As a kid, I was not allowed to like the New York Yankees. May dad instilled in me a love for the Detroit Tigers. We watched them play every summer in person, as we made our annual summer visit to see family. As a guy who walked to Tigers Stadium as a kid in the 60's, and watched the Yankees beat the Tigers a lot, my dad thought being a Yankees fan was unacceptable. Later, when I went to high school and college I wore #6 because it was my dad's number, and he wore it because the Tiger hall of famer, Al Kaline wore it. Today, I have a picture of Tigers Stadium hanging in my office. We have obviously enjoyed the post-season this year!

So his reaction when I came home from the town fair with a Yankees helmet should not have surprised me. I won a helmet by guessing my speed at the fast pitch game at the town fair. I only picked the Yankees due to a limited number of available teams. When I went home, my dad met me at the door, took off my helmet, and threw it in the yard. I went to get it and returned to the front door, but he made me go back to town and trade it in. I went back and got a Blue Jays helmet. Any team was acceptable as long as it wasn't the Yankees. (He has sensed mellowed, and have family members and good friends who are Yankees fans. He even bought a Yankees hat for my nephew this summer when we went to Cooperstown).

We live in a world of rivalries: Republican/Democrat, North/South, PC/Mac, Coke/Pepsi, Jacob/Edward. For Auburn fans, it is Alabama. For Michigan, it is Ohio State. For Duke, it is North Carolina. For UK, it is Louisville. Spurior

Then there are violent and vicious rivals that kill each other, due to cultural and racial hostilities.

In Eph 2:11-22, Paul describes a hostile rivalry that was deep and complex, between Jew and Gentile. Gentiles were non-Jews. The word is “ethna” in v 11 (non-Jewish ethnicities).
- It was religious. Gentiles didn't know the God of Israel.
- It was cultural. Jews had all of the rituals, feasts, and ceremonies that distinguished them from the nations.
• **It was racial.** The Jews could boast of "having the blood of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob flowing their veins."

Yet, through Christ, these two enemies have become friends. (Paul says this unity proclaims the mystery of the universe [3:10]).

For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility

Eph 2:14

There was a vertical and horizontal purpose of Christ's death. Through the cross, we not only are reconciled to God, but we also can be reconciled to others.

Snodgrass suggests that this is *perhaps the single most significant ecclesiological text in the NT.* (123). If not the most significant, it is one of the key passages on the nature of the church.

And the cross is at the center. Verses 13-18 are sandwiched in between who the Gentiles were, and who they have now become. Those verses describe the cross. Notice the words “blood of Christ” (13), “in his flesh” (14), “through the cross” (16). It is through the cross that we overcome our alienation from God and one another.

Paul urges the church to "remember" (11-12) these things so that they may live with a **greater sense of gratitude** to God and greater love for one another as members of the church.

I will outline this incredible passage with **three "reminders"** for us (originally written for a predominately Gentiles audience).

**Reminder #1: Alienation**

**What We Once Were (2:11-12)**

Verses 11-12 follow the pattern of Ephesians 2:1-3. They tell us the dark picture of what life apart from Christ involves. In short, we were **alienated from God and the people of God.**

Paul addresses the readers by saying "you Gentiles in the flesh" (11). He is highlighting a **real physical difference between Gentile and**
Jew. He goes on to note how through the work of Christ, their physical difference is of no ultimate significance (O’Brien, 186).

It's not about skin color, it's about the heart.

He goes on to note how the Jews looked upon the Gentiles as “uncircumcised.” They dismissed the rest of the world as “uncircumcised” not because they were the only ones who practiced it, but because it was a physical sign of their covenant with the Lord. To be uncircumcised was to be separated from the Lord.

Paul then says it is “made in the flesh by hands” in order to drive home the point that it belonged to the old order of Judaism with its external features. Now, Paul could say, “what matters is a new creation (Gal 6:15).

Paul now goes on to elaborate on the pre-Christian past of the Gentiles, all of them point to their being outside God’s people.

A. They were Christ-less.

The Gentiles were separated from the Messianic hope of Israel. Notice Romans 9:4-5:

They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen. (Romans 9:4-5 ESV)

True, some Jews were and still are separated from Christ, but they have been told in their Scriptures of him. The Gentiles were strangers to these things.

To be separated from Christ personally, separated from his salvation, is to be “alienated from the life of God” (Eph 4:18). Is there anything more terrible than this?

If you are separated from Christ, but sense God dealing with you, then turn to him.
B. They were separated from the commonwealth of Israel and were strangers to the covenants.

