

Ephesians 2:14-18  
The prince of peace!

**Ephesians 2:14–18 (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 **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.

**Introduction:**

On May 25, 2020, in Minneapolis Minnesota, a white police officer arrested an African American man named George Floyd. George Floyd ended up on the ground while his face was being shoved into the concrete while his arms were cuffed behind his back. Then, the white police officer forced his knee on Floyd's neck. Several times Floyd complained that he could not breathe. Eight minutes later he was dead.

Floyd's murder quickly triggered protests, riots, and looting all across the country, revealing the presence of significant racial, social, and political tension in America.

Unfortunately, hostility between members of the human race is not new.

One author writes,

“The scarcity of peace has prompted someone to suggest that ‘peace is that glorious moment in history when everyone stops to reload.’ In 1968, a major newspaper reported that there had been roughly 14,000 known wars since the time of Christ (averaging 7.3 wars per year).” (MacArthur, Matt. 209-210)

Things seem to be getting worse. The twentieth century was the bloodiest century by far (160 million lives were lost in war).

Is there any hope for peace? We want peace, but it seems so elusive. Is peace possible? If so, how in the world do we experience it? This brings us to Eph. 2:14-18. In this passage Paul argues that...

***Jesus, and only Jesus, can create lasting peace!***

We will look at this morning's passage under four headings.

*The absence of peace.*

*The agent of peace.*

*The achievement of peace.*

*The application of peace.*

**First, the absence of peace.**

**There was a serious absence of peace between Jews and Gentiles in the 1<sup>st</sup> century.**

**Ephesians 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 end of verse 14 indicates that there was a dividing wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles. In other words, they really did not like each other.

One commentator writes,

“A study of the history of the ancient world tells us that none of today’s social distinctions — none of our racial barriers, our narrow nationalisms, our iron curtains — are more exclusive or unrelenting than the separation between Jews and Gentiles in Biblical times. The Jews believed the Gentiles were created to fuel the fires of Hell. A common motto was, “The best of the serpents crush . . . the best of the Gentiles kill.” It was not lawful to aid a Gentile woman in giving birth, for that would bring another heathen into the world. . . . If a Jewish boy married a Gentile girl, or if a Jewish girl married a Gentile boy, the Jewish parents held a funeral for their Jewish son or daughter.” (William Barclay)

Jews referred to gentiles as heathen dogs... The Gentiles referred to the Jews as “homicidal enemies of the human race.” (Kent Hughes)

### **Application:**

There was an absence of peace in Paul’s day.

There is an absence of peace in our day.

There is mistrust between blacks and whites.

Democrats and Republicans.

Socialists and Capitalist.

People who want to defund the police and people who love the police.

People for the LGBTQ agenda and people opposed to the LGBTQ agenda.

People who think Covid is a serious threat and people who don’t.

Or bringing it even closer to home....

Conflict in our families

Conflicts between our kids

Conflict in the church

Conflict in our marriages

Conflict in the neighborhood

Conflict at the office.

Conflict on the roads (tell recent story).

Is there any hope for peace in our day? Yes... this brings us to the next point.

*First, the absence of peace.*

**Second, the agent of peace.**

**Who is the agent of peace? Jesus is the only agent of peace!**

**Ephesians 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

Paul writes, that “he himself” is our peace. Jesus Christ is the world’s only hope for true and lasting peace.

This explains why the prophet Isaiah calls him the prince of peace.

**Isaiah 9:6 (ESV) — 6** For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

What is peace?

“Biblical peace is more than a personal sense of tranquility and well-being. It carries the idea of harmony, first with God and then with those around us. It includes the idea of order and wholeness, of disparate areas of life and people groups coming together with a cessation of conflict and a sense of security.” (Osborne)

Said another way, peace is more than the absence of hostility. True peace is not merely laying down arms. Biblical peace is warm embrace, human flourishing, and wholeness.

Attempts to achieve peace apart from Jesus Christ, the agent of peace, ultimately fail.

### **Illustration:**

“Take, for instance, a 1986 peace march that largely self-destructed through bickering. It began in Los Angeles only to stall in Barstow, about 120 miles out of L.A., where about half the 1,200 marchers went home. Soon those remaining argued over those who were real walkers and those who rode in vehicles. They fought over a dress code. They decided to hold an election, but disagreed over who could vote, finally allowing even children to vote. Then the election was declared invalid. Many ended the peace march not speaking to each other.” (K. Hughes)

Yes, humans can achieve some peace, but lasting peace is only found in Jesus Christ.

This means that true peace is not achieved through....

Politics

Voting

The redistribution of wealth

Equal opportunities

More police training

More education

More organizations

Or marching across the country

Jesus is the only true and lasting agent of peace. But how does he achieve peace? This brings us to the third point...

