

July 18th 2021
“Extreme Makeovers”
Ephesians 2:11-22

Introduction:

Do you remember the reality TV shows called Extreme Makeover? It was popular about 15 years ago. The show depicted ordinary men and women undergoing "extreme makeovers" involving plastic surgery, exercise regimens, hairdressing and wardrobing.

Then there was the hit show Extreme Makeover - Home Edition, or The Block with Scott Cam, or Better Homes and Gardens. Where a crew of fantastic volunteers and professional contractors and designers would take an old house and garden and turn it into a beautiful home. There was normally a family involved about whom you would hear an inspiring backstory and then the transformation began.

Well, today we're learning about, what Rev Matthew McCraw of First Baptist Church in Florida calls, "Extreme Makeover - Gospel Edition". Due to the short notice, the lockdown, and the disappointment that Nigel Lau couldn't join us. This brother makes resources available for Kingdom use as long as you mention the source. I acknowledge with gratitude that I have relied heavily on his outline, and use of the Extreme Makeover illustration.

Today we will be reminded of the extreme transformation that Jesus brought in our lives. In Ephesians chapter 1, Paul told us who we are in Christ, what God has been doing since before the world began to bring us to Christ, and how God's power is seen in the pre-eminence of Christ. In v1-10 of chapter 2, Paul explains that we are saved because of God's great gift of grace!

Now, in v11-22 Paul takes us further down this path of God's work to explain this extreme makeover through the power of the Gospel. As with the episodes of the show, we must first understand:

1. The backstory v11-13

The backstory is knowing what happened before the transformation started. For the various shows, it was always something like they had 6 kids, or the dad just lost his job, or mum's got cancer. For Paul, he wants to make sure that the Ephesians are reminded of what life was like for them before Jesus changed them. Look at v11-13.

“Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)—remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But, now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ”.

Remember, at the time of Paul's writing this, Christianity is a pretty young religion; it's less than fifty years old. Also, at that time Christianity is viewed as a very Jewish religion. After all, the God whom we serve is often referred to as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who are all fathers of the Jewish faith.

Further, Paul is pointing out how Jewish people often looked down on Gentile people (remember Gentile means non-Jewish). He says that the “circumcised” (or the Jews) called the Gentiles the “uncircumcised.” Remember, circumcision was a sign of God's covenant with the Jewish people. So, for those who were not Jewish, or not marked as God's covenant people, they were considered second class citizens.

So, Paul is setting the stage to further help the Ephesians understand what it was like to not be part of the covenant of God, and what it was like to have no hope.

Paul gives five descriptors of what it was like for the Ephesians, who originally had non-Jewish heritage. In v12, he says they were: without Christ / excluded from the citizenship of Israel / foreigners to the covenants of promise / without hope / and without God in the world.

Paul doesn't say that their backstory was fine and dandy. He doesn't say, "I know that the Jewish people rejected you Gentiles, but really everything was ok; you're really good people." No! Paul said they were hopeless!

However, as with last week, there is a very important phrase that starts with the word "but." V13 says, "*But now in Christ Jesus*" everything has changed for these Gentiles who were without God. Paul says in v13, "*you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*"

Paul is pointing out that God did something amazing for the Gentiles also, not just the Jewish people. In fact, this moment was prophesied from the very beginning of God choosing Abraham, the father of the Jewish people. God said to Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3, "*I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*"

In God's redemption of the Gentiles, we are seeing this promise to Abraham being fulfilled. All the peoples on the earth are being blessed through the line of Abraham! The blood of Jesus changes everything! Those who were far from God have been brought near to God!

Brothers & sisters, we must remember our backstory, not only ours personally, but the backstory of all of those who were without hope, without a Messiah, without a covenant with God. We were lost and helpless, but now in Christ Jesus, we have been brought near! Well, how did all of this happen? That takes us to our next phase of the process:

2. The Makeover v14-18

In an Extreme Makeover show, you always see the process of the makeover. Everyone comes together and creates a beautiful new creation. There are a lot of people involved in the party. Well, with the Gospel makeover, there is one party responsible for the transformation: God! Let's read about what God does in this makeover. Look at v14-18:

"For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit".

Paul now focuses on this new idea of peace. Through Jesus, we now have peace with God and others. Paul uses two powerful descriptions to describe what God has done.

First, Paul says God "made both groups one." The two groups that were at odds with one another; Jews and Gentiles, the circumcised and the uncircumcised; have now been brought together. They are no longer two, but they are one.

This reminds me of the movie, Remember the Titans. A biographical sports film based on a true story. Coach Herman Boone is portrayed by Denzel Washington. The movie is about a football team that becomes integrated with both white and black players. Even though they

are on the same team, initially, there is a lot of division on the team because of the race differences. However, there's a moment in the movie where it is no longer the white players and the black players. Instead, they all become Titans, and they are one. So, also, Paul says there are no longer Jews and Gentiles. Instead, there is now one: Christians, the Church, those who are followers of Jesus the Messiah!

