



Time to Reflect

- Take a few moments to reflect on Wiersbe's quote (footnote 2). In what ways is it reflective of the faith situation in today's world?
- Read over Wiersbe's quote (footnote 5). How do you understand God as being both loving and holy?

Last week we focused on the themes of God's love and grace. We reflected on the remarkable transformation that God affords us when we turn to Him in faith and with repentance. This week we will consider Christ's peace mission and how it dealt with separation, offered reconciliation and brought unification.

"I read somewhere that from 1500BC to AD850 there were 7,500 'eternal covenants' agreed on among various nations with the hope of bringing peace, but that no covenant lasted more than two years."

(Warren Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians*, p65)

Specifics

- In this week's passage we see how Paul focused on Christ's great peace mission as he sought to encourage and challenge the Ephesians. He wanted them to realise the importance and significance of the covenant made by God on Calvary's hill – a covenant that was sealed by Christ's own blood.
- As he reflected on this great and eternal peace mission, Paul drew the attention of the Ephesians to three main concepts:

1. Separation (v11-12)

- Most of the converts in Ephesus were Gentiles. There were tensions between Jews and Gentiles, and Paul wanted to speak into this situation. From the moment that God had called Abraham, there were clear differences between the Jews and the Gentiles.
- Warren Wiersbe emphasises, "God set them (Jews) apart that he might use them to be a channel of His revelation and goodness to the heathen nations. Sad to say, Israel kept this difference nationally and ritually, but not morally. Israel became like the lost nations around her."¹
- The Gentiles were without Christ. The Ephesians worshipped the goddess Diana before the coming of the gospel and they knew nothing about Christ.
- The Gentiles were without hope. Historians reveal that there was a profound sense of hopelessness in the ancient world. Philosophies and traditions were shallow.
- The Gentiles were without God in the sense that they did not know the One true God.
- Wiersbe reflects, "It is worth noting that the spiritual plight of the Gentiles was caused not by God but by their own willful sin. Paul said the Gentiles knew the true God but deliberately refused to honour Him (Rom. 1:18-23)."²

¹ Warren Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians* (David C Cook, 2009), p66.

² Ibid, p67.

2. Reconciliation (v13-18)

- We have already been reflecting on the division that existed between Jews and Gentiles, and we have touched on the reality of spiritual division that separates sinners from God.
- In (v13-18) our attention is drawn to the theme of reconciliation – a bringing together again. As he reflects on the need for reconciliation with God, Wiersbe helpfully writes, “Sin is the great separator in this world. It has been dividing people since the very beginning of human history.”³
- This is clear from the very beginning of the Bible. However, God moved decisively to deal with this situation. Paul refers to this in (v13).
- The sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross “...abolished the enmity between Jew and Gentile and between sinners and God.”⁴ This is clearly highlighted in (v16).
- Jesus Christ is the One who speaks into all situations and offers eternal solutions. This applies to all human relationships and our own relationship with God.
- The law made a distinction between Jews and Gentiles. The sacrifice of Jesus removed all barriers, fulfilled the demands of the law, and offered unity in Christ.
- Romans 10:12-13 is a powerful passage of Scripture in terms of Christian unity. “For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”
- The sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross also brought reconciliation between sinners and God (v16-18).
- Wiersbe concludes, “A God of love wants to reconcile the sinner to Himself, but a God of holiness must see to it that sin is judged. God solved the problem by sending His Son to be the sacrifice for our sins, thereby revealing His love and meeting the demands of His righteousness.”⁵

3. Unification (v19-22)

- The final verses of our passage reflect on what it means to be united in Christ. The word ‘one’ is repeated on several occasions in this passage (v14, v15, v16, v18).
- (v19a) reminds us that all believers, regardless of background, belong to God’s holy nation and have citizenship in heaven. This is made possible through faith in Jesus.
- Through that same faith we enter God’s family (v19b) and we can call him (with certainty and meaning) ‘Our Father.’ Weirsbe highlights, “We are all brothers and sisters in the one family, no matter what racial, national, or physical distinctions we may possess.”⁶ True Christian unity is built on Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone (v20).
- (v21) gets us thinking about the very nature of what we understand by the term ‘church.’ It isn’t just a building or an elaborate complex. A proper understanding of the term ‘church’ will refer to the gathering of God’s people, who have the Spirit of God dwelling in their hearts, and who collectively worship and serve Him.
- When we dwell in this kind of unity then God really does command blessing (Psalm 133:1). The pursuit of this true unity is an ongoing process and believers “...are being built together...” (v22).
- We proceed in confidence because of what Christ has done for us and through the continued leading of the Holy Spirit. We proceed in thankfulness because of the love and holiness of God, and the grace that He willingly affords each of us.

³ Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians*, p68

⁴ Ibid, p68

⁵ Ibid, p72.

⁶ Ibid, p73.