

Ephesians 2:11-22 | Sociology 101

Tyler Velin | October 10th, 2013

So let me give you a little glimpse into the sinful heart of Tyler Velin. In 2008, the Grizzlies made it to the national championship game. And me and some of my friends road tripped all the way down to Chattanooga to watch the game.

We had all these great plans of what we were going to do after the Griz won. And the Griz lost. This is where we notice something with many men and football. I don't mean to generalize here, but for the most part, men put more effort and emotion into watching football. And you will see this when you watch college football. You will see at the end of a game a shot of the stands, and they will show some guy standing next to his girlfriend and the girl has this sad face on, she is upset they lost, but the guy standing next to her, looks like his soul was just eaten by a dementor. That's because there are many men who make an idol of football. Me and my three friends, were some of those men. Not only did Richmond beat us, they knocked over our idol. Prior to the loss we wanted to go down town and parade about and berate Richmond fans, but now after the loss, all we wanted to do was get something to eat and go home.

If you have ever spent much time in the south, you know if it's late at night, and you want to eat, you go to a Waffle House. They're everywhere. But no joke, we pulled in and out of three Waffle Houses because we could look inside and see Richmond fans being all happy and eating waffles. So we drove to the shadowlands and found this fringy waffle house, and set up there, but one of the friends we met down there, who didn't worship football wanted to invite this girl he knew from school. She came and she was so nice, and she was so happy, and she was so talkative, and we all hated her. Because we were grieving the loss of our idol, and we wanted to be alone. We didn't want to talk, we didn't want to smile. We wanted to savor the shame of eating at a Waffle House after a big loss we drove $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way across the country for. You see we didn't even know it, but we were isolating ourselves because of our sin. We wanted to alienate ourselves from everyone.

On a far more spiritual level, this is what Paul is going to talk about tonight in Ephesians 2. Paul is going to show us the problem of sin, and how it damages community, but he is also going to show us the power of Christ, and how he restores it, and enhances it. Let's **Pray**. Now I want us to remember two things here. 1.) Because the Bible is the divinely inspired word of God, things written in this book thousands of years ago are meant to be read and submitted to by contemporary readers. This is a book which is for us, and it is one of God's greatest gifts to us. This is where God speaks. 2.) In God's grand scheme of things, we are intended readers of this text, but we are not the immediate context of any text. We see that in the title: Ephesians. This book was written to a specific people for a specific purpose. As a result, we see certain portions of scripture, which are equally true, and equally relevant, but it takes some diligence on our parts to discover what Paul is really talking about, and how it stirs us to worship this side of 1st century culture.

The passage Kaylyn just read for us is a great example of that. But in order to fully understand it, we have to look back at Genesis 1 and 2. In Genesis God created the first male and the first female, the relationship between God and Adam and Eve was perfect. They had perfect fellowship with one another. The relationship between Adam and Eve was also perfect. Adam

would listen perfectly to Eve, and Eve would grieve perfectly with Adam after a football loss. There was no drama, no tension, no anger, no manipulation, it was a perfect relationship. But then sin came. Eve was deceived, Adam was silent and all died. They ate the fruit of the tree, and they severed their relationship with God. **Gen 3:22-24**. Paul uses the word alienation in this text, the most severe result of the fall wasn't death, it was alienation from God. That alienation produced the death that came.

We were separate from God.

But there was another alienation that happened in the fall.

Prior to sin, Adam and Eve had a perfect relationship. But once sin entered the ball game everything changed. Adam started throwing Eve under the bus for eating the apple. Eve probably started glaring at Adam for passing the blame to her.

And in the very next chapter Adam and Eve have children, and the first act we see is Cain became jealous with Abel and killed him. Time wise this story is not far from perfection, but heart wise humanity is far from perfect. You see not only did sin alienate us from God, it alienates us from one another.

Sin isolates.

James makes this clear in **James 4:1**. What causes wars, conflicts, strife, enmity and isolation among people? What causes nasty break up's, and what fuels world wars? The sin in each of us. Our sin makes us selfish for our own desires. We looked at that last week. Sin doesn't bring freedom through excess, it brings bondage through desire.

So sin has division and strife into humanity. Outside of God, we struggle to relate to humans. We struggle to love other humans, it was a problem in the 3rd chapter of the Bible and it is a problem still today.

So God in his mercy desired to begin his work of redemption in the Old Testament, and he chose the people of Israel as the building block for this story. But God made it clear why he chose Israel. If you were involved in a community group this week you looked at this passage.

Deut 7:6-7

God chose the people of Israel because they otherwise would have been picked last in dodge ball.

He entered into a covenant with Israel and said I will bless you, and I will make you a great nation. And it kind of went to Israel's head. The Jews, especially in the time of Jesus saw themselves as God's gift to the world. If you were not a Jew, you were a Gentile, and that is almost as low as you can get. There is a little lower than Gentile. You see Gentiles don't really have a choice in the matter, but Samaritans do. Samaritans were called 'half-breeds' of "dogs" by the Jews because Samaritans were the children of Jews who married Gentiles.

They diluted the holy and pure blood. Jews were circumcised, Gentiles were not. Jews were a people of promise, Gentiles were not. Jews had covenants with God, Gentiles did not. Jews were holy, Gentiles were not. This is how the social classes were seen during Paul's letter.

