

# The Christian Arsenal

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## EPHESIANS 2:11-22

For the past three weeks we've been looking at the *book of Ephesians*. We've seen Paul tell the Ephesians of the riches that are theirs because they belong to Jesus.

We've seen as Paul has discussed the salvation of sinners **in general**...that we are saved by grace through faith and that salvation is not of ourselves...it is a gift of God...not as a result of works...and because it is a gift of God and not of works no man can boast about his salvation.

But today, we see Paul turn his attention to the work of Christ Jesus for Gentiles **in particular**.

See, most of the converts in the Ephesian church were Gentiles, but there were Jewish believers there as well. And apparently there was disunity in the Ephesian church between the Gentiles and the Jews. Most theologians believe that "Judaism" had reared its head in the church at Ephesus as it had in Galatia.

**In the early church many Jewish believers felt that the church was merely an extension of Israel and these folks insisted that Gentile converts to Christianity should be circumcised as part of the process of coming into a relationship with God.**

The Gentile believers resented this. And if we were to go to every passage of Scripture in **Acts** and the **Epistles** that address this, we would see what a hot issue this was.

The Gentiles were not perfect. Greeks felt superior to the Jews because they felt their culture and philosophy and education were superior to the Jews.

And for centuries the Jews had looked down on the Gentiles with an attitude of superiority that God never ever intended them to display.

Had God chosen the Jews to be His people...His own peculiar people? YES!

Ever since God called Abraham, God made a difference between Jew and Gentile. However, He made this difference not that the Jew would boast and feel superior and look down their noses at the Gentile, but that they might be a blessing to the Gentile. He wanted them to be the channel of His revelation and goodness to the heathen Gentile nations.

So, Paul takes this opportunity to address this disunity. He seeks to remind the mostly Gentile church of Ephesus about some truths concerning how God looks at the folks who make up His Son's church.

You know, it really doesn't matter what **you and I think** about a subject. It matters only what **God knows** about it.

So, Paul is going to remove all doubt in the minds of the Greek believers as well as the Jewish believers as to how God thinks about **both** of them. God is not pleased with disunity. God desires unity in His church...so let's look at what God's Word says about this...

**2:11-12...They were separated from God...**

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First of all, let's look at what Paul is saying about circumcision.

Paul says, "You Gentiles are called the 'Uncircumcision' by the so-called 'Circumcision'."

And Paul goes on to mention that circumcision is performed in the flesh by human hands.

What **was** circumcision...I mean, what did it represent? It was the sign of Israel's covenant relationship with God.

Then, Paul reminds the Gentiles where they were before they came to Jesus.

## 1) They were without Christ...

The Ephesians had religion. They worshiped Diana before they heard and believed the Gospel, but they were without Christ.

## 2) They were without citizenship...

God called the Jews and built them into a nation...what Paul calls here *the commonwealth of Israel*...God gave them His laws and His blessings. A Gentile could enter that nation only as a proselyte, but a Gentile wasn't born into the nation. Israel was God's nation in a way that was not true of any Gentile nation.

## 3) They were without covenants...

God had not made any covenant with the Gentile nation. He had included a blessing for us in the Abrahamic covenant...but He hadn't made a covenant with us. The Gentiles were aliens and strangers and the Jews never let the Gentiles forget it.

In fact, many Pharisees would pray this prayer daily...

***"O God, I thank Thee that I am not woman, a slave or a Gentile."***

## 3) They were without hope...

Man can live without a lot of things for a long time...but man cannot live long without hope.

All the culture and learning and philosophy of the ancient Greeks had failed to give the people any hope.

## 4) They were without God...

The Greeks had so many gods that they had even erected an altar "to the unknown god" just in case they had missed one. The problem was not that the Gentiles had **no** god but that they did not have the **true** God!

## 5) They were without excuse...

We're tempted to say, "Well, the poor Gentiles couldn't be held accountable. They weren't at fault because they were without God."

They didn't have God's Law written for them on stone tablets as the Jews did, but **Romans 2** tells us they had it written on their hearts and consciences. **Romans 1** tells us they had the revelation of His nature, His creation, and God said they had rejected that revelation. They had rejected Him and they were without excuse!

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Now, that's where the Gentiles were before salvation! And if you are a Gentile...that's where you were before salvation...and that's where I was before salvation! We were all separated from God!

## **Verses 13-18...Reconciled to God...**

This passage begins with that little word "but" and we said last week this little word always is a sign of a contrast...

Paul has just told the Ephesian Gentiles of their separation from God and now he's going to tell them of their reconciliation to God!