*First, the absence of peace.*

*Second, the agent of peace.*

### *Third, the achievement of peace*

*How does Jesus achieve peace? How does he reconcile hostile parties? He does several things...*

#### **Jesus achieves peace by tearing down walls!**

**Ephesians 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

Paul mentions “the dividing wall of hostility.” This dividing wall was a feature in the temple. As I mentioned last week, the temple was massive edifice, covering 40 acres.

It was divided into different sections.

The innermost section was reserved for one high priest once a year.

Moving out, the second section was reserved for the priests.

Moving still further out, the third section was reserved for the Jews.

Moving all the way out, the fourth section, was open to gentiles.

The dividing wall of hostility, mentioned in Eph. 2:14 was the wall that separated the Jewish section from the gentile section of the temple.

**Show image of the temple...**

In 1871, archeologists discovered that signs were posted at intervals on the dividing wall that said...

**“No foreigner (i.e. gentile) is to enter within this space... Whoever is caught will have himself to blame for his death.”**

This is much more serious than “gentile trespassers will be prosecuted.” Instead it said, “gentile trespassers will be killed.”

This wall symbolized the deep divide between Jews and gentiles. Who would bring it down? And how will it be done?

**Ephesians 2:14–15 (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 **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,

It was the mosaic law that separated Jews and Gentiles. The dividing wall of hostility represented the Mosaic law. All those who obeyed the Jewish laws could enter the Jewish section of the temple. Everyone else was forbidden.

Through Jesus life, death, and resurrection, he abolished the Old Covenant. This means that the Mosaic laws no longer serve as a barrier between Jews and Gentiles. Jesus created a brand-new community and established a brand-new covenant, known as the new covenant. Members of the church of Jesus Christ no longer have to obey the Mosaic covenant, regardless of their ethnic heritage. Christians no longer obey the laws of Moses; we obey the laws of Christ (1 Cor. 9:21; Matt. 5:17; Rom. 3:31; Gal. 6:2).

The era of the new covenant has begun, and it is marked by the presence of the Spirit of God (Eph. 2:18, 22; Ezek. 36), and it is open to anyone.

This means that the dividing wall of hostility has been abolished. And BTW... at the end of chapter 2 of Ephesians Paul argues that there is one new temple composed of Jew and gentile.

### **Illustration:**

The Berlin wall was a guarded concrete barrier that physically and ideologically divided Berlin from 1961-1989. This wall was closely associated with the iron curtain during the Cold War.

The wall included guard towers, machine guns, barbed wire, and a death strip. The death strip was a large strip on the Eastern side. If you set foot in the strip, you were shot.

Over 100,000 people tried to cross from East to West. Only 5000 succeeded. Many died in the attempt.

Show image...

When the wall officially came down in (1989) 1990, there was great rejoicing (show image). How much more should we gentiles rejoice when we hear the news that the dividing wall of hostility has been abolished by Jesus Christ.

*Jesus achieves peace by tearing down walls!*

### **Jesus achieves peace by creating one new man!**

**Ephesians 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,

Jesus has created in himself one new man in place of the two.

Through his life, death, and resurrection he has created one new body. Notice, that Jesus did not create a new community where Jews and Gentiles could merely get along. He exerted his divine power to create an entirely new class of humanity in which race means little. In essence, he created an entirely new society of people.

This society is the new covenant church, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and united to the resurrected Christ.

This one new man is neither Jewish nor gentile, it is something else entirely. It is a third race, a new race!

Commenting on this passage, Chrysostom (the fourth century preacher and scholar) said that it is as though God put a silver statue in the furnace and then he put a led statue in the furnace. But then he pulled out something entirely new. He pulled out a gold state.

Jesus Christ has created one new man. A new race of people.

Theological side note... this implies that God has one plan one people, not two peoples and two plans...

### **Illustration:**

“Bishop John Reed tells about driving a school bus in Australia which carried whites and aborigines. Tired of all the squabbling, one day far out in the country he pulled over to the side of the road and said to the white boys, “What color are you?” “White.” He told them, “No, you are green. Anyone who rides in my bus is green. Now, what color are you?” The white boys replied, “Green.” Then he went to the aborigines and said,

“What color are you?” “Black.” “No, you are green. Anyone who rides on my bus is green.” All the aborigines answered that they were green. The situation seemed resolved until, several miles down the road, he heard a boy in the back of the bus announce, “All right, light green on this side, dark green on that side.”

Bishop Reed had the right idea. What was needed was a new race, “the greens,” but he couldn’t pull it off! Our text says that Jesus created a new man, a new humanity, a new race. (Hughes)

**Galatians 3:28 (ESV) — 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.

**Application:**

Should we celebrate the differences between us? of course...