The Gentiles were alienated from God's people. Israel was a “commonwealth” or a nation under God, a theocracy. Gentiles were foreigners (19)

They were also not part of a covenant people. The term "covenants" implies a series of covenants: Abraham (Gen 15:7-21; 17:1-21), Isaac (Gen 26:2-5); Jacob (Gen 28:13-15); Israel (Ex 24:1-8); David (2 Sam 7). The phrase "promise" probably has to do with God's promise to Abraham.

To be separated from the covenants of promise meant they were missing the covenants that promised the Messiah (Rom 9:4)

C. They were hopeless and godless.

While God did plan on blessing all nations through Israel, the Gentiles didn't know this. Because they didn't know the promises, they didn't have hope.

They also didn't know the God of the promises. They had opted for idols, instead of God, suppressing the truth revealed to them (Rom 1:18-ff.). Because they didn't know God, they didn't know hope.

Application: Before we met Jesus, we had this same tragic position. We were separated from God and his people. So, Paul says, "remember" this! You at one time were separated from Christ and gospel community.

• If we continue to remember where we came from, we will live with constant gratitude toward God, and love toward others.

Reminder #2: Reconciliation
What Christ Has Done (2:13-18)

Like in Eph 2:4, there is another great "But" statement. A dramatic change has occurred, as Paul says:
It is by the blood of Christ that we can be brought near to God. Only by his blood can we be reconciled to God.

Historically, Christ died on the cross. It was public and visible (like in a shopping mall - not on a hill far away). He died on behalf of sinners. He bore our punishment. He took our place that we may be declared righteous. We receive the benefits of forgiveness, righteousness and new life.

Experientially, we experience the effect of the cross, by our union with Christ. Notice it is "in Christ Jesus" and then you have been brought near by his blood." There was a past event that is experienced in the present. This is what gives you peace with God and others today.

So the cross is central. There are many who do not like all of the blood language in the Bible. But blood reminds us of what God has done for us, in his great love. Blood also reminds us of the gravity of our sin. "It was my sin that held him there, until it was accomplished."

Some think the cross is overemphasized. They think evangelicals are too "atonement centered."

• In his book, Atonement, Stephen Finlan says, "It is a mistake to identify the atonement as the Central doctrine, although it is central in Pauline tradition, to First Peter, Hebrews, First John, and Revelation. But these books in their entirety compose only 39 percent of the NT." (in In My Place, 108)

I don’t agree with his assessment, but even so, if it is central in 39%, then you can't sweep it under the rug!

Others think the cross is too violent.

• "The church’s inability to shake off the great distortion of God contained in the theory of penal substitution, with its inbuilt belief in retribution and redemptive power of violence, has cost us dearly" (Chalke, in In My Place, 105).
In Recovering the Scandal of the Cross, Joel Green and Mark Baker think the cross is irrelevant.

- They say, "We believe that the popular fascination with and commitment to penal substitutionary atonement has had ill effects in the life of the church and in the United States and has little to offer the global church and mission by way of understanding or embodying the message of Jesus Christ."

It has little to offer? I think it has everything to offer! I think it's the main thing we have to offer!

Kimberly and I went Fred's Beds... Can I help you? "Do you guys have any beds?"... "We only have auto parts..." I do that at Starbucks...If someone comes here, I want them to know what we are commending. "What do you guys have here? Jesus Christ and him crucified. And a community that loves him. That's what we offer.

C.J. Mahaney The Cross-Centered Life: "This is what I hold out to my young son as the hope of his life: That Jesus, God's perfect, righteous Son, died in his place for his sins. Jesus took all the punishment; Jesus received all the wrath as he hung on the cross, so people like Chad and his sinful daddy could be completely forgiven.

Charles Simeon... had no mother to nurture him. His father was an unbeliever. His boarding school was a godless and corrupt place. And he knew of no Christian at Cambridge for three years after his conversion! He writes of his conversion story like this... He was nineteen years old, sitting in his dormitory room as Passion Week began at the end of March, 1779. He wrote:

In Passion Week, as I was reading Bishop Wilson on the Lord's Supper, I met with an expression to this effect - "That the Jews knew what they did, when they transferred their sin to the head of their offering." The thought came into my mind, What, may I transfer all my guilt to another? Has God provided an Offering for me, that I may lay my sins on His head? Then, God willing, I will not bear them on my own soul one moment longer. Accordingly I sought to lay my sins upon the sacred head of Jesus; and on the Wednesday began to have a hope of mercy; on the Thursday that hope increased; on the Friday and Saturday it became more strong; and
on the Sunday morning, Easter-day, April 4, I awoke early with those words upon my heart and lips, 'Jesus Christ is risen to-day! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!' From that hour peace flowed in rich abundance into my soul; and at the Lord's Table in our Chapel I had the sweetest access to God through my blessed Saviour. (Moule, 25f)

Yes, we have "sweet access to God through the Savior" and "peace that flows in abundance" because of the Substitute!

