

The Unity of the Body, Part 2

Scripture: Ephesians 2:13-15

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The subject of being in the body of Christ, being in Christ, being one with Christ and as we are one in Christ, there is a tremendous unity. And that is the message that Paul is talking about here. He's talking about unity, and it's an important message for his world and for our world. Our world knows all about problems of discord, disharmony, and disunity. We have it in the family. We have arguments and strife and quarrel and bitterness, divorce. We have it in the offices in the businesses. We have it in the schools. We have it in the government. We have it between nations. We have constant conflict, constant enmity, constant antipathy, constant argument, strife, division.

And we have in our world barriers and people are always building barriers and we're all really guilty of this. It's just a part of sinful man's very nature as a sinner. And the ancient world wasn't any different than our world. It was a world just jammed full of barriers and walls and fences to keep people out and enclose certain people in. And that there were many different fences and different barriers. One of the most obvious barriers in the ancient world was the barrier between the bond and the free or the slave and the slave owner.

The slaves resented, for the most part, their owners and the owners looked down in condescension on the slaves. And there was a tremendous gulf. In fact, one of the real problems in early Christianity was getting a slave and a master to sit beside each other and worship the same Christ. And then there was a tremendous barrier, believe it or not, between men and women. We see it in 1 Corinthians Chapter 7 where one of the biggest problems in the early church was that a woman would become a Christian. And her husband would find it intolerable that his wife would ever do anything independent of himself. He had a place where she was to be and it was to be a place of subservience to him and he would tell her what to believe and there was a barrier there. She never entered in a man's world. And when she made a decision that affected her entire life and destiny like receiving Jesus Christ, it was out of character and it created tremendous conflict and it even meant that many times her husband would leave her because he would be a laughing stock among his buddies.

There were barriers everywhere. There were barriers particularly between people known as the Greeks and the what? Barbarians. Remember that? Cicero wrote, "As the Greeks say all men are divided into two classes, Greeks and Barbarians." Now the Greek called a Barbarian...called a man a

Barbarian if he didn't speak Greek. That was a Barbarian. If you were speaking Greek, if you're a Greek speaking person, you were a Greek. If you didn't speak Greek you were a Barbarian. And it came from bar-bar, because to the Greek any other language sounded like bar, bar, bar, bar, bar, bar, see. And that's where they got the word. It didn't make any sense. It was just gobbety-gook to them, and so they were called Barbarians.

And the Greeks said they had the language of the gods. They elevated themselves. They exalted themselves in this wonderful language and they looked down on everybody else. So there were huge walls between the Greeks and the Barbarians. In fact, Aristotle wrote that "The Barbarians practiced bestiality." That is they practice sexual activity with animals. He talked about certain Barbarians belonging to the bestial class and Livi, an ancient writer, also said, "The Greeks wage a truceless war against people of other races," against Barbarians.

So the gospel had to deal with male and female conflicts where men felt themselves in an entirely different class than women. They had to deal with the bond and the free where slave owners felt themselves in an entirely different class than slaves. It had to deal with the Greek and the Barbarian and it had to deal also with the tremendous tension between the Jew and the Gentile. The apostle Paul faced something of this Greek Barbarian problem in Romans 1:14. He said, "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, to the wise, and to the unwise, so as much as in me is I am ready to preach the gospel." And he felt that the gospel was for Greeks and Barbarians. That it was for wise, that is educated and non-educated, for slaves and free men, for women and men, for Jew and Gentile.

In Colossians Chapter 3, in verse 11, the apostle Paul says this, "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all." In other words, in Christ, all the barriers come down. No more castes, no more classes, no more races, no more distinctions, no more uniquenesses. It's all equality in Christ. A very important message in Christianity.

Sir Philip Gibbs wrote of the reality of this unity in his book entitled *The Cross of Peace*. This is what he said. "The problem of fences has grown to be one of the most acute that the world must face. Today there are all sorts of zigzag and crisscrossing fences running through the racism peoples of the world. Modern progress has made the world a neighborhood and God has given us the task of making it a brotherhood. In these days of dividing walls of race and class we must shake the earth anew with the message of Christ in whom there is neither bond nor free, Jew nor Greek, Scythian or Barbarian, but all are one." Christ comes to break down the barriers.

