"A New Humanity of Peace"

Ephesians 2:11-22

October 4, 2026

We have been exploring *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ* for several weeks now in the book of Ephesians.

- In chapter 1, we saw how God has done everything necessary to secure our salvation in Christ: chosen, adopted, redeemed, forgiven, sealed us in the HS.
- Then Paul prayed for these truths to be deeply embedded in the hearts of God's people to live out their new identity in Christ.
- Last week we saw the difference the gospel has made positionally for those who trust in Christ—from being dead in our sins to alive in Christ eternally!

Now in Eph 2:11-22 Paul is going to elaborate on one of the remarkable blessings of our salvation, one that we cannot ignore—the unique gift of becoming a part of the people of God.

The blessing of our salvation is not only being saved *from* our sin and *from* God's wrath, but also being saved *to* life with Jesus and *into* the people of God where true peace is possible because Christ has created a new society that He reigns over and that is governed by new kingdom values.

You were created to be in relationship with God and with people. You cannot experience wholeness without wholesome relationships. Yet sin has severed our relationship with God and corrupted our ability to live at peace with one another. But praise God for the gospel of peace which reconciles us to God and to His people.

I want you to imagine something that would be impossible apart from the supernatural hand of God. I want you to imagine a team of missionaries planting a church in the middle east. On this team are some who have devoted their lives to reaching Israelis for Christ and others who have devoted their lives to reaching Muslims for Christ. By the hand of God, they not only see both Jews and Muslims converted to Christ, but also Jews from various Jewish political sects and Muslims from various political sects.

What would it take for these new followers of Christ to worship together and live in peace together after being at war with each other over deep-seated hostilities for generations? It would take:

- A deep understanding of the gospel that transforms one's heart and worldview
- Prolonged discipleship and profound sanctification
- *A miraculous work of God* forming a whole new kind of society. Not just laying aside differences, but truly dying to self, dying to one's former worldview, and everything once held dear to live in an all new reality.

As Paul writes to the Ephesian church, which is primarily made up of Gentile believers, he must address the deep, age-old rift between Jews and Gentiles. For many of us, when we came to Christ, a passage like Eph 2:11-22 was not on the top of our discipleship agenda. But for a church in the middle east or among warring tribes in Africa one or in inner cities where rivaling gang members are being converted to Christ, one of the first priorities of discipleship is addressing how to live with former rivals and follow Christ together. And if the American church will be resolutely focused on reaching our communities for Christ, and not just reaching those who already have a similar worldview politically or ideologically, then Eph 2:11-22 will quickly rise in its level of importance.

We live in an age of division where the world no longer pretends to promote peace. We live in a culture that promotes fences and division, a culture of cancelling those who disagree with us and inciting hostility rather than seeking to understand or resolve issues.

What does the church have to offer in times like these? We have been entrusted with the gospel of peace through which those of any background can be reconciled to God and be given the gift of living in true peace with God's people—a whole new humanity.

In Eph 2:11-22, Paul gives us several reasons as to why we must deeply value and carefully steward the blessing of being saved into this new society of peace called the church.

1. **We must not forget that apart from Christ, we were completely alienated from God and His people** (Eph 2:11-12).

Paul begins by addressing the sharp distinction between Jews and Gentiles in the first century in vs. 11-12 and reminding them of how comprehensively they were alienated from God and His people before turning to Christ in faith. **[vs. 11-12]**

The Greeks of the first century were so proud of their culture that they saw themselves as racially superior, and everyone else as barbarians. The Roman statesman, Cicero, said, "All men are divided into two classes, Greeks and barbarians."[1]

But they were not the only ones to see themselves as superior. When Jews referred to Gentiles as "the uncircumcision" it was a derogatory term. Circumcision was the sign of the covenant between God and His people, so to refer to Gentiles as "the uncircumcision" was to view them though eyes of condemnation as a people outside of God's provision of grace. While its true that Israel was to be a light to the nations (Isa 42:6; 49:6), the dominant perspective among Jews was to view Gentiles with contempt. Jews would even avoid traveling through Samaria because Samaritans were Jews who had intermarried with Gentiles. Jonah was abhorred with the thought of God having mercy on the Ninevites and even Peter, after his conversion, could not overlook the dietary differences between Jews and Gentiles until God gave Him a vision. It was a common attitude among Jews that God created Gentiles to be fuel for hell.[2]

The Jews prided themselves in their privileged relationship with God as 'the circumcision,' yet Paul levels the playing field by reminding them that circumcision was "made in the flesh by human hands" (11), using a Greek term that was commonly used of making idols. In other words, don't pride yourself in what is merely external if your hearts are not aligned with God's purpose. In Romans 2 Paul clarified, "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But He is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart by the Spirit…" (Rom 2:28-29). In other words, being a true child of God is about a life of faith, not mere external adherence to God's law.

