

Together in Christ – Part 2

Ephesians 2:11-22 - NCBC, July 17, 2022

Main Point: **Jesus' death is the answer to our separation with God and others.**

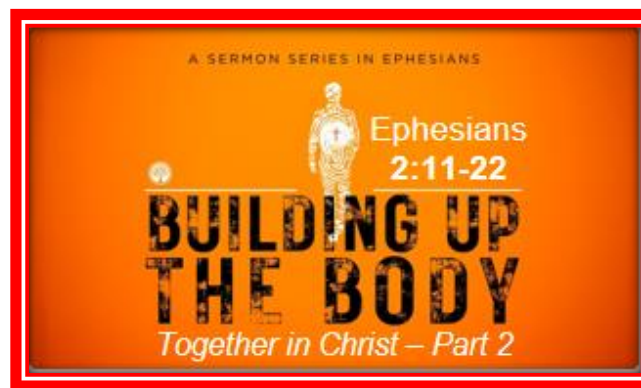
- Christian, remember our past separation apart from Jesus' death (11-12)
 - Relationally separated with others by external religion (11)
 - Relationally separated with God by spiritual ignorance (12)
- Christian, realize our present reconciliation in Jesus' death (13-18)
 - Relationally united with others (13-15)
 - The "far off" are now brought near
 - The "two" are now made one
 - The "hostile" are now in peace
 - Relationally united with God (16-18)
 - Sinners are now friends with God
 - Sinners are now at peace with God
 - Sinners are now welcomed by God
- Christian, rejoice in our present identification together in Christ (19-22)
 - Citizens in God's kingdom (19a)
 - Children in God's family (19b)
 - Building Blocks in God's temple (20-22)

Application: **Reflect your peace with God by making peace with others.**

Opening Announcements:

- Thanks to all our volunteers to helped with **Vacation Bible School** at New Castle Bible Church last week! Please pray for God's favor on our VBS in Goodfield this week ... for the salvation of many children in Goodfield!
- This Saturday we are sending **25 of our students and adults to serve with Mateo and Gabby Alzate in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco**. Please pray for God's favor on this significant outreach week.

<<Amazing Grace>>



That song never grows old because it tells the wonderful story of our salvation in Christ by God's grace alone.

Welcome to the worship of Jesus Christ! Today we are continuing our pulpit series through the New Testament book of **Ephesians**.

So let's continue our worship by opening our Bibles to **Ephesians chapter 2**.

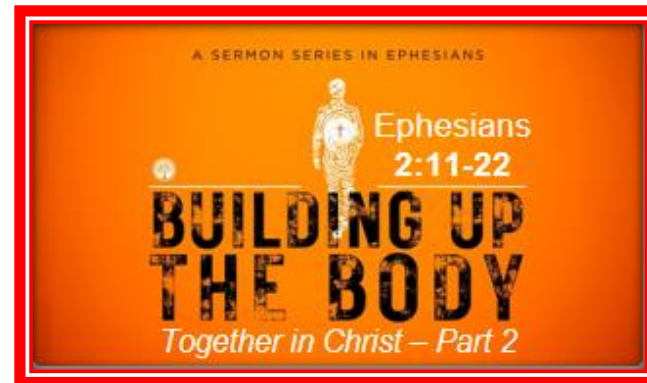


If you do not have a Bible with you, simply raise your hand as our ushers come by, as we'd love to give you a Bible to use today. You are welcome to take this Bible as a gift, and take it home with you today. For there's no stronger power in the world today than the living word of God.

Before we read **Ephesians 2**, let me just say a quick thank you to all of you who prayed and served our community this past week. You served joyfully this week at our Vacation Bible School and 1Way Kidz programs and Mack-A-Fest.

I'm so humbled by all of you, and so thankful for all of you. "Thank you!" for all the ways you are serving our Lord and our loved ones by the power of God's Spirit. We have another busy week of ministry ahead of us this week... so let's not grow weary of doing good! This week is full with Vacation Bible School in Goodfield, 1Way Kidz in Mackinaw, a funeral for our beloved Sandy Miller, and

sending out a team for a week-long missions trip to San Francisco. So let's stay humbly dependent upon God's power and love. May God bear much fruit through us as we all continue to abide in Him.



Now let's read our passage from **Ephesians chapter 2**. Last week was part 1 of this 2-part message. So I'll read the entire section from **verse 11-22**, and then we'll quickly review what we learned last week as we begin.

If you're able, please stand in honor of the public reading of God's Word, as I read **Ephesians chapter 2, starting in verse 11**, from the ESV translation:

*¹¹ 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—
¹² 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. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has*

made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵ 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, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

This is the reading of God's Word. Let's Pray.

