

**Ephesians**  
**He Himself Is Our Peace**  
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We're looking together at Ephesians 2, continuing our study of this great letter. And particularly, we're looking at the paragraph that begins in verse 11 of chapter 2 and runs all the way through the end of the chapter. We looked at length at the first ten verses of this chapter, and the first ten verses are intensely personal. They record how it is that individual sinners have been rescued by God. The verses 11 through 22 are more corporate in their focus. They look at Christ's work, not only as it affects the individual, but as Christ's work brings each individual into unity with the rest of the people of God, regardless of their background, regardless of their race, regardless of those things that seem to divide and make us distinct here in this world. The theme of this paragraph, I told you last time, is that all Christians, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds are united together with God and each other in the church, through the work of Jesus Christ. Paul is very concerned to make sure the Christians in Ephesus, and that we, understand this truth. And he develops this theme in three distinct sections, as he works his way through this paragraph.

Verses 11 through 13, we find out about the reality of this union. In verses 14 through 18, the reason for the union; and in verse 19 to 22, the results of the union. Last time we examined verses 11 through 13, the reality of the union. He begins by saying, verse 11, "Therefore, remember...." He says, I want you to keep two great realities about your relationship to God and your relationship to others at the very forefront of your thinking. I want you to remember your past disconnect from God and from His people. In verses 11 and 12 he reminds us that there was a time when we were totally disconnected from God, and we were totally distanced from His elect and chosen people. We were without Christ, outside of Israel, without the covenants of promise, without hope, and without God.

He also says, I want you to remember, as you think about your past, I want you to remember your present union with God and His people. The past was a disconnect, but now, you have been united together. There is the reality of a union. Verse 13, "but now in Christ Jesus, we who were formerly were far off have been brought near." Now, we Gentiles have the Messiah. We are heirs of the covenants of promise. We have hope and the God of Israel is our God.

Remember the reality of this union that has taken place. We are connected to God, and we are connected to His true people.

Today we come to the second section, verses 14 through 18, the reason for the union. The cause, if you will, of the union. What lies behind this union that has been created. Verses 14 through 18. Let me read them for you.

For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity, AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.

This is a very challenging and difficult section, as you can see even as I read it. But it is so important to the apostle Paul's argument. This section, those verses I just read for you, are really at the heart and soul of this entire letter. Today, I just want to introduce you to these verses. I want you to get the big picture. Next week, Lord willing, we'll take them apart, but I don't want you to miss the forest for the trees. If I were to summarize these five verses in one word, it would be a very important biblical word. The word itself occurs down in verse 16. It's the word "reconcile." While the word "reconcile" doesn't occur in every verse, the concept of reconciliation permeates every word of this entire section that I've just read to you. We need "reconciliation." What is the opposite of reconciliation? What creates the need for reconciliation? The antonyms of "reconciliation" or "to reconcile" would be "alienation, enmity, hostility."

Alienation and hostility are part of life in a fallen world. If you don't believe that, pick up the newspaper. Look in your extended family, or perhaps in your immediate family. This alienation and hostility is true horizontally. That is, it is true between man and man. We see this in our individual lives. We see this in nations. We see this throughout the history of mankind. But alienation and hostility are also true, not only horizontally, as we live and interact with others; but they are also true vertically. There is hostility and alienation between every human being and God, by nature. But this is the wonderful thing about what Christ has done. He brings reconciliation both horizontally and vertically. He unites. He brings people together with each

other, and He brings us together with God. That's what Ephesians 2:14 to 18 describes. And it does so with great theological depth and precision. And Lord willing, we will take it apart in great detail next week.

But today, I want you to consider with me what has made that reconciliation with other human beings and with God possible. Paul tells us in one simple expression at the beginning of verse 14. Here it is in a nutshell. Here's why we can be reconciled, the end of alienation, the end of hostility. "For He Himself is our peace." That's a profound statement, and one you ought to memorize, think about, meditate on. "For He Himself is our peace." The word "for" takes us back to verse 13. God has brought all of those who believe near to Him, and therefore near to each other. He's created this union. And how did He do it? How did God accomplish this union of us with Him and of us with each other? For, because, here's how. "He Himself is our peace."

