

# Out of Many, One, in Christ

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[0:00] Good morning. Welcome to the Church of the Holy Trinity.!

Ephesians chapter 2. If you don't have one, there should be one in the pew there for you.

Ephesians chapter 2. We'll continue where we left off last week in verse 13.

By way of reminder, we spoke last week of the enmity between two groups. The Jew and the Gentile. And if you recall, the Jews were of the circumcision.

The Gentile of the uncircumcision. Now being of the circumcision meant being near to God. Having the promise of the Messiah.

Having a way of life that was given by God. A covenant of promise. God being the center of their religious and social life.

[1:24] These are all the privileges. That came with being of the circumcision. They were worthy. Great. Great privileges. The Gentiles, on the other hand, were outside looking in.

They were far from God. Without a hope. Paul tells us. But we also talk of the real hatred. That developed between these two groups.

Because of human pride. Because of human pride. Instead of the Jews being a light to the nations. Which is what God intended. A light to the nations that invited them into God's light.

Instead of that being what happened. The Jews made their privileged status. They made it a club. To beat the nations back. The tragedy was that they needed God.

That is the Jews. They needed God as much as the Gentiles did. But by placing confidence in their own flesh. In their own privileged status.

[2:25] Rather than making God the object of their faith. By doing so. When the promised Messiah came among them. They rejected him. Herein lies the tragedy.

They took their eyes. Off the one who alone can save. Because they were too busy taking credit. For what God has freely given to them.

Paul reminds us. Of the importance. Of remembering a right. We cannot put any confidence in the flesh.

We cannot take credit. For our nearness to God. In remembering rightly. In remembering our condition before God.

In remembering that we were grafted in. Into God's covenant people. We can then make Christ. And his finished work on the cross.

[3:28] The basis of our boasting. The basis of our glory. We can boast in a mighty redeemer. Who is mighty to save. We can boast in God.

And hold fast to him. Who is the author and finisher of our faith. This is Paul's concern. For us. In Ephesians.

That we will know about God. And know of the great salvation. We have in Christ. Christ. This is the whole essence.

Of theology. To know God. To know him rightly. And to know the means by which you can be saved. Now the devil has come to make us think.

That theology is for the ivory tower. Whereas. The word itself. The word means the study of God. The study of God's nature.

[4:23] The study of God's relationship to the world. And this is Paul's emphasis. His emphasis is this. You cannot grow as a Christian. The church.

Cannot be a healthy place. A place where people mature into Christ likeness. Until we know about God. Until we know the way we are saved in Christ Jesus.

So you can see now that. The study of God is essential. Indispensable to our life in Christ. Paul after encouraging the Ephesians.

To remember the condition. That God saved them from. Just like in verse 4 of chapter 2. He now turns his focus. To the positive aspect. Of their life in Christ.

And he says in verse 13. Of our text today. By the way. We read verse 11 to 22. But we will. We will continue from verse 13. And we will be covering it up.

[5:27] To verse 18 today. And we will finish this section next week. God willing. But. Paul begins in verse 13. And he says.

But now. But now. But now. It refers to God's mighty act. God's mighty act. In changing their natural condition. And grafting them into his kingdom.

But now. In Christ Jesus. You who were once far off. Have been brought near. By the blood of Christ. Look at the words there.

You who were far off. Is referring to the Gentiles. Remember we've talked about. They were on. Outside looking in. Alienated from God. Far off.

Didn't have the promise. Of the Messiah. Didn't have. God. In the world. Those who are far off. Have now been brought near. By the blood of Christ.

[6:26] Essentially. Paul is saying to these Gentile believers. That you now have access. To God. You have a right. To call God. You who were.

Without God. Now you have a right. To call God. Father. This is what John says. In John. Chapter 1. Verse 12. That to all who receive him.

That is Christ Jesus. Those. To all who believe in his name. He is given the right. To become children of God. We cannot call God our father.

That is not a small thing. And we can do so. By the blood of Christ. This is how we're reconciled. To God.

It is by the atoning death of Christ. On the cross. For our sins. E. Woonio no sin. Became sin for us. That we might be the righteousness of God.

[7:27] E. Is the propitiation. For our sins. That means. That word. Propitiation. Means that. By Christ. Shed blood. On the cross. He turned away.

