

Good Morning, I am Drew Dennison. It is an honor to be up hear this morning, to stand before you and preach the word of God to you! Before we start, I would like to thank Pastor Joel and the elders for this opportunity to preach to you this morning. I would also like to thank my wife Emily for supporting me in seeing if God is calling me to full time ministry. I know she will be glad she is not the only one who will have to hear my sermon today. Thanks again to Joel for this opportunity; I am so excited to preach the word of God today to his people.

I do not know if you know this, but there are about 8 billion people alive today. With this, many people there are bound to things in our lives that cause division and conflict. I am confident that even with a few in the room this morning or those of you sitting in your living room at home this morning. We can't all possibly agree on everything. AND WE LOVE EACH OTHER. Let me see if I can't stir up the pot this morning amongst ourselves. Have the audience raise their hands. I have one a Samsung/Android phone, (I think it is awesome.) I think many of you would say iphone and apple is the way. You have Coke vs Pepsi, Ford, vs Chevy, Uber vs Lyft, Michael Jordan vs Lebron James. Tennessee vs Florida, Yankees and Red Sox, Packers vs Bears. Dunkin and Star bucks. I could go on and on. As you can see being a part of or belonging to one of these groups can stir some feelings among us depending on where you land. We will see this in the passage of scripture we will be reading this morning. That one of God's goals for us, is that we learn to get along with each other well.

We are continuing our study of Ephesians ch2 in this series we are calling a rock solid faith. If you are visiting today or join us online. We have been walking through Ephesians ch2 these last two weeks. Pastor Joel preached week 1 from verse 1-3 about our Alienation from God. He said because of our sin we are dead spiritually and separated from God. We all have missed the mark through sin. We need saving from this state of spiritual death. Pastor Joel's Rock solid faith take away was, "we have to know what we were saved from in order to know why God has saved us." Last week Cole Maupin Preached on Ephesians 4-10 on Justification. We have now been justified through Jesus Christ to God. Jesus has now brought us into right standing with God because of his work on the cross.

Jesus has brought us from the spiritual death we saw in week 1 to being spiritually alive. Cole's Rock solid faith take away was "we must know our salvation comes by grace through faith in Christ and we know that true faith in Christ causes life change which should be visible to the world. **This is great!**

Now this week we will be looking at Ephesians ch 2 11:18, and seeing what the next steps are in building our faith through Christ.

You can turn open your bibles and we will read this scripture together.

Let us now look at the scripture this morning.

[Eph 2:11-18 ESV] 11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands-- 12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 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 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

You will notice the very first word is "Therefore" in verse 11. Paul is saying since now you have been justified here is the next step. We notice two groups in verse 11. You see there are the uncircumcised and the circumcised or Gentiles and Jews. The Gentiles and Jews did not really get along too well. They were two different kinds of people who had many differences. I want to look back at Genesis and we will see God called a man named Abram to leave his people and head to a new land to start a new group of people.

[Gen 12:1-3 ESV] 1 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I

will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

[Gen 17:4-8 ESV] 4 "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. 6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. 7 And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. 8 And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God." **THIS IS A REFERENCE FOR ME IT DOES NOT NEED TO BE A SLIDE**

So you see God chose Abraham to be a new people group- the Jews. The mark he gave the Jews was the covenant of circumcision. This is an outward mark. Paul is saying Gentiles/Ephesians, circumcision is outward, but inwardly we are the same. We may look different from each other. We may have different skin color, or facial features. All of these things do not change who we are inwardly. We all have the same number of Chromosomes. We are all human; we were all created by God the same equal in worthy and value to Him. God then would later give the Jews his commandments and temple to worship in. The Jews were chosen by God to be set apart for His purposes. They were proud of it and because the Gentiles were outside the covenant promises of God, they called the Gentiles unclean. As you can imagine, This caused a lot of issues between the two groups especially- if you were a Gentile. Look at what Paul says in verse 12.

[Eph 2:12 ESV] 12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

The Gentiles were excluded from citizenship that Israel had. They had no right the benefits of relational connection with God.

They were without God's law and outside His governing. They were in a spiritual free for all. Similar to what we see today. Do whatever pleases you or as long as it makes you happy.

They had no direction, without God there's no way to go, and no hope. They were without the true God who would lead them and direct their ways. They had no future promise to hold on to. They were not waiting on Jesus to come and establish his kingdom. They were as far from God as they could possibly be.

