

Oneness In Christ

Eph 2:11-22

Everybody wants to know what the future holds

A popular song of the fifties went like this

When I was just a little girl, I asked my mother

What will my future be

Will I be rich, will I be pretty, what does the future hold for me

She said, Que sera, sera, whatever will be, will be

The future's not ours to see, que sera, sera

There are literally thousands of people

Who will tell you they can see into your future

There was a fortune teller on Pearl Road just into Brunswick

She went out of business

I asked Jackie – I wonder if she saw it coming

Millions of people, including Christians read their horoscope every day

Isn't it incredible to know that every person on planet earth

Born under a given sign will have the exact same thing happen to them

As everybody else born under that sign – every single day

As Al Borland used to say – I don't think so Tim

Well it so happens that you and I do know our future

And it isn't que sera, sera – whatever will be, will be

But it is the same future as everyone else who is born anew in Christ Jesus

You don't have to go to a charlatan and pay money to know your future

The Bible is specific - it isn't guessing - it is never wrong

And our future is stated right here in chapter 2 of the Book of Ephesians

Your past – **you were once dead in your trespasses and sins**

Your present – **He made you alive together with Christ and raised you up with Him and seated you with Him in the heavenly places**

Your future – **in order that in the coming ages, He (God) might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward you**

Your past – dead – your present – raised up with Christ

Your future – God is going to show you amazing kindness

We have already studied those verses which are in the first half of Ch 2

The reason I bring them up is that in some ways the 2d half of chapter 2

Is similar in theme to the first half

Paul begins with – remember – remember you were once

Goes to what you are now

And finishes with what will continue to occur in your life

In Chapter 2 Paul's found his theme and he's sticking with it

Generally speaking people are protective and suspicious of differences

People build walls to separate themselves into groups

Robert Frost in his poem On Mending A Wall wrote – Good fences make good neighbors

It is human tendency to separate into groups

It started at the tower of Babel – it still goes on today

India with its caste system is a perfect example of manmade walls

But there are walls in every society

At the time Paul was writing

There were a number of groups who felt superior to other groups

The Jews felt superior to the Gentiles

Roman citizens were superior to non citizens

The Greeks believed they were superior to everybody

Unfortunately class distinction affected the early church

Deacons were inaugurated

Because some widows were treated differently than others

Like I said it's human nature

But disunity among His people has always been a special heartache to God

God does not like His children separated into cliques

In His intercessory prayer for His disciples

Jesus prayed three times that His disciples would be one, and once, that they might be perfected in unity

That Jesus would pray for unity four times is pretty significant

Remember in Jewish thought – one time is enough

Twice is great – three times is perfect – what then is four times

I think we can pretty safely say that

Unity among His people is one of Jesus most fervent desires

Now Jesus prayer for unity has already been answered positionally

Every person who has ever received Christ has been made one with Him

And one with every other believer from every age

Positionally we are all one in Jesus Christ

We are all part of one body

And just as a physical body has a common life flowing through it

So does the church - Christ's body

The Spirit of God puts the life of Christ in the soul of every person

Who receives Jesus as Savior and Lord

And in so doing He unites every believer with every other believer

In the Kingdom of Jesus there are no walls

Robert Frost started [On Mending A Wall](#) with this line

Something there is that doesn't love a wall

He was wrong

It is someone who doesn't love a wall and that someone is God

In His kingdom there are no walls no classes no castes no races no gender

Unfortunately the visible church is often quite different

There are churches that if you plan on attending

You had better have the correct Bible translation

I have heard of church splits over the color the walls were painted

That just has to break God's heart

For God's desire for His visible body is that we display outwardly

The oneness we have in Christ

That is what He intends for us – and He will settle for nothing less

And Oneness within the body can only come from love

Just think about what love is like

Love is patient – love is kind – bears all things believes all things – hopes all things – endures all things

Now think about what love is not

Love doesn't brag – is not arrogant – does not act unbecoming or seek its own - - is not provoked – does not take into account a wrong suffered

How many here are naturally like that – no one here is naturally like that

When Paul painted a word picture of love

He described the character of Jesus Christ

And unifying love in us can only come from oneness with Christ

The early church had problems – they had divisions

There was a group of legalist Jews plaguing the church

Paul called them the party of the circumcision

They believed they were better than the uncircumcised gentiles

They had Christ and they had the Law – does it get any better than that

Well actually yes it does – **Christ alone is better than Christ and the Law**

READ Ephesians 2:11-22

The human life begins with alienation

Let me tell you - If God didn't exist I would be an existentialist

The American Heritage Dictionary defines existentialism this way

A philosophy that emphasizes the uniqueness and the isolation of the individual in a hostile or indifferent universe, and regards human existence as unexplainable

