



# Ephesians

## Part 16

Ephesians 2:11-23  
Week of June 20, 2021

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Before Connect Group

- Read Ephesians 2:11-23
  - Watch the sermon by going to <http://switzerlandcommunitychurch.org>
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*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—remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 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, 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 were 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 are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the 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 also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.’*

*Ephesians 2:11-23, ESV*

# Sermon Notes

## Notable Quotable

We wrestle with peace within ourselves, with one another, and we wrestle with peace with God. Yet, if we attempt to find this peace within ourselves, we will always come up short. As a sinful people who desired things contrary to the Spirit, things not of God, we will not find peace inside of ourselves. The effects of the Fall separated us, an unholy people, from a holy God. Peace can only come Jesus Christ. He is our peace. He is the one who establishes peace in Himself by bridging the gap between us and God and by establishing the peace between us and one another. The issue of mankind has always been our propensity to sin. The solution to that problem of sin has always been and will always be Jesus Christ. Any attempt to find peace apart from the peace that is in Jesus Christ will be nothing but a counterfeit peace. The opposite of peace is not war, peace is forged in war. The opposite of peace is chaos, division, and entropy. The dispersion where everyone goes off on their own and does what they want. As we look for peace, we must not look any further than Jesus Christ, who forgives us our sins through his work on the cross, removes the barriers between us, and united us together in Him.

## The Dividing Wall of Hostility Between Us and God

- vs. 14 The Dividing Wall of Hostility
- Temple imagery is being employed
  - Within the deepest part of the temple of Israel is the Holy of Holies. The High Priest could enter into the temple one time a year on the day of atonement to offer a sacrifice for the people.
  - Every time the priest served in the temple, they were required to go through the purification rituals to ensure their own personal holiness.
- The Hostility Originates with God's supreme perfection and our profound unholiness.
  - Ultimately, we do not have a problem with God as long as God lets us do what we want to do. We desire deeply to be blessed by God, to experience the riches of His blessings but still cling to the desires of the flesh. Yet, in doing so, we completely misunderstand the purpose of the veil to the Holy of Holies. It was to protect us from the presence of God, not to protect God from us.
  - If an unholy person sought an audience with God, they would be abolished and unable to bear the witness of a holy and righteous God.
  - *Exodus 33:18-20 Moses said, "Please show me your glory." And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The Lord .' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live."*
  - An unholy thing can persist in the presence of the holiest of presences any more than darkness can persist in the presence of light.
- The issue of the hostility between us and God comes in our sin. Our sin, which we chose in our rebellion against the Lord, separated us from the presence of God.
  - Sin, for God to be loving and just must be punished and the debt paid for. Until our lives
- While we were at odds with God through our actions and our decisions to rebel against God, Jesus Christ is our peace.
  - *Isaiah 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.*

- Christ bore the weight of our punishment upon Himself as the once and for all sacrifice that paid the cost of sin. Christ is our propitiation, our payment of our debt against the Lord.
- By the works of Jesus Christ, we can have peace with God because God sought to bring us back to Him and draw us near to Him. Our peace comes from the works of Jesus Christ to return us to Himself
- The Dividing Wall of Hostility between mankind and God is destroyed by the work of God.
  - *Matthew 27:51 And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.*
  - The height of the temple curtain would have been roughly 30 feet tall. There is significance that the curtain tore from the top to the bottom. This is not that someone started and worked their way up to the top pulling the pieces apart. Instead, the barrier between the presence of God and man could only have been opened through the work of God.
  - We did not contribute to God's work of salvation. Period. We were dead in our trespasses, dead in our sins, rebelling against God.
  - God drew us near to him first through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.
- Your peace between you and God comes by grace and grace alone. Nothing you did contributed to the forgiveness that comes from God. We brought the sin that drove the division between God and man and it was good who took our punishment on Himself, drawing us to Him so that we might find peace in our soul and rest for all eternity.

## The Dividing Wall Between Mankind

- Not only is the wall of hostility between one another Paul is talking to a gentile crowd, a non-Jewish crowd. But Paul was talking to them as a Jewish man, and a highly trained and skilled man at that. He has all the reasons to boast and yet becomes willing to diminish himself for the sake of others.
- Paul, in his letter to the church in Ephesus, though, is only partially talking about the wall between the Holy of Holies and the people. He is also referring to the wall of Hostility between the Israelites and the Gentiles
  - The Church in Ephesus is made up of Gentile converts who have chosen to follow Jesus Christ. They are not Israelite by nature but they would have an understanding of the temple structure.
  - As gentiles, as non-jews, they would only be allowed so far into the temple needing to stay in the outer courts. The inner courts were reserved for those of Israeli descent and practicing the faith.
- The walls were a temporary measure to keep the peace for a moment but not to make it. The law, the ordinances, and the regulations had laid down in order to keep peace between people through constant threat of punishment.
  - For the Jews this would have been the law. The laws could not bring about peace but only reveal our deep need for a Savior.
  - For the gentiles, this was the Pax Romana of the time, the peace of Rome which sought peace all throughout the land through force and punishment of any who rebelled against Caesar.
  - Rather than providing an avenue of peace, it only sought to subjugate people and create divisions among each other. It turned into a way to rank a person's importance by how favored they were by God
- Most of us look up to some biblical character and want to be them. If you had to be a biblical prophet, I would say most of us would choose Isaiah who spoke before Kings and

people of importance. None of us would choose to be Jeremiah, the weeping prophet. But if we are being honest, most of us are Jonah.