Now, notice the change in pronouns that happens here in verse 14. If you look at verses 11 through 13, Paul repeatedly uses the second person plural pronoun. "You," "you," over and over again. Verse 12, "you were at that time separate." Verse 13, "but now you who were formerly far off," but in verse 14 he begins, "for He Himself is our peace." Paul includes himself and every other Christian in this monumental statement. It doesn't matter whether you're a Jew or a Gentile, male or female, whatever other distinctions there may be. If you're in Christ, this is true of you. "He Himself is our peace." Now, what did Paul mean? Why do we need peace? For just a few minutes I want you to think with me and consider two very simple truths that flow out of that powerful sentence. Two very simple truths that lie behind the statement, "He Himself is our peace"

Truth number one. God is at war with every sinner. God is at war with every sinner. That's a shocking thing to say, isn't it? I mean, we don't think of God like that. We don't think of ourselves like that. But that's the universal testimony of the Scripture. Immediately, when sin came into the world, there was alienation and hostility. You remember, if you're familiar with the Christian faith at all. If you've been in the church any time at all, you remember the story from the garden of Eden, how that God Himself in the second person of the Trinity, the Eternal Son of God, would come in the cool of the day, the Scripture says, and walk through the garden with Adam and Eve, perfect fellowship, perfect communion. But when Adam and Eve chose to sin, when they chose to eat of the tree that had been forbidden them as a test of their willingness to obey, immediately something happened. Immediately there was hostility. There was alienation. What was the very first thing Adam and Eve did when the Son of God comes walking through the garden in the cool of the day? They hide themselves. And we've been

hiding ever since. We are, by nature, God's enemies. Every man, every woman, by nature, as we are born apart from the intervening grace of God, we are God's enemies. As rebellious sinners against His law that's written on our hearts, our consciences constantly accuse us and remind us that we have set ourselves against Him. We put other gods in His place. We worship idols, whether literal stone idols or the idols of the heart, things that become more important to us than loving and obeying God. We have made ourselves God's enemies.

James puts it like this, the half-brother of our Lord. He says, "... do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God. Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." You say, I just don't think of myself as God's enemy. I don't even think that that was true of me before I came to faith in Christ. Listen to what James says again. "Whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

When the US entered World War Two and allied itself with Britain, we immediately became the enemy of all of those who were fighting against the allies. Simply by joining ourselves to Britain, we became the enemy of everyone who was fighting Britain. That's what James is saying here. In the same way, James says that when you choose the world as your friend, when you choose to pursue the lust of your flesh, when you choose to pursue the lust of the eyes, when you choose to pursue the boastful pride of life, when you live for what your body wants, for what your eyes see, and to be exalted in the sight of others; then you have made yourself by default the friend of the world, and by default the enemy of God. So, man is clearly hostile to God.

But listen, there's a greater problem. The biggest problem is not that you are hostile to God or that I am hostile to God. The bigger problem is that God is hostile toward us. It's not something we like to think about, but that's what the Scriptures teach. God is at war with us. That's an interesting expression. You know, we use it in reference to countries. When we say they're at war, usually something happens before they actually are at war. Usually one of the countries will break off its diplomatic ties, will close its embassy in the opposing country. But even when that happens, there's still not technically in a state of war. Something else has to happen first. One of the countries has to declare war, or commit an act of war against the other country. Only then are the two countries technically at war.

And the Scriptures teach that this is the situation between God and us. God has formally declared war against us, against every sinner. Turn to Psalm 7. I want you to see this because

it's hard for us to really grasp this. This is what the Bible teaches. Here, David writes about this reality. Verse 8 of Psalm 7.

“The LORD judges the peoples; Vindicate me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and my integrity that is in me. O let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous; For the righteous God tries the hearts and minds.” [So here you have this dichotomy. There's the righteous and the wicked.] “My shield is with God, Who saves the upright in heart” [So God rescues those who are righteous.] “God is a righteous judge, And a God who has indignation every day.”

