

## **MADE NEW: A New Body<sup>i</sup>** **Ephesians 2:11-22**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Good morning, Trinity! It is so good to see you today. My name is Chris Wigley, I'm one of the pastors here at Trinity. If you are a first-time guest, we are just thrilled to have you with us today. We'd love the opportunity to get to know you a little bit. You can provide information to us by texting the keyword, TBCMP, which stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mount Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you send that keyword, a link will be sent back to you and that will take you to a form that is less than a minute to fill out. When you click "submit," it notifies me, and I always look forward to following up with our guests each week.

If text messaging isn't your thing, please swing by our information center located in the fellowship area, right out these doors in the lobby. We have a gift there for you just as a way of saying thank you for being our guest today. Again, we are thrilled you have chosen to worship with us today.

### **SERIES OVERVIEW:**

We are working our way through a teaching series we have entitled Made New. We are studying the New Testament book of Ephesians and the major theme that Paul teaches about being made new in Christ. We've looked at how we have a new identity, a new focus, and a new life in Jesus. Today we are going to look at how we have a new body. We belong to the body of Christ, that is, His Church.

So, I want to invite you to grab your bibles and turn with me in your New Testament to Ephesians. We are going to be in chapter 2 this morning and work through verses 11-22 today.

### **OPENING ILLUSTRATION: Rivalries<sup>ii</sup>**

As I was thinking through this message, I started thinking about some of the rivalries that exist. I think the reason for me thinking through this will become clear as we work our way through this passage. But rivalries are a part of our culture. And many of these rivalries bring division. Texas vs. Oklahoma. Mac or PC. Republican or Democrat. Blue Bell vs. Blue Bunny. Which the only way you like Blue Bunny is if you're a communist. You know what? That was uncalled for. I apologize.

My point is that we understand rivalries and divisions. And sometimes we feel the hurt that is the result of them. And in our passage of study this morning, Paul is going to point out the divisions that existed in the early church, he's going to address the unity that resides in the church, and then he's going to talk about the result of that kind of unity. So, I am going to take Paul's cues and use that as our outline this morning. The conflict, the connector, and the conclusion.

Ultimately what we are going to see is that we have a new body, we belong to a new body of believers, in which our vertical relationship with God affects our horizontal relationship with others. Paul is going to teach about what brings the church together and what makes the church so special and dynamic.

And remember, the first 3 chapters of Ephesians are theological in nature. And Paul is laying out his ecclesiology, that's a big word that means the doctrine of the Church. But it is building. Our new identity is found in Christ. And in Christ we have been given a new focus of prayer. And that in Christ we have been given new life. Now, he's going to say that in Christ we have a new body, we belong to this amazing institution called church.

So, let's jump into this passage by first looking at...

### **MESSAGE:**

#### **1) The Conflict.**

If you were here last week, you are going to recognize the pattern of verses 11-22. You could almost stack these two passages, 1 through 10 and 11 through 22, on top of each other and see very similar structures. For example, in verses 1-3 of Ephesians 2, Paul talks about our problem before trusting Jesus as Lord. Here in verses 11 and 12, Paul addresses the conflict that was in the early church, the massive problem they faced.

When Jesus ascended into Heaven after His resurrection, He gave His disciples a mission. They were to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the world. And in their obedience to that mission, people all over the world began coming to faith in Jesus, they were getting saved. Well, this created a conflict in the church because of the conflict that existed between the Jews and the Gentiles.

Let's look at it together. You follow along in your copy of God's Word. Ephesians 2, verses 11 and 12. ***11Therefore 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—<sup>12</sup>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.***

A few things here. First, the word “Gentiles,” just meant non-Jews. Now, many of the people that made up the Church in Ephesus were Gentiles, non-Jewish. You and I would be considered Gentiles.

Notice that these Gentiles were called, “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision. Circumcision was a physical sign of a covenant that God made with Abraham. And in many instances in the Bible, the Jews would often call any non-Jew uncircumcised and would do so in a derogatory way.<sup>iii</sup> For example, when David faced Goliath, do you remember what he called Goliath? An uncircumcised Philistine. You can see the derogatory way this was used.

Why is this discussion important? Well, it highlights the conflict, the division, in the church at Ephesus. And it was no small division. The Gentile believers were called uncircumcised by the Jews. The Jews hated Gentiles and the Gentiles despised the Jews. maybe the Jews had good reason to feel the way they felt.<sup>iv</sup> For thousands of years, they were the objects of Gentile conflict. They were enslaved by the Egyptians, who were Gentiles. They constantly had to defend themselves against the Philistines and the Babylonians. And by the time Jesus comes on the scene, the Jews were oppressed by the Romans, also Gentiles.