14-17 – After saying Christ's death has brought us near, Paul goes on to add more results of Christ's sacrifice. Notice the verbs in this section. They emphasize what Christ has done in order to reverse our condition: "made, "broken down," "abolishing," "create,"
"reconcile" "preached." What a Savior!

Paul also shifts from "you" to "we" and "our." Both Jew and Gentile have the same hope: Christ's atoning death.

A. Christ Has Brought Us Peace (14)
Jesus has brought us peace with God and others.

Jesus is the peacemaker. "He himself is our peace," Paul says. Peace is found in a person, Jesus. This was described in the OT (eg., Isa 9:6; Mic 5:5), affirmed in the gospels (eg, Luke 1:79, 2:14, 19:42 John 14:27) and explained in the epistles (Rom 5:1; Col 1:20, 3:17)

App: My friend, do you know this peace?

B. Christ Has Made Us One (14b-17)

He Broke Down the Wall (14b). Christ's blood has obliterated this old, long-standing division between Jew and Gentile.

While Paul was writing this letter, there was a literal wall standing in the temple that excluded the Gentiles. Josephus tells us that attached to this barrier at intervals were messages in Greek and Latin warning that the Gentiles must not proceed further lest they die.
The temple was destroyed in AD 70 physically, but it was destroyed spiritually around AD 33 or so, when Jesus Christ died on the cross for sinners ("in his flesh"). Jesus tore down the wall.

While Paul could be referring to a literal wall in the temple specifically, but it seems that he is referring to the barrier of the law of commandments expressed in ordinances more generally...

**He Abolished the Law of Commandments Expressed in Ordinances (15a).** Paul is probably referring to the ceremonial law. The parallel passage in Col 2:11, 16-21 alludes to circumcision, and questions about food and drink, and regulations about a festival, new moon and the Sabbath.

These commandments are ordinances put up a huge wall between Jew and Gentile. Jesus set all of it aside. He did it by dying on the cross. At the cross, Jesus fulfilled all the shadows and types of the ceremonial system.

Paul might also be saying that Jesus abolished the law as a means of salvation, through his death on the cross. Like Paul says to the Colossians, Jesus has "canceled the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands" (2:14). A person is only accepted by God through the work of Christ, not their own work.

**Stott** summarizes, "Jesus abolished both the regulations of the ceremonial law and the condemnation of the moral law. Both were divisive. Both were put aside by the cross" (101).

**He Created in Himself One New Man (15b).** Jesus' abolishing of something old, has led to something new: one new humanity. Christ has created one new man.

It is in Christ, and in Christ alone, that this new man exists.

In Christ, a new corporate entity exists, called the church. It is not as though Gentiles have been transformed into Jews, or vice versa, but rather God has created one new man.
They not simply become one (though its true); they have become better. Chrysostom said, “it is though one took a statue of silver and a statue of lead, put them into a forge and they came out a statue of gold. (in Chapell, 110)

This is part of God’s plan of summing up all things in Christ (Eph 1:9-10).

**App:** We like to make fences today. People do it in all types of ways, but the cross of Jesus Christ brings unity. **Racism among believers can't be justified, and it must be resisted.** Paul says elsewhere:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

(Galatians 3:28 ESV)

Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

(Colossians 3:11 ESV)

Diversity in the church is a glorious demonstration of the work of Christ. It is to be celebrated, as it pictures heaven. It demonstrates the one new man.

**He Reconciled Us Both to God in One Body (16).** Paul speaks of the double reconciliation that has taken place. He says that the hostility has been put to death.

As Stott says, "God turned away his own wrath, and we, seeing his great love, turned away ours also" (102). The hostility has come to an end through the death of Jesus.

Christians are to be a people who forgive one another because of the forgiveness of Christ (Eph 4:32). Jesus taught us to pray, “forgive us, as we have forgiven others” (Matt 6:12).

**App:**
- The fact is God will do more through a church's unity than through its disunity.
God will do more through your life through your oneness with other believers, than by your isolation from other believers.

