

**CAPITAL BIBLE CHURCH  
SERMON NOTES**

**April 22, 2018  
PASTOR AJ Miller**

**Series: What's the church?  
"Where There is Life, There is Always Change"  
Ephesians 2:11-22**

Where there is life, there is always change

Read Ephesians 2:11-22

As I was preparing for this message, it felt like God was unloading on me, kind of like being fed with a firehose, in both my personal situations and professional situations. There were many times where I would read the passage, or in my study and research or in my prayer time, that God was convicting me of many things and convicting me of sin in my life and to be honest, it wasn't pleasant. There were moments of hurt, pain, feelings of loneliness, but also moments of peace and joy. I say all of this to warn you. It is my honest prayer that God puts you through the same thing this morning. There will be times where God will be convicting you of your sin, your grudges, your resentments, things in your life that you are holding onto and not letting go, or maybe you are not seeking forgiveness or offering forgiveness. And honestly, I hope you do experience some hurt and pain from God's conviction and I pray God will not hold back.

Now the good news is, this morning will not be all hard to handle. There is some good news coming but before we hear the good news, we won't appreciate it until we go through the hard to handle stuff. We can't appreciate where God wants to take us if we don't know where we've been. A phrase I have heard that has hit me like a ton of bricks over the past few weeks, and is the title of my sermon, "where there is life, there is always change."

In this passage, Paul gives a break down into what I call, the 3 R's, Remember, Reconciliation, and Rebuild. This process is vital to your personal journey and walk with Jesus but it also equally important to the health of the local church, us who make up CBC. That's why I have approached today's message with lots of prayer.

Before we jump into Scripture, I want to define the word reconciliation, because I will use it often. Reconciliation involves bringing fallen humanity out of alienation into a state of peace and harmony with God. Jesus has healed the brokenness and separation created by sin and restores communion between God and people. Reconciliation is not a process by which people gradually become more acceptable to God, but it is a decisive act, like a legal verdict, by which believers are delivered from separation to fellowship with God. And we will see how this process of reconciliation pertains to both us as individuals, and to us corporately as a church. What Paul is doing is bringing the Ephesians and us to the realization that we cannot accomplish God's purposes unless we are united, in our individual lives and in the life of our church. Christians, us, here and now, must pull together in a faithful direction to fulfill God's purposes.

Verse 11-12

<sup>11</sup> Therefore 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.

Starting in verse 11, we see the first action statement that Paul gives us up to this point in the book of Ephesians. So far, Paul has been unloading information and doctrine to set the stage for the action portion of his

letter. It is interesting that the first thing Paul tells us to do is to remember. Why does Paul tell us twice to remember? Because we too often forget. It is too easy to forget, too easy to be proud about ourselves, too easy to embrace our prejudices, too easy to nurse our offenses and so the Apostle tells us “remember”. Remember who you were, where you came from. Every single one of us was at one time hostile to God, a sinner on the outside looking in, a foreigner, alien, far off from God. Remember who, be nature, you were. Many people think that we have an outside problem that can only be conquered by an inner solution. But, in reality, we have an inner problem that can only be fixed by an outside solution. That is what Paul is saying. Remember you were once far off, an alien to God. That is what Paul is reminding us. Not only were the Gentiles, you and me, morally separated from God, but we were also separated from God’s covenant people. They were without any knowledge of Christ. They had no rights in God’s family and were not recipients of God’s covenants. They were without hope and ultimately without God. Those of us who can be reminded of how unclean and unworthy we felt when we used our bodies for unholy and sinful purposes, can begin to get the sense of the impurity that Paul is telling the Ephesians, and us. We all have a past. That is where we all begin. Human nature is a terminal illness, only made right by God. Because whether we like it or not, even the person that seems closest to God, shows their humanity whether it’s through pettiness, quarrels, lack of forgiveness, envy or lust, gossip or laziness. All of us, at one point or another, still wrestle with these sins. Remember where you were before God stepped in. Remember who you were before the Spirit quickened your heart and gave you understanding. Remember, for in those unclean memories are the images that will make not only your salvation precious, but will also make those around you, including those who were once very different from you, seem very much like you and then precious to you. We must understand, just because you are saved and the person next to you is not, doesn’t make you better than them because you were once in the same position. You need to help that person, love that person, be Jesus to that person. That is what Paul is saying. That is why we cannot live in the past. We should learn from it but living in the past is just as dangerous as forgetting it. We cannot forget our past and we cannot live in the past. When we live in the past, we begin to live as if we are entitled to what we have, to how we do things and since outsiders are not like us, they are not welcome. Paul says remember, you were once separated from Christ, alienated from the people of God, and you were strangers to God. That person was you, at one point. Now, these are not pleasant thoughts to think about or hear. We do not like to acknowledge that what we despise and judge in others is just our own human nature. Paul does not let our minds evade our sin or debate our guilt.

