

Jim's Notes
September 26, 2007
The Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians
Ephesians 2:11-22

Ephesians 2:11

St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):

Many are the evidences of God's love of humanity. God has saved us through himself, and through himself in such a special way, remembering what we were when he saved us and to what point he has now brought us. For each of these stages in itself is a great proof of his benevolence, Paul now reviews at each stage what he writes, He has already said that God has saved us when we were dead in sins and children of wrath. Now Paul shows to what extent God has raised us. (Homily on Ephesians 5.2.11-12)

St. Epiphanius of Salamis (AD 310 – 403):

The phrase Gentiles in the flesh contrasts types of realities. The type in the flesh was awaiting the time of the spirit, The less perfect fulfillment of the circumcision is expressed in relation to its more perfect fulfillment. (Panarion 42.12.3, Thirty-Sixth Refutation of Marcion)

St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):

By calling the Ephesians Gentiles in the flesh, he shows that in the spirit they are not Gentiles just as conversely the Jews are Gentiles in spirit and Israelites in the flesh. Therefore the Jews and Gentiles are subject to a fourfold division: Some are circumcised in spirit and flesh, as were Moses and Aaron. . . . Some have been circumcised neither in spirit nor in flesh, as were Nebuchadnezzar and Pharaoh . . . A third group are circumcised only in the flesh . . . Lastly come those of whom he now speaks . . . believers such as today we see in the whole host of believing Gentiles around the world. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.12)

Ephesians 2:12a

Theodoret (AD 392 – 457):

He wants to show that Christ is the provider of all goods for them. "For previously," he says, "you were destitute of the knowledge of God and did not enjoy the goods promised beforehand to Israel." (Epistle to the Ephesians 2:12)

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

The true way of Israel consists in living according to the Spirit, thinking according to the Spirit and being circumcised from unworthy desires. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.12)

Ephesians 2:12c

St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):

When he says having no hope, without God in the world, he does not deny that the Ephesians had many gods before they believed in Christ. His point is that one who is without the true God has no god worthy of the name. And the next phrase, without God in the world, is significant: The Gentiles in a sense already had God indeed in the form of anticipation, because God knew beforehand that he would have them. In God's foreknowledge they were never without God. But enmeshed in the world they were without God. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.12)

Ephesians 2:13

Tertullian (AD 155 – 230):

They were once far off from the Christ of the Creator, from the way of the Israelites, from the covenants, from the hope of the promise, from God himself. Once far off, the Gentles now come close in Christ to the things that were once far off. (Against Marcion 5.17.12-13)

Origen (AD 185 – 251):

Paul is responding to those who think that believers in Christ may enter into the commonwealth of Israel but that it is some entirely different one that has nothing in common with the history of Israel . . . It is those who know the spiritual law and live in accordance with it who are made dwellers in the commonwealth of Israel, more so than those who are Israelites in the body only. (Epistle to the Ephesians)

St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):

God in his entirety is everywhere. Who can be separated from him when all things are in him? . . . He is, however, said to be far away from the unrighteous, according to Proverbs [15:29] . . . Just as far as the unrighteous are away from him, so close is he to the saints. Just when God seem to be furthest from the Ephesians, he was coming close to them by the blood of Jesus. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.13-14)

Ambrosiaster [pseudo-Ambrose] (about A.D. 370):

He reminds us that we were brought close to God by the blood of Christ in order to show how great is God's affection toward us, since he allowed his own Son to die. We too, enduring in faith, should not yield to despair in any of the agonies inflicted on us for his sake, knowing that what he deserves from us exceeds all that our enemies can bring upon us. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.13)

Ephesians 2:14a

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

Christ, he says, is our peace. Elsewhere Paul calls him mediator. He interposed himself of his own accord between divided realms. Souls born of God's fountain of goodness were being detained in the world. There was a wall in their midst, a sort of fence, a partition made by the deceits of the flesh and worldly lusts, Christ by his own mystery, his cross, his passion and his way of life destroyed this wall. He overcame sin and taught that it could be overcome. He destroyed the lusts of the world and taught that they ought to be destroyed. He took away the wall in the midst. It was in his own flesh that he overcame the enmity. The work is not ours. We are not called to set ourselves free. Faith in Christ is our only salvation. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.14-15)

Theodore of Mopsuestia (AD 350 – 428):

Christ, conferring immortality on us through his resurrection, has put an end to this division [between Jew and Gentile], for there can be no circumcision of an immortal nature. (Catena 2.134)

Ephesians 2:14b

Ambrosiaster [pseudo-Ambrose] (about A.D. 370):

The passion of the Savior made peace between the circumcision and the uncircumcision. For the enmity, which was between them like a wall and divided the circumcision from the uncircumcision and the uncircumcision from the circumcision, was abolished by the Savior. His command is that the Jew should not so presume on his circumcision as to reproach the Gentile, nor should the Gentile trust in his uncircumcision, that is, his paganism, so as to abhor the Jew. Both, made new, should maintain in Christ their faith in the one God. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.14.1)

