Hell” in this statement by our Lord is not the place of eternal torment, but Hades, which is the grave, or the place of the dead. This actually was a prediction of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He was going to die (although His disciples did not believe that He would), but from death the

Lord would be raised among other grand reasons, to build His Church. This is not any local church, or any denomination, but a spiritual body made up of all who truly believe in Jesus Christ from Acts 2 until the Lord comes and takes His Church to heaven.

Why do I say Acts 2? Because in Acts 2 you have the first occurrence of the baptism of the Spirit. And 1 Corinthians 12:13 tells us that “by one Spirit are ye all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit,” the Holy Spirit.

The word *church* in the NT speaks of a people who have been called out of the world, out of sin, and joined together with Christ as members of His Body. Now this marked a great change in the work of the Lord because, as we have read in Ephesians 3:6, it marked a time in God’s dealings with men when “the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel.”

If you started reading the NT at the beginning of the year, as we all should have, you came across this statement which the Lord made to His disciples as He sent them out to preach the Gospel. The names of the original twelve are given in Matthew 10, verses 1 through 4, and then this is what the Lord told them as He sent them out:

5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 10:5-6).

And this is what the twelve did all through the time of the Lord’s ministry here on earth.

But now let me take you to the words of our Lord immediately preceding His ascension back to heaven. These familiar words are found in Acts 1:8, and note how they differ from what the Lord had said to the twelve in Matthew 10. Here is what the Lord said to His disciples before he went back to the Father in heaven:

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Do you see the difference? Here and there throughout the OT individual

Gentiles were saved. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, was one. Naaman the Syrian was another. Ruth the Moabitess was still another. And I am sure that there were more. But you can look through the OT but never see how the door of salvation was thrown open like it was following the ascension of the Lord Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit to abide permanently with the people of God. God was doing a new thing. The church was born on the Day of Pentecost in chapter 2 of Acts. And here in Ephesians Paul was writing to a church that was predominantly Gentile, as were the churches at Corinth, at Philippi, at Colosse, at Thessalonica, at Portland, and so on and on. God promised Abraham that in his seed, speaking of Christ, all nations would be blessed with salvation. It is in the NT that we see our Lord Himself opening the door to the Gentiles, bringing us into this body of Christ, the Church. Is the Lord finished with the people of Israel? Certainly not! But today He is building His Church, joining Jews and Gentiles to Christ as the body of which He is the Head.

Now as we come to our text in Ephesians 2:11, I want us to stop and remember, as Paul told the Ephesians to do, but what I want us to remember is in addition to what Paul was saying. I want us to remember who wrote this epistle. Who was He? Had he always been a Christian? No. Did he like Gentiles? No. How did he feel about Jesus Christ when we first meet him in Scripture? He hated Christ. He was doing all that he could to silence Christians, and to do away with the Gospel message. Do you get the impression as you read through this epistle to the Ephesians that he still hated Christ, and Christians, and the Gospel? No, he was deeply devoted to Christ. He loved the Gospel. We read in one of his other epistles that he was willing to die for the Lord and for the Gospel. What had happened to him? The Lord Himself stopped Saul of Tarsus (as his name was before he was saved) as he was on his way to Damascus to arrest Christians and to take them back to Jerusalem in chains. The Lord made Saul a new creature, and the result was that he then loved the Gospel which he used to hate, and he loved the people he used to hate – which included the Lord and those people who had trusted the Lord for their salvation.

Although Judaism was in a terrible state when the Lord came to the earth, yet they were a *religious* people. The Jews claimed that they were better than the Gentiles because they were Jews. They despised the Gentiles as being uncircumcised and felt that they were better than the Gentiles ever could be. I don't think that there is any doubt but that the greatest example of racial discrimination and incrimination, is the relationship between

Jews and Gentiles. And that is being carried on between Jews and Jews, and between Gentiles and Gentiles. Sin has filled the human race with pride, and we are all inclined to feel that whoever we are we are better than anyone else.

Paul here in Ephesians 2 is addressing Gentiles, and he reminds them of what they were in the past, as he pointed out in verses 11 and 12, as compared in verses 13 and following with what they were now that they had been brought to salvation through Christ. In the past they had been “without Christ” (v. 12), but now they were “in Christ.” This shows the effect that the Gospel had had upon them personally.