On June 12, 1987 United States President Ronald Reagan stood in front of the Berlin Wall in Germany and said those now famous words, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"

You see, for nearly 30 years after the end of World War II, East Berlin was under the control of the Soviet Communists. And the Soviets wanted to "protect" (quote-unquote) their people from the beliefs and thoughts of the free world. So they built a huge, guarded concrete wall that was 27 miles long—a barrier right through the capitol city of Germany—that separated fellow countrymen and

families – an uncrossable border that grimly pictured the Iron Curtain of the Soviet regime.

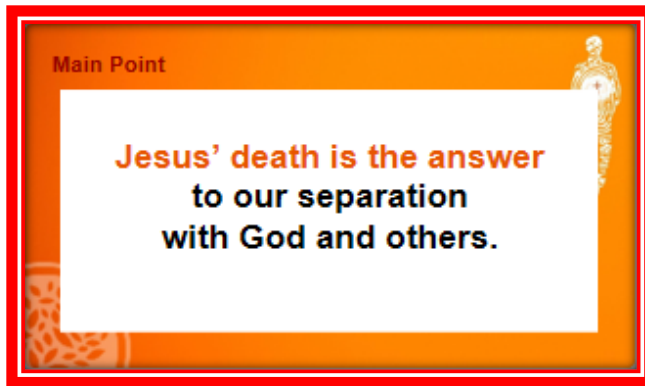
No one from East Berlin could ever pass into West Berlin without being killed for trying. It was a constant witness of the separation between the ideology of Communism and democratic freedom.

So just as President Reagan called for the Berlin Wall to be torn down in 1987, our Bibles are open today to **Ephesians chapter 2** where the Apostle Paul is calling for another wall to be torn down.

In **Ephesians 2** the wall is not physical, but spiritual. It's a wall of hostility and animosity – a wall of deadly separation that sin builds. This wall of sin surrounds individual souls, and separates people from God, and people from people. It's a wall of shame, guilt, pride, judgment, and anger and fear.

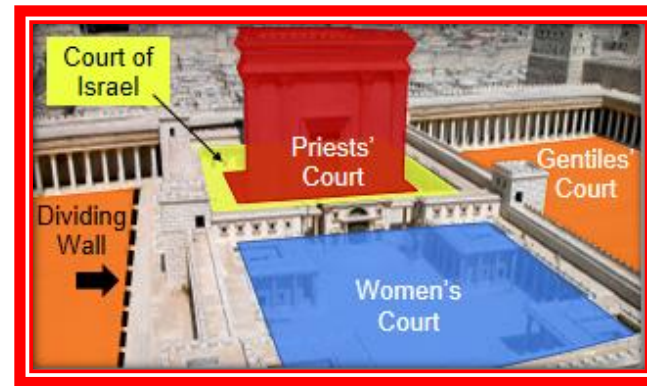
Every person on the planet finds themselves surrounded by the unsurpassable wall of sin at some point in their life. Sin separates us from knowing God in the freedom of perfect love, and sin separates us from the relational oneness we were created to have with others.

So here in **Ephesians 2** Paul writes to the Gentile believers in Ephesus so that these Christians would understand that,



Jesus' death is the answer to all our separation with God and others. Jesus' death tore down the wall of hostility and relational separation that sin built! Jesus' substitutionary death on behalf of sinners forever sets souls free to love God and love others the way He created us to do. It is the shed blood of Jesus that unites all believers together into one body we call the church.

Now, if you missed last week's sermon, please go online and listen sometime this week. Because last week we shared the historical context behind Paul's argument here from the Jewish-Gentile perspective.



Remember that 1st-century temple worship in Jerusalem used a series of discriminating courts surrounding the Temple to communicate how close any person could approach to God's presence.

The outer court was the Court of the Gentiles. Next was the court of the Jewish women. Then the court of Israel for the Jewish men. Then the court of the priests for Jewish men from the tribe of Levi. And then inside the temple building, the "Holy of Holies" – the very room where God's presence was – was separated from the holy place by a huge thick curtain. Only Israel's high priest could pass behind the curtain once a year after making a blood sacrifice for his own sins and the sins of all the people.

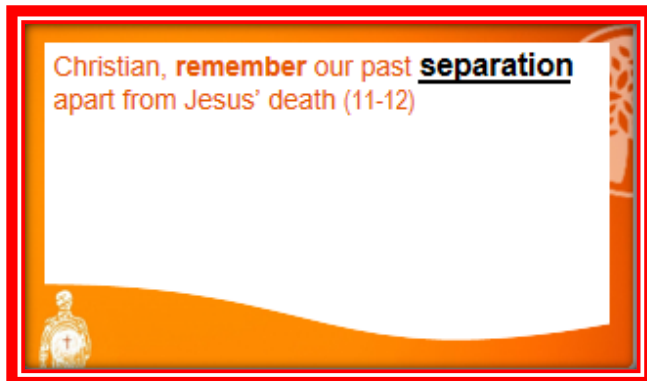
After all, sin is what separates all of us from our perfectly holy Creator. And sin is fundamentally the root cause for all discrimination and relational brokenness between people as well.¹

¹ James 4:1-3ff

Just like the Berlin wall, and the wall of hostility that separated the Gentile court from all the Jewish courts in the temple ... sin always separates relationships.