St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):

Some say that the wall between them is that of the Jews against the Greeks, because it does not allow them to mix, I do not think so. Rather I think that the wall between them is common within both. It is the hostility proceeding within the flesh. This was the midwall cutting them off, as the prophets says, "Do not your sins stand in the midst between you and me?" (Isaiah 59:2) The midwall was the enmity that God had both toward Jews and toward Greeks. But when the law came this enmity was not dissolved; rather it increased "For the law," he says, "works wrath." (Romans 4:15) (Homily on Ephesians 5.2.13-15)

Ephesians 2:15a

St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):

The law was a fence, but this was made for our security. This is why it was called a fence, so that it might fence us in . . . Now he has abolished the law of commandments

through his teaching. Oh, what love of humanity! He gave us a law that we might keep it, but when we failed to keep it and deserved punishment he dissolved the law. (Homily on Ephesians 5.2.13-15)

Ambrosiaster [pseudo-Ambrose] (about A.D. 370):

The law that he abolished was that which had been given to the Jews concerning circumcision and new moons and food and sacrifices and the Sabbath. He ordered it to cease because it was a burden. In this way he made peace. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2:15)

Theodoret (AD 392 – 457):

Christ dispelled the enmity between us and God. He gave his own flesh as a ransom for us, Once this was done he put an end to the things that separated you and them. For this is what he means of the law of ordinances. He has not annulled the Decalogue . . . For Christ the Lord himself held these up to the one who wanted to know the way to eternal life. But by doctrines he meant the gospel teaching, since the realizing of full maturity lies in the responsive choices of the will . . . Yet these gospel teachings are not laid down as laws. They are a matter of free choice. What he does lay down as law is what he inscribed on nature when he created it in the beginning. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.14-15)

Ephesians 2:15b:

Tertullian (AD 155 – 230):

He was born in a singular way from a virgin by the Spirit of God. He was born to reconcile both Gentile and Jew to God, both of whom had offended God. He reconciled them into one body through the cross, The enmity was in this way slain, This reconciliation took place in his flesh through his body as he suffered on the cross. (Against Marcion 5.17.15)

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

Their souls have thus been reconciled to the eternal and the spiritual, to all things above. The Savior, through the Spirit, indeed the Holy Spirit, descended into souls. He thereby joined what had been separated, spiritual things and souls, so as to make the souls themselves spiritual. He has established them in himself, as he says, in a new person. What is this new person. The spiritual person, as distinguished from the old person, who was soul struggling against flesh. (Ephesians 1.2.14-15)

St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):

Don't you see? The Greek does not have to become a Jew. Rather both enter into a new condition. His aim is not to bring Greek believers into being as different kinds of Jews but rather to create both anew. Rightly he uses the term "create" rather than change to point out the great effect of what God has done. Even though the creation is invisible it is no less a creation of its Creator. (Homily on Ephesians 5.2.13-15)

Theodoret (AD 392 – 457):

He has reconciled both, that is, those from Gentile and from Jewish backgrounds, in the one body that was offered on behalf of all, so that they may at last be made one body. And he has called all believers a single man because Christ our Lord is the one head, and those who have been favored with salvation fill the role of members. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.16)

St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):

He did not pass the task of reconciliation on to another. He made himself the means of combining one with the other. This produced one wonderful result, He himself was the first instance of this reconciliation, a result greater than all the previous creation, For that is what in himself means: Having assumed dominion over the Jew and then of the Greek, he himself became their mediator. He brought them together, doing away with all that estranged them. Now he has fashioned them anew through fire and water, no longer water and earth but water and fire. He became a Jew when he was circumcised. Then, being cursed, he became a Greek outside the law and one more excellent than either Greek or Jew. (Homily on Ephesians 5.2.15)

Ephesians 2:15c:**St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):**

Making peace may mean their peace with God or with one another . . . The focus is primarily on peace with God, as is made clear by what follows. What does he say? He has fully reconciled both to God in one body through the cross, He did not say, "to some degree reconciled" but "fully reconciled." Even before this human nature was in principle reconcilable, as we see in the righteous and before the law. (Homily on Ephesians 5.2.16)

Ephesians 2:16a:**St. Gregory of Nyssa (AD 335-394):**

Taking up the enmity that had come between us and God on account of sins, slaying it in himself, as the apostle says (and sin is enmity), and becoming what we are, he joined the human to God again through himself. (Against Eunomius 3.10.12)

St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):

No expression could be more authoritative or more emphatic. His death, he says, killed the enmity, wounded and destroyed it. He did not give the task to another. And he not only did the work but suffered for it. He did not say that he dissolved it; he did not say that he put an end to it, but he used the much more forceful expression: He killed! This shows that it need not ever rise again. How then does it rise again? From our great wickedness. So long as we remain in the body of Christ, so long as we are one with him it does not rise again but lies dead. (Homily on Ephesians 5.2.16)