But what did Paul mean when he wrote, “For He is our peace.” Who is He? He according to verse 13 is Christ Jesus. Who did Paul have in mind when he wrote, “our peace.” He was speaking about what the Gospel does in the heart of an unsaved Jew, and what the Gospel does in the heart of an unsaved Gentile. It is the Gospel which brings people together in peace. This is what I had in mind when I gave my message the title “An Interesting and Intended Fruit of the Gospel.” As we look back through the Bible, what do we see is the fruit of sin? Sin destroys our relationships with other people. It made Adam blame Eve, and even blame God for his sin. It made Cain so jealous of his brother Abel that he killed Abel. It is only by the sovereign grace of God that civilization has lasted as long as it has. But today it is the purpose of God that the Gospel would change our relationship with God and toward ourselves, but look at what it does to our relationships with each other in the body of Christ. What were the two things that Paul and the other apostles looked for as evidence that a person had been saved? It was first, faith in God and in Christ, and love for others who know the Lord. Our society is demonstrating today that the more we turn away from God, the more violent we are toward each other.

Think of what salvation did for Saul of Tarsus. It immediately changed his attitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ. It changed his attitude toward Gentiles, but also toward Jews. It changed his attitude toward Christians. I am sure that people who knew Paul as a young rabbi in his hatred toward Christ and the Gospel and Christians, would have been amazed to read any of his letters that he wrote as a Christian.

The middle wall of partition had reference to the court of the Gentiles in the temple area. A Gentile who turned to Judaism could never have full

acceptance with Jews. But in Christ we all stand on the same ground with the same full acceptance with God, and the Lord continues to work among us until we as believers have full acceptance with each other. Christian fellowship is a miracle of the grace of God.

Do I need to remind you that the word “church” is used in two ways in the Bible? There is the Church, the Body of Christ, made up of all true believers in Christ during this present age. When a Jew is saved today, he is baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ. When a Gentile is saved today, he also is baptized into the body of Christ. We are joined to Christ and to His body. But then there are local churches. It has always been possible for people to get into a local church without being saved even though church leaders may seek to keep unsaved people out. You often find people in local churches who don’t believe the Bible, or they don’t believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the one and only Savior of those who come by faith in Jesus Christ. But for churches that are true to God and to Christ, and true to the Bible, the by-product of salvation should always mean that their members not only seek to honor God and Christ and the Word of God, but that there is “peace” among the members, a peace that is the result of salvation through Christ.

Our reconciliation to God comes through the Cross, and so does our reconciliation with each other. The Jew is considered in this passage as those who were nigh to God because they are the people to whom the Word was originally given, and from whom the Savior has come. The Gentiles were not blessed in the same way, and so they are spoken of as far off. But both groups need peace. That is where the preaching of the Gospel comes in.

Paul makes it very clear in these verses that there is only one Gospel. There is not one Gospel for the Jew, and another for the Gentile. There is not one Gospel for men, and another Gospel for women. There is not one Gospel for an immoral person, and another for one who seeks to be moral in his conduct. Paul says it all in Ephesians 2:18: “For through Him [Christ] we all [Jews and Gentiles] have access by one Spirit to the Father.” All three Persons of the Godhead are involved in the salvation of every person who is saved.

Concl: So what is God doing today? He is calling out from among the people of the world a people He has chosen for Himself, redeeming and transforming them by the blood of Christ, and uniting the

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redeemed to Christ in one body where we are not only members of Christ's body, but also members one of another.

Have you noticed that there is only one thing that we are told to do in all of the verses of our text? It is in verse 11, "Wherefore remember." We are to remember that we are "His workmanship." We are what we are by God's grace. We don't save ourselves. It is a work which only God can do. But we are also to remember what we were when we came to Christ. We were hopeless because of what we were, and hopeless as far as making any change for ourselves. But then in verse 13 we look at things as they are now – "But now." And this is all what we need to remember as well. Our hopelessness was because we were without Christ. Our hopefulness is now because we are in Christ.

How encouraged we should be because we are "in Christ" and that relationship can never end, not because of who or what we are, but because of Who and what Christ is for us.