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**A New Race in Christ:
Racial Reconciliation in the Pauline Corpus**

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Introduction

On both sides of the Atlantic, the Christian church has historically been plagued by racism, discrimination, and hatred. “Christians” have been the recipients of these atrocities, but they have unfortunately often been the source. “Christian” involvement in the exclusion of Gentiles from the church in the New Testament era (e.g. Acts 15, Gal 2:11-21), “Christian” involvement in the holocaust, and

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“Christian” involvement in slavery and segregation in the US support that “Christians” and the Christian church cannot simply blame secularism and atheism for racial discrimination when in fact “Christians” have often been the spearhead in front of it.

In her recent book about the influence of Christianity on interracial marriage and American law, Fay Botham documents an example that demonstrates that too often Christians have been on the wrong side of the race issue. Her example comes from the US in the 1950s during the era of segregation.² In the summer of 1958, an eighteen year old black/Native American woman, Mildred Delores Jeter, and her twenty-four year old English-Irish/White husband, Richard Perry Loving, left their hometown of Central Point, Virginia to get married in Washington, DC, because it was illegal for blacks and whites to intermarry in Virginia in 1958. After their marriage was legalized, Jeter and Loving returned as newlyweds to their home in Virginia. Five weeks after their return, three Caroline County policemen barged into their home, shined a flashlight into their faces in their bedroom, and demanded an explanation of their being together in the same bed. When the couple informed the officers that they were husband and wife, the Sheriff informed them that their marriage was invalid in Virginia; he arrested them for breaking the law, and hauled off the young couple to jail where they were charged with violating Virginia Code 20-58. Virginia Code 20-54 prohibited interracial marriage, and Code 20-58 prohibited “any white person and colored person” from leaving Virginia to evade Code 20-54.³

In January 1959, a Caroline County (all white) grand jury indicted the couple for unlawfully leaving the state to marry with the intention of returning to the state and for cohabiting as husband and wife contrary to the peace and dignity of the state of Virginia. The couple pleaded guilty, and Judge Leon M. Bazile sentenced each to one year in the Caroline County jail, which the judge eventually suspended provided that the couple would leave Virginia and not return for twenty-five years. While the Supreme Court was debating a

²Fay Botham, *Almighty God Created the Races: Christianity, Interracial Marriage, & American Law* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

³Information in the above paragraph comes from Botham, *Almighty God*, 1.

Civil Rights Bill in 1963, which eventually became the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Lovings hoped that their case would be reversed. After much effort of attorneys on behalf of the Lovings, Judge Bazile, a life-long Catholic (who originally sentenced the Lovings), reaffirmed Virginia's anti-miscegenation laws in 1965. He concluded his remarks by stating: "Almighty God created the races white, black, yellow, malay, and red, and he placed them on separate continents. And but for the interference with his arrangement there would be no cause for such marriages. The fact that he separated the races shows that he did not intend for the races to mix."⁴ Judge Bazile's Catholic Christianity shaped his understanding of Civil Rights (or lack thereof) and particularly his understanding of interracial relationships between blacks and whites. He, as many other "Christians," was on the wrong side of the issue.

In this article, I will provide a general overview of racial reconciliation in the Pauline corpus. My thesis is that according to Paul, Jesus' death for sin accomplishes racial reconciliation for the Jews and Gentiles for whom he dies, creates them into a new race by faith, is central to the Pauline gospel, and establishes the motivation for unity within the believing community.

A. Peace with God

Peace with God is reconciliation to God. Paul begins a new section in Romans 5-8 that emphasizes the theme of hope.⁵ Central to this hope is justification by faith in Christ, which is supported by the close connection between 3:21-4:25 and the word "therefore" in 5:1. Paul argues in Rom 1:18-3:20 that Jews and Gentiles will be judged by God in accordance with the same standard: namely, whether they perfectly obey God. In 3:21-4:25, he argues likewise that Jews and Gentiles are justified in accordance with the same standard: namely, by faith in Christ who died for their sins. In 4:25, Paul concludes the argument with a reference to Jesus' death for sin and his resurrection. He suggests in 4:25 that Jesus' death and resurrection together guarantee the future justification of Jews and Gentiles who have faith in Christ.

⁴Ibid., 2.

⁵For other scholars who affirm this about Romans 5-8, see chapter 3 in my *One New Man*.

“Therefore,” Paul states in 5:1, “having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁶ This statement provides the force behind Paul’s discussion of hope in Romans 5-8. It also suggests that the justification that comes by faith in Christ grants peace to all who are justified.

The statement “having been justified” suggests that God is the theological subject, for Paul states earlier in Romans that God both reveals his righteousness (1:17, 3:21-22; 9:30) and justifies all who believe by faith (3:26, 30; cf. 8:30). As elsewhere in Romans, the verbal idea “to justify” is forensic (2:13; 3:4, 20, 24, 26, 28, 30; 4:2, 5; 5:9; 6:7; 8:30).⁷ Moreover, since Paul has argued in 3:21-4:25 that Jews and Gentiles can be justified by faith, the verbal idea “having been justified” in 5:1 likely communicates a causal idea (“because we have been justified”).

The statement “because we have been justified by faith” is an extremely important theological statement. But since the statement appears in a dependent clause, it is not Paul’s main thought in 5:1. Instead, the clause grammatically relies on the sentence “we have peace with God” since “we have peace with God” is the main verbal idea in the verse.⁸ The words “because we have been justified by faith” provide the reason for which those who have faith in Christ have peace with God. In Paul’s view, peace with God is not an emotional feeling, because (1) those who have been justified by faith have peace with God; (2) faith is the means through which peace with God comes to the justified, and (3) Jesus is the agent through whom peace with God comes to the justified.

Peace occurs elsewhere in the Pauline corpus. He either uses the term in a benediction by itself (Rom 15:33; 16:20; Eph 6:23; 1 Thess

⁶Unless otherwise indicated, translations of ancient texts are mine.

⁷For a more detailed discussion of justification, see chapter 3 in my *One New Man*.

⁸An important textual variant occurs in 5:1. Scholars have noted that external evidence (various manuscripts from different locales) suggest that Paul uses the subjunctive mood “let us have” instead of the indicative “we have” and that internal evidence (the argument of Romans) suggests that the latter verb could be the correct reading. The former reading states a command (“let us have”). Thus, Paul would be exhorting the Romans to pursue peace instead of stating that they have received it. For a discussion of the variant readings, see critical commentaries of Romans.

5:23; 2 Thess 3:16) or in conjunction with grace (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; Col 1:2; 1 The 1:1; 2 Thess 1:2; Tit 1:4; Phl 1:3), mercy (1 Tim 1:2), and joy (Rom 15:13). He uses “peace” to refer to eternal life (Rom 2:10; 8:6; Gal 6:16) and the gospel (Eph 2:17; 6:15). He uses “peace” as an attribute of God (Rom 15:33; 16:20; 1 Cor 14:33; 2 Cor 13:11) and to express how Jews and Gentiles ought to live in relation to one another in the world (Rom 3:17; 14:17, 19; 1 Cor 7:15; 16:11; Eph 4:3; cf. Eph 2:14-15). He states that “peace” is a gift from God (Eph 1:2; Phil 4:7, 9; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Thess 1:2; 1 Tim 1:2; Ti 1:4; Phl 1:3) and from Christ (Eph 1:2; Col 3:15; 2 Thess 1:2; 3:16-17; 1 Tim 1:2; Tit 1:4; Phl 1:3), and he states that “peace” is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22).