I would believe it for that is what I experienced in life outside of Christ

Aloneness - isolation - a hostile world – all of it unexplainable

And I'm not alone in this - so did many of you

That is why so many people join clubs and organizations

That is why the same people always go to the same bar

They are looking to dwarf their loneliness – to find companionship

They want to belong – they don't want to feel alone

Mankind wants to experience in this world

That which can only be experienced in God

Paul says you were alienated – separated from God and without hope
Then he lists four things Christianity brings to individuals in desperate need

First Christian salvation brings God

If it brought us nothing else – that would be enough

We were far away and now we are near

We were without God – we now have God

It has been said - Our hearts are restless until it finds its rest in God

There is a longing within the human heart for God

And Christ alone can fill that longing

Only in Christ can we experience closeness to God and eternal life

Don't look for it elsewhere – it just isn't there

Then with Christ comes hope

Paul tells us that we were without hope in the world

But now we have hope

Existentialism is essentially a philosophy of life without hope

The human heart needs hope to thrive

They've studied people who were in life-threatening situations

They discovered that those who had hope fared better and survived longer Than those who believed they had no hope

Being in Christ has given us hope

This isn't all there is – it isn't the best we will ever have

Something wonderful awaits that is better and more glorious

Than anything we could possible imagine

Eternal life with God in heaven awaits each one of us

We have a hope that the world cannot comprehend

Then being in Christ has made us all part of something great

Your faith has brought you into a covenant relationship with God

And with every other believer throughout history

You are part of an eternal family extending all the way back to Adam

What Bob Mandel correctly calls your forever family

Abraham – he's your brother

Moses – Joshua - David – Peter James John and Paul – and Jesus

They are all part of your family

You come from good stock

And there are literally billions of us

Chinese Indian Jewish Arab black brown white – all united in one family

All part of God's great plan

All partakers of God's great grace

Now here is the greatest part

We are not powerful because of our great numbers

The sum of us is much greater than the individual parts

Within the sum, multiplying the sum, is the very person of Christ

You are part of something great

God never loses – you are on the winning side

Finally Christ has made us one with Him and one with each other

Think about it - We are one with Christ and one with each other

I believe that could be the hardest truth of the Bible

There is an old poem that goes

To live above with saints we love – brother that will be glory

But to live below with saints we know – well - that's a different story

But here it is – vs 14 – Christ made both groups one

Vs 15 – we are being made into one new man

Vs 19 – we are fellow citizens of heaven

And then verse 21 tells us – we are being fitted together

A stone building was fitted together by first laying the cornerstone

Our Cornerstone is Jesus Christ

And then shaping every other stone to fit

Every stone had to be reshaped to fit the plan of the building

Then it could fit snugly with the rest of the wall

That is what gave the building its strength

That is what God is doing with you – with me

God is reshaping you to fit snugly into His design for the church

That is part of what verse 10 means when it calls you God's workmanship

God is at work in your life

And God uses people and circumstances to shape you

God uses those people who rub you the wrong way to sand you into shape

God uses those people who keep bumping into you

To knock off the high spots of your pride

So – quite often God uses those people whom you get along with least

To work in your life for His glory

So when someone comes into your life who rubs you the wrong way

Or you keep bumping up against them

Don't be so quick to pray that God will cause them to leave

Instead ask God why they are in your life

It could be that God placed them there to help you

Finally Paul lists three types of alienation we as Gentiles had

All of which have been eliminated by Christ

Gentiles were socially alienated

As far as Jews were concerned Gentiles were outcasts

They referred to us as the uncircumcision – a term of derision

We were not part of the Abrahamic Covenant

Many Christian Jews believed saved Gentiles were inferior to them

Paul calls these Jews the "so-called circumcision"

Circumcision has never been the mark of a personal relationship to God

It's just an external act

When you received Christ as Lord

A much more significant circumcision took place – that of your heart

In Romans Paul writes – **He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that which is of the heart**

Later in Romans Paul points out that

Abraham was saved before he was circumcised

Ever feel socially alienated

In the movie Rambo - Rambo tells this young woman he is expendable

She asks “what does expendable mean” and he responds

It’s like you get invited to a party, but it doesn’t make any difference if you show up or not

