

Book	Ephesian – Study 7
Topic	
Reference	Ephesians 2 : 11-22
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SCHEME:

In chapter 1 Paul prays for power. In chapter 2, the first part is a power for transformation of the individual and this second part is the power of transformation of a community. So verses 11-22 can be divided into three sections.

- The first section is from 11 to 12 which is basically what we were before.
- The second section is from verse 13 to 18, which is what Christ did for us
- The third section is from verse 19 to 22 and it is what we are now.

*Ephesians 2:11-22 (ESV) Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the **uncircumcision**” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— 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.*

So the gentiles lack these five things:

- They don’t have circumcision
- They were separated from Christ.
- The alienated from Israel, which is basically the chosen nation of God.
- Strangers to the covenant of promise
- No hope and without God

This describes every person in the world except Jews. Now why is it important basically to talk about covenant. We don’t do much systematic theology in Gamma, we basically do biblical theology which means we go through book by book but there are some strands of systematic theology which is very important for us to understand. Number 1 of this strand is basically covenant. If you look, there are strands of ideas that can go across from the Old Testament to the New Testament and one of these ideas is covenant. So covenant is very important concept. Covenant is basically a binding legal agreement. It is a contract. It is one where you have a new level of intimacy between the two convening parties but there is an exchange. You exchange freedom for hope. Lastly, the difference between this covenant is that, is a covenant where God can deliver covenants, whereas the other people cannot. So if you look at the power of covenants

*Exodus 2:24-25 (ESV) And God heard their groaning, and **God remembered his covenant** with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. 25 God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.*

Whenever you see the word, God remembered, it doesn’t mean that he forgot it. So in the Old Testament, every time when it mentions the word remember, it means it remembers with some action. It is that I will do something for you, it is always the case. This is important in the covenant

because it is the only way where you can actually as it were get God into some sort of agreement with you that will actually obligate him to act.

God being infinite can do whatever he wants, the only way you can grab him and sort of predict his activity is through a covenant and that's a covenant which he voluntarily gives to you. God remembered the people of Israel in Egypt and he brought them out.

*Luke 1:68-74 (ESV) Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people 69 and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, 70 as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, 71 that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; 72 to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to **remember his holy covenant**, 73 the oath that he **swore to our father Abraham**, to grant us 74 that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,*

So therefore when Jesus came again, it is in response to God remembering his covenant. So covenants are extremely most important things. So there are different types of covenant in the Bible.

- There is a parity covenant, which is a mutual compact between people.
- Royal grants where a royal person, God, gives you something. For example, something you don't deserve. 2 Samuel 7:14, it is when God gives David a promise that from now onwards to the end of time there will be a kingdom of David that his son will never leave the throne.
- Suzerein-Vassal covenant where I do something for you, but you have to do something for me, because if you disobey I will cast you out and Israel disobeyed and they were sent to the exile.

So there a lot of biblical covenants, the first biblical covenant was with Adam. The next covenant was with Noah. Then Abrahamic covenant, after that Mosaic covenant and then Davidic covenant and then you got New Covenant. This covenant is the one that covers all the other covenants is subsumed under the new deal.

*Jeremiah 31:31-34 (ESV) Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. 33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: **I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.** And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."*

This is the new Covenant where God will actually put his law into their hearts through the Holy Spirit. That's why when Jesus comes and in the Lord Supper he said, this is the blood of the New Covenant. So covenant has symbols of God. So this new covenant subsumes all the old covenants. So covenants are things that you can use to predict God's behavior. When you are in trouble all you have to do is to remember, because with that promise God will come and save you. So every time we have a Lord Supper, it is a sign of the New Covenant that when every time you suffer and

you are persecuted, when you actually eat the Lord's Supper, you are reminded that God will keep this promise to you and the proof of that is all the previous covenants from Mosaic Covenant, Davidic Covenant, all the covenants God has never broken them. We have broken them and God has never broken them.

So therefore covenants are important because the covenant means hope and this hope is a certainty. We actually have human governments. Time and time, every human government starts off with hope and because of the sinfulness of man they will be stealing soon. It is a matter of when only.

Culture at that time needs to address the society's aspirations, happiness, sadness and death. They need hope, but if you look in the olden days where this was written at the time of the Greeks they actually were the top two philosophers, the Epicureans and the stoics. They had no covenant. They had a philosophy.