The spiritual walls of guilt, shame and judgment that sin builds around our souls must be torn down if we will ever experience oneness with God. For once we experience true oneness with God Himself, there's no longer any reason for discrimination between Jews and Gentiles, or men and women, or people of any kind.

So let's walk through this glorious Scripture this morning listening carefully to learn how Jesus' death is the answer to our separation with God and others.



In **verses 11-12**, Paul calls Christians to remember where they came from. Christian, remember our past separation apart from Jesus' death.

Last week we learned from **verse 11** how the Jews used physical circumcision as a religious reason to separate from Gentiles.



The Jewish discrimination of Gentiles as "the uncircumcision" testified to the relational separation with others that comes from all external religion.

Before Jesus died to pay for our sin, all religion could do was discriminate among people based on external ceremonies or hand-made traditions.

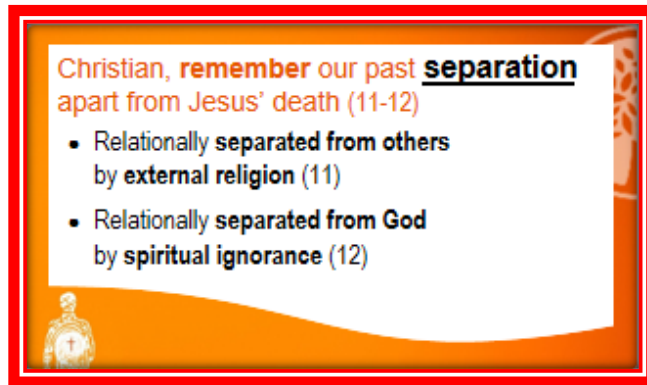
So listen carefully friends... if you are not trusting in Jesus' death to pay for your own sins, then the sum total of your religion or irreligion only results in proud judgmentalism and animosity against those who are different than you.

Religious legalism always leads to relational brokenness. Living according to the rules of external religion always ultimately divides and separates people.

That's why the first part of **Ephesians chapter 2** is so important for all of us to understand. We can only be saved from God's wrath our sin deserves by God's grace through faith. Salvation is not our own doing; it is the gift

of God. Salvation from sin never comes from any human work.²

So Christian...humbly remember your religious past. Before Jesus died for us, we were relationally separated from others by external religion, and then in **verse 12**,



We were relationally separated with God by spiritual ignorance. Remember, before the cross of Christ, Gentile people were at a huge spiritual disadvantage compared to the Jews.

Because, **verse 12** teaches, the Gentiles were separated from knowing about the Messiah, separated from the benefits of being God's special nation, separated from the promises of God's covenants, separated from any confidence of saving hope, and separated from intimate fellowship with their Creator God in this world.

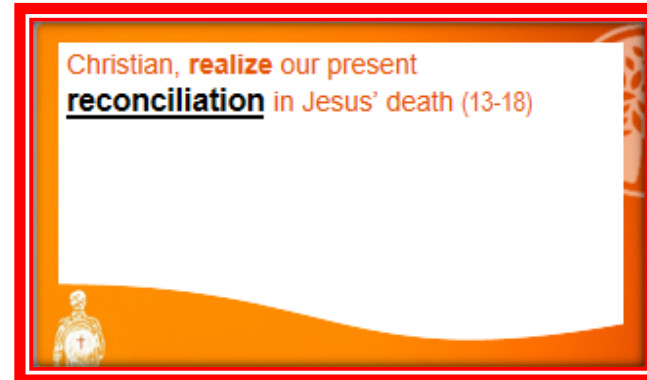
These Gentile Christians in Ephesus, just like us today, must humbly remember that all of salvation is an

² Ephesians 2:8-9

undeserved gift from God! Before Jesus died to pay for our sins, we were all separated from God and His people by spiritual ignorance. We had no right or reason for God to allow us near Himself. All our religious attempts at reconciling ourselves to God were hand-made...and resulted only in further pride and relational brokenness.

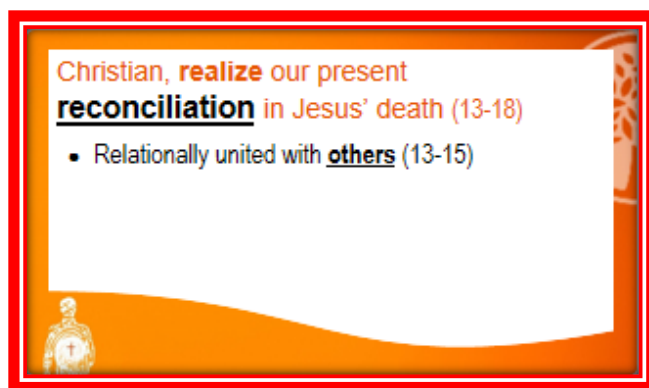
So Christians – let's stop comparing ourselves among ourselves.³ Let's stop the in-fighting and "friendly fire" that often happens between Christians. Let's be humble enough to remember that salvation belongs to our God, and none of us ever deserved His grace.

