
Wednesday GEL Group

Grow Encourage Learn

Tonight, we are going to look at the theme of what does it mean to be 'One in Christ'. Before we do so, there is a question I would like us to evaluate. Can you think of a group who would be regarded as second-class citizens and why? Is it their ethnicity, their way of living, or just something simple like the way they look make us think twice about conversing with them? The other question I would like to ponder is, does judging a book by its cover become a roadblock for discovering the goodness of what may be found on the inside? Do we tend to position people in our minds because they may not look or act right? What if they had visual markings like tattoos, different styles of hair or lifestyle activities which made them peculiar to us? Let's discuss this as a group and then let's pray together and for each other.

Let's now read Ephesians 2:11-22.

1. How do you think the Jews regarded Gentiles in those days? What does Ephesians 2:11-12 tell us?

2. When we compare the Gentiles and the Jews of that day, the Gentiles had five distinct disadvantages
 - a) They were living apart from Christ, having no expectation of a Messiah to save them.
 - b) They were excluded from God's people, Israel. Gentiles could never fully partake of the spiritual privileges promised to Israel, God's chosen people. While Gentiles could become Jews after an extensive training period, followed by circumcision and baptism, the sense of 'exclusion' was never fully removed. Gentiles could never truly be citizens of Israel.
 - c) Gentiles had little or no knowledge the promises God had made to Israel.
 - d) They were without God. Most Gentiles were polytheists (believers in many gods) but they were without the one true God.
 - e) They lived without true hope. The pagan philosophers' theories about life after death was both vague and supplied no way to atone for evil committed during a person's life. They had no divine promise and, thus, no basis for hope.

3. One of the difficulties, for some of, if not most of the pious Jews, was how they erred in being proud of their circumcision. Even more so, believing that circumcision was enough to make them godly without the necessity of inner renewal. In other words, it affected only their bodies and not their hearts.

Let's read Romans 2:25-29 and Galatians 5:6 to gather some further perspectives of scripture about this. What is Paul asserting in these passages?

4. Whilst the Jews would label Gentiles as the 'uncircumcised', what labels have we given to 'unbelievers'. Do you think these labels have had a positive impact or made us seen as being judgemental? How do we balance these views to be a believer who has a heart for the lost just like Jesus did? How does John 3:16-17 shape our view?
5. We see at the start of verse 13 two small words "but now" which have large implications. What are they?
6. What are the main points seen in verses 14-17? What does this mean to you?
7. What other Scriptures come to mind which develop the main thrust of verse 18?
8. What are the consequences of verse 19-22?
9. How do we apply these verses today?
10. How has your faith GROWN in view of this passage?
11. Is there a specific thing you have learnt in terms of being 'One in Christ'?
12. How have you been encouraged tonight? Is there something you could encourage us with?