

“The Family of God” continues

Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians

Ephesians 2:11-22

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Jeff: Our gracious Father in heaven, we bow before You. We know that You are God. You’ve revealed that to us and made it plain. You sent Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ to exegete the Godhead to us. And He has made You known in a way that satisfies the soul, enriches the mind, and certainly fills the heart with love. You have indeed shed Your love abroad in our hearts. So we bow before You, acknowledging Your kingship, thanking You for Your priestly mediation, and listening to You in Your prophetic ministry to us.

Lord, as we come to You we thank You. And we come to You knowing that You are the only rock, the only mountain of security in this world. When all else fails we look to You. And often we don’t look to You soon enough. Such is the case with our nation. So send revival, send reformation. But send it into our hearts first, and then let it overflow. Let us touch those around us in ways that are in keeping with the gospel. Let us bring glory and honor to You, to Your name, for You are the triune God who saves.

Father, let us stand in the day of trouble, for we know that as long as we are on Your side we will stand. Help us to avoid the error of thinking that You are on our side. And so let us stand with You. And better yet let us think of our standing in the Lord Jesus Christ. And let us call others to take their stand in Him.

Father, bless us today as we open Your word. Help us to understand it. Strengthen us in it, for we ask it in the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: Well, let’s look at Ephesians chapter 2. And I ended with the last part of verse 10. We talked about the aspect of sanctification that’s there—God’s work in us. We’ll talk about that. But I think I’ll start reading at verse 11 and then read through the end of the chapter. But when we start today I’ll just go back to verse 8-10. But really we’re looking at verse 10. And I’ll explain that in a minute. Let me read to you now the word of the living God.

“Therefore remember that at one time you were Gentiles in the flesh, called the uncircumcision by what his 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 were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, He 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. And He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

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“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.” All right; there’s the—Man!

Sig Tragard: The word of the Lord. Say it!

Jeff: I can’t remember it.

Sig: The word of the Lord.

Jeff: The word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: Ah!

Sig: It’s not Presbyterian.

Jeff: You know, yesterday I could not remember a single name. I was talking to someone. And every time I would go and try to remember who or what I was talking about I couldn’t remember. And so the guy across from me said, “Well, let’s just keep playing the clue game. You give me clues.” (*Laughter*)

Well anyway, today we’re going to talk about verse 10. And verse 10 really tells us—and I’ll just read it to you, a single verse. I’ll start in verse 8. *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not of your own doing. It is the gift of God, not a result of works so that no one can boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”*

Now remember what I said to you the last time. I want to put this on the board because this is where we left off. And I want you to remember that what we’re dealing with is the twofold grace of God. For those of you who are interested in the technical term it’s the *duplex gratia*. And when we think about the twofold grace of God we think about *forensic benefits* and we think about *renovative benefits*.

Now we oftentimes think about these renovative benefits in terms of an added appendage, or as if they are an extra. So for instance we talk about being justified by faith. But when we talk about works we say, “Well, yeah, yeah, yeah. I should do works because I’m saved.” But we talk about it as if well, we may not do works. And in that way we’re wrong.

Why? Because when we talk about union with Jesus Christ, brought into union with Jesus Christ we possess all of the benefits that are in Christ Jesus. And for instance, that means that regeneration is an inceptive part of the renovative benefits. We think about justification, and that’s a forensic benefit. We think about adoption, and that’s a forensic benefit because it’s a legal declaration. We belong now to the family of God. We think about definitive sanctification. And when we think about definitive sanctification we think about a punctiliar act of God. In other words we’ve been translated from one kingdom—that of darkness—to another kingdom—that of the sun of His love, the kingdom of light. There’s a punctiliar aspect to our sanctification, a definitive aspect to it.

And then there is a durative aspect, and that’s progressive sanctification. We progress in what we already are. And that culminates in glorification. And there are all of these benefits that are part of what we call the *ordo salutis*. But they can be summed up in our

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union with Jesus Christ basically under these two terms—forensic and renovative—legal and those that have to do with cleansing.

And so when we talk about good works we need to remember that good works are part of what is produced from the durative aspect of sanctification. Our works are necessary if we’re saved. They are a necessary component—not to be saved. Notice how clearly this is put in the text: not by works, but for works.