I remember reading about a modern missionary who told that he was officiating at a communion service in a certain part of Africa in a very remote area. And he said he sat at the communion table and to his right sat a man who was known in his native language as Manly Heart. And he was the

tribal chief of a people called the Ngoen. And there were many Ngoen, the missionary writes, in the congregation. And the old chief told him that he could remember the days before they heard of Christ. And he said those were the days when the young warriors of the Ngoen went out to bloody their spears with the blood of the neighboring tribes, the Sanga and the Timbuka. And the old chief told the missionary that they would come back with their spears completely bloodied, behind them a trail of burned and devastated towns and dragging along with them raped women as their booty, taken from the Sanga and the Timbuka tribes.

But now the chief said, it's all different. And the missionary said that's right, because sitting on his left hand were the elders from the church among the Sanga and the Timbuka, all three tribes, once thirsting for each other's blood, now one in the blood, in the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what Christianity is intended to do, to break down the fences. But it wasn't easy. It wasn't easy. The church in its early years had a tremendous battle on its hands. And to begin to win that battle, there had to be a clear statement of the theology. God had to say this is what is right. And that's why Ephesians in part is written, to say, this is the standard of unity. We are all one in the body of Christ. And that's why in Chapter 4 it is perhaps best summed up in verses 3 and following that we are to endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. We must do all we can to maintain this oneness and this unity that knows no fences and no barriers and no walls. Because this is the way God made it.

Look at verse 4, "God has designed there is one body, one spirit, one of hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is above all and through all and in you all." In other words, everything God has designed into the church is one and the church is to manifest that same oneness. Until it says in verse 13, "We all come in the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the son of God to a perfect man to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. We are to be one as Christ was one." That's the design of God.

The toughest barrier to get over was the Jew and the Gentile in those early days. And I told you last week how at odds they were, how the Jew hated the Gentile, how the Gentile hated the Jew. And neither one really had a reason, but they began to hate each other and the mountain got bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger until finally after re-enforcing it and re-enforcing it there was just absolutely no relationship at all, but bitterness and hatred. And it shouldn't have been. You remember last time I said to you that God had called out Israel not as an end in itself, but to reach the Gentiles with the message? They should have remembered Isaiah 57:19, one of the great verses of the book of Isaiah.

Isaiah 57:19 says this, Isaiah heard God say this. Isaiah was eavesdropping on the eternal God and this is what he said. "Peace, peace to him that is far off and to him that is near." You say what does that mean? Those are designations of two different peoples, the Jew and the Gentile and those designations arose because of the geographical location of the temple. When the temple was built in

Jerusalem, the Jews by virtue of proximity to it were called near. The Gentiles, because they were beyond the borders of Israel were far off. And so this concept of near and far off, first of all on a geographical idea, connected to the location of the temple. The Jew was near the temple, near the house of God, near the place of worship and spiritually near God. That's the idea.

It first of all, was geographic. It became spiritual in its connotation. So that a Jew was called one who was near and a Gentile was called one who was far off. And they should have all known from Isaiah himself eavesdropping on God that all along God had said peace to him that is far off and peace to him that is near. God always had Gentile salvation in His heart, always. But the Jews didn't. Unfortunately, they didn't want to reach those that were far off. The Jewish rabbinic writers tell us an incident that helps us understand their attitude.

A Gentile woman came to Rabbi Eleazer and she came and she confessed to the rabbi that she was a sinner and that she wanted to be righteous. And she asked if she could be admitted to the Jewish faith. "Rabbi," she said, "bring me near." Because that was the terminology as I just explained that they used. "Rabbi, bring me near." And the rabbinic writers tell us that Eleazer said to her, "No, you cannot come near. And he shut the door in her face." Now that is just an illustration out of Jewish writing itself, of the isolationism that took the place of the mission that Israel was intended to have.

When Jesus came and Jesus wanted to bring Jew and Gentile together in one and Himself, the wall was so high and so wide that it was with great difficulty that that was accomplished and even today it's still difficult. Let me show you how difficult the problem was by giving you an illustration of it. Look back at the book of Acts Chapter 10 for a moment. God's grace had always embraced all classes of people. That shouldn't have been some shocking revelation to the Jews. They could have read it in Deuteronomy Chapter 10 way back in the writings of Moses himself in the Pentateuch. It said, "God is no respecter of persons." That was already an established reality.

