

"United in One Body"

Ephesians 2:11-22

Part 1

Introduction: Last week in our study of Ephesians we were in chapter 2 and verse 10.

Notice Ephesians 2:10

The word "WORKMANSHIP" is the word "poiēma". This is the very word that we get the word POEM from. The idea here is that we are God's POEM which He is writing. The word can also mean "MASTERPIECE". The idea is that we are God's poem that He is writing and the situations and the events in our lives are the pen which God uses to write His poem. This word is only used one other time in the Bible, and it is in Romans 1.

Romans 1:18-20

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

¹⁹ Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

*²⁰ For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood **by the things that are made**, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:*

This phrase is the very same word and what is being said here is that the creation is God's poem by which testifies of His power and Godhead.

Now, we are a greater testimony of His power. We are His MASTERPIECE. Our changed lives are the testimony that tells of the power and the grace of God even more so than creation tells of His power.

Last week I ended with Paul's words to the Corinthians which are a great reminder to us.

2 Corinthians 3:2-3

*² Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, **known and read of all men**:*

³ Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

We are God's testifying MASTERPIECE. Therefore, we are to live in a way that others can see the "POEM" which God is writing with our lives. Let me remind you where we are headed.

Ephesians 4:1

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.

God has performed a miracle within each believer and therefore we are to live in a way that honors God's work in us and so that others can see His grace and power in our lives.

Let me remind you quickly of what we have seen in this study of Ephesians. In chapter 1 we looked at who we are IN CHRIST. We glimpsed the spiritual blessings that we have IN CHRIST. In chapter 2 we were able to see how we went from the depths of sin to the heights of spiritual riches. This was all by the grace of God as we exercised our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Notice Ephesians 2:8-9

So, it is God's grace that lifted us from the pit of sin and placed us in the body of Jesus Christ. Now as we proceed on Paul is going to teach us about the unity which we have POSITIONALLY IN THE BODY OF JESUS CHRIST. Before we get to our text let me show you what is recorded in Galatians.

Galatians 3:26-28

²⁶ *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*

²⁷ *For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

²⁸ *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*

This unity in the body of Jesus Christ is the answer to Jesus' prayer in John 17.

John 17:20-23

²⁰ *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;*

²¹ *That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*

²² And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

²³ I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

This prayer is answered POSITIONALLY for we are all one IN CHRIST. But practically we have not reached that perfect unity. This is still a work in progress. Let me show you what it looked like in Corinth.

1 Corinthians 1:10-13

¹⁰ Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

¹¹ For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

¹² Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

¹³ Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

This is a glimpse of the divisions in Corinth.

In the early church days, there were great divisions between the Jews and the Gentiles and that is what is going to be addressed in the remaining part of Ephesians 2. We do not see this here at Claysburg, but there are still divisions within Gentile churches today. Divisions because of backgrounds, wealth, occupations, families, traditions, levels of spiritual growth and so on. Remember what James wrote?

James 2:1-6

My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.

² For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

³ And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

⁴ Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

⁵ *Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?*

⁶ *But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?*

Before we get into this section, I want to help you to understand the contention between the Gentiles and the Jews. Jonah helps us to see the contention.

Jonah 1:1-3

Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

² *Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.*

³ *But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.*

After Jonah was in the great fish for three days, he then received a second chance from God, and he went to Nineveh.

Jonah 3:4-5, 10

⁴ *And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.*

⁵ *So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.*

¹⁰ *And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.*

Now let me show you Jonah's reaction.

Jonah 4:1-3

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

² *And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art*

a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

³ *Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.*

Jonah was angry because God withheld His judgment. He desired to see the Gentiles destroyed.

The Gentiles saw the Jews as slaves and they continually oppressed them, and they killed them. The Jews saw the Gentiles as fuel for the fires of hell.

The people of Israel were God's chosen people and they were truly blessed. In Romans 9 we see some of the blessings enjoyed by the nation of Israel.

Romans 9:4-5

⁴ *Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;*

⁵ *Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.*

Israel was blessed of God because they were chosen to be His representatives. As one man has said, "Israel was not to be a bucket, but they were intended to be a channel". They were called to be different and they were called to manifest God to the rest of the world. But instead of being a channel they became prideful and they came to despise the Gentiles. The Gentiles could see the pride and the self-righteousness, and they hated the Jews for it. This carried right into the early church and we shall see glimpses of it in the section before us.

Now we have come to where we are in our study today.

I. Social Outcasts

Notice Ephesians 2:11

Paul commands them to REMEMBER. They were to think back to the time before they were saved.

First of all, they were Gentiles IN THE FLESH and for that reason they were called the Uncircumcision by the Circumcision. The term Uncircumcision was used by the Jews to belittle the Gentiles. Someone has said that it would have been a term then that would be equal to the N-WORD today. It was term that was used to mock the Gentiles.

Let me show you what David said when he faced Goliath.

1 Samuel 17:26

²⁶ And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?

Getting back to what Paul is saying, he is reminding these Gentiles that they were outcasts in the Jewish society. They were viewed as being worthless.

But now that they were IN CHRIST, they were the riches of God's grace. They were His poem. They were His Masterpiece.

Let me give you two purposes for which Paul brings their past up.

- 1. For them to remember this would keep them from treating others as they were once treated.**

Isaiah 51:1

Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.

It is good for us to remember what we were before we were saved. This will keep us from being so quick to judge others.

Matthew 7:1-5

Judge not, that ye be not judged.

² For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

³ And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

⁴ Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

⁵ Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

- 2. It would remind them of how significant they were in God's plan now.**

The world can make us feel at times as though we are nobodies. But we are royalty. We are commissioned by God to manifest Jesus Christ to a lost and a dying world.

2 Corinthians 5:19-20

¹⁹ To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

²⁰ Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

Matthew 5:14-16

¹⁴ Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

¹⁵ Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Conclusion:

Notice Ephesians 2:11 again.

Circumcision was done with hands and it was an Old Testament sign of God's Covenant people. It was also a picture of what God desired to do for His people. There might be those in Ephesus who tried to make these believers feel insignificant because of not being circumcised but Paul reminds them that circumcision was done with hands.

There was another circumcision that was far more important.

Romans 2:28-29

²⁸ For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

²⁹ But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

The mark of the Covenant today is not circumcision, but it is the Holy Spirit.

We may be social outcasts, but we are the most important people on the earth. We are the representatives of Jesus Christ.