_He Preached Peace (17)._ The cross of Christ is our peace was _achieved_, but now it is to be _announced_.

Commentators debate if this refers to (1) Jesus' earthly ministry of preaching, (2) the crucifixion itself (as a symbol of proclaiming peace), (3) his post-resurrection proclamation of peace (John 20:19-21); or (4) the ongoing proclamation through the apostles and now the church.

I'm not sure if it has to be limited to any of these. Jesus certainly proclaimed the gospel of peace before the cross, on the cross, and after the resurrection.

And now, the _followers of Jesus, are to preach peace_. We are to tell the world, how people can have peace with God. Paul possibly adopted this phrase, "preached peace" from Isaiah, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who publish peace… (52:7; cf., Rom 10:15; 57:19). We read elsewhere…

_As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)…_

Acts 10:36

_And, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace_

Eph 6:15

Christ proclaims peace through his followers today. By the Holy Spirit, Christ proclaims his peace through us.

_App: Think about it. How many people are filled with guilt because they don’t have peace with God. Many around the world, are crippled by self-made religion. They can't do enough good deeds to earn God’s favor. Their soul has no peace. Only the gospel gives you that. To preach Christ, is to preach peace._
This good news was preached to those "far off" and those "who were near" – that is to Gentile and Jew. (cf., Isa 57:19).

The whole world needs this gospel. Christ has made us one by preaching the gospel of peace.

C. He Has Given Us Access to God (18)

Those who responds to Jesus' work and message, now have access to God.

Notice the Trinitarian language: Paul says it is "through him [Christ] that we both have access in One Spirit to the Father."

This is what prayer is about.

We pray to the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit.

The ongoing benefit of Christ's reconciliation is that you today, have access to God. We can now come with boldness (Eph. 3:12) because of what Christ has done.

Paul is not just emphasizing this personal privilege, however. He is emphasizing, that Jew and Gentile together approach God through Christ by the Spirit.

Reminder #3: Identification
What We Have Now Become (2:19-22)

Paul summarizes Christ's reconciling work by reminding the Gentiles of who they now are. He says that they now belong to a new community, joined together w/ Jewish believers.

In Eph 2:5-6, I noted the three "with" (syn) words, which shows how we have been synched with Christ.

In 2:19-22, there are three more "with" or "together" words. He speaks of "sympolitai" ("fellow citizens [together] with the saints"),
"synarmologeo" (joined together), and "synoikodomeo" (built together). (Snodgrass,)

This emphasizes that you have been synched not only to Christ, but to other Christians. This is your identity.

To illustrate this identity, Paul uses three word pictures: citizens, family, and stones in a temple.

**A. Citizens of God's Kingdom (19a)**

First, he says that they no longer are refugees. Now, they have a citizenship. This citizenship is Kingdom citizenship. They are not second-class citizens, in someone else's territory. They are full members of the kingdom.

The kingdom of God is where God rules his people. That is where his privileges are enjoyed and the responsibilities are carried out. We are waiting for the King to return and set up the full realization of this kingdom.

Paul is writing during a time in which Roman citizenship was prized. Its citizens had great privileges. Citizenship in a great country is a blessing, but there's nothing like being a citizen of the kingdom of God. (cf., Phil 3:20)

When you are a stranger in another city or country you feel vulnerable. You have to keep your papers with you at all times.

But he says you don't have to feel this way. You belong. You are part of the kingdom that has no end. This is the only kingdom that has no end.

**B. Members of God's Family (19b)**

Paul's metaphor of God's new community changes to something more personal: a family. One might imagine Jew and Gentile together in one kingdom, but to be one family is stunning. Elsewhere, Paul says we are the "household of God" (1 Tim 3:15)
How are we one family?

- **We have the same Father.** Paul just made that point in Eph 2:18. We have access to "the Father."

- **We are adopted children.** Paul made this point in Eph. 1:5. The church is made up of adopted brothers and sisters.

- **We have responsibilities in the family.** That's what a church is about. We are one family, each fulfilling his or her role, bringing glory to our father (Eph 5:1).

**In 1 Timothy 5:1-2**, Paul says that we should treat one another like family.

**App:** Some of you older members, let me encourage you to serve as mothers and fathers to these students... Students, serve older members...

**C. Stones in God's Temple (20-22)**

Paul's third metaphor would have been very vivid. **For nearly one thousand years, the temple had been a focal point of Israel — Solomon to Zerubbabel to Herod. Now there was a new temple, made up of people.**

**Verse 20**

He says that the **foundation of the temple is God's word.** The apostles and prophets were teachers, and what Paul is emphasizing here, their teaching. (Paul is probably referencing NT prophets, but even with the OT prophets to the apostles and NT prophets, there was continuity in their teaching).

