

**Ephesians 2:11-22**  
**November 13, 2022**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Q: Today we probably don't face the question of the integration of Jews and Gentiles into one family. But if churches are still divided because of racial, cultural or social-economic differences, my guess is that we have missed the meaning of Christ's death. What are examples of challenges that come up (or have come up) when people different from us want to BELONG to a particular family of God like Riverbend? Or maybe you've tried to be a part of a Christian fellowship and got the vibe that you "didn't belong." How did you feel? [Let people engage]

**Transition:** In the first ten verses of Ephesians 2, Paul has discussed the salvation of sinners in general, but now he turns to the work of Christ for Gentiles in particular. Most of the converts in the Ephesian church were Gentiles. For centuries, the "circumcision" (Jews) had looked down on the "uncircumcision" (Gentiles) with an attitude that God had never intended them to display. So Paul is going to set the record straight on what God really intended for both Jews and Gentiles. Let's read the text to get started.

**BOOK:**

**One in Christ**

<sup>11</sup> Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)—<sup>12</sup> remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

<sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, <sup>15</sup> by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup> and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. <sup>17</sup> He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

<sup>19</sup> Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. <sup>21</sup> In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

**Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

**LOOK:**

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 plan!

**Close in Prayer**

## **Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 2, pp. 22–26). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.***

# **THE GREAT PEACE MISSION**

## *Ephesians 2:11–22*

Peace in our time! Peace with honor!”

Some of us still remember those words of British Prime Minister, Sir Neville Chamberlain, when he returned from conferences in Germany in September 1938. He was sure that he had stopped Adolf Hitler. Yet one year later, Hitler invaded Poland, and on September 3, 1939, Great Britain declared war on Germany. Chamberlain's great peace mission had failed.

It seems that most peace missions fail. I read somewhere that from 1500 B.C. to A.D. 850 there were 7,500 “eternal covenants” agreed on among various nations with the hope of bringing peace, but that no covenant had lasted longer than two years. 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)**

In the first ten verses of Ephesians 2, Paul has discussed the salvation of sinners in general, but now he turns to the work of Christ for Gentiles in particular. Most of the converts in the Ephesian church were Gentiles, and they knew that much of God's program in the Old Testament involved the Jews. For centuries, the “circumcision” (Jews) had looked down on the “uncircumcision” (Gentiles) with an attitude that God had never intended them to display. The fact that a Jew had received the physical mark of the covenant was no proof he was a man of faith (Rom. 2:25–29; Gal. 5:6; 6:15). Those who have trusted Christ have received a spiritual circumcision “made without hands” (Col. 2:11).

But since the hour that God called Abraham, God made a difference between Jews and Gentiles. He made this difference, not that the Jews might boast, but that they might be a blessing and a help to the Gentiles. God set them apart that He might use them to be a channel of His revelation and goodness to the heathen nations. Sad to say, Israel kept this difference nationally and ritually, but not morally. Israel became like the lost nations around her. For this reason, God often had to discipline the Jews because they would not maintain their spiritual separation and minister to the nations in the name of the true God.

The one word that best describes the Gentiles is *without*. They were “outside” in several respects.

***Without Christ.*** The Ephesians worshiped the goddess, Diana, and, before the coming of the Gospel, knew nothing about Christ. Those who claim that pagan religions are just as acceptable to God as the Christian faith will have a problem here, for Paul cites the Ephesians' Christless state as a definite tragedy. But then, keep in mind that every unsaved person, Jew or Gentile, is “outside Christ” and that means condemnation.

***Without citizenship.*** God called the Jews and built them into a nation. He gave them His laws and His blessings. A Gentile could enter the nation as a proselyte, but he was not born into

that very special nation. Israel was God's nation, in a way that was not true of any Gentile nation.

**Without covenants.** While the blessing of the Gentiles is included in God's covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3), God did not make any covenants with the Gentile nations. The Gentiles were “aliens” and “strangers”—and the Jews never let them forget it. Many of the Pharisees would pray daily, “O God, I give thanks that I am a Jew, not a Gentile.”