So the idea that I can ever work to merit union with Christ has to go out the window. Why? Because the inceptive part of renovation is regeneration, okay? And that regeneration happens as a result of God’s call upon my life. God calls, the Spirit regenerates; that’s the inceptive part. In other words, I am brought into this relationship of union with Jesus Christ. And as part of that union sanctification is a benefit, and works are the result. Okay?

So that’s where we left off. Does anybody want to flesh that out and talk about that a little bit? I’ve got one here behind you first. Then we’ll go to Matt up here.

Ted Wood: You’re a Puritan.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: Now I’m pretty smart.

Jeff: Oh, okay. *(Laughter)*

Ted: Like my mother, but wrong. *(Laughter)* I’m just wondering how many people actually know what the words *punctiliar* and *durative* mean.

Brave Man: Permanent.

Sig: I didn’t know those either.

Jeff: Punctiliar. *(Laughter)* **Ted:** Does Dr. Rodgers know it?

Bishop Rodgers: Yes. Punctiliar means “the straight act of a point.”

Sig: The straight act of one point.

Brave Man: You’re right.

Jeff: Punctiliar, yes. Okay. Anyway, sorry. *(Laughter)*

Ted: So am I. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: *Punctiliar* has to do with that one time, that instantaneous act of being moved from one kingdom to the next.

Durative. Think about *duration* or *endure*. Think about the continuing aspect of it. If I endure I am going through something and I’m continuing to stand. So there’s an inceptive. In other words, at its inception, at its beginning point we find regeneration. We find that punctiliar, that instantaneous move when we talk about the definitive, in the sense that there is a definite and punctiliar aspect to sanctification. And then the durative is the ongoing aspect. Yes? Matt had something.

Matt Reichart: I remember from last week. You made something like a comment, that as church leaders we need to call the people who are claiming Christ to examine themselves in their hearts, that they would have the desire to be a part of the body and to use their gifts, to work and to serve.

Jeff: Yes, absolutely.

Matt: How would you say that as a pastor to your congregation?

Jeff: How would I say this to them?

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Matt: Yes. Just in regard to this distinction here between created for good works. What are you doing with the gifts that you have? Are you burying them, you know, like the talents?

Jeff: That’s a great question. And it’s a good way to frame it. I had a number of interns. And one of the things that I noticed is that they handle doctrine well. But they don’t always handle how to present it to the congregation. They’re learning how to do that.

So for instance, a couple of Sundays ago,--don’t tell them this, Roger; I’ve already talked to them about this--, (*Laughter*), I had an intern who was preaching on sanctification. He was preaching on the necessity of good works. And he was preaching the right doctrine. In fact I went to him and asked him this. “Was the twofold grace of God on your mind?” And he said, “Yeah.”

But this is part of what he said at the end. And this is going in the other direction, and Matt, I’m going in the other direction. That night when he preached to the congregation he said, “If all you have is right doctrine, then you have something to fear.”

Now what I told him afterwards was this. I said, “Think about what you’re doing. You’re preaching to a church of people. And they are not people who only have right doctrine. That’s kind of like a hypothetical. And if you’re in a vacuum, then that hypothetical is wonderful.” If you only have a profession of faith, and if you only have right doctrine, then you’re in big trouble.

But when you are talking to a group of people who are professing Christians, they’re not thinking, if all I have is right doctrine, I’m in big trouble. What they’re wondering, when that’s said to them, is, “well, how many good works do I need to be assured of what I have in Christ?” And so that’s what they’re asking.

And so I said, “You have to be very careful to run around hypotheticals when you’re preaching like that, especially when you’re preaching such an important doctrine, but a doctrine that could be so easily misunderstood. So you have to be really careful.”

How would you say that? Well, I think how you would say this, instead of casting doubt what you would do is that you would encourage. So for instance I encouraged him. I said that the question to ask, the statement to make, is not “If all you have is right doctrine, then you’re in big trouble.” But the statement to make—and I can’t think of the text right now; maybe I can play a guessing game with Roger later. But the statement to make would be something like this. What are you doing now? What’s going on in your life that’s pleasing to God? You ask people, “What are you doing that you’re gifted to do? What are you doing right now in the church that God has gifted you to do that you love to do, and you’re really good at doing it, and other people are really blessed as a result of you doing it?” You know, that way of framing it.

And I’ll tell you why. Maybe you remember, maybe you don’t. But when we went through—I can’t remember. I am really struggling. The last couple of days have been almost a setback. Anyway,--

Ted: You’re doing fine.

