

## Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018

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**Eph. 2:11-22 NKJ** <sup>11</sup> Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh-- who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands-- <sup>12</sup> that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, <sup>15</sup> having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, <sup>16</sup> and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. <sup>17</sup> And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. <sup>19</sup> Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*, <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, <sup>22</sup> in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Three basic thoughts that Paul lays out for us in this section

1. We were separated from God and missing out on all these blessings
2. Christ tore down the wall that separates us from Him and one another
3. Christ built us up into one body one family in which we now have all the blessings of heaven

Remember our theme: The riches we have in Christ, and the poor substitutes this world offers in their place.

Paul starts right off with reminding us that there was a time when we did not have these riches in Christ. Remember that says Paul and compare it to what you know have.

We were “without” that is the best word to describe the unbeliever, without circumcision, without peace, without citizenship, without the “covenants of promise.”

**Eph. 2:12 NKJ** <sup>12</sup> that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

One of the greatest gifts the founders of the United States gave to us is the first amendment. It is a covenant guaranteeing the freedom of speech and religion. You could strip away all the other amendments, that one is worth more than all the others combined, by far. Yet consider how easily many American citizen would throw that away. I heard that the Canadian immigration website went down the night that Trump won because so many American's were looking into it. Canada doesn't have the 1<sup>st</sup> amendment. It doesn't have that guarantee of the freedom of speech. So those people would throw away that covenant because they dislike the way that one presidential election went.

Far better than that we have this guarantee from God, a guarantee of forgiveness of sins, the covenant of the promise. Yet so many people throw that away even quicker.

Paul here mentions the history of the people of Israel. Their history was one of constantly throwing away this promise from God. "I will be your God and you will be my people." But they constantly thrown it away because they thought it would be more fun to worship Baal and have orgies and sacrifice their children than to have this "covenant of promise"

We talked about this covenant last. The promise was written with the blood of Christ, but the seal the evidence that it is ours is the Holy Spirit.

A history book I was reading mentioned that there were some 7,000 "eternal covenants" the Romans made, none of them last more than two years.

The covenant of our God is never broken, God has never broken it, and it remains forever.

In order to bring us this "covenant" Jesus had to tear down the wall that separates us, the wall that separates us from God (our sin) but also the wall that separates us from one another. The riches of God are peace and unity.

**Eph. 2:17-18 NKJ <sup>17</sup> And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.**

Does anyone know what Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain announced not just to Great Britain but to the world on September 1938? "Peace in our time! Peace to the World!" One year later September 1939 Great Britain was at war with Germany. This peace was useless, as human made peace always is.

Here is God's plan for unity: die for the sins of all people, preach the Gospel, work in the hearts of men to bring as many to faith as possible, then when the time is right gather us altogether in heaven. That unity is fulfilled only in heaven. Yes we have unity now in Christ, but it is a unity of faith. That is it is something we believe because the bible tells us it is so, it is not something that we can ever see. We don't see that unity on this earth even among believers.

Again we so often we trade in the peace of God, God's plan for peace for an earthly peace, man's plan for peace. What is the danger of striving for a unity on this earth that we can see:

#1 - we lose the focus, so quickly it become all about the earthly unity. Then it becomes all about politics. You see this in many churches where you can disagree about baptism. You can disagree about vicarious atonement, even whether it's ok to be homosexual. You can disagree with all those things but you have to be on board with their politics. You noticed they have replaced the unity we have in Christ with a unity about man's ideas of policies about how to make this world great.

#2 - when it doesn't work and it never does we can easily lose faith.

Every time the Bible tells us something is "by faith" that is flag reminding us this is something we can't see but God promises is ours. Any of those things that are by faith, if we try and achieve them on this earth, if we try and make them something we can see then we are trading the riches of God for the poverty of man.

**Eph. 2:21-22 NKJ <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, <sup>22</sup> in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.**

We are being built into the body of Christ. We are united in Christ even if it doesn't look like it, but this is not a unity that destroys all differences and social structures and hierarchies. Instead it recognizes for each person our uniqueness and our place and unites in one body. Just as the head and the hands and the feet are unique and different but work together in one body

These are the riches that we have in Christ:

The wall that separated us (sin) and kept us from the riches of Christ is torn down

The Eternal Covenant which was written in the blood of Christ, namely that our sins are forgiven

Peace, true peace with God and with one another, true we can not now see this peace but it is ours and it will be fulfilled in Christ.

These are far greater gifts even than the first amendment we don't want to trade them for anything.

**AMEN**