And he begins by saying, "Now in the Lord Jesus Christ you who formerly were separated...you who were far off have been reconciled...you have been brought near by the blood of Christ!"

Who were the ones who were far off? The Gentiles! To whom were they brought near? **To the Jews and to God!**

We see the word enmity used twice in these verses...don't we?

The blood of Jesus did away with a **two-fold enmity**.

- 1) **Gentiles were at enmity with the Jews,**  
and we see that in **verses 14 & 15**.

For centuries, the Jews had been different from the Gentiles...**in religion, culture, language, dress, diet and laws.**

And until Peter was sent to Cornelius and Gentiles began to come to Christ, the church really had no problems. I mean, at first all the members were all alike...the very early church was made up of Jewish believers. But when the Gentiles began to be saved, the problems began.

What was the problem? Well, it was the Law. The ceremonial law and civil law and moral law...all this had been given to the Jews and they wanted to impose it on the Gentiles.

**The Law was good. The Law was holy. The Law was of God. The Law was given as God's divine standard. The Law was given to show man what God expected of him.**

But, the Law was also given to show man that he could not keep it. The Law wasn't given to save anybody. James said that if we're guilty of breaking the Law at one point, we're guilty of breaking all the Law.

No one is saved by keeping the Law. The Law was given to show man his need for salvation.

The Law made a definite distinction between the Jew and the Gentile. This distinction was meant to draw the Gentile to the God of the Jews, but these divine ordinances given by God to Israel stood as **a wall...a barrier** between the Jew and the Greek.

In fact, there was a wall in the Jewish temple that separated the Court of the Gentiles from the rest of the temple area. And any Jew caught bringing a Gentile across that barrier could face death.

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In fact, Paul was accused of allowing a Gentile to cross that barrier and was almost killed because of it.

The Court of the Gentiles in the Temple was placed there by God for the very purpose of winning Gentiles to Himself. It was meant to be a place for Jewish evangelism of Gentiles, a place for winning proselytes to Judaism and of thereby bringing them “near.” It was that court, however, that the Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day used as a “den of thieves.”

**In order for Jews and Gentiles to be reconciled, this wall that separated the Jews and the Gentiles had to be destroyed! Jesus did this when He died on the Cross.**

The Law no longer holds sway over Jew or Gentile. Believers in Christ are not under Law...they're under grace!

The righteousness of the Law...the holiness of the Law is still God's standard...but the Law was fulfilled when Jesus died on the Cross and His righteousness was imputed to believers by His shed blood.

The death of the Lord Jesus removed the barrier that once divided Jew and Gentile. Now, the two are made into one new man ***thus establishing peace.***

***Galatians 3*** tells us ***“there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female...”*** We are all one in Christ Jesus.

A story that comes out of World War II is that of a group of American soldiers who lost their buddy in battle.

They carried his body to the only cemetery in the area, which happened to be Catholic. When the priest was told that the dead man was not Catholic he said, “I am sorry, but he cannot be buried here.”

The disheartened and discouraged soldiers decided to do what they thought was next best, and during the night they buried their friend just outside the cemetery fence.

They returned the next morning to pay their last respects, but they could not find a grave outside the fence. When they told the priest of their quandary, he said, “The first part of the night I stayed awake sorry for what I told you. And the second part of the night I spent moving the fence.”

When Jesus Christ ***“broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity,”*** He moved the fence, in order that ***“in Himself He might make the two into one new man.”***

Well, not only were Gentiles at enmity with the Jews, but

**2) Both Gentile and Jew were at enmity with God...verse 16-18...**

The Gentiles were far off...the Jews were near, but they were all equally lost! They were at war not only with each other but also with God.

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**Verse 18** tells us we both, Jew and Gentile alike have access to the Father in the Holy Spirit. Jesus said no man comes to the Father unless the Spirit draws him. Jesus also said that no man comes to the Father except through Him.

And when the Spirit draws us to Christ then Christ reconciles us to His Father.

I guess most soloists have a “signature song” and the song that came to my mind in connection with this was the song ... “This One’s With Me”...

**“Father, this one’s with Me,  
Part of the family...  
One of the reasons I died on Calvary.**

**Father, welcome him in,  
I paid for the price for him...  
Father, oh Father, this one’s with me.”**

We were separated...We have been reconciled, but we also have been united...we have been made one...

- we were made one in Christ...**verses 19-22**...

Paul has repeated the word “one” over and over...

In **verse 15**, he speaks of *one new man*...

In **verse 16**, he speaks of *one body*...

In **verse 18**, he speaks of *one Spirit*...

All spiritual distance and division have been overcome by the blood of Christ. And in the closing verses Paul gives three pictures that illustrate the unity of believers, whether they be Jews or Gentiles.

