

Series: Ephesians

Title: A Cross Work & A Heart Work

Text: Ephesians 2: 14-18

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Under the old covenant, the greatest division that existed between men was between Jew and Gentile. The Jews consisted of the nation of Israel, called in Ephesians 2: 11 “circumcision in the flesh made by hands”—because of that fleshly sign of circumcision. Gentiles consisted of the rest of the world, outside of Israel, called in verse 11, “the Uncircumcision” because they did not have that fleshly sign.

Originally, there was no difference between any sinner—all came from Adam. “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (Rom 3: 23) All are born spiritually dead in trespasses and in sins. (Eph 2: 1) There was only a world full of sinners.

Yet, God called Abraham, and from his natural born children, God created the nation Israel, the Jews, the Circumcision. God separated Jew from Gentile by giving the Jews laws which forbid the Jew to associate with a Gentile. Those laws are referred to in Ephesians 2: 15 as “the law of commandments contained in ordinances.” Those laws served as a wall of partition, dividing the Jew and the Gentile as in verse 14, “the middle wall of partition between us.”

What was God’s purpose in dividing Jew from the Gentile? It was not because one people were better than the other—we are all sinners. God did it to show his true elect that God alone puts a difference between the elect people he chose in Christ in eternity and the rest of the world.

Exodus 11:7:...that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.

1 Corinthians 4:7: For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

God told Abraham from the beginning that not all Abraham’s children were God’s true Israel but that his true holy nation were made up of God’s elect who would be born of God the Holy Spirit. God told Abraham to cast out his son Ishmael and his mother, the bondwoman. For God said.

Genesis 21: 19:...in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

God used Paul to tell us exactly what God meant by that statement—

Romans 9: 6:...they *are* not all Israel, which are of Israel: 7: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, *are they* all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. 8: That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. 9: For this *is* the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son.

God told Abraham that God’s true elect Israel was not all Abrahams’ children, but the children of promise—those elected of God. Also, God promised that each elect child shall be born of God the Holy Spirit. The word of promise is: at God’s appointed time, each of his elect shall be born-again by the miracle of God’s grace, just as Isaac was born of God at the set time. This is why when speaking to born-again, Gentile believers, God said through Paul, in Galatians 4:28: Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

Furthermore, God told Abraham that God’s true Israel, his elect, were not only among natural Israel but also scattered in four corners of the earth: in all nations, tribes, tongue and people of the earth.

Genesis 12: 3:...In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed

“Families” means all nations, tribes, tongues, people.

Genesis 18:18:...all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in [Abraham]?

Again, God the Holy Spirit uses Paul to tell us exactly what God meant by “all nations.”

Galatians 3: 8: And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. 9: So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Speaking to born-again believers, Jews and Gentiles after the flesh, God says through Paul you are one by faith in Christ.

Galatians 3: 26: For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27: For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ [it means baptized into Christ by the Spirit of God in the new birth] have put on Christ. [it means put on Christ through God-given faith] 28: 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. 29: And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Furthermore, God even told Abraham that it was IN CHRIST that all God's elect would be made one holy nation.

Genesis 22:18: And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;

God used Paul to tell us exactly WHO God meant by “in thy seed.”

Galatians 3: 16: Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

**Be sure to get this.** The reason it is a certainty that all God's elect, all Christ's redeemed, shall be born-again and called to faith in Christ is because God the Father promised Christ they would be, the same as God promised Abraham they would be—“to Abraham and his Seed” that is to Abraham and to Christ Jesus “were the promises made.” This is the word of promise: at this time will I come and each elect child shall be born of the Spirit like as Isaac was born at the set time according to promise.

So God made the natural Jewish nation Israel and fulfilled every earthly promise he made to them to show that God alone puts a difference between his spiritual people and the rest of the world and that God fulfills all his spiritual promises. God separates and makes his people holy by divine election by God the Father, by blood redemption by God the Son and by divine regeneration by God the Holy Spirit. But God does not separate us and make us one using carnal ordinances, as he did under the old covenant when he separated the natural sons of Abraham from the Gentile world. How does he do so? This is what we will see tonight in Ephesians 2.

**Proposition:** God makes his elect one with God and with one another in Christ by a two-fold work which Christ the Mediator accomplishes.

Let's read our text and I will show you these two works, which will make up our divisions.

1) Christ is the peace of his elect by what Christ accomplished on the cross—**Ephesians 2: 14: For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; 15: Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even the law of commandments contained in ordinances*; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so making peace*;**

2) Secondly, Christ is our peace by what he accomplished in our hearts through the gospel—**Ephesians 2: 16: and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: 17: AND came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 18: For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.**

## **I. FIRST, CHRIST IS OUR PEACE BY WHAT HE ACCOMPLISHED ON THE CROSS.**

Christ himself is every true believers Peace.