Ephesians 2:17:

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

He distinguishes those who are far off from those who are near. This refers to the Gentiles and Jews. For the Jews are obviously close and the Gentiles far off. Yet the Savior himself has brought the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul here mentions first that Christ by his advent has truly preached peace also to those who are far off, that is, the Gentiles, as is shown by many evidences. For those who come to belief from Gentile backgrounds ironically have a greater claim to be called sons than those from Jewish backgrounds. And yet, so that it may not be denied to the latter, he adds and those who are near. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.17)

Ephesians 2:18:

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

Both Jews and Gentiles have access to the Father through Christ himself. But how? In one Spirit. For the Spirit, who is one with Christ, enters into us when we believe in Christ. We then feel God's presence, know God and worship God. Thus we come to the Father in that same Spirit through Christ. No one, whether Jew or Gentile, comes to the Father except through Christ. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.18)

St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):

"We both" means not less to one and more to another but having access by a single grace. For he has dispelled the wrath through death and made us all beloved to the Father through one Spirit. Note that "in" here means "through." (Homily on Ephesians 6.2.17-22)

St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):

However, it should not be thought possible to achieve perfect and complete reconciliation in this world . . . The making of the new person in Christ will be fully consummated when earthly and heavenly things have been reconciled, when we come to the Father in one Spirit and with one affection and understanding. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.15)

Ephesians 2:19:

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

What are we to understand by "fellow citizens with the saints"? It implies a distinction between citizens and saints. But if this is so, who are the saints and who are the citizens? "Saints" refers to the apostles, prophets and all who formerly experienced God or spoke divinely through the Spirit dwelling within them. They in some way beheld God's presence, as did Abraham, either through the flesh, through the Spirit or through both flesh and Spirit, as with all the apostles. Those who have later believed in Christ

without any such special means are “fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household.” (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.19)

Ambrosiaster [pseudo-Ambrose] (about A.D. 370):

Believers become “fellow citizens” in a way analogous to all those who desired the peace of Rome. They brought gifts and were accepted as Roman citizens, as were the people of Cilician Tarsus. Paul was a Roman citizen of that city. So too anyone who has joined himself to the Christian faith becomes a fellow citizen of the saints and a member of God's household. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.19)

Ephesians 2:20:

Origen (AD 185 – 251):

These are fitting words to cite against those who would divide the Godheads and think that the prophets belong to one God and the apostles to another. (Epistle to the Ephesians)

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

Jesus Christ and his teachings are the foundation for the apostles. The edifice built on this foundation consists in life and character and one's conduct and discipline. The primary foundation is for life; the rest of the edifice is for its adornment and edification. The primary foundation, I say, is to believe in Christ, hope in him and trust in God. This foundation is the teaching of the apostles, which is also heard in the word of the prophets, Note the order of this distinction, first apostles and then prophets. The apostles beheld [God incarnate]; the prophets received the Spirit. These are the saints mentioned above: those who saw and those who were inhabited by the Spirit. Hence the teachings of the apostles and prophets are indeed the teachings of Christ, which proclaim the foundation of all eternal hope. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.20)

Ambrosiaster [pseudo-Ambrose] (about A.D. 370):

This means that the household of God is built upon both the old and the new covenants. For what the apostles preached had been foretold by the prophets. In his words to the Corinthians, that God “placed in the church first apostles then prophets,” (I Corinthians 12:28) he is concerned with the order of the church. But in this case he is speaking of the foundation in the prophets of old. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.20)

Ephesians 2:21a:

St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):

See how he joins himself to us. Sometimes it is as if holding together and unifying the whole body from above. Sometimes it is as if joining the edifice from below, as if supporting the building with underpinnings and being its root. (Homily on Ephesians 6.2.17-22)

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

He called this stone a cornerstone not merely because it is at the corner but because it is the first and most important stone. From it begins the foundation of the corner which joins and couples two things to make them one. Souls above already with Christ are united together with those that live in holiness and receive Christ in a mystery that is present. Souls below that are Christ's, including those of the Gentiles, are also joined by that cornerstone, Jesus Christ. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.20)

Ephesians 2:21b:

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

All souls made spiritual through Christ are joined and built up into a holy temple, where God dwells, As Christ is in all and God in Christ, all are a temple of God through Christ. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.21-22)

St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):

It is maintained by some that the whole edifice built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets comprises not only human souls but also angelic powers, so that all equally will become the abode of God, They argue that it would be absurd if angels and all the blessed forces who serve God in heaven would have no part in this blessedness. For in this is a building, put together harmoniously, that is growing into a holy temple of God and to be an abode of God in the Spirit. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.19)

Ephesians 2:22:

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

As he does so often, he brings the argument back to individuals, that is, to the Ephesians. They themselves have been built into that same temple cornerstone. Here he cleverly adjusts his language to form an exhortation. They have not yet fully entered into this unity but are still being built up. There is a deficiency, and therefore he warns and exhorts them. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.21-22)