## **a) We are united in God’s kingdom...verse 19a...**

Sin divided mankind, but the blood of Jesus has united mankind. We are all a part of the kingdom of God. Our citizenship is in heaven.

## **b) We are united in God’s family...verse 19b...**

It’s good to be united in God’s **kingdom**, but it’s also good to be united in God’s **family**. **We are all brothers and sisters in one family, no matter what racial, national, cultural, or physical distinctions we may possess. We all have the same Father.**

**And if believers have no distinction before God, they should have no distinction among themselves.** We are equal in every spiritual way before God.

**If God accepts each one of us, how can we not accept one another!!**

**Well, one last thing...we are united in God’s kingdom, we are united in God’s family, and**

## **c) we are united in God’s temple...verses 20-22...**

We are God’s temple!

And He tells us the foundation of this temple is made up of the prophets of the **Old Testament** and the apostles of the **New Testament**.

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Then he tells us the Lord Jesus is the cornerstone.  
Please turn over to **Matthew 21**. There's a passage of Scripture that I believe ties in so well with this lesson...

## **Matthew 21:33-44...**

I don't ever want us to forget that the gospel was offered to the Gentiles because it was rejected by the nation of Israel as a whole. I don't ever want us to forget that the stone that the builders rejected has become our chief cornerstone!

And then Paul tells us we are being **fitted together**, and we are **growing** into a holy temple in the Lord. The church is under construction today. And it will be under construction until Jesus comes for His church. We are growing in numbers...and we are growing, hopefully in spiritually maturity...in sanctification.

We've seen the **foundation** and the **framework** of this temple...let's quickly look at the **function** of it...

In the **book of Genesis**, God walked with His people. In the **book of Exodus** God decided to dwell with His people.

God dwelt in the Tabernacle until Israel's sins caused His glory to depart.

Then God dwelt in the Temple, but Israel sinned again and His glory departed once more.

God's next dwelling place was the body of Christ, but men took the Lord Jesus and nailed Him to the Cross.

Today, through His Holy Spirit, God dwells in the Church...God doesn't dwell in these walls of brick and mortar and sheetrock and glass...and when the new sanctuary is finished, God won't dwell there either! God dwells in the hearts of those who have trusted Christ! He dwells in the Church!

**That's the function of the temple!** We are to allow God to dwell in each one of us in the Person of His dear Holy Spirit!

**I'm just glad He included me in all this!**

Isn't the **book of Ephesians** rich? I mean, as we look back over this lesson, we can't help but praise God for what He has done for us. His grace is truly amazing!

He has reconciled us to each other and to Himself.

Paul tells us in **2 Corinthians** that God has given to us the ministry of reconciliation.

And we should be about our Father's business of reconciling as many folks as we can to God through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In 1912 when the **Titanic** sailed from England it was supposed to be unsinkable. But, the **Titanic** hit an iceberg and it did what it wasn't supposed to do. It began to sink. The **Titanic** didn't have nearly enough lifeboats on board...less than half the number that was needed.

When word began to go out that the ship had gone down, the docks of Liverpool, England became swamped with loved ones of the passengers...trying to get information, trying to see if their loved ones had perished or had survived.

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The ocean liner folks finally put up lists on the windows...one list said **THOSE KNOWN TO BE LOST**

And the other list said **THOSE KNOW TO BE SAVED.**

And when confirmation would come in that a certain person had gone down with the ship, his name was entered on the **LOST** list. When confirmation came in that someone had gotten on a lifeboat and his life had been spared, his name was listed on the **SAVED** list.

And for hours and days, thousands of people pressed their way to those two windows...searching to see which list their loved ones' names were on.

And God looks at us the same way. Now, I'm not saying God has to look at a list...He already knows who is saved and who is lost.

What I'm saying is He doesn't look at how much money we have or don't have.

Or what **color our skin is...**

Or **how much education we have...**

Or **how successful in life we've been...**

Or **what nationality we are...**

Or **anything else...**

He looks at **whether we're saved or lost.**

He looks to see if **we who were once far off have been brought near.**

He looks at whether or not **we have been reconciled to Himself by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.**

He looks to see **we're being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.**

He looks to see **whether we're saved or lost.**

**Think about it...**

**Through what the Lord Jesus Christ did at Calvary...**

**Aliens become citizens.**

**Strangers become family.**

**Heathens become the temple of the true God.**

**The hopeless inherit the promises of God.**

**Those without Christ become one in Christ.**

**Those far off are brought near.**

**And the godless are reconciled to God!**

**Therein is the reconciliation of men to God and of men to men.**

**Praise His holy name!!!**