Then in verse 12, Paul talks about how we were separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise. Don’t miss that last part. Covenants is plural in this verse and promise is singular. What’s that about? The promise that Paul is referencing is the promise of God to be the God of the covenant people; but the covenants in the OT are many. Covenants were made between God and Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and David, and God renewed covenants with many others. Many covenants, all of which point to one promise, that God would be their God. When we live outside of God’s covenant commitments in order to pursue the goals of business success, church recognition, or academic success, these become tools that Satan can use to drive us from the intimacy our God desires us to have with Him and with our fellow brothers and sisters in the church.

At this point, you might be sitting there, feeling like you are being hit with wave after wave of the cold reality of who we are without God. We are desperate for hope and relief from the memories and thoughts that haunt us even now. And up til now, Paul is setting the stage, bringing us to the point where we can understand and it’s at this precise moment, Paul throws us a lifeline.

### Verse 13

<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Here in verse 13 Paul starts it off with some strong language by saying ‘but now’. What has changed? Everything in chapter 1 and everything up until now has been building to a climax. Remember where you came from, remember who you were, remember your old ways BUT NOW, things have changed. The Gentiles were no longer in their alienated state. Where did the change took place? In Christ Jesus. Those who trust in Him have a present salvation and a future hope. We are no longer “in the flesh”, stuck in our humanity deserving

death but instead, are “in Christ Jesus”. We are no longer imprisoned in humanity but united to divinity. In Christ we are no longer “failure, liar, hypocrite, pervert, or betrayer” but God calls you “my child” because you are in union with his Son. But now, in Christ, people of all nations are gathered under His wings. This means that they are gathered close not only to him, but also to each other. Our differing opinions and human corruptions that separate us from community, intimacy and worship are overcome by our union with Christ. In Christ we are part of the same family despite our differences. Our differences make us stronger when we are all marching to the beat of God’s drum. Our differences shouldn’t divide us, but as part of God’s family, we are united in Him and each of us bring different gifts and talents to help the body of believers accomplish the will of God. We were once far off, but now we are near. And how were we brought near? By the blood of Jesus. Jesus bought and paid for his church. We were not merely forgiven our sin but also are filled with his righteousness, holiness and redemption. What he is, I am. Yes, I am part of the Miller family, but more than that, I am a Christian. Yes, I am an American, but more than that, I am a Christian. Yes, I have failed to be all that my God requires, but I am not my sin. I am a Christian. Until we all realize that we are a Christian before anything else, that we are part of something bigger than ourselves, that we are part of a family here at CBC for His glory, this church won’t become all that God needs it to be. Our relationship to Christ, and in turn, our relationship to each other in God’s family, should create unity and from that unity, we become the church that God needs us to be. And although we remain full of weakness, lies, lust, pride and prejudice, we are God’s beloved children. Beyond our trials, disappointments, and failures, this kinship with God is our life, our hope, and our identity, because the blood of Jesus cleanses us and equips us for his glory.

Verse 14, 15

<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 <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,

Here, in this verse, a turning point is made in how Paul addresses his readers. Up to this point, Paul has been making the distinction between the Gentiles and the Jews, the “you” and “us”. But now, it is all “we” and “us”. No longer are they Jews or Gentiles, but now they are Christians. With these words Paul not only reminds us of our unity, he also underscores the consequences of living as though people who once had different and distant backgrounds and opinions, are all close to God, and therefore peace and unity are the result.

Jesus is the great cause of peace between people. As soon as we become Christians, we cannot hate anybody. It is utterly inconsistent with grace in the heart to harbor malice against others. Through our weakness we may be, at times, quick to temper, we should feel regret and guilt over it, but to carry in our soul any enmity against others is contrary to the spirit of Jesus Christ. Paul is making a huge statement in this verse. Neither the end of religion nor the blend of religion but rather the blood of Jesus Christ removes the barriers between all people and brings true peace to the world. If you carry that same principle to the church, you will see that our differences or opinions, any hostility or enmity we have towards another believer can only be fixed and is fixed by the blood of Jesus. Jesus destroys the barriers between us with a dual purpose of reconciling all people to each other and each person to God. That is why Paul says that Christ’s blood both destroys old enmity and creates a new humanity. It is through Jesus, and both parties involved following the example Jesus set for us, that reconciliation, forgiveness and then unity and peace can happen. Jesus alone has the power to remove the barriers that we have built up between us.