They should have known it, but in Chapter 10 of the book of Acts you have the conversion of Cornelius. And he quotes from this ancient text in verse 34. "Peter opened his mouth and said of a truth, I perceive God as no respecter of persons. But in every nation he that fears Him and works righteousness is accepted with Him." You have faith plus works equals righteousness. And that's true in any nation. It can't be faith without works or it's dead, right? It's got to be faith with a product. It can't be works without faith or it's legalism. But where there is real faith, we're His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works. There is the evidence of acceptance with God. And that's for everybody in every nation because God is no respecter of persons.

Now Peter finally awoke to the reality of the Old Testament text when he finally saw a Gentile come to Christ, and the first one was Cornelius. And when Cornelius was believing and Cornelius heard and listened to the Gospel, Peter said, "This is true." Salvation is not just for Jews, it's for Gentiles. And then over in verse 44, "While Peter still spoke these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them who heard

the word. And they of the circumcision who believed were," what, "astonished." Incredible. God is giving the Gentiles the same thing He gave to us. In fact, it was such a shock that Peter when he was reporting it over in Chapter 11, verse 15, he said, "And as I began to speak you'll never believe what happened, the Holy Spirit fell on them as on us at the beginning." Verse 17, "For as much then as God gave them the same gift as he did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could withstand God."

Now his first reaction to Cornelius' salvation was to do what? To withstand it, to argue against it, to fight it, to deny it, to reject it. He says, "I couldn't do it." When God gave him the Holy Spirit, I saw it's the same thing. I couldn't fight God." Gentiles actually getting saved. Well, the people of Jerusalem, the Christians of Jerusalem, some of them got upset. Some of them said no way, that's an impossibility. You can't be a Gentile, then a Christian. You can't come to God while you're a Gentile. You've got to become a Jew first. And so they wanted all these people before they could be converted to get circumcised, keep the law of Moses, he had to go Pagan, Jew, Christian. You couldn't just go Pagan, Christian. It can't be done.

So they decided that it was a big enough problem, they ought to have a council meeting, Acts 15. And in Acts 15 they got all the heads together, all the brain trust, all the white hairs, I mean, they were all there. James the leader of the Jerusalem church. All the mucky mucks from Jerusalem, Peter was there, and so were Paul and Barnabas. They really had the brain trust and all the sides of the issue where there. And verse 1 sets the issue. Certain men who came from Judea taught the brethren, that is the Christians, these were Judaisers. And they said unless you are circumcised after the manner of Moses you can't be saved. Now if that was true folks, we'd have another thing we'd have to do here at the church. We'd have to hire a bunch of doctors. This wouldn't a prayer room in here, it would be a surgery room. You see that's ridiculous. That's exactly where they were in their thinking. It's exactly where they were.

And so they said, well what are we going to do about this? Well, they had this big discussion. Finally, Peter stands up and of course, the certain Pharisees in verse 5 said it was needful to circumcise him and command him to keep the law of Moses. Peter finally gets up and he says, verse 7, "Men and brethren, you know, how that a good while ago," he's referring to Acts 10 and Cornelius, "God made choice among us that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God who knoweth the hearts bore them witness giving them the Holy Spirit as he did to us. It must have been genuine salvation or God would never have," what, "given them the Holy Spirit."

You know that, and "he put no difference between us and them. He purified their hearts by faith, not by works." Now why are you putting God to a test? Why do you want to put a yoke on the neck of the disciples, the Gentiles, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? Why do you want to make them do what we can't even do, keep the law of God? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved even as they." And then Paul and Barnabas went on to tell how

wonderfully God had saved them. And so the decision of the counsel was no, you don't have to become a Jew. You can come to faith in Jesus Christ and be equally saved. And that's the message of Ephesians, we're one in Christ.

"God our Savior," 1 Timothy 2, "who will have all men to be saved who has offered Jesus Christ as a mediator between God and man, the one who giveth His life a ransom for all, Jew and Gentile." Oh but it was so hard for the Jew to accept that. Oh that was hard. I remember when I was a kid reading the Adventures of Tom Sawyer. Do you remember that? And do you recall that Tom Sawyer didn't want Huck Finn in his gang. And they had a little dialogue that went like this according to Mark Twain. "Now Tom," Huck said, "ain't you always been friendly to me? You wouldn't shut me out would you, Tom?" "Huck, I wouldn't want to and I don't want to, but what would people say? Why they'd say, hmmm, Tom Sawyer's gang, pretty low characters in it and they'd mean you, Huck. And you wouldn't like that and neither would I."