This shouldn't surprise us. The church stands or falls based upon its faithfulness to God's Word.

A friend recently met with what was left of the leadership of a church about purchasing their building. They had dwindled down to only a handful of people. The problem? They left the truth of
Scripture, and as a result lost all of their people. My friend was speaking to them, and quoted a few Bible verses. One guy said, “We haven’t heard that in years.” Another man, who had no apparent belief in the authority of Scriptures said, “Jesus doesn't care who you sleep with…” Really? That changes things!..

- Plumbing
  Acts 2:42 says that the early church “devoted themselves to the apostles teaching.” That's foundational.

Next, we see the cornerstone mentioned. There’s only one cornerstone: Jesus. He makes the whole building possible. He is what the whole community is built upon. He gives security to the building, and gives it alignment. (cf., Isaiah 28:16, Rom 9:32, 10:11, 1 Pet 2:4-8).

While the apostles' teaching is being emphasized, Jesus' person and work is being emphasized. Jesus is also how the church grows and is held together.

There is no unity nor growth if Christ is not the cornerstone.

Verse 21
Paul likens the people to stones. He says "in whom you also are built into it." Peter says something like this as well, calling us "living stones."

We are carefully shaped building blocks, fitted to build this temple. Each new member is added to it.

- In 1 Corinthians 6:19, Paul refers to individuals being a temple of the Spirit. But here (and in other places like 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:16), the people make up the temple.

By saying, "you also" he is referring to the Gentiles, being added to this building.

- Before the Gentiles were not allowed to enter the temple, but now they are a part of it!
Even though the Israelites knew that God didn’t dwell in temples made by hands, they recognized that God promised to dwell in the temple's inner sanctuary.

• Now, his special presence is not limited to a place, or a building, or a race. God’s presence is spread worldwide, wherever people believe in Christ.

Notice it is "in Christ" that we are a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Through Christ, by the Spirit of God, God dwells in us personally and as a community.

Ultimately, this reality will be fully realized and enjoyed in the New Heavens and New Earth, when God makes his dwelling place with man.

In Ephesus they had a great temple. In Jerusalem they had a great temple (Artemis), but Paul says, through Christ, by the Spirit, there is a better temple – it’s made up of people, from every tribe and tongue.

We are joined together and built together. Each one is related to the other in a special way; and we are all growing together in Christ. Practically, that means every person counts.

• We need each other’s time, talent, treasure; love and resources; encouragement and rebuke.

We are to live the Christian life together, as a multi-ethnic temple, centered in Christ, rooted in the teaching of Scripture.

Application

Let me make a few applications from this very important passage. This passage confronts the typical Western mindset in two major ways, including the way people in the west in the church think.

1. Let’s elevate our concept of the church.
An obvious implication from these three pictures: Christ wants to create a people, not merely isolated individuals who believe in him.

This passage confronts Western individualism.

To separate yourself from the church, is to say "I want to be a stone apart from a building," "a son or daughter separated from my family," or a "refugee away from my country."

Many people treat the church as something that is unnecessary, unimportant, or even a hindrance to doing great things for God.

- I used to believe this... Didn't want to pastor...Superior to others, not needing the church... Hopped around, but didn't have community... That's not God's design

Some think it's fine for others, but there's no need for them to take membership seriously. The NT sees it as your fundamental identity.

Belonging to a local church should be more important than where you go to school, where you work, or what club you belong to.

Sometimes, people ask should college students join a church. I think you should consider the church you may belong to, before you go off to school.

- If you are apart from community, you are not following the NT pattern, and you are not helping yourself.

- It is not good to be apart from the oversight of shepherds, and apart from the accountability and support of brothers and sisters.

The NT assumes every Christian is part of a local church. It knows nothing of a "lone ranger" Christianity, or the idea, “I’m a member of the universal church; I don’t need to join a local, visible church.” That’s how you show you are part of the universal church, by identifying yourself with a people.
Do you do that w/ your union w Christ? Do you not live it out visibly? Then live out your union w other believers - visibly.

Identify yourself with a people.

