

He Is Our Peace
Ephesians 2:11-22
Pastor John Miller

Modern technology has created a global community, yet we still have a world where man is alienated from man. We are divided over race, over religion, over politics, economics, and I don't know about you, but in my lifetime, I don't think I've ever seen the United States more divided. It is really an issue right now with the racial issues, the "Black Lives Matter" issue, and the issue between black and white, brown, and different colors. Racism is kind of at a fever pitch and quite a controversial subject. Well, the only answer to this division is Jesus Christ. Jesus is our peace. When we come—black, white, brown, yellow, if there are green people out there, they can come, too (I don't think there is)—to the foot of the cross, we find forgiveness and restoration with God. We become the children of God and He becomes our Father. We're part of a new humanity, a new society, a new group of people called the new humanity. It's a marvelous concept that Paul sets forth in this passage which we often know as the Church.

The Church is spoken of in a universal sense—all believers anywhere in the world—and then the church is a local assembly as we are here at Revival Christian Fellowship. The Church is made up of more than we who come to this fellowship, we're a local church or congregation, we're part of the universal body of Christ. The answer to the problem of racism and division over religion, politics, economics, and other things—you name it, race, sexual gender and those kinds of things—is that Jesus Christ died for our sins and unites us in His redemptive work upon the cross.

The problem today in the world is not skin, it is sin, s-i-n; which has alienated man from God and man from man. Jesus takes care of both. He brings us back into a right relationship with God, and He brings us into a right relationship with one another. The problem is spiritual, that's why our job right now is to go out and preach the gospel; not politics, psychology, or philosophy but to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Amen? When men's hearts are changed and they're brought into the family of God, then, and only then, can we see peace in our troubled world.

A quick little review in Ephesians 2:1-10, Paul has shown us how God reconciled man to Himself—that we were sinners and were dead, and He has reconciled us to God. How has He done that? Look at this key phrase in verse 10, "...in Christ." Last week we looked at verses 8-10, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." The way that God brings unity from diversity is "in Christ," or "in Christ Jesus," verse 10.

Tonight we move from verses 8-10 to verses 11-22 and see that in Christ God has reconciled man to man. The first half of Ephesians 2 is God reconciling man to Himself. It's a fine point, but one that needs to be noted, that God reconciles us to Himself. We don't do anything or perform any deed to be reconciled to God, God reconciles us to Him. We're the ones that are estranged from God, we're the ones that are enemies from God, we're the ones who have been

running from God; so God takes the initiative to deal with the sin which has created alienation. He's the One who has reconciled us to Himself. He is the reconciler. He has now reconciled us to Himself and reconciles "in Christ" us to one another.

Notice verse 14 is the key thought: "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us," when he says, "us," he's referring to Jew and Gentile. He's not referring to God and sinner. This is where this section gets misinterpreted. He's not talking about reconciliation between us to God, he's talking about reconciliation between Jew and Gentile. You say, "Well, what's that got to do with me today? We're not divided, Jew and Gentile." But we are divided today over racial issues, over religious issues, so it does have perfect and appropriate application to us today that Jesus is our peace. It's a Jewish-Gentile who are made one in the Church, Jesus Christ.

Paul's theme in Ephesians is the glory of the Church, and he refers to the Church in a term that's really unique in verse 15. He calls it, "one new man." Again, this is where people think it's referring to the individual sinner and being born again and regenerated. It's not. It's referring to in the church we become one new man, and that phrase speaks of one new humanity. We're going to break it down for you in this text. The hatred in the ancient world between Jews and Gentiles is taken care of in the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross.

This is what we're going to do with the text. There are three portraits or pictures of how Christ is our peace. If you're taking notes, you can write them down. The first is the portrait of what Gentiles were and the key word (if you just want to write down one word) is "separation." The Gentiles were separated from Jews. They were living in alienation from one another, verses 11-12. Let's read those verses. Paul says, "Wherefore remember," the fact that he starts with "Wherefore" indicates that it's actually building off verses 1-10, how He saved us and reconciled us to God. In light of that, He's reconciled us to one another in the Church. It's good to remember what God has done for us. He continues, "that ye being in time past Gentiles," the entire passage is spoken to primarily Gentiles. Most of the believers in the church at Ephesus were Gentiles, and many Gentiles began to come to Christ in the early church in the first century, but this whole context is written to Gentiles talking about how before they knew Christ. Verses 11-12 are the Gentile people before Christ, before their salvation, or before their conversion.