But the effect of Jesus’ work is more than just making the two alike, it is a renewal, making both new and better. Christ’s purpose was to “create in himself one new man.” In the coming together of different people or the reconciliation between two people at odds with one another, we have the delight of pre-glimpsing the heavenly scene where the great multitude from every nation, tribe and language with gather as one before the throne of God. Please understand this, “church, we are meant to be a picture of the future that is to come.” In heaven, will there be hostility? Will there be division? Will there be unforgiveness, grudges and resentments? No! So why do we hold onto them now? What will move us from “got to” to “get to” in our attitude and mentality? I “got to” forgive this person, NO! I “get to” forgive this person. I “got to” help my church with my

gifts and talents. NO! I “get to” help my church with my gifts and talents. Until we understand that overcoming barriers is our own foretaste of heaven, we will not have the energy to move toward those who are moving away, the willingness to endure insult, the grace to forgive, and the desire to reach out in love towards those different from us. How will we generate the joy that has such power? We generate such joy when we teach others to recognize that the barriers that God destroys between others and us are ultimately the reflection of the barrier that he has destroyed between us and him. When we see barriers come down between us, we understand that God has done the same to us. God doesn’t hold a grudge. God doesn’t hold onto resentments and leave barriers up between Him and his people. So why do we think that we can? God doesn’t sweep sin under the rug or not confront it. God addresses sin and hostility and makes things right. And so should we. How Christ’s blood brings peace with others makes sense only when you understand how Christ’s blood brings peace with God.

Verse 16, 17

<sup>16</sup>and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. <sup>17</sup>And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.

The goal was not merely to reconcile two groups into one but to reconcile them unto God. The one body is the church, the new humanity, the place of peace. Not only did God take Jews and Gentiles and from the two, make one new creation, Christian, therefore making peace between them. But also, in this one body, reconcile us back to God through the cross. Through the cross, the Son absorbed the righteous rage God had against us and put to death the hostility between God and man. What we may not be accustomed to thinking is that God intends for this reconciliation to occur between us, as we are in one body. In some way, our experience and expression of unity and reconciliation with each other helps us understand and experience on a deeper level, the unity and reconciliation we have with God. After all, we ask God to forgive us as we forgive others. Our expression and interaction with each other should look like God’s expression and interaction with us. If we want what God has done for us but are not willing to give that to our fellow brother or sister in Christ, we are hypocrites. We are told to enter communion corporately, which by the way is next week, however, we are cautioned not to partake if we are sinfully separated from others, especially those in our church family. Especially among Christians there must not be anything like a shadow of division or discord. And I do pray that we would lay aside everything like enmity, hatred, strife and jealousy. We will have to live in heaven together, so we better learn to live like heavenly beings together down here.

It's true that God deals with everyone individually, but God also deals with us corporately, as a church. I warn you because God warns us, do not take part in communion if you have any unforgiveness dwelling inside you. Our sin is not just between man and man, but it is between man and God. Jesus Christ took the dirt and filth of all our sin on his own body and now he says to all parties involved, “I want to deal with you.” This divine intention makes it clear that we cannot know the fullness of all that God intends to do for us and through us until we approach him together, everyone in unity and peace. God chooses to do far more through our oneness than through our isolation from each other. The truth is, we all mess up, we all sin against our brother or sister. But we need to forgive and move on. God forgives and moves on, so should we. The church throughout Scripture is called the body. If the hand wants to go one way, the foot wants to go another and the stomach wants to go a different way, the body ends up going nowhere. The same is true with a church. If some people want the church to go in this direction and some want the church to go in that direction, the church doesn’t go anywhere. We all must set out on the same mission, vision and goal.

Too many people think of their faith only in terms of “Jesus and me”. But God calls us to love our neighbor as ourselves. Matthew 25:40 “And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’ We must look after those around us and care for them even if they are different than us. This awareness, that when we bond together in our differences and then the power of God is poured through us, this must be our ultimate motivation to unite under Jesus Christ. When we believe that putting hostilities to death brings to life the power of God in our experience, then uniting in Christ with those who differ from us in appearance and opinion is not a burden. Variations in style of worship and approaches to

ministry fill us with excitement. We become anxious to innovate in ways that demonstrate the wisdom of God and the glory of God to reach more people, rather than being anxious about changes to traditions that merely comfort us. When we realize that we are one in Jesus, that our differences make us stronger, change isn't so scary. All of us should want to see more people come to Christ. God made you who you are, so you can reach people that I cannot reach. And God made me who I am to reach people that you cannot reach. But together, unified under Christ, with the same vision, mission and goal, our differences make us stronger.