The hatred from the Jews to the Gentiles was intense. If a Jewish boy married a gentile, they would actually have a funeral for that Jewish boy. At the Temple mount, there was a huge wall that separated the court of the Gentiles from the courts which the Jews could go into, and not only was that court the outermost court, it was also the lower court so that if the Gentiles wanted to go worship at the temple, all they could do was stand far off and look up at the temple mount.

This is the culture that Paul is writing to in Ephesians. Keep that in mind as we look at **2:11-17**. At one point we were alienated by God from sin. The first chapter and half speak to how God in his great mercy adopted us back into his family through Christ. This chapter speaks of our reconciliation back to each other through Christ.

You can see how on one hand this passage encourages the Gentiles, and yet on another how it pierced the Jews who wanted to sit alone in their Waffle House.

But the Jews missed the point of the covenants. The first covenant given was given to Noah, and it was a covenant to never again destroy the whole world by flood. That covenant was for all people. And then there was the first of the Jewish covenants, the covenant to Abraham.

Gen 12:3, 17:4. We also see throughout the Old Testament that God makes ways for Gentiles to find shelter in the people of Israel. In fact a Gentile prostitute is included in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1. While God may have started with Israel, his goal was always the nations. This was, to borrow Paul's phrase, the whole counsel of God, from before the foundations of the world.

Paul is saying to the church that there is no longer two people groups, but one people group. There is no longer the dividing wall, speaking of the temple mount. There is no longer those who follow the law and those who don't. Now there is Christ. Christ is the peace which brings people together in himself on the cross. Christ is the one we follow. Christ is the one man who makes all men one in himself. Christ kills the hostility of our sin, and Christ kills the hostility we have towards one another.

While sin is isolating, Christ brings people together through redemption. I love how verse 17 says that Christ preached to those who were far off, Gentiles, and also preached to those who were near, the Jews. Both needed to be preached to. Because God doesn't want people to be far off, nor does he desire us to be near Christ. God's plan is for us to be found in Christ.

When we are in Christ we are changed in our standing towards God, but we are also changed in our standing towards each other. This is the result of hostility being killed: **18-22**

I want to read that passage again and look at the corporate language he is using. **18-22**

This passage marks a distinct shift in this book, as the first portion mainly highlights the salvation of individuals, this passage marks a shift to the church as a body of saved individuals.

Jesus builds his church. Jesus takes sinners and saves them into a Christian community. He doesn't say you have been built together into outposts, we are built into households. We are joined together through Christ, and held together by his flesh pierced on the cross.

He is the cornerstone of the church, and in him, we together are being built as a dwelling place for God by the power of the holy spirit.

Isn't that wild to think about. God dwells in his people communally. He wants his people to be his new temple.

This is why we gather as GCF, we gather as members of Christ's church. This is why we do community groups, go to church together on Sunday, eat a Jakers together later tonight we do this because we see that in community we are exercising our salvation and we are allowing God to dwell and work among his people.

Peter emphasizes the same point in **1 Peter 2:4-6, 10**. God is building us up as a holy priesthood. You know what the priests did in the OT? They interceded for people. They labored for people. They preached to people. They loved on people. People who need forgiveness, people laden with sin, people in need of a savior.

This is why God has given us over to community. Because as a community of believers we most fully project the glory of God, and it is the glory of God seen in Christ which the world so desperately needs to see.

Paul gives us our new task in light of the community of faith in **2 Cor 5:16-6:1**.

Our grace is vain if it is an individual grace. Grace is fundamentally evangelistic. We no longer regard people according to the flesh. We no longer fear the flesh, we no longer are limited by the flesh, but rather we are given to the ministry of reconciliation.

God reconciled his church to himself. God brought those who were near to be found in Christ, he brought those who were far off to experience the salvation of Christ, and now the church preaches and lives the message of Christ.

God has killed hostility in the heart of his people which was left over by sin. What God has placed in us instead is a Christ like desire to preach the peace of Christ.

As a community of believers we have a given responsibility to reconcile people to God in the same way we were brought in: by spreading the gospel. Here on campus. We ought to be helping one another in doing in. We are the dwelling place of God, the holy temple.

We are the church of Christ proclaiming the beauty of Christ. So here is my challenge to you in here. If you have not been covered by the blood of Christ, come to him. Let him remove the hostility and dividing wall of your heart, and enter into the love of Christ and the community of the people of Christ.

If you are in Christ, do two things. 1.) Give yourself over to the church. Do church things. Gather with believers, sing with believers, learn with believers, eat with believers, laugh with believers, worship Christ with believers. But 2.) As a church we are a body of believers, but we must also be a body of believers given over to reconciling people to Christ. Go to community group do that. But also, read the Bible with your roommate. Start a Bible study with some friends and read through a gospel. Mark is a great book to start in. Invite your friends to church, and to GCF, give them opportunities to hear the same message which saved us when we were far off.

Look at the covenants and see God's plan for the nations, and then look at the New Testament and see how God plans to do that through the church. This ministry of reconciliation can be an intimidating thing, but we are not called to it alone. God has given us the Holy Spirit, but he has also given us each other.

Get this. The best way you can relate to other humans is through Christ. That's how we were created in the garden. That means that you are fully capable of loving and serving those around you because you are doing it as the body of Christ, in the name of Christ.

Let a reflection of your individual salvation push you to a communal mission. This what Jesus has saved us to.