The wrath of God. The wrath of God. That was the just penalty. For my sins. And your sins. Because of his shed blood. On the cross. Christ has turned. The wrath of God away.

From us. And he had borne it. On himself. So. Being a good person. Being a religious person. Being a devout person. These are all good things. But none of these things. Will bring you near to God. Only one thing.

Brings you near to God. That is the blood of Jesus Christ. And it brings you. Not only near. But it brings you.

[8:21] All the way. The author of Hebrews says. That the sacrifice of bulls and goats. Cannot take away sins. Hence.

Why. Both the Jew. And the Gentile. Must. Be brought near. In Christ alone. So the call for us.

Is to stop striving. In vain. To come near to God. Stop striving. In vain. To come near to God. If that. If that is. If that has been you.

In the past. Today. I ask that you. Would trust in Christ. To work on the cross. For you. This is the only hope. You can hold on to.

This is the rock. That will bear you up. In the storm of this life. You have no other righteousness. And if you are in Christ. And you.

[9:19] You've trusted. In his finished work for you. You need no other righteousness. Beware. Of being like the Pharisee. Who approaches God.

In confidence. Based on his ethnicity. As a Jewish man. Based on his religious piety. And his good work. Beware. Of being like that Pharisee.

Rather. Be like the task collector. Who. Upon beating his chest. Pleads for mercy. Because he knows. He knows.

That he's a miserable offender. It is the task collector. According to Jesus. It is the task collector. Not the Pharisee. Who is brought near.

Because he comes. Not in his own righteousness. But in Christ's righteousness. Paul continues.

[10:17] And he says. For he himself. That is Christ himself. Is our peace. He has made us both. Here he's referring to. Both the Jew and the Gentile.

He's made us both. One. One. And is broken down. In his flesh. The dividing wall. Of hostility. Paul drives the point home here.

It is the fact that he says. He has made both. Jew and Gentile. One. Is. A drastically. A drastic statement. To make.

We've been talking. In the past week. Of the dead separation. Between these two groups. Both. Good. Because some of the separation. Was enacted by God. In his law. To keep. To keep the. The Jewish. Israel. Holy. And both. Because of. The pride of sin. And self-righteousness. But Paul says here.

[11:13] That he has made both. One. By breaking down. In his flesh. The dividing wall. Of hostility. So in light of the enmity. That exists.

Between Jew and Gentile. Think about it. In light of the enmity. That might exist. Between northerners. And southerners.

Between black and white. Between. Insert. Thousands upon thousands. Of different things. That we've used. To build walls. To divide ourselves.

In light of all this. Paul says. That Christ. Is our peace. But I want. Us to see. That he still has in mind.

When he says this. He has in mind. Paul does. The great barrier. What is the great barrier? The reason there is.

[12:10] Enmity between us. The reason we find it so easy. To build walls. Among each other. Between each other. Is because of our sin nature. The greatest wall.

The one. No human can scale. Is the wall of division. Between us and God. And it is this wall. Primarily.

That Paul has in mind. And I think. As a devout Jewish man. Paul likely. Also has. A picture of the temple. In Jerusalem. In view. When he refers to the wall.

Walls of. Wall of hostility. Here. The temple. Was a segregated place. Rightly so. God's presence. Is in the holy of holies. Where no mortal. Dare goes. Except once a year. When the high priest. After making careful. Preparation. Goes in.

[13:09] And even. When he does go in. He goes in. With great fear. And trepidation. This place. The holy of holies.

Is covered. There's a wall. There's a veil. A thick veil. That goes from. The top of the ceiling. To the ground. That separates. Where God's presence is.

From. The rest of the people. Then. There's the holy place. Where the priest. Goes. To make sacrifices. Atoning sacrifices. And the holy place.

Is separated. From. The inner courts. By a short wall. You can. A grown man. You can probably see above the wall. But it's separated.

Only the priest can go. Into the holy place. Now. The inner courts. Is where. Only Jews are allowed in. To the inner courts. And then.

[14:06] Dividing the inner courts. And the outer courts. Is another. Taller wall. That separates. These two areas. And the Gentile. This Gentile side.