The Jews had privileged access to God (law, sacrifices, temple), but Gentiles didn't. In vs. 12 Paul outlines 5 disadvantages that contributed to the Gentiles alienation from God.

a. **Separate from Christ** (12) – They had no Messiah, no hope of a deliverer. History had no true purpose, plan, or destiny except for divine judgment of which they were unaware.
b. **Alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel** (12) – Israel was a theocracy, a nation under God's rule. But the Gentiles only knew the futility of human leaders. They knew nothing of God's personal blessing, protection, and love.
c. **Strangers to the covenants of promise** (12) – Israel had the benefit of various covenants with God through Abraham, Moses, David, and the promise of the new covenant of grace. These promises had redemptive aspects by which they would enjoy the benefits of being God's own people. But the Gentiles had no promise of future hope or present help from God.
d. **Without hope** (12) – Israel had hope because they had a God who was able to deliver on all His good promises. But the Gentiles had no hope of life beyond the grave and no hope of escaping their corrupt human dilemma. The pagan gods of the Gentiles offered no hope, only fear and despair.
e. **Without God in the world** (12) – The Gentiles were not atheists. They had a pantheon of false gods. But it was of no value to them because they did not know the one, true, living God. All they had was life in the world under the domain of Satan and the passions of their sinful flesh at war with the God they could not see and did not know.

Do you see what Paul is doing? He's reminding these Gentile believers what they have been saved from. He's helping them see that in the church of Jesus Christ, there is nothing from their background in which they should pride themselves. There is no place for a sense of superiority over

[1] John MacArthur, *The MacArthur NT Commentary: Ephesians*, pg. 66.

[2] John MacArthur, *The MacArthur NT Commentary: Ephesians*, pg. 69.

others in the church, because whether you were a Jew or a Gentile all are saved by grace and grace alone.

But Paul does not leave them there. Now he turns from the disadvantages of their alienation from God to the benefits of their union with Christ.

2. **We must remember that through Christ we've been reconciled to God and His people** (Eph 1:13-18).

[vs. 13-18] Do you remember the "But God" moment last week in vs. 4? Formerly we had been 1) dead in our sins, 2) walking in the way of the world, 3) following the prince of the air, Satan, 4) living in the rebellion of disobedience, carrying out the desires of our sinful flesh, and 5) were by nature children of wrath. "BUT GOD" intervened by His great mercy and love and made us spiritually alive with Christ!

Well, here's another "but God" moment in vs. 13. Formerly they had been 1) separated from Christ, 2) alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, 3) strangers to the covenant promises, 4) having no hope, 5) and without God in this world. "BUT NOW in CHRIST JESUS you who were once far off [far from God] have been brought near by the blood of Christ!"

No longer are they alienated from God, but near God. And they were brought near *not* through the Jewish sacrificial system, or the law of Moses or circumcision, but by the blood of Christ. Jesus Himself is our source of peace, not only with God but also with each other. There are many things we can do in our culture and in our world to uphold standards of morality and wisdom. But peace will only come through gospel of Jesus Christ which changes the hearts of people from loving self supremely to loving God and His values supremely.

The division, strife, and conflict that are so prevalent today are the result of sin because sin makes us selfish which collides with the selfishness of others not to mention warring against God's rightful rule over our lives. But in Christ, we die to self and are reconciled to God and His rule. And when others do the same, we find ourselves in alignment with each other relating to one another not according to the law of self, but according to the love of Christ. So, vs. 14 says, "Christ Himself is our peace, who has made both [Jew and Gentile] one…" That is, Christ has made those who were once hostile toward each other to be unified as one. In the church unity is not something we achieve, it is something we maintain. We already have an essential unity in Christ as one of the blessings of our conversion. This is why later in 4:3 Paul calls us to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Vs. 14 goes on to say that, through His flesh, Jesus "has broken down…the dividing wall of hostility." In other words, through His death Jesus has broken down the wall that divides Jews and Gentiles. What is that wall? Paul is most likely referring to a literal 4.5 foot high wall in the temple that separated the court of the Gentiles from the rest of the Jewish worshipers. There were multiple inscriptions on this wall that warned foreigners to not enter lest they themselves were responsible for their subsequent death.[3]

So how did Christ destroy this wall of hostility? Vs. 15 says He abolished the law of commandments expressed in ordinances to create in Himself one new man in place of the two. When vs. 15 says He abolished the law, the idea here is that Jesus made the old covenant obsolete by replacing it with the new covenant. In other words, the OT law would no longer govern how God relates to His people. Now He would relate to them through the new covenant established by the blood/death of Christ. Now Jews and Gentiles alike are reconciled to God, not through circumcision, or animal sacrifices, or law, but through the cross of Jesus (16). Gentiles did not have to become Jews first to come to Christ. They could come directly to Jesus.

