

Christ Breaks Down Every Ethnic Barrier

by Tim Conway

The sermon emphasizes the problem of enmity in the world, the power of God to overcome enmity, and the reality of enmity in the lives of people, and highlights Christ as our peace who has broken down the dividing wall of hostility.

Duration: 1:07:50

Scripture: Romans 5:1, Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 2:14-15, Colossians 3:11

Topics: "Racial Unity", "Christian Reconciliation"

Description

This sermon focuses on Ephesians 2, emphasizing the unity and peace brought by Christ between Jews and Gentiles, highlighting the eradication of divisions and hostilities through His sacrifice. It delves into the creation of one new man in Christ, uniting believers from all backgrounds into a new humanity. The message underscores the transformative power of Christ's love in breaking down barriers and fostering unity among God's people.

Transcript

Ephesians 2, if you'd like to turn in your Bibles, I would like to read chapter 2, verses 11-17 perhaps. Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision which is made in the flesh by hands. 2,000 years ago, Jew and Gentile, perhaps if you lived in Israel, perhaps if you lived close to a Jewish community, maybe Brooklyn or somewhere, we might have a better feel for this.

There's lots of division. There's lots of disunity in our world today. We right here in San Antonio, Texas do not feel this like Paul would have felt it in that day seeing what he saw.

Now you have to think about this. In the days that Paul walked this earth, he could look into a church like this, Antioch, Ephesus, Thessalonica, Corinth, and he saw Jews and Gentiles. To him, that was radical.

Here in San Antonio, we might look out and we see people of different skin color, people of different ethnicity, people of different social strata. Remember, he's talking specifically to the Gentile here. We're Gentiles.

Remember that you were at that time. What time? Former time. Before we were saved.

We were separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel. We basically were not citizens of Israel. And thus, we were strangers to the covenants of promise because the covenants of promise were made to Israel.

We were having no hope and without God in the world. That's where we were, in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, now saved and in Christ, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

And we've got that far weeks back. Here's where we pick up new material. What I want to deal with today is 14 and 15.

For He Himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that He might create in Himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace. Lord willing, next week. And might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

And He came and preached peace to you who are far off and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access in one spirit to the Father. So then, you Gentiles, you're no longer strangers and aliens, but you're fellow citizens with the saints, members of the household of God, built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

In Him you Gentiles are being knitted right into the fabric of this dwelling place, this temple of God by the Spirit. So, we read this. But the question I would ask you this morning is this.

How's your life? It seems like we're changing gears a little bit. But is everything good in your life? Not too long ago, I was taking a truck ride somewhere with a brother who, he didn't use these exact words, but he was struggling with the fact of thinking that his life stunk. Sometimes we get there.

My life stinks. Is your life going just exactly how you want it to go right now? Does anybody have any problems? Can anyone say life is perfect? Or you might say, my life is a perfect mess. Where am I going with all this? I'm going here with it.

We have lives. We're living our lives. There's a reality that we live in.

And typically our lives are not perfect. Typically there is something. You have all the finances you need, all the money you need.

Is your marriage perfect? Are your children well behaved? They don't cry out in the middle of the service? You see how long it is before somebody runs their child out of... Everything perfect? Your car working just right? I was coming to church and somebody had two flat tires. I said, is everything okay? And I know it's pretty shady, but I don't know what they were doing. But they had flat tires.

Even the spare was already on there and it was flat. Sometimes our life is like that. Two flat tires.

So what do we do to fix it? Brethren, do you realize that this great apostle is writing to Ephesian Christians? Do you ever think about who they are? You know, sometimes when people are far away in another time, we tend to dramatize and spectacularize. We tend to think of people, even Paul himself, we tend to think of people in a way that isn't really true. Do you realize that the people at Ephesus, do you

realize who they were? They were men and women and children.

And they ate and drank. And they were trying to make the ends meet financially. They were trying to figure out how to keep food on the table.

They were trying to figure out how to keep their bills paid. They were trying to figure out how to maintain their marriages. Some of them were single.

Some of them were single and wanted to be married. Some of them were married and maybe didn't want to be married. Some of them were married and having difficult times in marriage.

Some of them had children. They were seeking to raise those children. Brethren, you know, there's another place there in Ecclesiastes.

There's nothing new under the sun. These people are just like us. They were trying to make the meetings on time and brother so-and-so was always late.

It was the same, brethren. It was the same then. And what happens? What does the Apostle Paul think that people like that need to hear? In fact, even more than that, what does the Holy Spirit think that people like that needed to hear? Well, you know, if you glance back up to 119, this is such... These verses 18 and 19, it really comes back to what Paul is praying.

You remember, he's not ceasing to give thanks, remembering you into my prayers. What was he asking for? He wanted God to give them eyeballs spiritually. He wanted them to be granted this spirit of wisdom and in a revelation of the knowledge of God and have the eyes of their hearts, their understanding enlightened so that they might recognize some things.

And the third thing here that he hits on is this, the immeasurable greatness of the power of God. And we've been looking at this, brethren. There's two demonstrations of this.

