Clear About the Gospel Bible Study
Ephesians 2.11-22
BYF 10-18-26 - Dr. Clay Brown, MDPC Adult Discipleship Pastor

TEACHING OUTLINE

1. Start with announcements and prayer. (5 minutes)

2. Read aloud Ephesians 2.11-22. (5 minutes)

3. Discuss Paul's teaching on the problem the grace-through-faith solution addresses in Ephesians 2.11-12. (10 minutes)

- Speaking now specifically to Gentile readers of this circular letter in Ephesus and surrounding area:
- To sum up: they were all as far away from God as anyone can be
- Outsiders to promises of God and called "uncircumcised heathen" by Jews (2.11 NLT) who called themselves "the circumcised" (NIV), even though Paul states circumcision lauded by Jews had no impact on their true relationship with God; "only their bodies and not their hearts" (NLT)
- Then terse, quick list of the old reality: apart from Christ, excluded from citizenship in God's people, ignorant of the covenant with God and its promises
- "You lived in this world without God and without hope" (2.12 NLT): pointed summation of life without Christ

4. Discuss Paul's teaching on how the grace-through-faith solution works in Ephesians 2.13-18. (15 minutes)

- Key to this section: Peace through reconciliation brought about by Christ through his offer of grace through faith
- Once far away from God, but now ethnic, racial, and religious separation has been healed: "He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us" (2.14b NLT)
- How? His death on the cross does away with "the system of law with its commandments and regulations" and creating a new community of "one people" from the two groups (2.15-16 NLT)
- Refresher on ethnic, racial, and religious tensions between Jew and Gentile in Christianity: review Acts 10, 11, and 15
- "...The Jews and Gentiles coexisted but did not interact or cultivate friendships with one another...[They] did not share the same worship places, schools, diet, or values, and strongly discouraged intermarriage. The wall between the Jew and Gentile pervaded every area of their existence… When Christ abolished [the three primary walls of division or separation in human existence: race, class, and gender] they did not cease to exist. Instead they would no longer create barriers to fellowship with one another. Thus Christianity realigned the entire worldview of the lines of demarcation that separate people and races from one another." [Rodney M. Woo,

The Color of Church (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2009), 86-87; former long-time pastor of multicultural Wilcrest Baptist Church, Houston; college and seminary classmate of Clay Brown}

5. Discuss Paul's teaching on the permanent results of the grace-through-faith solution in Ephesians 2.19-22. (10 minutes)

- Great theological vision and imagery: Temple as no longer separating Jew and Gentile as before
- Gentiles no longer "strangers and foreigners" (2.19 NLT), but together Jews and Gentiles together are becoming one people, God's house, a "holy temple for the Lord" (2.21 NLT)
- Foundation is apostles and prophets (linking OT and NT "Big Story" of Scripture) and cornerstone of this new temple: Jesus Christ himself, King of Kings and Lord of Lords
- Review Acts 13.1-3 and Rev 7.9-10 for examples of this multicultural unity
- Simply put: no viable reason anymore for separation, segregation, or alienation of races, groups, cultures within the Kingdom of God and to practice such separation, segregation, and alienation is an offense to God

6. Close with prayer.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. As you read aloud Ephesians 2.11-22, what jumps out at you at first? Why?
2. In what spiritual condition does Paul say the Gentile Ephesians were before they hear and receive the gospel? How does Paul sum up their condition in verses 11-12? How does the gospel provide the spiritual solution?
3. Do you know people today who fit the description Paul lays out in these verses? How might the gospel speak to them? How might you be part of this divine outreach to them?
4. Grace through faith does more than just save us. It also reconciles us with one another. How does Paul describe this reconciliation in verses 13 and following? Between what two groups? How have they been separated and alienated from each other in the past?
5. What groups of Christians today need this sort of reconciliation with one another? Why is it still so difficult to connect with fellow Christians of differing cultures, languages, and experiences? How can we begin to overcome these barriers?
6. What theological image or metaphor does Paul use to describe the reconciliation with God and each other brought about by Christ and grace through faith? What image or metaphor might we use today?
7. Acts 13.1-3 and Revelation 7.9-10 briefly detail God's new reality. Summarize both these passages and talk about how they can be helpful to us now as we seek to live out the new reality Jesus gives.