

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

## ***The Cause of True Unity***

***Ephesians 2:14-18***

**Keywords:** Racism, Unity, Fellowship, the Law, Freedom

**PowerPoint Presentation included:** NONE

**SermonAudio Blurb:**

### **I. Introduction.**

- A. Read vs 11-22.
- B. We stepped into this important section of Ephesians last week while we considered the source of true unity in the Church.
  - 1. I remind you that this section sets up and gives the basis for the rest of the book making it important to know.
  - 2. The challenge in the Church regarding the divisions between the Jew and Gentile.
    - a. Both looked at each other with general distrust and distaste.
    - b. The Jew tended to have a very superior attitude simply because of their privileged position as the chosen people of God.
      - (1) Romans 3:1-2.
      - (2) Romans 9:1-5.
  - 3. It is important that we remember that what we are hearing right now is not personal, individual accounts of salvation. Paul describes the blessings of the Jew in a corporate sense.
    - a. In fact in Romans 2 Paul challenges the arrogance of many Jews as they take on a haughty attitude toward the Gentile who sins.
    - b. He points out that they practice the same things and that simply be a Jew outwardly means nothing ultimately.
  - 4. In Ephesians Paul is addressing the reality that as a people group all who were not Jews were a people without hope.
    - a. Yes throughout the Old Testament we have instances of a Gentile coming into a true relationship with God. Rahab and Ruth are two simple examples.

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- b. But though Rahab was saved, the Canaanites as a whole were not. Nor were they afforded that opportunity.
  - c. In relationship to the one, true God the Gentile world walked in ignorance and darkness.
- C. What Paul is doing in our section is showing that through Jesus Christ all of those things that separated the Jew and the Gentile are destroyed.
- 1. They are of no account.
  - 2. For the Jewish believer this means they needed to get over themselves.
  - 3. For the Gentile believer they need to both set aside their tendency to dislike the Jew and also understand that they participate in the fullest way along with the Jewish believer.
  - 4. There is no real distinction.
- D. Our section today will be vss 14-18 and breaks down in two assertions. The first is that there is now peace between the groups (14-17) and the second is that they all have the same access to the Father (18).

**II. The first assertion—There is now peace between the groups.**

- A. Because of Jesus we have peace (14a).
- 1. This is not talking about peace between man and God.
  - 2. This is the simple assertion or declaration.
  - 3. You can perhaps imagine that when this part is read that many mouths would open with protests hanging from their lips.
    - a. "But we are the Circumcision."
    - b. "We have the covenants, not them!"
    - c. "Tell me when they ever had a prophet of God!"
    - d. "Peace? We have no peace! We are treated like second class people."
    - e. "Nice to say, but you will need to prove it!"
  - 4. Peace is much more than merely the absence of violence or hostility. Peace occurs when there is acceptance and friendship between the groups.

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5. And what Paul is saying is that in the very person of Jesus is that peace. Or you could say that apart from the person of Jesus Christ there is no real peace.
  - a. So when you see bumper stickers that say "Choose Peace" or "Pray for Peace" or my favorite "Visualize Peace" you should understand that this is impossible.
  - b. True peace is not possible in itself. WW1 was the war to end all wars, but of course it didn't.
  - c. True peace is necessarily bound up in the person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is an exclusive position.
- B. Paul then follows that assertion with several explanations as to why He alone is their peace.
  1. He made both into one (14b).
    - a. The point here is that the present peace that both groups now enjoy was accomplished in the past, specifically at the cross.
    - b. This is picked up again in vs 15 where we see that one of the grand purposes of His death on the Cross was make the two into one new group.
      - (1) this is important because there was a real question in the minds of the Jewish believers as to exactly where the Gentile fit in.
      - (2) Did they become proselyte Jews? What exactly were they? And how was the Gentile Christian to relate to the Law of God given to Israel through Moses?
      - (3) And Paul addresses these issues here.
        - (a) Notice the word "make" or "create" in vs 15. The term exclusively refers to the creative work of God in creation.
        - (b) Here Jesus, through the Cross, creates something entirely new.
        - (c) So it isn't the Old Israel nor is it Israel 2.0. It is something new.
        - (d) Not new just for the Gentile, but for the Jew.

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- (e) Notice how it is described as a new man. It speaks to the idea that the Church is the body of Jesus Christ. But you also could see it as a new humanity.
  - (f) You have in the world today three types of humanity in a sense, the Jew, the Gentiles/non-Jews and the Church.
  - (g) This is a right and proper way to transform your way of thinking. We are not first Americans and then Christian. We are not first male or female and then Christian. We must always see that we are first Christian.
- (4) Beloved this is a challenge for us because many of us tend to define ourselves by something else first. It can be something simple like being a Bear or Packer fan or something more subtle like where our commitments ultimately are in relation to the gathering and fellowshiping of the saints versus other things or people.
- c. How did all of this take place though? The next three points explain it.
- (1) And in doing so again remind us that what God is doing at any given moment is infinitely more complex and subtle than we could ever imagine.
  - (2) Ask an average Christian why Jesus died on the Cross and you will get something like "He died for my sins." Very seldom would you get, "God determined before anything was but God to have a people set apart for His Son. This people would be made up of two very distinct people groups who did not relate to one another, one receiving great blessing from God while the other was kept far from Him. When Jesus went to the cross to die he did so with the intent to create a new humanity in Himself and in doing so being their peace where peace did not exist before."
2. He broke down the barrier of the dividing wall (14c).
- a. The question of the day is what is meant by this "wall" that is broken down. There are many ideas:

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- (1) There was a wall that divided the Gentiles from the Jews in the temple. But this is doubtful for that wall only was in Herod's temple, not part of the original temple.
  - (2) Or, it speaks to the curtain that set apart the Holy of Holies. But that kept everyone but the High Priest out, it was not a distinction between Jew and Gentile.
  - (3) The final and best was the Mosaic Law. This law kept the Jew and Gentile separate. They could not eat with each other nor intermarry.
    - (a) This brings the whole external marker of circumcision into play as well.
    - (b) Also the issues in the books of Romans and 1 Corinthians regarding eating or not eating certain foods.
- b. This leads to the next point.
3. He abolished the enmity created in the Law (15a).
- a. There was a real hostility because of the Law.
  - b. Generally speaking it brought about an air of superiority from the Jew toward the Gentile.
  - c. This enmity or hostility is set apart from the "peace" that is what Jesus brings in Himself.
  - d. But how does Jesus abolish this hostility? It was accomplished by Jesus rendering the Law fulfilled and therefore inoperative for the Church.
    - (1) Paul makes it clear in Romans 7:1-6 that we are released from the Law.
    - (2) It was given not to the Church but to the nation of Israel.
    - (3) It was the cause of separation between the Jew and Gentile and it was used by the Jew to create this hostility.
    - (4) But Jesus Christ is our Law-keeper and has fulfilled the law on our behalf.
    - (5) And by doing this there is no longer any hostility or enmity that can arise from it.

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- (6) Notice again in vs 15 (in 14 for ESV) that this was all done in His flesh. This is in parallel with vs 13 and "the blood of Christ" and in 16 "through the cross."
  - (7) In other words, another purpose of the death of Christ was to fulfill and sum up the fulness of the Law in Himself.
  - (8) Now, for those who are in Christ, we are all law-keepers not in ourselves but in Christ.
    - (a) This is why Paul tells us that Christ is the "end of the law . . . . to everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4a).
    - (b) Or in Galatians 3:23-25
      - i) Here the Law is described as being a "tutor" or "steward."
      - ii) The Mosaic Covenant with its law was never intended to be permanent. It was designed to prepare for the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ.
      - iii) So the Law is perceived here like a guardian that imposes its rule over the minor until he reaches maturity.
      - iv) Because of Jesus Christ that time of freedom has come and we no longer need the tutor for we have Jesus.
4. He reconciled both to God (16)
- a. This is the final way that Jesus becomes our peace.
  - b. Little side note, the word in the Greek for "reconcile" is only found in Paul. It is generally thought that this was a word he invented to describe one of the things Jesus accomplished.
  - c. Here is the point though, both groups needed to be reconciled to God.
  - d. Both groups are in rebellion. Both need a savior and both need redemption.
  - e. How did He do this? Essentially two ways:
    - (1) By bringing the two groups into one new Body, the Church.

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- (2) And this was all accomplished through his going to the Cross on our behalf.
- (3) Again we are shown the complexity of the work of God
- f. And notice what happened because of the Cross (16b). "having put to death the enmity."
  - (1) Not the same enmity or hostility of vs 15 (or 14 ESV).
  - (2) That first hostility was between Jew and Gentile. This enmity is between God and man due to our rebellion and sin.
  - (3) So we have Jesus bringing peace to these two group of humanity and bring peace with them and the Father all through the Cross.
  - (4) No wonder Paul says to the Church in Corinth, "I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:2)
- C. All of this lead to Jesus preaching/proclaiming peace to those near and those far.
  1. Many think he is quoting Isaiah 57:19 but there is no reason to think this.
  2. In that context those who are far and those who are near are both Jews.
  3. Here, from the context of what we have studied so far the near would be the Jew and the far would be the Gentile.
  4. Both groups needed this peace that would only come through Jesus Christ.

### **III. The second assertion—They all have the same access to the Father.**

- A. Here we have the result of preaching peace and being their peace. Access.
- B. The coming of Jesus changed everything.
  1. The book of Hebrews clearly shows that there was no going back for any Jew who claimed faith in Jesus.
  2. He is the final Word of God. He is better than Moses. He instituted a better covenant. He is the perfect and final sacrifice. He is the perfect High Priest.
  3. So from the time that Jesus died and rose again there was only one access to God and it wasn't through the Temple, through sacrifices, or through the Law. It was through Jesus.

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4. Remember that this access to God was a point of pride for the Jew. Violence was sure to come if any Gentile tried to enter the Temple.
- C. But now, both groups, have access to the Father.
- D. How? In the Spirit.
1. Again we find Paul invoking the Trinity.
  2. Through the work of Jesus Christ, united in one Spirit, we all have access to the Father.
  3. Our salvation and all our blessings are the work of all three persons of the trinity.

#### **IV. Conclusion.**

- A. So once again we see that for the Church of Jesus Christ there is no room for attitudes of superiority or class systems.
- B. We see that the gospel is good news of peace. Both to one another and more importantly with our God and Maker.
- C. We are reminded again that God is doing many mysterious things and that His plan through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is complex beyond measure.
- D. And finally as we contemplate the smallness of ourselves let us magnify the rich love and mercy which was and is poured out upon us by our Triune God.
- E. For by grace you are saved.

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## **Community Group Questions**

- **In America what are ways we can create false walls between people groups that break down unity?**
- **If we are no longer under the Law of Moses then what is it that we are to obey. Think about passages like Matthew 28:20; Galatians 6:2; or 1 Corinthians 9:20-23.**