Why did Jesus preach peace? He did so because he knows that if there is not peace between us, we cannot fully know the peace that he gave his blood to bring to us. Christ's actions on the cross are the greatest endorsement and exhortation to break the barriers between us and not let them linger and fester.

#### Verse 18

<sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

The scene you can think of is that of a court official who allows visitors to come into the King's presence. Through Christ's reconciling work, both Jews and Gentiles have access to God's presence in one Spirit. There is only one Holy Spirit, and all must come to the Father through that Spirit. Somehow, deep within all believers there is the understanding that peace between other people and with God comes when, through the sacrifice of Jesus, we see ourselves as a child in the lap of our heavenly Father, but also see other children held with us in his arms. And we also know that when we count these other children precious too, because our heavenly Father gives them equal access to himself through the blood of his Son, then we will have understood more of the heart of our Father and will know even more of his love for us. That is why we must have an outward focus towards those who need to hear Jesus. Build a relationship and a friendship with someone, and through that bond, they will see Christ in you.

#### Verse 19

<sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

Look at the process a person goes through. We go from strangers, who are nonresidents with no rights, to aliens or foreigners, which points to people who have settled in a country of their choice but still have very limited rights or privileges. Then on to fellow citizens in where we now receive the full rights and privileges of being a citizen of heaven. Therefore, that makes us saints, living saints, which means we are united with all the saints past, present and future in which we all belong to the household of God. The household of God implies togetherness and inclusion. That's who we are, we must realize who we have become in Christ and act as part of the family. Paul understood that change can be uncomfortable, the fear of the unknown can stop us right in our tracks. Because in the final 4 verses, Paul is reminding us that whatever changes come, we remain dear to him, secure in him and vital to his future purposes.

Paul reiterates that we were once aliens from God, in isolation from his promises and privileges, that we were without hope but no longer. When Paul reminds us that we are fellow citizens with God's people, he is reminding us that we have the power and protection of heaven. We are the adopted children of God. We can be assured that God is our Father and we are in his family. Paul wants us to understand the great privilege and comfort that come from knowing that God claims us as his own family no matter what our past difficulties or failures.

#### Verse 20-22

<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.

God has not only built a new nation, but also God has rebuilt the whole structure. That structure is built upon the apostles and prophets. All their teachings, their relationship and use by God qualify them to be the foundation however, there is one who is greater, Jesus Christ is the cornerstone or capstone which holds

together the entire structure. If the cornerstone of a building is removed, the entire structure will fall. In history, the cornerstone was where the name of the king would be written, and it signifies who gets credit for the building's construction. Jesus gets the credit for your salvation. Jesus gets the credit for this church. Jesus gets the credit of creating His church. All we do is for the glory of His name. Its never about us. Its about Him. What are we doing to glorify his name more every day? God always intended for us to be part of his plan. We are built upon the apostles and Christ, we are what makes up the church. Paul in essence writes, God planned for you all along to be part of his household. He loved you, planned for you, and prepared for you. See, he wrote down right here through the apostles and prophets his plan to include you so that you would be sure. And if you were to still have any questions, he wrote his love in the blood of his Son. You can rest on that foundation, and on that cornerstone, you can build much new hope. Change might look daunting, change might look scary, but if Christ is our foundation, we will not stumble. Where there is life, there is always change.

The house of God is built with living stones of converted men and women and the church of God, which Christ has purchased with His blood, this is the divine sanctuary and the structure where God dwells even to this day. Each brick, you and me, is supporting the other in prayer, in resources, in encouragement, in offering our lives in example and sacrifice for the sake of others. We are together rising to become a temple of God, and each one of us is vital for all the changes and challenges that we will face. Our church is composed of dear and vital human beings and is itself alive and filled with power. God lives in the house he constructs by building our lives together. We are in this thing together.

This description conveys the idea of a dynamic church in the process of growing. The major theme of union with Christ reappears. God's habitation is not in the Jerusalem temple but in the church, which is accomplished by the work of the Holy Spirit who indwells the new believing community.

## Conclusion

What Paul communicates is that the days of glory are not past. God did not work among his people only a long time ago. He did not cease working for his purposes in some ancient day. God who brings us together indwells us for his purposes NOW! There is still a task for the unified church and he dwells in us so that we may fulfill it. Each person, as well as each generation, must embrace the vital role that we have to fulfill in God's building program. We are supporting one another, the body in which the living Spirit of God is at work to change the world. Always God gives us a vital role to fulfill in Christ's church as he is building us together to rise as the temple of divine purpose. He prepares to use us by filling us with the Spirit of power to fulfill his calling for this generation.

You are dear to God, secure in him, and vital to his purposes. The 3 R's: Remember, Reconciled and Rebuild. God is not done with us yet, he has only just begun.