The first one is found in chapter 2, verses 1 through 10. What was it? We're dead. We're dead in our trespasses and sins and nothing can raise us from that death except the exceeding greatness of God's power.

That's it. That is regeneration, folks. But you know what? There's another demonstration of the power of God and that's what we pick up with in verse 11.

The second problem that the power of God is confronted with, and you know what? It's somewhat of a legal problem. Where do I get that from? Well, I get that from chapter 2, verse 15, where we're going to be at today, by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances. When you start talking law, commandments, ordinances, you've got something legal going on.

What is it? It's the Gentile far-offness. It's a radical division, the separation between Jew and Gentile. And remember the situation with the Gentile.

Look at verse 12. Separated from Christ. Alienated.

Separated. There's a division here. Now even though it's not specifically talking about our division from the Jew, he gets to that.

Alienated from the commonwealth of Israel. And strangers to the covenants of promise. Now, it's interesting because he's kind of dealing sometimes with the true Jew and sometimes with the physical Jew as he goes through here.

You'll see that a little bit more clearly when you see what the remedy for all this is. But there's this separation. There's this divide.

We have no hope. We're without God in the world. God's power answers this as well.

How? God's power came down like a hammer upon the head of Christ. And there was wrath and there was blood and there was punishment and there was death. And you see it in verse 13.

In Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near. How? What did it take? It took blood. It took death.

It took punishment. It took God's wrath. He brought the hammer down.

Stricken, smitten, afflicted of God. This is an unleashing of the power of God too. And it answers to this second problem.

Now brethren, two things you don't want to do with this. We don't want to separate this from reality. Someone will say, oh, would you just get real? What is all this? Commandments, ordinances, brought near.

What is this? Making peace. Jew and Gentile. Get real.

We live here. What does this have to do with us? That's one thing you can't do with this. Or someone else says, look, I need preaching that's more practical than this.

This isn't practical. Give me a list of five how-tos. That's what I want.

Brethren, from the way Paul writes right here, I can tell you what he would say. You can tell from chapter 1, v. 17, 18, 19, what he would say is this. He would say that a very good way of testing whether the Spirit of God is at work in your life.

A very good way to test whether the Spirit of God is actually giving you the Spirit, or God is giving you His Spirit of wisdom and of revelation and the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, is to ask this, are your hearts being enlightened? Do you actually have the Spirit to where your eyes are being enlightened to be able to recognize the hope of your calling and to be able to recognize the riches of His inheritance and being able to recognize in all of this the power of God and how it benefits you? Brethren, and how do you recognize when that's happening? It's because you actually are following what the Apostle Paul is saying here and the Spirit of God is opening your eyes to it and you find it thrilling. You find it joyful. You find it something that you actually can feast on.

You find it bread for your souls. Brethren, let me tell you this. Nothing could be more practical than this.

When you actually find that the Spirit of God communicates the realities of these truths to you and you are given the Spirit of wisdom and a revelation. You actually, things are being revealed to you and it's glorious and it fills you with joy and it thrills your soul because the joy of the Lord is your strength. And brethren, when you go out into this world full of joy because of the things that God has done for you through the

death of His Son and through these gospel realities and you're gripped by these and you're filled with joy and that joy is your strength.

Brethren, what could be more practical than that? See, it applies to everything. You don't need the list of five how-tos because when you're gripped by these realities, brethren, it is life-changing. What could be more relevant than that? And if you want to speak about relevance, all you have to do is look at the text.

Look where we're going to be today. Verses 14 and 15. We'll grab some words out that are extremely relevant.

He Himself is our peace. Just think about that word peace. That's really what I want to deal with primarily today.

Christ is our peace. Who has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances that He might create in Himself one new man in place of the two. And here's the word again.

So making peace. Now what's interesting is in verse 13, what He says is we were far off. We've been brought near by the blood of Christ.

But He doesn't stop there. He wants to take us further in. He wants to delve deeper here.

Deeper still. He wants to touch on this peace. Not just that blood was shed, but He wants to talk about peace.

And you see it's precisely here that there is such relevance. Maybe the word peace makes you want to yawn this morning. I don't know.

But look around. And yes, you can look even in the church. But look out further than that.

Look at the world around us. The whole world. Brethren, when you think about the world out there, when you look at the news, when you watch the headlines, this world is in strife.

It's everywhere. People are fighting everywhere. People harm each other all the time.

All around us. And you see it in these verses. Look at verses 14, 15, 16.

All of your Bibles contain the word enmity or hostility in those three verses. And you know what? Your Bible contains one of those two words twice. Enmity or hostility.

Let your eyes just look through there. Those three verses, 14, 15, 16. Look for those two words.

Enmity or hostility. All your Bibles have them and it's there twice. And you know what's interesting? The first hostility is man's hostility against man.

And the second hostility is the fact that we need to be reconciled to God, thereby killing the hostility. There is enmity, man against man, and there's enmity, man against God, and God against man. Brethren, we're going to deal with man and man today because we're dealing with verses 14 and 15.