**Without hope.** Historians tell us that a great cloud of hopelessness covered the ancient world. Philosophies were empty; traditions were disappearing; religions were powerless to help men face either life or death. People longed to pierce the veil and get some message of hope from the other side, but there was none (1 Thess. 4:13–18).

**Without God.** The heathen had gods aplenty, as Paul discovered in Athens (Acts 17:16–23). Someone in that day said that it was easier to find a god than a man in Athens. “There be gods many and lords many,” wrote Paul (1 Cor. 8:5). But the pagan, no matter how religious or moral he might have been, did not know the true God. The writer of Psalm 115 contrasted the true God with the idols of the heathen.

It is worth noting that the spiritual plight of the Gentiles was caused not by God but by their own willful sin. Paul said the Gentiles knew the true God but deliberately refused to honor Him (Rom. 1:18–23). Religious history is not a record of man starting with many gods (idolatry) and gradually discovering the one true God.

Rather, it is the sad story of man knowing the truth about God and deliberately turning away from it! It is a story of devolution, not evolution! The first eleven chapters of Genesis give the story of the decline of the Gentiles; and from Genesis 12 on (the call of Abraham), it is the story of the Jews. God separated the Jews from the Gentiles that He might be able to save the Gentiles also. “Salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22).

God called the Jews, beginning with Abraham, that through them He might reveal Himself as the one true God. With the Jews He deposited His Word, and through the Jews He gave the world the Savior (Rom. 9:1–5). Israel was to be a light to the Gentiles that they too might be saved. But sad to say, Israel became like the Gentiles, and the light burned but dimly. This fact is a warning to the church today. When the church is least like the world, it does the most for the world.

### **Reconciliation: What God Did for the Gentiles (Eph. 2:13–18)**

The “but now” in Ephesians 2:13 parallels the “but God” in Ephesians 2:4. Both speak of the gracious intervention of God on behalf of lost sinners. “Enmity” is the key word in this section (Eph. 2:15–16); and you will note that it is a twofold enmity: between Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:13–15) and between sinners and God (Eph. 2:16–18). Paul describes here the greatest peace mission in history: Jesus Christ not only reconciled Jews and Gentiles, but He reconciled both to Himself in the one body, the church.

The word *reconcile* means “to bring together again.” A distraught husband wants to be reconciled to his wife who has left him; a worried mother longs to be reconciled to a wayward daughter; and the lost sinner needs to be reconciled to God. Sin is the great separator in this world. It has been dividing people since the very beginning of human history. When Adam and Eve sinned, they were separated from God. Before long, their sons were separated from each other and Cain killed Abel. The earth was filled with violence (Gen. 6:5–13) and the only remedy seemed to be judgment. But even after the Flood, men sinned against God and each other, and even tried to build their own unity without God's help. The result was another

judgment that scattered the nations and confused the tongues. It was then that God called Abraham, and through the nation of Israel, Jesus Christ came to the world. It was His work on the cross that abolished the enmity between Jew and Gentile and between sinners and God.

***The enmity between Jews and Gentiles (vv. 13–15).*** God had put a difference between Jews and Gentiles so that His purposes in salvation might be accomplished. But once those purposes were accomplished, there was no more difference. In fact, it was His purpose that these differences be erased forever, and they are erased through the work of Christ in reconciliation.

It was this lesson that was so difficult for the early church to understand. For centuries, the Jews had been different from the Gentiles—in religion, dress, diet, and laws. Until Peter was sent to the Gentiles (Acts 10), the church had no problems. But with the salvation of the Gentiles on the same terms as the Jews, problems began to develop. The Jewish Christians reprimanded Peter for going to the Gentiles and eating with them (Acts 11), and representatives of the churches gathered for an important conference on the place of the Gentiles in the church (Acts 15). Must a Gentile become a Jew to become a Christian? Their conclusion was, “No! Jews and Gentiles are saved the same way—by faith in Jesus Christ.” The enmity was gone!

