

242 The Household of God

We were reminded in last week's Reflection of the great spiritual significance the Lord God gives to the shedding of blood. He sets out the situation for us from the very start of His creation, in Genesis (see 4.9-12 / 9.1-7 / 37.22,26,31 / 42.22), and then on many other occasions throughout the rest of His Word.

Given this background, the voluntary shedding, on our behalf, of the innocent blood of God's own Son becomes all the more amazing, and truly lies at the very heart of God's loving mercy towards fallen, sinful mankind. Blessings now abound! – as we are told so clearly in Ephesians Chapter 2.

In this wonderful passage the Holy Spirit, through Paul, is emphasising the huge transformation that had come upon the Christians of Gentile background (so this applies to today's Gentiles too – people like us), who were now members of the Christian community at Ephesus. This change had been made possible only by the shed blood of Christ, the effects of which had been duly received by these Ephesian Gentiles through their faith in Jesus' Person and Work.

They had been “dead in their sins” (v.1), walking “according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air” – with Satan as the boss (v.2). The Spirit explains that we were all like that, steering by the desires of the flesh and thus being by nature still “the children of wrath” (v.3), and “aliens ... strangers, having no hope, and without God in the world” (v.12). There is the Bad News, and how important it is that Bible-accepting Christian people should be able to explain this Bad News in clear and simple ways in today's generation; it is sobering to realise that the great majority of the people among whom we live are still in this dire situation.

But then come the glories! God the Father, “rich in mercy” and filled with love for us (v.4), even when we were still spiritually “dead in our sins”, “quickened us (literally, “made us alive”) together with Christ (v.5). He has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (v.6): this is Past Tense – it has happened, and is the situation for all Christ-redeemed believers right now. We see here the three “togethers” (vv.5-6), stressing in this passage the togetherness of Jew and Gentile who are now made one, BY Christ and IN Christ, and who now share exactly the same rich spiritual blessings. We must never forget the enormity of that achievement in those times! – when deep mutual contempt was the norm between Jew and Gentile.

All this has been achieved by the Father through Christ, purely by His grace, His kindness and His gift (vv.7-8): in other words, it has nothing to do with us or our “works”, so human boasting has no place (v.9). When it comes to “works”, we ourselves are God's “workmanship”, now created in Christ Jesus “unto good works” which the Father has prepared beforehand for us to walk in (v.10).

Then the Holy Spirit through Paul further stresses the wonderful change from division to unity. Those who used to be far off have been “brought near by the blood

of Christ" (v.13). Christ is our peace; He has made us one, breaking down the barriers (vv.14-15), reconciling both sides to God in one body by the cross (v.16), and preaching this peace to one and all (v.17). No wonder that through Him we now both have access by one Spirit to the Father (v.18), and the days of our being "strangers and foreigners" have been replaced by our now being "fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God" (v.19).

These many blessings are all built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone (v.20), and as such they are UTTERLY SOLID. What is more, the building that is this Christ-won community "the Church", is being grown into a "a holy temple in the Lord" (v.21), and within that temple each of its members, the likes of you and me, are also being built, together, into "a habitation of God through the Spirit" (v.22).

We are living in troubled and dangerous times, foretold long ago by the Lord Himself. Yet from passages such as Ephesians 2 we marvel afresh at the goodness of Almighty God, at all the blessings He has wrought on our behalf through His Son Jesus Christ.

This Good News has never been for just a "holy huddle" and that old divine promise still stands as strong as ever – ".... everyone who shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (see Joel 2.32 / Acts 2.21 / Romans 10.9-13).

The way of salvation by faith in Christ remains open: may our Christ-reflecting lives play a part in helping others to find and follow that way.

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