

"Our Peace"

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Bible Text: Ephesians 2:14-18
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Scripture passages this morning be found in Ephesians 2, be considering verses 14 to 18. We're going to read Ephesians 2:11 to 22, give our diligent attention to the theme of God's holy infallible and perfect word.

11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh--who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands-- 12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from 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 both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, 16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. 17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. 18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. 19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Thus far this reading of God's holy word and let's pray and ask him to speak to us from it this morning. Let's pray.

Lord, as your word is proclaim indeed give us, your church, ears to hear what the Spirit says to us. I pray, Lord, that you use me as your yielded vessel that indeed I may disappear, but that you would be glorified, you would be magnified, Lord, and, Father, that your word would come forth with the demonstration of your Spirit and power. Pray in Christ's holy name. Amen.

Continued exposition here of Ephesians and we saw last week that we are called to remember who we were, right, to remember who we were before Christ. Now, of course, the Apostle Paul wrote this on the inspirational Holy Spirit to Ephesian believers there in the first century AD, but God's word is written for our instruction, and thus the Holy Spirit is speaking to us even now as his word, as God's word is proclaimed. And the Apostle Paul told them to remember that you were Gentiles in the flesh, right, uncircumcised, and then those five attributes of being without Christ: aliens, stranger from the covenant of promise, without hope, and without God in the world. We had nothing. We had nothing to offer. We had nothing to bring. We were just alienated, estranged from Almighty God which, of course, is the issue that every human being created in the image of God faces. It's not a matter of worth, it's a matter are you right with God. But as we saw last week as well, but now in Christ Jesus we have been brought near by the very blood of Christ.

Now this week, the Apostle Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is going to explain that it wasn't that the Jews had a monopoly on grace, but rather that they, as well as the Gentiles, Jews and Gentiles, Gentiles simply means non-Jews, right, both are saved by grace in Christ. But there was a time where they were separate and this is what the Apostle Paul is going to be dealing with, and thus this morning we're going to see that Christ Jesus has brought peace and unity to all of God's people. We're going to look at this under two main points. First, peace, and second, access.

So first peace. Look at verses 14 to 16 again here in Ephesians 2. "For He Himself," Christ Jesus, "is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity." As we saw last week, the Apostle Paul says that you once were Gentiles or uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision. The Apostle Paul and the early church were dealing with what might be called Judaizers. They thought that the Gentiles had to continue to hold what we call the ceremonial law in order to be part of God's people. Right, in the old covenant to be a part of God's people, you had to hold the ceremonial law, the law of Moses in regards to the sacrifices and the feasts and things of that nature and the purity laws, there were certain foods that God's people were not allowed to eat who were part of the covenant, the visible body of Christ. So if you wanted to be a believer, you had to join Israel as the covenant community of old, as God's covenant community of old. But now that Christ has come and fulfilled all the law, there's now no more two people of God but now he has made, the text says, the two one, one new man, that salvation is not found in the old ceremonial law but is found in Christ Jesus for both the Jew first and also to the Gentile, to the Greek.

He himself is our peace as the text says, who has made both one, the circumcised and the uncircumcised, the Jews and the Gentiles, and has broken down the middle wall of separation. How has Christ broken down the middle wall of separation? It says "having abolished in his flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in

ordinances so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace." Now did Christ come to destroy the law? Right, and in his ministry he says, "I didn't come to destroy the law, I come to fulfill the law," but within the law there is distinctions. There is the moral law, which is valid at all times because it's based on the nature of God and this, of course, summarized for us in the 10 Commandments, further summarized in the two Great Commandments, "love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself." Now the moral law, Christ didn't come to end the moral law. There are actually Christians, wayward in this regard, who think that we have nothing to do with the 10 Commandments and it's because of a misunderstanding of what the Apostle Paul is saying here when he talks about that no one is saved by the works of the law. No one themselves are able to be saved, to be made right with God according to the works of the law but, in fact, Christ Jesus fulfilled all the works of the law for us, and the moral law remains valid in the New Covenant and the Old Covenant. Always. It's based on the nature of who God is.