So, God rescues the righteous. He is angry with the wicked every day as well. There is, in God, this sense of antagonism, of indignation against sinners. And we all are. In Isaiah, Isaiah makes this image very clear. Isaiah 42. He describes God as a warrior against His enemies. Isaiah 42:13. Here you have part of a great section of Isaiah about the servant of JHWH, a promise, a prophecy of Jesus Christ, and who He will be and what He will do. Not only will He bring, verse 3, salvation to the weak and the repentant heart, but He'll also come as judge. Verse 13, “The LORD will go forth like a warrior, He will arouse *His* zeal like a man of war. He will utter a shout, yes, He will raise a war cry. He will prevail against His enemies.”

You get the picture behind this verse? Jesus Christ will bring the message of salvation. But there will come a day in which He will launch an assault against His enemies, those who have not received Him, those who have not accepted the message of peace. Verse 14,

“I have kept silent for a long time, I have kept still and restrained Myself. *Now* like a woman in labor I will groan, I will both gasp and pant. I will lay waste the mountains and hills ... I will make the rivers into coastlands and dry up the ponds.”

Here is a description of the coming judge, Jesus Christ, as He becomes a warrior battling His enemies. Paul makes the same point but in different language in Romans 1:18 when He says, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men who suppress the truth....”

Romans 2:5, “... because of your ... [stubborn and rebellious hearts] you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” Perhaps the

best summary of all that I'm saying to you is found in Romans 5. Romans 5, notice verse 10: "... we were enemies...." That's God's perspective. We were His enemies before we came to faith in Christ. God is at war with every unbeliever. He's already declared war and someday, He will begin the hostilities for real. That's implied in that wonderful statement, "for He Himself is our peace." The reason we need peace is because God is at war. That's not talking about some subjective feeling you feel in your heart. It's talking about an objective state of peace, the cessation of hostilities. If there's the cessation of hostilities, that means before there was war, and that's exactly what the Bible describes. So, God is at war with every sinner.

The second truth, a wonderful truth that really is the heart of this statement, is that in Christ, we can be reconciled to God. In Christ we can be reconciled to God. We desperately need reconciliation. We need peace with God. God realized this, and because God is a God of love as well as a God of wrath and anger against sin, He begins to promise in the Old Testament that He's going to send someone who will bring the end of the war, someone who will bring peace. You remember, He begins to announce in that way in Isaiah 9:6. What does He say about Him? He is the Prince of Peace. He is the prince whose reign will be characterized not by war but by peace. Most earthly rulers seek to make a name for themselves in war, but the Messiah will establish His kingdom in peace.

Turn to Micah 5, Micah 5. We quote this passage often at Christmas time in reference to Christ, but we don't read the whole passage. Micah 5:2 speaks of where Christ would be born. "But as for you Bethlehem Ephrathah, *Too* little to be among the clans of Judah, From you one will go forth for Me to be a ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity." This is a prophecy about Jesus Christ, where He would be born.

Notice verse 4: "... He will arise and shepherd *His flock* In the strength of the LORD, In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God. And they will remain, Because at that time He will be great To the ends of the earth. This One will be *our* peace."

So even in the Old Testament you begin to see the promise that God is going to send someone to reconcile Himself to us. To bring peace where there is hostility. To bring truce where there is war. And when Christ came, it quickly became evident that He was the one that had been promised that would bring peace. You see it even at the announcement of His birth. Turn to Luke 2. Luke 2:14. You remember, suddenly there appeared with the angel there with the

shepherds a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace among men”

This was a proclamation that peace with God is available to all men and all women. That this child would procure peace with God, the end of the war. He will secure that peace, notice, for all of those who are truly His subjects. Peace among men with whom He is pleased. You see, when the angels pronounced peace on earth, they weren’t primarily talking about world peace, although someday that will come, under the reign of Christ. They were talking about a very personal, individual application of peace that grows out of a first-hand knowledge of the Prince of Peace. You know the Prince of Peace, you bow to Him, and you have peace with God. This is the message of the gospel.

In fact, look at Ephesians 2:17. Here’s the gospel in a nutshell. [Jesus] ... CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE NEAR.” That’s why, in 6:15 it’s called the gospel of peace, the good news that there can be peace with God. The war can be over. Peter, when he brought the gospel to the Gentiles in Acts 10:36, said, “The word which He sent to the sons of Israel [that is, the word Jesus sent to the sons of Israel] preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)” [This is at the heart of the gospel, this reconciliation.]