That's dealing with man. God will move us in His Word to being reconciled to Him next. And we'll deal with that next.

Next week, Lord willing. Brethren, think with me. Man.

Just look around us. On Thursday, I just simply thought, okay, let's just get a snapshot. I went to the Drudge Report and I just went up and down the lines.

The Dems fighting Trump. What's new? They hate him. In the political arena in this country, there is hatred.

There is division. White supremacists are holding rallies. Have you seen that kind of stuff today? I mean, I showed my wife a picture of people flying through the air because at one of these rallies, the anti-supremacist came to protest and then somebody mowed them all down with cars.

Anybody see that picture? People flying through the air. That wasn't an accident. That's the hatred.

That's the enmity. How about this? A third, now I don't know who polled this. Nobody called me about this, but the Drudge Report says a third of the people in our country would cheat on their partners with a robot.

Brethren, that's where we've come to. And yet, really, there's nothing new under the sun. Clashes in Rome as police evict refugees.

Tesla is pushing to create a self-driving car and it sparks dissent among its engineers. This is just a snapshot, a Drudge Report. One day, this last week.

President calls journalists sick people. Russian nuclear bombers are flying close to South Korea and Japan. Of course, that has to do with North Korea who seems to hate everybody.

They're threatening us. They showed a picture behind Kim Jong-un that showed Austin being blown up. Anybody see that picture? Suspects shot by cops in hostage situation in Charleston.

Dating apps are cracking down on hate. You know what people do? They sign up for these dating apps and they put in there what they hate. And so people are getting together on that basis.

And so it's happening so much that they're having to crack down on it. Americans injured in Cuba by covert sonic device. There's 16 Americans in Cuba.

I don't know what they're doing. And the Cubans are hitting them with this sonic device that's destroying their ears. You ready to go to Cuba, brother? They might get us.

See, there's this hatred. I mean, what is this? Brethren, the answer is simple. It's sin.

Brethren, do you know what Scripture says? Romans 3.17, one of the classic descriptions of man. It says the way of peace they have not known. Brethren, there are several places in our Bibles where you have these extensive descriptions of man.

Let's look at three of them. You turn in your Bibles to these. I want you to see them.

I know you've read these before. The first one I want you to look at is in Romans. We'll take these in order.

Romans 1.29, 29, 30, 31. Description of man. And listen, we can be in denial and say, well, this isn't me.

This was never me. But you see, all that is is being ignorant. All that is is being deceived and all that is is denying the reality.

Because all these news headlines, they're the big picture. They're the things that are in the news. They're the things that are famous.

They're the things that are getting the notoriety and the attention, but the reality is that the things that are behind these are going on inside the hearts of every single man, woman, and child on the face of this earth. And if there's any exception, brethren, there's only one people that have any exception and it's those who Christ is their peace. That's it.

And even among us, Paul and Barnabas can't get along at one point. But brethren, look at these verses. Romans 1.29, they were filled with all manner of unrighteousness.

Okay, well, that doesn't so much look like hostility towards one another. And what I want you to ask yourself is this, how many of these verses have to do with hostility against one another and hostility against God? Because that's really what we're dealing with there in Ephesians 2. Look with me. All manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness.

Now here we go. Malice. You know what malice is? It's just meanness.

It's ill will. It's a desire to injure others. Malice.

They're full of envy, just wanting what other people have and more than that, not wanting other people to have what they have and you wanting what they have in murder. We want to end their life. We want to just eliminate them.

Strife is an idea of just, we're fighting all the time. We're just a quarrelsome people. A quarrelsome race.

Wars and rumors of wars. Always. Brethren, the thing that describes history.

Go to any kind of history class. At any level. And what marks history? It's all the wars.

Deceit. We lie to each other. Maliciousness.

Very much like the word malice. Comes from the same Greek word as well. The gossips.

Slanders. We speak evil of one another. Here it is.

Haters of God. Insolent. Haughty.

Haughty. We're just lifted up in ourselves. We're boastful.

Inventors of evil. Disobedient to parents. Foolish.

Faithless. Heartless. Ruthless.

Ruthless. We don't care about people. We don't care about others.

Okay, let's go further. 2 Timothy 3, verses 2, 3, and 4. We get another one of these descriptions. Brethren, this is reality.

This is reality. You want to talk about reality? Oh, come on. Give me reality.

Give me something practical. We walk around in this world, and even many in the church, and unsanctified people in the church. See, this is the reality in which we live.

Maybe it's so much like a fish that lives in the ocean, we don't even realize we're wet. Wet with this kind of hostility and enmity. It's just like the air we breathe.

Look at this. People will be lovers of self. You know what that means? When you love yourself.

Brethren, this is the heart of the problem. Pride. We love ourselves.

Self-consumed. Everything centers around us. Lovers of money.

Proud. Here it is again. Proud.

Arrogant. Abusive. We abuse one another.

We use one another the way we would never use ourselves. Disobedient to parents. Ungrateful.

Unholy. Here it is. Heartless.