Verse 11, "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision," the uncircumcision are the Gentiles, the circumcision are the Jews; but notice Paul throws this in at the end of verse 11, they're only circumcised by hands. It's just an outward rite on the flesh. What God wants is the circumcision of our hearts. That's the true spiritual work in our lives. It's just a religious kind of rite or ritual but separated the Jews from the Gentiles.

Verse 12, "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world," he's talking to Gentiles about their pre-converted days and actually even before Christ

came, died, resurrected, and went back to heaven. Now that Jesus Christ has come, He's the Great Reconciler. Notice that the separation, verses 1-10, is with sinners in general. Tonight, verses 11-22, we're going to see the work of Christ for Gentiles in particular, that they became Christians, bringing them together in the church there in Ephesus.

Notice their identity, and I've already commented on it, verse 11, they were "...Gentiles in the flesh." Basically, what verse 11 is doing is showing that they were objects of contempt by Jewish people. The Gentiles were hated by Jews. You think racism is bad right now in America, which I don't want to get sidetracked, but I don't think it's systemic in our culture. I don't think it's the big problem. I think it's fostered to create division in our culture today. We ain't seen nothin' compared to the racism that existed. The whole world was divided in New Testament times between Jew and Gentile.

The Jews hated Gentiles. They actually felt that they were only created by God to fuel the fires of hell. They believed Abraham would stand at the gate of Heaven and would turn away all Gentiles. No Gentiles got to go to Heaven. You couldn't go into a Gentile home, you would be ceremonially defiled and unclean. If a Gentile woman was giving birth to a baby, you couldn't assist or help her if you were a Jew because you would be assisting in bringing a sinner into the world. Whenever Jews would pass through Gentile territory, they would actually take their sandals off, and when they were crossing from Gentile territory into Jewish territory, they would actually knock the dust and dirt off their feet so that wouldn't bring Gentile cooties into their land.

In the Jewish temple, we'll get there in a moment, there was actually a wall around the temple that said: "No Gentiles can go past this wall. As you go past this wall, you have only yourself to blame for your death." There was this deep hatred. The Jew would wake up in the morning and say, "God, I thank You that I'm not a Gentile." There was just so much racial prejudice between Jew and Gentile.

In verse 11, this is showing that they were objects of contempt. To show their contempt, they used the expression, "They're the uncircumcised." That was an expression of contempt. Remember when David was going out to kill Goliath. What did he call him? "You uncircumcised Philistine! You've defied the armies of the living God. I'm coming to get you!" It was a derogatory term that they brought against the Gentiles. The Jews took pride in their physical rite of circumcision and referred to themselves as the circumcision, verse 11. Paul said, "I want you to remember that it's only circumcision made by hands."

Paul points out that the Gentiles suffered a five-fold alienation, and I want to point them out in verse 12. There are five aspects of their alienation before Christ. First of all, they were without Christ, verse 12. Literally, in the Greek, it's apart from Christ. Basically that means that they had no Messianic hope. They had no promise of Messiah, the Mashiach, the Anointed One. They were living without any Savior, without any Christ. They worshiped the goddess Diana in Ephesus as the Gentiles had their pagan gods. The Gentiles were not atheist, but they were idolatrous. They believed in gods, plural, but they didn't worship the true and living God. This is also a five-fold picture of anyone today, Jew or Gentile, any race or any individual or nationality

that has not been born again, you are without Christ. But in this context, it's referring to the Gentiles; they don't have Christ.

When Jesus was dealing with the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well in John 4, He made a statement that salvation is of the Jews, that God provided a Jewish Messiah and that they, as Gentiles, were without the promise of a Messiah. Now, we know that Jesus died for the world, and that's part of God's plan that Gentiles would be included when God told Abraham, "You're going to have a son, and in his seed all the nations of the world will be blessed," so He was promising even back in the Abrahamic Covenant that Gentiles would be saved; and we know that Gentiles were saved, even in the Old Testament, that believed in the God of Israel. As a people group, they didn't have the promise of the Messiah, no Messianic hope. They had gods, but they were false gods, so they were lost.

What we're going to see, too, and I'll just mention it now and maybe touch on it later, is that this is a basis for Christian missions. A lot of people try to put down the idea, "You Christians in America, shouldn't go to India or other parts of the world and try to convert them to Christianity, they have their own religion." Well, they have their own religion, but they don't have God and they're lost without Christ, so we need to take Christ to the nations. Amen? This is a mission statement here of why we need to take Christ to the world because without Christ they are spiritually bankrupt.