Of that wall. Has a sign. Often written. In Greek. In Latin. Actually. At least in. In Erodiian temple. That prohibits.

Gentiles. From going. Any further. Past that wall. On the pain of death. This. Was the makeup. Of the Jerusalem temple. And I want you to picture this. When you think of what Paul says. That Christ has done. In his flesh. In breaking down the walls. Of hostility. Upon his death.

On the cross. The veil. That separates. The holy of holies. Was torn in two. From top to bottom. That. The victor. The true. The filth. The name. The water. The water. The water. The water. The water. The water. The water. The water. The water. The water. The water. The water.

[15:02] The water. Put the water. lip. The water. lip. linked. signifying that we now have access to the Father through Jesus Christ by faith in his finished work on Calvary.

This is what Paul means when he says Jesus is our peace. He's broken down the great barrier. That is the greatest barrier, and if he has done that, you see the implications for all the other barriers.

So the temple was a visible manifestation of what Christ has done. But it goes even deeper than that. If you remember the law that was given, the Mosaic law given by God to Israel, someone puts it this way, that the law was like an iron wall that enclosed Israel like a fence, keeping them separated from Gentile influences, from corrupting influences.

But it was also the source of the enmity between these two groups. And Paul here shows that Christ has set the Mosaic law aside.

He set it aside by his once-for-all sacrifice on the cross, which the torn veil testifies to. He is torn it down in his flesh, Paul tells us, dividing the wall of hostility.

[16:37] So that even the moral law, the moral aspect of the Mosaic law, which we are still to keep, which we are bound to keep, which we are bound to obey, even that is now seen through the lens of the gospel.

The gospel being that which we've said, the gospel is what we've said earlier, that nothing you can do, by your own effort, nothing can bring you near to God.

The only means to God is to trust in his finished work. His perfect life lived on your behalf and his atoning death bearing penalty of our sins upon himself.

This is the gospel. This is what Christ, this is how we view even the moral law. This is the lens by which we view it. Ignore the crying child, no matter how loud he is.

No matter how loud he is. He's an objecture, so he's got a huge lung. So this is the promise that we have.

[17:53] This is what Christ has done. And what does this, what does this accomplish for us? What does it accomplish?

Paul tells us that it is so that Christ himself might create in himself a new man. That is a new humanity. You know, there are many walls of hostilities that we heat upon ourselves to divide ourselves.

Paul makes a profound declaration here. Jesus, in satisfying the wrath of God for the sins of all who are saved, makes them a new humanity.

Meaning that there is only one distinction God sees when he sees people. In Christ, or not in Christ. I'm going to repeat that.

There's only one distinction that God sees when he sees us. In Christ, or not in Christ. The implication for the church is this.

[19:02] By our union with Christ, we are also united with one another. Irrespective of any barriers that previously divided us.

To put it another way, our primary and our fundamental identity is that we are in Christ. All other identities are secondary or tertiary to that.

Do you have other identities? Are you African? Asian? European? Are you a city slicker?

Are you a country bunker? Democrat or Republican? American? COVID denier? Or COVID obsessed?

Are you blue collar? Are you a white collar? Are you a Black Lives Matter? Or Blue Lives Matter?

Are you in the faction that believes the church door should be painted red?

[20:08] Or the church door should be painted blue faction? I'm not making any statements in mentioning these walls.

I'm just pointing out these are the many things. Some important, some really vital, some inconsequential that we've used to build walls among ourselves.

In our society. In the world. Unfortunately, also in the church. Paul tells us that all these other identities are superseded by your common identity in Christ.

The list I just gave us, some of these identities are silly. Admittedly. Some are man-made. Some are immutable aspects of who you are, such as your skin color or ethnicity.

God created you that way. Those are good things. Yet all of them, all of them, are second to who you are in Christ.

[21:23] We are one in Christ Jesus. And since Christ is not divided into competing groups, and neither is the Holy Spirit that is given to the church, we cannot also be divided along secondary and tertiary lines.

When we allow things that are secondary to divide God's church, we cease to reflect what Christ has made us to be. And in doing so, we tell a lie about what God has made in his own flesh.

note that Paul, note here, that Paul is not exhorting us to be united and to bring peace. He's not saying, you need to be united.

