

Sermon Title: He Put To Death The Enmity
Scripture Text: Eph. 2:15-18 (Ephesians #12)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 7-18-21

Come back with me to Ephesians Chapter 2. Today, we're going to continue for what turns out to be the third of what I anticipate to be four visits to the paragraph which is Ephesians 2:11-22. The pattern we're following is to bite off a few verses from this section, and then consider some modern-day implications of this profound passage.

The label I came with last time will continue to be a bit of a theme: We need to stand for "The Sufficiency of the Gospel." Just as we speak of the sufficiency of Scripture—it has everything we need for "life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3); the sufficiency of Christ—the one and only "sacrifice for sin" (Heb. 10:12; cf. vs. 10); "The Sufficiency of the Gospel" refers to the fact that Christ is the *only* true solution to the things that divide us; and nowadays, that is running *rampant* under the label "racism." Friends, *we have the answer!* And we have the *only sufficient* answer, in Christ.

You have probably caught on, if you've been here very long—I try to get the titles of my sermon from the text whenever possible, whenever practical; and I try to make my outlines be indicative of the structure of the text. The outline part was really easy this week. The *title* part—well, I came up with, and I published: "He Put To Death The Enmity." Or, it could have been: "The Hatred Is Gone"; or: "One New Man"; or: "Reconcile Them Both In One Body"; or: "Through Him We Have Our Access"—because those are *all* in the text, and they would all equally well describe what we are talking about today.

Today, we're going to bite off a *whopping* four verses: 15, 16, 17, and 18. And it wasn't hard to outline these. We're going to look at The Ancient Alienation—Verses 15 and 16; and then, The All-Embracing Access"—Verses 17 and 18. Let's look at it together.

First of all: The Ancient Alienation. Verses 15 and 16 explain to us that the source of the separation between Jew and Gentile was the Law (Ps. 147:19-20; cf. Is. 65:5; Jn. 7:49; Rom. 2:17-20). And that's the *pattern* for reconciliation: If you can figure out how to reconcile people across *that* divide—*centuries long, totally ingrained on both sides* of the divide—you understand the answer for *any* divide that *we* can come up with!

We need to start reading at Verse 14 to get a full sentence. We broke it up by stopping after Verse 14 last time, but the sentence is Verses 14 through 16—"For He Himself is our peace"—that was a sermon title—"who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall"—well, that was a sermon title, too—"by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity." (NASB-1995; and throughout, unless otherwise noted)

In the Temple in Israel, there was a barrier; the whole temple structure enclosed the "Court of the Gentiles"—the largest part of the temple grounds—and then, inside that was the "holy place," and that's where only Jews could go; and that's where the real work of the priest was done; and then inside that, the "holy of holies"; and there was that "veil...between the holy place and the holy of holies" (Ex. 26:33).

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And then, there was that barrier into the holy place; and remember, last week I read you the translation of the sign that was there: "If you're a Gentile, you can't come any farther; and if you do, your death is your own fault." That was "the barrier of the dividing wall" (vs. 14), and that literal barrier in the Temple is also emblematic of *all* of the barriers between Jew and Gentile. Under the Old Covenant—the Law of Moses, pre-Christ—picture Jews on one side of a wall, picture Gentiles on the *other* side of the wall, and the wall is "the Law": all of those "commandments contained in ordinances" (vs. 15), all the regulations of worship that God gave to Israel to keep them separated from the nations of the world (cf. Ex. 12:48; Deut. 7:1-6).

Now Christ has come. Salvation is for all. God calls out to those who are "near"—the Jews; and those who are "far" away—the Gentiles: "You can *all* come to Me by faith in My Son." So, in the New Covenant, the picture is: Jews and Gentiles *together*, surrounded by a wall that separates *them* from all harm, with Christ at the center—both Jew and Gentile drawn to Him within the wall (cf. Jn. 10:28-29; 2 Thess. 3:3).

Paul describes the "enmity"—or, the "hatred"—between the two groups as "the Law of commandments contained in ordinances." The purpose of the Law that was given through Moses to regulate the worship of God's chosen people, the Nation of Israel, and to regulate their lives sufficiently to keep them spiritually distinct from the ungodly nations (Lev. 20:26; Deut. 14:2)—*that* became the "wall."

Sadly, what was *meant to be* a positive influence for holiness (Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2), and an awareness of the power and the holiness of God (Rom. 7:12)—*that* was turned into "the barrier of the dividing wall."

That word "abolishing" means "nullifying," or "rendering inoperative." In its grammatical form—which is an aorist participle, for the two of you that understand that—that means that He did this "once for all": "*Having abolished it*, He has made peace."

And Jesus did this "in His flesh" (vs. 15)—He took on a "body" so that He could die to pay the penalty for sins (Heb. 10:10). And remember when Jesus died, and that "veil" in the "temple"—between "the holy of holies" and "the holy place"—that "was torn in two from top to bottom" (Matt. 27:51); that signified the *end* of the era of the Law (cf. Gal. 3:19). He *abolished* all of the Old Testament ceremonial laws, all of the feasts, all of the blood sacrifices (Heb. 10:8-9)—those things that so separated Jews from Gentiles.

Now, I want to take you on a *very small* side-trip. One little side note: You read here that He was "abolishing" the "wall," "abolishing" the "barrier" (vss. 14-15). Well, you need to understand that in harmony with the famous words that He spoke in the Sermon on the Mount. I have to say this, because some of you have a memory—you can recall a year ago when we were *in* the Sermon on the Mount; and Jesus said this, in Matthew 5:17-18—"Do not think that I came to *abolish* the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to *abolish* but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished."

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So...which is it? Did He "abolish" it, or not? Well—Jesus didn't *dodge* any of it; He didn't *alter* any of it; He didn't *erase* any of the moral Law of God; neither did He ignore the prescribed sacrifices for sin. What He *did* was: He *fulfilled them all!* (cf. Matt. 3:15, 17) He lived a *perfect* life (Heb. 7:26; 1 Pet. 1:19; 2:22), and He became the "once for all" sacrifice for sin (Heb. 7:27; 9:12; 10:10), "for all time" (Heb. 10:12, 14). So, He fulfilled it all; those were all pictures looking toward the Savior (cf. 1 Cor. 5:7; Col. 2:17). All of the purpose of the Law was to *show us our sin* (Rom. 3:20) and our need for a Savior (Gal. 3:24). The Savior came, and He *fulfilled it all!* The rest of Matthew 5 after that is several examples of how Jesus fulfilled the moral requirements of the Law, and He helps us to understand *to deal with* the realities of sin in our hearts.

Now, read Romans; well, toss in Galatians; you'd better throw in Colossians; don't miss Hebrews; not to mention our passage in Ephesians. They all tell us that He rendered those sacrificial laws *obsolete*, because He fulfilled them. He fulfilled *all* of the requirements, and then died as the perfect sacrifice for the penalty for sin (Is. 53:5-6, 10; Matt. 20:28; 2 Cor. 5:21a).

So, what He "abolished" was "the enmity" (vs. 15), because He fulfilled the requirements and lived that perfect, sinless life. So now you and I, when we come to Him by grace through faith—we get His perfect righteousness applied to our account (Rom. 4:3-5, 11; cf. 2 Cor. 5:21b; Phil. 3:9); so thus, the Law is rendered inoperative—the "barrier" is "abolished"—because it's all fulfilled in Christ.

Notice the key words in that fantastic sentence we just read: The word "abolishing"—"rendering inoperative"; the word "enmity" (vs. 14); and then, "through the cross," and again, the word "enmity" (vs. 16). It's pretty obvious what he's getting at here, isn't it?

"Through the cross" is not talking about *the wood* of the cross; it's amazing—you can find enough *alleged* pieces of the cross to probably build a ten-story mansion if you wanted to; people get all sentimental and superstitions about that. But it wasn't the cross that He was nailed to. In this context, "through the cross" is approximately a synonym for "the blood of Christ"—His sacrifice which "brought near" those who "were far off" (vs. 13).

Remember, too, "the blood of Christ" and its significance in the New Testament: It's *not* about the stuff that flowed through Jesus's body—through His veins and arteries—it's about the sacrifice of His sinless life for ours (Heb. 9:14). To shed His "blood" is to give His "life" (Lev. 17:11); it's a euphemism (see Col. 1:20, 22; cf. Matt. 23:35; Heb. 9:22).

Have you ever thought of the irony of the fact that we use crosses as *decorations*? You might not realize it, but there is a *huge one* sitting on the roof right above your heads right now, where you're sitting. People wear them as necklaces. I didn't do any inspections as you came in, but I would imagine there is probably a cross or two, on a necklace or a bracelet or something like that, in the room today. We stencil or embroider them on clothing. We even get them as tattoos...Don't ask my opinion about that, unless you want to hear it. And it's okay—you can get to Heaven even with a tattoo, when you get there.

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But, a cross is a symbol—it's a reminder of, arguably, the *cruelest*, most torturous form of death *ever devised by man!* So why would we wear something that reminds us of that? It's because *on a cross of wood*, our salvation was "purchased" through the "blood" of the Son of God! (Rev. 5:9). Therefore, the Cross, as a symbol, represents something *beautiful*. Not *crucifixion*—that's *not beautiful!* What is beautiful is what was *accomplished* "through the cross" of Christ.