Don't miss the significance of what Paul is saying here. Jesus does not merely reconcile Jews and Gentiles to each other. He creates a whole new humanity, a new society, a distinct kingdom of those who are one with Him and therefore one with each other. This is why Paul said in Gal 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Paul is not attempting to erase all social and gender distinctions, some of which are according to God's design (like male and female). Rather He's teaching us

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[3] Clinton Arnold, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the NT: Ephesians*, pg. 159.

that there is essential equality among members in the body of Christ and that our *primary identity* is not based on ethnicity, nationality, gender, politics, or religious background. Our primary identity is based on our union with Christ as our Savior and King.

Now in vs. 17-18 Paul uses language reminiscent of Isa 57:19 to communicate that the gospel is for Gentiles who were considered far off, and for Jews who were consider nearer to God. And through this gospel, through Jesus, both Jews and Gentiles have access to the Father through one Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

This brings us to an amazing new reality in vs. 19-22…

3. **In Christ we share the rich blessings of not only being one with Jesus, but also being united to one another** (Eph 2:19-22).

[vs. 19-22] What an encouragement this must have been to the Gentile believers in Ephesus. They were not second-class Christians. Neither Jew nor Gentile had reason to pride themselves as superior, nor should they be viewed as lesser. There was now just one defining reality in their life and fellowship. By God's grace they were in Christ, one with Jesus and one with each other.

Do you realize that your union with other believers is just as concrete/permanent as your union with Jesus? Sometimes we think of our relationship to Jesus as essential but our relationship with other believers as optional. But that is contrary to the teaching of the NT. To be one with Jesus is to be one with other believers.

To drive home the Gentile believers' full participation in the people of God, Paul uses 3 metaphors. This is who we are, church, regardless of our background.

a. **We are citizens of God's kingdom** (19a) – No longer are we alienated from God's people and strangers to God's promise as we were in vs 12. Now we are citizens of the kingdom of Christ, under His sovereign and loving reign.
b. **We are members of God's household** (19b) - We are not mere subjects of a detached king. We are members of the royal family, *one spiritual family with each other*. Together we share in the infinite love of our heavenly Father.
c. **We are the Temple of the Holy Spirit** (20-22)– Just as Jesus tore down the dividing wall and created one new humanity of those who trust in Him, so the physical temple where God's presence once dwelt has now been replaced by the living temple of His people, the body of Christ.

   Jesus Himself is the cornerstone of this temple (20), meaning, He is the one who bears the weight of temple and He is the one who brings proper alignment and unity to the whole body. The foundation of this temple is the NT apostles and prophets. I take this to mean that the church's foundation is the apostolic teaching of the NT Scriptures and the authoritative preaching of God's word under the Holy Spirit that keeps the church grounded and properly aligned to Christ.

   Notice that this temple is not fully completed but is continually growing and expanding as believers are added to the church (21). 1Pet 2:5 describes this temple as being comprised of individual believers as living stones. This temple is filled with presence of God through Holy Spirit who indwells us.

   We who were once without hope and without God in this world are now the living representatives of God's presence to the world. And His presence is manifested in peace through our love for one another as a reflection of God's love for us.

The church is unlike any other organization of people on the face of the earth. Oh, the selfishness of sin still tempts us to have strife with one another. But there is no other place where God's grace dissolves the superiority of human pride. There is no other place where we have the potential of divine peace. One of the things that often amazes me about the body of Christ is the number of people that, apart from Christ, I would have no natural affinity with. But the unifying factor of life in Christ together creates love and appreciation. Many of you have friendships in the church with others who share many of the same interests, and that's great. But in the body of Christ, we are not dependent on secondary mutual interests when we have Jesus as our central unifying treasure.

Add to that, that regardless of your status or occupation in life, regardless of the former life from which you were saved, there is a basic equality that you share with your fellow believers. One of you may have come out of a life of debauchery before Christ. Another may have been converted from a life of "high-standing" in the community. But the grace that saves one from a life of debauchery is the same grace in both quantity and quality that is needed to same another from self-righteousness. In Christ there is no dividing wall because Christ Himself is our peace.

Take a moment to look around you—its not awkward if you smile. The people in this room—those who are born again into new life in Christ, are God's chosen instruments of grace and blessing in your life through the encouragement they offer and through the sanctification that they stimulate through their yet unperfected godliness. You need them. And if fact, you are irrevocably bound to one another.

As we come to the Lord's table, we come as a body—one body. We come recognizing that we not only need the grace of Jesus for our ongoing struggle with sin, but we also need each other. We need both the graces and the challenges of living together to keep us growing toward Christlikeness.

As we pray and prepare our hearts to partake of the Lord's supper, let's ask the Holy Spirit to search the attitudes of our hearts toward one another. Some of us need to take hold of our true dignity in Christ, that we are not of lesser value than other members of the body. Some of us need to humble ourselves and not think of ourselves as superior to others, to surrender our critical spirits or judgmental hearts. All of us need to pray that we will love Jesus with all our heart and each other with a wholehearted love for God.

Communion: open communion

- Bread: Through His crucified body, Jesus has torn the veil that separated us from God and He has broken down the wall that separated us from each other. Jesus Himself is our peace!
- Cup: "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (Eph 2:13).