### **Peace between God and His Child**

First, Christ is peace between God and his child. Every sinner lost friendship with God in the fall. We broke God's law in Adam. And born of Adam's corrupt seed, our sin-nature was enmity against God. In our natural state we considered God our enemy and sinned against God personally. Our sin against God, made it necessary that we be reconciled to God our Judge and Lawgiver before God could receive us in peace.

Ephesians 2: 13: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ...

Christ took flesh, made under the law, and was proven holy—a fit substitute. So the LORD God laid on him the iniquity of all his elect people. Christ bore the punishment of divine justice in place of his people. By Christ satisfying divine justice, all his elect who were once far off from God are made nigh to God by the blood of Christ.

### **Peace between Brethren and Brethren**

Now, the context says, Christ is also our peace between brethren and brethren. God's elect Jew and God's elect Gentile were divided into two nations. As I said before, there was no greater enmity between men and men, than existed between Jew and Gentile.

Sinners love to exalt self. We use every carnal distinction to do so: race, sex, religion, class, education, and so on. And the law of God was used that way. But Christ alone make his people one—**Ephesians 2: 14: For he is our peace, who hath made both one.**

Christ made the elect of God one holy nation by fulfilling the law given to Moses at Mt. Sinai. The law was given to declare us guilty and shut our mouths. That law also became a wall, dividing God's elect Jew from his elect Gentile. If you picture two rooms divided by a wall—the law was that wall. God's elect Jew was on one side, his elect Gentile on the other. But Christ broke down that wall—**Ephesians 2: 14: and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;**

The law in the hands of sinners was the “enmity” spoken of here between his elect Jew and his elect Gentile. Due to sin, the law made the Jews proud and full of enmity against the Gentiles, and by that sinful pride, the law made the Gentiles rage with enmity against the Jews.

Galatians 4: 24:...The law “from mount Sinai, gendereth to bondage.”

But by taking flesh and fulfilling all that was written in the law—Christ abolished the enmity by removing the law—**Ephesians 2: 15: Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances;**

Colossians 2:14: Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

By his finished work, Christ made all God's elect one new man IN HIMSELF—**Ephesians 2: 15: for to make IN HIMSELF of twain one new man, so making peace.** God's elect Jew and God's elect Gentile, were made one holy nation, in the mind and purpose of God, by Christ's work, before he revealed it to his people.

Be sure to get what the verse is saying. Just as each elect child was reconciled to God before God made us to know it—likewise, all God's elect were reconciled to each other, before God made us to know it. In Christ's one body, though we were not yet reconciled one to another in our hearts, God's elect Jew and Gentile were already reconciled to one another, and made one people, because God viewed us in Christ. God acknowledged us as one new man—his one holy nation—as represented to him by Christ in his one body, while as yet we were still divided from each other—while as yet we still divided ourselves into the camp of the Jews or Gentiles, and by all the other vain, carnal distinctions. Remember, God told Israel in

Exodus 19:5: Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: 6: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.

But no sinner in Israel ever fulfilled the law in perfect obedience. Yet, as God said through Peter, by Christ's obedience that scripture is now fulfilled. We are God's "chosen generation, his royal priesthood, his holy nation, his peculiar people." (1 Pet 2: 9)

All of this work was accomplished by Christ, in his one body, by him fulfilling the law for his people in his flesh, taking the law out of the way, and making his elect to be no longer Jew and Gentile, but one holy nation. And he did this before he made us one in our hearts by his Spirit.

Brethren, this is one reason, we ought to be as kind as possible, and declare the gospel, even to those who are enemies of the cross. If Christ has reconciled them to God—they are one with us before God, though neither us nor them knows it yet.

**II. SECONDLY, CHRIST IS OUR PEACE BY WHAT HE ACCOMPLISHED IN OUR HEARTS—Ephesians 2: 16: AND that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: 17: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 18: For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.**

Christ the Prince of Peace is the Peacemaker on whose shoulder the government of his church rests.

### **Christ Came and Preached Peace to Us**

In order "**that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross,**" having already slain the enmity thereby, having already broken down that middle of partition between us, having already fulfilled the law for us, Christ also comes and preaches the gospel of peace—of reconciliation—to each one of his redeemed children through his ambassadors.

It is Christ's glory as the Head of the church to fill all in all. God the Father not only promised Christ that, in Christ, Christ's seed shall be called, but God also raised Christ and gave him the glory of calling them.