Secondly, notice they are without citizenship, verse 12. This is seen in the phrase, "being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel," in other words, they had no home, place, or lot with God's people. They weren't God's chosen people in that sense of God wanted Israel to be a theocracy where God ruled over them. Instead, they wanted a king and got Saul, and things went from bad to worse with the nation of Israel. They were basically rejecting God from ruling over them, but the Gentiles really did not have God over them. They had no citizenship or "commonwealth of Israel," it says in verse 12.

Remember when Jesus was ministering in Mark 7. The story is recorded in verses 24-30 in the northern area of Israel called Tyre and Sidon, which is way up in modern Lebanon. It's outside of Jewish territory, and it's Gentile territory. There was a woman that came to Jesus. She was a Sidonian, a Gentile. She said, "Lord, please help me. My daughter is demon-possessed. Would You deliver her?" Jesus said something that blows people away. He said, "It's not right to take the children's food and cast it to the puppies," or to the dogs. When you read that you say, "Wow! What is the Lord doing there? Why would He say this? This poor woman has a demon-possessed daughter and He said, 'It's not right to take the children's bread,'" which was the Jews, "and cast it to the dogs." The word He used for dogs was a domesticated little puppy. I love the woman's response. She says, "Yes, Lord," she didn't disagree with Him, "but even the puppies under the table get the crumbs which fall." If you're a Gentile tonight, in reality, we're puppies under the table getting crumbs.

In Romans, Paul talks about wild olive branches being grafted into the root and becoming heirs of the promise. We were wild, we were off. We didn't have the covenant promises either.

Notice thirdly, verse 12, “and strangers from the covenants of promise.” God made His covenant promises with Abraham. God made His covenant promise and renewed it with Isaac and with Jacob. God made His covenant promise with David. It’s called the Davidic covenant. He didn’t make it with Gentiles. Even the New Covenant, which we celebrate with the cup and the bread, was a covenant made with Israel. We’re just lucky enough to get the crumbs falling from the tables and get grafted in. Once we’re grafted in—don’t freak out—we have an equal standing with even the Jewish people. In the Church, there’s no Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female, and that’s an issue in our culture today as well, but we’re all one in Jesus Christ. He says they were without covenants.

Fourthly, Paul says, verse 12, “having no hope,” they were without hope. Historians tell us that the ancient world was one of the most hopeless worlds to live in. Here’s the interesting thing, before Christ was born, the world was about as dark as it could ever get. It was a very dark world. That’s why Christmas is so exciting to think the Light of the world came into the world—God’s Light came into the world. Hope was born. Christ came—God came—to reconcile us. God made His covenant with Israel. God gave them hope. They had the Messianic hope and a future hope, but in Christ we have hope. Write down 1 Thessalonians 4:13 where Paul was writing to believers who were sorrowing because their loved ones had died. He said, “But I would not have...ye sorrow...even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.” If you’re in Christ, you have hope.

The first century was called the age of suicide. Isn’t it interesting that suicide is on the increase in the United States and has been really radically for the last few years. Tacitus, an ancient historian, tells the story of a man who killed himself in indignation that he had been born. How true that is. My wife passed out a tract to someone at a store just this week. They were receptive and open and said, “I really need that.” This total stranger began to tell my wife that she had been contemplating suicide. When you’re checking out at a store and the person checking you out says, “I’ve been thinking about killing myself.” There was no hope. There was no God. There was no Messiah. They were lost. This is a general picture of the Gentile world, but it’s actually descriptive of the world that we live in our day.

Here’s the fifth thing that they were alienated, because they were without God. That really summarizes it in verse 12, “...without God in the world.” The pagan world was religious. They had temples filled with false gods, but they didn’t have the true and living God. As I mentioned, this impetus to missions in Acts 17, Paul went to Athens and preached to the Athenians about the “unknown god.” They had an alter there in Athens. I’ve been to Mars Hill. I’ve had the privilege of preaching Paul’s sermon on Mars Hill a couple different times in Athens, Greece. Paul was preaching and says, “I notice that in your monuments to all your gods, that you had one monument that was to an unknown god. Well, that’s the One I want to tell you about.” He began to rehearse about the God of Israel, that He sent His Son and preached the gospel to them. Again, the reason for missions, that they do not have the true and living God.

It’s no different today. The world is without Christ, thus without hope and without God. Make no

mistake. If you are without Christ, you are without hope and without God. You have no hope beyond the grave. You have no hope of being forgiven. You have no hope to live eternally with God. This hopeless world needs hope found in Jesus Christ.