The cause of that enmity was the Law, because the Law made a definite distinction between Jews and Gentiles. The dietary laws reminded the Jews that God had put a difference between the clean and unclean (Lev. 11:44–47). But the Gentiles did not obey these laws; therefore, they were unclean. Ezekiel the prophet reminded the priests that their task was to teach the Jews “the difference between the holy and the profane” (Ezek. 44:23). The divine ordinances given by God to Israel stood as a wall between the Jews and the other nations. In fact, there was a wall in the Jewish temple, separating the court of the Gentiles from the rest of the temple areas. Archeologists have discovered the inscription from Herod’s temple, and it reads like this:

No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the sanctuary and enclosure.  
Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death.

It was this wall that the Jews thought Paul and his Gentile friends crossed when the Jews attacked him in the temple and threatened to kill him (Acts 21:28–31).

In order for Jews and Gentiles to be reconciled, this wall had to be destroyed, and this Jesus did on the cross. The cost of destroying the enmity was the blood of Christ. When He died, the veil in the temple was literally torn in two, and the wall of separation (figuratively) was torn down. By fulfilling the demands of the Law in His righteous life, and by bearing the curse of the Law in His sacrificial death (Gal. 3:10–13), Jesus removed the legal barrier that separated Jew from Gentile. For centuries, there was a difference between them. But today, “there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek. 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).

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 my 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” (see Col. 2:13–14).

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.

**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 (Phil. 3:20–21).

**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.

**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).

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.

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: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace" (Isa. 52:7). Do you have beautiful feet?

**Hoehner, H. W. (1985). *Ephesians*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 625-628) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books**

#### *E. New position corporately (2:11–22)*

Individuals who have received God's gracious salvation are not left alone but are brought into union with other believers. In 2:11–22 Paul developed this concept of the corporate unity of saved Jews and Gentiles in the church, Christ's body (cf. 1:22–23).

#### 1. STATEMENT OF THE UNION (2:11–13)

##### *a. Past disunion (2:11–12).*

2:11. Having completed his discussion of believers as God's workmanship (vv. 1–10), Paul began this section with the strongest inferential particle (*dio*, **therefore**) to alert the Ephesians to the unenviable position of having no relationship with God. Paul commanded them to **remember that formerly**, before their conversions, they were **Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by Jews**. Jews, being circumcised physically (**in the body**) disparaged all non-



Jews by calling them the “uncircumcised.” This physical difference between Jews and Gentiles affected every area of their lives. A great social and spiritual boundary existed between them.

2:12. The Gentiles’ lack of the external sign of circumcision also meant that they lacked five privileges that God had given the nation Israel. First, they **were separate from** (lit., “without”) **Christ** not only personally (true also of many Jews) but also in that they had no national hope of the Messiah.

Second, they were **excluded from citizenship in Israel**. They did not belong to the theocratic state of Israel (cf. Rom. 9:4). The word “excluded” is *apēllotriōme noi*, “alienated” or “estranged.” It is used only two other times (Eph. 4:18; Col. 1:21). Though some Gentiles were admitted into Judaism as proselytes, Gentiles as a whole were excluded; they were thus alienated.

Third, they were **foreigners to the covenants of the promise** (cf. Eph. 3:6). They were deprived of direct participation in God’s covenants and thus had no hope of future glory and blessing as Israel did. Israel’s “covenants” include the Abrahamic (Gen. 12:1–3; 15:18–21; 17:1–8), the Palestinian (Deut. 28–30), the Davidic (2 Sam. 7:16; Ps. 89:1–4), and the New (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:24–30). These covenants—all pointing to “the promise” of the Messiah and of blessings through Him—assured Israel of a national existence, a land, a King, and spiritual blessings.

Fourth, the Gentiles were **without hope**. Unlike Israel they had no expectation of a personal Messiah-Deliverer and the Messianic Age.

Fifth, they were **without God** (*atheoi*, “apart from God”) **in the world**. The Gentiles were in a desperate situation. They had no meaning, hope, purpose, or direction in life.