- We know about the being swallowed by a whale but we completely forget why Jonah attempted to avoid God's plan and went to Tarshish. He knew that God would be able to save the people of Ninevah.
- *Jonah 4:2-3 And he prayed to the Lord and said, "O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live."*
- God called Jonah to the enemies of the Israelites and Jonah knew that God could be gracious towards them and save them. Then he would have to call them brother.
- Jonah in that moment, didn't want peace. He wanted the entropy. He wanted the chaos.
- How much do you have to hate someone to wish that they would spend an eternity in the wrath of God? How much do we have to completely not understand the grace we have received to withhold it from someone else.
- Christ has destroyed the wall of hostility that stood between people by dying on the cross for mankind. We did not deserve it or earn it but have been given it freely. And yet, even though our salvation is a gift of grace given to us, we want to withhold it from other people.
- We keep trying to erect the walls of hostility between us that Jesus knocked down. We cling to our preferences and our desires and threaten to punish or abandon people when we don't get our way. This is not peace, this is chaos, this is entropy.
- As a people of God, we ask God to reveal the corners of our heart that would prefer to erect these walls of hostility. We judge people based extra biblical criteria while treating our own extrabiblical criteria as divinely inspired.
- Christianity seems to be one of the few places where acknowledge we are saved by grace, but once people come in, they have to prove they fit in with us.
- Christ is our peace and He takes away the distincts between us by united us in His grace.

## **Reconciling Us Both and Creating One New Man**

- *Ephesians 2:16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.*
- Christ's work
- *Galatians 3:27-29 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 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. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.*
- The effect of the coming down of the dividing wall of hostility means more than just we have to tolerate one another but that we are united together and bonded together in one body.
- *1 Corinthians 12:12-13 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body— Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*
- The way we view one another in the church changes when we start viewing it as one body unified in the person of Jesus Christ. We find our peace with one another by the works of Jesus Christ who saves us all by His hand of grace.

- Weddings are momentous and wonderful occasions. There is a pastor I know who describes weddings as two funerals and birth. While you may laugh at this at first, there is more to this than people give it credit.
  - In a wedding, the two flesh become one rather than two entities. In fact, the unity of a marriage comes with the working with one another to resolve the differences as a couple bonded together in covenant.
  - Even during fighting, it is not that you fight with one another but that you fight alongside one another.
  - The couple acts as one individual unit who is striving towards God together.
- When we fight and when we disagree, we do so with the intention of coming together back in unity by fighting against the sin that drove us apart and holding one another up. We are not trying to dominate the other person but lift one another up.
- *Romans 12:9-10 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.*
- The same is true with the church. There are not multiple churches but one church with multiple locations. If someone in the body of Christ is hurting them we are hurting with that person. If someone is celebrating, then we are celebrating with that person.
  - We do not compete with other churches. Its a family business and dad owns it all.
  - The success one one church is the success of all the churches and the failures of one is the failure of all the others. We stand united in Jesus Christ, not as people who must tolerate each other but as people who stand and worship the same God together.
  - We put to death our own preferences for the sake of the other person.
  - We stop pointing the finger of "they just" and instead start doing our part and saying "I just."
- The "one person" is not a battle to see who wins or doesn't win. Its a crucifixion of the self and a coming alive to the person of Jesus Christ.
  - *Joshua 5:13-14 When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord . Now I have come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?"*
  - God is not pro me or pro my enemy. God is about Himself as the eternal good of the universe who sustains all things within Himself. To try and make God pick would be lunacy of the highest form. For peace to be achieved, our collective flesh must be crucified on the cross of Christ so that, as one body, we can rise with Him.
- *Revelation 7:9-10 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"*
- When we understand that we are saved by grace and did nothing to deserve it, we can link arms with one another and pursue the righteousness of God together.
- People we once thought were enemies can come together and declare with one voice that Jesus is Lord and Jesus is King.
- We can put to death the preferences of our own ambition and strive to grow as one body, in one voice that Jesus is Lord
- This unity is through the cross of Jesus Christ. He died on the cross so that all, all, everyone, regardless of background, skin color, preference, and any other determinant can be saved and join the one body of Christ forever and ever.

# Connect Group Discussion Questions

- Why did God require a wall between the Israelites and the holy of holies? What would have happened if people wandered into the holy of holies?
- How about our relationship between God and man dictate our relationship between one another? How are the two affected by one another?
- What do you see as some of the biggest barrier we face to being able to stand with one another?
- In what ways do the work of Jesus Christ on the cross pave the way for our unity with one another? Why can we stand with one another?
- How does Jesus Christ Himself represent the peace of God? Where are you looking to apply the peace of God to your life?

## Challenge For The Week

With the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, the dividing wall of hostility has been removed between us and God and between us and others. Yet, many of us have various biases on how we should treat one another.

- Walking in faith means we need to be honest about our biases and about the barriers we put up between one another. What are some of the biases you hold against people and how do you gate keep the Kingdom of Heaven?
- Who has God put in your life who needs to hear the Gospel that Jesus Christ died for our sins so that we might be with Him forever? Take some time this week and tell them your story.