Ever feel socially expendable – most of us have at some time

Listen – you are not expendable in the Body of Christ

You are not a social outcast – you are not alienated

You have been chosen by God for an important mission

And your part in this mission is just as valuable as any other persons

Then we Gentiles were spiritually alienated

We were separate from the Messiah, excluded from Israel, strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world

Now that is bleak

Gentiles were outside the covenant of God and had no way to get in

Gentiles were not greater sinners than the Jews

But there was a difference in how God dealt with them

We had no hope of a Messiah or deliverer

Gentile history had no purpose no plan no destiny

Being spiritually alienated meant that we were excluded from all the promises of God

That means we were without hope - literally we were hopeless

Real hope can only be based upon a true promise

Hope is a profound blessing that gives meaning and security to life

Existentialism is a philosophy of life without hope

And it is the real life of men without God

Real hope comes from the confident assurance that our future has been provided for

We had no hope and all of us were headed to the ultimate judgment of God

This is where that wonderful part about God being rich in mercy comes in

We were outside – not really interested in being in

But God being rich in mercy reached out to sinful men and saved us through His grace

And now all the promises of God are yours

They are yes and amen in Christ Jesus

When I was young there was a program called The Millionaire

Billionaire John Beresford Tipton would pick a person in trouble

And his manservant would show up at that person's door

With a check for \$1,000,000

People dreamed that someone would show up at their door with that money

If someone promised you a million dollars

Would it excite you – the answer is maybe yes – maybe no

In the golf league we play the last hole with an ongoing wager of \$50,000

I currently owe Ed Ron Dave Dan and others in excess of a million dollars

Do you think they are anxiously awaiting their payday – I don't think so

You see the promise is only as good as the person making the promise

I don't have a million dollars – don't expect that I ever will

Our bet on the ninth hole is for fun because none of us is able to pay it

On The Millionaire, the check never bounced – but that was fiction

In real life it's more like our bet on the golf course

A promise is no better than the credibility of the person making the promise

That's why as many promises are broken as are kept

Well God has made you promises

And God's promises are as good as Word is trustworthy;

His promises are as good as His ability to keep them

His Word will last forever

And His ability to keep them is regardless of any and every circumstance

So your hope rests on God's faithfulness and power

How many times has someone made you a promise

And even when they made it you knew it was no good

That's because you trust in a person's promise to the exact extent

You trust their character and their ability to deliver what they have promised

Listen carefully

God cannot lie – ever – it is not possible for Him to lie

What God has promised must come true – always

The hope that you received when you received Christ rests upon

The credibility and power of God

Who has revealed Himself to us through His Word

This is a small church – but even we are incredibly diverse

We are diverse in our place in society

We are diverse in our activities – our likes and dislikes

We are diverse in our theology

We are diverse in our gifts

We are diverse in our availability to God

There is certainly more about each of us that is different

Than there is where we are the same

Some churches tend to focus on the differences

And forget the one unifying factor – Jesus Christ

Leaving here today I want you to remember a few things

First – outside of Christ there are things that make the pain of loneliness seem better

Drugs alcohol and some relationships –

But they will never satisfy that loneliness and isolation you feel

When you are alone or sober

What the world has to offer is false and ultimately leads only to despair

Now listen carefully

It is only inside the Kingdom of Christ

That you will find your place of fulfillment and acceptance

It is only inside that you will be able to find real and definitive purpose

Don't look for it elsewhere – it isn't there

Only inside can a group of individual diverse people find commonality

Comfort and care

Are you on the inside or are you on the outside
Have you received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior
Have you joined the largest family in the world
Become part of something that is great
And received purpose power and hope
If not – isn't it time you did
Perhaps you are inside the Kingdom of Christ
You are a child of God – you have been born again
But you are living like you are not
You are trying to find love and acceptance in what the world has to offer
Brothers and sisters – I cannot tell you strongly enough - **it just isn't there**
Pleasure – yes; joy – no; real happiness – no
Anesthetic – yes – you can deaden the pain and ease your fears
But your life is like that old c/w song – your looking for love in all the wrong places
And deep in your heart you know it
Only in Christ there is release and freedom from your pain and your fears
Your isolation and your loneliness
Real love – real purpose – a real hope
You didn't walk into this building by accident today
God brought you for a purpose
Perhaps that purpose is to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior
Perhaps it is to rededicate your life
Whatever the purpose God has for you today
Don't leave until His purpose for you is fulfilled