Now **verse 13** starts with the word, "But," and interrupts this nostalgia of our religious separation, with the glories of Jesus making all believers into one body of His church.



So now Christian, realize our present reconciliation in Jesus' death. Jesus' death reconciles us both with others and with God Himself.

³ 2 Corinthians 10:12



First in **verses 13-15**, Jesus' death causes us to be relationally united with others.

Look at **verse 13**:

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

So in the past we were separated from God and others – closed in by an invisible wall built by sin. But now... God intervened! But now... all who are God's workmanship who have been made alive together with Christ, and raised up with Christ, and seated with Christ in the heavenly places⁴ ... now...the blood of Christ has done something miraculous!

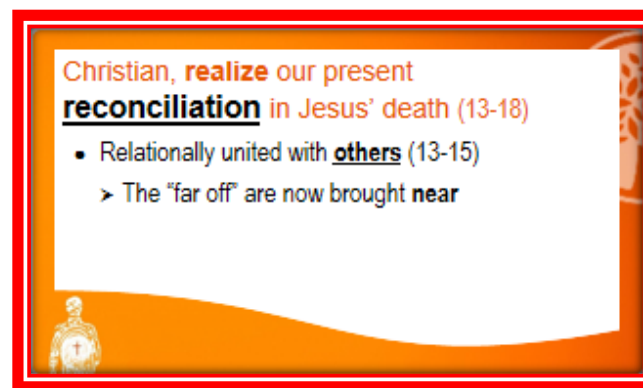
If you write in your Bible, you might underline that phrase, "By the blood of Christ" in **verse 13**.

⁴ Ephesians 2:5-6

⁵ Romans 6:23

Because a death sacrifice was required for our reconciliation. Sin always deserves death. The wages of sin is death.⁵ The only way our wall of sin could ever be torn down was through a sacrificial death of someone in our place who had never sinned themselves.

Listen carefully friends. Jesus was the sinless God-man. Humanity and Deity combined forever into one person when Jesus was born of a virgin and added humanity to his nature.⁶ Jesus never sinned. So when Jesus gave His life and spilled His blood for sinners like me and you, an amazing miracle of reconciliation occurred!

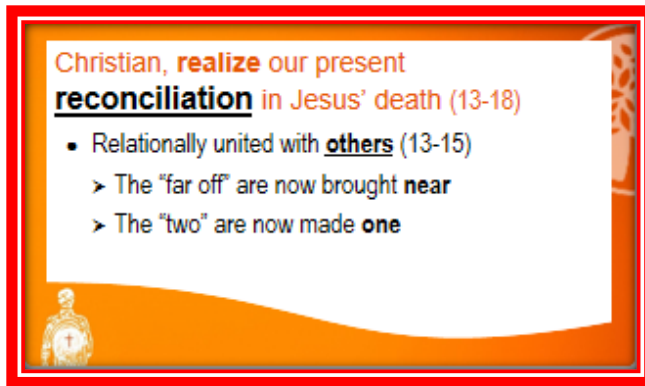


Verse 13 says, The "far off" are now brought near.

Those who were excluded to the outer court of worship by external religion are now brought near to sit at the right hand of God Himself, where God delights to eternally disclose His heart to us in intimate revelation forever.⁷

⁶ Philippians 2:6-8

⁷ Ephesians 2:6-7



Verses 14-15 teach the “two” are now made one.

Look at **verse 14**,

For [Jesus] 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,

Underline those words “*in His flesh.*” Because when Jesus died in His flesh on the cross, He became the source of our peace with one another. He took the two people groups on the earth – the Jews and the Gentiles – and created out of them both an entirely new man – a new humanity that is neither Jewish nor Gentile. By his death, Jesus created His church – His body of believers who are now forever at peace with one another through their common union with Jesus Himself.

