

# Wednesday Evening Service

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, before we turn back to the passage this evening, let's just unite our hearts together and pray it again. Let's pray.

Lord, we pray that this evening that we would be able to simply be still and know that you are God. And that through your spirit that you would speak to us afresh, that you would enliven our minds, that you would quicken our hearts to understanding of your word and the challenges which it presents to us.

We thank you too for the great encouragements that your word brings to us, for the truth in which it enlightens our lives and minds, how it changes and transforms us day by day.

So Lord, we pray for your spirit this evening, that your spirit would move amongst us, that we would be aware of your presence here. But too, we remember and we are mindful of those who cannot be with us, perhaps through no choice of their own.

Father, we think of the elderly, the infirm, those who are unwell. Father, that you would be ever close to them and especially at this time, that they would know your presence with them.

[ 1 : 26 ] We remember those who are beset by illness, those who are downcast, those who are struggling in their faith. And Father, we pray that you would put people in their paths to lift them up, to minister to them, to help them.

Lord, we just give thanks again for this opportunity to openly come here, to sing your praise without fear of reprisal. And we do thank you that we can indeed open our mouths and our hearts and pour them out to you in praise and in worship.

So we pray that you would speak to us this evening. Forgive us of our sins, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, if you'd like to turn back to the passage that we read a short time ago, and for a few minutes this evening, we'll consider a number of things from it.

Diversity. Diversity is something which is championed in our society today. But diversity, ultimately, is something that often leads to division.

The world that we live in is a world which is full of differences. There are political differences, which often result in war and division. There are social differences in areas of how we live and what is acceptable.

[ 2 : 51 ] Abortion, etc. These differences that people have often lead to division. Sometimes there's differences in the home. Sometimes people within the home fight with one another.

And these differences can often lead to division. But sadly, there's also differences within the church of God. There's differences in styles of worship.

There's differences in types of music and dress codes. Countless other differences that we could think about. And unfortunately, they often lead to division within the church.

Well, in this chapter, Paul is attempting to teach the church in Ephesus and indeed to ourselves that all of our differences are put to death in Christ Jesus.

Because in Christ, we are one. Whilst the world may fight wars, whilst society may argue over different agendas, whilst homes may be divided, the church should be a place where unity and peace prevail.

[ 4 : 06 ] Because in Jesus Christ, there is that oneness that brings all believers together on the common ground of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, in the first part of this chapter, Paul delineates for us our position. And the reality of life outside of Christ. In the first few verses.

But then tells us about how by grace we have been saved. How it is all of Jesus and not of ourselves. He tells us the richness of the position we now hold in Christ Jesus because it is by grace that we have been saved.

If we have put our trust and our hope in the Lord Jesus. There is a number of sermons even just in that first part of Ephesians 2. One of my favourite chapters.

But this evening, I would really like to look from verse 13. And in verse 13, Paul reminds us that, Now, in this section of chapter 2, Paul is dealing with the body of Christ.

[ 5 : 22 ] He's dealing with the church, with you and I. And he's doing that with the fact that the church is made up, the church of Christ is made up by both redeemed Jews and Gentiles.

Now, these two groups, as I'm sure you were aware, were avowed enemies of one another. That's illustrated to us in verses 11 and 12. The differences between the Jews and the Gentiles are driven home clearly by the words of verse 12.

But then in verse 13, he gives us that glorious news that Jesus, through the shedding of his blood, has reached out to all of those who were lost in sin and has brought them near to God.

In the passage before us, Paul is teaching that in Jesus there is no more Jew. That in Jesus there is no more Gentile. There is only those who are in Christ and those who are not.

Many years ago, one of the early church fathers named Clement of Alexandria said, We who worship God in a new way, as the third race, are Christians.

[ 6 : 37 ] Paul wants us to know that in Jesus, those who were once formerly at war have been made to be at peace with one another.

That's the U.S. slipping out in me. We have peace with both common man, but greater than that, we have peace with God.

That we have been declared righteous in his sight through the blood of the Lord Jesus. So let's look at three points this evening. What Jesus destroyed, what Jesus did, and what Jesus delivered.

So verses 14 and 15. First of all, what Jesus destroyed. Paul tells us that Christ is our peace. And when the prophet Isaiah spoke of the coming of Christ, he called him the Prince of Peace in Isaiah chapter 9.

And when Paul says that Jesus is our peace, he's telling us that Jesus is the ground of peace in which both the Jew and the Gentile are set.

[ 7 : 40 ] In other words, the Jew could never earn peace with God through their rituals, through their sacrifices, through their attempts at keeping the law. Regardless of what they did, they would still be sinners in the sight of a holy God.