Without God we are lawless, without direction, without protection and hopeless. CAN BE A FILL IN THE BLANK IF YOU WOULD LIKE IT TO BE

So far there's not a lot of good news in these first two verses, as Paul reminds us of everything they do not have, and how we are not included. However if we continue in the text you will see the word **but**. If you remember what Cole said from last week, THIS IS A HUGE WORD. IT CHANGES EVERYTHING.

[Eph 2:13 ESV] 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

You have been brought near. BECAUSE OF JESUS DEATH FOR YOU!!!! WE GENTILES, HE HAS BROUGHT YOU NEAR! No longer are you without hope, without direction/vision, without God, without a promise. GOD HAS BROUGHT US IN THROUGH HIS SON. WE HAVE COMPLETE ACCESS WE are part of the family. HOW AWESOME IS THAT. You go from the status of sinners to saints, without citizenship to citizens of God's Kingdom. When you put your faith in Jesus. So Paul has recapped for us at first we are alienated from God. Then we are justified through faith into a relationship with God and with the people of God. We all know from personal family experience, sometimes we can have our moments when we don't always get along with each other. Paul wants to address that now that we are brothers and sisters.

We can have a rock solid faith because JESUS has reconciled us to God, as well as reconciled us to one another. You are now apart of Heaven's Family.

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ADAMS AND EVES sin broke the unity the harmony that we had with GOD AS HOLY PEOPLE.

Illustration playing our own tune, opposite tune from what God is and wants. Jesus through the cross has now ended the discord between us and has given us harmony. Now we are back in tune. We are listening to the conductor and are together making joyous song. **Love this!**

[Eph 2:14 ESV] 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

The text says Jesus is our peace. Erenie is the Greek word for peace here. It means to be in a state of Harmony. Jesus is our erenie for God and us as well as our erenie with brothers and sisters who are different than us. JESUS has made us one. He restored our peace and relationships with God the Father and with one another. There is no longer a dividing wall of hostility between us.

PICTURE TO GO WITH BELOW SECTION. I have placed a picture on the page of this document.

The Temple during this time in Jerusalem was known as Herod's Temple. It was a marvelous structure. It was 600 yards long, walls as high as 15 stories. People came from all over to worship there. Near the center was the Holy of Holy's. Then outside of it a courtyard. Then about 100 yards from there was the court of the Jewish women. Moreover, 300 yards from the Temple was a wall called the that separated the two. Outside the wall known as the courtyard of the Gentiles. They could not get any closer than 300 yards from God. There was a sign posted that read

NO MAN OF ANOTHER NATION TO ENTER WITHIN THE FENCE AND THE ENCLOSURE AROUND THE TEMPLE AND WHOEVER IS CAUGHT WILL HAVE HIMSELF TO BLAME THAT HIS DEATH ENSUES

It would cost a Gentile their life if they crossed over. There was physical wall that separated them as well as a spiritual wall that separated them. Paul is saying that Jesus has broken down the wall. Where you are now welcome to come in and live together. **Great news!**

Walls and Boundaries create separation from others. Jesus has called us to tear down our walls and live open and peaceful fellowship with one another.

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[Eph 2:15 ESV] 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,

The definition of hostility is deep rooted hate between two or more individuals or groups. This the same word that can be find in Genesis 3:15

[Gen 3:15 ESV] 15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

You can see sin entered the world there has been hatred between the Devil and God/Jesus. Hatred comes from Satan. Satan is the father of sin and hatred of God and of one another. His whole mission is to keep us away from the Father and his plan of salvation and restoration. He wants us to be only focused on ourselves and our own desires. HE WANTS YOU FOCUSED ON DARKNESS. YOU CANNOT FIND PEACE IN DARKNESS, PEACE IT ONLY COMES FROM JESUS. This is why this verse saying JESUS HAS ENDED THE HOSITLTY AND THE HATE, the law has caused separation between us and god, as well others. Jesus has abolished the law through His death on the cross. Therefore ending the hate between God and man. We are now free of sin and have peace with God.

[Eph 2:16 ESV] 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

WE can see yet again Paul is really hammering this Notion. That we have PEACE THROUGH CHRIST to one another. Verse 16 we see the word reconcile. IT means bring back in harmony together. God has brought the Gentiles (you and I), into the family. This is his great plan from the beginning to bring us into His big family with the Jews. (Make sure you emphasize this point! Reconciliation is the whole point of your message.)

[Act 10:1-16 ESV] 1 At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, 2 a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. 3 About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, "Cornelius." 4 And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. 5 And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. 6 He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea." 7 When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him, 8 and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa. 9 The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. 10 And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance 11 and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. 12 In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. 13 And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." 14 But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." 15 And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common." 16 This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

Peter says in Acts 10:34, "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism, but accepts from every nation the one who fears Him and does what is right."