Mark Twain picked up on history didn't he? Pretty low character. Can't let you in my gang. And that's about where the Jews were. What would people say? Judaism, hmmm, pretty low characters in it, Gentiles. We still play that game. We screen out of our little world anybody who doesn't enhance our image. Anybody who doesn't strengthen our viewpoint, anybody who doesn't boost our pride, re-enforce our prejudice or feed our ego. And if you don't do any of those things you're not in our gang. But the body of Christ isn't so. The body of Christ is made up of all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ and Paul the apostle said we're to love everybody the same, everybody the same.

Now Paul writes this chapter to try to help to break the walls down. I told you last time there are two segments from verses 11-22 and they are from the viewpoint of the Gentiles. Point number one we discussed last time, socially and spiritually alienated. Paul says, it's true. The Gentiles were socially alienated, verse 11. No question about it. They were called uncircumcision by the circumcision. In other words, the Jewish people wouldn't accept them. They distained them and uncircumcision was a term of derision. There was a terrible social alienation. But worse than that there was a spiritual alienation in verse 12. And there he says that the Gentiles were without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise having no hope and without God in the world. Trapped in the evil system. Trapped in the kosmos. Trapped in Satan's domain. And they were Christless, hopeless, covenantless, stateless, Godless, alienated socially, alienated spiritually.

You say well why does he make an issue out the social alienation? Because it was very important. They couldn't get the spiritual message until they got over the social alienation. The Jews couldn't reach out until they saw that they were really alienating themselves socially. The Gentiles needed to understand both barriers were there. But the point that he's making here really is that they were just in despair. They were Godless. They were not only sinners, Chapter 2, verses 1-3, but they were despairing. They had no Christ, no hope, no future, no God, no promises, no nothing and that's despair folks. That is abject despair. And that concept of having no God, of being Godless, is a

repetitive comment about Gentiles in the scripture, about Pagans, about those without Christ.

In 1 Thessalonians 4 he says, "Don't act like the heathen who know not God." In Galatians 4:8, he reminds them of when "they knew not God." Now people may say they know God, but apart from Christ, they don't, they are Godless. And we saw that their problem of despair, their problem of Godlessness is really their own fault because in Romans Chapter 1, God gave them the knowledge of Himself, but it was twisted and perverted until it was lost. And so first of all, Paul says, "Yes, it's true." Look at the two past modes that he deals with. In time past, verse 11. Verse 12, at that time. This is in the past. It's true you were alienated socially and spiritually.

Notice the first word of verse 13, "but." But and the second word now, at that time yes. In time past, yes, but now that alienation is over. It begins the same way verse 4 of Chapter 2. "You are a sinner, you are a sinner. But God...you were alienated, you were alienated. But now" ...and here comes the change.

And we move to point two, spiritual and socially...spiritually and socially united. No longer alienated, in Christ united. Jew and Gentile become one in Him. Now I want to talk about this for our time this morning, and I want you to see verses 13 through 15 and see how Paul describes it. Very theological, but it's rich and insightful. Look at verse 13. "But now," two great words, two shocking, striking words that intrude upon the terrible alienation of verse 12. "But now," here comes the key, "in Christ Jesus." There's that little phrase again. Mark it, "in Christ," everything in Ephesians is an issue of in Christ. "In Christ Jesus ye who were once far off are made near by the blood of Christ." Now listen, I don't believe for one minute that there ever will be an end to alienation until Christ ends that in the human realm.

Peace, peace when there is no peace. There is no peace for the wicked. And that doesn't just mean peace with God, it means there's no peace in human relations either. Christ alone can take people who are far off and bring them near and he's saying there, there's those terms again, far off and near, people who know God and people who don't, Jews and Gentiles. He brings them together. This is the promise of the gospel. It's always been this way people. Christianity is for Jew and Gentile. The first sermon ever preached when the church was founded is preached in Acts 2 and the preacher was whom? Peter. Listen to what he closes his message with. "For the promise," the promise of salvation, promise of the Holy Spirit, all that's involved in forgiveness, the whole act of salvation, "the promise is unto you and to your children," he says to the Jews. "To you and your children." Now if you stop right there we could say salvation is just Jewish, but he said this. "And to all that are afar off." Now who did he have in mind there? Gentiles. "Even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

In the spiritual sense, the near are those who believed. The far off, those who don't. In the context of the New Testament, the near are the Jews, the far off Gentiles who don't know God. Originally it was geographical in relation to the temple. And so here he says those who were far off, Gentiles who

didn't know God are made near by the blood of Christ. And there's no rabbi slamming the door in their face either. There's just Jesus, but the door wide open calling to them to come. Now what is it that did this?