*b. Present union (2:13).*

2:13. **But now in Christ Jesus** marks the contrast both temporally (“formerly” [v. 11] as opposed to “now”) and positionally (“separate from Christ” [v. 12] as opposed to “in Christ Jesus”). The Gentiles **who once were far away** (cf. v. 17) from both God and the Jews (v. 12) **have been brought near through the blood of Christ** (cf. 1:7). They have come near to God and to the Jews by means of Christ’s sacrificial death. Sin separates people from God and only Christ’s atonement can remove that sin barrier.

2. EXPLANATION OF THE UNION (2:14–18)

Having stated the fact of the union of Gentiles and Jews (v. 13), Paul then explained what this involves. He discussed two things in this section: the establishment of peace between Gentile and Jewish believers, and the peace between God and the people who believe in Him.

*a. Assertion of peace (2:14–16).*

2:14. Christ **Himself is the peace** between Jewish and Gentile believers, having **made the two groups one and having destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility**. “Peace” is mentioned four times in three verses (vv. 14–15, 17 [twice]). Various interpretations have been given regarding this “dividing wall,” which is mentioned only here in the New Testament. Some have thought it refers to the wall in the Jerusalem temple precincts that separated the Court of the Gentiles from the Court of the Jews. But this view is invalid because Paul makes no reference to the temple in Jerusalem and because this wall was still standing when Paul wrote this epistle.

Some think it referred to the curtain in the Jerusalem temple between the holy place and the holy of holies. But that was a curtain, not a wall. Others have suggested it meant the “fence” around the Law mentioned by some Rabbis. But that referred more to the protection of the Law than to the hostility mentioned in this context. The structure of the Greek words suggests that the dividing wall describes not a physical barrier, but the spiritual enmity between Jews and Gentiles, which separated them. Since Christ destroyed this enmity (cf. v. 16), Jewish and Gentile believers should have no hostility.

2:15–16. Paul now described how and why this enmity came to an end. The animosity between believing Jews and Gentiles ceased because by Christ’s death (**in His flesh** suggests His actual physical death; cf. Col. 1:22) He rendered **the Law** “inoperative.” (*katargēsas*) in believers’ lives. Jews and Gentiles were enemies because the former sought to keep the Law **with its commandments and regulations** (cf. Col. 2:14, 21–23), whereas Gentiles were unconcerned about them. This difference was like a barrier between them. But now that the Law is inoperative (“Christ is the end of the Law” [Rom. 10:4]), Jewish-Gentile hostility is gone. Some translations (e.g., KJV, NASB) give the idea that the Law was the enmity, but that is wrong; the Law was the cause of the enmity. Christ “destroyed” the barrier (hostility) by making the Law inoperative.

Christ had two purposes in ending the hostility. The first **purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace**. The word “new” (*kainon*) means new or fresh in character or quality rather than new in the sense of recent in time (*neos*). This “new man” (Eph. 2:15), or “new humanity,” is also called “this one body” (v. 16), the church. In the church, Gentiles do not become Jews, nor do Jews become Gentiles. Instead believing Jews and Gentiles become Christians, a whole new single entity.

Christ’s second purpose in destroying the enmity was **to reconcile both Jewish and Gentile believers to Himself in ... one body** (cf. 3:6). This reconciliation was accomplished **through the cross, by which** Christ killed (**put to death**) the enmity between people and God. Though *He* was put to death, He in turn put to death the Jewish-Gentile **hostility**. In 2:14 the reconciliation is between Jewish and Gentile believers, and in verse 16 the reconciliation is between people and God. Reconciliation (removal of enmity) between man and God is mentioned elsewhere by Paul (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18–20; Col. 1:20).

#### *b. Announcement of peace (2:17–18).*

2:17–18. Verse 17 begins in Greek with “and” (untranslated in the NIV). This links verse 17 with verse 14. Not only is Christ “our peace” (v. 14), but **He** also **preached peace**. When did Christ do this? Certainly, this refers to the preaching of peace by the apostles rather than Christ Himself because Christ preached almost entirely to Jews (Matt. 10:5–6; 15:24–27). Also, the peace that was preached was based on Christ’s death, rather than during His life on earth. **Peace** is supplied both **to those who were far away** (cf. Eph. 2:13), that is, Gentiles (who were without Christ and alienated from Israel and her covenants, v. 12) and **to those who were near**, namely, Jews (who have “the covenants of the promise,” v. 12).