But God as he reveals himself to us in giving us the covenants, and before Christ came, he gave his people the ceremonial law which were all types pointing to Christ Jesus. Thus, the sacrifices only became effective and were only effective to God's people of old as they did it by faith. Right, it wasn't just the act of giving the sacrifice that brought them near to God, but by faith. God had commanded it, and they followed him, his commands, and it was always pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ as the one and only sacrifice for God's people.

And he also gave them, of course, circumcision and the Passover and, of course, the other, the purification laws, as was discussed there were certain foods that were clean and unclean that they were not allowed to eat, right, and these are what we call positive laws. Okay, a positive law is something that God commands for a time but that in and of itself is not necessarily sinful. And I'll give the example: pork. Eating pork is not a sin, for if it was we in the New Testament are sinning, but we're clearly not. But when God said you were not allowed to eat pork to the people of old to Israel, they were not allowed to eat pork. It's called a positive law. A positive law.

We know that the Apostle Paul here is not referring to, as I said, the moral law but to the positive law. It was the positive law of the ceremonial law specifically that separated the Jews and the Gentiles, that the Gentiles, even though God had not given them the 10 Commandments, he gave it to his people, to Moses, right. The 10 Commandments, in fact, are written on our hearts, as we read in Romans 2. Now none having fallen in sin and suppressing the truth and unrighteousness, of course, Gentiles would never come of themselves, or could they come to God. But the moral law stood to them too as well, an obligation that they were to obey God, but the ceremonial law was given specifically to the people of God, as it were, underage, right. The Apostle Paul gives that example in Galatians as well, talking about when, you know, Hagar and being underage and that when a child is little they have a tutor, the law was a tutor to God's people but now that Christ has come, there's therefore no more Jews and Gentiles as separate people of God. There's no two programs, okay, of God's redemptive work that God still has a thing for the Jews but now it's the Gentiles' time, and then he's going to.... No, we are one people

of God. It's not the replacement of the Jews, but it's the enrichment that was there from the beginning. Remember when God promises Abraham in Genesis 12, he says, "In you all the families of the world would be blessed." That was always God's intention. Of course, God decrees all things as we know already and as we've heard time and again here in Ephesians. We serve a sovereign God who does all things according to the counsel of his will.

But Christ has come to give peace to his covenant people, right, making the both one, breaking down the middle wall of separation, abolishing in his flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in the ordinances, thus giving us peace. And the Apostle Paul explains there in verse 16, "that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity." Fulfilling all of the ceremonial laws, there is no more need for animal sacrifice. Christ has died once and for all for all of God's people. That's why when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, it's not a re-sacrificing or a continual sacrifice. He died once and for all. It's a remembrance of what he has done once and for all for us, his people.

I would hope you receive the wonderful truth here and the joy it ought to bring. I'm glad I don't have to sacrifice animals anymore. I'm not squeamish but it was very, you know, it was bloody. And the idea there that that, you know, life is in the blood and without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins, but now that Christ has come we no longer have to shed anymore blood, for it is his blood that has brought us peace, that has abolished the ceremonial law. He fulfilled all of the law for us. He who knew no sin became sin for us that we might be the righteousness of God in him. Why? As it says there, to reconcile both to God in one body through the cross. That's why we, as God's people, are not called to stay separate. Now God has blessed, you know, many Jewish believers but the idea of remaining in Judaism as part of worshiping God, Christ has taken away all the shadows, we read in the book of Hebrews, right? Christ is greater than all of the types and shadows and things that are not where our perfection, or salvation lies.

Our Christ is greater than Moses, and the ceremonial law. Christ is greater than the angels. Christ is greater than all of those high priests who had a sacrifice even for themselves, who were allowed into the Holy of Holies one time a year. Now us as God's people both Jews and Gentiles, can go boldly to the throne of grace. We can go boldly to the throne of grace. We don't have to wait for one priest to go one time a year for our high priest sits at the right hand of the Father interceding for us right now. And it was through the cross, the Apostle Paul teaches us here, that God reconciled both of us, Jews and Gentiles, putting to death the enmity. You see, because the ceremonial law in and of itself didn't save you, it pointed you to Christ. Christ is the only one who saves and for the Gentiles, of course, they were outside of the visible body of Christ. They had no, we read, no hope, no God, strangers, aliens, without Christ but it is in Christ and Christ alone that we have salvation, that we have redemption through his blood, and thus he has eliminated the need of having, as it were, two separate peoples of God. You know, this one people of God, and that unity is found in none other than in Christ Jesus.

