

Diversity in Biblical Perspective

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Key themes from Ephesians 2:11-22:

- 'In Him'—that is 'in Christ' we have present and eternal resources to live for, love and take deep delight in God.
- Church—the book develops major themes centered on the community of God's people.
- Trinity at work in forging unity in the Body—immediate text shows how the trinity works to bring hostile ethnic peoples into one Body.
- Cross of Christ not only paid the penalty for individual sins but also for ethnic/cultural hostilities.
- What saves was the great question of Galatians. How Gentiles enter the church became the natural second question to the church comprised mostly of Jews and Gentile proselytes.

Outline of Ephesians chapter 2

- 2:1-3 who we were before Christ
- 2:4-9 how we came to Christ
- 2:10 what we were created for in Christ
- 2:11 Therefore... reminding Gentiles of their pre-Christ days (before Christ)
- 2:14 For He...Christ brought the two factions together (how we came to Christ)
- 2:19 Consequently...called to community (what we were created for in Christ)

The issue: hostility toward one another (v. 14, 16)

- Hostility: Jew and Gentile were at odds with one another; Enmity, as in enmity toward God in Js. 4:4; Hostile to God in Rom. 8:7; Herod and Pilate had been enemies, Lk. 23:12
- Barrier of hostility: allusion to the barricade in the Temple which separated the court of the Gentiles from the temple proper which included an inscription threatening death to any non-Jew who tried to pass it;
- "No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the sanctuary and enclosure. Anyone caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death."
- To Jews the Gentiles were 'dogs.' The court of the Gentiles became the convenient location for spiritual merchants and money-changers (Lk. 19:46).
- To the Gentiles, Jews were the 'enemies of the human race,' a people 'filled with a hostile disposition toward everybody.'

The solution: 'He, he himself is ...

- v.13—But now in Christ...brought near by His blood

- v.14—He Himself is our peace
- v.16—He...reconciled both to God through the Cross; “The miracle of Calvary, however, was even more thrilling, for, *through the instrument of the cross*, the Sufferer not only reconciled to God both Jews and Gentiles but also slew the deeply-rooted antipathy that had existed for so long a time between the two groups. The basic lesson holds for all time. The reason why there is so much strife in this world, between individuals, families, social or political groups, whether small or large, is that the contending parties, through the fault of either or both, have not found each other at Calvary. Only then when sinners have been reconciled to God thru the cross will they be truly reconciled to each other. This shows how very important it is to preach the gospel to all men, and the beseech them on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God (II Cor. 5:20)...” (NTC, 136)
- v.17—He came and preached peace
- v.18—Thru Him we have access to the Father by the Spirit

The benefit: created for community

- v.19—Co-citizens and co-household members with the Holy One
- v.21—being joined together into a holy temple
- v.22—being built together into residence where God’s Spirit lives
- Compare with 3:6 heirs together, members together, sharers together;

Illustration: Early 1990’s in Manila representing UFM to secure visas for missionaries before the Commission on Immigration and Deportation. The commissioner that day announced, ‘don’t you understand, we don’t want you here.’ He did grant our visas but not before some worried moments on my part. We in essence have said the same thing to the A-A church down thru the centuries. Don’t you understand? We don’t want you here.

Paul’s passion: (WWPD) He was not Dr. Paul, a man of the letters and great academic titles; He was Prisoner Paul, 3:7, 4:1; It was Paul’s badge of honor. He was shackled to a Gospel and the Lord of that Gospel that reconciled the most hostile peoples. He was its slave, a servant to a message that alone could transform such hostility. 3:14 ‘For this reason I kneel before the Father...’

Reactions to the presence of the black man in Western experience in the 19th-20th centuries:

1. Oppression—‘do they have a soul?’ or ‘they are as we were’ (Three global reactions: a. USA laws in the 1870s reconstruction; b. Industrial revolution isolated the A-A in urban ghettos without access to the new economy; c. European colonization policy refused the A-A missionary access to Africa. The pastor became the dominant player in the A-A community becoming what we had for business, civic, political and spiritual leaders all rapped up into one role.
2. A-A reaction—mission turned internal to meet the local pressing needs in the urban ghettos;
3. A-A Gospel—their leaders saw a Gospel in the 1950’s that liberates from oppressive structures; they became the conscience for America. The TV images would no longer permit America to rest comfortably in their silent prejudice.

4. 20th century Evangelical theology privatized sin; had no response to oppressive social structures;
5. 20th century mission organizations explicitly or implicitly turned down the A-A as a possible partner in mission. (A tale of three missions);

Current attempts at rapprochement toward the A-A church:

1. Seeking reconciliation with the black church.
2. Building relationships pastor to pastor.
3. Passive acceptance.
4. Ignore the issue.

CrossWorld at the crossroads to the opportunities and challenges to prove the Gospel strong in our midst:

1. What would Paul do? (WWPD) He had a passion to see the Gospel unite Jew and Gentile and he used Gentile offerings for Jewish needs as a means of demonstrating the Gospel's transformation of cultural hostilities.
2. How does our theology impact our praxis?
3. How do we take the Trinitarian resources of 2:18 and 2:22 to break down the invisible wall?
4. Why has God given Yvonne to us? A-A board members? Pastors?
5. What invisible barriers limit partnership with the A-A church?
6. What impressions do they get from a walk on our campus? At our CO in counseling? Dominate vs. sub-culture;
7. What can/should we do differently?

Editors Note: Dr. O'Neill previously presented this material at his Senior Management Retreat on April 11-13, 2005 and has been published with his permission.