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# One in Christ

Scripture text: Ephesians 2:11-22

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## THE GREAT PEACE MISSION

*Ephesians 2:11–22*

The only “eternal covenant” that has lasted—and that will last—is the one made by the eternal God, sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ. It is Christ’s peace mission that Paul explains in this section, and three very important words summarize this great work: separation, reconciliation, and unification.

## **Separation: What the Gentiles Were (Eph. 2:11–12)**

- A. Without Christ.**
- B. Without citizenship**
- C. Without covenants**
- D. Without hope.**
- E. Without God.**

## **Reconciliation:**

- A. The enmity between Jews and Gentiles**
- B. The cause of that enmity was the Law**
- C. Jesus removed the legal barrier that separated Jew from Gentile**

**For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:12–13).**

In Jesus Christ, Jew and Gentile become one. **“He is our peace”** (Eph. 2:14). Through Christ, the far-off Gentile is made nigh (Eph. 2:13, 17), and **both Jew and Gentile are made one.**

The consequences of Christ’s work are, then, **the destroying of the enmity by the abolishing of the Law, and the creating of a new man—the church, the body of Christ.**

**The word abolish simply means “to nullify.” The Law no longer holds sway over either Jew or Gentile, since in Christ believers are not under Law but under grace.**

The righteousness of the Law, revealing God’s holiness, is still God’s standard. But this is fulfilled in the believer by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:1–4). It took the early church a long time to get accustomed to “there is no difference!” In fact, some religious groups have not learned the lesson yet, for they are trying to get Christians back under Law (Gal. 4:8–11; 5:1; Col. 2:13–23).

**Romans 8:1-4** There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. **For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.** For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, **in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**

**Galatians 4:8-11** Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? You observe days and months and seasons and years! I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.

**Galatians 5:1** For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

**Christ “is our peace” (Eph. 2:14) and He made “peace” (Eph. 2:15).**

That verb to make in Ephesians 2:15 means “**to create.**” The church, the body of Christ, is God’s new creation (2 Cor. 5:15). **Everything in the old creation is falling apart because of sin, but in the new creation there is unity because of righteousness.**

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). **You may contrast the old position of the Gentiles with their new position and see how wonderfully Christ worked on their behalf on the cross:**

## *Old Position*

## *New Position*

“without Christ”

“in Christ” (Eph. 1:3)

“aliens”

“a holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9)

“strangers”

“no more strangers” (Eph. 2:19)

“no hope”

“called in one hope” (Eph. 4:4)

“without God” (Eph. 2:12)

“The God and Father  
of our Lord Jesus  
Christ” (Eph. 1:3)

## **The enmity between sinners and God (vv. 16–18).**

**Not only did the Gentiles need to be reconciled to the Jews, but both the Jews and the Gentiles needed to be reconciled to God!** This was the conclusion the Apostles came to at the Jerusalem Conference recorded in Acts 15. Peter said that God “put no difference between us [Jews] and them [Gentiles], purifying their hearts by faith ... But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they” (Acts 15:9, 11). It was not a question of the Gentile becoming a Jew to become a Christian, but the Jew admitting he was a sinner like the Gentile.

**“For there is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:22–23). The same Law that separated Gentile and Jew also separated men and God, and Christ bore the curse of the Law.**

A man stopped in a Minister’s office one day and said he wanted to get help.

“My wife and I need a re-cancellation!” he blurted out. I knew he meant “reconciliation.” But in one sense, “re-cancellation” was the right word. They had sinned against each other (and the Lord), and there could be no harmony until those sins were cancelled.

A God of love wants to reconcile the sinner to Himself, but a God of holiness must see to it that sin is judged. God solved the problem by sending His Son to be the sacrifice for our sins, thereby revealing His love and meeting the demands of His righteousness. It was truly a “re-cancellation”.

**Colossians 2:13-14** And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, **having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.**

**Jesus Christ “is our peace” (Eph. 2:14).**

**He “made peace” (Eph. 2:15),**

**and He “preached peace” (Eph. 2:17).**

**As the Judge, He could have come to declare war. But in His grace, He came with the message of peace (Luke 2:8–14; 4:16–19). Jew and Gentile are at peace with each other in Christ, and both have open access to God (Rom. 5:1–2). This reminds us of the rent veil at the time of Christ’s death (Matt. 27:50–51; Heb. 10:14–25). Reconciliation is complete!**

# **Unification: What Jews and Gentiles Are in Christ (Eph. 2:19–22)**

Paul has repeated the word “one” to emphasize the **unifying work of Christ**: “made both one” (Eph. 2:14); “one new man” (Eph. 2:15); “one body” (Eph. 2:16); “one Spirit” (Eph. 2:18).

**All spiritual distance and division have been overcome by Christ.** In the closing verses of this chapter, Paul gives three pictures that illustrate the unity of believing Jews and Gentiles in the church.