You need to work hard and make him peace. Rather, he just declares that ye, Christ, is our peace. it has already been done. This is the, this is the matter of this first app of Ephesians. Paul is telling us who we are in Christ.

[22:31] And he's saying to us, the church of Christ, you are one. Irrespective of whether you believe it or not, whether you want to accept it or not, you are one in Christ Jesus.

You are family. And just like you don't get to choose your family, you don't get to choose who's sitting next to you right now. They are part of your family in Christ Jesus. Your brothers and sisters, blood bought in Christ.

This new humanity is not comprised of all those who believe in his name. I'm sorry.

This new humanity is now comprised of all those who believe in his name. From every nation, from every tribe, from every tongue. This new humanity is born not of blood, as John tells us, not of the will of the flesh or the will of man, but of God.

This new humanity has been reconciled in one body. Here, Paul is not referring to Christ's physical body when he says it's been reconciled in one body, but he's referring actually to the mystical body, the church.

[23:51] The church as Christ's body in the world. This is what the church is. We are people from different ethnic lines, like the Jews and the Gentiles, who have been brought near to God.

I have been in peace with God the Father, with the privilege of calling God our Father and being family members with one another.

This is the wonder of the gospel, that through Christ, those who are near, those are the Jews, and those who are far, those are the Gentiles, are now being brought near through Christ and have been made to have peace, lasting peace with God.

Let's go back to the temple. In the temple, the Jews had proximity to God. That didn't give them peace, did it? Remember, as the author of Hebrews says, they had to make continued sacrifices to God.

The priest was constantly standing day after day, after day, after day, before the altar making sacrifices. But in Christ, we have a high priest who was secured at peace with God, who was made a satisfactory offering of himself, who now sits at the right hand of God on high.

[25:28] peace. And this peace that he made has been extended, not just for the Jews, it's been extended through the proclamation of the gospel to every nation and tribe, every faction.

How do we know we have peace with God? Let's go back again to the temple motif. The Gentile had no access, remember, to God.

The Jews were near at proximity but no access either. Remember, the holy of holies, the thick veil. But in Christ, the great dividing wall of hostility keeping you away from God due to our sin, to my sin and your sin has been done away with on the cross.

The veil has been torn for through him, Paul tells us, we both have access in one spirit to the Father.

This access to the Father is the evidence of our peace with God. Jesus, our high priest, has gained us access. This is what Thomas Guthrie, this is how Thomas Guthrie, one of the Scottish divines, this is how we describe this access that we have.

[26:50] It says, it is the boldness of the little child that unabashed by anyone's presence climbs onto his father's knee and throws his arms around his father's neck or bursting into his father's room, breaks in on his father's busiest hours to have a bleeding finger bound or some childish tears kissed away.

It is the boldness that says that if any threaten or hurt him, he will go and tell his father. And however he might tremble to sleep alone, he fears neither ghosts nor man nor darkness nor devils if he lies couched at his father's side.

This is the confidence, such confidence, bold as it seems, springs from trust in a father's love and pleases rather than offends us.

This is what we have. Do you have such an access to God? Do you desire to have such an access to God?

If so, I bid you come to Christ. Place your trust in him. He is the way, the truth, and the life. Let us pray. Amen. Lord, we thank you for the cross.

[28:33] for there you made an end to our hopelessness and futile existence. And you secured for us a lasting peace.

There you broke all the barriers that separate us from God and from one another. Thank you, Lord, that you have created, as Paul tells us, in yourself, the church, and in you we are united.

So that Jews and Gentiles can come together. So that people from all ethnicity can be of one body, having together one citizenship in your heavenly kingdom.

Lord, please remind us of this very reality that is your church, that we are comprised of all nations and tribes, and that in glory we will see all of that diversity reflected in your kingdom as we worship you, as we see you face to face.

Help us, Lord, now, even in this world to live accordingly. Help us, Lord, not to build up walls because of our pride or our arrogance or our sin, Lord.

[30:11] Help us, rather, to break them down among ourselves and help us to proclaim the gospel that can only be the healing salve to what hails the world around us.

We pray all of this in the name of our Savior, Redeemer, Reconciler, Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen.