



# Ephesians

(For access to all available commentaries and sermons of Charlie's click [HERE](#))

**But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.** Ephesians 2:13

The words “But now” are set in contrast to the words of the previous verse. In former days, the Gentiles were:

- Without Christ
- Alienated from the commonwealth of Israel
- Strangers of the covenants of the promise
- Having no hope
- Without God in the world

But now “in Christ Jesus” means that we have moved positionally from Adam to Him. We are “in Christ” and participate in all those things which we were unable to partake in. Because of being “in Christ” Paul says that “you who were once far off...” These words tell of how the Jews would speak of the Gentiles.

The Jews had the temple where God dwelt among them. They had the oracles of God which could speak to them. They had the feast days and the many other privileges which come through being “near” to God. The Gentiles had none of these things and thus were “far off” from them. However, even those “far off” were not completely forgotten by God. Isaiah told them this –

“I create the fruit of the lips:

Peace, peace to *him who is far off* and to *him who is near*,”

Says the LORD,  
“And I will heal him.” Isaiah 57:1

Through Christ, there is now peace. Those who were “far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” It is the blood of Christ which is considered the seal that guarantees us a new nearness to God. Earlier in Ephesians 1:7, it said that we have “redemption through His blood.” This indicated that the blood is the means of redemption. But it is also that which guarantees it as well.

It is as if the blood of Christ has been sprinkled on us. We are cleansed and purified by it. It is what provides the atonement, or a propitiation, for our sins as is noted in Romans 3:25. Therefore, it is what now allows us to draw near to God, regardless of physical location. This is revealed in the marvelously comforting words of Hebrews 10:19 –

“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus.”

Life application: If you have received the work of Jesus Christ, you have been redeemed, your sins are atoned for, peace with God has been restored, and you have access into the very dwelling place of the Almighty. As this is so, what should you fear?

**For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,** Ephesians 2:14

Paul has been describing the woeful state of the Gentiles for the past few verses. In verse 13 we then read, “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” Now in explanation of this, he says, “For He Himself is our peace.” The words, “He Himself” are emphatic. It is through Christ alone that this peace comes about. The idea of peace as given by the Lord simply permeates Scripture. For example, from the Old Testament we read –

“I create the fruit of the lips:  
Peace, peace to *him who is far off* and to *him who is near*,”  
Says the Lord,  
“And I will heal him.” Isaiah 57:19

Then at the birth of Christ, the heavenly host proclaimed –

“Glory to God in the highest,  
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” Luke 2:14

As Christ was finishing His earthly ministry, we then read –

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” John 14:27

Paul’s words, however, show that not only does Christ grant peace, He is our peace. He uses the word “peace” in an abstract sense to show that it defines Him and His work rather than merely being a result of what He has done. He is the source of it and the continuation of it. In Him, we now have this peace. Next, to further define this, he says, “who has made both one.” This is speaking of the division between Jew and Gentile which was especially highlighted in verses 11 & 12. Here Paul uses the term “both” in the neuter gender. By doing this, he shows that these states simply existed. They were facts concerning the nature of the state; Jew and Gentile. There was no peace and no accord between the two, but in Christ we are made one. Peace exists because of His work. “Both,” showing a distinction, is replaced with “one,” showing peace.

As a secondary note, it is also true that Christ is our peace between God and us. Where there was once enmity and strife, there is now love and contentment between the two. But this is not the intent of Paul’s words here. That is well described by Paul elsewhere though. In this verse, he is dealing with the issue of individual status before God – Jew and Gentile. This is fully evidenced by the words that Christ “has broken down the middle wall of separation.”

This “middle wall” refers to the wall which was in the temple in Jerusalem beyond which no Gentile could pass. Flavius Josephus indicates that it bore a sign which proclaimed death to any Gentile who passed it. This is what is referred to in Acts 21 –

“Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all *men* everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.” Acts 21:28

By supposing that Paul had brought a Gentile into the temple, it would have been considered a defilement of it.

Where the Jews could go, the Gentiles were excluded. However, in Christ, that middle wall of separation no longer exists. Gentiles are considered on the same level as Jews because of the work of Christ.

Life application: Too often we see people continuing to make a distinction between Jews and Gentiles, as if Jews are lifted up as having a special importance and favor with God within the church. This is incorrect. In Christ, all are on the same level, even as far as access to the Throne of Grace.

**...having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace,**  
Ephesians 2:15

This verse brings in a question upon which scholars are divided. Is “having abolished in His flesh the enmity” speaking of “the middle wall of separation” of the previous verse, or of “the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances”? Here is how they read together. Remember that the words “that is” are inserted by the translators –

“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, <sup>15</sup> having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace...”

The answer, when looking at Paul’s thoughts is that it is speaking of both. The “wall of separation” was there in the temple *because* they were the stewards of the law. The second explains the first. Christ has made us (meaning Jew and Gentile) both one. The way He did this was by breaking down that middle wall. And that middle wall stood because of the law which set Israel apart from the nations.

The law is now abolished. The word in Greek is *katargeó*. It properly means, “idle down, rendering something inert (‘completely inoperative’); i.e. being of *no effect* (totally without force, completely brought down); done away with, cause to *cease* and therefore abolish; make invalid, abrogate (bring to nought); “to make idle or inactive” (HELPS Word Studies).

It is the law that Paul implicitly and explicitly states many times in His letters which is obsolete. The author of Hebrews states it explicitly three times and implicitly another dozen or so as well. The law was given to Israel, and it was intended to show us the need for something else. Paul explains this in detail in Galatians. Its purpose was to lead us, as a tutor, to Christ. In Christ’s fulfillment of the law, it is annulled, obsolete, and set aside.

The Bible does not make a distinction between the “moral” and “ceremonial” aspects of this law. They are a united whole. Having said that, those precepts which are restated in the New Covenant are binding; hence, we are not to commit adultery, murder, etc. However, any precepts which are not repeated under the New Covenant are abolished. The Sabbath is such a law. Rather, belief in Christ brings us into God’s rest (Hebrews 4:3). Christ is the end of the law for all who believe.

In abolishing “the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances,” Jesus has created “in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace.” The dividing wall is torn down and now, in Christ, we are one. This does not mean that Jews are no longer Jews and Gentiles are

no longer Gentiles. This means that in relation to Christ, and concerning salvation based on that relation, they are on the same level.

Gentiles are now no longer alienated from the commonwealth of Israel. They are now in Christ, having hope, and sharing in the riches of the true God while in this world.

Life application: Paul explicitly states that the law is abolished. Do not be duped by people that take one or two verses completely out of context, and then tell you that you are obligated to adhere to precepts of the law. Abolished means just that. Our salvation comes by faith in Christ's completion of the law – end of story.

**...and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. Ephesians 2:16**

This verse explains and builds on the thought of the previous verse. Together they read –

“...having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace,<sup>16</sup> and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.”

The “one new man” of verse 15 precedes the thought of reconciliation which is given in verse 16 in the order of Paul's statement; but actually the reconciliation comes first, thus the new man is created. The verb from which “reconcile” comes is *apokatallassó*. It is used only here and in Colossians 1:20 and 1:22. It means more than bringing about conciliation, but reconciliation. In other words, there was once unity, but that was lost. Now in Christ, and through His cross, there is harmony once again. As Vincent's Word Studies Notes, “This brings out the profound idea, which so especially characterizes these Epistles, of a primeval unity of all created being in Christ, marred and broken by sin, and restored by His manifestation in human flesh.”

The Pulpit Commentary shows this thought in a marvelous way. They say, “If Christ had only to proclaim God's friendship toward sinners, why should he have suffered on the cross? The cross as a mere pulpit is hideous; as an altar it is glorious.” In other words, God didn't just proclaim reconciliation to fallen man as with a trumpet, but as an offering. In the crucified body of Christ, the enmity that existed has ended.

It needs to be remembered that this enmity is speaking first and foremost of that which existed between Jew and Gentile. It is true that the cross does this between God and man, and this will be noted in the coming verse in exactly this context, but it was the Jew who had access to God through the temple worship. Now, the cross of Christ offers it to all. The “middle

wall of separation” no longer stands between Jew and Gentile. The enmity which existed is put to death.

Life application: Do you have a secret prejudice or bias against a person of a certain color or national heritage? If so, you are not seeing that person as God does. All people are descended from one man, Adam. Thus all are related. Now, in Christ, there is even more reason to not have enmity towards such a person. If they are “in Christ,” they are truly one with you in Christ as well. Put away your prejudices and see your fellow Christians as true brothers in the Lord.

**And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.**  
Ephesians 2:17

The word “He” here is speaking of Christ Jesus, and yet, it cannot be said that Christ “preached peace” directly to the Gentiles, represented here by the Ephesians. He had ascended to the Father by this time. And so we see the Oneness of God hinted at in the Trinity. It is the Holy Spirit who transmitted the message (and continues to do so through the word) after Christ’s ascension. Jesus even spoke of this to the disciples concerning His peace –

“These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. <sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” John 14:25-27

Therefore, though it is the Holy Spirit who is directly speaking, it is still in Christ Jesus’ name that He does so. Understanding this, we see that “He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.” The word “peace” is *eiréné*. It properly means, “*wholeness*, i.e. when all essential parts are joined together; *peace* (God’s gift of *wholeness*)” (HELPS Word Studies). In other words, the peace here speaks of our being reconciled to God. There is no longer a state of enmity between the two parties. Instead, there is peace.

Those “who were afar off” is speaking of the Gentiles; “those who were near” is speaking of the Jews. This is a quote from Isaiah 57:19 –

“I create the fruit of the lips:  
Peace, peace to *him who is far off* and to *him who is near*,”  
Says the LORD,  
“And I will heal him.”

A few things are of interest in this. One is that the Gentiles are mentioned first. This points to the scope of the “peace” which has come through Christ. The number of Gentiles far exceeds that of the Jews. Though the message is “to the Jew first” in chronology, it is the opposite in

scope. Secondly, the fact that “peace” was preached to the Jews signifies that until the work of Christ was complete, the enmity between God and Jew still existed. The work of Christ was anticipated in the rituals of Israel, but the peace truly only came when that which was anticipated was fully accomplished. The repetition of “peace” toward both Jew and Gentile shows this to be true. This peace is not only something realized between Jew and Gentile (as verses 11 & 12 show), but it is also peace between each category and a third party, meaning God.

Life application: People want to believe that they are at peace with God through their good attitude, charities, etc. This is a lie. The only way to have peace with God is through accepting the work of Jesus Christ as Lord. The most moral, decent, and giving person in human history is no closer to God without Jesus than the greatest sinner of all. Only Christ! Only Christ can bring the peace we need. Spread the word!

**For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.** Ephesians 2:18

This is one of the “Trinitarian” verses found in Paul’s writings. Here we have the work of Christ which results in our being conducted by the Spirit into the presence of the Father. Access to the Father is the subject of the verse. There is an emphatic structure in the sentence - “Through Him we have the access, both of us in one Spirit, to the Father” (Charles Ellicott).

It is through the work of Christ that both Jew and Gentile are granted this access. In reception of His work, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13, 14) and thus the access becomes assured. The word for “access” is *prosagógé*. It means to “come towards (near); have access (*approach*), with intimate (face-to-face) interaction (note the prefix *pros*). All three occasions of *prosagōgḗ* (‘interactive access’) refer to ‘having audience (*direct* access) with God’ (J. B. Lightfoot, *MM*)” (HELPS Words Studies).

The word is a technical one which gives the idea of being conducted into the presence of royalty. When this occurs, it is through a trusted officer of that court. In this case, it is the Holy Spirit who testifies that, “This one is mine; he has received the work of Christ and is now allowed full and unfettered access.”

This concept fully supports the words of Jesus in John 14:6. He is the way to obtaining access, and there is no other way. Through His work, we are granted this right.

Life application: If you are in a slump and feel that God has left you, come back to Ephesians and read what Christ has done for you. In your reception of Him and His work, you are sealed with the Spirit of promise and you are granted full access to the throne of grace. Lift yourself up and press on with the full assurance that you were, are, and will continue to be accepted by Him.