Well, look at verse 13. "Those who were far off," that's us Gentiles, unbelievers, "were made near by the blood of Christ." You say well, what kind of connection is there here? How is it? Well, the blood of Christ is a reference to His death. It is His death that made us near. And this is the whole point that he wants to make here. Now listen, there is only one thing and this is a simplification and it's a genuine and true one. There is only one thing that creates antagonism, antipathy, enmity, hate, bitterness, strife, fighting, war, conflict, there's only one thing that intrudes into perfect human relationship. Do you know what it is? Sin. Right? That's all.

That's it; you remove sin. You have a perfect relationships. The only thing that intrudes is sin, that's it. A good illustration is heaven. In heaven, there's no sin, there's no problems. Relationships are just incredible. The absolute epitome of potential relationships, perfect relationships. Relationships just like...well, to give you a better illustration, the best example of a perfect relationship is between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, right?

Never any break down. And that's because there is no sin. Where there is perfect righteousness, there is a perfect relationship, so that the problem in human relationships is sin. Now in order to eliminate sin, Christ had to do what? To die. And when He died on the cross, now watch this, when He died on the cross, He paid the penalty for sin. Sin was therefore eliminated positionally speaking. In terms of our standing before God, sin was eliminated, therefore we came together because the only thing that stood in the way was removed positionally.

When someone receives the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, all the cleansing value of His blood washes away that individual's sin. He enters into the family of God, sinlessly seen before God, his whole life is cleansed. He has the common life of God and so does everybody else who's there at the foot of the cross and they're all one with each other before God. That's the point. I don't care whether you're a Timbuka, a Sanga, a Ngoen who fought for decades and even centuries, in the blood of Jesus Christ you're one. I don't care if you're...whatever your races, creeds, backgrounds, nationalities, it doesn't matter because the thing that makes for barriers is sin and Christ on the cross removed the sin and made us one. That's the positional reality of the body of Christ. Now we don't always live it out, do we?

We don't always act like it. We don't always live up to our position. And that's the goal of Chapters 4-6 in Ephesians. But in Chapters 1-3, he's just defining our position. The Jew and the Gentile were separate, and they were separate in their sin. And their sin caused the problem. You can see it on a simple scale in your own life. When you have a quarrel with your wife and you go and you seek forgiveness and you have mutual forgiveness and you remove the problem there's instant

communion. And that's the point. At the cross, sin was taken away. Sin was done away with and there was no barrier left. And everybody became one in Christ.

Two men in Christ are always one with each other, always. Two people in Christ are always one with each other because it is the blood of Christ that removed the problem. So those far off and those near come to the foot of the cross. Listen, every single person who's ever been redeemed from the time of Adam to the last human being that ever lives is redeemed because he stands at the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ. It's like the Apex of history. It goes down to all that's behind it and down to all that's in front of it. And everybody comes under that same umbrella.

People who came to God before Christ was even born nonetheless had their sins paid for by His cross. Those of us who have come to Christ since He died, nonetheless have our sins covered by His cross. His death goes both ways in history and gathers in everybody under the cross. That's why the Lord's table is so important beloved, because when you come to the communion table and the Lord's table, you are refocusing the fact that you are one in Him who has removed the barriers. And the primary barrier is sin. There are no others. Let's go a little further.

Verse 14, I'll show you something. "He is our peace who hath made both one and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." Now it's a general statement in verse 13 of how Christ has brought us together by His blood and now He gives a couple of analogies. The first one is about a middle wall. But he says He's our peace. A position of the pronoun here in the Greek indicates that the best translation is He alone is our peace or He only is or peace. It's emphatic. He alone. In other words, what Paul is saying is look, Jews and Gentiles have been trying to get together for centuries and nothing ever pulled it off, the law, works, ordinances, ceremonies, sacrifices, human merit, great effort, none of it could handle it. "He alone is our peace." or "He alone is the embodiment of peace." He alone brings people together.