As a result of this message of peace both Jewish and Gentile believers **have access to God the Father by one Spirit** (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13). Access can mean “introduction” in the sense that Christ *is* a believer’s “introduction” to the Father. But it seems better to understand that Christ *gives* believers access. The Greek word for access (*prosaōgēn*, “approach”) is used elsewhere in the New Testament only in Romans 5:2 and Ephesians 3:12. As so often in this book the work of

the Trinity is seen. Here believers have access to God the Father through the Holy Spirit because of Christ's death on the cross.

In four ways in 2:14–18 Paul emphasized that the two (Jew and Gentile) have been united: (1) “the two” (*ta amphotera*) are made “one” (v. 14), (2) “one new man” is created “out of the two” (v. 15), (3) “in this one body ... both” (*tous amphoterous*) are reconciled (v. 16), and (4) “both” (*hoi amphoteroi*) “have access ... by one Spirit” (v. 18). Nothing could be clearer than the fact that this new union replaces enmity.

### 3. CONSEQUENCE OF THE UNION (2:19–22)

Having stated and explained the union of Jewish and Gentile believers Paul then described the consequence of that union.

#### a. *The fact: a new relationship (2:19).*

2:19. **Consequently** (*ara oun*) **you**, that is, Gentile believers, **are no longer foreigners** (*xenoi*; cf. v. 12) **and aliens**. Believing Gentiles become **fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household**. They become a part of the company of the redeemed of all ages beginning with Adam. However, this does not mean that the church inherits the blessings promised to Israel. There are three reasons for this: (1) In the context Paul was discussing the “one new man” (v. 15), the “one body” (v. 16). This does not mean that Gentiles are incorporated into Israel but that believing Jews and Gentiles are incorporated into one new “humanity.” (2) Paul specifically stated that Gentiles are incorporated “with God's people” and are in “God's household” (v. 19); he did not use the word “Israel.” If Paul meant that the church became “Israel,” he would have named both groups, as he did in verse 11. (3) Paul explained that this new relationship is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief Cornerstone” (v. 20). This began on the day of Pentecost, not in the Old Testament. True, Gentile believers become a part of the redeemed of all ages (v. 19). But their being incorporated with Jewish believers into the “one new man” distinctly began when the church came into being at Pentecost.

#### b. *The cause: a new establishment (2:20–22)*

Paul described the church as a great building, a holy temple in which God dwells. This figure of God dwelling in a temple comes from the Old Testament. Paul wrote of the building's foundation (v. 20), formation (v. 21), and function (v. 22).

2:20. Paul first described the foundation of the building. The reason Gentile believers are “fellow citizens” (v. 19) is that they are **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets**. The “prophets” are of the New Testament era, not the Old Testament. “Prophets” follows the word “apostles” here and in 3:5 and 4:11. These men received the revelation of the mystery of the church in the present Age, which had been hidden in days past, that is, in Old Testament times (3:5).

The words “apostles and prophets” could modify “the foundation.” This could mean (a) that the foundation was built by them, or (b) that the foundation came from them, or (c) that they own a foundation or, as seems best, (d) that they are the foundation. The words could be translated, “the foundation which consists of the apostles and prophets.” This makes the best sense when one sees in 4:11 that the apostles and prophets were gifted men given to the church as its

“foundation.” Furthermore, this fits well in the present context, which states that **Christ Jesus Himself is the chief Cornerstone**, that is, He is part of the foundation. In ancient building practices “the chief cornerstone” was carefully placed. It was crucial because the entire building was lined up with it. The church’s foundation, that is, the apostles and prophets, needed to be correctly aligned with Christ. All other believers are built on that foundation, measuring their lives with Christ.