But even more importantly than our differences are the things we have in common. We are a new race created by Jesus. We are the one new man, God’s new society, where racism, hostility, and prejudice don’t exist.

In God’s new society alienation has given way to reconciliation.

In God’s new society hostility has given way to peace.

In God’s new society hatred has given way to love.

*Jesus achieves peace by tearing down walls.*

*Jesus achieves peace by creating one new man.*

**Jesus achieves peace by dying on the cross!**

**Ephesians 2:16–18 (ESV) — 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.

Both Jews and Gentiles are reconciled to God through the cross. This implies that they needed to be reconciled to God. Yes, their sins (and our sins) separated them from God’s presence. But God acted in Christ to reconcile them to himself. How? Christ died in their place so that their sins could be removed. When their sins were removed, they were reconciled to God.

Since they have both been reconciled to God through the cross, the hostility between God and man no longer exists (end of verse 16).

Notice Paul’s use of the words “both” and “one body” in verse 16. Paul is emphasizing that both the Jews and the Gentiles are reconciled to God through the cross. In other words, they are reconciled to God in the same way. Verses 17-18 makes this even more clear. Explain...

Here is the point. When we all recognize that everyone is reconciled to God the same way, it kills the hostility between people groups.

The cross tells us that Jews are not better than Gentiles and Gentiles are not better than Jews. The cross says that they are both guilty before a holy God.

Similarly, the cross tells us that...

Whites are not better than blacks.  
Blacks are not better than whites.  
Democrats and republicans.

We are all sinners who need to be reconciled to God. At the foot of the cross we all stand on level ground. We all have the same need for grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

This means that we are equally depraved, which destroys pride, which in turn destroys hostility.

To summarize, vertical peace with God is foundational to horizontal peace with man.

*Jesus Christ has done the impossible. He has achieved peace. He has reconciled Jew and gentile, a monumental feat.*

*If he can reconcile Jew and gentile, there is hope for our society and there is much for us to do. This brings us to the final point...*

*The absence of peace.  
The agent of peace.  
The achievement of peace.*

#### **Fourth, the application of peace.**

##### **How does all this talk of peace apply to us?**

Christians must work as agents of peace. Why? A Christian is someone who follows Jesus. We follow the prince of peace by becoming agents of peace.

##### **What does this look like?**

##### **We must work for peace in our relationships.**

**Matthew 5:9 (ESV) — 9** “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

**Hebrews 12:14 (ESV) — 14** Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

**Romans 12:18 (ESV) — 18** If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

How hard are you working for peace in your relationships?

Is there someone you are currently unreconciled to??? Don't wait, call the person today, set up a meeting for this week, and work for peace.

This often means listening aggressively, shutting our mouths, forgiving, overlooking, letting go of bitterness, and falling on our swords.

But Dave, this will be costly... it was very costly for God to make peace with you.

##### **We must work for peace in the church.**

The watching world desperately needs to see a picture of true gospel peace displayed in the church of Jesus Christ.

We work for peace in the church by overlooking offenses, putting to death gossip, using our gifts to serve.

In addition,

Reach out to others not like you.

Young reaching out to the old.

The rich reaching out to the poor.

Republicans reaching out to Democrats.

Business owners sharing a meal with manual laborers.

Mask wearers reaching out to non-mask wearers.

Being ok with differing opinions.

Listening carefully and sympathizing with those who have been marginalized.

### **We must work for peace in our society.**

How do we work for peace in our society? The answer may surprise you. We work for peace by planting and building healthy local churches.

This is God's only plan for peace!!! There is no other plan in the Bible.

When healthy local churches are planted and build up, hostility nearly ceases.

Why? When Christ transforms people, they stop being racists.

How can you be involved in planting and building local churches? Come, serve, and give!!!

*The absence of peace.*

*The agent of peace.*

*The achievement of peace.*

*The application of peace.*

### **Conclusion:**

Bryan Chapell (one of my professors) grew up in the rural south. His father served with the occupation forces in Japan in an integrated military police unit. This meant that his father served side by side with an African American soldier. They laughed together, cried together, and faced great hostility and danger together. They were brothers in arms, in one sense.

But, when the war was over they had to go their separate ways. Later, Dr. Chapell's father told him that he could not even bring himself to shake the hand of this black man when they parted. Why? The thought of touching the hand of black man repulsed him.

As a result, all of Dr. Chapell's siblings wondered how their father would respond when many years later, one of them adopted a little African American boy.

At the end of this story, Dr. Chapell describing one of his prized possessions. It is a picture of his father asleep with his adopted African American grandson cuddled up in his arms.



The hand that refused to shake the hand of an African American man was now wrapped around his African American grandson.

How do we explain this change? Jesus Christ!!! Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone, can bring peace. Let's pray...