Epicurean	Stoics
Modify your expectations, your desires because life is so difficult.	Modify your response to events.
Don't worry about God or death, focus on enjoying the good things.	Focus on how you react to things, focus on wisdom, courage and self-control.
These are natural and necessary desires, food, a place to stay, good friends. Focus on these things. Don't focus on unnecessary desires. So if you avoid unnatural desires you will have a good life according to Epicureans. So it is easy to endure the terrible things in life because acute pain is sharp but short. Chronic pain is long but dull. If life is too bad suicide, these are Epicureans. It actually comes down to atheist today.	The stoics are a little bit different. They don't just look at modifying the things, the desire. What they do is they modify their response and the contemporary equivalents are Buddhism and Taoism. Buddhism says, all desire is bad, so I better not expect many things. Everything is predestined, you cannot change events but we can change our attitude. So therefore there are some things up to us and something not up to us. For example, things beyond your control, other peoples' actions and opinions, reputation, health and wealth. Otherwise it is slavery when you focus on the things beyond your control. If you are so upset always control with what other people think of you, then you will always be a slave. So basically things are within your control, these are the things that you should be focusing on.

The problem with this philosophy is that you lead to very impoverished life, you are very passive to evil because when evil comes you just adjust your attitude to evil, you don't overcome evil. Ignore the source of evil, absence of evil, absence of intense love, absence of solid eternal future. These two Greek philosophies collapsed when the plague came. When people die from wars and plagues. Within 300 years, the Greek philosophy was wept aside for Christianity, because Christianity gives you hope. So the most important thing is basically hope.

Bertrand Russel says, “any philosophy worth taking seriously would have to be built upon a firm foundation of unyielding despair.”

Today’s philosophy, even Bertrand Russell recognizes has to be built on an unyielding foundation of despair. Because there is no hope.

Leo Tolstoy is a very famous Russian author. He writes, “today or tomorrow sickness and death will come (they had come already) to those I love or to me; nothing will remain but stench and worms. Sooner or later my affairs, whatever they may be, will be forgotten, and I shall not exist. Then why go on making any effort? . . . How can man fail to see this? And how go on living? That is what is surprising! One can only live while one is intoxicated with life; as soon as one is sober it is impossible not to see that it is all a mere fraud and a stupid fraud! That is precisely what it is: there is nothing either amusing or witty about it, it is simply cruel and stupid.”

Leo Tolstoy lived a life without love, without hope and eventually he became a Christian. This kind of despairing, secular atheistic philosophy has no hope. We cannot live without hope.

George Lucas, famous for Starwars says, “There is no why. We are. Life is beyond reason.”

Carl Sagan, a famous cosmologist writes, ‘The hard truth seems to be this: We live in a vast and awesome universe in which, daily, suns are made and worlds destroyed, where humanity clings to an obscure clod of rock. The significance of our lives and our fragile realm derives from our own wisdom and courage. We are the custodians of life’s meaning. We would prefer it to be otherwise, of course, but there is no compelling evidence for a cosmic Parent who will care for us and save us from ourselves. It is up to us.’

Life without hope is actually very black kind of philosophy if there is no God. So hope is very important.

ISRAEL AND GENTILES

*Ephesians 2:11-22 (ESV) Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— 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.***

He is using the example of Israel and the gentiles. Inside the temple there was place for Jews to worship and there is a middle wall. There was a court of the gentiles. Gentiles cannot cross the barrier. In fact, there was a sign there, if you cross this barrier, we will chop your head off. We will kill you. In fact, Paul was accused of bringing a gentile within this confines. What separates them is the fact that you got to prepare to go to the temple, you have got to have certain clean foods, they have ceremonial laws that separate Israel from non-Jews. They have the gift and the gift is basically the law, but if you look in human life giftedness is always a cause of division. So circumcision is a division, they will divide you whether you are circumcised. These are modern day Jews. One of their key leaders say,

Goyim [non-Jews] were born only to serve us. Without that, they have no place in the world – only to serve the People of Israel.” “Why are gentiles needed? They will work, they will plow, they will reap. We will sit like an effendi and eat.”

Here is another man, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson says,

We do not have a case of profound change in which a person is merely on a superior level. Rather we have a case of . . . a totally different species. . . . The body of a Jewish person is of a totally different quality from the body of [members] of all nations of the world . . . The difference of the inner quality [of the body] . . . is so great that the bodies would be considered as completely different species.

These are Jewish leaders today and that’s why they are very arrogant.

This is the reason why the Talmud states that there is an halachic difference in attitude about the bodies of non-Jews [as opposed to the bodies of Jews]: “their bodies are in vain”. . . . An even greater difference exists in regard to the soul. Two contrary types of soul exist, a non-Jewish soul comes from three satanic spheres, while the Jewish soul stems from holiness.

This is absolutely bizarre. Martin Luther’s recommendation for Jews,

- (1) burn their schools and synagogues;
- (2) transfer Jews to community settlements;
- (3) confiscate all Jewish literature, which was blasphemous;
- (4) prohibit rabbis to teach, on pain of death;
- (5) deny Jews safe-conduct, so as to prevent the spread of Judaism;
- (6) appropriate their wealth and use it to support converts and to prevent the lewd practice of usury;
- (7) assign Jews to manual labour as a form of penance.

