

## Home group study questions on Ephesians 2:11-22

By Phil Bailey

**Theme:** Christ has given God's people a great privilege by making believing Jews and gentiles into one new humanity and God's holy temple through his death.

- Aim:**
- Remember what you were and rejoice in what you have become!
  - Strive to display your unity as a church – no second-class Christians.

### Sermon summary:

If we want to appreciate what a privilege it is to belong to God's people, we need to remember what we were. Gentile-background believers (like most of MRC) were without God and without hope in the world before Christ bought them near. Prior to the coming of Jesus, they could only join God's people by being circumcised and following the Law of Moses. There was no salvation in pagan religion and no access to God. Gentiles who do not have Christ in our own day are in a similarly hopeless position. Jewish people are and were not automatically saved, but at least they had the promises of God and the covenants to offer them hope! Nevertheless, as Paul said in 2:3, they also were/are objects of wrath if they continue to reject the Messiah, because Israel broke the Mosaic covenant.

Once we've seen what we were, we can truly rejoice in what we have become in Christ. He has broken down the hostility between Jews and Gentiles who believe by setting aside the Mosaic covenant, with its ceremonial law that deemed gentiles unclean and excluded them from the assembly of Israel. In fact, in Christ, Jewish and Gentile believers *both* transcend what they were because he makes us one new humanity (v.15) and reconciles us to God (v.16). So gentile believers do not simply become Jewish; we both become something new, together. Better still, Christ gives us privileges that the Jewish people could never have dreamed of under the Law of Moses, by making us the very temple and dwelling place of God. We have intimacy with God, through the Spirit, that exceeds anything possible under the Old Covenant.

First and foremost, we should rejoice in this enormous privilege and be humbled by what God has done, which is so completely undeserved. But we should also remember that there are no second-class citizens in the Kingdom of God, because *every* believer is made part of Christ's one new humanity, which transcends ethnic, cultural and class distinctions (cf. Col 3:9-11). We should seek to display and live out this unity as a church, repenting where we have acted or spoken in ways that does make a brother or sister feel second class.

### Questions

- 1) Why might we struggle to believe Paul's/God's verdict on gentiles in v.12?
  - Some non-Christians can seem very spiritual. Why is it that they still don't have access to God, even with all their spirituality/religion?
  - How can you be praying as a home group for one another's witness to those who don't know Christ?
- 2) Why is it so important to understand and accept Paul's verdict in v.12 if we are to understand the *privilege* of being included in God's people?

- 3) How do vv.11-12 act as a corrective to gentile Christians if we feel entitled to be part of God's people – especially if we've grown up in Christian families?
- 4) Paul lists a lot of privileges that Christ gives to his people in vv.13-22. Think back to our sermon series in Exodus over the summer. How does Exodus (and Leviticus) help us understand the greatness of these privileges?
  - Which of these privileges are you most thankful for?
  - Which do you most need to remember?
- 5) Verse 15 shows that Jewish and gentile believers have been (re)created into one new humanity in Christ. What does this act of recreation mean for our sense of identity and belonging?
- 6) Verses 15-19 imply that no one is a second-class citizen in God's kingdom on the basis of their race or culture – not in God's eyes. But are there times when you *feel* like a second-class citizen in MRC because of your race or culture?
  - What leads to this?
  - Discuss as a home group what might help bring a greater sense of belonging. Please do pass any suggestions onto the elders!