But by the same token, the Gentiles, they didn't even have any way to approach God. They had no hope of securing peace with him through any means. What the law couldn't do, what sacrifices couldn't accomplish, what works of the flesh couldn't make a reality, Jesus did.

Jesus accomplished. He did all of that when he died on the cross for sinners. We're told that Jesus has broken down the wall of hostility.

Broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility. He's dissolved it. He's broken it. He's destroyed it. And in dying, Jesus brought some things to an abrupt end, didn't he?

Notice what he destroyed when he died. He destroyed a social wall. Paul mentions this dividing wall of hostility. And what he's talking about there really is the dividing wall that stood between the court of the Gentiles and the court of Israel within the temple.

[ 8 : 56 ] And there was this four-foot wall with several openings, but the Gentiles could not pass through. They couldn't go in. And archaeologists have actually recovered a sign that once hung on the wall.

And it said, Now that sign was symbolic of the division that there was, this deep entrenched division that existed between the Jews and the Gentiles.

They were on opposite sides of a great social divide. This wall, there was no common ground between them. But when Jesus died, when Jesus went to the cross, he dismantled that wall.

And he brought Jew and he brought Gentile together in himself. For those who don't know the Lord Jesus, those old walls still exist.

They still have barriers between themselves and others and ultimately between themselves and God. But for those of us who know the Lord, those of us who have put our trust in Jesus, we have discovered that these walls of division have been torn down forever.

[ 10 : 19 ] We have been liberated through the blood of the Lord Jesus. We have been united to him. Regardless of race, creed, culture, background, anything, we are one in Christ Jesus.

Or we should be. In Jesus, there is no Jew. There is no Gentile. There is only the Christian.

Colossians 3.11 Here, there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and is in all.

Galatians 3.28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile. Neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

That doesn't mean that we lose our identity in Christ. It simply means that nobody has an advantage over another. The ground is level at the foot of the cross.

[ 11 : 22 ] In Christ, there is only believer and unbeliever. And that should cause us to examine our heart, shouldn't it? That should cause us to examine our prejudices, perhaps a little more carefully.

Because we are no better than the next person in Christ Jesus. Because Christ himself has destroyed these dividing walls. So he destroyed a social wall.

He also destroyed a spiritual wall. Verse 15 says that he abolished. He has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two.

So making peace. He has broken it down. He has done away with it. He has raised it to the ground. The Jews despised the Gentiles because they dishonored, they disregarded the law of God. The Gentiles despised the Jews because they sought to keep the law of God.

[ 12 : 31 ] The Jews for their strict dietary laws, their laws of dress, their laws governing every aspect of the social and religious life. They hated the Gentiles who lived outside of that law and did as they pleased.

You see, the law stood as a great wall of division between these two groups of people. There was great hostility between the Jews and the Gentiles.

There's been great hostility between people of all kinds for all matter of reasons throughout the centuries. But the greatest hostility that ever existed was between man and God.

All men, regardless of who they were, Jew or Gentile, were sinners. Standing condemned before a holy God for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, Paul tells us.

Every man was guilty of violating the law of God. And therefore destined for wrath, judgment and death. Here's what the Jews never considered.

[ 13 : 33 ] Here's what the Gentiles never knew. Galatians 3.10 For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse, for it is written. Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law and do them.

When Jesus came. Jesus came and he died on the cross. What he did was he tore down the social walls between the Jews and the Gentiles. He tore down the spiritual walls between the lost sinners and the holy God.

Jesus Christ takes both Jews and Gentiles and makes them one new man in himself. The Lord takes these two groups of people that were so opposite, that were so opposed to one another. And he creates a brand new person. A new creation in Christ. But more than that, he takes sinners and makes them the body of Christ.

Makes us new in him. Christostom, the great early preacher, said that it's as if God took a statue of silver and a statue of lead, threw them into a furnace and they came out as a statue of gold.

[ 14 : 40 ] Not only had they become one, but they'd become better. In Christ, our differences disappear. We are declared righteous before God through the blood of Jesus, apart from the deeds of the law.

And not only are we made right with God, we are made right with one another. The divisions, the dividing wall of hostility has been taken down. In Jesus, everything that stands between people is destroyed.

In Jesus, everything that stands between sinners and God is destroyed. Paul says that he abolishes in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.

He breaks it down. He abolishes it. He renders it inoperative. Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes, Paul says in Romans chapter 5.

10. Christ is the culmination of the law. Through his death, Jesus Christ renders the law inoperative.

[ 15 : 54 ] The law holds no claim over us any longer. We are free from its power to condemn. But it still serves a number of purposes, doesn't it? It still serves the purpose of exposing our sins.