You get that word again. It was over in Romans. Heartless.

We don't have a heart. Unappeasable. It means somebody angers us, and nothing will satisfy us except vengeance.

We just can't be appeased. Slanderous. Without self-control.

Brutal. Not loving good. Treacherous.

Reckless. Swollen with conceit. And here it is again.

Before it was haters of God. Now it's lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. And just turn over one book.

Titus 3.3. You get one more of these lists. And this one ends on just the perfect note as far as our enmity one against another. Titus 3.3. Passing our days in malice.

That word again. And envy. Hated by others.

And hating one another. Sin. It puts man at enmity against God.

God at enmity against His fellow man. You hear it there. Arrogance.

Pride. Self-love. Brethren, this is the great problem.

Sin can always be boiled down to these very things and you can trace it all the way back to the garden. See, that was the appeal of the devil to that first woman and that first man. And, yea, has God said? You see, the real issue here is God knows that if you ate of that fruit, you'd become like God.

What are you waiting for? Who is God? He's keeping something from you. You need to exalt yourself. Eat that fruit.

You'll be like God. God knows that in the day you eat it, He's just holding back on you. God is holding back.

Don't you realize if you eat that fruit, you'll be like God? That's what you deserve. Stand up for your rights. Do it.

Do it. It doesn't matter what God said. Do what's gonna make you happy.

Do what's gonna make you God. Do what's gonna make you important. Do it for you.

You. You are gonna become like God, knowing good from evil. You are.

Do it for you. Come on, man. And man did it.

And this is all our pride. And you see, this is the problem. We by nature, we all want to be God.

Just like they wanted to be God. They wanted to be like God. So we all want to be gods.

And each one is asserting ourselves. And each one of us wants to be at the center. When these little children cry, that's what that's all about.

Especially when the more you hear that anger, that self-will in that, I'm not getting my way. My parents are wanting me to sit still. Who are they to think that that should happen? I think I'd be happier if I could be doing something else.

If I could be doing anything. I want to be playing. I don't want to be sitting in this chair.

That's where Adam was. I don't want to be in this garden with all this fruit that I can eat when there's this one over here that I can't eat. Who's God to tell me that? Yeah, the devil's right.

I'm gonna go over here and eat this. And I want my way. And man's been like that ever since.

I want my way. And you know what the problem is? You take a bunch of these, you know, you got the sun and everything else rotates around it. And when you try to throw two suns into the same solar system and watch the chaos, you know, the planets all spinning around.

That's us. We all want to be the sun. We want to be at the center.

Everything needs to spin around us. Everything's great. As long as everything spins around me and everything caters to me and everything answers to me and everything is about my self-worth and my self-importance.

And you know, don't fool yourself. I know in this world we look at some people and we say, oh, he's proud. You know, you see the athlete and he does something outrageously proud.

You say, that guy's proud. Or you see a child and give me that toy. And you say, you know, oh, that's selfish.

Don't fool yourselves. This world is not full of really giving people and then a few selfish people or a few proudful people like those athletes, but most of the people are relatively humble. Don't fool yourself.

We are full of a world where we are self-important in our own mind and I'll tell you this, you just let somebody cross over into my lane and come too close and there's road rage. Brethren, this is it. Man puts him at the center and everything else must revolve around him.

He's haughty, boastful, proud, arrogant. Man is a lover of himself. And you take all these little gods and you get a tank over here and you drop them all in there together just like throwing two suns into a solar system together.

And you know what happens? Everything's out of whack. Everything's in enmity. Everything's in hostility.

Everything's clashing. Things are smashing into each other. That's exactly our problem.

And you know what the bigger... I mean, we've all got this. A bunch of little gods going around and we're all fighting each other, but then you've got the true God and the King of Kings. And He's above all this.

And you see, we all hate Him. But just because we all hate Him doesn't mean that we're like Pilate and Herod where we're friends in all of this. Pilate and Herod might have been friends for a little while, but before that they were at enmity and probably after that, they went back to being at enmity.

Why? Because that's the way people are. And you know what? Even if they've got friendship for a little while, it doesn't mean that none of this is true. Brethren, the truth is that in the lost state, men are friends with some people.

But only as long as that friendship builds on their own self-worth, their own self-esteem, makes them feel good. Why do you think the divorce rate's so high? People get married all the time. Why? Oh, because they're attracted.

They want something. The guy wants the sexual intimacy. He wants that woman.

He's got a desire. The woman wants to be taken care of. She wants the intimacy.

But then they come together and what happens? As soon as they're not happy with each other, they go their own way. That's how the world is. And you know what? Some of them stay together.

Why? For the children's sake. Some of them stay together. Why? Because they're in perfect harmony? No, that's never the reason.

Unless Christ is our peace. Brethren, this is the world around us. This is that child crying out.

Why? Ah! Why do they cry out? Because me, I want something. Even in the beginning when you say, well, if they're hungry, they need to do that. That's how they communicate.

I'm not going to say that that's necessarily totally bad. But again, they're not concerned about feeding you. They're concerned that they get fed.