Hitler took all these reforms. On either way there is so much prejudice but now what has Christ done

*13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has **broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility** 15 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, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.*

This is what Christ has done. So basically the middle wall is now broken down and what separates the Jew from the non-Jew is basically the dividing wall hostility. We are all separated in some way, whether Jews or non-Jews. There is a wall of hostility because we are always comparing with the other person has. We are always looking at the other person through the eyes of our own giftedness as it were. There is a dividing wall.

We tend to see people through the lens of our own culture. We look through the strength of our own culture when I see others. We always do that and that's why there is so much hostility. The blood of Christ brings us together through the cross and through the one spirit. So this is what Christ has done,

*Ephesians 2:13-16 (ESV) But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by **the blood of Christ**. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 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, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body **through the cross**, thereby killing the hostility. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in **one Spirit** to the Father*

So he means that, all these dividing walls, religious, cultural, racial are all broken down. Because Jesus sacrifice is enough for everybody, you don't have to do all the Old Testament sacrifices any more, you don't have to obey all the ceremonial laws, all these are abolished.

Hebrews 10:1 (ESV) For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.

So basically the sacrifices of the law are shadow of the good things to come, but when the good things come, you don't need these things anymore. The law and the ordinances were a shadow. So basically once the ultimate lamb comes, you don't need to go and offer lamb anymore.

Hebrews 10:11-14 (ESV) And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, 13 waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. 14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

So there is no longer any ceremonial law, we just have one sacrifice which is Christ Jesus and that is the one that will bring us to God. So he has brought us near and he has made us both one, one new man. We are not equal, we are one, we are different but we are united. In the church, in society, we are not equal. We were never created equal and the whole simplistic idea is that everybody must be equal. Jesus didn't die to make everybody equal, he died to make everybody one. There is unity in diversity and that's the thing. So through the cross, we no longer let our differences divide us because we belong to the same family.

So therefore you actually can preserve your differences and yet forge a unity. So you got unity and diversity, the Jew decrease in privileges and the gentiles increase in privilege, because we have received the same Abrahamic promises.

*Matthew 8:10-12 (ESV) When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. 11 I tell you, **many will come from east and west** and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, 12*

while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Jesus is telling that one day the gentiles will come, all will sit in the same table and the Jews will be outside. This is Jesus telling that under the new covenant we will be included.

*Romans 11:17-18 (ESV) But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a **wild olive shoot, were grafted in** among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree,*

*Romans 2:28-29 (ESV) For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. 29 But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a **matter of the heart, by the Spirit,** not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.*

So now the New Covenant includes all of us. We were not part of the covenant before but because of the death of Christ, we now enter the covenant because being part of the covenant is not from racial descent or ethnic descent, it is from the heart, it is from faith and this makes it all equal.

*Galatians 3:28-29 (ESV) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all **one in Christ Jesus.** 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, **heirs according to promise.***

We are all united in one family but we may have different gifts and different positions.

*Colossians 3:11 (ESV) Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but **Christ is all, and in all.***

So it doesn't matter who you are, you have differences. The Bible recognizes these differences, you don't have to make it flat, because that is not how God created us. We need to preserve those differences but we are all united in one.

*Ephesians 6:8-9 (ESV) knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. 9 Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is **both their Master and yours** is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.*

Here he is saying, a situation where there is an employer and employee, master and slave. The differences are not important; the important thing is you all have one boss. That is how Christianity brings about this concept of unity in diversity, otherwise you would be asking a woman to be a man or man to be a woman, that is a wrong concept.

1 Corinthians 12:18-20 (ESV) But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

So we are all different parts. So we need to celebrate those differences. So the Cross changes the way we see ourselves and see others. The Cross actually flattens the way we look at ourselves and

the way we look at others. So we are humbled when we look at ourselves, we are humbled when we look at other people.

Identity no longer wrapped in how others look at us but how we can enjoy our ethnicity. When we are all under the cross, how we look at other people and how we look at ourselves is totally flattened because of what Christ has done for us. So we no longer look at people through the lens of our own superiority, because the cross has flattened it all out. So when the cross has flattened it all out, it allows us to enjoy our differences. Our differences is what makes us special.

Society tries to flatten all the differences, when you flatten all the differences you destroy the differences which God has put into enrich your life and this lesson needs to be learned by the church of Jesus Christ, because if we want to succeed we cannot flatten all the differences, we are like one nation, we work for one goal but we must enjoy and celebrate our differences.

It is not where you are from, your cultural background, your ethnic background is important. The important thing is your direction in life.

identity no longer wrapped up on how others look at us, we can enjoy our differences. Everybody is precious because the blood of Christ has broken down the hostility and when we come to church the worst thing that we can do is to build up walls again. Where God has knocked them down by the cross, we start building up ethnic barriers, race, groups. The church should be a place where non-Christians can come in and see there are no barriers and that differences are celebrated and it is beautiful, unity in diversity.