

• *What God did for gentiles*

Consider next what God did for these gentile Christians in Ephesus.

1. Brought them near to God

1. **God brought them near.** Paul says *‘But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ’* ^{□1}. The gentiles were corporately and nationally far away from God. God brought the gospel to them, and God has done that for us too. Think of the way God brought the gospel to our country, and to the countries of the world. In many nations, He has reached out to gentiles, pagans, people who did not know God at all.

□1 2:13

The Christian is ‘brought near’ to God. He or she has access to God. He is conscious of God’s presence. God hears his prayers. He knows God’s love for him. How can I get near to God? Not by anything I am by nature. Not by anything that is done to me. Not by anything I **do**. Not by Jesus’ teaching. But by the blood of Christ! The blood of Christ atones for my sins. It cleanses my conscience and sanctifies my relationship to God.

• *By the blood of Jesus*

2. Brought them into one body with Jews

2. **God brought Jews and gentiles into one body.** Paul says, *‘For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall’* ^{□1}. *He did this by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the law consisting of commandments, expressed in ordinances, in order that in Himself He might create out of the two one new man, thus establishing peace* ^{□2}. *The purpose was that Christ might reconcile both in one body unto God through the cross, killing the enmity by it’* ^{□3}.

□1 2:14

□1 2:15

□1 2:16

• *At peace with God*

‘He Himself is our peace’ says Paul. We are not to take this in a sentimental way. This is not a sentimental subject. It is something strong and bold. It does not mean that God gives us an easy life. Peace is reconciliation with God. It then leads to peace of conscience, peace within ourselves. It then leads to peace in our relationships.

• *Leading to peace in our relationships*

Jesus makes peace by bringing Jews and gentiles (and all other groups of human beings) into the one body of Christ, the church. Paul explains how God did this.

• *The law given to Israel abolished*

In the case of Jews and gentiles God had to abolish His own law, given to Israel through Moses. The biggest barrier between Jews and gentiles was that of the law of God. The law of Moses was given to Israel only; it was a temporary measure. The aim of the law of God was to restrain sin. (Law is still needed for this purpose but it does not have to be exactly the Mosaic law.) Jesus abolished all parts of the law of God, the ceremonies, the laws concerning holy days in the year, the Sabbath, the laws about different kinds of uncleanness (for example, the regulations concerning leprosy). He abolished the food laws. Even what is often called ‘the moral law’ was replaced by something higher. (The **righteousness** of the law is still demanded by the gospel but the way of reaching it is not by being under the Mosaic system of law.)

• *A new human race walking in the Spirit*

In the first century temple there was a **literal** fence between the area in which gentiles were allowed and the inner courts. Paul uses this as an illustration of a profound spiritual barrier. All Christians are on a level. Jewish Christians have no advantages. By walking in the Spirit and not living under law, all Christians are in the same position. The people of Jesus are a new human race, consisting of people from every section of the old human race.

• **All reconciled through the cross**

At first one could get the impression that only gentiles were far away from God and that Jews did not need reconciling to God. It is true that Jews were near to God in their history as a nation, yet they too needed reconciling to God, as verse 16 says. Both Jews and gentiles have to be brought into one body, and **both** have to be reconciled to God. This happened as Jewish men and women, and gentile men and women, came to faith in Christ's cross. The cross, when you put your faith in Jesus, kills enmity to God and it kills enmity among those who have believed.

3. Sent the gospel message to them

• **Faith comes by hearing the preached word**

3. **God arranged for the gospel-message to reach the gentiles.** Paul says, 'And He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near' ^{□1}. It is striking that Paul says that Jesus preached to the gentile Ephesians, since we know Jesus never went to Ephesus. The thought is similar to Romans 10: Faith comes from true 'hearing'. True 'hearing' in the heart occurs when Jesus is so with the preacher that the preacher's words become Christ's words. When the early preachers went to the gentile Ephesus, Christ was preaching in them. It is the 'word of Christ' that is coming to the people. So Christ was making arrangements for the Ephesians to hear the gospel-message when Christ sent preachers to Ephesus and spoke through them.

□1 2:17

4. Gave them equal access to God – with the Jews

• **We pray through Jesus**

4. **Jewish Christians and gentile Christians have equal access to God.** Paul says, 'For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father' ^{□1}. Prayer is coming to God and talking to Him as our Father. Prayer is a matter of coming to God as a powerful Father. We use simplicity as we pray, and are not bothered about the cleverness or beauty of our praying. We do not have to use many words. It does not matter whether we are loud or soft. We are coming to our Father.

□1 2:18

• **We pray on the power of the Spirit**

Prayer is coming to God 'through Him', 'through Jesus'. We do not pray in the name of our worthiness, or in the name of our successes. We come to God because Jesus' blood was shed on the cross, and now is presented in heaven. Our sins were transferred to Jesus.

• **Equal privilege for Jews and gentiles**

Prayer is to be in the power of the Spirit. The place where we pray does not matter very much. Posture does not matter very much. Prayer books are not needed. The Holy Spirit leads us to the promises of God, and encourages us once we start praying in Jesus' name.

Paul's main point is: because of what Christ has done upon the cross both Jews and gentile Christians have an equal privilege of coming to God in this way.

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