Here's what one commentator I read said about the division between the Jews and Gentiles. “The Jew had an immense contempt for the Gentile. They said that the Gentiles were created by God to be fuel for the fires of Hell; that God loved only Israel of all the nations that he had made; that the best of the serpents crushed, the best of the Gentiles killed. It was not even lawful to render help to a Gentile woman in childbirth, for that would be to bring another Gentile into the world. The barrier between Jew and Gentile was absolute. If a Jew married a Gentile, the funeral of that Jew was carried out. Such contact with a Gentile was the equivalent of death; even to go into a Gentile house rendered a Jew unclean.”<sup>v</sup>

But the hatred between the two groups went both ways. Another commentator I read pointed out that in the Jewish Temple there was a sign on the wall leading

past the Court of Gentiles that read, “Any Gentile entering beyond this wall will have only himself to blame for his ensuing death.”<sup>vi</sup> Do you see the conflict that is happening here?

And not only does Paul remind them of the hostile history between the Jews and the Gentiles, but also between the Gentiles and God. They were separated from Christ, alienated from the Jews, strangers to the Abrahamic covenant, and hopeless without a relationship with God. The Gentiles were outsiders.

So, there's this great conflict going on, division in the church. So much that Paul calls it a dividing wall of hostility in verse 14.

Now, while we would think that a lot has changed over the course of 2,000 years of history in the Church, divisions still exist. Churches in our day are often divided racially, educationally, politically, by young and old, and even by degree of sinful past, and there are many other ways churches in our day are divided. So, before we simply keep this issue at arm's length, relegated to just a problem for the first century Ephesians, we must realize the relevance of this passage in our day, and work to Paul's admonishment toward unity.

But how is this unity among drastic differences achieved? What could possibly unite the Jews and the Gentiles? That brings us to point number 2 today...

## 2) The Connector.

Differences in the church exist, but there is a great connector. Let's look at verses 13 through 17. <sup>13</sup>***But*** [there's that word again. Mirrors verse 4. Division is the problem, 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 us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.***

Jesus, in His death and resurrection, is the unifying connector for this deeply divided church. The same is true for us today. And Paul says that Jesus has broken down the dividing wall of hostility.

### **ILLUSTRATION: Berlin Wall**

I can remember back to when I was 9 years old. Ronald Reagan was the President of the United States at that time. I remember the news broadcasting his speech from the site of the Berlin Wall in Germany. Anyone remember that?

The Berlin Wall separated the East from the West. It was a guarded wall, and many died at the foot of the wall. Well, on June 12, 1987, at that very wall, President Reagan spoke what many have called the four most important words of his presidency. He addressed Mr. Gorbachev, the Secretary General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. President Reagan said, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" A couple years later, on November 9, 1989, the wall was destroyed, and millions rejoiced over the freedom that was gained.

Well, by the blood of Jesus Christ, on the cross at Calvary, the wall of hostility, dividing the Jews and the Gentiles was torn down. Jesus purchased peace for all believers and eliminated hostility between believers. The same is true for us today.

How exactly did Jesus do that? Verse 15. ***15by 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, 16and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. 17And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.***

The word translated as "abolishing," in the original language means to remove all power from.<sup>vii</sup> What Paul is saying is that the Jews can relax a little because the purpose of the Law had been completed. The emphasis being that The Law no longer separated Jews and Gentiles. Jesus, by way of living a perfect life and becoming the spotless sacrificial lamb, fulfilled the requirement of The Law. And when He did that, He reconciled us to God, that's our vertical relationship. By way of the cross, Jesus killed the hostility that separated the Jews and the Gentiles, that our horizontal relationships. The vertical relationship with God impacts the horizontal relationships with other.

Paul said that Jesus came and preached peace to those who were far off. Who are the far off? The Gentiles. But Paul also said that Jesus came and preached peace to those who were near. Who are the ones that are near? The Jews. So, Jesus preached peace to both the Jew and the Gentile. That's because both sets of people were dead in their trespasses and sins and in need of a Savior.

Paul is saying that the division that the Ephesian church is experiencing, the conflict that existed, would all dissipate if they would all simply remember that everyone was isolated from the promise of God<sup>viii</sup>, but God, in His grace and

mercy, rescued whosoever will, by the blood of Jesus. And then in verse 18, we learn that faith in Jesus as Lord, gives both Jews and Gentiles have access to God the Father.

So, we've looked at the conflict and we've discovered the connector. Now, let's talk about...

### 3) The Conclusion.

Because the conflict in the church has been solved by the connector, Jesus, there are some amazing outcomes! Look with me beginning in verse 18. ***18For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.***

Some amazing things come as a result of the resolution of division that is found in Jesus Christ. Three major outcomes, three conclusions from our unity in Christ.

First, **we all have access to God**. In verse 18, Paul says, ***18For through him [that's Jesus] we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.*** In other words, salvation is made available to all, Jews and Gentiles. It is not that the Jews have access to God and the Gentiles do not. Or that the Gentiles have access to God and the Jews do not. It's not that we have to come to someone else in order to get to God. No! Both Jew and Gentile have access to the same Father because it is The Lord Jesus that purchased our salvation. It is the same Holy Spirit of God, that doesn't not discriminate, except on the basis that one believe in Jesus, that indwells every single believer.

Since that is the case, Beloved, we don't gain a seat in this sanctuary because we are somebody. Our prayers aren't heard on the basis that we are somebody. We aren't chosen by God because of our lineage. No. What we are is wretched sinners apart from Christ, but God being rich in mercy, rescued each one of us. And the same Spirit that dwells in me is the same Spirit that dwells in you. And therefore, we all have access to the same God and Father. How's that for having something in common?!

