

# The Pearl of the Epistles – Ephesians

## Peace Verses Hostility

### Ephesians 2:14-18

*Ephesians 2:14-18 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. (ESV)*

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#### Introduction

I had a lot of trouble deciding on a title for today's message. Peace is often sought but seldom found. It seems illusive and once you have peace, it seems to slip from your fingers like sand. Hostility on the other hand is easy to obtain and maintain. Our sinful nature is the opposite of peace and clam. It is calamity, anger, selfishness and lust.

*The Personnel Journal reported this incredible statistic: since the beginning of recorded history, the entire world has been at peace less than eight percent of the time! In its study, the periodical discovered that of 3530 years of recorded history, only 286 years saw peace. Moreover, in excess of 8000 peace treaties were made-- and broken.<sup>1</sup>*

I found this quote from an unknown source that said, "Peace that Jesus gives is not the absence of trouble, but is rather the confidence that He is there with you always."

Peace is longed for, desired, and plenty of money is spent in trying to attain it.

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<sup>1</sup> Moody Bible Institute, *Today In The Word*, June, 1988, p.33.

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### Peace Was Acquired By Christ Jesus

*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*

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The Christian does not need to look very far to find peace. Jesus is our peace for he bridged the gap between Jew and Gentile. The division between Jew and Gentile was profound, bitter, old and lasting. The Jews viewed the Gentiles as barbaric, unclean and low on the social ladder. They referred to them as dogs. The Gentiles viewed the Jews as money hungry and religious hypocrites. This hostility had been going on for generations.

Then Jesus entered the world. Through His atoning sacrifice on the cross, both can find peace and become one in Christ. Centuries of mistrust and hatred were torn down in his flesh.

Most see this is a reference to the miracle of the inner veil, between the Holy of Holies and the Holies in the Temple, being torn apart, from top to bottom.

But there is another possibility to look at. I believe Paul chose his words carefully. The King James Version refers to the “*middle wall of partition between us.*” Because you and I today are not familiar with the Temple structure, organization, ministrations and requirements we could miss the reference to “*the middle wall of partition between us.*” The Temple mount was a glorious structure that could be seen for miles around Jerusalem. The temple was broken down into several courts leading finally to the Temple itself. The Temple complex was completely walled in. Inside on each of the four walls was a large porch area. Moving towards the Temple were courts, each more exclusive than the previous. The outer court was the Court of the Gentiles. This court was not considered “holy ground”. Buying and selling took place in this court. Sacrificial animals of all types could be purchased. Since only Temple money could be used within the Temple courts, money-changers would exchange foreign currency to Temple coins for a fee. A dividing wall made of stone separated the Court of the Gentiles from the next inner court, the Court of Women. Another wall separated the Court of Women with the Court of Israel. Another wall separated the Court of Israel from the Court of the Priests. Each of these courts was designed to discriminate against a particular group. First were the Gentiles, then women, and finally priests. There was a wall of discrimination for each court.

All along the wall that separated the Court of Gentiles from the Court of Women were signs posted warning that non-Jews could not to enter into the next court on pain of death. Gentiles could

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only go so far and then they were forbidden by threat of their life. That wall caused much frustration and anger. The Jews decided that the Gentiles could not worship God Almighty and put up a wall to keep them out.

I believe this is the wall of partition that Paul is referring. It is this wall of separation that kept Jews, Gentiles, women and men from worshiping together. Jesus the Christ tore down these barriers through His work on the cross.

And how did Jesus death tear down this wall of partition? He accomplished it in three ways:

*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,*

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First he abolished the “*law of commandments expressed in ordinances.*” You might be that is not what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5:17 “*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*” Christ kept and fulfilled all the moral law. What He abolished was the ceremonial law; the restrictions for the Sabbath, the washings, offerings, etc. These had become a wall of partition in the worship of the LORD. Focus was on the ceremony and not on God Almighty.

Secondly He created a new man. Jews were always going to be Jews and Gentiles were always going to be Gentiles. A new third race was needed. R. Kent Hughes wrote:

*Jesus didn't Christianize the Jews or Judaize the Gentiles. He didn't create a half-breed. He made an entirely new man.<sup>2</sup>*

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:10) takes on a whole new meaning in view of this scripture. The walls of discrimination are brought down and Jew and Gentile can be at peace with each other through Christ.

### Peace Required Reconciliation

*16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.*

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<sup>2</sup> Ephesians, The Mystery of the Body of Christ, R. Kent Hughes, Crossway Publishing, p. 93

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Third, Jesus reconciles us together to God. He presents us to God as one body, the Bride of Christ. All differences are removed through the work of the cross. Since there are no more differences, then hostility is put to death.

### Peace Was Decreed to Us

*17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.*

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“...he came and preached peace to you”. Jesus central message wasn’t about peace. Jesus will one day return as a Judge. So what is the point that the Apostle Paul is alluding to? Jesus preached a religion that would produce peace with the Father. Those that were near, the Jews, and those that were far off, the Gentiles. Jesus is the source of salvation to all men, no matter their religion, race, creed, color or location. Peace refers to “reconciliation with God the Father.” Not peace in the world.

*2 Corinthians 5:18-21 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

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### Peace Brings Access to the Father

*18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.*

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Once reconciliation is made with the Father (peace), then man can have access to the Father through the Holy Spirit. That reconciliation is made possible through Jesus death.

“...we both have access” means both Jews and Gentiles. We could also say male and female.

### Conclusion

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In order for the Christian to have real, lasting peace requires the “blood of Christ.” (Ephesians 2:13)

Peace Was Acquired By Christ Jesus for all believers

Peace Required Reconciliation unto the Almighty God

Peace Was Decreed to Us to the Messiah, Jesus the Christ

Peace Brings Us Access to the Father

*In a speech made proclaiming a National Fast Day in 1863,  
Abraham Lincoln said,*

*"We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us."<sup>3</sup>*

*Robert C. Crowder*

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<sup>3</sup> President ABRAHAM LINCOLN, proclamation appointing a National Fast Day, March 30, 1863. The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, ed. Roy P. Basler, vol. 6, p. 156