In Rom 5:1, Paul uses “peace” synonymous with salvation since he states that the ones whom God justifies by faith have peace “with God” and since he states that justification by faith is the basis for “peace with God.” “Peace,” then, is an eschatological promise that has invaded the present age since Paul connects it with justification by faith (5:1, 9) and with salvation (5:9), both of which are eschatological promises that have invaded the present age (cf. 2:13; 3:20, 24, 5:1, 9). More specifically, “peace with God” suggests that hostility between God and humanity no longer exists for the justified ones. That is, the justified and God are no longer enemies, but they are friends, for God has reconciled them to one another by faith on the basis of Jesus’ sacrificial death for their sin (Rom 5:6-11).

The Basis of Peace with God and Reconciliation

Romans 5:6-11 provides the reason for the hope that Paul discusses throughout Romans 5-8. “Peace with God” is part of this eschatological hope. The reason that the justified ones have this hope is because Jesus died for their sins. Romans 5:6 states: “For Christ still died in time for the ungodly while we were still weak.” The “weak” and the “ungodly” in 5:6 for whom Christ died are “sinners.” This is certain since Paul states in 5:8 that “Christ died for us while we were sinners.”

Romans 5:9-11 elaborates the nature of the hostile relationship between the “weak” and “ungodly” ones and God before Jesus died for them and before they were justified by faith. He confirms that they were God’s enemies and subject to his eschatological wrath (cf. Rom 2:6-11). Romans 5:9 infers from 5:1-8 that Jesus’ blood justifies

(“having been justified by his blood”) and that as a result, the justified will be saved from God’s future wrath. In 5:9, Paul forthrightly states what he merely assumes in 5:1: the foundation of justification by faith is Jesus’ death for sin.

In 5:10, Paul restates the premise of 5:8-9, but with more precision: “for if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his son, how much more we will be saved [from God’s wrath] because we have been reconciled [to God through the death of his son]” (brackets mine). All believers were God’s enemies before they were justified since Paul states that the justified ones will be saved from God’s eschatological wrath in the judgment on the basis of Jesus’ blood (5:9) and since he states that God’s enemies were reconciled to God by means of Jesus’ death (5:9-10). But Jesus’ death for them justified them by faith and reconciled them to God.

The verb “to reconcile” in 5:9 is used in a theological sense in Paul (cf. 2 Cor 5:18-19).⁹ Paul borrows the concept of reconciliation from the Hellenistic world in which he lived to speak of the reconciliation that Jesus accomplished for those whom he died.¹⁰ He especially uses both the verb and the noun in 5:10-11 the same as the author(s) in the apocryphal books of 2 Macc 5:20 and 7:33 since the author(s) of 2 Maccabees and Paul refer to the accomplishment of reconciliation between two parties accomplished by means of the sacrificial death of pious, Jewish humans for the benefit of impious

⁹ Cf. Cilliers Breytenbach, *Versöhnung: Eine Studie zur paulinischen Soteriologie*, WMANT 60 (Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989). Breytenbach’s masterful work (*Versöhnung*, 118-19; 221) on reconciliation in Paul’s soteriology argues that a Hellenistic military context was Paul’s background for reconciliation. He posits that Paul merges the secular Hellenistic idea of reconciliation with Old Testament cultic vocabulary and thereby creatively interprets both reconciliation and atonement in light of the early Christian tradition of Jesus’ death for others

¹⁰See John T. Fitzgerald, “Paul and Paradigm Shifts: Reconciliation and Its Linkage Group,” in *Paul Beyond the Hellenism/Judaism Divide*, ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 241-62; idem “Paul and Friendship,” in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook*, ed. J. Paul Sampley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), 319-43.

people.¹¹ The authors of 2 and 4 Maccabees suggest that the Jewish martyrs vicariously died as sacrifices of atonement for Israel's sin in order to reconcile God to the nation. God was angry with Israel and judged the nation through the persecution of the Greek tyrant, Antiochus Epiphanes IV, since many of the Jews rebelled against their God and heeded to Antiochus' pagan reforms (cf. 1 Maccabees 1-2 with 2 and 4 Maccabees). That the martyrs' deaths achieved reconciliation for Israel is confirmed when the author of 2 Maccabees states that the martyrs' deaths made peace between God and the martyrs who were otherwise at enmity with one another and when he states after the martyrs' deaths that Antiochus eventually made peace with Jews in the land (2 Macc 5:1-8:5, esp 7:33; 4 Macc 6:1-17:22).¹²

¹¹For a discussion of martyr theology's influence on Paul, see my *Maccabean Martyr Traditions in Paul's Theology of Atonement: Did Martyr Theology Shape Paul's Conception of Jesus's Death?* (Eugene, Or: Wipf & Stock, 2010).

¹²Observe the following excerpts from 2 and 4 Maccabees that speak of the need for reconciliation between God and Israel and that suggest that the Jewish martyrs were the means by which God was reconciled to the nation.

May [God] hear your prayers and be reconciled to you, and may he not forsake you in time of evil (NRSV, 2 Macc 1:5) (brackets mine).

. . . Therefore, [the temple] itself shared in the misfortunes that befell the nation and afterward participated in its benefits; and what was forsaken in the wrath of the Almighty was restored again in all its glory when the great Lord became reconciled (NRSV, 2 Macc 5:20).

. . . For we ourselves suffer because of our own sins. But if our living Lord has been angered for a little while on account of rebuke and discipline, he will also again be reconciled to his own servants (2 Macc 7:32-33).

Meanwhile Judas, who was also called Maccabeus, and his companions secretly entered the villages and summoned their kindred and enlisted those who had continued in the Jewish faith, and so they gathered about 6,000. They implored the Lord to look upon the people who were oppressed by all; and to have pity on the temple that had been profaned by the godless; to have mercy on the city that was being destroyed and about to be leveled to the ground; to hearken to the blood that cried out to him; to remember also the lawless destruction of the innocent babies and the blasphemies committed against his name; and to show his hatred of evil. As soon as Maccabeus got his army organized, the Gentiles could not withstand him, for the wrath of the Lord had turned to mercy (NRSV, 2 Macc 8:1-5).

After the Sabbath, they gave some of the spoils to those who had been tortured and to the widows and orphans, and distributed the rest among themselves and their children. When they had done this, they made common supplication and implored the merciful Lord to be wholly reconciled with his servants (NRSV, 2 Macc 8:28-29).

[Footnote continued on next page ...]

Similar to the martyr theology in Hellenistic Judaism, Paul's point in Rom 5:9-10 is that Jesus' death for sin grants peace for and reconciles Jews and Gentiles to God by ending the hostility between God and the justified ones for whom he died. Consequently, Paul can say in 5:11 that the justified ones hope in God through Christ, who is the very source of their justification and reconciliation with God. Reconciliation "marks the end of hatred and the inception or return of affection. Good will places ill will, and with that change, enemies are transformed into friends."¹³ In addition, peace with God in Rom 5:1 is reconciliation to God and reconciliation to God equals friendship with God. Both of these happen because of Jesus' death for the sins of Jews and Gentiles.

B. Reconciled to God by Jesus' Blood

Paul suggests in 2 Cor 5:18-19 and in 5:21 that Jesus' death reconciles Jews and Gentiles to God.¹⁴ Paul mentions Jesus' death for others in 2 Cor 5:14-15. Then, he states in 2 Cor 5:18 that God "reconciles us to himself through Christ" and that he gives "us a ministry of reconciliation." Thus, Jesus' death is the foundation of God's reconciliatory act for Jews and Gentiles in 5:18 since references to his death precede (5:14-15) and follow (5:21) Paul's references to God's reconciliatory act through Christ. Jesus' death is the foundation of reconciliation between God and humanity in this text since Paul states that God reconciles "us" to himself "through Christ."

Second Corinthians 5:19 and 5:21 together support that Jesus' death reconciles Jews and Gentiles to God. Second Corinthians 5:19 further elaborates 5:17-18 by stating how God has recreated all things

[Lord], be merciful to your nation, and be satisfied with our judgment on behalf of them. Make my blood to be their purification, and receive my life as their ransom (4 Macc 6:28-29).