Now turn back to Ephesians 2 and look at verse 14 again. “For He Himself is our peace....” Notice that Christ doesn’t just make peace or bring peace, although He does that. He is our peace. In His person, Jesus is peace for us, with God. Peace with God is a person, Jesus Christ. The emphasis here is on the fact that in His own person, Jesus has reconciled us to God. He’s the one who brings reconciliation to human relationships. He’s the only one who can bring reconciliation between us and God.

Isaiah 53:5, we looked at a number of weeks ago now, says the chastening to secure our well-being (you remember what that word well-being is, it’s the word “peace,” it’s the Hebrew word “shalom”), the chastening to secure our peace fell on Him on the cross. Romans 5:1, “... we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” He Himself is our peace. Paul’s point is that Christ is the basis of true reconciliation, peace with God. The war is over for those whom God has rescued.

Now what is this “reconciliation?” Well, the Greek word that’s translated “reconcile” originally meant “to exchange.” It was used in secular Greek for the process of money changing. If you’ve ever traveled internationally, you go to either a bank or someplace there at the airport, or in the

country to which you've traveled, and you exchange your money, US dollars, for the currency that's there. There's an exchange rate that's set, and supposedly, you're getting an equal amount of funds in that currency, that you're giving them in US currency. That's how this word was used in secular Greek, to exchange one set of coins of one kind, for that of another of equal value. So here's the picture behind this word. When two people are "reconciled," they exchange something. They exchange enmity and hostility for friendship. Where the relationship was characterized by hostility, you trade in the hostility, and you get an equal amount of friendship, and amiability, and relationship. Douglas Moo writes, "To reconcile means to bring together, to make peace between two estranged or hostile parties."

So, "reconciliation" (don't miss this, this is the heart of what Paul is saying, that He's our peace), reconciliation consists of two elements: the end of hostility, and mutual acceptance and genuine friendship. Reconciliation consists of the end of all hostility, and mutual acceptance and genuine friendship. Lloyd-Jones puts it like this:

Reconciliation is not merely that which brings people into speaking terms again, who formerly passed one another without even looking at each other." It means really bringing together again, a re-uniting, a re-connecting. It is not a compromise, the kind of thing that happens so often when a conference has gone on for days and there's been a deadlock, and somebody suddenly gets a bright idea and suggests introducing a particular word or formula which just patches up the problem for a moment. It's not that [he says]. It is a complete action. It produces complete amity and concord where there was formerly hostility.

Listen carefully. Everyone outside of Christ is God's enemy. But in Christ, in reconciliation, that relationship changes completely. We go from being God's worst enemies, to being His most beloved children. That's what reconciliation is. We go from being His worst enemies to being the special objects of His favor and love and care. That's reconciliation. Paul loves this image of reconciliation for what God did in Christ at the cross. He uses it often. Romans 5. In fact, turn there again. Romans 5:9. He says,

... having ... been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of *God* through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. [And he ends verse 11 saying,] we exult in God ... through whom we have now received the reconciliation. [There is reconciliation.]



Colossians 1, he makes this same point. Verse 19:

“... it was the *Father’s* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in [Christ], and through ... [Christ] to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross ... you were formerly alienated and hostile ... *engaged* in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach--”

But my favorite passage, as you know if you’ve been here in our church any time at all, is 2 Corinthians 5, 2 Corinthians 5:18. Paul says,

... all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and ... [has given to us] [who now have been reconciled] the ministry of reconciliation ... God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

And here’s how He reconciled us. Verse 21, “[God] ... made ... [Christ] who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

I want you to notice in this passage that reconciliation needs to happen from both sides. Notice verse 19, God’s side. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. God took the initiative to reconcile us to Himself by sending His Son. But man’s side is accomplished when the sinner accepts, by faith, the completed work of Christ. Look at verse 20: ... “we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

This is the only way. This is the only way to go from being God’s worst enemy to being His most cherished son or daughter, is through Christ and through what He did. If you think you know God, or you think you have God’s favor, but you have not embraced Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, you are deceiving yourself. There is no other way to have peace with God. There’s no other way for the war to be over. And if you think you’ve not done that but you’re not at war with God, you better listen to God’s assessment, because He says you are. God is at war with every sinner, but in Christ, we can be reconciled to God. We can have peace, not only the end of the war, but mutual acceptance and genuine care and love and concern.

