

Eph 2:14-22

14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, 16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. 17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. 18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

There is a lot of division in the world today.

America is divided over many issues and that shouldn't surprise any of us.

Thus far in the first half of the chapter we've seen God reconciling man to Himself

- and then in Christ He reconciles us to one another.

In verse 10 we're told that we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

When Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians

- there was that middle wall of separation,
- between Jew and Gentile.

Paul used this wall as an illustration of the division between Jew and Gentile.

In this next section, verses 13 thru 18 we'll see how God reconciled both Jew and Gentile to Himself.

Eph 2:13

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (they were drawn to God thru the gospel message)

- They were once alienated from Christ,
- and strangers foreigners in a strange land.

Then he says something similar to what he said earlier in verse 4,

- But now!

In verse 4 he said,

- But God!

There was a time when the Gentiles were the scum of the earth to the Jews.

In Acts 11, the Jewish Christians reprimanded Peter

- Because he sat and dined with the Gentiles.

14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,

Christ broke the middle wall of separation .

At one time there was a crack in our relationship between us and the Lord.

- Perhaps there are cracks in some of your relationships.

We may need to mend gaps

- between us and a relative or between us and a friend.

Jesus is our peace, the one that bridged the gap between us and Him.

So how did Christ's death bring down the wall of enmity and hatred between the Jews and the Gentiles?

- He abolished the enmity which is the commandments of the law contained in ordinances.
- He Created in Himself one new man from the two thus making peace.
- He reconciled both Jew and Gentile to Himself through the cross (vs 16)
- He brought peace (vs 17)

15 having abolished (to nullify, to render inactive, useless or ineffective) in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man (the church) from the two (Jew and Gentile), thus making peace,

In order for the Lord to join us unto Himself

- He needed to abolish the law.

Paul is referring to the ceremonial law,

- the customs of the nation,
- such as circumcision,
- sacrifices, ceremonies, feasts and festivals etc.

Jesus came to make peace:

“To make” is derived from a Greek word meaning “to create.”

1 Cor 10:13

13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make (create) the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

God will CREATE a way of escape for you if you'll only lean on Him.

16 and that He might reconcile (to bring together again) them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

- The Jews wanted the Gentiles to become like them, but the truth is that the Jews needed to come to Jesus like the Gentiles did.

It was the same law that separated the Jews from the Gentiles

- which separated man from God.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off (Gentiles) and to those who were near (Jews). Jesus came to bring peace.

He said in,
John 14:27

27 Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

The Pax Romana didn't last very long. John F. Kennedy once said that "the mere absence of war is not peace."

There will never be real peace until Christ is ruling and reigning.

18 For through Him (Jesus) we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. (Trinity)

19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers (Gentiles) and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints (We belong with the saints, the Christians) and members of the household of God,

20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,

Thank God for the apostles and the prophets

- who were obedient and paved the way for us to see Jesus.

Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,

21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,

The cornerstone is the first stone set in the construction of a masonry foundation.

- It's the most important stone.

Jesus is the chief cornerstone.

22 in whom (the Lord) you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

This is a metaphoric picture of the church.

- We are citizens of heaven,
- we are brothers and sisters
- having the same Father.

Eph 3:1-7

1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles — 2 if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, 3 how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, 4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), 5 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: 6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, 7 of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.

Responsibility laid on Paul:

- He directed his efforts toward the Lord.

When he came to the Lord

- he became a powerful witness.

The Jews were furious that Paul taught salvation

- both for the Jew and the Gentile.

Paul, did not criticize the Jews for opposing him.

Eph 3:1-2

1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles — 2 if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

Eph 3:1-2

1 When I think of all this, I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus for the benefit of you Gentiles . . . 2 assuming, by the way, that you know God gave me the special responsibility of extending His grace to you Gentiles. NLT

Something to focus on here is that

- Paul was a prisoner of Jesus.

Lord, if this is what you have for me,

- I'm going to go thru it with every ounce of power I have.

I believe Paul knew once he'd been called

- it would most likely mean prison time
- and eventually death.

Twice in this letter, in chapters 3 & 4

- Paul reminds the Ephesians that he was a prisoner.

Then in chapter 6 he says he was “an ambassador in bonds.”

The Ephesians probably wondered why Paul was in prison?

In this paragraph he will explain his situation and he will also explain the mystery of the church.

2 if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

The English word “dispensation” is derived from the Greek word “oikonomia.” It’s definition is “stewardship, or to rule over a household”

John 1:17

17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Paul understood the Lord has given him the responsibility of extending His grace to the Gentiles.

Eph 3:3-4

3 how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already,

The mystery Paul is referring to is that now

- both Jew and Gentile
- could freely come to the cross.

4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),

What is God’s plan in this mystery?

5 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:

This is speaking of the OT. Things that were once concealed in the OT have now been revealed in the NT. None of the OT prophets knew that one day God would unite all people groups to Himself.

Now Paul tells us in verse 6 what the mystery is.

6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,

The Jews didn't like this because

- they were taught from birth that they were special.

Deut 7:6

6 "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.

Some Jews said that God created the Gentiles to kindle the fires of hell. It was also against their oral law to help a Gentile woman thru birth because they were assisting in bringing another heathen into the world.

Paul said that the Gentiles should be partakers of God's promise:

Eph 3:7-8

7 of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. 8 To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

- Was Paul pretending to be humble?
- I don't think so!

When you consider that he once attempted to stamp out the faith prior to

- the Lord getting a hold of him, he was sincere.

He dove in all the way!

1 Cor 15:9

9 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Paul didn't forget where he'd come from, nor did he forget his past mission!

1 Tim 1:15 he called himself the chief of sinners.

Paul says in Timothy that

- he is the chief of sinners

and in Ephesians he says

- he is the least of all the saints.

We may feel like that at times

- because we have an enemy that is real. He condemns.

Many of us if not all feel the same way,

- I am the chief of sinners.

9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;

Well, since this mystery was so awesome, why did God wait so long to reveal it?

One: to give Israel an opportunity to be a light to the Gentiles that they never became.

Two: To educate the angels.

Look at verse 10:

10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom (the many colors or diverse) of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers (designations for angelic beings) in the heavenly places, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,

1 Peter 4:10 speaks of God's "manifold grace"

10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

God has plenty of grace for us!

Paul speaks of God's manifold wisdom.

Even the angelic beings in the heavenly's marvel at God's wisdom.

Angels have been watching and learning all along.

1 Peter 1:10-12

10 Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, 11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven – things which angels desire to look into.

The NL says, It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen.

The OT prophets didn't always understand

- what they were writing, but they wrote anyway.

As the angels study us they're learning about God's wisdom according to verse 10.

Even though they see us as a bunch of sinners,

- Luke 15 says there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

You know that one day we will judge the angels according to 1 Cor 6:3.

All of this was part of God's plan:

12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.

13 Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

It seems the Ephesians were losing heart.

- Paul was imprisoned on 7 different occasions that we know of.
- Interestingly, 7 is the number of completion.

Paul wants everyone to know

- what was once a mystery is no longer a mystery.