2:21. Paul then discussed the formation of the building. **In Christ the whole building is joined together**. The ASV has “each several building” (rather than “the whole building”). But it is preferable to understand the Greek to refer to one whole superstructure, perhaps in several parts. The participle translated “is joined together” is *synarmologoumenē*, used only here and in 4:16. It denotes that the various parts of the building are skillfully fitted to each other, not haphazardly thrown together. This structure **rises to become** (lit., “continually grows [present tense] into”) **a holy temple in the Lord**. This indicates that the church is a living and growing organism, as new believers are included in this temple’s superstructure (cf. 4:15–16; 1 Peter 2:5). Both Jewish and Gentile believers are being “joined together” into this one organism labeled “a holy temple” (cf. “one new man” [Eph. 2:15] and “one body” [v. 16]). The word for temple (*naos*) always refers to the sanctuary within the physical structure in Jerusalem, not to the entire temple area with its open courts (*hieron*).

2:22. Paul now discussed the function of the temple. God places individual believers into the structure; thus, it is **being built together**. The goal of this temple is **to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit**. In the Old Testament God’s glory was in the temple, which represented His presence with the people. In this Age God dwells in His new temple which is constructed not from inanimate materials but of living believers. The Holy Spirit indwells each individual believer (cf. John 14:17; Rom. 5:5; 8:9, 11; 1 Cor. 2:12; Gal. 3:2; 4:6; 1 John 3:24; 4:13), who is thus a “temple” (1 Cor. 6:19). But the temple in Ephesians 2:21–22 refers to the Holy Spirit’s *corporate* “dwelling” (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16), His “temple” composed of *all* Jewish and Gentile believers.

“By His Spirit” is literally, “by the Spirit,” as it is translated in Ephesians 3:5.

In conclusion, Paul has shown that though the Gentiles were formerly outside God’s household, they are now one “new man” with Jewish believers. This new entity is like a temple that is structured on the apostles and prophets, with Christ being the chief Cornerstone; it is indwelt by God through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

***Dockery, D. S. (1998). The Pauline Letters. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (pp. 577–578). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.***

## **RECONCILIATION (2:11–18)**

Paul explained Christ’s peace mission in this section. Those who were separated from the covenant have been united, those who were alienated have been reconciled, and those who were far off have been brought near.

The first ten verses of chapter 2 dealt with personal reconciliation. The remainder of the chapter turns to corporate reconciliation, particularly the reconciliation of Gentiles. For centuries the Jews (the “circumcision”) looked with contempt on the Gentiles (the “uncircumcision”). The Jews thought they were participants in God’s covenant by their heritage. They believed the Gentiles were distant from this covenant. Thus, Paul described the Gentiles with the term “without.”

They were without Christ, without citizenship, without covenants, without hope, and without God. Their condition was not due to their heritage or even to God but to their own sinfulness and spiritual bankruptcy.

Paul exclaimed the good news in verses 13–18. Apart from Christ, the Gentiles were hopeless. “But now in Christ Jesus” Gentiles and Jews are reconciled to God and to one another. The enmity, the barrier, has been broken down. This is the meaning of reconciliation—to bring together again. In Jesus Christ, Jew and Gentile became one because of His work on the cross. The law and its accompanying barriers created the barriers. Now those barriers have been nullified. Not only has Christ made peace, “He himself is our peace.” Jews and Gentiles are no longer strangers; they are called in one hope as one people of God.

### **THE NEW SOCIETY (2:19–22)**

Some modern theologians assert that God has acted in Christ to reconcile all the world to Himself. Consequently, the church’s primary concern is not to seek to effect the reconciliation of all people to Christ but merely to proclaim that all have already been reconciled. This type of universalism is not what Paul taught in this chapter. In fact, the apostle opposed that kind of thinking.

It is only in response to the cross of Christ (called faith in 2:8) that peace exists vertically between humans and God and horizontally between humans. This new society, called the church, is depicted at the end of chapter 2.

The church is pictured as a nation (“fellow citizens,”), a family (“a household”), and a “building.” This new building is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.” The purpose of the church is for believers to be “built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit”.

**The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Ephesians 2:11-22). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.**