Jeff: Remember what the writer to the Hebrews says when he chastises his congregation. He says to them, “By now many of you ought to be teachers. But as it

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stands I need to go over the basics with you.” But then he goes on. And in that same passage he says to them, “But I think better of you than that.” And he talks to them in an enriching way and a comforting way.

And I’ve always said to my interns that this is the model right here. The model for the church is not to beat people up with doctrine. The model for the church is that if you have to say hard things, then what you do is you say the hard thing. But you know that people can be encouraged because you know that in God’s people there are things you can encourage. And so you encourage people.

And that’s not spin. I mean, if I go to my child and I’m always talking to them about the negative, how are they going to feel? You know that’s not a good parenting practice. And pastors and elders are in the role of parents.

So you go to your kids and you talk to them. And you make sure that you say encouraging and positive things. And that way, when you do have to say something hard, they can hear it from you.

John Newton wrote a letter. Some of his letters are the most famous things that he wrote. (Maybe not; maybe “Amazing Grace” is.) But his letters are pretty famous. And in one of his letters he says, “*My congregation at this point in my ministry can hear anything from me.*”

And what he meant was that “I have spoken into their lives in ways that have been positive and encouraging gospel ways. But I can also speak difficult things into their lives when they hear it from me. And they hear it from me because they know that I love them.” That sort of thing; it’s really encouraging. Yes?

Matt: So I like how you termed that. What are you doing now for the church? So my recent opportunities for everyone that’s on our team that we bring in—our staff—is filling a role.

Jeff: Yes.

Matt: They’re using their gifts. You know, we always send them out to “*go and do likewise.*” Get involved in your church. The challenge for church ministry is that first off there are professionals. Everyone looks to the professionals to do everything. But this is a great question. I constantly ask people how they can identify what ministry could be accomplished with your gifts in our congregation and in our family, and also what opportunities could be blessed with your gifts outside.

Jeff: Yes.

Matt: And in directing people. The mindset is that everybody is valued. No one is just that there coming to be served. They’re coming to learn to serve, to learn, to grow and to give.

Jeff: Yes.

Matt: And that’s the challenge. We want the church who claims the name of Jesus Christ to be serving somewhere in some capacity, using their gifts. “What have you done for me lately?” None of that.

Matt: You know, Matt, I agree with you. And I think that people aren’t good at it. They walk into a situation where it’s a group. And they immediately wonder, “What

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group can I join?” And I think there’s a broader question that could be asked before that question, and it gets at what you’re saying. That question is, “What’s my role?”

And people say, “Well, I don’t have a role in this setting.” And they’re wrong. You do have a role in this setting. You can ask the question. What are my real and not my perceived responsibilities?

Now in a group there will be those with real responsibilities delineated for you. But what’s the role of the Christian? In general it’s in the church, right? I’m to encourage others, right? I’m to pray for others. There are real things that I can do. And you know, in the Christian church one of the ways that we identify our people for leadership is that they’re acting like leaders already and do the things leaders do, right? And so what are the real responsibilities that are yours as a Christian that you’re just naturally doing?

And then you begin to ask, “Well, what’s my obligation?” Well boy, even if you’re not in a group there are plenty of obligations that Christians can take upon themselves under these real responsibilities. What are my limits? What are the limits of these? I usually use this for more specific roles. But what are the limits? What can I and what can’t I do, for instance?

You might say, “Well, a Christian person can’t administer the sacraments, or baptize,” or those kinds of things, right? But I can do many other things, right? There are many other obligations I have. And I can always encourage people, right?

So even if I don’t fit into a particular role, you know, when you’re asking this specifically, your real responsibilities may be limited. That would limit your obligations. But I always encourage people.

But my point is that we need to encourage Christian people not to ask the question, “Where do I fit in, into what group?” But when I come into any Christian church what is my role as a Christian?

Tom Hansz: I always thought my job when I came into a Christian community was what clique do I join? Isn’t that what we see too often in churches?

Jeff: Well, I don’t know; that could be the case. But I’ll tell you that this is what I have come to realize in churches. I’ve come to realize that churches are really like family reunions. And at a family reunion all of the cousins gather together in age groups, right? And you know, the moms and the dads in their 30s and 40s get together and they all visit. And all the old-timers get together. And they sit around and reminisce about all the family reunions before. But if Grandpa falls on the ground, guess who comes running? Everybody is going to come running—even the little kids who can’t help, right? “Grandpa’s down!”, right? And so they come running. Everybody is there to help.