Now sometimes people throughout history have used this as a guise to mistreat Jewish people but that's utterly foolish and ignorant of people to do. Christ Jesus was Jewish according to the flesh. The idea of abusing the Jews is utterly ludicrous against God's word. Now it also doesn't mean we support whatever the Jewish nation does now as they try to remain ethnically distinct outside of Christ. You see, outside of Christ you're not the people of God. Outside of Christ you're not the people of God. It's only those who are in Christ, but those who are in Christ are not excluded based on being Jewish or not Jewish. In fact, they're both. It's inclusive, right, from every tribe, tongue, people and nation, and Christ has done this by his death on the cross, the mighty work of God in Christ Jesus where he fulfilled all of the law for us and died for all of us, God's people's sins and was raised for our justification.

Our peace is found in him. He has reconciled us both to God so no longer do Gentiles need to become Jewish to be a part of the covenant community. No longer are Jews to require others to become Jewish to become part of the covenant community. There's one covenant community and what is required is faith in Christ. Faith in Christ. As the Apostle Paul says there, "so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace." Thus making peace. Right, the Apostle Paul referring to the distinctions of the Jews and the Gentiles in the book of Romans, right, it's to the Jew first and also to the Greek regards to the gospel, but in regards to judgment, it's to the Jew first and also to the Greek or to the Gentile. And then dealing with all the promises of God in the Old Covenant, they are not pointless. They're not useless. They have great effect. Right, in Romans 2, Romans 3, he shows that it was of great effect that they had, that they were the visible body of Christ at that time before Christ had come.

But now that he has come, we don't go back to the old. Once you become an adult, think of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13, right? "When I was a child I thought like a child, I acted like a child. When I became a man, I put away childish things." So it would be wrong of us to bring back the ceremonial law in order to create, as it were, division amongst God's people. No, our unity is found in the truth of Christ Jesus who not only fulfilled the ceremonial, he fulfilled, of course, the moral law, and thus that's why our righteousness is found in him and we don't do good works, as we already saw earlier here in chapter 2, to be saved or to stay saved, we do good works because indeed we are saved. We are saved in Christ. We don't earn our salvation. We, by God's grace, live a life of gratitude. And in fact, God called us to be holy, as we saw, before the foundation where. He didn't call us simply not to go to hell. Thankfully he did not call us to go to hell and suffer his wrath, but he called us to be holy. As Paul says in Romans 8, he "predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son." Which means what? To do the will of the Father. To love God and to keep his commands.

And that's why we understand that when it says he abolished the enmity that's found in the law of commandments contained in the ordinances, he's not referring to the moral law, he's referring to the ceremonial law, the very things that made distinction between Jews and Gentiles. But they no longer are part of what God's people ought to be. We are one new man, both Jews and Gentiles, in Christ Jesus and thus we have peace with God, peace with one another as the covenant community. We're not in any type of competition

that the Apostle Paul had to deal with with the Judaizers. Think of the Galatians where Paul even had to correct Peter, right, not that Peter was doing anything but, you know, Peter would withdraw when the Gentiles would come and Paul had to tell him, "You who don't even live like a Jew anymore are going to compel Gentiles to live like Jews. You know, you're being a hypocrite in that regard." No, we are found in Christ. We're not called to go to Egypt and literally come back up. No, God has done that in real history and it is our history, God's people's history. And as I said, there's no place for hatred towards Jews. God saves people from every tribe, tongue, people and nature. And in fact, the Jews that do have the great blessing of speaking to them as a people, of having the covenants, of being the covenant community in the Old Covenant, in the Old Testament. But God is rich in mercy who had always purposed for his covenant community then in the nation to go out and spread throughout all of the earth. Even consider Christ's ministry, right? In his ministry, he tells them not to go to anyone outside of Israel, but once he dies and is raised from the dead, he tells them to wait for power on high, right, the Holy Spirit and they will start there in Jerusalem but then go, you know, to Samaria and to the ends of the earth. There's no more enmity. There is now peace for all of God's people in Christ Jesus and his death for us.