⁸ Acts 21:27-36

⁹ Matthew 5:17-20

Remember again from last week, this “dividing wall of hostility” that Paul writes about in **verse 14** is referring to that visible wall that separated believing Jews from believing Gentiles in the temple. **Acts 21** reports the history of how Paul was arrested under suspicion of taking an Ephesian believer past this religious barrier.⁸

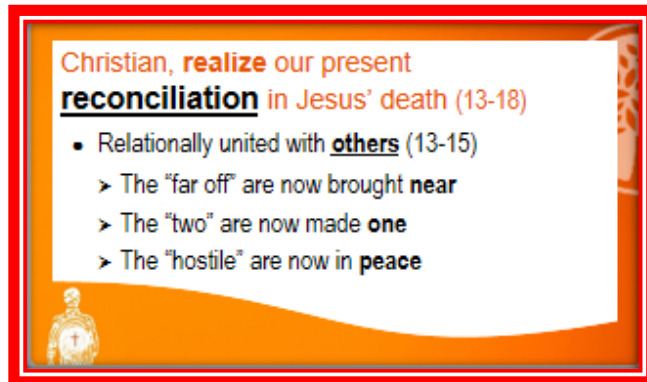
So this is very personal for Paul and the Ephesians. Paul uses strong language in **verse 15** when he says Jesus *abolished the law of commandments expressed in ordinances*.

Literally that word abolished means, “obliterated” or “blew up.” Jesus’ death completely nullifies any barrier between Jew and Gentile. All the religious ceremonies and external distinctives of the Mosaic Law – all the dietary laws, all the dress codes, all the circumcision laws and sacrificial laws – all the feasts and all the priesthood is now completely abolished and nullified. External religion is forever destroyed. The law of Moses has now been completely replaced by the law of Christ, for Jesus Himself has fulfilled God’s law to its utmost,⁹ and all who believe on Christ now have the law of love written on their hearts!¹⁰

So listen up, church. The Christian’s peculiar distinctives are now always a matter of the heart rather than outward appearance. External rules or religious customs should no longer divide God’s people. All who are united with Christ by saving faith are made one.

¹⁰ Galatians 5:1, 14; c.f. Matthew 22:37-40; Romans 13:8-10

The far off are now brought near. The two are now made one. And as the end of **verse 15** clearly says,



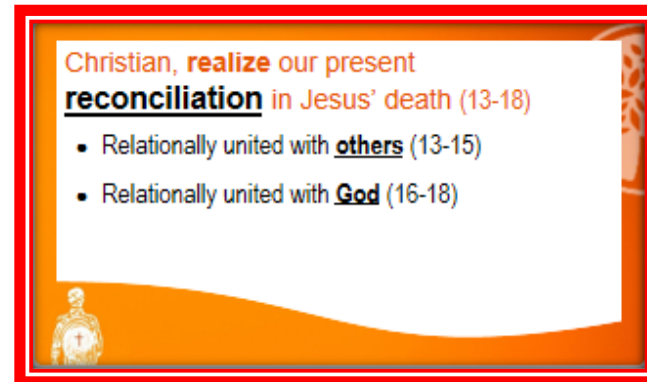
The “hostile” are now at peace.

Conflict ceases. Wars end. Feuds are resolved. Marriages are reconciled. All because Jesus died to pay for all of our sins. All... of our sins. And once sin has been taken away, we are forever relationally united with others.

So let that soak in for a moment, church. This means Jesus’ death has brought you into full reconciliation with every other Christian. No matter what country they’re from, or what color their skin. No matter their education or wealth. No matter whether they are even in the same family or household as you. No matter whether they are Baptist or Presbyterian or Methodist or some other brand of believer in Jesus.

After Christ’s death – there’s only two people groups in the world – those who trust in Jesus for their salvation, and those who are trusting in themselves.

And of course Jesus’ death reconciles all its beneficiaries together into one body since His death,



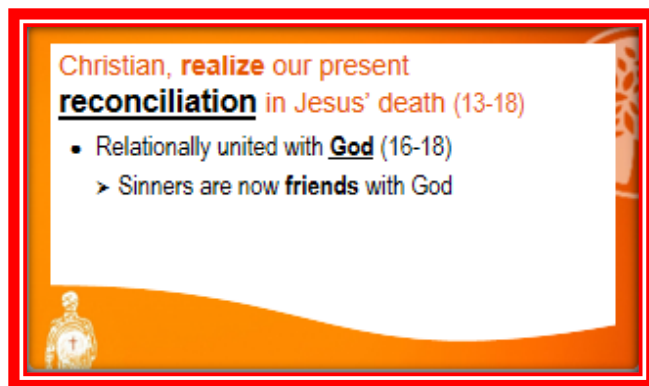
First relationally united us with God. Notice what Jesus’ death accomplishes for us according to **verse 16**,

and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

Believing Jews and believing Gentiles are both reconciled to who? To God. In one body through the cross. That word *reconcile* is a strong word in the text.

It doesn’t only mean removing the barriers that separated us. It actually includes the union of total re-conciliation.