One of my favorite stories, a story in World War II where the Americans were firing at a farmhouse occupied by the Germans in Europe. The family had run for its life to the barn. When the Germans descended upon the house under pursuit of the Americans, they began to fire across an open field. And the blaze of bullets was really going. And all of a sudden, they had a little two or three year old baby girl who was in the barn and somehow slipped out and started running across this open field. And instantly a soldier saw the child and screamed to cease fire and the same happened on the other side and they both stopped because the little babe crossed the field. And in some sense what all of the Generals and all of the Presidents and all of the mucky mucks couldn't do, a baby did, brought peace in the midst of a war.

Well, that's exactly what Christ did. He was a babe who brought peace. Both sides stopped firing. And what didn't happen in that story does happen in Christ. They dropped their weapons and run into the midst of the field around Christ and embraced each other. That's what happened spiritually. We're

one in Him. Listen, I want you to understand what I'm going to say. When a Jew believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, he loses his national uniqueness. Did you get that? He doesn't stop being a Jew. Doesn't lose his heritage. I'm not talking just about the history. I'm talking about his spiritual identity. I'm talking about the national uniqueness that sets him apart. When Jesus died on the cross Judaism as a religion ended. It ended. It was done.

As a people they haven't ended, believe me. God still has a wonderful future right for Israel. But Judaism as a religion ended. A Jew loses his uniqueness. From then on he is in Christ. That's the issue. He is a member of the church. There is neither Jew nor Gentile. That's exactly what the New Testament says. That doesn't matter anymore. It's lost. There's no distinctions, not black and white, not male and female, not bond and free, not Greek and Barbarian, and not Jew and Gentile. When a Jew comes to Christ that's gone. And when a Gentile receives the Lord Jesus Christ, he loses his identity also and he comes to the place of being in Christ and that's all that matters anymore. And listen people, those of us who are all in Christ ought to be radiating that kind of acceptance and love. We ought to be ripping down those fences so that the world will know what our Christ really does.

And the sad, sickening, disheartening thing of it all is that we just keep slapping up the fences even in the name of Christianity, don't we? Churches fight and quarrel and squabble and split. No wonder God's heart is grieved - when that's the one thing He came to do was make us one and we're constantly tearing it apart. Listen, all fleshly distinctions, race, nationality, color, all are nailed to the cross. It's over with. God called out that separate people for a certain time in history. And they had a unique identity, but when the church was born their religious identity stopped. They're still a nation. They're still constituted in national identity. God is still going to do something with them as a people, but Judaism as a religion is over, it's dead.

In fact, it was dead in Acts 10 for sure when Peter saw the vision of the sheet and he saw on the sheet all kinds of animals, clean and unclean, that is those that a Jew could eat and those that he couldn't. And the Lord said to him in the vision, "Rise Peter, kill and eat, eat it all. It doesn't matter anymore." Peter says, "I can't do it. I've been a Jew all my life. I can't handle that." And He says, "Are you going to argue with me? Eat it Peter." And then after he had that vision, he got the message to go to see Cornelius the Gentile. That was a preparation vision so he'd know the Gentiles were accepted. But the point was, it didn't matter anymore. The feasts were over. The ceremonies were over. The fasts were over. The whole shmear was done with.

In Romans Chapter 14, the apostle Paul writes to the Romans and he says if a guy wants to keep the Sabbath and it's in his conscience to do it, let him do it. If you don't want to keep the Sabbath, forget it. It doesn't matter anymore. That's over too. That whole system is over. Watch, the whole ceremonial thing is done with and we'll see more about that in a minute. And just to show the illustration...by the way, that's why it bothers me when people today want to come along in the name of Christianity and isolate all the groups out of Christianity. You know, we have Jewish Christianity

and Irish Christianity and black Christianity, you know, and the Lord is up there going "this is ridiculous."

See, we just undo everything. There's just...we're just all in Christ people. We just embrace each other in Christ. And look at the illustration. "Hath broken down the middle wall or partition between us." This is a vivid picture because there...it pictures the temple, the middle wall. Let me show you why. Visualize with me for a minute. Maybe I'll use this hymn book to give you an idea. Let's assume that this is the outer court of the temple, the whole outer area. And then it...this is called the court of the Gentiles. Inside that was another court called the court of the Israelites. Inside that was the court of the priests. Inside that was the holy place, and then inside was the holy of holies.