Because that's how we start out and that's how we go through life. And you know what? As long as you are patting my back, it's good. But when that stops happening, all you have to do is have a parent die and watch siblings argue over an inheritance.

You have brethren, husbands, wives, parents, children, best of friends. Those relationships are dashed on the rocks all the time in our world. All the time.

And the only relationships that are maintained at all, as long as we keep patting each other's back so it feels good to both of us. Or we just stay out of each other's way altogether. We don't tend to get upset with people that we don't know and are far away and we've never met.

Unless, of course, they're of another religion or another race or something where we can just categorize them all together into a group that I hate. Brethren, that's us. You have the battle of the gods.

Our lost state. It's wreckage. So, to come into the possession of Christ Himself as my peace, what could be more relevant? And you have to remember this, brethren, we are not dealing today with our peace with God.

We're dealing with our peace with one another. Notice it. Ephesians 2.14, For He Himself is our peace.

He's the Prince of Peace. But this verse is specifically dealing with our peace with one another. We're going to look at our peace with God next week in v. 16.

But today, it's peace between men. You will notice the word both in v. 14. For He Himself is our peace who has made us both one.

I just wonder, we often think about not being reconciled to God. We often think about that. We often think about peace.

We heard about it in the first hour from Romans 5.1. We're justified. And therefore, there is this peace. But brethren, this verse specifically deals with peace among men.

It's very interesting that Paul deals with that first. You might think, wait, wait, the relationship with God is more important. Shouldn't God come first and then Paul thought best to go to man first.

You can imagine, Paul, looking at all those churches, how is this possible? That these people who for 1,500 years since the law was given, maybe longer, these people have hated each other. If ever there was enmity, Jew against Gentile, Gentile against Jew. We may not feel it, but there's a reality there.

How can these people be worshiping together in the same church? How can these people be where they are? Notice the term in v. 14 and 15. Both. Who has made us both.

See, Christ is our peace, and He immediately goes here. Who has made us both. One.

And has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances that He might create in Himself, notice this, one new man in place of the two. Notice both those words. Both and two.

Both and two. You see, that's the divide between man and so making peace. Maybe your Bible says twain in v. 15.

We are both and we are two. Who are they? Well, we've been talking about them, but notice from the text who they are. You get them back up in v. 11.

The uncircumcised and the circumcised. That's who they are. They're the Jew and the Gentile.

Notice something else. There at the end of v. 15, it says, Christ makes peace. You see that? Christ makes peace.

Or, if you've got the New American Standard, it says establishing peace. But at the beginning of v. 14, Paul says Christ is our peace. Now brethren, that is not two different ways of saying the same thing.

No, I know they're related. But look, you've got a situation in a school. Jonathan was just telling me how he's working with students in all these different grades, pre-K through 5th.

Let's say Jonathan in his school has two 5th graders who are fighting. There's hostility. You see, if Jonathan goes and seeks to bring these two guys together and is a peacemaker, it would be really weird for one of the students to say, Jonathan Payne is my peace.

No, Jonathan, Mr. Payne, helped us to be at peace. He was a peacemaker. He made peace between us.

But to say, Mr. Payne is my peace? That's different. You see what this is saying? Jesus doesn't just come to make this thing happen. Now, He does that.

Because it says that at the end of v. 15, He makes peace. Definitely. But to say that He Himself is our peace means I have to have Him to be at peace.

Not just what He did. I have to have Him. He is the price of my peace.

I have to be in Him. Oh, how often Paul says that through this letter. In Christ.

In Christ. In Himself. He has brought together the two.

In Him. We've got to have Him. We've got to be in Him.

We've got to abide in Him. We've got to be one with Him. We've got to be connected to Him.

That's the reality. So how has Christ made peace? That's what the Apostle is interested in. He looks at all these churches.

In the Roman letter, you see specifically how Jew and Gentile are dealt with back and forth. Chapter 2, you then who are Gentiles. You get over to chapter 11, it's very clear Paul's talking to the Gentiles and telling them not to be haughty or to be arrogant or lifted up because they've been grafted in.

But you've got both of these. Paul looks at these churches and it's amazing to him. Jews and Gentiles at peace.

They're worshiping the same God, trusting the same Savior, depending on the same atonement. They're singing the same songs. Christ whose glory fills the skies.

They're all there together. Even when the piano's not working. And they're off tune in the first.

They're doing it together. Brethren, this is a miracle. And I know this full well.

There are lots of people in this room who would not have any sort of relationship whatsoever if we weren't converted. We come from such different places of life. Some of us similar, but a lot of us not so much.

The truth is if we were all not united in the things of Christ, we would not be here any more than they would have 2,000 years ago in that church at Rome. And Paul looked at that and he recognized that is a downright miracle. You've got these people, Jew and Gentile, they're hugging each other! They're giving

each other these kisses of love and affection.

We give each other hugs. They're trusting the same Savior, hoping in the same heaven. Fellow citizens belong to the same redeemed family.