Verses 11-12 is their alienation. In the second portrait, verses 13-18, the largest section, is a portrait of what God did for the Gentiles, reconciliation. The key word here is reconciliation. The first is alienation, now God brought reconciliation, verses 13-18. Let's read it, following in verse 13. Notice the contrast, "But now," it closes in verse 12, "...and without God in the world," and immediately starts in verse 13, "But now," so you were without God, you were without Christ, you were without hope, but...this is kind of like the "but" we read in verse 4 where we were dead, depraved, doomed, disobedient, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us." Where would we be without God's love and grace reaching out to reconcile us? How marvelous that is!

In verse 13, Paul says, "But now in Christ Jesus," and there's that key phrase, "in Christ," "ye who sometimes were far off," that's the Gentiles. We just read that in verses 11-12. "...are made nigh by the blood of Christ." How are the Gentiles made near to God and brought as one with the Jews? Through the blood of Jesus Christ. Notice verse 14, "For he," that is, Jesus Christ, "is our peace, who hath made both one," that is, Jew and Gentile, "and hath broken down the middle wall of partition," or hostility, "between us; 15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain," that is, Jew and Gentile, "one new man," that's the church, "so making peace; 16 And that he might reconcile," there's our word, "both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity," or hostility, "thereby: 17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off," that is, the Gentiles, "and to them that were nigh," the Jews, "For through him," that is, Christ, "we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

Every phrase in this section is just pregnant with amazing theological and doctrinal truth. Notice in verse 13, the Gentiles "...were far off are made nigh," many of them are far out, too, and now made nigh. I think about that. How were they made nigh? By the blood of Jesus Christ. As I pointed out, there's a contrast with the "But now," in verse 13, with the "without God," in verse 12. There we were without God, without hope, without the promises, without the covenants, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." The Cross of Jesus Christ is the great reconciler. It brings us together. It's been said that the ground is all level at the foot of the Cross. I love that. When we come to the Cross, it's not black and white, brown and yellow. It's not male or female, Jew or Gentile. It's not rich or poor, educated or uneducated. It's not sophisticated or unsophisticated. It's that we're one, coming as sinners, in Christ being washed in the blood and redeemed and made one.

Verse 14, "For he is our peace," and what is this "...wall of partition between us"? As I mentioned this "wall of partition" was in the temple with a sign saying that Gentiles couldn't pass through that. That wall is not the reference here. That's an illustration of what is referenced here. The wall referenced here is the enmity, the hostility, the hatred that existed between Jew and Gentile. The only way to break down that wall is through the Cross, the blood

of Jesus.

Can you imagine being a Gentile and you become convinced that the God of Israel is the true and living God, so this Saturday you're going to go to Sabbath and worship. You go to the temple and start walking and see on the wall a sign that says, "If you're a Gentile, you can't go past this point. If you do, we're going to kill you. Welcome to our church." Thank you very much. What a division there was between Jew and Gentile. Verse 16, what enmity existed between them.

How did Christ's death bring down the wall of enmity and hatred and racial prejudice between Jew and Gentile? Let me give you four ways from the text. In verse 15, He abolished, through the Cross, the law. It says, "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances," the law here is not talking about the moral law, which would include the Ten Commandments. He paid the penalty for those sins that were broken that the law demanded, but it's talking about the ceremonial law. This is what actually separated Jew from Gentile, one of them being that of circumcision. The law has been dealt with in the Cross.

When you go to Colossians, which is another prison epistle written at the same time and parallels Ephesians, it talks about Jesus, through the blood of His Cross has abolished the law which was against us. The Cross paid the penalty of the law and satisfied the demands of a holy, righteous God, but it abolished and did away with the ceremonial law. He did more than abolish the law, He created a new humanity. Look at verse 15. In the middle of the verse it says, "...for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace." He abolished the enmity contained in the commandments and the ordinances, and then "make in himself," two groups, Jew and Gentile, "one new man, so making peace." This concept of the new man is the Church, and the phrase conveys the idea of a new humanity. It's not black or white, it's a new humanity not distinguished by color, but blood-bought, blood-washed children of God. This Church that He's created is actually referred to as the "new man." He's not talking about the individual becoming a new person in Christ, he's talking about the Church, a new humanity.

