

Ephesians 2:11-22 – What happens in salvation (2)

This is another “before and after”. In 2:1-10, Paul taught us the change that happens inside a Christian in conversion. Now, he explains the change in their relationship to God and to man. All of this takes place because of the blood shed by Jesus Christ on the cross. This passage teaches us more of what he achieved.

1. Without Christ (before) (v11-12)

The world before Christ came was divided into Jews and Gentiles. God had chosen the Jews as his special people. The Jews then looked down on others; they even called them dogs. The great mark that separated them was circumcision. Paul explains where we, Gentiles, were before Jesus came. It is good for us to remember, so that we can be grateful – or if we are not yet saved, we can understand where we are. Paul says the Ephesians were foreigners to God and to his promises (v12). They had none of the rights of God's people. They had no true hopes – only empty ones. Without Christ, you have no reason to expect anything from God except wrath and anger! Without Christ, there is no relationship with God (John 14:6, 1 John 2:23). There is no other way forward. Before Christ came, then, the Gentiles were separate from God and from his people – and they could do nothing about it, because God had passed them by at that time.

2. What Christ accomplished (v13-17)

By his death on the cross, Jesus has made those who were far, to be near. By his death he ended all separation between Jew and Gentile. All the Jewish laws of separation ended when he died. He broke down “the middle wall” that divided us (Paul's readers probably knew about the wall in the Jewish temple that Gentiles could not pass beyond). He made the two peoples into one people. Today God has no special dealings with the Jews; but only with believers, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. It is not circumcision or food laws that matter, but conversion to Christ (Galatians 3:28). Christ reconciles all people. We should not ask, “Are you a Kalenjin”, “Are you a Luo”, but “Are you in Christ?” Round the Lord's Supper, we meet as equals – all sinners, all redeemed, all brethren. Christ not only gave peace; he *is* our peace (v14). He reconciles us to each other and also to God (v16). We have shown our opposition to God by sin; and God is holy in wrath. But at the cross Jesus dealt with these. We died to sin with him, and he satisfied God's anger. Christ visited Ephesus by his Spirit when Paul preached to them (v17). To hear true preaching is to hear Christ; to disobey it is to reject him.

3. With Christ (afterwards) (v18-22)

Believers have access to God by the Spirit (v18). Salvation is Trinitarian: the Father sent the Son, the Son sends his Spirit, and by the Spirit we return to God in Jesus' name. Cultists who deny the Trinity are unsaved heretics. We are now citizens and members of God's household – God's holy temple. We have great privileges. We ought to use them! So, we should value our unity; we should pray; we should seek holiness; we should serve God in his household and fellowship with him. Most of all, we must love Jesus Christ who did it all. Is this your faith?