## A. One nation (v. 19a).

Israel was God's chosen nation, but they rejected their Redeemer and suffered the consequences. The kingdom was taken from them and given to "a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43). This "**new nation**" is the church, "**a chosen generation ... a holy nation, a peculiar people**" (Ex. 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9). In the Old Testament, the nations were reckoned by their descent from Shem, Ham, or Japheth (Gen. 10). In the Book of Acts, **we see these three families united in Christ.**

In Acts 8, a descendant of Ham is saved, the Ethiopian treasurer; in Acts 9, a descendant of Shem, Saul of Tarsus, who became Paul the apostle; and in Acts 10, the **descendants of Japheth**, the Gentiles in the household of the Roman soldier, Cornelius. **Sin has divided mankind, but Christ unites by His Spirit.** All believers, regardless of national background, belong to that “**holy nation” with citizenship in heaven.**

**Philippians 3:20-21** But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it **we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,** who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, **by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.**

## B. One family (v. 19b).

Through faith in Christ, we enter into God's family, and God becomes our Father. This wonderful family of God is found in two places, "**in heaven and earth**" (Eph. 3:15).

Living believers are on earth; believers who have died are in heaven. **None of God's children are "under the earth"** (Phil. 2:10) or in any other place in the universe. **We are all brothers and sisters in the one family, no matter what racial, national, or physical distinctions we may possess.**

## C. One temple (vv. 20–22).

In the Book of Genesis, God “walked” with His people (Gen. 5:22, 24; 6:9); but in Exodus, He decided to “dwell” with His people (Ex. 25:8). God dwelt in the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34–38) until Israel’s sins caused “the glory to depart” (1 Sam. 4). Then God dwelt in the temple (1 Kings 8:1–11); but, alas, again Israel sinned and the glory departed (Ezek. 10:18–19).

**God’s next dwelling place was the body of Christ** (John 1:14), which men took and nailed to a cross.

**Today, through His Spirit, God dwells in the church, the temple of God. God does not dwell in man-made temples, including church buildings (Acts 7:48–50). He dwells in the hearts of those who have trusted Christ (1 Cor. 6:19–20), and in the church collectively (Eph. 2:20–22).**

**Act 7:48-50 Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands, as the prophet says, "'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? Did not my hand make all these things?'**

**1 Corinthians 6:19-20** Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

**Ephesians 2:20-22** 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.

The foundation for this church was laid by the Apostles and New Testament prophets. Jesus Christ is the Foundation (1 Cor. 3:11) and the Chief Cornerstone (Ps. 118:22; Isa. 8:14). **The cornerstone binds the structure together**; Jesus Christ has **united Jews and Gentiles in the church**. This reference to the temple would be meaningful to both the Jews and the Gentiles in the Ephesian church: the Jews would think of Herod's temple in Jerusalem, and the Gentiles would think of the great temple of Diana. **Both temples were destined to be destroyed, but the temple Christ is building will last forever.**

**“I will build My church” (Matt. 16:18). The Holy Spirit builds this temple by taking dead stones out of the pit of sin (Ps. 40:2), giving them life, and setting them lovingly into the temple of God (1 Peter 2:5). This temple is “fitly framed together” as the body of Christ (Eph. 2:21; 4:16), so that every part accomplishes the purpose God has in mind.**

As you look back over this chapter, **you cannot help but praise God for what He, in His grace, has done for sinners**. Through Christ, **He has raised us from the dead and seated us on the throne. He has reconciled us and set us into His temple.**

Neither spiritual death nor spiritual distance can defeat the grace of God! But **He has not only saved us individually, He has also made us a part of His church collectively.** What a tremendous privilege it is to be a part of God's eternal program!

This leads to two practical applications as we close this study. **First**, have you personally experienced the grace of God? Are you spiritually dead? Are you distant from God? Or have you trusted Christ and received that eternal life that only He can give? If you are not sure of your spiritual position, **I urge you to turn to Christ by faith and trust Him.**

Like the nation of Israel, you may have been given many spiritual privileges, only to reject the God who gave them. Or, like the Gentiles, you may have turned away from God and lived deliberately in sin and disobedience. In either case, “**there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God**” (Rom. 3:22–23). **Call on Christ—He will save you.**

**Romans 3:22-23** the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. **For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**

**Second, if you are a true believer in Christ, are you helping others to trust Him? You have been raised from the dead—do you “walk in newness of life”? (Rom. 6:4)**

**Do you share this Good News of eternal life with others? You are no longer at enmity with God, but are you spreading the Good News of “peace with God” with those who are still fighting Him?**

**Jesus Christ died to make reconciliation possible. You and I must live to make the message of reconciliation personal.**

God has “given to us **the ministry of reconciliation**” (2 Cor. 5:18). **We are His ambassadors of peace** (2 Cor. 5:20). Our feet should be shod “with the preparation of the Gospel of peace” (Eph. 6:15). **“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God”** (Matt. 5:9).

A missionary was preaching in the village market, and some of the people were laughing at him because he was not a very handsome man. He took it for a time, and then he said to the crowd, “It is true that I do not have beautiful hair, for I am almost bald. Nor do I have beautiful teeth, for they are really not mine; they were made by the dentist.

I do not have a beautiful face, nor can I afford to wear beautiful clothes.

**But this I know: I have beautiful feet!"** And he quoted the verse from Isaiah:

**Isaiah 52:7** How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

Do you have beautiful feet?