Peace and reconciliation not only between us and God, but with each other. So what is it that brought the Jew and the Gentile together in the Christian church? The answer is right here. The Lord Jesus Christ has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of separation or the dividing wall of hostility.

So look at it there. He Himself is our peace who has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility. And what's Paul doing? He's using a figure that was true of the temple.

In the temple, there were lots of divisions. There were lots of dividing lines. Lots of different courts.

You can look at that. You can see that they had courts for different things. We talked about this before.

But any kind of divisions that were made, abolished. They've been knocked down. They've been decimated.

He has torn these things down. The temple was full of barriers. It was full of separations.

There was a veil. You know that. There was this inner court.

There were outer courts at different levels working all the way out to the court of the Gentiles. The Jew went beyond that. There was divisions.

There was dividing lines. Women could go so far. Jewish women.

The Jewish men could go further. The priests could go further. There was all these separations.

Brethren, the Lord smashes that. How does He do it? You know what it says here? By abolishing the law of commandments contained in ordinances. What's that? What are the commandments contained in ordinances? Now brethren, what we have to recognize is this.

The peace that is specifically being spoken about in these two verses is man to man. Now if we talked about, yes, there are places where the legalities of the Mosaic law and the sacrifices and priesthood, but what is it? What is it? Well, here's something to think about. There were laws that divided between the Jew and the foreigner.

You ever come across those laws? Even in the New Testament. Open your Bibles to Acts 10. You see, this is one of the mile markers.

This is a point in history that is well worth observing because the Gospel is being introduced to the Gentiles here in Acts. Namely, the house of Cornelius. And at this time in the life of the church, this is before Paul predominantly came on the scene.

He's been converted by this point, but he has no prominent place. Peter is the prominent apostle. And he, as a spokesman, he has this vision, you remember, before he goes and God is teaching him and things are happening.

But I want you to notice what Peter says to the household of Cornelius when he comes there. Acts 10.28, And he said to them, you yourselves know how... notice this, unlawful. Here we've got laws, commandments, in ordinances.

There are laws. Peter says there are laws that do what? It's unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit any one of another nation. Now, you could let your mind go through Scripture.

I could take you to a place where it says concerning the Passover, no foreigners to eat of it. I could take you to another place. Moabites and Ammonites, they're out altogether.

To the tenth generation forever. These divisions. I mean, God there in Amos looks at Israel and says, you only I've loved.

Where are the nations? You remember when they thought he brought an Ephesian into the temple? This undoubtedly was an Ephesian believer. That's what led to all of his imprisonment there in the later chapters of the book of Acts. Brethren, we remember this.

Even at the well there in Samaria, the woman said to our Lord Himself, why are You even talking to me? Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Or even our Lord Jesus Himself when He dealt with the Syrophoenician woman. It's not appropriate for me to give you the bread that belongs to the children.

I'm not supposed to throw it to the dogs. I've come for the house of Israel. You see, Jesus smashes those things down.

There were separations. There were those things that divided. Thus says the Lord God, no foreigner, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, of all the foreigners who are among the people of Israel shall enter My sanctuary.

And how were all these laws eradicated? These laws that separated? You know what it says there? In His flesh. You remember what it says in Hebrews about His flesh, this new and living way that opened for us through the curtain? That is through His flesh. Brethren, here's what happens.

When you tear the curtain down, and no matter how far out people are, even though they're divided, the Jews closer, the Gentiles further away, and they're divided into two groups, when you rip that thing open and everybody's free to have access, that's how you just demolish the whole thing. You're all free to go all the way in. All the way in to the Shekinah.

Nothing holds you back anymore. In His flesh. This is the legal aspect.

But you know what? There's also a creative aspect here. And you see that. Look there in 14 and 15.

He Himself is our peace who has made us both one. He made. Or the even stronger word is in 15.

And this is right. That He might create. This word is that.

It's a creation. He creates in Himself one new man in place of the two. Now listen, there's all sorts of questions today about Jew and Gentile.

I mean, you get the eschatological perspectives from the pre-millennial people and the dispensational camp out there, and everybody wants to separate. Brethren, it's a denial of these verses. There's no

separation.

There's no two separate plans for Israel and for the church. There is one new man in place of the two. He created one new man.

You say, then we get to another camp. Testament theology. Does the church replace Israel? You want to be careful here.

Look, the church replaces both the Jew and the Gentile. It's one new man. One new man.

It's not like one of the two was the real man and the other was added to Him. It's one new man in place of the two. But you also want to be careful because the new man is the true Jew.

It's the true Israel. You say, where do you get that? Well, you see, when you look there at verse 12, and where was the Gentile? Alienated from the commonwealth of Israel. Where are we now? Come down to verse 19.

You're no longer strangers and aliens. Fellow citizens, with who? With the saints and members of the household of God. But what saints does he have in mind? Remember, he's writing 2,000 years ago.

Pretty much all the Gentiles, they're still alive. The saints. He's talking about Abraham.

He's talking about Isaac. You see, this was what Jesus said, was it not? He said to the Jews that the kingdom is going to be taken away from you, but it's not going to be taken away from Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. Not them.