OI kind of feel like that about a church. A church is a family. And it has natural groups that kind of gravitate. But you know what? If somebody is down, boy, all you have to do is look at that sign-up list for taking somebody a meal or whatever. And it gets filled up by every age group.

So I used to think that way, I really did. But I really think that the church is like a family. And you sort of have to cut it a little bit of slack. There can be groups that turn into cliques. But I think that if the church is healthy those groups will feel awkward about what they’re doing.

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Tom: Hopefully.

Jeff: Well, I think that you underestimate the pressure of real Christians who are not necessarily saying things to people, but by their very lives are not condoning their practices and inviting participation in other ways. Do you know what I mean? With one of the things as a pastor I’m not critical of everything that I see in a person’s life, right? I don’t correct everything that I see verbally, right? But I also don’t verbally or nonverbally assent to everything that somebody tells me, right? And there’s a way of communicating in that, right?

Brave Man: The verse that says, “In my weakness God strengthens me.” The perfect tense in my mind runs through, in opposition to what is relying on a believer to understand how they might position themselves in the role of service in the church. How does the discernment happen? Is it just kind of through this proper alignment of your understanding of God’s word, and that’s how you see something correctly directed? Because otherwise we’re in spiritual gifts test land. And we are leaning into our strengths, which seems to make less sense in terms of God rounding us out in less of ourselves and more of Him.

Jeff: Yes. Maybe you’re asking, should I be focused more on my weaknesses as I develop as a Christian?—that sort of thing. And I have a tendency to think that verse—and I can’t think about it in its context. If you want to tell me what that is I can interact with it a little bit more.

Brave Man: “*When I am weak, then I am strong.*”

Jeff: Okay. All right; that’s fine. I’ll just tell you what I think. And I thought that maybe Ted would mention it. But anyway, here’s my—Ted, say it again.

Ted: 2 Corinthians someplace.

Jeff: Okay. So basically how I understand that verse is this. I am in Christ and I walk in His humiliation. And so by virtue of the world’s view of me I’m weak; I’m foolish. And so it is in that position that I am strong because I stand in Christ. And you can think about that in any number of ways. By what I believe I’m foolish. By the love that I show to others I’m weak. Any number of avenues or aspects you can sort of put yourself in that position where you’re weak.

And yet I’m strong. It’s sort of like Frederic Nietzsche who was that crazy, on the edge modern philosopher who basically said, “I want to re-imagine a world without Christianity because Christians are weak. The only reason a Christian loves his neighbor is because he’s afraid of his neighbor.” That’s the idea that Nietzsche had.

And so, kind of playing off of that, I understand what he’s saying. There’s a sense in which Christians are weak, or are perceived as weak. And yet we are really weak in this world. And the only strong position we have is in Christ. So I have a tendency to view that kind of verse like that. Again we could talk about the context. I may be wrong about that. When I hear that that’s what I think.

So when I think about what you said, because what you said was legitimate, how then do we shape the Christian life? Is it just having a right understanding of God’s word, or is there more?

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And I think there’s more. For instance there’s the whole aspect of the church. There are certainly elders to provide counsel. There are wise members who function as leadership but aren’t ordained. They come alongside, which is why I think that Paul pours his life into others so that they can pour their lives into others.

So I think there is certainly a right understanding of God’s word. The Holy Spirit teaches us and brings us into conformity with the right understanding of it. But I think there’s a corporate dimension that cannot be passed over. And I personally want to avoid the whole gift testing thing. For instance, if you have a particular gift you have a tendency just to be drawn to practice it. I mean, my brother could draw; he could paint. So he was always drawing and painting, right?

I have a tendency to think that, you know, if the Lord gifts you to be a generous person, you are just generous, right? You actually want to be generous beyond your means. If you teach you want to teach, right? If you lead you want to lead. You know, there are all kinds of arguments for that kind of thing.

In fact, I had a pastor tell me. He told me years ago. He actually said to me, “Find the thing that you really love to do.” And he said, “And if you love to do it, you’ll thrive in it.” He said that if you’re doing something you hate, you may not be gifted in doing that. He said, “You may. But if you hate doing it, you may not be gifted in doing it.”