. . . the tyrant [Antiochus] was punished, and the homeland [Israel] purified—they having become, as it were, a ransom for the sin of our nation. And through the blood of those devout ones and their death as an atoning sacrifice, divine Providence preserved Israel that previously had been mistreated (NRSV, 4 Macc 17:21-22) (brackets mine).

¹³So Fitzgerald, "Paul and Friendship," 336.

¹⁴Of course, 5:19-21 is part of a larger unit (chs. 1-7) wherein Paul defends his apostolic ministry.

in Christ.¹⁵ Second Corinthians 5:17-19 and 5:21 suggests that Jesus' death for sin was the mechanism by which God reconciles Jews and Gentiles to himself and brought about a new creation between Jews and Gentiles. New creation, then, is God's reconciliatory act in Christ that he has accomplished through Jesus' death for others. This reading is supported by Paul's assertions that God did not reckon transgressions against those for whom Jesus died (5:19) and that God "made Jesus to be sin" (5:21).¹⁶ Although Jesus had no personal

¹⁵In the Greek text of 2 Cor 5:19, v. 19 begins with the two adverbs w&" ("as") and o\$ti ("because" or "that"). These two adverbs occur side-by-side elsewhere only two other times in Paul (2 Cor 11:21; 2 Thess 2:2). In both occurrences in 2 Corinthians, the statements that follow the two adverbs explain a preceding statement. Similarly Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 439-440, esp. 440.

¹⁶There are some hermeneutical difficulties in this text. First, 2 Cor 5:19 presents two interpretive challenges that 5:19 presents. One is grammatical, and the other is exegetical. (a) The grammatical challenge is interpreting the syntax of 5:19. There are at least three translation options: (1) "It was God who in Christ was reconciling the world to himself." (2) "In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself." (3) "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." Option one should be dismissed on Greek grammatical grounds since it suggests that "God" is not the subject of the verb "was." Options 2 and 3 are both grammatically possible, and they essentially convey the same idea: God reconciled the world to himself. Nevertheless, option 3 is preferred here ("God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.") since it elevates Christ as God. Paul emphasizes Christ as God's agent through whom new creation and reconciliation are accomplished, and he thereby heralds Jesus as God's equal. Each translation option comes from Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 440-41. Second, 2 Cor 5:21 presents two exegetical challenges. Paul states that God made Jesus to be sin and that we become the righteousness of God in him. Three questions arise from this statement: (1) how did God make Jesus sin? (2) When did God make Jesus sin (i.e., incarnation or crucifixion)? (3) How do those for whom Jesus died become God's righteousness in him? The verse, first of all, should be interpreted in the context of Paul's argument wherein he defends his apostolic ministry (cf. 3:1-5:21). In the context of 5:16-21, 5:21 likely explains 5:19, which explains 5:18. This seems right since 5:19 states that in addition to reconciling the world to himself, God does not count the transgressions against those who were reconciled, but instead God gave them a ministry of reconciliation. The three participles ("reconciling," "counting," and "placing") in 5:19, then, suggest at least three things that God in Christ provided: (1) reconciliation, (2) forgiveness of sins, and (3) a message of reconciliation. Second Corinthians 5:21 states more specifically the reason that God does not count transgressions against those whom he reconciled to himself: he made Jesus (who knew no sin) to be sin for them. When Paul states that Jesus did not know sin, he possibly means that he was [Footnote continued on next page ...]

experience with sin, God made him to be sin. Since Paul connects God's act of making Jesus sin in 5:21 with Jesus' death for others in 5:14-15 and with reconciliation in 5:18-19, it follows that God likely made Jesus to be sin by offering him to die *for* sin and *to bear its curse* for those who sinned. Both acts were realized and culminated in Jesus' death (cf. Rom 3:25-26; 4:25; 8:3; Gal 3:13).¹⁷ This reading suggests that even if Paul is not calling Jesus a sin-offering here,¹⁸ he still suggests that Jesus bore the punishment of sin by his death for the transgressors,¹⁹ that his death basically functions as a sin-offering, and that his death should be viewed in 5:21 as both representative and substitutionary for others.²⁰

The phrase "righteousness of God" in 2 Cor 5:21 is the same exact phrase that Paul uses in Rom 1:17 and in 3:21-22 to refer to God's saving righteousness (i.e., his act of justification for those who believe).²¹ As in those texts, Paul uses the phrase in 2 Cor 5:21 soteriologically as a reference to justification (2 Cor 5:14-15, 21) and reconciliation. Thus, the "we" become "God's righteousness" in Christ by faith on the basis of Jesus' death, and the "we" are reconciled to God when God declares the "we" for whom Christ died and who are in Christ to be in the right (2 Cor 5:19; cf. Rom 1:16-17;

not acquainted with sin nor had experience with it since Paul contrasts in 5:21 Christ's ignorance of sin with God's act of counting not transgressions against those for whom Christ died (5:14-15), i.e., against those whom God reconciled (5:19) and against those whom he justified (5:21). (b) The second exegetical difficulty is the meaning of the statement "so that we would become the righteousness of God in him." For recent discussion of the meaning of this statement and for an interaction with key scholars in the debate, see Vickers, *Jesus' Blood*, 160-90.

¹⁷Harris (*Second Corinthians*, 454) suggests that God treated Christ as sin.

¹⁸Against Jesus as a sin-offering in 2 Cor 5:21, see Richard H. Bell, "Sacrifice and Christology in Paul," *JTS* 53 (2002): 1-27, esp. 13-14.

¹⁹Vickers (*Jesus' Blood*, 162) makes a helpful observation when he asserts that "the link between 'made to be sin' and 'sin-offering' is stronger if one does not try to limit Paul's meaning to a particular sacrifice or aspect of a sacrifice. That is to say, perhaps there is a more general idea of Christ's being a sacrifice for sin in this verse, rather than a one-to-one correspondence with the Old Testament 'sin-offering.' It is what the sacrifice accomplished, not the particular sacrifice itself, that comes into focus." For further discussion of 5:21, see Vickers, 161-90.

²⁰So Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 453.

²¹For my discussion of "righteousness of God" and opposing views, see chapter 3 in my *One New Man*.

3:21-5:1, 9, 10). The contrast between God making Jesus sin and “we” becoming God’s righteousness in Jesus suggests that God imputed our sin to Jesus and he imputed his (God’s) righteousness to those for whom he died,²² because Jesus became sin for the “we” for whom he died and the “we” receive his righteousness. Second Corinthians 5:21, then, states how God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself (5:19): viz., God judged sin in Jesus so that those for whom he died would receive God’s righteousness in Christ.²³

C. Command to be Reconciled to God and to One Another

As a result of God’s saving work of justification and reconciliation, Paul states that he and other apostolic witnesses received a message of reconciliation from God by which they announced “be reconciled to God” (5:20).²⁴ The command “be reconciled to God” is not antithetical to Paul’s assertion in 2 Cor 5:19 that God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself. Rather, God’s divine act of reconciliation in Jesus provides a means by which others can be drawn into this reconciliatory act, and the proclamation “be reconciled to God” is the means by which others can experience this reconciliation. God’s act of reconciliation through Christ is the foundation of one becoming reconciled to God and receiving the righteousness of God in him; Jesus’ death for sin is the foundation of the apostolic message of reconciliation with God, and both of these indicatives provide a ground for the imperative to be reconciled to God.

Paul does not use the terminology of reconciliation in Romans 14-15, but his command for Jews and Gentiles to be reconciled to one another is nevertheless evident. The unit of 14:1-15:13 begins with Paul urging his audience to receive “one another” (14:1), continues with a command not to judge “one another” (14:13), with the

²² Contra N. T. Wright, “On Becoming the Righteousness of God: 2 Corinthians 5:21,” in *Pauline Theology*, vol. 1, ed. David M. Hay (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 205-06.

