

December 21, 2025

Ephesians 2:11-22

“When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace.” This is a quote by one of the greatest musicians in the last century, Jimi Hendrix, and he’s right. If everyone in the world decided that their neighbor was more important than their own desires, and that the safety and security of their neighbor was more important than their ambitions, wealth, or status, there would likely be no more war. Small problem. Human beings by nature are power-hungry creatures, and they constantly dehumanize and devour each other. It happens in families, schools, and communities, and it happens on a large scale between nations. Jimi was right, but what he and so many don’t understand is that the problem isn’t that we have the wrong people in power or the wrong virtues or the wrong systems, but that we are all wrong in our hearts and desire power over each other. We live in a peace-less world.

Yet, the Scriptures boldly proclaim that it can grant and create true, lasting, perfect, beautiful peace. We saw in the Psalm that God promises peace to his people! The Immanuel who comes into this world is going to be the “Prince of Peace!” Simeon declares that because he’s seen Jesus, he can depart this world in peace! What kind of peace is God promising? Is it simply world peace, or something different- something more? How does he give us this peace if we by nature are unpeaceful? And where can God’s peace be found in a world riddled with violence on the outside, and emotional turmoil and anxiety and fear on the inside? Paul answers this question in Ephesians 2- one of the great, great chapters of Scripture, where Paul answers a lot of questions at once about the church and salvation, and something to remember- the Christian in Ephesus had seen a great deal of violence in and around their church. When Paul was in Ephesus working with them, a riot broke out because Paul’s ministry was endangering the market for idols- so the silversmiths that made idols for Athena were bent on killing him, and likely continued that violence toward the Christians. Also, the Jews who rejected Jesus also liked to cause riots and had plotted to kill Paul and his friends many times. A bit before Paul wrote this letter, one of his companions, Trophimus, who was from Ephesus, was actually in danger of losing his life because some of the Jews in Jerusalem thought (didn’t see) that Trophimus entered the temple, which was prohibited because he wasn’t Jewish. How powerful then is it that one of the main things Paul wants to talk about with the Ephesian Christians here is *peace*. Paul’s main theme is the peace of God’s people, and that the peace found in God’s church isn’t there because human beings are peaceful- it’s not achieved through the right kind of education or systems or people simply choosing to get along and love each other. The point Paul makes is this: **Jesus Is Our Peace**. And Paul shows them the power of Jesus’ peace by showing them: **1. What You Were. 2. What Christ Did. 3. What Christ is Doing.**

1. Peace With God. The Church in Ephesus was an ethnically mixed church- both Jews and Gentiles, and it seems like in Ephesus the majority of the church was actually Gentiles who were formerly pagan. In the first part of this chapter, Paul writes some of the most well-known, most

clear words about Salvation that we have in Scripture: *“It is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not of yourselves, it is a gift of God. Not by works, so that no one can boast! For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”* Then, Paul starts the next section which we read today- *“Therefore, with all of this in mind, knowing who you are and how you are saved and what you’ve been created for, knowing what kind of status you have as God’s child, remember...”* They need to remember what they were, and what had to happen in order for them to be reconciled to God. They were outsiders- both socially and spiritually. Yes, they were "uncircumcised," they were outsiders from the community of God, but more importantly, they were separated from God himself- and this is very, very true. If you read the book of Acts, you’ll notice that the people of Ephesus that became Christians at one time came together and burnt all their magic, demonic spell books, which if they had sold all of those books it would have been 50,000 Drachmas, which would have been about 135 years wages. Now- that is tremendous testament to the power of the Gospel, that people who were actively engaging in witchcraft, speaking, listening to, and conjuring demons, casting spells on people, but also engaging in idol worship and public sexual immorality left that all behind for Jesus- and paid dearly for it. That little insight, however, shows us how fallen and messed up these Christians actually were! They were not good people. They were godless- and they were hopeless, and so was everyone. Notice- it says later that Christ had to come preach peace to those who were far- the Gentiles, *and* those who are near- which were the Jews. Why? Go back to the garden- when Adam and Eve fell into sin, what was the first thing they did when God entered the garden? They hid. And what was the second thing Adam did when God confronted him? He blamed God and blamed his wife. And their first two sons- what happened there? Cain hated his brother, and hated God. And humanity since has had enmity toward God- a dividing wall of hostility and hatred between God and humanity. Humanity hates God and his rules and his ways, and God, being just, hates the wickedness of humanity. That’s why there’s no peace. No peace, between God and humanity, and therefore also no peace between human beings.

2. What Christ Did. This is what makes Christmas so, so beautiful and powerful and, frankly, different from any other religion. Our God came down to make peace with us, even when we were the ones at fault. Paul says that Christ made peace by his blood shed on the cross. This is important to understand- all the bloody sacrifices in the Old Testament had one purpose- to make peace with God. God in perfect justice demands the death of the sinner, and there is a real tension and enmity between God and humanity, and Christ destroyed it with his blood. By dying on the Cross, Jesus, the perfect Son of God was punished in the place of all sinners, taking on the death we deserved, and therefore earning for us a perfect reconciliation with God himself.

“Peace on Earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled.” I’ve mentioned this before, but in the temple, there was a curtain that separated God from everyone, because anyone that would go into the presence of God in the Holy of Holies would immediately die- and what happened to that curtain when Jesus died? It was torn- *from top to bottom*. We did not make peace with God. God made peace with us in his Son Jesus Christ, through blood. Jesus Christ *is* our peace. When

Jesus came to Earth, *Peace* came to Earth- God himself came to reconcile himself with his fallen, beloved, peaceless creatures.

And... He came to make peace between humans. Paul mentions a “dividing wall of hostility. One of the questions the commentators wrestle with is, “What exactly is he referring to?” Is he referring to the spiritual wall of hostility between sinful humanity and God? Well, if you look at the rest of the sentence, he’s not referring to hostility between God and humanity, but between humanity and humanity! What’s he referring to? Interesting- at the Temple, in Jerusalem, which wasn’t the original temple that Solomon built, or the rebuilt version after the exile, but it was made by Herod the Great- and in this temple, something new that wasn’t in the Old Testament was put. It was called a “Soreg.” The “Soreg” was a waste-high wall that separated the outer courts of the Temple, from the inner courts of the Temple and the Temple proper. Who was the wall keeping out? Gentiles. Non-Jews. And on this wall there was a sign: “*No foreigner may enter. Whoever does will be responsible for his own death.*” And that wall was much more than a wall- it was a symbol of the hatred that existed between the Jews and the Gentiles. There was so much violence between the two groups- especially around the time of Jesus and the Early Church. But look at what Christ has done- by doing away with the Law and it’s commands- meaning that we are not loved or forgiven because of what we’ve done, Christ has through his death on the cross and salvation through nothing but his grace and forgiveness, he has created a brand new people of God- the Church- which isn’t based on ethnicity, race, gender, class, or anything- but only on faith in Jesus. And through him, we are the true, temple where we have access to God in the purest way. And little by little, Jesus continues to build his Church, his temple, his people.

3. What Jesus is doing. Paul says that Jesus is continuing to build his church- Jesus is the cornerstone on which the entire thing is built, and the foundation is the apostles and prophets- that is- the Word of God- Jesus’ teaching and doctrine- the Gospel. And we are like bricks, all coming together as one forming the true Temple where God is found. And in that Temple, there is true peace. There is true peace between God and his people, and therefore, there is peace between Jew and Gentile, slave and free, man and woman, and all different groups which may normally be at each other’s throats, now come together and call each other brother and sister. The dividing wall of hostility is broken, and we are one.

Here’s what I mean. I heard a story a few years back of a conference with a few WELS leaders, and they were talking about mission work and how to reach out to people. And someone came up to the microphone and asked, “Well, what if someone comes into church and wants to be a Christian, but has all kinds of hair colors and piercings and is covered in tattoos? What do you do?” And the Pastor on the stage leaned into the microphone and said, “Uh, cool tats.” More seriously, in an ancient world where Jews and Greeks hated each other, the Ephesian church, along with all of them, stood and shined brightly with people who would normally be at each

other's throats calling each other brother and sister, loving each other, embracing each other, and being at peace. And this was a powerful testimony to the rest of the world- the power of the Gospel. If the Gospel is true, then I don't have the ability to look down on another soul for being the wrong race, the wrong culture, for looking or speaking a certain way, because I was just as lost. Sure, we call all people to repentance, but we ourselves also repent, and in doing so are able to admit that all these things that people kill each other for are not that important- Christ is. My friends, in a world where people are actually killed for having the wrong political beliefs, for being the wrong race, for speaking the wrong language, the Christian Church has an opportunity- to be a place where the Gospel shines brightly- where people put aside their differences and are united as one family under one Lord, saved by one Savior, one baptism, one Father, and the beautiful peace of the Gospel. That is who we are. That is the Church. Amen.