And you know, he was really right. When I first became a believer I went to the church and asked them to put me to work. And they put me to work. And I hated what they were asking me to do.

And the conversation I had with him centered around that. And so I told him. I said, “Well, I quit this.”

And he kind of looked at me. And I said, “Well I want you to put me to work in some other way. But you know, I am not in love with this.” (*laughter*) So anyway, does that help?

Brave Man: I just have the concern that God says that some people will enter heaven with the smell of smoke on them, right?

Jeff: Mm-hmm.

Brave Man: And that may be a reference to people who make a deathbed confession, or come to know Jesus minutes, days, hours before they meet the Lord face to face. But it also could refer to the fact there are things that are suppressive to our growth that are either the flesh, the world or the devil, that really keep us sometimes from acting in accordance with and in agreement with the Holy Spirit. And that aligns with bad doctrine. So I think that in America in 2020 I would say that you’ve got a big dose of both.

Jeff: Yes. So we’ve gone over this before. But think about what faith is. Faith is knowledge, assent and trust. And think about it. This is the mind, this is the will and this is the affections.

Now think about this for just a minute. When you think about mind, will and affections, think again about what Jonathan Edwards called “*the unitary dispositional complex.*” When these things are all working together they’re unified. And that’s the way Adam was prior to the Fall. And that’s the way you were when you met your wife, right?

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(Laughter) You knew who you wanted. You desired her. And you did everything in your power to choose her, right?

When you're a fragmented dispositional complex, your mind knows one thing, your affections want another, and your will is caught in the middle. So when we talk about strong or weak faith, we can talk about it this way. Strong faith is when I have a more unified dispositional complex. When my faith is weak I need to ask myself. What am I desiring that is not Christ??

And here's the other thing. When I'm choosing the thing I desire that's not in accord with Christ, then I'm really in trouble, right? So when we think about strong or weak faith it is a subjective thing. But it's kind of an identifiable thing.

I mean, when I'm not feeling strong in my faith, it's a subjective way of putting it, but it's true. When I'm not feeling strong in my faith I ask myself. What is my heart desiring that it shouldn't be desiring? What am I wanting that I shouldn't want?—that sort of thing.

And I think it goes back to what you were saying. We have a lot of people out there that are just sort of everywhere on the spiritual map.

Matt: One of the things that I've come to realize too is something someone shared years ago: that there are places where we grow spiritually when we serve versus studying the Word.

Jeff: Yeah.

Matt: We learn the Word and grow that way. But we say no to ourselves and exercise our will. when we say no to ourselves and serve others we grow spiritually. And I see that happen all the time, because whether they come for a day, a week or for the summer, at the end of the summer we see that our staff has grown significantly. It's one thing that we've never taught them.

Jeff: Yes.

Matt: But the Holy Spirit taught them through the act of service. I see our responsibility as leaders when we're young becoming self-aware. What is my gift and what is my calling? When you're in your 20s and 30s you don't know who you are. And so self-discovery is part of that process. So doing all those tests helped me do one of those tests.

I said, “You're a church guy, right? Would that work at camp?” So we started doing that as well. And that kind of just affirmed something that was in me.

Jeff: Yes.

Matt: And I think that when we're older too, the advice of the culture is that you've done your time. You can check out now and kick up your heels and go play golf. But really, as long as there's life and breath in our lungs, what can we be doing to advance the Kingdom? I loved it when older men would come alongside me. It's like touching arms. We need older men or women coming alongside of the younger guys and encouraging them, giving them reason and insight. So it's never over till we breathe our last breath.

Jeff: Yeah. What you were saying reminds me of one of the things that we talked about in the midst of our leadership at our churches. We talked about the strength of our own leadership in our own congregation not being in us. But the strength of our church is

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in the unordained leadership. When unordained men are acting like leaders, leading their families into worship and practicing family worship, and doing things in a way where you’d look around the church and you’d think that the guy is an elder but he’s really not. And when that’s happening that’s when a congregation is really strong. When you have a pool of men who could be elders at any moment, they recognize what I was telling you about—that role thing, right? They recognize that and are doing that. Okay.

Sig: When you were commenting when Ron was talking, or Ron might have even said it about gifts,--

Jeff: Yes.

Sig: And you said you were opposed to testing gifts? Is that what you were—

Jeff: No. They have spiritual gift tests that have a million and 538 thousand questions.