Romans 7. What shall we say then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not. Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. The law is a necessary teacher to bring us to Jesus, isn't it?

Galatians 3. Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under law. Locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith.

Now that this faith is the law. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. So in Christ Jesus, you are all children of God through faith. Paul tells us in Romans that there is no longer any separation.

There is no longer any condemnation. We are not under the law, but we are under grace. It is the grace of the grace of the Lord Jesus himself. Some of you may have been alive in 1961.

[17:09] I was not. I was not. But in 1961, the East Germans built a wall around West Berlin and Germany. And this wall cut off West Berlin from the rest of Germany.

Families and friends were divided, were separated for a generation because of this wall. And East Germans, the guards there patrolled the wall. They killed hundreds of people, even whole families who tried to cross the wall to freedom in the West.

But in 1989, the East German government announced that the East Berliners could pass through the wall to visit people on the other side. And a celebratory atmosphere broke out.

And in a short time, souvenir hunters began to chip away at the wall. I've got a bit of it, as it would come to pass. And before long, the two governments dismantled the wall completely, leading to the reunification of Germany in 1990.

And I remember watching it on the television. And if you were watching it on the news at that time, then you've got a small glimpse of what Paul is trying to teach us here in this passage.

[18:17] Because when the wall fell, people from East and West crossed the no man's land where the wall had stood. And these former enemies embraced one another in a spirit of unity, didn't they?

When Jesus broke down the walls between the Jew and the Gentile, he made it possible for these long-term enemies to be brought together, to be unified, to be united.

He made it possible for the lost, the wretched, the broken sinner like me and like you to be embraced by a holy God. He made reconciliation possible on every level for us through his blood. And we praise him for that this evening. So we see what Jesus destroyed. Verse 16, we see what Jesus did.

Having told us what Jesus has destroyed, Paul now tells us how he did it and what he did for us when he did it. He accomplished our reconciliation, didn't he?

[19:20] And might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

The word reconcile means to bring into a state of harmony. And the Lord Jesus in his death destroyed the walls of separation that stood between the Jew and the Gentile.

He destroyed the walls of separation that stood between a sinful man and a holy God. He was able to take warring parties and bring them together in himself, making eternal peace.

That's our Savior. That's Jesus. He's brought man together with man and he's brought man together with God.

Because the ultimate goal of Jesus and the Lord himself wasn't to settle a dispute between two opposing parties. His ultimate goal was to reconcile sinful people to himself.

[20:23] His ultimate goal was to take the lost, condemned, sinful man and make him one with God.

And he accomplished that when he went to the cross for us, for me and for you. Not only did he accomplish our reconciliation, but he accomplished our redemption.

He did that by giving all of himself on the cross. A perfect sacrifice for sin.

Atonement on the cross of Calvary. And in giving himself, he has killed the hostility. That's what it says here.

We might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. He killed it. He abolished it. When he died on the cross, he delivered all of us from death to life if we put our trust and our hope in him.

[21:29] How did he do that? Well, he did it by becoming subject to the law, didn't he? Galatians 4. But when the set time had fully come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law that we might receive adoption to sonship.

He did it by bearing its penalty. Galatians 3. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. For it is written, cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.

He did it in his own body, didn't he? 1 Peter. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness.

By his wounds, you have been healed. He did it on the cross. Where we were once alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of our evil behavior.

But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight without blemish and free from accusation.

[ 22 : 39 ] Colossians 1. He offered himself in the place of sinners. He offered himself in my place. He offered himself in your place that we may be free.

That's the cost of what Jesus did. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5. That's our Savior. That's Jesus. So we see what Jesus destroyed.

We see what Jesus did. And then we see what Jesus delivered. Verse 17. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.

For through him we both have access in one spirit to the Father. The word peace appears in this passage a number of times.

[ 23 : 47 ] Verses 14, 15, 17. And peace speaks of harmony, of unity, of concord. And that's what Jesus accomplished. And that's what Jesus accomplished between the Jew and the Gentile.

In verse 17, it speaks of peace between man and God. It refers to this tranquil state of soul assured of its salvation through Christ.

And therefore having nothing to fear in this life. That's what his peace means. This peace which passes all understanding. But the word preached here too is often the same word translated gospel. Literally the good news. And Paul is telling us that the Lord Jesus Christ secured peace with God through his death on the cross. And that he's gone out to both Jew and to Gentile declaring the good news that they both can be saved from their sin.

And that good news still stands today. Praise his name. That those who come to Jesus for salvation will always find a willing saviour. If you are not in Christ today, if you haven't given your life to Christ, then if you come to him, bear the words of John 6, 37 in mind, All those the Father gives me will come to me and whoever comes to me, I will never drive away.