I would not read the whole passage, but quickly summarize it (it's long!) to help connect the dots that God is reconciling Jew and Gentile to the Father through Jesus and God is reconciling Jew and Gentile to one another through shared faith. I imagine Peter's faith grew much stronger when he saw what Jesus was doing to reconcile not only the Jews, but Gentiles as well! When we see life change happen our faith grows stronger.

Paul saying we are to be one with brothers and sisters in Christ. I think of my marriage to my wife, Emily. We both grew up in two different states. I am a Georgian, she is a Virginian. We are now Tennessee. Our marriage has made us one flesh. No longer I am GA or VA, but we are one new person. I grew up taking road trips where we never stopped for breaks. We just drove until we were there, then we would rest. Emily grew up complete opposite of this. Her and her family would stop about 8 times a trip for potty breaks, to stretch their legs, and to snack. This probably the safer way, but I hate stopping when traveling; however I learned real quick we needed to come together and figure out what works for both of us, so she wouldn't leave me on vacation and head back home without me. lol We figured out that we usually stop once for a bathroom break and to stretch our legs. And she learned to bring snacks in the car. We now have very harmonious road trips together. We had to reconcile the difference to be united together. If not it will be a weakness in our marriage and cause difficult. The enemy will use it against us to push us apart. Brothers and Sisters we need lose our groups we I.D. in. We need to only identify together with Christ. We need to remember this when we post things on social media, or when we interact with coworkers or other family members. We are called be one. We are to be Christians/disciples. I like this illustration to help with your point.

Look at Jesus in John 4.

[Jhn 4:6-14 ESV] 6 Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. 7 A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." 8 (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) 9 The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) 10 Jesus answered her,

"If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." 11 The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." 13 Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

ONLY THIS PART OF THE SCRIPTURE WOULD NEED TO BE ON A SLIDE

15 The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water." 16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." 17 The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." 19 The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." 25 The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." 26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he." 27 Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" 28 So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, 29 "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" 30 They went out of the town and were coming to him.

Jesus, a Jew, meet this Samaritan at the well, where she was. Look at how surprised she was when Jesus asked her for a drink. She was like are you talking to me? Do not know who I am? Also notice the difference in how they worship. She says we worship here you worship there. There is division here that is keeping them separate. Jesus walks through that dividing wall says I offer you something great. Then notice the shock of the disciples when they come back from town. Jesus knew he was heading to Samaria. He COULD HAVE GONE AROUND, YET HE CHOOSE TO GO THROUGH SARMIA. JESUS CHOSE EARILER ON TO MODEL FOR HIS DSCIPLES LOVE AND COMPASSION FOR ALL. EVEN OUR ENEMIES.

Philippians 2:2-6

[Phl 2:2-6 ESV] 2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,

Galatians 3:6-9, 26-29

[Gal 3:6-9, 26-29 ESV] 6 just as Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"? 7 Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." 9 So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. ... 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

We can have a rock solid faith knowing we are woven together through Christ as holy people. He has given us unity together as brothers and sisters for us to be a light of hope in this dark world.

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I love this! Point to the mission we can accomplish when we understand the power of being reconciled. Great job.

Remember Jesus was not of this world. He was set apart, He was a light to those around him. He always raised the bar during his time on earth. He has called you and me brother and sister, to likewise be set apart from this world. We are to go further in showing compassion, love and peace to others. Be willing to lay down yourself for you brothers and sisters.

Lastly we see in the final two verses.

[Eph 2:17-18 ESV] 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Jesus has given peace to all who are saved. We need to find life in this peace to another through him. This is how we grow in our faith in God, being with brothers and sisters grows us deeper to Him and another. God has given us a family we can worship him together with. A family of brothers and sister who care for each other in genuine compassion and love. What a wonderful sight it will be seeing all tribes in heaven worshipping our father in heaven together in one spirit.

Lastly, The beauty of Christianity is that there are Jews and Gentiles; black and white and yellow and red; high income and low income; men and women and children... We are all equal because of the cross to bring us into relationship with God and with one another. God breaks down the walls that keep us out of relationship.

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[Eph 4:1-7 ESV] 1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call-- 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Rock solid faith builds us up together. We are the church and grow as a church through this rock solid faith, and community it provides us.

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I really like this point a lot. I would close here and point ahead to Paul next week.

Let me close us this day with pray and have Kyle come back on Stage to lead us in a final song this morning.