So there were levels of going in. Now a Gentile could only go in the outer court and that was it. And between the outer court of the Gentiles and the next court of the Israelites was a marble screen. And written on that was what Josephus calls the law of purity and this is what it said on that plaque, right on that screen in the temple. "No Gentile may enter within the barricade which surrounds the sanctuary and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death."

If a Gentile walked inside that deal, bang he was dead. Now that courtyard God had there for a reason. He wanted Gentiles to come in there in that outer court and he wanted them to worship. In fact, when in Mark 11, he went to cleanse the place, he says...he said, "my Father's house is to be a house of prayer for all nations." He said that in Mark 11, but he said, "You've made it a den of thieves." So Christ admitted that they had taken that court of the Gentiles where Gentiles were to come and be exposed to Christianity...I mean to Judaism first of all, and then if they believed and became legitimate proselytes, they would be responding to God's message. And that's where they were sort of to be evangelized. That was evangelism territory, but they had corrupted it and turned it into a den of thieves.

But the point is they couldn't come pass that wall. And of course, they made such a deal out of that wall that they were about paranoid if any Gentile did. In fact, a very interesting thing, in Acts 21, happened. The apostle Paul came to Jerusalem and they hated him like mad because he was preaching grace instead of law. And they accused him...they grabbed him in verse 27, Acts 21, they grabbed him, they seized him and they said, "Men of Israel," they grabbed Paul like a prisoner and they started screaming at everybody around there in the temple. "This is the man that teaches all men everywhere against the people and the law and this place. This is the anti-Jewish, anti-law, anti-temple preacher. And further he brought Greeks into the temple and polluted the holy place." You say did he do that? No, but they had seen him in town with a man named Trophimus, an Ephesian, and they supposed that Paul brought him into the temple. And the city was moved, people ran together, took Paul, drew him out of the temple and at once the doors were shut and they were about to kill

him, and all of a sudden the soldiers moved in and said hold it right there folks. They were going to slaughter him on the spot because they said he brought a Gentile past the marble screen. It was a lie, but it illustrates how really paranoid they were about that.

So Paul knew well when he said there was a middle wall, boy he knew what he was talking about. But in the body of Christ the middle wall, look at it, is torn down Ephesians says. It's broken down. It's gone. It's abolished. And so there's no more separation. There's no more the privileged and the unprivileged. A Jew is no closer to God than a Gentile. There's no more of that stuff. A Jew is no more special to God than a Gentile. I remember one time when Dr. Feinberg said to me, he was my professor, beloved man, Jewish scholar of the Bible, he said to me one time, he said, "John," he says, "why do you Gentiles make such a big deal about us Jews." And I kind of laughed. He was really serious, because for him as he understands the word of God, there's no difference.

There's no reason to look down. There's no reason to look up. We're one in Christ, right? And the same for anyone in Christ. Look at verse 15. And Paul says the same thing in another way. "Having abolished in His flesh," that is, of course, in the crucifixion, Christ's crucifixion, "then enmity." When Christ died on the cross, now watch this, He abolished something. He literally abolished means he wiped it out. He literally wiped out something that was a barrier. Now what was the biggest barrier, the biggest genuine barrier between a Jew and a Gentile? What was it? Basically the ceremonial law, wasn't it? The whole Jewish thing. The whole ceremonial, ritual feasting, fasting, dressing, cooking, all the stuff they had, circumcision.

Listen, when Christ died on the cross, He abolished that. He abolished. It's called the law of commandments contained in ordinances. Now he's not talking about the moral law. Let me hasten to say this. God has a moral law and God's moral law never, what, changes. Never. It never changes. God's moral law was not abolished. God's moral law, Romans 1 and 2 says it's written on the heart on every man. God's moral law was formalized in the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. God's moral law is summarized in Matthew 22 there is one great commandment. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength, your neighbor as yourself."

God's moral law is again summarized in John 13:34. "A new commandment I write unto you that you love one another even as I have loved you that you also love one another." God's moral laws never change. The whole Ten Commandments are simply structured love. Did you know that? Having no other gods before you means you love God alone. Not coveting your neighbor's wife, means you love your own wife alone. Not murdering somebody means you love that somebody. Not stealing from somebody means you love them too much to take anything from them. You see, the whole Ten Commandments is a love treatise. And God has never changed His basis of morality.