I've been to Australia quite a bit over my years of ministry, and I know from experience that the tension is quite heavy between the Aborigines and the Australian people. I heard the story of Bishop John Reid. He was a pastor there. He was driving a school bus of Aboriginal and Australian boys and girls one day. They were fighting, bickering, and dividing on the bus—the Aborigines against the white Australians. The bishop stopped and got all the kids off the bus. He said, "Look, you're not black and white anymore. You're all green," he just created a new humanity. "You're all green, so get back on the bus, you green people." They all got back on the bus and were riding along kind of content for a while. The silence was broken with someone yelling, "All the dark green on the right side and the light green on the other side." That sinful heart of man just cannot be reconciled apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. Amen? We need the Holy Spirit to change our hearts and to change our lives.

I love this concept of a new race, a third humanity, the Church. If you are a born-again

Christian, you are a part of the new man, the Church.

Notice, thirdly, 1) He abolished the law; 2) He created a new humanity, and 3) the death of Christ reconciled both Jew and Gentile to God in one body having slain the enmity. Look at verse 16. "And that he might reconcile," there's that word, which means two parties that were at enmity are brought back together into unity, "both unto God in one body by the cross," we experience this unity through reconciliation, and it's back to God, one body, and it's by the Cross, "having slain the enmity," hatred, "thereby," this is all the work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Then, in verse 17, it brought peace. So He abolished the law, created a new humanity, by His death He reconciled both Jew and Gentile "in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby," and, verse 17, He brought peace. I love Isaiah 9:6 where it says that He is called, "...The Prince of Peace." There's no peace for the wicked. There's only peace when Christ reigns in our hearts and brings us back together.

Notice verse 17, "And came and preached peace to you which were afar off," that's the Gentiles, "and to them that were nigh." It's not talking about Jesus preaching peace, but it's talking about the Holy Spirit working through the apostles and the early Christians going out into the world and preaching Christ, preaching the Cross, and bringing peace. So much of the harmony that we have in the world today is because of true Christianity and the gospel of Jesus Christ. If it weren't for Christ, if it weren't for His Cross, if it weren't for the gospel message, the world would be very, very, very dark.

The reason why America is getting darker by the day is because the gospel is not being proclaimed as it should because of the lack of Christian influence. It's not legislation, it's not Democrats versus Republicans, it's the lack of gospel impact and influence. If it weren't for Christ, if it weren't for the gospel, it weren't for God's Word, the world would be a very, very, dark, hopeless place. We have hope. We need to go out and be lights in the midst of a very dark world.

I like that He brings us to God, verse 18. It says, "For through him," that is, Christ, "we both have access by one Spirit," that's the Holy Spirit, "unto the Father," that's God the Father. If you're taking notes, you can write down the word "Trinity" right there. You have God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit all mentioned there in verse 18. That's a marvelous reference to the Trinity.

Thirdly, and lastly, verses 19-22, we had separation; reconciliation, one new humanity, the Church; and now we have unification, the portrait of what Jews and Gentiles are in Christ. I love these closing verses. Verse 19, "Now therefore," he's actually wrapping up everything he just said, "ye are no more strangers," remember he's talking to Gentiles who were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, who were without covenants, without hope, and without God, "and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints," which is a reference to Christians, "and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom," that is, in the Lord, "ye also are builded

together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

We could have taken three weeks on this passage, one week for each little section, but let me point out some marvelous truths. Notice in verse 19, “Now therefore,” he’s pointing out that the death of Christ created a new humanity, the Church, and the affects of this are stupendous for the Gentile believers. He describes them by using three graphic, mind-blowing images. If you’re taking notes, write them down. Now that we have been reconciled to God in Christ, we are part of a new nation, a new city, verse 19, “...ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens,” notice that, “with the saints.” The imagery, or the picture here, is that we have a new nationality, we have a new city, we have a new nation. It’s the Kingdom of God where He rules in our hearts.

Again, in my travels around the world, and I’m actually glad I don’t travel like I used to. I used to travel all over the world, and if you’ve traveled to foreign countries, I know many of you have, you know how you don’t ever quite feel at home—you’re an American, but you’re not in America—and depending on what country you go to, you’re a different color than they, you speak a different language, and you’re just different. I remember even going to white Europe, whether it be Eastern Europe or Western Europe, I don’t know what it was, but they knew you were from America, even if you didn’t talk. The minute you talk, you give it away, but it’s like, “Do I look like I’m from California or something?” It blew my mind. They would say, “You’re Americans, aren’t you?” I don’t know if it’s the shoes you wear or the clothes or what it was, but they knew. I never really felt at home until I got back on American soil. I remember some trips where I was so weary and so tired.

