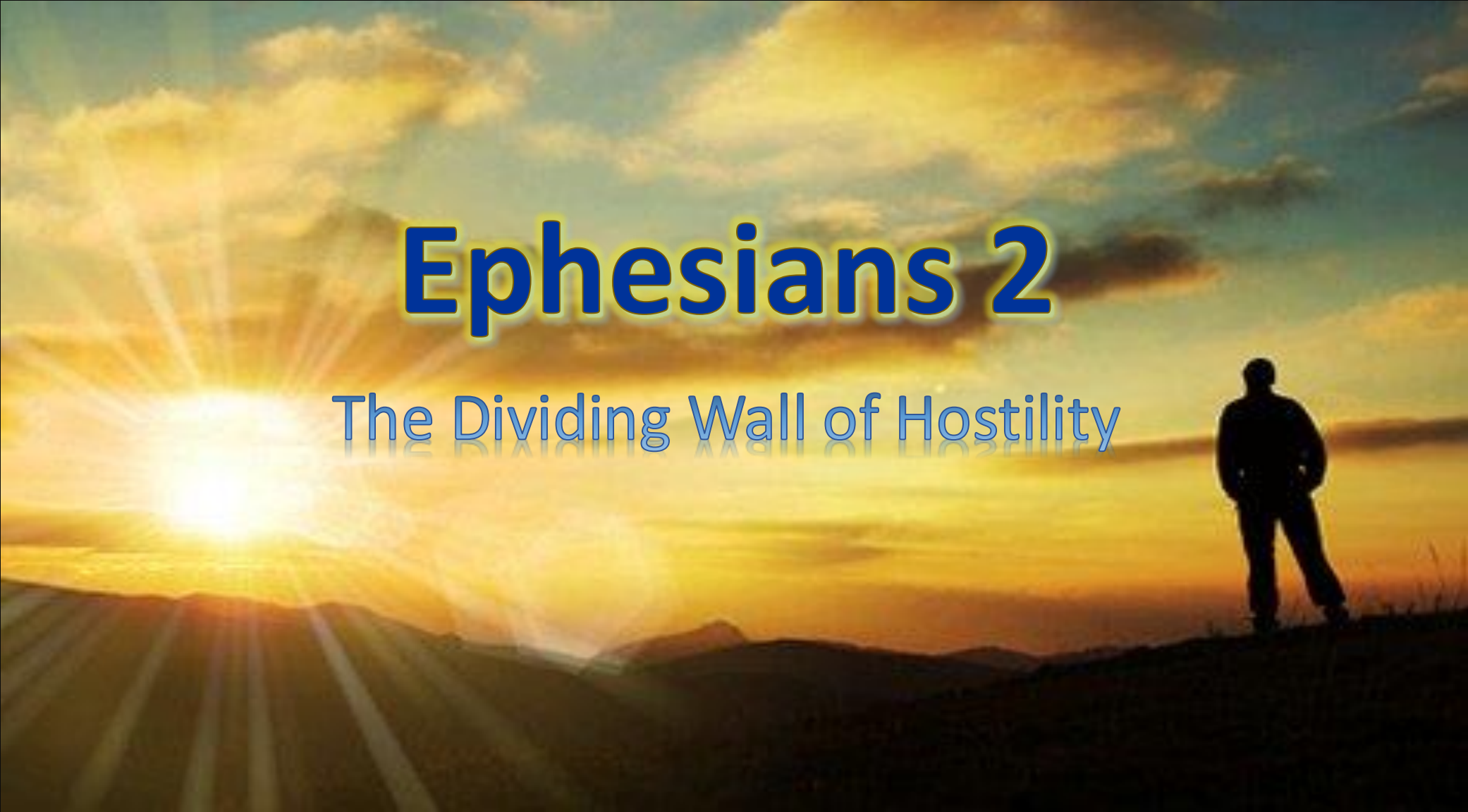




Ephesians 2

The Dividing Wall of Hostility

Have you ever . . .

- Have you ever attended a church and discovered something you disagreed with?
- Have you ever attended a church where you felt judged?

Regarding evangelical churches:

- Did you ever go denomination-shopping?
- On what basis did you choose a church to attend?
- How might the wide variety of denominations appear to non-believers?

Regarding interpretation of Scripture

- What are the typical reasons for different interpretations?
- How can a different interpretation influence:
 - Our personal understanding of Scripture?
 - Our beliefs; theology?
 - Our relationships with other believers?
 - Our “valuation” of church?
 - Our personal study time and methods?

Ephesians 6:5-9

Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; ⁶ not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. ⁷ With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, ⁸ knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

⁹ And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him. (NASB)

Paul's desire for the Church in Ephesus

- Eph. 2:4 – “But God . . . “ Common ground for all the saints.
- Eph. 2:14 – “For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility”
- Eph. 2:19 – “ . . . you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God . . .”
- Eph. 3:6 – “this mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs”

Contrast Rev 2:4-5 with Eph 1:15

For this reason, I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *exists* among you and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers; Eph 1:15–16 (NASB 95)

‘But I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵ Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. Rev 2:4–5 (NASB 95)

What happened?

The cooling of the church's affection for Christ was the source of all the evil that followed, with much outward zeal masking an inward spiritual decline. If the Ephesian community had fully resolved the Jewish-Gentile tensions Paul addressed, this healed fracture would have strengthened their collective love for Christ and one another.

(A. W. Pink, *The Redeemer's Return*)

Victory for the Ephesian church required more than theological vigilance; it demanded internal unity grounded in love. This principle directly echoes Paul's concern in [Ephesians 2:11–22](#), where ethnic divisions threatened the body's coherence. The failure to maintain this unity—rooted in recognizing shared Christian identity across ethnic lines—likely contributed to the spiritual deterioration John witnessed.

(C. A. Beetham et al, *NIV Application Commentary of the Bible*)

Final Comments: Spiritually Unaware

- Have we forgotten that we are all sinners saved by grace?
- Do we remember that our identity is in Christ?
- Do we major in the minors?
- Do we express our gratitude to God for His many blessings?
- Do we appeal to the Holy Spirit in times of need?
- Have we lost sight of our first love?

Final Comments: Spiritually Unaware

- Love expressed through humility – 1 Cor 8:1-3

Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. ² If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; ³ but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.

- How does our behavior influence the spiritual behavior of other believers?
- Do we make opportunities to encourage other brothers?
- Are we open to allowing other brothers to speak into our lives?

Quick Summary

Central theme: first and foremost, we are united as brothers in Christ. We are all on equal footing before God. *Doctrine.*

What about the church today: Why such a variety of denominations? What are the reasons for and the consequences of “disagreements” (at several levels)? Is it just about differences in translation?

Historical example: Consider the conflicting interpretations of Ephesians 6:5–9 pro/anti-slavery and the horrendous toll. Consider Civil War-era prejudice: Consider Lincoln consulting the wisdom of Jesus in Mark 3:25 (“a house divided . . .”)

Paul’s appeal in Ephesus: “salvation by grace through faith” is the common ground for all saints; the revealed “mystery” (removal of the wall of hostility) declaring Jews and Gentiles as co-heirs; equal access to God

Cause for disunity in Ephesus: Note the church’s decline, within a generation, as reflected in Revelation 2:5 – continued ethnic prejudice; loss of their first love.

Call for Spiritual Awareness: How does our behavior influence/affect other Christians?