Second, Paul says, God, *"tore down the dividing wall of hostility."* Now, some say that this may refer to a wall or curtain in the temple, but I think that Paul is speaking here about a metaphor. This wall of division and hostility that existed between Jews and Gentiles, has been torn down by the power of the Gospel.

Note carefully: The power of the Gospel can break down any wall! All those in Jesus are one! Concerning the Jews and Gentiles, Paul says in v15 that Jesus took care of the law, commands, and regulations so that they were no longer barriers. He said that Jesus created "in himself one new man from the two, resulting in peace." Paul goes on further to describe this wonderful miracle. He says in v16, *"He did this so that he might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross by which he put the hostility to death."*

Both Jews and Gentiles needed Jesus! Paul says in v17 that Jesus, *"came and proclaimed the good news of peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near."* Far away and near, we all need Jesus!

Look at v18 again, also: *Through Jesus, "we both have access in one Spirit to the Father"*. All of us have access to God the Father, in the Holy Spirit, through the work of Jesus! How amazing!

As Paul says in Romans 8:1-2, *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death."*

Did you get that? All of us are free in Jesus and all of us are one in Jesus! There should be no division in Jesus Christ; we are one!

Black, white, and every other ethnicity are one in Christ! Liberal, Labour, Independent are one in Christ! Aussie Citizens, foreigners, immigrants, are one in Christ! Lower class, middle class, and upper class are one in Christ! Educated and uneducated are one in Christ! White-collar, blue-collar, and no collar are one in Christ! Homeless, renters, homeowners, and home developers are one in Christ! Former missionaries and former mobsters are one in Christ!

We are not just all forgiven, but we are unified in Jesus! There is power in Jesus, there is power in the Gospel, this is Extreme Makeover: Gospel Edition! *"For through him we [all] have access in one Spirit to the Father."* This is the makeover that Jesus does in our hearts. Finally, the best part of those renovation shows!

3. The reveal v19-22

The reveal is the moment when you see the culmination of all of the work that was done. When you see the result. Well, let's look at the result of Christ's work through the Gospel.

Look at v19-22:

"Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is

joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit”.

Because of the work of Jesus; the Ephesians, who were Gentiles, foreigners, strangers, and the uncircumcised; are now fellow citizens with the saints and members of God’s household. How awesome is that? Jesus changes everything! We are one in Jesus!

Paul then shifts his metaphors to speak of a building (he probably knew we were going to use Extreme Makeover - Home Edition as an illustration!). Paul says that this household is built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. All of God’s messengers were preparing a foundation for this moment. They were building something that could bear the weight of the miracle that God was going to do, by bringing all types of people together in Jesus. All the promises to Abraham would stand tall on this foundation!

What is the most important ingredient in this building? Well, of course, it’s Jesus! Paul says in v20, *“with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone”*. Jesus holds up the entire building! He the foreman, He is the cornerstone, He is the capstone, He is the main crossbeam, He is the 100-year warranty, He is the essential security of the building of God’s one new people.

Paul then tells us what kind of building this is. In v21, we see we are, *“a holy temple in the Lord.”* After all, the temple is often referred to as the house of God. In the Old Testament, the dwelling place of God was in the physical temple. Now, Jesus is building a new holy temple that is the people of God, the Church.

In v22, Paul says, *“In him you are also being built together for God’s dwelling in the Spirit.”* In Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, we the people, we the Church, are the dwelling place of God. Not a building, but a people; redeemed and united by the work of Jesus. What a miracle! We are brought together as fellow citizens and members of God’s household, and God wonderfully reveals His beautiful work accomplished in Christ. This is Extreme Makeover: Gospel Edition!

Concluding Thoughts:

In the book of Ephesians, Paul is telling us who Jesus is, what God has done through Him, and how the Church is affected by what Jesus has done. In this passage, we see that Jesus redeems all types of people and builds us up as His people for His glory.

That takes us to our bottom line: God is beautifully building us for His glory and our good.

The message throughout the book of Ephesians is that God has a great plan to redeem sinners from sin, adopt them as His own children, and build them into a beautiful church. He is doing so to bring glory to Himself and to create us to be who He intends us to be. Jew and Gentile, or whatever else, we are now one in Christ, a new creation called the Church of Jesus Christ. We must understand this reality.

Are you part of the holy temple that God is building through His church? Are you participating in making that temple holy? If you need to recommit yourself to be a holy and unifying part of the holy temple of God, I want to invite you to do so today. Also, if you’ve never been brought near to God by the work of Jesus, I want to invite you to do so right now by confessing your sin and asking Jesus into your life.

Prayer.