



The Shaping of Gospel Community
Ephesians 2:11-22
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The Power of the Gospel to Create a New Person

If you've been at River West Church for any amount of time, you've probably noticed that we constantly talk about the Gospel (If you need a little reminder, just look left). We have good reason for this. In Romans 1:16, Paul declares that the Gospel "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes". When a person hears the Gospel word (the good news of what God has done for us through Christ) and believes, that person experiences something powerful! Salvation! Everything changes. They are brought near to God. The relationship, which once was broken by human sin and a hardened heart, is restored. In Ephesians, Paul describes it this way; "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (2:13). It is the powerful work of the Gospel to create a new person, a person who is softened in their heart towards God.

The Power of the Gospel to Create a New Community

There is another equally important reason behind our commitment to the Gospel word. The Gospel is powerful in creating community as well. The book of Ephesians is all about this new "gospel community". Paul writes in chapter 2 verse 14, "For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility". The work of Christ is not only to restore peace in the relationship between the individual and God, but to restore peace between people. We are made "one" with each other in Christ. We become united together under Christ, despite our differences, through the Gospel.

The letter to the Ephesians is filled with beautiful imagery about this new Gospel community. The church is pictured as the "body of Christ" (4:12), the "household of God" (2:19), a "holy temple in the Lord" (2:21), and a "dwelling place for God" (2:22). This is what Jesus is building! This is what we are called to embrace and contribute to... a new community of people with hearts softened towards God and towards one another. This is Christ-centered community. This is the fellowship of the Gospel. It doesn't require that we share everything in common, that we dress the same, look the same, vote the same or even always think the same. The shared ingredient is our faith in the saving work of Christ.

Are You Helping?

In our study of Zechariah we've been talking about building. Paul's letter to the Ephesians offers a powerful vision of what Jesus Christ is building in and through His people. It's the Gospel community; the body of Christ and you are called to participate in it. You are called to build. Have you embraced that vision in your heart and in your life? Have you responded to the truth of the Gospel by placing your faith solely in Christ? Is your heart soft towards God and towards others in the community of Christ, even those who are different from you? Are you committed, engaged and involved? My prayer today is that we all will grow in our commitment to this Gospel community.