What was abolished on the cross was the ceremonial, the ritual, the traditional and that was the thing that kept barrier. Jew and Gentile couldn't eat together because they cook the food different. They couldn't dress together because they had different kinds of clothes. They couldn't feast together. They had different feasts, different fasts. All these things, different offerings and they had a terrible time getting together and that was a real external enmity. When Christ died on the cross as I said earlier people, you've got to remember this, Judaism as a unique system was abolished. That's why I say we don't need people coming back reintroducing the Bar Mitzvahs and all of these other things into Christianity. We just got rid of that back here.

Now it's all right to go back and study your roots and your tradition and your history and I enjoy that even in my history. I can go back and study my German and Scotch ancestry. It's wonderful and exciting and it enriches my own life. And it makes me think that maybe there is something to me after all. Somebody back there did something significant. But don't get the idea that as a system Judaism must be fought to be maintained, because that isn't the point. It is abolished as a system. As a people, oh no. As a people they are preserved for God's great future for them.

But for this time and this day and this age, the church is the syniquanon, Judaism is abolished. And isn't it interesting to you to note this, that far and away, predominately even among Jewish people, Judaism has become totally liberalized. Do you know that to prove the abolishment was final in 70 A.D. God allowed the Romans to come down and the Romans literally wiped out Judaism. They abolished the temple, destroyed the whole thing and there has never been a sacrificial system in Judaism since that time to this day, never. It was wiped out. It was done. It was gone.

And with it went all the records. They don't know what tribes they're in. They don't know who the priests are. The whole system was finished. God wiped it out. And that's the way he meant it because his church is a mystery of Jew and Gentile as one. Verse 6 of Chapter 3, "The Gentile should be fellow heirs of the same body, partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel." That's the church. That's the new thing. There's never been anything like it.

And that's what he says here. Look at verse 15 again, "To make in himself," there it is again, in Christ, always in Christ, "of those two, one new man making peace." The word new is interesting. It's not neos, neos means new in time. Like if you have an assembly line and you're running off cars, the last one off the line is new. The newest one. You can have a new car, neos. It's not that word at all. It's kainos, kainos means something new in quality, not quantity. Something new in quality, not chronology. Something new of which there has never been another kind. This is a prototype. And so he says here, this one new man is not the latest in a long line of stuff. It's kainos. There's never been anything like it.

The church has never existed before. This is something brand new. This is a mystery. There's no precedent for this. Jew and Gentile are one in Christ. That's the message. What a tremendous thing it is to realize that God has broken down the wall, removed the fences and were one in Christ.

In France in World War II again, some American GIs lost their buddy in a battle. They carried his body to a little cemetery. They found a priest who spoke some broken English and they said, "You know, if it's possible sir, we would like to bury our buddy in a cemetery so he could at least have the dignity of a grave in an area that would be kept."

In the broken English, the priest said "Is he Catholic?" And they said, "No." He said, "I'm sorry, he cannot be buried here. This is a Catholic cemetery." Well, they were very disheartened and discouraged and they went on their way. They hadn't walked very far when they said, "Well let's do the next best thing. And in the darkness of the night as the day was ending they took their shovels and they dug a grave just a couple of feet outside the fence of the cemetery. If we can't be on the inside, we'll get as close as we can." And they buried their buddy and covered it over. They went to sleep not far away. In the morning they came to pay a final respect as it would be to the grave site and as they came back to their amazement, they couldn't find it. And they went around and around and they couldn't find it and they thought that in the darkness of the night, they must have forgotten where they were. And they looked and looked and finally they went and found the priest and they said, "Sir, can you help us find the grave outside the fence? What happened? Where is it?" "Well," said the priest, "the first part of the night, I stayed awake sorry for what I told you and the second part of the night I spent moving the fence."

Aren't you glad Jesus moved the fence and included us all? That's the way it is in the body of Christ, we're all one. We've got to live it out folks. We're going to spend eternity together. And we want to make it work right here don't we, so the world will know we really belong to him and they'll believe our gospel. Let's pray.

Thank You, our Lord, for the fact that in Christ we are one with each other. Help us to manifest that love, manifest that unity, manifest that sweet fellowship the world may see us and perceive that this is the love of God. This is what Christ can do. Oh Father, if the world which struggles so hard to make meaningful relationships could only see a church that had them, how drawn they might be to the Christ who made it possible. Father, we just can't get over the barrier of a lack of love. There's just no way to evangelize if the world can't see our love. We're one in the body. That's the way it is. Help us to accept each other as You have accepted us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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