Sig: Yeah, right.

Jeff: And they’re all asking different ways to kind of fool you into sort of answering something about yourself to indicate where your spiritual gifts are.

Sig: But my question on that subject was when you were going through ministry as a young man, they had you do this work and you hated it.

Jeff: Yes.

Sig: Wouldn’t it be good to go through some kind of analysis or self-introspection to find out what you’re gifted at?

Jeff: I think Matt has the right idea. And that is that what you need to do is that you need to bring yourself under experienced godly men in your congregation. They’ll put you to work, and you’ll find what you love to do. I mean, the Holy Spirit is in you and they’re counseling you. It will eventually work itself out. I think you’ll come to realize what you are really passionate about.

And sometimes there are gifts, like giving liberally. Who has to teach you to do that? You just have an urge in your heart to give, right? You don’t have to be taught to do that.

Sig: Tom wants to give something right now.

Jeff: Liberally.

Tom: What I think is important is that we get caught up in all these youth tests or different seminars that we go to. And it’s truly your relationship with God, and how He brings older people for training.

Jeff: Yes.

Tom: But also I can see my own thing. I never thought that I had the gift of helps.

Jeff: Mm-hmm.

Tom: And I hated to clean up for people. I was kicked out of a camp one time because I refused kitchen duty where I cleaned up after people eating.

Jeff: Okay.

Tom: One day I’m in a church. I’m a father and a husband and grown up. And all of a sudden I look after this big spaghetti dinner and only two women are left to clean up.

Jeff: Mm-hmm.

Tom: I said, “This is lousy!” I went in and started to clean. And all of a sudden it hit me. I’ve got the gift of helps. I would never have done that on my own. But God works in each of us to change us.

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Jeff: Yeah.

Tom: And we just need to keep praying and working in our spiritual community. You’ll know what you have. And pretty soon you’ll think, I’ve got one gift; I’ve got two gifts; I’ve got three gifts. You grow.

Jeff: Yes, absolutely. Well let me go on, if there’s nothing else. So let me go on. Let me talk for a minute about *the elephant in the room*. And the elephant in the room is the section 2:11-22. And that has to do with Jew and Gentile tensions.

You know, I want you to think about this just for a minute. When you think about Jew and Gentile tensions, think about this in terms of the New Testament. Here you have the Jews, and Jesus comes. He is their Messiah. And they wholesale reject Him. Not wholesale, because Paul himself says that we haven’t totally rejected Him. I’m a Jew. And so there are Jewish people who recognize Him as the Messiah.

But I want you to think about this. Early on, what do you have? You have the believers going to the temple. Paul takes a Nazirite vow. When Timothy joins the group you have Paul saying, “But I really want you to be circumcised. You’ve got a Jewish mom and a Greek dad. But as we go to the Jews you’re going to need to be circumcised in order not to be a stumbling-block to them as we preach the message of the gospel to them.”

So the reason Paul goes to the synagogue is because he’s telling Jewish people about their Messiah who has come. So what he’s trying to do, what we find early on in the New Testament, especially in the book of Acts, is that Paul is trying to get Judaism to realize that their Messiah has come. And eventually (and I want you to think about this for a second), Acts 15 is a question about Jew and Gentile relationships.

Think about Romans. We all love Romans. But guess what! Romans 1, 2 and 3 are about the tensions between Jew and Gentile. 9, 10 and 11 ask the question. Because the Jews have stumbled, does that mean that God has rejected them totally? And when you get to 14 and 15, that’s really about things *adiaphora*, but things *adiaphora* having to do with Jew and Gentile relationships—certain days and certain things to eat and all of that would have to do with Jews and Gentiles. So an inordinate amount of the book of Romans is taken up with Jew and Gentile relationships.

Galatians is the same way. Galatians is talking about Jew and Gentile relationships. When you go to these New Testament books and read about these Jew and Gentile relationships, we have a tendency to think to ourselves, well, I can tell you about a famous pastor in history. When he got to romans 9, 10 and 11 he skipped it because he said that it’s irrelevant to the church in these days. I mean, that’s the view, right? It’s irrelevant; we don’t need it; it’s Jew and Gentile relationships.

So what we need to remember is that this was a living issue in the early church. The Judaizers were following Paul around, persecuting him. Why? Because he was going to their synagogues. And they saw him as an enemy of their religion. This is a guy who is trying to take from us.