But the people from the east and the west, they're going to come and they're going to sit down. The offspring, the true offspring of Abraham. You see, the one new man is the true offspring.

And you remember Galatians 3? Who is the offspring? It's Christ, the true Jew. And what happens is, we are made one in Him. One in the true Jew.

One in the true Israel. It's interesting, you read through the prophecy of Isaiah. Sometimes it's difficult to know whether the servant is Israel or whether it's Christ.

I think the reason that sometimes it seems ambiguous and kind of comes together is because Christ is the true servant and He is the true Israel. And we are one as we are united together in Him. You see what it says there in v. 19? We are fellow citizens.

We used to be alienated from the commonwealth of Israel. Now we are fellow citizens. But with the saints, not with all Jews physically, but with the saints, with the Jew who was a true Jew, with the Jew who was like David, like Hezekiah, like Josiah.

We are brought together. We are united. Christ is uniting those in heaven and those on earth.

You go back to chapter 1, verse 10. And He's uniting all these things together. Where? In one new man.

In Him. In Himself. In Christ.

That is where the new man is. We need to be plain on this. He creates.

He creates in Himself one new man in place of the two. Created in Himself. Brethren, do you recognize that when we are born again, when you are regenerated, you are regenerated into a new humanity.

We used to be in Adam. Now we're in Christ. It's all together new.

And we are united. Oh, brethren, how does this make for peace? Well, I think it should be obvious. The implications of how peace is arrived at through this ought to just jump off the page at us.

We're now all the same family. Go back to v. 19. No longer strangers and aliens.

You're fellow citizens with the saints. And you are all together. We're members of the household of God.

That's what's being said here. Or you go to v. 21 and 22. We're all growing into this holy temple.

The whole structure. It's being joined together. And He says specifically to you Gentile Christians in v. 22, in Him you also, you likewise, the temple, you are the dwelling place of God.

What Christ has done is He's created a humanity in which God will dwell. And the whole thing is being united together and strung together, knit together, brought together all in Him. So that what happens? So that you get those texts like we're so familiar with from Galatians and Colossians that specifically say that there is not Greek or Jew.

You see those old delineations, those old designations are gone. But brethren, the same thing that unites the Jew and the Gentile is applicable to the Hispanic and the white and the black and the yellow and the red and the rich and the poor and those born on the north side and the south side and the east side and the west side. Brethren, when Paul deals with this to the Galatians and the Colossians, he doesn't stop at Jew and Gentile.

Oh, that in his day, that was the massive issue. But he goes on. Oh, should the women of Islam know this? There's no male or female.

We're all one in Christ. The woman who's converted in Christ is not inferior to the man. Weaker vessel, but fellow heir.

All these are broke down. Brethren, what this says to us is nothing about my former life defines me. Remember what he said? Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing but what? A new creation.

One new creation. Those old designations, they don't matter anymore. But what you have to see is nothing you did in the past, whether you were circumcised or not, but all the other designations, they simply don't matter anymore.

They're all gone. The sins I once committed, they've been dealt with. They're all under the blood.

They no longer define me. They matter as little as circumcision and uncircumcision. The color of your skin matters as little as uncircumcision or circumcision.

The amount of money that you have, the degrees that you've gotten, they matter as little. Brethren, there is no Greek Jew who's circumcised, uncircumcised, barbarian, scythian, slave, free in Christ. All is in all.

Or there in Galatians, there's neither Jew nor Greek. There's neither slave nor free. There's neither male nor female.

You are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you're Christ, then you're Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. We no longer assess one another on our former morality or our former religion.

You know how it is. Somebody says, oh, you know, she used to run around with the guys. He used to be a homosexual.

He used to be in a gang. Look at all those tattoos. She used to be a stripper.

I'll tell you what, if you talk like that, you know who you're like? You're like the older brother in the prodigal of the parable. Because that's exactly what he did. He squandered all the wealth.

He ran around with the prostitutes. You see how this makes peace? Why? Because no matter how much money you make, no matter what class or caste or background, how much wealth, how much notoriety, how much fame, what family you came from, those things are all minuscule and they just dissolve away when you and I look at each other and we recognize all our sins, they're all forgiven. I'm free.

There's an eternal weight of glory before me. My past doesn't matter. All my sins, not in part, but the whole, they've been nailed to the cross, and so have yours.

And we can look at each other and we can literally... Remember what he said to those apostles at that one time? He says, you can leap for joy. That's what happens. We're in Christ.

We have been saved out of all the ranks of humanity. We have been plucked out. I was just telling somebody, Elliot recently, he was at my house telling me about how he got saved.

And I was telling him, out of all my family and out of all my friends, as much as I know, with the exception of my dad, I'm hoping my dad was converted there at the end, but God plucked me out and has plucked no others out. And see, we're the redeemed ones. We've been plucked out.

Nothing divides us. We don't want to be like the Corinthians where we're going to sue one another. Why? Because we want our rights.

I can surrender those rights. Why? I've been bought with a price. I'm not my own.