Translation,

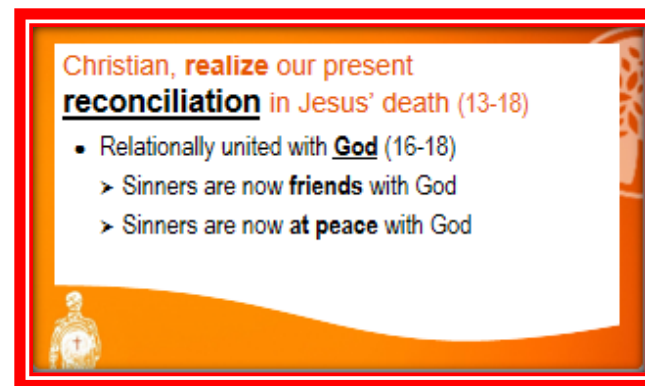


Through the cross of Christ, sinners are now *friends* with God.

We who were formerly enemies of God. We who only deserved God's judgment...are now reconciled to God Himself through the death of Jesus on the cross. Now we are seated at the Father's right hand – in a place of loving intimacy – where He delights to open His heart to us that we might truly know Him.¹¹

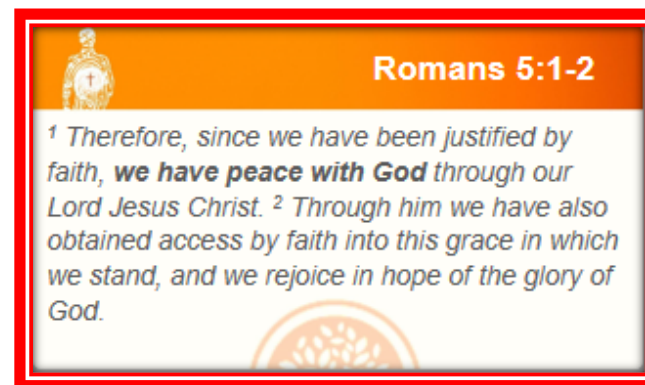
Verse 17 says Jesus, *came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.*

¹¹ Ephesians 2:7



In other words, Sinners are now **at peace** with God. Jesus the peacemaker is also the peace-proclaimer. Jesus invites all people – those who are far away from God and those who are close to God – to believe Gospel preaching so they may experience oneness with God through His substitutionary death.

Just as **Romans 5 verse 1** says,



Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through

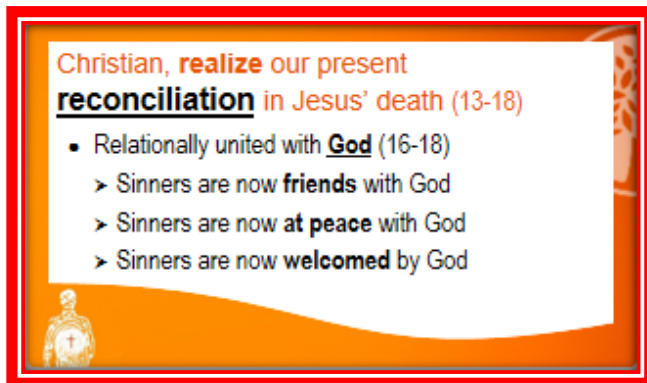
Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand...

So friend, let me ask: is your soul at peace with God? Biblical peace is stronger than a feeling. It's the true absence of conflict. It's reconciliation. Biblical peace is *Shalom* –all being made right – without any of sin's separation.

Now consider the wonders of **verse 18**,

For through [Jesus] we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

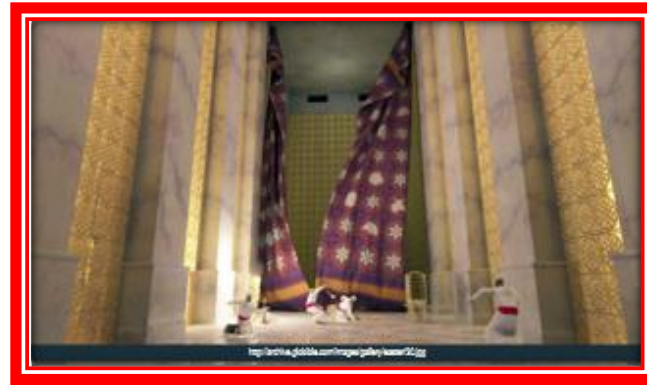
So through faith in Jesus' death,



Sinners are now welcomed by God.

Every believer has access to knowing God personally. After all, do you remember what happened in the temple the moment Jesus' died on the cross?

¹² Matthew 27:51



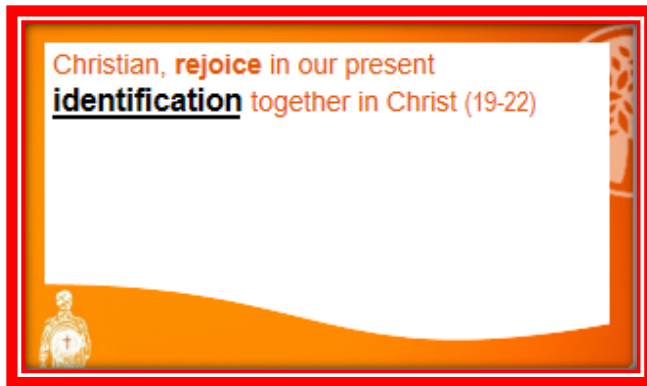
The curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.¹²

All separation between sinners and God was removed once our sins were paid for by Jesus' blood sacrifice for us! Now anyone who believes on Jesus' death and resurrection for our salvation is welcomed without reservation into the very presence of God Himself!

O Christian – remember our past separation from God and others, and then realize our present reconciliation to God and all who believe on Jesus' name!

Through Jesus' death, we have been relationally united with God and all others who believe on Him.

Therefore, in **verses 19-22**, Paul concludes by calling us,



To rejoice in our present identification together in Christ as His church. Here Paul paints three different word pictures for Christ's body as the church. Although He doesn't literally use the word "church", Paul describes the universal church of Jesus Christ using three metaphors that all emphasize our positional oneness together as believers in Christ.

First, Paul concludes that the death of Jesus results in all believers together identifying as,



Citizens in God's kingdom (19a)

Look at **verse 19**: *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints*

Now when you hear the word aliens... don't think of little green men in space suits! Think immigrants. Foreigners.

Gentiles are not second-class outsiders in God's family. There's no such thing as a spiritual refugee in the church. We are all fellow citizens of God's kingdom together.

Verse 19 continues,

... *and [you all are] members of the household of God,*

And that's the second word-picture. Not only are all Christians citizens together in God's eternal kingdom, but all who trust in Jesus' death for the forgiveness of sin are,



Children in God's family.

Members together of God's household. Isn't this precious? Family ties are obviously more intimate than the relationship between citizens of the same kingdom.

So as Paul is describing the reality of our Christian unity from different perspectives, he says once the blood of Christ has covered your sins, now you together share in Jesus' sonship. All believers are brothers and sisters of Jesus, and beloved children of God.

Finally, **verses 20-22** describe the church's identity as,



Building Blocks in God's temple (20-22)

Paul writes you are all, *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.*

Notice the building language. We're built together on the *foundation* of the New Testament apostles and prophets. These are the people God's Spirit used to breathe out the New Testament Scriptures. So the gospel of Jesus'

death and resurrection ...the message of salvation in Christ alone by grace alone through faith alone ...that we find in the New Testament Scriptures... this is the foundation for our faith! Saving faith comes by hearing the words of Christ¹³ as recorded for us in the Scriptures.

And this gospel foundation of the church of course draws its strength from the *cornerstone* of Jesus' person and work. Together God's people are then a living and growing temple, where every believer is perfectly placed into the structure at just the right place, with just the right shape, to help the entire building fulfill its purpose.

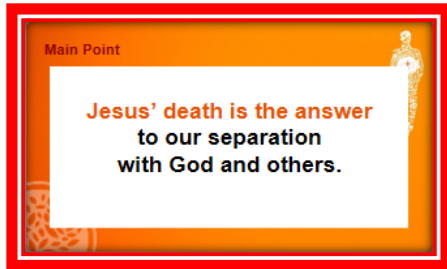
So listen church. Every individual believer is important to the structural soundness of the church. No person is out of place, or misshapen, or unnecessary. Every building block is precisely fit, placed, and shaped to beautifully complete the whole structure. All for what purpose?

Verse 22 concludes,

You all also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Wow! Together all believers make up the church which is God's permanent home. After the death of Jesus, God no longer lives in a physical temple in Jerusalem. God now lives among His people. By His Spirit, God is making for Himself an eternal home... where He will live and dwell forever in joyful unity with souls who love Him, and believe on Him, and have been made to be at peace with Him through the blood sacrifice of Jesus His Son.

¹³ Romans 10:17



So then... please understand: Jesus' death is the answer to all our separation with God and others.

Jesus' death kills sin. Jesus' death removes the animosity and relational separation that sins always brings.

So how will you respond to this?



I believe we rightly apply **Ephesians 2** when we live out our unity together in Christ. In other words, we must reflect our peace with God by making peace with others.

Of course, if you have not yet trusted in Jesus' death for the salvation of your sins... then you must recognize that you will never experience oneness with God and others

¹⁴ Matthew 5:8

¹⁵ James 4:1-3ff

until you first believe on Jesus' death and resurrection for eternal life. You must repent of all external religion. You must stop comparing yourself with others for your spiritual confidence.

Humble yourself. Admit that your sins have separated you from God and from others. Repent of your self-reliance. Believe that Jesus' blood covered your sins, and believe that Jesus' resurrection gives you a brand new heart! Receive your new identity as God's workmanship with His church.

Then, after you are saved by the Spirit's work, you must live to reflect the nature of our peacemaking God by seeking to make peace with others around you.¹⁴

Now practically speaking, I know it's easier to be a peace-faker, than a peace-maker. Biblical peace-making is far more involved than simply refraining from fighting.

To make peace with others is to pursue biblical reconciliation after sin. After all, remember that sin is always the ultimate cause for all relational brokenness.¹⁵

So peacemaking always begins by first identifying your own sin – what the Scripture calls “the log in your own eye” before you attempt to help someone else with their sin, or “the speck in your neighbor’s eye.”¹⁶

Peacemaking always starts with confessing your own sin... not excusing it or downplaying your own sin. Name

¹⁶ Matthew 7:1-5

your own sin before God and others. Then seek God's forgiveness, and the other person's forgiveness.

I love how **1 John chapter 1** encourages us here! For **verse 7** says,

If we walk in the light, as God is in the light... in other words...if we confess our sins to one another, since God already knows all of our sins...then we will have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin!

Don't you see how biblical peace-making builds up the body, church? True fellowship only comes through walking in the light with each other...or biblically confessing our sins to one another. **Verse 8** reminds us that none of us can ever say that we've not sinned. All of us need Jesus' death to pay for our sins. The foot of the cross is level, loved ones! So take **verse 9** to heart,

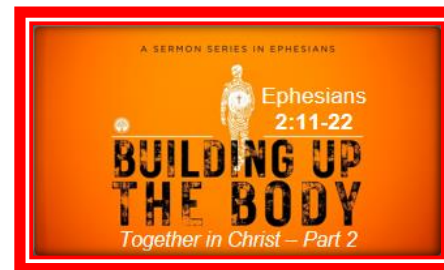
If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Hallelujah for God's glorious salvation! If we would be committed to confessing our sins to one another, and truly forgiving one another as God has already forgiven us... we would experience a kind of unity and relational oneness that is completely foreign to this world!

So how can you personally apply the glorious truths of **Ephesians chapter 2** today by building up the church through biblical peacemaking?

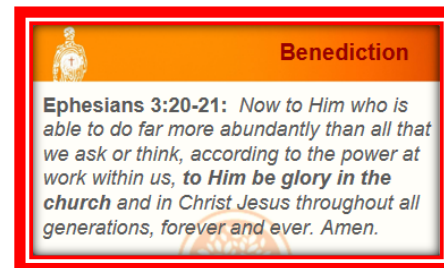
What sin do you need to confess to God or others in sincere biblical repentance? What sin do you need to forgive, because of how much God has forgiven you?

God has already made us positionally one together in Christ, church. May His Spirit now help us to practice this oneness in biblical peacemaking, all for the greater building up of His body the church!



Let's pray.

<<Christ Our Hope in Life and Death>>



Let's pray aloud our benediction from Ephesians 3:20-21:

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Recommended Resources on Ephesians 2:11-22:

- Ruth 1:16
- Psalm 118:22-23; 133:1-3
- Isaiah 9:6
- Matthew 5:9; 27:50-51
- John 14:27; 16:33; 17:21-23
- Acts 2:39; 21:27-36
- Romans 2:28-29; 5:8-10; 10:12-13
- 1 Corinthians 3:11; 6:19-20
- 2 Corinthians 6:16; 10:12
- Galatians 3:28
- Philippians 1:27-2:4; 3:20-21
- Colossians 1:20-22; 2:16-23
- Hebrews 13:20-21
- James 2:1-13
- 1 Peter 2:5-10

- <https://rw360.org/>
- <https://www.9marks.org/article/work-for-unity/>
- <https://www.gotquestions.org/Court-of-the-Gentiles.html>
- <https://www.bibleplaces.com/blog/2012/02/q-illustrations-of-herods-temple/>

- *United*, Trillia Newbell
- *A Plea for Unity*, John MacArthur
- *The Peacemaker*, Ken Sande
- *Bloodlines*, John Piper

Growing Deeper: Life Group Questions

1. Read Romans 9:4-5. What advantages did the Jews have over Gentiles before Jesus came to earth? Now that Jesus died for all who believe in Him, what spiritual advantage do Jews have over Gentiles today? (c.f. Acts 2:39; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:13-22, 3:6)
2. Read Acts 21:27-36. What city was Trophimus from? Since this was the event that led to Paul's imprisonment in Rome (from which he wrote Ephesians), how does this add understanding to Ephesians 2:14-16?
3. Review Ephesians 2:13, 14, and 16. Why is Jesus' bloody death necessary for our peace with God and with others? I.e. What is the ultimate cause of our alienation and division from God and others?
4. Review Ephesians 2:19-22. What are the three pictures Paul uses to describe our unity together in Christ? Which is your favorite, and why?
5. Read 1 Samuel 16:7 and 2 Corinthians 10:12. Do you ever ground your own identity in your comparison with others? Why are comparisons and judgments based on external differences so destructive to our unity together in Christ?