Not only do we have peace with God because of the work of Christ, we also have access. We have access to God, look at verses 17 and 18. "He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." He came and preached peace to those who were, to you who were afar off and to those who were near. Right, we just look at the text to see who the Apostle Paul is referencing. Right, those who were afar off, of course, were the Gentiles who were really afar off. They were not only not God's people, they were not even a part of God's visible people. They had no place in the covenant community.

But Christ didn't only come preaching to those who were afar off but also to those who were near, the Apostle Paul referencing Romans again. Not all of Israel is Israel. Right, look at covenant, look at redemptive history. Right, we see that Isaac, who's the promised son of Abraham, has twin sons Jacob and Esau, and Esau proves to not be part of God's people. He's received the covenant sign and everything but he's proved not to be part of God's people. And then, of course, even when they're coming in the exodus from leaving Egypt coming to the Promised Land, we see there are many rebellions. Not everyone, not all of the older generation dies. That doesn't mean that they were all condemned, but there were certain rebellions that were clearly against God's people. Korah and his rebellion. Nadab and Abihu that gave strange fire. And others that receive God's judgment. But even Moses, Aaron and Miriam were not allowed to go into the Promised Land according to God's decree but, of course, we know that they were God's people.

But that we always see that amongst God's visible people, not all of them are truly his people and that's why the distinction between the invisible and visible church is something, or the invisible and visible people of God is something that is biblical. It's true. Right, those who prove to be unfaithful and leave the faith, right, the Apostle John speaks of that, "They left us because they weren't from us because if they were from us,

they would never have left." It's not that they lost their salvation, they weren't truly God's people. We're talking about final apostasy. They weren't truly God's people.

But Christ came preaching to those who were afar off, to the Gentiles, to the nations and to those who were near. Israel, the Jews came preaching to them, "For through Him," through Christ, "we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." And this language of preaching to both those who are far and near we find in Isaiah 57. In the context of Isaiah 57, the Lord speaking, his work is his work through the suffering servant our Lord and Savior Jesus. Christ, looking forward. But Isaiah 57:19, "I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace to him who is far off and to him who is near," Says the LORD, "And I will heal him." But the wicked are like the troubled sea, When it cannot rest, Whose waters cast up mire and dirt. "There is no peace," Says my God, "for the wicked." God preaches, Christ has preached, peace, peace to those who are far and near, says the Lord, he will heal them, that our peace is found in Christ, both the Jews and the Gentiles.

There is no salvation outside of Christ. There is no name under heaven by which men must be saved. Right, at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Jesus Christ is Lord, but reading further there in Isaiah, "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, When it cannot rest, Whose waters cast up mire and dirt. 'There is no peace,' Says my God, 'for the wicked.'" Unless we become conceited or prideful in a bad sense, let's not think, "Oh, we're not like those people. We're not the wicked. We're the righteous." In the view in Christ you are the righteous but what did Paul just tell us last week? "Remember there was a time where you were the wicked, where you were outside of the people of God. But now in Christ Jesus, but now in Him who Himself is our peace, who has abolished the enmity by His flesh, who has reconciled both Jews and Gentiles to God through His body, putting to death the enmity on the cross, it is He who came and preached peace to those who were afar off and who were near, for through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father."

There is no peace for the wicked but our attitude shouldn't be, "Well, you know, I can't wait for God to destroy them." Our attitude should be, "Lord, have mercy. Draw more men to Yourself." The Apostle Paul had a heart, he tells us in Romans, right, that he wished himself accursed that his people according to the flesh, the Jews, would be saved. That's the opposite of our natural inclination, right? "I can't wait for God to get him or her." No, we should have a heart, first and foremost, for God, right, you love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and you love your neighbor as yourself. In fact, we are even to love our enemies. So when we tell them that the wicked there is no peace, it is not meant to seek for them to have condemnation with but that God would use it to wake them up. And to wake them up, that God would draw them to himself, that God would draw them to himself through his Son through whom all of man is made right with God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who fulfills all of the law of God, who abolishes all of the ceremonial laws that were just pointing, that were types and figures pointing to him. We no longer look for types and figures. We have him who came, him who died, him who was raised for us, him who sits at the right hand of the Father interceding for us.

