

Living as God's Glory

Wk 3 (10/26) – Ephesians 2:11-3:21

Summary

In Chapter 1, Paul celebrates the glory of God who set aside for himself a people to declare his glory and called them to be holy. He forgave their sins, adopted them as sons and daughters, and indwelt them with power. These set aside people form the church, Christ's body, who continue the flesh and blood revelation of God to all humanity and to the universe. They are empowered by his Spirit and seated beside Christ in heaven while they live out their mortal lives on earth. In a sense, you can say that God's people are like Christ who is fully human and fully divine. We are fully human while also fully sons and daughters of God.

In Chapter 2, Paul shows how the inclusion of the Gentiles into the people of God demonstrates God's amazing power and his eternal purposes to redeem all of creation. God's work reconciles the fractured social arrangements, just as it does the separation between man and God caused by sin. Paul sees himself as a minister of this unifying message of God and prays that the Ephesians will begin to grasp the grandeur of God's work, and their participation in it.

(2:11-22) One New Humanity

In this section, Paul uses the central symbol of Israel, the temple, to explain graphically God's inclusion of the Gentiles as sons and daughters of God. The temple was a physical symbol of the separation between Jew and Gentile because Gentiles did not have access to certain areas within the temple. These physical walls which separated Jew and Gentile were mirrored by walls constructed of superior attitudes, moral distinctives, and social segregation. Paul declares that God's work in Christ focused on destroying walls of separation to create "one new humanity." According to Paul, Christ destroyed the social, physical, ethnic, and gender barriers that existed as walls of separation in the world. The unified, undivided, no-distinctions community of God's people replaced the physical temple as the dwelling place of God on earth.

Discussion

- What are the implications of Paul using the phrase "Gentiles by birth"?
- What laws separated Jews and Gentiles acting as a "dividing wall"?
- In what way did Jesus destroy the Law? How does this square with Christ saying he came to fulfill the law (Matt 5:17)?
- How does the inclusion of the Gentiles "create one new man [humanity] out of the two"?
- V. 22 talks about "being built together" to become a dwelling place of God. What is involved in being "built together"?
- How does this section depict the "glory of God" on display?

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(3:1-13) Paul as Minister of God's Mystery

In this section, Paul speaks of his personal ministry preaching the mystery the Gospel revealed in Christ. Paul emphasizes the unity brought about by the work of Christ with the phrase “the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and shares together in the promise in Christ Jesus.” This unity becomes a display piece, demonstrating God's character and purposes to the heavenly realms.

Discussion

- Paul describes his ministry as an “administration of God's grace.” Why would Paul refer to the gospel he preached in these terms? In what ways do we administer God's grace?
- Looking at verse 10 in context, what specifically is it about the church that is on display to the “authorities in the heavenly realms?”

(3:14-21) Paul's prayer for “power to grasp”

Paul's prayer focuses on gaining a deep understanding of what God purposed in Christ. He prays for understanding and power to see that God is a God of love and grace.

Discussion

- From vv.16-17. Why does it take “power through the Spirit” for Christ to dwell in our hearts through faith? Is there another way for Christ to dwell in our hearts?
- How can knowing God's love surpass knowledge? What more is there to know than the knowledge of something?
- Describe how v. 21 imagines the role of the church.