I remember being in China for several weeks listening to Chinese. I don’t know a lick of Chinese. My son is actually fluent in Mandarin Chinese, but I don’t know any Chinese. For weeks, all I heard was Chinese. God bless the Chinese-speaking people, but I like to understand what I’m hearing. I remember when I first got off the plane and came back and heard people speaking English, it’s like, “Ahhhhh, praise Jehovah!” Sometimes, as you come into the country and go through customs they’ll say, “Welcome home,” and that would thrill my heart, or “Welcome back to America.” It was so awesome.

We have a new citizenship, and Heaven is our new home. We all speak the same language, Heaven’s language; we all worship the same Lord, Heaven’s Lord; we all have the same destination, we’re all going to Heaven; so there’s that camaraderie that’s there among believers. What a blessed thing that is. We have a common allegiance. We have a common goal. We have a common God to glorify and a common destination. Write down Philippians 3:20. Paul says, “For our conversation,” citizenship, “is in heaven.”

The second picture in this passage, verse 19, is that of having a new family. Notice he calls it, “...the household of God.” We have a new citizenship, it’s heavenly; we have a new family. This is warmer and a little more personal. It’s not just a nationality, but it’s a family and God is our Father. How important that is. This new humanity has its own citizenship, but it’s God’s city and we reconciled people are now also part of God’s family. This represents a deeper intimacy than

citizenship.

Peek back at verse 18 where he says, “For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” It’s interesting he mentions the Father and now mentions the family. God is our Father, and we’re brothers and sisters in Christ. In Ephesians 3, turn ahead with me real quick, verses 14-15, “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,” so think about that. This is the Church—God is our Father and we are all one family.

Then, notice thirdly, we’re also a building or a temple, verses 20-22. He says, “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” This, again, is a metaphor or picture of the Church. We’re citizens, we’re brothers and sisters with the same Father in the same family, and we’re also a building. We’re like “living stones,” Peter says, all compiled together. We make a temple, and God inhabits us by His Spirit. That’s why when we gather corporately, even like we are here tonight, there’s a special sense of the presence of God. Jesus said, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” It’s so wonderful to gather corporately. This is why fellowship or coming to fellowship is so important because we’re like living stones, we’re compacted together, we’re built into God’s building or God’s temple or God’s house. We’re living stones.

Let me point out these facets about this temple. The foundation is in verse 20, it’s “...built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,” these are New Testament apostles and prophets, and it probably involves their teaching. Some believe because Jesus is called here the “chief corner stone,” knowing that He is also the foundation, but here the apostles laid the foundation. There’s a sense in which they’re also the foundation of the Church. We need to follow apostolic teaching and the Word of God.

The early church gave themselves to the apostle’s doctrine, so they’re the foundation of the Church. In this primary sense, I believe there are no apostles or even prophets in this sense anymore in the Church. There is the gift of prophecy, and the Spirit gives some of those gifts, but the apostles laid the foundation, and we have their doctrine in the Word.

The cornerstone is referred to as Christ, “Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.” Any of you guys that have done stonework or masonry or laid block wall, you know how important the corners are, that they’re plumb and straight. The cornerstone is what holds it all together. Some feel that it’s possible that in the ancient arches with the stones they put in, that the cornerstone was the center stone at the top of the arch that held the arch together, not necessarily the corner on the ground. Either way, the cornerstone on the ground requires plumb walls to build the building. We need Jesus Christ or the cornerstone in the arch that holds it all together. Jesus is the cornerstone.

Thirdly, notice verses 21-22, that it has building blocks, and we are those building blocks. We

are "...the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord," and then notice also, lastly, that it has inhabitants. It is inhabited by God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This is a picture or an image of the Church. All these little blocks, or bricks or stones, put together forms a temple, and God inhabits us by His Spirit—God through the Holy Spirit. So, by God's grace, through the work of the Cross, aliens have become citizens, strangers have become family, idolaters have become the temple of the true and the living God. Amen?

Let me drive home one last point, too, as I close. That closing point is as Christians, are you practicing peace in the church, in your marriage, in your family, in your workplace? Are you taking the gospel of peace? Are you sharing the good news of Jesus Christ so people can find peace with God and peace with one another? If you want harmony in your home, you need Christ in your heart. If you want harmony in your church, you need Christ at the center of your church. If you want harmony in your world, in your nation, we need Jesus Christ. If ever America needed Jesus Christ and the gospel of Christ, it's now. Amen? Let's pray.