It would have been wonderful to have lived in the first century and to have seen the magnificent piece of architecture that was Herod's Temple. By the time of Jesus' life, they'd been working on it for fifty years, building that magnificent temple. There were huge courtyards surrounded by beautiful arched balustrades, big enough to hold hundreds of thousands of people. But the focal point of the temple mount in the first century, in the center of that massive mount was a building, the temple proper. At the very front of it, it was 150 feet high by 150 feet wide. That's 50 yards high by 50 yards wide. A massive structure. And if you had been a priest and you were allowed, you could have walked in the front door of that massive entrance into what was called the Holy Place. This is where the priests ministered daily. And as you walked into that massive structure and looked toward the back there would have been a perfect small cube, one room, one small cube toward the very rear. It was thirty feet by thirty feet by thirty feet. It was accessible by only one man, and by him only once a year on the Day of Atonement. The high priest could enter that little cube set in the back of that massive building.

It was separated, the Holy of Holies as it was called, from the Holy Place, by a massive curtain. The Jewish Mishnah tells us that that curtain that separated the Holy Place from the holy of holies was thirty feet by sixty feet and it was made of seventy-two squares that had been sewn together. It was suspended from four gold covered pillars. Josephus tells us it was a magnificently beautiful curtain. Mostly, and primarily, a rich blue decorated with gold thread and gold emblems all across it. But perhaps the most impressive thing about this curtain was the sheer massive character of it. Because this curtain was a hand-breadth thick, four inches thick. The rabbinical literature tells us that the priests claimed it took 300 men to handle it. It was there for a reason. It was there as a barrier. It was there as a wall of sorts. It pictured the distance that sinful people must remain from the presence of a holy God.

But at the exact moment that Jesus died, the priests serving in the temple that day heard an awful sound. And they looked in horror and saw that four-inch thick curtain, which had hung there for years, being ripped. And it ripped completely in two, and as Matthew tells us, it ripped from the top to the bottom, clearly a divine act, clearly a commentary on the death of His Son that was happening just outside the city walls as the Passover lamb was being slain in the temple, and as the High Priest himself perhaps either had just entered or was about to enter into the Holy of Holies. What was the message of the torn curtain? It was certainly the end of symbolism and all of its shadows. It was the end of the priesthood and all of the sacrificial system, but mostly it was the end of a barrier between the sinner and God. Our great High Priest had entered into the presence of God Himself to offer Himself as the sacrifice. And He didn't come out like the earthly high priest and try to pull the curtain together. He tore it down, and He let sinners in.

Through Christ we can come to God directly. We need no priest. We need no sacrifice. We need no ritual.

God the Father wanted us to know that in the death of His Son, the way into His presence, for all of us who will believe, for all who will turn from their sins and follow His Son, the way has been made. We have been reconciled to God. The war is over. Don't stay at a distance. Come, and be the special objects of My care and favor. How did He do that? He did it through His Son. For He Himself is our peace, our shalom. If you sin, if you have ever sinned, then you are by nature God's enemy. And God's character, the Bible tells us, demands justice. It demands that that sin be dealt with as it deserves. And every sin contains enough guilt because it is committed against a holy, creating, omnipotent God. Every sin contains enough guilt to damn us forever to eternal punishment away from the presence of God.

But while God is holy and while He is just and while He is filled with wrath against sin, God is also love. God loved the world, and He sent His son to demonstrate that love. If you have any doubt that God loves you, look at the cross where He slew His Own Son. And He invites every sinner who is currently at war with Him to be reconciled. I beg you, Paul says, on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. Put down your arms of rebellion. If you will today, if you have not already, if you will today turn from your sin and embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, then the war will be over. And you will go from being God's worst enemy to being His most beloved child. We have been reconciled.

Our Father, we thank You for the sacrifice of Christ. We thank you that He willingly gave up His life, the innocent for the guilty, so that He might reconcile us to You. Father, we thank You and praise You for Jesus Christ, for His life and for His death. And we thank You that even now He stands in Your presence as our great high priest, having entered the Holy of Holies once for all. We thank You in His great name. Amen.