And Paul is saying, “No. I’m not trying to take anything from you. I’m trying to give to you what you didn’t recognize to begin with when He was among you. And that’s your Messiah.” That’s the idea.

“The Family of God” continues

So that’s the way we ought to look at this 11-22 section. And what we ought to do is that we ought to see that Israel was the commonwealth of God. Gentiles were outside of that commonwealth. They’ve been brought in. And the solution is basically Christ. Christ brings two one; He brings unity in Himself.

There’s a lot we could say about this. And next time if you want me to bring up some of these things I will be glad to talk to you about them. But let me just say a couple of things now to round out the point. And then I’ll start out next time asking you if you have anything you want to look at.

I want you to notice. If Christ is the solution we ought to see it in the text. And we do. Paul says in verse 12, *“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 notice what he says. Christ is our peace (verse 14.) And this is a great thing. Christ is our peace. *“And He came and preached peace to you.”*

The question you have to ask yourself is this. When did Christ come and preach peace to Ephesus? He never visited Ephesus. When did He preach peace to Ephesus? Never. But in chapter 3 he’s going to talk about how Christ gave gifts to the church. And it’s through the preaching ministry that Christ preaches to the Ephesians. We’ll see that.

And then He established our peace (verse 15.) And *“He preached peace”* (verse 17.) That’s what I was just referencing there.

So what we find is, we find that there’s an issue between Jew and Gentile. And Christ brings unity to that. And I think that maybe what I’ll do is that I’ll say one final thing and then ask you if you have questions, and then we’ll close it out.

Okay. So what I want you to remember is that in Adam we find the gospel in Genesis 3:15 or 16, whichever verse that is. I think it’s 3:15.

Transcriber’s Note: Genesis 3:15, ESV. *“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”*

Jeff: And so we find the gospel. But notice that the gospel takes a specific form when it is given to Abram. And that is in Genesis 12:1-3.

Transcriber’s Note: Genesis 12:1-3, ESV. *“Now the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation. And I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’”*

Jeff: There are three promises that are given to Abraham—land, people, and “I’ll make you a blessing to the nations.” Notice that this blessing to the nations includes those who are outside of the family of Abraham. And he will give birth to one who will have twelve tribes, the twelve tribes of Israel.

But notice that when you get to Galatians chapter 3, verses 7-9, what does it say? It says that the gospel was preached to Abraham. And then it quotes Genesis 12:3, that He will be a blessing to the nations. And therefore he is the father of all who have faith.

“The Family of God” continues

Now this ought to help us to understand something. Israel was a vehicle, a vehicle for a number of things.

First of all it replicated Adam’s sin. And I’ve shown you that before. They are outside the Garden; they are cast out for disobedience; the same with Israel. Why? Because the law drives us to our need for the promise. It’s simple as that.

But think about that. All the while in romans 9:1-10 what do we have? In 1-5, Israel. Israel had benefits. They had the covenants, they had the worship; they had benefits.

But then he says in verse 6 and following that not every Israelite was an Israelite. *“Not all Israel is of Israel.”* And what does he mean by that? I’ll tell you what he means by that. He means that those who have faith in what? The gospel—those were Israelites.

And so when he gets to 11:25-26 and he talks about all Israel being saved, he means all Israel of Jews and Gentiles who have faith. In other words, all Israel, the Israel of God which believes the promise of the gospel, all Israel will be saved.

That’s something we can talk about when we get to Romans. But the idea is that Israel as an ethnic nation was not true Israel. True Israel is those who have faith in the gospel.

So I would argue for instance, as Paul says in Galatians 6:16, that they are *“the Israel of God.”* He’s speaking to a Gentile church. They are the Israel of God. And I would argue that we’re the Israel of God if we believe in the gospel. So that’s the idea. Do you have any questions or thoughts you want to finish with?

All right; let’s pray then. And what we’ll do next time is that we’ll start with chapter 3 and move on from there.

So let’s pray. Father, thank You for this day, for the time You’ve given, for the blessing of the gospel, for the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, we pray now that You’ll bless us in that gospel as we go forth. We ask again that You will equip our hands in Christ—our feet, our minds—and help us to do the good works prepared beforehand in advance for us to do. Father, we ask that in Jesus’ precious name. amen.

Brave Men: Amen. (*Applause*)