Ephesians 1: 22: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, 23: Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. 2: 1: And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

God said Christ would do this through the prophets. Christ fulfills all prophecy:

Isaiah 53: 10: Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

God the Holy Spirit says, “It pleased God”—it is the pleasure of the LORD—“It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” (1 Cor 1: 21) So after Christ abolished in his flesh the enmity by fulfilling the law on the cross then God raised Christ, gave him to be Head over the church to accomplish the pleasure of God of giving his people one Spirit through the gospel. That is plainly what our text says,

**Ephesians 2: 15: HAVING ABOLISHED in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;**

That is Christ’s cross work]

**Ephesians 2: 16: AND that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: 17: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 18: For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.**

That is Christ’s heart work through his gospel. In 2 Corinthians 5 God says the same thing through Paul, 2 Corinthians 5: 18, “And all things *are* of God.” First, is the cross work—“who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.” Second, comes the heart-work through the gospel—“AND hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.” He repeats it. First, is the cross work--v19: “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;” Second, is the heart-work through the gospel—v19: “AND hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” Paul says that we are, therefore, speaking as ambassadors in the behalf of Christ, v20: “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: We pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”

Brethren, do we want Christ to receive his glory? It is Christ’s glory to reconcile his people to God in one body by both his accomplished cross work and his accomplished heart work through the gospel.

**To Them Far Off and Them That Were Near**

**Ephesians 2: 17: [Christ] came and preached peace to you which were far off”—to the Gentile. “And to them that were nigh”—the Jew.**

Remember how Christ sent Peter, a Jew, to his elect Cornelius, a Gentile. Christ appeared to Peter when he was on the rooftop praying. He let down that sheet knit at the four corners and filled with animals that were forbidden by law for a Jew to eat. Christ told Peter, “Arise, kill and eat.”

Acts 10: 14: But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. 15: And the voice spake unto him again the second time, **What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.** 16: This was **done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.**

- That sheet was knit at the four corners—God’s elect are called from the four corners of the earth.
- In that sheet were all manner of animals—all manner of elect sinners are in Christ.
- God declared to Peter three times—“What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.” God’s people are cleansed and made holy by the three persons in the Godhead: by God the Father in divine election, by God the Son in blood redemption, and by God the Holy Spirit in regeneration.
- It was received up into heaven with all the animals in it—Christ has been received by God in heaven with all his reconciled elect in Christ.

When Peter saw Cornelius, the Jew,

Acts 10:34: Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

After Christ preached the gospel through Peter to Cornelius and those other elect in his house, Christ baptized them in the Holy Ghost and they believed on Christ. And when Peter's Jewish brethren heard—

Acts 11: 18: When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

Christ made them no longer Jew and Gentile but one in Christ by one Spirit.

Then later when other Jews were trying to build back those walls, insisting the Gentiles become Jews by coming back under the law of Moses, Peter said this,

Acts 15: 7: And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. 8: And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; 9: And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. 10: Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? 11: But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

Peter said, "We, believe that we, Jews, shall be saved, even as those Gentiles." How? We shall be saved without the law through faith through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then Christ spread the gospel further by sending Paul to the Gentiles and Peter to the Jews. But it was Christ preaching! We who he has called know that because to you who are called, Christ is the Power and Wisdom of God. And by Christ coming and preaching peace to us this is the effectual result—**Ephesians 2: 18: For through HIM we BOTH have access by one Spirit unto the Father.**

**So let's go home remembering this.**

1) First, we are justified by Christ. And through God-given faith, we have peace with God. All is through our Lord Jesus Christ. He justified us. Doing so, he reconciled us. Christ came and preached peace to us. He quickened us by the Holy Spirit. He gave us faith to believe on Christ. Now, we have peace with God. All is through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:1: Therefore being justified, by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

2) Secondly, we do not build up those walls again by bringing believers back under the law. Gentiles were never under it in the first place. Nor do we make any other carnal distinctions of any kind.

Galatians 2: 18: For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. 19: For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. 20: I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. 21: I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

God built that wall, to show that only God through Christ through the Holy Spirit can break that wall down and make his people one in spirit and in truth.

Colossians 3: 11: [In Christ] there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

For us who believe in Christ, it is as God says it is with him, there is no such thing as Jew and Gentile or Israel and the rest of the nations of the earth, or circumcision or uncircumcision, or male or female—but Christ is all, and in all.

3) Thirdly, therefore, we must abide in Christ as Christ commanded. Doing so means we abide in his church, united with his people for this is how God promises to grow us in the strength of Christ—

Ephesians 2: 21: In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:  
22: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

4) Lastly, endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Ephesians 4: 1: I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, 2: With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3: Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4: *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5: One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6: One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

**Amen!**