

Christian Students Association Bible Study

November 11, 2020

The Building of the Church

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not of yourselves; it is the gift of God;

9 Not of works that no one should boast.

10 For we are His masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand in order that we would walk in them.

11 Therefore remember that once you, the Gentiles in the flesh, those who are called uncircumcision by that which is called circumcision in the flesh made by hands,

12 That you were at that time apart from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have become near in the blood of Christ.

14 For He Himself is our peace, He who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of partition, the enmity,

15 Abolishing in His flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances, that He might create the two in Himself into one new man, so making peace,

16 And might reconcile both in one Body to God through the cross, having slain the enmity by it.

17 And coming, He announced peace as the gospel to you who were far off, and peace to those who were near,

Note for “grace” in verse 8 – Grace is God dispensed into us. Therefore, to be saved by grace means to be saved by having the processed Triune God dispensed into us.

Note for “faith” in verse 8 – Faith is the substantiation of invisible things (Heb. 11:1). It is by faith that we substantiate all the things Christ has accomplished for us. Through such a substantiating ability, we have been saved by grace. The free action of God’s grace saved us through our substantiating faith. This faith of ours is the faith by which we believe in Christ, and it is Christ in us as our faith.

Note for “masterpiece” in verse 10 - The Greek word, *poiema*, means *something that has been made, a handiwork, or something that has been written or composed as a poem*. Not only a poetic writing may be considered a poem, but also any work of art that expresses the maker’s wisdom and design. We, the church, the masterpiece of God’s work, are a poem expressing God’s infinite wisdom and divine design. The heavens, the earth, and man, created by God, are not God’s masterpiece; but the church, the Body of Christ, the fullness of the One who fills all in all (1:23), the corporate and universal new man (v. 15), is a masterpiece. We have been saved by grace to be God’s masterpiece that we may walk in the good works prepared beforehand by God.

Note for “created” in verse 10 - We, the church, the masterpiece of God’s work, are an absolutely new item in the universe, a new invention of God. We were created by God in Christ through regeneration to be His new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

Note for “no hope” in verse 12 – All God’s blessings are contained in Christ, all the civil rights are related to the nation of Israel, and all good things are promised in God’s covenants. Since we were apart from

Christ, were alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and were strangers to the covenants of God's promise, we had no hope whatever.

Note for "without God" in verse 12 – God is in Christ; He rules and moves in the commonwealth of Israel; and He bestows His blessings according to His covenants. When we were apart from Christ, the commonwealth of Israel, and the covenants of God's promise, we were without God; we did not have God as our enjoyment.

Note for "blood of Christ" in verse 13 – We were far off because we were fallen. But the redeeming blood of Christ brought us back. Hence, in this blood we have become near both to Israel and to God.

Note for "peace" in verse 14 – Christ, who accomplished full redemption for both the Jewish and the Gentile believers, is Himself our peace, our harmony, making both one. Because of the fall of mankind and the calling of the chosen race, there was a separation between Israel and the Gentiles. Through Christ's redemption this separation has been removed. Now, in the redeeming Christ, who is the bond of oneness, both are one.

Note for "create" in verse 15 – Christ created the one new man, the church, by working God's divine nature into humanity. The working of the divine nature into humanity was something new. Hence, it was a creating. In the old creation God did not work His nature into any of His creatures, not even into man. In the creating of the one new man, however, God's nature was wrought into man to make His divine nature one entity with humanity.

Note for "in Himself" in verse 15 – Christ is not only the Creator of the one new man, the church, but also the sphere in which and the means by which the one new man was created. He is the very element of the new man, making God's divine nature one entity with humanity. The Greek word rendered *in* here can also have an elemental significance, meaning also *with*, implying that the new man was created with Christ as its divine essence.

Note for "one new man" in verse 15 – The church is not only the church of God, the Body of Christ (the fullness, the expression, of the all-filling One — 1:23), and the household or family, the house, the temple, and the dwelling place of God (2:19, 21-22); it is also the one new man, which is corporate and universal, created of two peoples, the Jews and the Gentiles, and composed of all the believers, who, though they are many, are one new man in the universe. God created man as a collective entity (Gen. 1:26). The corporate man created by God was damaged through man's fall; hence, there was the need for God to produce a new man. This was accomplished through Christ's abolishing in His flesh the ordinances and through His creating of the new man in Himself.

Note for "one Body" in verse 16 – This one Body, the church (1:23), is the one new man mentioned in the previous verse. It was in this one Body that both the Jews and the Gentiles were reconciled to God through the cross. We, the believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, were reconciled not only for the Body of Christ but also in the Body of Christ. What a revelation here! We were reconciled to God; we were saved in the Body of Christ.

Note for “cross” in verse 16 – On the one hand, the cross of Christ slew the enmity caused by the ordinances, which were instituted because of the flesh, and on the other hand, it redeemed us with the blood of Christ, which was shed upon it. It was through the cross that both the Jews and the Gentiles were reconciled in one Body to God.

Discussion Questions

- How does the salvation by grace in Ephesians differ from the salvation shown to us in Romans?
- What is the masterpiece of God and how did it come into being?
- What constitutes the new man to make him new? How do the old man and the new man differ?