Let us not be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, rather, let us know that being drawn, being preached to by Christ through his servants have been brought near to him both those who were near and those who were far. For what? For us to have access by one Spirit to the Father. Look at the wonderful doctrine of the Trinity. Referring to Christ Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, the God man, through him we both have access by one Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, to the Father, the first person of the Trinity. One God, one essence, three persons.

We have peace with God, we have fellowship with God, we have access to God in him, and we have peace with one another as the people of God. That's why we ought to have a deep concern and love and fellowship amongst us as God's people. We're one new man in Christ Jesus, you see, because Christ is the one that is to be high and lifted up in our lives. Pick up your cross, "Deny yourself, pick up your cross and follow Me." Not me as your pastor, but Christ who we all serve, who we are all being conformed to his image. No, not that we're going to have to wear first century clothes and get sandals and so on and so on. No, that he followed the will of God, that he obeyed God perfectly.

Now we don't obey God perfectly, but we need to stop using that excuse to wallow in sin. The Scriptures also say, "Be holy as I am holy. Be perfect as I am perfect." Now we know that that perfection comes in him. In who? In Christ Jesus. The Apostle Paul has driven that home over and over again, especially chapter 1, but also here in chapter 2. But now in Christ Jesus. You see, we saw last week in verse 13, for he himself is our peace. In himself he made us one new man from the two that he might reconcile us, and he has reconciled us to God. He came and preached. He, and it's through him, in him, by him that we have access by one Spirit to the Father, that we have fellowship with God, that we are the sons and daughters of God.

Remember I stated several times in our exposition here of Ephesians, the first three chapters focus on the indicative of what God has done for us, and we're going to see the last three chapters the imperative, what we are to do as God's people. I pray that we all be inflamed with love for God and for our neighbor, and that this gospel will be for the glory of God in our lives shining through, not only in us as a congregation, just a small manifestation of the body of Christ, but amongst God's people everywhere that they may know him, God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that they may have peace with him, that they may know eternal life in Christ Jesus.

And God is pleased to use means and he uses us as people. That's why we're referred to as the body of Christ. No one sees Christ. All those pictures are merely the imaginations of men. But they see you. Not that we become in and of ourselves the embodiment of truth, right, God has given us his word, but we are to live according to that word. We're not looking for gimmicks, we're not looking for man-made ways of making the gospel more attractive. What greater news is that there's a God in whose image we are made and thus we are worth, we're worth it. We're not disregarded. We're not animals. We're not just anything, a part of the creation. We are created in the image of God. But God demands holiness. That's the bad news. But the good news is, is that God doesn't leave it to us to make ourselves right with him, but has done what we would not do, could not do,

and did not do, namely make us right with him through his Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And it is to him that we are to flee. It is to him that we are to draw nearer to God and are enabled by the Holy Spirit that he sent the third person of the Trinity to abide with us, right? He said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Now, his body, of course, as a man, a resurrected man, is there located in heaven but he's God, the second person of the Trinity. And of course, the third person of the Trinity is the one, the promised helper who has come. Thus we have access, as it says there in the text in verse 18, "through Him we both have access by one Spirit," the Holy Spirit, "to the Father."

Thus beloved, I want to encourage us all, Christ has brought us peace. He has brought us peace. The covenant community ought to be characterized amongst themselves as a people of peace and as peacemakers. Christ has reconciled us to God. We are no longer foreigners. We are no longer enemies. We are no longer without God. We're no longer without Christ but are indeed in Christ, and Christ has given us access to the Father. That's why we as God's people ought to always be, as it were, coming to the throne of grace constantly. That's why we're encouraged to pray without ceasing. God is the one who has brought us to himself. God is the one who teaches us to pray. God is the one who answers our prayers for his glory. May he be glorified in his covenant community for he has brought those who were far away and those who were near that all may have salvation in him, in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Let's pray.

Lord, we thank You for indeed we are one new man in Christ for You saved both Jews and Gentiles for Your glory. Thank You for Christ for in him we have access to You, to You, God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. May You be praised always by us and by all Your people everywhere. In Christ's name I pray. Amen.