



Week of January 26, 2020: Ephesians 3:1-14

Discussion Questions Set #1

"I was entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the [Gentiles], just as Peter had been to the [Jews]. For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the [Jews], was also at work in [Paul] as an apostle to the Gentiles" (Galatians 2:7-8)

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd". (John 10:14-16)

In sermon, we discussed the idea that the Apostle Paul gets incredibly sidetracked at the mere mention of Gentile faith, leaving a thought completely unfinished in Ephesians 3:1.

1. Discuss why the inclusion of Gentiles into the church might have been such a difficult reality for the early church.
2. Paul indicates that "the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 3:6). What significance does this statement lend to how we understand both faith and faithful community?
3. Why might it be important to our faith in 2020 that the early church understood that these once hostile groups would now be brought together in unity within the church, even though this presented both a significant shift in understanding and a significant challenge for implementation? What can we learn about unity in the church in 2020 from this early church example?

Discussion Questions Set #2

"So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:26-19)

In sermon, we used an object lesson to reveal that from an inclusion/exclusion/belonging standpoint, we are now one through faith in Jesus, regardless of any other distinction. This unity is accomplished by virtue of being dissolved into something else – namely, Christ. The mystery of which Paul writes is not only that believing Gentiles become one body with believing Jews in the church, but that the church – all of us - is *incorporated* into Christ and, by virtue of this, each previously separate person or group is incorporated into the others. All persons who have been joined to Christ have also been joined to one another.

1. Though all distinction does not dissolve as we become "in Christ", why is it significant that no distinction exists in the church from a belonging standpoint? How might this understanding impact our function as a church?
2. What significance is there that if we are joined to Christ, we are also joined to one another? How does this impact our view of unity within the church? What might this suggest about the function of a H2H group?

Discussion Questions Set #3

"Through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Ephesians 3:10)

1. Why is it significant that our unity reveals God's wisdom to oppositional forces of evil in the heavenly realms? What does this suggest about the importance of our unity? How might understanding this put the sometimes petty squabbles in churches in proper context?
2. "Each and every time when we choose the church, the body of Christ, the interests of each other over our own interests, we buckle the enemies' knees". Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? What is an application of this understanding in the life of the follower of Jesus?