- Church discipline assumes that church members are identifiable (Matt 18:15-17). When Paul says, “expel the immoral brother”, it assumes there are people who are in and out (1 Cor 5:9-13). In (2 Corinthians 2:6), it is the majority of members who voted to remove a man from its membership.
- The NT also contains lists, which illustrates that people were identifiable (1 Tim 5, of widows).
- The book of Acts counts people. People knew who was part of the church.
- Hebrews 13:17, says overseers will give an account for their people. If there are no identifiable members, than there is no one to lead.
- Electing leaders (Acts 6, 13), submitting to them, regulating membership, keeping lists (Acts 2), and voting (2 Cor 2:6) only makes sense if there is an identifiable group of members.
- The metaphors of the church – stones in a temple, members of a family, citizens of a kingdom, members of a body – all assume that that you are part of an actual church.

There is certainly flexibility on how one works out the membership process in a local church, but the emphasis on the importance of belonging to a local church in the NT is abundantly clear.

Some folks are like Ninjas. They’re here, and then boom, they’re gone. Don’t be a Ninjah, be a family member.

This is not a scam. I’m not trying to get you to give money. I’m trying to care for your soul.

Why don’t people join a local church? Thabiti M Anyabwile offers the following reasons:

- They are indifferent – membership is take it or leave it
- They are ignorant. They’ve never been taught.
- They are indecisive. They can’t make up their minds.
• They are independent. They don’t want people in their business.
• They’re inverted. They have strong attachments to their “home church” even though its hundred of miles away. They can’t emotionally leave another place.

“At root, all of these perspectives on the local church stem from the same problem: a failure to understand or take seriously God’s intent that the local church be central to the life of God’s people.” (64).

You can’t read this passage honestly and not see the importance of the church.

This is how God intends for you to live out your faith, and love one another – in community.

It is an incredible gift of God’s grace to have a family of faith.
• It is a gift of grace to gather corporately, and stir up one another to faith and good deeds. (Heb 10:24-25)
• It is a gift of grace to love one another, as Christ has loved us. (John 13:34-35)
• It is a gift of grace to bear one another’s burdens. (Gal 6:2)
• It is a gift of grace to encourage one another, and be encouraged by one another.
• It is a gift of grace to be warned and admonished by one another.
• It is a gift of grace to be allowed the privilege to give financially to further the gospel.
• It is a gift of grace to come to the table weekly for communion.

All of these privileges, have come to us, via the cross-work of Jesus Christ. He has brought us near, and has made us one. Remember your corporate identity.

#2. Let’s be a "red church."

I’m not talking politics. I’m talking race and cross.
This passage confronts not only Western individualism, but it also confronts the racist impulse in many believers.

These man-man distinctions of a "black church" or a "white church" are not acceptable to gospel-centered people.

Let’s be a red church! A group of people, from every tribe and tongue that has been redeemed by the torn apart Christ, who spilled his red blood that we may be reconciled to God and one another.

I think the main way we work to cultivate diversity is by proclaiming the gospel.

When a person understands the gospel, and that the entire human race is fallen and in need of grace, unity comes naturally.

With that said, I do think it is good for us to think about how we might intentionally cultivate diversity, displaying our love for the gospel. Could anything be more powerful before a lost world, than to see people from all races united in Christ?

Here are some practical challenges:

- **Ponder the corporate implications of the cross.** See what has happened corporately because of the cross. Race is a cross issue.

  Piper: But let us also dwell on this: that God ordained the death of his Son to reconcile alien people groups to each other in one body in Christ. This too was the design of the death of Christ. Think on this: Christ died to take enmity and anger and disgust and jealousy and self-pity and fear and envy and hatred and malice and indifference away from your heart toward all other persons who are in Christ by faith—whatever the race.

- **Truly value people of other races.** An attitude that says, "They are not my kind" destroys the body of Christ. (Snodgrass, 151)

- **Welcome new people every week regardless of race - in corporate worship and growth group.**
• **Intentionally invest in Christians of other races.** Demonstrate that other groups matter to you. Don't just make this a theory. Practice it. Invite them over for dinner, in your home. Invite people of other races to corporate worship.

• **Passionately seek justice, and display mercy for other races.** Love the poor of all races. Seek justice for those sold into slavery, of every race. Care for orphans of every race.

• **Gladly work together with other races for the advancement of the gospel.**

• **Eagerly Pray for wisdom and diversity here, and be glad when you see new elements in worship.** This is hard work.

  • *Coming up in december...* God's Servant and Ambassador

May these intentional acts glorify the crucified Savior.

If anything is obvious in this passage, and other passages in the NT, the church is not a building. It’s a people.

If you belong to Christ, you belong to a people. Live out this Corporate identity.