

This is a Great Mystery

A Study of Ephesians

Week 11 – Ephesians 2:10-15

Prayer – Dear Jesus, you are our peace. You have done all that is necessary for us to be saved and, for that, we give you endless thanks and praise. In our thankfulness, lead us to live lives of good works, of light, and of peace. The only way we can do so is by being brought near to you through your Word and Sacrament; bless us through those means and grant that our faith in and knowledge of you would grow today and always. Amen.

From Last Time – It sounds like you got through everything with Pastor Plagenz. Is there anything that is lingering from verses 6-9?

Verse 10 – αὐτοῦ γάρ ἐσμεν ποίημα, κτισθέντες ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἐπὶ ἔργοις ἀγαθοῖς οἷς προητοίμασεν ὁ θεός, ἵνα ἐν αὐτοῖς περιπατήσωμεν.

For we are his [God's] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared in advance so that in them we would live.

1. This first nine verses of this chapter have made it clear that works have no place in earning a person salvation. So how can Paul say that we have been created for good works?
2. What else from chapter 1 (verses 5 and 11) did God prepare in advance for us?
3. In what ways does God prepare good works in advance for us?
 - a. What comfort does that bring you in living your life of sanctification?

Verses 11 and 12 – Διὸ μνημονεύετε ὅτι ποτὲ ὑμεῖς τὰ ἔθνη ἐν σαρκί, οἱ λεγόμενοι ἀκροβυστία ὑπὸ τῆς λεγομένης περιτομῆς ἐν σαρκὶ χειροποιήτου, ¹² ὅτι ἦτε τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ χωρὶς Χριστοῦ, ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ξένοι τῶν διαθηκῶν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, ἐλπίδα μὴ ἔχοντες καὶ ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ.

Therefore, remember that at one time you, the Gentiles in the flesh—the ones said to be uncircumcised by those who are said to be “of the circumcision” in the flesh by human hands—[remember] that at that time, you were apart from Christ, having been excluded from the citizenship of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of the promise. You were without hope and without God in the world.

4. Let's start with the overarching perspective of these verses. The first chapter started with salvation being decided completely by God through and in Christ; the first part of the second chapter takes a different approach, saying that salvation is NOT accomplished by human works; this second half of the second chapter is leading into saying that salvation does NOT come through someone's _____.

5. So then, why does Paul bring up that the Gentiles were excluded from Israel’s citizenship? Isn’t that saying that salvation is dependent on where you come from? Explain your answer.
 - a. What was so important about being a citizen in the nation of Israel? In other words, what did Israel have that no other nation had?

6. Notice, too, what Paul leads with in the list of things they were separated from—Christ. Christ is always the focus of Paul’s ministry and he always wanted people to remember that everything comes back to Christ. It’s a good reminder for us that Israel, along with the covenants and promises of God, circumcision, practically everything in the Old Testament, was meant to point to Christ. It brings to mind **Colossians 2:17**. Let’s look up and read that passage.

7. Notice how God and hope are coupled together. You can’t have one without the other. They are completely inseparable. No God? No hope. We will see the same to be true of Christ and peace in just a few verses. How is that viewpoint different than what we hear in the world today?

8. Short note on the Greek: ἄθεοι is kind of a made-up word. It’s only used here in the entire Bible. It means “without God,” ἄ meaning “without” and θεος meaning “God.” There are prepositions that mean without that Paul could have used. Why the Spirit inspired him to do this? We don’t know.

What comments and questions do you have?

Verse 13 – οὐκ ἔστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ὅτε μακρὰν ἐγενήθητε ἐγγὺς ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

9. It’s been a while since I’ve been able to highlight this but look at the frequency with which Christ is mentioned! You have been brought near to Christ by Christ. Also look at the picture being painted here by Paul—is there any effort or work or contribution being made by “you”?

10. What things were Gentiles (ourselves included) far away from at one point?

11. Recall the importance of the blood of Christ from Ephesians 1:7 and Hebrews 9:22.

Verses 14 and 15- Αὐτὸς γάρ ἐστιν ἡ εἰρήνη ἡμῶν, ὁ ποιήσας τὰ ἀμφότερα ἐν καὶ τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ λύσας, τὴν ἔχθραν ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ, ¹⁵ τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν καταργήσας, ἵνα τοὺς δύο κτίσῃ ἐν αὐτῷ εἰς ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον ποιῶν εἰρήνην

For he himself is our peace, who has made both of them one and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility in his flesh, ¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments with its ordinances. [He did this] to create in himself one new person from two, [thus] making peace.

12. Think of all the things the Gentiles (we) were far away from, according to verse 13. Now, because we are brought near, we have peace in Christ.

- a. A few translations take the simple first phrase to say, “For Christ himself has brought us peace.” Aside from the issue of not taking the clearest Greek translation, what else changes with that translation choice?
- b. One of the main thrusts of Paul’s letter to the Galatians is this same idea of peace, regardless of nationality or bloodline. Read **Galatians 3:26-28** to see the summary of his thoughts.
 - i. Again, notice where the focus and foundation is:

13. In verse 15, the word “abolish” can bring about some discussion among Christians. In what way is the law abolished? In what way is the law not abolished?

- a. In what ways could that be confusing, even to seasoned Christians?

14. I would have to do some more digging on this to be completely certain, but it seems like Paul is lumping up all the different words for rules (commandments, law, ordinances) to show the extent to which Christ has abolished the law. Perhaps ordinances were “less important” than commandments in the eyes of some. Or the law is the generic term; commandments is more specific; ordinances is most specific. There’s no question to answer, I’m just sharing my thoughts.

What comments and questions do you have?

We might try to finish chapter 2 next week. We’ll see how many discussion points come up in studying the last seven verses.

Closing Prayer – In Christ There is No East or West CW 539 v. 1, 3
**In Christ there is no east or west, In him no south or north,
But one great fellowship of love Throughout the whole wide earth.**

**So, brothers, sisters, praise his name Who died to set us free
From sin, division, hate, and blame, From spite and enmity!**