[ 25 : 15 ] He will never drive people away as they seek him. If you are seeking the Lord, come to him. He is waiting for you. Those who come to Jesus are brought into a state of perpetual peace with God himself.

Those who come to Jesus experience complete forgiveness and freedom from sin. Those who come to Jesus find that they are reconciled to God, that they are adopted into his family.

When we come to Christ, we experience his power to forgive, to save, to deliver, to secure, to change, to transform us forever. That's the good news that Jesus preached.

That's the good news that we then preach. That's the good news that we take out with us as we seek to fulfill the Great Commission. So he delivered a message of peace, but he also delivered a message of permission.

Through what Jesus did on the cross, we have access to the Father. When we come to Jesus in faith, we are placed in a position of being brought before God by him.

[ 26 : 49 ] And this word that's used here is used three times in the New Testament, in Romans 5 and Ephesians 3. And each time it refers to the believer's access to God.

And the word really refers to a court official who was responsible for introducing people to the King. That person controlled access to the King.

Jesus Christ is our access to the Father. I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through me.

Jesus is our access to the Father. He is able to take us to the Father if we come to him in true faith. At one time, our sin stood us an impossibly high barrier between us and God. Think of it like driving along the M25 and there's a 35 car pileup.

[ 27 : 53 ] There is debris, there is barriers, there are many obstacles in our way and we cannot get through. We know where we want to go, but we cannot get there. That's life without Jesus.

But Jesus is like the recovery and rescue crews that come and clear the way. They take all of the debris, all of the obstacles, all of the hindrances out of our path.

And he clears the way to the Father. That's what Jesus did when he tore down these walls. He tore down that impossibly great wall, that dividing wall of hostility between us and the Father.

And he has made access to the Father possible. And not only that, he presents us to the Father. Many years ago, there was a young boy and he stood outside a palace.

He wanted to see the King. He didn't want to ask for anything, just wanted to see the King. But there were several obstacles that stood between him and the King.

[ 28 : 54 ] There was the impossibly high wall. Then there was the impossibly high barriers. Then there was the security personnel dotted around the perimeter. Then there was the building itself.

There was no way that he could even catch a glimpse of the King. And having stood there for some time, one of the security officers said to him, it was time for him to go home.

He could not see the King. But just then, the gate opened and a young man strode out, took this young man by the hand and led him inside the palace grounds.

Took him around and showed him the highlights of the palace. And after a while, they came to a door. And as they walked in, this young man couldn't believe his eyes as he saw the King sitting before him.

Right before him was the King. And this stranger that had the young man's hand said, Father, I have a young boy here who would like to meet you.

[ 30 : 00 ] Young man, meet the King. Now what this young man didn't know was that the stranger who had taken his hand was the son of the King.

It was the Prince. And by meeting the son, this young man met the father. And it's just like that for us.

When we meet the son, we're then introduced to the father. The son gives us access where access was previously forbidden.

In Jesus, we have access to the father. We could never have got there on our own merit. We can never reach that place by what we have to offer.

But we can meet the son. And the son can offer us access to the father. And that is why we can be bold. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence.

[ 31 : 02 ] So that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. I'm very thankful this evening for what Jesus did in bringing me to God.

And what he has done for bringing each of us that have our faith in him to the Lord. We give him praise this evening that he has made us one with one another.

And that he has made us one with God. That that is the message that we proclaim. There is no longer any Jew or Gentile. But that we are one in Christ Jesus.

So often we put up artificial barriers between ourselves and others. So often we put up barriers between ourselves and God. But Jesus has broken all of these barriers.

He has taken all of these obstacles and hindrances and cleared the path. If we will put our trust in him. There are others.

[ 32 : 18 ] There are people who are different to us. There are people who live slightly different to us. But often we look at people and say if they don't live exactly like we do.

Then they must be wrong. But we shouldn't tolerate that kind of attitude within us. Because Jesus died to eradicate and erase the distinctions between his people.

He died to make us one in himself. And until we come to the place where we are willing to walk as one with Jesus.

The question is will the church ever experience the power or presence of Jesus as it would.

If we cast petty differences aside and lived in a united way. Until we come to a place of unity.

[ 33 : 25 ] We'll always be less than Jesus saved us to be. Jesus has broken down the dividing wall of hostility.

He has died in order that we may be freed. And he is our access to the Father. Father we thank you for your word to us and for its challenge.

And we pray that we would be people who live for Jesus. That we wouldn't put up our own preference or opinion as barriers or as obstacles.

But that we would recognize that we are one in Christ Jesus. And that we would focus on that which is of fundamental importance. We ask it now in Jesus name.

Amen.