²³ Vickers, *Jesus’ Blood*, 182-83.

²⁴ Harris (*Second Corinthians*, 448) rightly understands the command “be reconciled to God” in 5:20 as an evangelistic appeal to any audience that Paul (and his colleagues) would address as ambassadors of Christ. For alternative readings, see Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 447-49.

command for the strong to bear the weaknesses of the weak (5:1), and concludes with another command to receive “one another” because Christ received both groups (15:7) and with an affirmation that Christ was a servant for both Jews and Gentile to confirm on behalf of both groups the soteriological promises given to the fathers (15:8-12; cf. Eph 2:11-22). Although A. Andrew Das has recently challenged afresh the “double character” of Romans,²⁵ the reason for the above commands seems to be that the Gentile majority and the Jewish minority over dividing over kosher food laws and special days (14:1-23). The double character of Romans is strengthened by Paul’s statement that the gospel is God’s power resulting in salvation for the “Jew” and the “Greek” (1:16), by his double indictment of both Jews and Gentiles (1:18-3:20), by both his argument that God has not forsaken his promises to Jews in spite of a large Jewish rejection of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah and that Gentiles should not become arrogant over their inclusion within God’s soteriological plan for Israel (Rom 9:1-11:36), and by his command that the Romans should love “one another” and thereby fulfill the entire Torah (13:8-10). Thus, Paul commands his mixed Jewish and Gentile audience to be reconciled to one another and to demonstrate this reconciliation by living in unity with one another.

The same point can be seen by Paul’s remarks to Peter in Gal 2:11-21. This text is hotly contested in New Testament scholarship by those in the thralls of the justification debates in Pauline theology,²⁶ because the earliest place where justification appears in Paul is here in a text that emphasizes horizontal reconciliation between Jewish and Gentile Christians alongside of a discussion of justification. However, what seems fairly straightforward in the text is that although Paul does not use the terminology of reconciliation in these verses, his response to Peter suggests that Peter should live in harmony with fellow Gentile believers because Jews and Gentiles alike are justified by faith and that Jews are not sinners by virtue of associating with Gentiles (Gal 2:11-16). Paul addresses Peter in this way of course

²⁵*Solving the Romans Debate* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007).

²⁶For a summary of this debate as it pertains to this text and other Pauline texts, see Stephen Westerholm, *Old and New Perspectives of Paul: The “Lutheran” Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

because when some Jews came from James from Jerusalem to Antioch, he stopped having table-fellowship with Gentiles and he thereby reinstated the dividing wall of food laws erected between Jews and Gentiles by Torah (Gal 2:11-14, 18-19; cf. Lev 11:1-47; 1 Macc 1:47, 62; 2 Macc 6:18-21; 7:1; Jub 22:16). Peter's hypocritical actions compelled Paul to enter into a discussion of justification and Abrahamic sonship (Gal 2:11-4:7). He argues that Jews and Gentiles are justified by faith not by works of law (Gal 2:11-21), that Jews and Gentiles are sons of Abraham by faith and not by reception of Torah (Gal 3:1-14, 21-29; 4:1-7), and that the Abrahamic promises were fulfilled and applied to the Gentiles in and by Jesus (Abraham's descendant) and not by the giving of Torah (Gal 3:15-20). Therefore, Paul urges the Galatians (Gentile Christians) to serve one another (Gal 5:13-15) and to bear the burdens of one another (Gal 6:2): i.e., to be reconciled to one another.

D. Reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles to One Another

Ephesians 2:11-22 suggests that Jesus' death reconciles Jews and Gentiles to God and to one another.²⁷ Paul urges his Gentile audience to remember that they were formerly "without Christ, separated from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers of the covenants of promise, without hope, and without God in the world" (2:11-12). The call to remember in 2:11-12 reveals a connection with 2:1-10, for "therefore" precedes the exhortation in 2:11-12.²⁸ Paul urges these Gentiles to remember based on the fact that these Gentiles were formerly dead in trespasses and sins (2:1) and that God himself took the initiative and saved these Gentiles by grace through faith, not by their works, so that they would have no reason to boast in themselves before God (2:6-9). Paul concludes his discussion of 2:1-9 in 2:10 by saying that God's work in their lives provides the reason that the Gentiles should produce good works (2:10). Then, in 2:11, Paul urges the Ephesians: "therefore remember!" They should remember that they were

²⁷Because of lack of space, I will assume Pauline authorship of Ephesians instead of arguing for it. I am aware that many scholars reject Pauline authorship. For a recent discussion, see Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 1-10.

²⁸So Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 135.

formerly before their conversion to Christianity outside of God's promises of salvation to Israel.

The term "Gentiles" in 2:11 is the first place in 2:11-22 where Paul makes an ethnic distinction between Jews and Gentiles in Ephesians 2. This distinction is accentuated in 2:11 when Paul calls his readers "Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcised by those who are called the physical circumcision." One of the many things that distinguished Jews from Gentiles in the ancient world was circumcision (Jub 15:25-34). In fact, circumcision was generally the fundamental sign that a particular group was the people of God and, thus, was part of the covenant that God made with his people. Circumcision as a covenantal-sign goes back to Abraham in Genesis 17 (Gen 17:11-14; cf. 17:10-14). This commandment of circumcision becomes part of the Mosaic Covenant, and it is the fundamental sign whether one has membership in the Abrahamic covenant from the perspective of some Jews (Lev 12:3; Jos 5:2-9).

The adverb "formerly" in 2:11 and the phrase "in that time" in 2:12 express the time when the Gentiles were excluded from God's promises of salvation to Israel. This separation was when they were dead in trespasses and sins (2:1-10), for "therefore" in 2:11 links 2:1-10 with 2:11-22. That Paul uses the term "Gentiles" and "uncircumcised ones" demonstrate my point. Jews were people of the covenant, and they showed their membership in part by their circumcision. The Gentiles were not members of the covenant, and they demonstrated this in part by their lack of circumcision. Thus, Paul states in 2:11 that these Gentiles were formerly not God's covenant-people since they were Gentiles and since they were called uncircumcised Gentiles by the circumcised people of the covenant.²⁹

Developing his comments in Eph 2:11, Paul states in 2:12 the first thing that the Gentiles should remember. They should remember that when they were dead in trespasses and sins, they had no access to the Christ. From a Jewish perspective, Gentiles were not Jewish; they were not part of God's covenant-people (cf. Rom 9:4-5; Phil 3:4-6), and, therefore, they had no part in Israel's Messianic hope (cf. Psalms of Solomon 17-18).

²⁹So Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 352.

God's promise of salvation in the Old Testament through Messiah anticipated an inclusion of Gentiles (Gen 12:1-3; Isa 42:6), but non-Christian Jews (in Paul's view) are separated from Jesus (Rom 9:1-5) and the soteriological promises given to Abraham fulfilled in Jesus (Rom 9:1-11:36; Gal 3:1-29) unless they express faith in Jesus as Lord and Messiah. God's promise of a Messiah to save God's people was fundamentally given to Israel, not to the Gentiles (cf. Gen 49:10; Deut 18:15; Ps 2; 45:3-5, 17; Isaiah 40-66).³⁰ The Jewishness of God's Messianic promises is supported by the statement in 2 Sam 7:12 that the David's successor would descend from his seed (cf. LXX 2 Sam 7:12; Matt 1:1), which means in part that he would be Jewish. Thus, since the Gentiles were not children of the covenant, God's Messianic promises to Israel did not naturally apply to them and consequently "they were without Christ."

Paul states in Eph 2:12 the reason that Gentiles were formerly without Christ: "having been separated from the commonwealth of Israel, and [you were] strangers of the covenants of promise."³¹ The specific verb that Paul uses in 2:12, which I have translated as "to separate," occurs only three times in Paul (Eph 2:12; 4:18; Col 1:21).³² The verb suggests that Gentiles had no connection with Israel's religious heritage and thereby were excluded from God's saving promises to the nation (cf. 3 Macc 1:3), for Paul coalesces the ideas that the Gentiles were "without Christ" and "separated from Israel's citizenship" with the fact that the Gentiles were "strangers of the covenants of promise."³³ The "covenants of promise" from which the Gentiles were separated when they were dead in trespasses and sins possibly refer to the covenants that God made with Abraham regarding land, seed, and universal blessing (Gen 12:1-4; 13:14-18; 15:1-21, and 17:1-21), with David regarding a seed to succeed his

³⁰Similarly Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 188.

³¹The statement "having been separated" is a participle in the Greek text. Its function here is possibly causal since in context Paul appears to offer a reason why the Gentiles were without Christ. A causal understanding of the participle would require the translation "because you were separated."

³²Contra LXX Jos 22:25; Ps 57:4; 68:9; Job 21:29; Hos 9:10; Jer 19:4; 27:8; Ezek 14:5, 7.

³³Cf. Philo, *On Special Laws*, 1.9.51.

place on the throne (2 Sam 7:12-17; 23:5, Ps 89:3, 27-37, 49), and with Israel and Judah regarding the new covenant of a future restoration (Jer 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36-37), for Paul connects the phrase “the covenants of promise” with the title Messiah (Eph 2:12).³⁴ Thus, the “covenants of promise” refer to God’s soteriological promises to Israel, which began with Abraham, continued with David and the prophets, and came to fulfillment in the fullness of time in the coming of Jesus (cf. Acts 2, 7-8, 13; Gal 3:1-4:7). Therefore, when the Gentiles were without Christ, they were hopeless and without God in the world because they had no part in the soteriological promises that God gave to Israel during the old covenant (Eph 2:12; cf. Pss Sol 18:1-12).³⁵

E. God’s Soteriological Promises to Israel extended to Gentiles

With the words “but now” in Eph 2:13, Paul offers an emphatic antithesis to his comments in 2:11-12. When they were dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1-10), Gentiles were formerly without Christ, alienated from Israel, hopeless, and without God in the world (2:11-12). However, their identity in Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, changes their relationship with Israel and includes them into God’s promises of salvation.³⁶ Paul emphasizes in Eph 2:13 that Christ Jesus was the agent through whom the Gentiles have been brought into God’s salvation-historical plan for Israel with his repetition of the phrases “by means of Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:13a) and “by means of Christ” (Eph 2:13b).

To be brought near means that God extends his saving promises to the Gentiles through the Jewish Messiah (cf. Acts 22:21), for Paul states in Eph 2:11-12 that they were excluded from these promises since they were not Jewish. To be brought near “by the blood of Christ” means to be included into these promises by means of Jesus’

³⁴So Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 358-59.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 359.

³⁶With the words “but now,” Paul does something similar in Rom 3:21-26 as he does in Eph 2:13. In Rom 1:18-3:20, Paul argues that Jews and Gentiles are both guilty before God in the judgment since both groups fail to honor God to the degree that he deserves (cf. Rom 3:23). Then, in 3:21, he says “but now” God has chosen to justify Jews and Gentiles by faith in Christ on the basis of his death (cf. Rom 3:21-26).

death. His death was necessary for these Gentiles to be included in God's soteriological promises since they had no natural connection with Israel or with the Jewish Messiah (cf. Rom 2:14). So, the Jewish Messiah himself had to act on behalf of the Gentiles in order to fulfill those saving promises to Jews and in order to extend those promises to Gentiles (cf. Rom 9:1-11:36; Gal 3:10-14; Isaiah 40-66). Paul's point here is not that Gentiles become ethnic Jews by being connected to Israel's Jewish Messiah, for Paul calls them Gentiles in 2:11, but that God includes them as Gentiles into his saving promises to Israel through the blood of Israel's Jewish Messiah and creates both Jews and Gentiles into a new race (cf. 2:13 with 2:14-22).

Paul states in Eph 2:14-22 that Jesus' death shattered all ethnic boundary markers between Jews and Gentiles, included the Gentiles into his saving promises, and made the two groups into a new race. Jesus, Paul argues, reconciles by his death both groups into one new man, establishes peace between the two groups, and he builds them up into the temple of God as one body. When Paul states that Jesus is "our peace" (Eph 2:14), he echoes his statement in Rom 5:1 ("we have peace with God"). As in Rom 5:1, "peace" in Eph 2:14 should be interpreted as reconciliation because Paul's argument in Eph 2:14-22 is that God has recreated Jews and Gentiles into one new man and thereby shattered their hostility between one another.³⁷ Contrary to Rom 5:1, however, Paul states in Eph 2:14 that Jesus does not simply provide peace for Jews and Gentiles, but that he is "our peace."

With these words, Paul offers in Eph 2:13-18 a Christological exegesis of Isa 9:6, 52:7, and 57:19 (cf. Mic 5:5).³⁸ "Peace" in Eph 2:14 and the proclamation of peace to "those far" and to "those near" in 2:17 connect Eph 2:13-18 with Isaiah 40-66.³⁹ In Isaiah, "peace" refers to Israel's Messiah (Isa 9:6) and to the salvation that would come to the nation through him (Isa 52:7; 57:19; cf. Isaiah 40-66). Some within Israel were "far off" because they had turned from faithful devotion to Yahweh (cf. Isaiah 1), but others within Israel were "near" because they were serving Yahweh. Nevertheless,

³⁷Similarly Stuhlmacher, *Reconciliation*, 188.

³⁸Stuhlmacher, 187; O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 194. Against Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 126-27.

³⁹Stuhlmacher, *Reconciliation*, 187.

Yahweh sent Israel and Judah into exile because of the disobedience of some in both parts of the kingdom (cf. 1 Kings-2 Chronicles). But Paul suggests that these texts from Isaiah are fulfilled in Jesus and that the Gentiles have been included into these Messianic promises of salvation through him.⁴⁰ Since Paul specifically mentions Messiah in Eph 2:12-13 and since 2:14 explains that Messiah brought the Gentiles near God's promises to Israel by Messiah's blood, then "our peace" probably refers to the Messiah and the peace/salvation that he brings. Furthermore, Paul's emphasis in Eph 2:14-22 (unlike Romans 5) is not God's act of reconciling Jews and Gentiles to himself, but his act of reconciling Jews and Gentiles to one another. Other statements throughout the text support this latter point.

Paul states that Jesus "made both to be one" (2:14) and that "he created the two into one new man" (2:15). He declares that Jesus made peace between Jews and Gentiles (2:15) and that he reconciled both in one body to God through the cross by killing the enmity between both groups (2:16). He states that Jesus preached the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles (2:17; cf. Isa 52:7) and that both groups have access to God by the Spirit (2:18). Finally, he claims that Gentile Christians (along with Jewish Christians) are fellow citizens in God's family (2:19), are built upon the same apostolic and Messianic foundation as Jewish Christians (2:20), and are growing together with fellow Jewish Christians into a holy temple (2:21-22).

Paul's main thought in Eph 2:14-16 is that Jesus is peace for Jews and Gentiles. The pronoun "our" in "our peace" most likely includes both Jews and Gentiles since Paul's entire discussion in Eph 2:14-22 highlights that the two groups are reconciled into one body. Paul's exposition of this point is particularly interesting. He states that Jesus "made both [Jews and Gentiles] to be one" (brackets mine). As stated above, this means that God has shattered the boundary markers of separation between Jews and Gentiles through the death of the Messiah and has made them into a new race. As a result, Jewish and Gentile Christians become a new humanity.

The above interpretation fits with Eph 2:14b-22. After stating that Jesus made Jews and Gentiles into "one new man," Paul states that "he destroyed by his flesh the dividing wall, [i.e.], the fence" and that

⁴⁰Ibid., 188.

this “dividing wall” caused enmity between Jews and Gentiles. The “dividing wall” alludes to the walls of Jerusalem (LXX 3 Kgs 10:22; 11:27; 2 Esd 9:9) and to the courtyards of the temple (Jos *Ant.* 15.5.417).⁴¹ Jesus’ death destroyed the wall between Jews and Gentiles that was erected by the law,⁴² for the wall that divided Jews and Gentiles from one another was Torah. Yet, Jesus’ death abolished the law and thereby destroyed the enmity between Jews and Gentiles. The phrases “by means of the blood of Christ” (2:13), “by means of his flesh” (2:14), and “through the cross” (2:16), and the reference to Jesus’ “killing” the enmity in his flesh (2:16) support that Jesus’ death destroyed the enmity between Jews and Gentiles.⁴³

“Law” in Eph 2:15 refers to the Mosaic Covenant as a whole, not simply to ceremonial aspects of the law, since the entire Mosaic system was the fence that divided Jews and Gentiles from one another (Ep. *Arist.* 142). The law and all of its ordinances served as a fence of protection around Israel in order to protect the nation from the pollution of the Gentiles (3 Macc 1:3). This interpretation is supported by one Jewish perspective of the law in Second Temple Judaism in the Epistle of Aristeas (ca. BC 170).

In his wisdom, the legislator, in a comprehensive survey of each particular part, and being endowed by God for the knowledge of universal truths, surrounded us with unbroken palisades and iron walls to prevent our mixing with any of the other peoples in any matter, being thus kept pure in body and soul, preserved from false beliefs, and worshipping the only God omnipotent over all creation (Ep. *Arist.* 139, Charlesworth 2:22). . . . So, to prevent our being perverted by contact with others or by mixing with bad influences, he hedges us in on all sides with strict observances connected with meat and drink and touch and hearing and sight, after the manner of the Law (Ep. *Arist.* 142, Charlesworth 2:22). . .⁴⁴

The Mosaic Covenant was the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles. But Jesus by his blood shattered the wall erected by the Mosaic Covenant, “so that he would create the two in him into one

⁴¹Some take Paul’s reference to refer to actual inscriptions on the temple that warn Gentiles from entering the partitions erected to keep them out. For example, see Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 369 n. 3.

⁴²For other arguments against a reference to the temple in Eph 2:14, see Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 369-71.

⁴³So Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 374.

⁴⁴Martin (*Reconciliation*, 185) pointed me to the above texts.

new man by making peace” (Eph 2:15).⁴⁵ God’s new creation of Jews and Gentiles into one new man is regeneration and conversion since the Gentiles were formerly dead in trespasses and sins and since Jesus’ blood was the foundation underneath God’s recreation of this new race. In support of conversion, Philo (*On Special Laws*, 1.9.51) and the love story of Joseph and Asenath (chs. 49-50) suggest that Gentile converts to Judaism were freshly created. Philo (*On Special Laws*, 1.9.51) especially states that Gentile proselytes become joined to Israel’s commonwealth.

Paul expresses that Jesus ended the hostility between them “by destroying the law, i.e., the commandments, with the ordinances.”⁴⁶ Jesus destroyed the enmity between Jews and Gentiles by destroying the source of its enmity.⁴⁷ Paul further explains Eph 2:15 in 2:16 with another purpose clause. In 2:16, he states both the purpose and the means by which Jesus made Jews and Gentiles into one new man: “so that he would reconcile both in one body to God through the cross having put to death the enmity by means of him.” To achieve reconciliation for and between Jews and Gentiles was the purpose of

⁴⁵Rightly O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 196-99, esp. 199.

⁴⁶So Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 142. For alternative readings of the Greek syntax, see Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 141-44; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 368-74.

⁴⁷Hoehner (*Ephesians*, 375) thinks that to translate the Greek verb as “to destroy” in Eph 2:15 is incorrect since the Greek verb (he argues) consistently means “to render inoperative,” “to nullify,” or “to invalidate” in Paul. Nevertheless, I offer in response to Hoehner three reasons why this verb should be translated as “to destroy” in Eph 2:15. First, Hoehner states that the verb occurs in Paul 26 times and that it consistently means “to render inoperative,” “to nullify,” or “to invalidate,” but he only cites six texts to support this assertion. Four of the six texts that he cites could easily be translated as “to destroy” in their given contexts (e.g., Rom 3:3, 31; 4:14; 6:6; cf. Gal 3:17; 5:11). Second, other uses of the verb in Paul could only be translated as “to destroy” (1 Cor 1:28; 6:13; 15:24, 26; 2 Thess 2:8; 2 Tim 2:10). Third, the translation “to destroy” fits best in Ephesians 2:15a since Paul speaks of new creation in 2:15b. Jesus destroyed the old so that he could recreate a new humanity that is free from the restrictions in and the exclusivity of the Mosaic Covenant. Fourth, “to render inoperative,” “to destroy,” and “to nullify” are synonymous verbs (cf. Matt 5:17; Rom 14:20; 2 Cor 5:1; Gal 2:18 with Rom 3:3, 31; 6:6; 1 Cor 1:28; 6:13; 15:24; Eph 2:15). Hoehner (*Ephesians*, 377) demonstrates this point when he states regarding Eph 2:15 that “Paul’s progression in the argument is that Christ has destroyed the symptom, that is, enmity between Jews and Gentiles, by making inoperative the root cause, namely, the law of commandments in decrees.”

making them into one new man, and Jesus' death for them was the means by which this reconciliation was accomplished. Paul uses a different Greek word here (apokatallassō) for reconciliation from the one he uses in Rom 5:9 and in 2 Cor 5:18-19 (katallassō). Nevertheless, the meaning is the same: two parties who were once at enmity with one another now have peace with one another.⁴⁸ In general, hatred between Jews and Gentiles was fierce and reciprocal in the ancient world (cf. Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.1-13),⁴⁹ but Jesus' death put an end to this hostility.

⁴⁸See Col 1:22 where same term in Eph 2:16 appears with the same meaning as in Rom 5:9, 2 Cor 5:18-19, and Eph 2:16.

⁴⁹See D. R. de Lacey, "Gentiles," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, eds. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 335. For a few examples of this hatred from primary texts, read the following representative excerpts below from the Second Temple period:

[Ptolemy] proposed to inflict public disgrace on the Jewish community, and he set up a stone on the tower in the courtyard with this inscription: 'None of those who do not sacrifice shall enter their sanctuaries, and all Jews shall be subjected to a registration involving poll tax and to the status of slaves. Those who object to this are to be taken by force and put to death. Those who are registered are also to be branded on their bodies by fire with the ivy-leaf symbol of Dionysus, and they shall also be reduced to their former limited status (NRSV, 3 Macc 2:27-29).

When the impious king comprehended this situation, he became so infuriated that not only was he enraged against those Jews who lived in Alexandria, but was still more bitterly hostile toward those in the countryside; and he ordered that all should promptly be gathered into one place, and put to death by the most cruel means (NRSV, 3 Macc 3:1).

While these matters were being arranged, a hostile rumor was circulated against the Jewish nation by some who conspired to do them ill, a pretext being given by a report that they hindered others from the observance of their customs. The Jews, however, continued to maintain goodwill and unswerving loyalty toward the dynasty; but because they worshiped God and conducted themselves by his law, they kept their separateness with respect to foods. For this reason, they appeared hateful to some; but since they adorned their style of life with the good deeds of upright people, they were established in good repute with everyone. Nevertheless, those of other races paid no heed to their good service to their nation, which was common talk among all; instead they gossiped about the differences in worship and foods, alleging that these people were loyal neither to the king nor to his authorities, but were hostile and greatly opposed to his government. So they attached no ordinary reproach to them (NRSV, 3 Macc 3:2-7).

[Footnote continued on next page ...]

And when we had granted very great revenues to the temples in the cities, we came on to Jerusalem also, and went up to honor the temple of those *wicked people*, who never cease from their folly. They accepted our presence by word, but insincerely by deed, because when we proposed to enter their inner temple and honor it with magnificent and most beautiful offerings, they were carried away by their traditional arrogance, and excluded us from entering. . . (NRSV, 3 Macc 3:16-18) (italics mine).

. . . This moreover explains why we are distinct from all men. The majority of other men defile themselves in their relationships, thereby committing a serious offense, and lands and whole cities take pride in it: they not only procure the males, they also defile mothers and daughters. We are quite separated from these practices (Ep. *Arist.* 152-53, Charlesworth II, 23). . .

Happy are we, O Israel, for *we* know what is pleasing to God (NRA, Bar 4:4) (italics mine).

These are some of our teachings [] which are [the] works which w[e] think and a[ll] of them concern [] and the purity of. . . [And concerning the offering of the wh]eat of the [Gentiles which they. . .] and they touch it. . . and de[file it. . . One should not accept anything] from the wheat [of the Gen]tiles [and none of it is] to enter the Sanctuary. [And concerning] {the sacrifice} which they cook in a vessel. . . {in it} the meat of their sacrifices and that they. . . in the courtyar[d. . .] {it} with the broth of their sacrifice. And concerning the sacrifice of the Gentiles. . . [we consider that] they {sacrifice} to [an idol and] that is [like] a woman fornicating with him (DSS 4Q394 3-7 i. conflated with 4Q395).

Separate yourself from the Gentiles, and do not eat with them, and do not perform deeds like theirs, because their deeds are defiled, and all of their ways are contaminated and despicable and abominable. They slaughter their sacrifices to the dead, and to the demons they bow down. And they eat in tombs. And all their deeds are worthless and vain. And they have no heart to perceive, and they have no eyes to see what their deeds are, and where they wander astray, saying to the tree 'you are my god,' and to a stone 'you are my lord, and you are my savior,' and they have no heart (Jub 22:16-18, Charlesworth II, 98).

. . . For Israel is the portion and inheritance of God (Pss Sol 14:5, Charlesworth II, 663). . .

O Lord, your mercy is upon the works of your hands forever. (You show) your goodness to Israel with a rich gift. Your eyes (are) watching over them and none of them will be in need. Your ears listen to the hopeful prayer of the poor. Your compassionate judgments (are) over the whole world, and your love is for the descendants of Abraham, an Israelite (Pss Sol 18:1-3, Charlesworth I, 669). . . May God cleanse Israel for the day of mercy in blessing, for the appointed day when Messiah will reign (Pss Sol 18:5, Charlesworth I, 669). . .

. . . But when you pray, do not use thoughtless chatter as the Gentiles. . . (Matt 6:7).

. . . Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place. Moreover, he even brought Greeks [Footnote continued on next page ...]

Regarding racial reconciliation, Eph 2:15-16 is perplexing for at least two reasons, because (1) Paul uses violent, war-like language (destruction, death through a cross, and the killing of enmity) to describe the hostility that existed between Jews and Gentiles and the peace that Jesus achieved for them, and (2) because he states that both Jews and Gentiles were reconciled to God through Jesus' cross. Ephesians 2:16 is the nerve verse for the point that Jesus' death is the foundation of Paul's theology of racial reconciliation and his recreation of Jews and Gentiles into a new race. Paul does not state here that Jesus' death hypothetically achieved reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles.⁵⁰ Instead, he emphatically states that Jesus' death has indeed accomplished it for the believing community of faith (cf. Eph 1:15; 2:8-9)!

This does not mean that Jesus' death "brought a universal redemption so that all Jews and Gentiles are reconciled" to God and to one another apart from faith in Christ.⁵¹ Rather, Paul in Eph 2:15 assumes that believing Jews and Gentiles are in view. First, Paul commends the Ephesians for their faith in Jesus (1:15; 3:12).⁵² Second, Paul states in the preceding context that Gentiles were saved by grace through faith (2:8-10).⁵³ Third, Jesus' blood was the means by which God created this new humanity (2:13-14, 16). Fourth, Paul states that Jesus preached the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles (2:17). Therefore, all Jews and all Gentiles do not constitute a new race in Christ, but all Christian Jews and all Christian Gentiles have been recreated to constitute a new race (cf. 1:7; 2:12, 16; 3:12).⁵⁴

Paul highlights in 2:17-18 Jesus' reconciliatory ministry. He states in 2:17 that Jesus "preached peace to those who were far off and peace to those who were near." In light of the argument in 2:11-15, "peace" here refers to reconciliation. Since Paul states that "Jesus preached peace to Jews and Gentiles after he came, this preaching

into the temple and has defiled this holy place (ESV, Acts 21:27; cf. *Jos Ant.* 15.5.417).

⁵⁰Against Breytenbach, *Vorsöhnung*, 158-59, 165, 169, 215, 221, 223.

⁵¹Rightly Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 380-81.

⁵²So Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 381.

⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

could refer to his earthly ministry.⁵⁵ Jesus' proclamation of reconciliation did not discriminate against Gentiles. Jesus is Israel's Messiah, and he came to save the lost sheep of Israel (cf. Matt 1:1, 21). He also primarily preached the gospel to Jews (Matt 10:5-14). But Jesus did not limit his ministry only to Jews (cf. Matt 4:15; 12:18, 21; 21:43; 24:13; 28:19; Luke 2:32; John 4). He also preached to Gentiles the good news of reconciliation (John 4), and he universally proclaims the gospel of peace after his resurrection to Gentiles through his prophets and apostles (Eph 3:5-8).⁵⁶

Ephesians 2:18 in the Greek text begins with the word *hoti*.⁵⁷ With this word, Eph 2:18 states the result of 2:17 so that the two verses should be read in the following manner: Jesus preached peace to both Jews and Gentiles [with the result that] "we both have access in one Spirit to the Father" (2:18).⁵⁸ Paul again here assumes faith in the preached gospel as a means by which Jews and Gentiles have this access to God and form a new race (cf. 3:6).

As in 2:15-16, 2:18 emphasizes the unity between Jews and Gentiles. Paul states in 2:15 that God created Jews and Gentiles (two groups) "into one new man." In 2:16, he states that he reconciled both groups into "one body" through Jesus' cross. Then, in 2:18, he states that both groups have equal access to the Father "by means of one Spirit." The latter suggests that God has given to the Gentiles the same Holy Spirit that he poured out on Jews (cf. Acts 2), which is likewise the same Spirit that was promised to Jews during the old

⁵⁵Against Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 385; Karl Olav Sandnes, *Paul—One of the Prophets?": A Contribution to the Apostle's Self-understanding*, WUNT 43 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1991), 229. Hoehner (*Ephesians*, 385) suggests that no evidence exists that Jesus ever preached to Gentiles, but that "it is better to assume that on the basis of the peace he accomplished, it was proclaimed by him to Jews and Gentiles by means of the Holy Spirit through his apostles (cf. Eph 3:5-6)."

⁵⁶O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 206-08, esp. 207-08.

⁵⁷The normal meaning of this word is "because" or "that," but neither of these definitions makes sense in 2:18. Paul does not say here that Jesus preached peace to Jews and Gentiles (2:17), "because we both have access through him. . ." (2:18). Against Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 149.

⁵⁸So Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 388. Admittedly, this is an abnormal function of the Greek word "that." Even Hoehner in his detailed exegesis of the Greek text does not cite at least one text to support the resultant usage. Such a usage seems present in John 7:35.

covenant (cf. Jer 31:31-37; Joel 2; Ezekiel 36-37). The Gentiles who were once alienated from God's covenantal promises simply because they were not Jewish (2:11-12) now through Messiah's death have equal access to the Father by his Spirit along with Jewish Christians (2:18).

That Jews and Gentiles have equal access to God is truly profound since Paul states in 2:12 that they were without Christ, without God, and hopeless in the world prior to their faith in Christ. Additionally, the Jews had access to God through the Torah and the cult (cf. Exodus 20-Deuteronomy). Regarding the cult, Gentiles were forbidden to enter the temple since their uncleanness would have defiled the holy place (cf. 1 Maccabees 1-2; 3 Maccabees; Acts 21:28; Acts 24-25). Israel fought against Gentile nations on various occasions throughout its history when those nations sought to defile the temple (cf. 1-3 Maccabees). The Gentiles' inability to participate in the cult impeded their ability to have access to God since he appeared to the high priest, who offered atonement for the people, over the mercy seat in the temple in the most holy place. "But now" in this new age of salvation-history, Jews and Gentiles through Messiah's blood by faith in the power of the Spirit form a new race, and together as one they have equal access to God.

Ephesians 2:19-22 further emphasizes the unity that Jews and Gentiles have with one another because of Jesus' death. Ephesians 2:19 begins with an emphatic inference: "therefore then."⁵⁹ The latter refers back to 2:11-12 and thus includes the unit of 2:11-18 since 2:14-18 forms part of the argument in 2:11-13 and since 2:19 states that Gentiles through Christ are recipients of God's soteriological promises to Israel, whereas he states in 2:11-12 that they were excluded from them. Paul, therefore, concludes the argument of 2:11-18 in 2:19-21. The terms "therefore then" in 2:19 accentuate that what follows is the result of Jesus' death for Jews and Gentiles and the reconciliation that it accomplished between both groups: "Therefore,

⁵⁹So Margret E. Thrall, *Greek Particles in the New Testament: Linguistic and Exegetical Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 10-11. The combination of the above particles in the New Testament only occurs in Paul (Rom 5:18; 7:3, 25; 8:12; 9:16, 18; 14:12, 19; Gal 6:10; Eph 2:19; 1 Thess 5:6; 2 Thess 2:15).

now, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow-citizens, [i.e.,] saints, and [you are] members of God's family."

The Gentiles are no longer foreigners or second class citizens in God's city (cf. DSS 4Q279)! Messiah's death for sin has reconciled both groups to God and to one another in such a way that both groups have equal access to God's covenantal promises that he originally gave to Israel. Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians are "saints." They are now through Christ members of God's family, and they are now spiritually united and related to each other, so that they have equal access to Israel's Messianic promises (cf. Rom 2:28-29).

Paul elaborates this latter point in Eph 2:20-22. He metaphorically uses temple imagery in these verses to explain further the Gentiles' part in God's soteriological promises and to emphasize the unity that now exists between Jews and Gentiles through Christ.⁶⁰ Paul states in 2:20-21 the reason that the Gentiles are fellow-citizens with the Jews: viz., their faith was built on the same apostolic and prophetic foundation as the faith of the Christian Jews, and Jesus, the Christ, is the cornerstone of that foundation. He states in 2:21 that the entire structure of the foundation is held together in Christ, and it will grow into a "holy temple." Finally, he states in 2:22 that the Gentiles are being built up together into a house of God by the Spirit. Since Paul mentions earlier that Jews and Gentiles have the same Holy Spirit (2:18) and since the emphasis in 2:14-21 is that God has reconciled Jews and Gentiles to one another and that he has incorporated Gentiles into God's family with Jews through Messiah's death, Paul most likely suggests in 2:22 that believing Jews and believing Gentiles (not only believing Gentiles) are being built up together into a holy temple of God, i.e., a heavenly city (cf. Rev 3:12; 7:15; 11:1-2, 19; 14:7; 15:5; 21:22). The Gentiles formerly could not enter the Jewish temple, but now through Messiah's blood by faith Jews and Gentiles together are God's temple (cf. Jer 31:31-37; Ezekiel 36-37).⁶¹

⁶⁰An inscription on the temple wall forbade Gentiles from entering beyond the second gate of the temple (Jos *Ant.* 15.5.417) and since years earlier the Jews ardently fought against Gentiles who sought to sack their temple (cf. 1-3 Maccabees).

⁶¹Paul's statements in Eph 2:11-22 would have been considered scandalous from a first century Jewish perspective (cf. Acts 21-26), for Paul's point in Eph [Footnote continued on next page ...]

Paul argues in Eph 2:11-22 that in Christ, circumcision, food laws, purity laws, Sabbath, or any other boundary marker erected by the Mosaic Covenant divides Christian Jews and Christian Gentiles. God's soteriological promises of new creation have been fulfilled by the inclusion of the Gentiles into these promises, and God has thereby reconciled Jews and Gentiles to himself and to one another by faith through Messiah's cross.

Conclusion

Jesus' death shattered all ethnic boundary markers between Christian Jews and Christian Gentiles, and his death recreated these groups into a new race. The power in this reconciliatory act of God is

2:11-22 is not that ethnic distinctions no longer exist between Jews and Gentiles, but that these distinctions no longer matter and that Jews and Gentiles together form a new race marked not by Torah but by the Spirit since Jesus' death "killed" the boundary markers that divided them (cf. Acts 13; 22; 26:19-23; 27:28). To discern the depth of Paul's comments, observe the following statements that Jews made about Gentiles in selected excerpts from early Judaism:

Separate yourself from the Gentiles, and do not eat with them, and do not perform deeds like theirs, because their deeds are defiled, and all of their ways are contaminated and despicable and abominable. They slaughter their sacrifices to the dead, and to the demons they bow down. And they eat in tombs. And all their deeds are worthless and vain. And they have no heart to perceive, and they have no eyes to see what their deeds are, and where they wander astray, saying to the tree 'you are my god,' and to a stone 'you are my lord, and you are my savior,' and they have no heart (Jub 22:16-18; Charlesworth II, 98).

And if there is any man in Israel who wishes to give his daughter or his sister to any who is from the seed of the Gentiles, let him surely die, and let him be stoned because he has caused shame in Israel. And also the woman will be burned with fire because she has defiled the name of her father's house and so she will be uprooted from Israel (Jub 30:7; Charlesworth II, 112-13).

Gentile foreigners went up to your place of sacrifice; they arrogantly trampled [it] with their sandals (Pss Sol 2:2; Charlesworth II, 652).

For the Gentiles insulted Jerusalem, trampling [her] down; he dragged her beauty down from the throne of glory. . . Do not delay, O' God, to repay them on [their] heads; to declare dishonorable the arrogance of the dragon (Pss Sol 2:19, 25; Charlesworth II, 653).

The Lord plucks up the roots of the Gentiles and plants the humble in their place. The Lord always lays waste the land of the Gentiles and destroys them to the foundation of the earth. He removes some of them and destroys them and erases the memory of them from the earth (NRSV, Sir 10:16-17).

[Lord], lift up your hand against foreign nations (NRSV, Sir 36:2).

not that Jews and Gentiles are no longer different, but that both groups (though different) form a *new race* and a new humanity *in Christ*. Messiah's death has reconciled them to God and to one another, and this reconciliatory act of God in Christ between them is central to the Pauline gospel. Paul says that Christian Jews and Christian Gentiles should live out God's reconciliation in Christ by sharing a mutual love for one another within the believing community and by extending that love to other Jews and Gentiles outside of the believing community by preaching and living out the gospel of Jesus Christ, so that unbelieving Jews and Gentiles can too become part of God's *new race in Christ*.



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