The second conclusion that Paul comes to is that **we all are a part of the same family**. Verse 19. ***19**So then you are **no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.***

Paul says, you Jews and Gentiles better learn to get along with one another because you are all family. Jesus is the great connector, and those that are in Christ belong to the household of God. It does not matter your race, your location, your socio-economic status, your dress, or your age. If you are in Christ, we are no longer strangers but family.

That means, for those of us that are believers in Jesus Christ, we have more in common with one another than we differ. In fact, we have more in common with believers across the globe than we do with our unsaved neighbor across the street that votes the same way we do.<sup>ix</sup> We all have access to God, and we are all part of the same family.

The third conclusion that Paul comes to is that **we all share the same purpose**. Look at verses 20-22. ***20**built on **the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21**in whom **the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22**In him you also are **being built together** into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*

What is Paul talking about here? What is it that is being built and joined together? He's talking about the Church. Not a particular church and not even a church building. He's talking about how we are the Church. The Church is not brick and mortar, it's people and purpose.

And Paul says that Jesus is the chief cornerstone of The Church. Remember in Matthew 16, Peter makes a profession that Jesus is Lord, the Christ, the Son of the living God. And do you remember what Jesus said at that statement? He said that upon that confession He, Jesus, will **build His Church**. Like we sang just a little bit ago, when Jesus rose from the grave and ascended into Heaven, the Church of Christ was born and the Spirit lit the flame.

In the ancient world, the cornerstone was the first rock placed and used to establish the foundation of a building.<sup>x</sup> Jesus is the anchor of The Church. And the foundation, Paul says, is, "**the apostles and prophets.**" That is their

teaching, which is The Word of God. And the Holy Spirit is the power at work in and through The Church.

And listen, the whole structure is joined together for a purpose. We are unified in our purpose, Beloved. Oh, we may come from many different backgrounds. We don't all look alike, praise The Lord. We may have differing views on some things. But we are united in our purpose, filled with the same Holy Spirit, and founded upon Jesus as Lord and The Word of God as absolute truth.

So, what is our purpose together? In verse 22, Paul says that we, "**are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.**" We are to join in on the building process. We worship by the Spirit, we live by the Spirit, we are led by The Spirit, and we walk by the Spirit. And we do this that not only do we grow, but that others might know Jesus as Lord and become a part of the family of God. That's our purpose.

Any conflict we have among each other is minimized by the fact that we are all sinners redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. As a result, we are joined together, by the Connector, and given access to God, a part of the family of God, and given a shared purpose.

### **CONCLUSION:**

As Jared and the team comes to lead us in a time of response, I want to ask you, are you a part of the Family of God?

## ENDNOTES:

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- <sup>i</sup> Works consulted in preparation for this message: John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians*, Moody Press: Chicago, 1986; Klyne Snodgrass, *The NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1996; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians*, Word Books: Dallas, 1990; J.D. Greear, various sermons, accessed online: <https://summitchurch.com/message-archiv?book=5673c703-f0c5-450d-ae06-6a27470ba217>; Hope Church Las Vegas, various sermons preached, accessed online: [https://hopechurchlv.com/message\\_passages/ephesians/page/4/](https://hopechurchlv.com/message_passages/ephesians/page/4/); Jarrett Stephens, *Much More: The Body of Christ: One People, Purpose and Passion*, sermon preached at Prestonwood Baptist Church on February 23, 2020, accessed online: <https://www.facebook.com/prestonwoodbc/videos/277629353208213/>; Michael Youssef, *Discover Your Treasure House: Discover Its Benefits*, published by Leading The Way, April 7, 2013, accessed online: <https://www.ltw.org/watch/teaching/series/discover-your-treasure-house/part-3>; Michael Gossett, *Ephesians Living in Christ: Together in Christ*, sermon preached at Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler, TX, January 30, 2022, accessed online: <https://www.gabc.org/episode/together-in-christ/>; Jeremy Randolph, *Remember You Belong: Ephesians 2:11-22*, presented at the Harmony-Pittsburg Annual January Bible Study.
- <sup>ii</sup> Illustration inspired by both Michael Gossett and Jarrett Stephens.
- <sup>iii</sup> MacArthur says, “a term of derision, defamation and reproach,” page 71.
- <sup>iv</sup> Further discussion on this is presented by John MacArthur in his commentary, page 70.
- <sup>v</sup> William Barclay, “Barclay’s Study Bible: Ephesians 2,” published by Study Light, accessed online: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/dsb/ephesians-2.html>.
- <sup>vi</sup> J.D. Greear.
- <sup>vii</sup> Bible Ref, <https://www.bibleref.com/Ephesians/2/Ephesians-2-15.html>.
- <sup>viii</sup> Michael Gossett.
- <sup>ix</sup> Jeremy Randolph.
- <sup>x</sup> Bible Ref, <https://www.bibleref.com/Ephesians/2/Ephesians-2-20.html>.