I have a love. He's put a love. You know how constraining the love of Christ is when your heart overflows and you look at somebody else and it's like, He died for them too.

My love for Him. He died for you too. It doesn't matter what.

You look past the color, it's like, brother, brethren, this idea that we have black churches and white churches or somebody visited us one time from Houston. They said we go to a Hindu church. Or you go over to Romania.

It's like, you've got the Romanian churches and you've got the Gypsy churches. What's that? What is that? That's a denial of this. That's absolutely a denial.

When you look at each other, it's like, you know, we were sitting at a table down in Laredo on Friday, Michael's birthday. Two guys are sitting across from me and one has a degree in engineering. I have a

degree in engineering.

You know, there's kind of a common thing there. I'm looking at the other guy over here and he's just recently been converted. And I was looking at him and I was thinking, no, he can't sit there and he can't boast of these degrees and stuff, but he's got a smile on his face and he feels like God converted him about three weeks ago.

And just, that's the connection. Anytime, like the Corinthians, we start talking about suing each other or lining up behind certain preachers or the rich don't wait for the poor or you start boasting in your spiritual gifts, you see what you start doing? You start putting men in categories and you start attacking that one man. That one man.

He united all one man. Our identity is now in Christ. You sit on an airplane, you're a doctor, and you sit next to two people and one guy's a doctor and one guy digs ditches over there, but you're a Christian and that guy's over there a Christian.

We have the same Savior. That alone silences man's contentions and his hostility with each other. I mean, you bring men to the same cross.

You give them the same hope. You promise them the same heaven. They're worshiping God together.

The love of Christ is massively powerful. It is all-consuming. So much so that what? A man will go and sell all that he has, including his titles, his degrees, his background, his wealth.

Why? Because he's got Christ. And he looks over and he sees another man with a smile on his face. They've got Christ too.

We're going to live forever together in glory. An eternal weight of glory. All of our sins are forgiven.

We could dance and we could jump and we could shout. This guy that's lost to me, he's got the same degree next to me. He doesn't know.

He's on the outside. He is the true outsider now. This is the thing that kills hostility.

When you're given such gifts like this. When you're given such wealth. When the heart is transformed.

When this love for Christ has been put there. When our sins are forgiven. Oh, what is that? That is so self-killing to recognize I am on my way to heaven and it's not because of anything that I've done and it's not because I've been moral.

It's not because I've been like the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal. I am like that tax collector and all I could do is plead for mercy. And my brother over here, he did the same thing.

We just pleaded for mercy. It doesn't matter the color of my skin. It doesn't matter how much money's in my pocket or in my bank account.

We are going to glory together. Christ died for us together and not many. No, there's few that be that find it.

We're some of the elect. We're the fellow elect. We can look at each other and brethren, that just kills hostility.

It kills it. Today, the great massive divide, you probably think of a Muslim or an Arab and a Jew and all those things. Whatever the big dividing things are here in our culture right here in San Antonio.

It's just all of it. Jesus Christ is our peace and there is no other. There is not a second way.

He alone melts the hearts of men together in making them one new man, putting them in the same nation, fellow citizenship, putting them in the same family, putting them in the same structure, the very dwelling place of God. The work of the atonement, brethren, is not only meant to produce peace between us and God. It is meant to produce peace among all of God's people and to break every barrier down.

There's no longer Jew. There's no longer Greek. There's no longer circumcised.

There's no longer uncircumcised. There's no longer slave. There's no longer free.

There's no longer male. There's no longer female. There's one new man.

He created one new man in Himself. You've got to have Him. If you don't have Him, there's no peace.

There's no peace for the wicked, sayeth the Lord. There is no peace. You will never have peace.

Any peace you have is artificial at best. Only artificial. You'll never truly have it until you're recreated.

You see the whole thing here is we're not just recreated on an individual basis. We're recreated as a people. He's uniting together those in heaven and those on earth.

Uniting two people into one. He's constructing a temple. And He's uniting all the people.

They're being joined together. We're being fit as components, as parts, as stones in this structure. The whole thing, it's one great, big, massive, renewed structure.

The temple of God. The dwelling place of God. Christ Himself is our peace.

Amen. Father, we ask that this very creative power of our Lord Jesus Christ would be demonstrated in uniting as we pray it oftentimes, but we pray it again, Lord. Unite the people of God.

Unite us, Lord. No matter what part of the city we come from, no matter what kind of family we come from, no matter what kind of sins we come from in our past, no matter what we might have been called in our former days, no matter what might have been true of us then, no matter what our religion might have been then, no matter what our morality might have been, Lord, no matter what, we pray that these people, the elect of God, of all classes, of all strata, of all economic, social position, Lord, bring us together as one. Destroy the enmity.

Christ, we are told, in His flesh destroys the hostility. Breaks down the dividing wall of hostility. We pray that that reality would be ever so marked and clear.

May the love of this one new man, this united humanity, this new humanity, in Christ, no longer in Adam. Lord, may the love of Christ constrain us to unity and to a love for one another. We pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

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