

# “Members of God’s Household”: Ephesians 2:14-22

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity – Nov 22, 2020

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## Introduction

1. We are looking together at this letter written by the Apostle Paul to a church on the west coast of Asia Minor, present day Turkey.
2. Last week, we looked at 2:11-13, in which Paul makes the case that, though the Gentile (or non-Jewish) believers had a bunch of strikes against us when it comes to having an intimate relationship with God, God’s Son dramatically altered their situation by coming to earth, taking on human flesh, living a righteous life and dying a sacrificial death.
3. In vv.14-22, Paul will continue this line of reasoning, helping us to better understand the salvation he has made available to us in Jesus.

## Exposition

**“<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 is our peace (cf. Micah 5:5). As the unique God-Man, Jesus embodies two natures, one fully divine, representing God the Father to humanity; the other fully human, representing humanity to the Father, wedded in the person of JC.
- Paul said Jesus has broken down the “dividing wall of hostility”. This was *torah*. In English, “the law”, the body of legislation that God gave to Israel through Moses.
- God rescues Israel from forced labor in Egypt and brings them to their own land on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, making a covenant with the nation to insure that they will preserve his teachings, traditions and ethical standards in the midst of these other hostile nations that are serving other *elohim*, lesser spiritual beings.

- How is God going to insure they don't mix with these other people groups? He makes a bunch of laws regulating virtually every aspect of lives. Collectively these 613 laws are known as *torah*, or the "Law of Moses". They covered every part of life including:
  - moral/ethical standards
  - ritual laws
  - Festival ordinances
  - Cultic regulations
  - Hygiene rules
  - General laws (business transactions, agricultural methods, clothing, warfare and marriage)
  - Dietary guidelines
- By keeping *torah*, the Israelites would avoid getting all mixed up with the Amorites, Hittites, Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians and other nations who worshipped lesser spiritual beings, offered human sacrifices, and lived morally debauched lives.
- Sadly, the nation as a whole didn't keep *torah*. Many of the people intermarried with the surrounding nations, worshipped their gods and adopted their moral practices over and over again. They were unfaithful to God and they broke the covenant.
- But then, in the fullness of time, the Father sends his Son, Jesus, to earth. Jesus is the true Israelite, the seed of Abraham, and he lives his 30 or so years in perfect obedience to the Father, fulfilling the entire *torah*. Having fulfilled it, he then can set it aside. Jesus removed the barrier.

**<sup>15</sup> by 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, <sup>16</sup> and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.**

- "Abolish" is *katargeo* – to deprive of force; render ineffective or useless.
- Jesus instituted a New Covenant with Israel, only this one would not be restricted to the physical descendents of Abraham but would include all of humanity.
- This new covenant had been predicted several hundred years before Jesus' birth by the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Ez 36:27 says that God will put his own Spirit in each covenant member to serve as proof that they are part of the covenant and to empower them to do God's will and live righteous lives.

- Since humanity's fall into sin, every human had been subject to certain irresistible forces that tended to drag them away from God. Now God is going to put inside us the Spirit of God as a counterweight to those instinctual desires we all feel to call our own shots. We will still experience that tug to think and act in ways contrary to God's will. But formerly we were powerless to resist those temptations. Rom 7:15: "I don't understand myself: I do the things I don't want to do and I don't do the things I want to do".
- But now, in this new covenant relationship, the Son puts his Spirit in us so we have a quantitatively superior power to resist temptation. Rom 8:2: "the law of the Spirit of Life has set you free from the law of sin and death." (Ex: the laws of aerodynamics vs. gravity).
- And to whom does Jesus give his Spirit in the new covenant? To Jews only? No, to Jews and Gentiles, circumcised and uncircumcised, men and women, young and old.
- His goal? He tells us: it was to make "one new man (*anthropon kainon*) out of the two." He came to create an entirely new humanity: Humanity 2.0. (Ex: fertilization of an ovum).

**<sup>17</sup> And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.**

- The word "access" is *prosa'goge* – brought face-to-face. One scholar writes: the word describes "that relationship with God whereby we are acceptable to him and have assurance that he is favorably disposed towards us."
- There are two additional things we want to note in v.18. First, notice the explicit reference to the holy Trinity – through him (Son); in one Spirit (HS); to the Father (God the Father).
  - The doctrine of the holy Trinity is the biblical teaching that, though there is one and only one God, this one God is not a solitary monad living in relational isolation; but rather three personal modes of being: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Ex: thermodynamic triple-point).
- The second thing to note are the prepositions Paul uses to describe our relationship to each of the three persons of the holy Trinity:
  - "to the Father" – he is the object of access
  - "through Jesus" – he is the mechanism of access
  - "in the Spirit" – he is the means of access

- Ex: Internet connection over a device

**<sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”**

- In verses 20-22, Paul employs this construction metaphor to highlight God’s role in designing an organic building or temple to live in. This is a reference to us, the Church of Jesus Christ.
- **“you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God.”**
- When the bible uses the terms “holy ones” or “saints” it generally means an array of heavenly beings who occupy God’s sacred space. The term is *hagioi* in Gk. (trans. *qedoshim* in Hebrew): cherubim, seraphim, watchers, archangels, angels, dominions, authorities and powers. The phrase “members of the household of God” is not limited to human believers but the entirety of the divine household.
- Take some time this week to read Revelation 4 and 5, Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1.