Notice: "Through the cross," He has "put to death the *enmity*" (vs. 16). Interesting word; we don't use it very often in the English language. It's one of those awkward words to pronounce; usually when you say it, it comes out "em-ni-ty," but it's actually "en-mity." It's hard to get the "n" and the "m" smoothed out; we don't usually say them in that order, and our tongues aren't used to that. But the word means: "animosity," "hostility," "alienation." The word refers to the animosity between God and man (Ps. 7:11), because He is eternally holy God (Rev. 4:8; cf. 92:15; Hab. 1:13a), and we are consistently sinful people (Prov. 19:3; Col. 1:21). There's "enmity," there's "alienation" between God and man (Is. 59:2); and we need a Savior. It is *also* the word that describes the alienation between Jew and Gentile, with all that "wall of partition" (Eph. 2:14, KJV) that separated them for all of those centuries; and in that sense, it describes an ongoing hatred and hostility that *needs to be resolved*.

So, the key phrase, once again, is: "in Christ." "In Christ," every believer—whether Jew or Gentile—is brought into a relationship with every *other* believer, so that we are, as the text says: "one new man" (vs. 15). We become *one spiritual entity together* in the "body" of "Christ" (Rom. 12:5). There *are no spiritual distinctions* between one another "in Christ." He does not exclude *anyone* who comes to Him from *any* background! "Come to Me, *all* who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). And "Everyone the Father gives to Me," says Jesus, "I will *never* cast him out!" (see Jn. 6:37).

That word "new" in the phrase "new man" is a translation of a Greek word that describes something *completely unlike* what came before it (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Rev. 21:5). It doesn't mean just merely the latest model of something; it's not "getting an upgrade"; it's not adding on an accessory; it's not improving what you have; it's *transformation*. Spiritually, a new person in Christ is *no longer* Jew or Gentile—*only* Christian! (Col. 3:11) In Christ, I really don't think we should ever have hyphens. You might think that's racist, but I'm not talking about a group of people. We shouldn't be hyphenating! What do we care about "Jewish-Christian," "Gentile-Christian," "Male-Christian," "Female-Christian," "American-Christian," "Asian-Christian," "African-Christian"? *Get rid of the hyphens!* You're "in Christ," or you're *not!* (e.g., Matt. 25:34, 41; Jn. 8:47; 10:14; 1 Jn. 3:10a)

If you haven't already heard it, you'll enjoy the song that I sent out with today's e-mail. David Wesley did a mashup of a whole bunch of Sunday School songs over the years, and he took just a snippet out of one. I was handicapped by *not* growing up in the Church. I went to Vacation Bible School *once*, dragged along by my big brother when I was five years old. I had *no clue* about anything that happened there whatsoever. I did not learn all of those songs. It was kind of fun when we got married; Marsha could *teach me* Sunday School songs and Bible stories and stuff like that; it was interesting to see that.

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But I remember one of the ones that I heard. Wesley has it in his mashup; we have an excerpt of it on the wall in the Two's and Three's rooms: "Jesus loves the little children"—oh, that's good—"all the children of the world"—*that's good*—"Red and yellow, black and white, they're all precious in His sight"—*that's wrong!* *Dead wrong, completely wrong!* *You can't say that sentence if you believe the Bible!* There aren't "red" people! There aren't "brown" people! We are all *various shades of one color!*

To even *think* of humanity in terms of racial distinctions—*that's wrong!* That's why most of the answers proposed to racism *can't work*—because they're built on a *faulty presupposition of the very nature* of a human being! We are *all* image-bearers of God (Gen. 1:27; 9:6).

Now, *I know what you mean*, and you do not need to repent in sackcloth and ashes if you've ever sung that song. But understand: *That's not the concept that we want to teach!* (see Gen. 3:20; Acts 17:26)

Look at a couple of other Scriptures: Romans 10:12-13—"For there is *no distinction* between Jew and Greek"—so, lose the hyphen—"for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for '*Whoever* will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.'" "*No distinction*"—so *don't make* distinctions!

In Galatians 3:28, Paul wrote this: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man"—*ethnicity* doesn't matter; *social status* doesn't matter; *positions of wealth or lack thereof* don't matter—"there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (cf. Eph. 4:25b)

Another astounding aspect of being "in Christ" is that *every person of every background* "from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9)—they *all* come to salvation in *exactly the same way!* Jews have no inside track over Gentiles because of their national history of having the Law (Acts 15:11; Rom. 1:16). They *are* called "near"; and remember, the picture there is: If God dwelt in the Temple, the Jews were "near"; the Gentiles weren't allowed to come near, so they were "far off" (Eph. 2:13). *All of them were lost!* *Everyone* needs a Savior!

Every person who comes to faith in Christ not only comes the same way, they all receive *exactly* the same benefits! It's summed up by that famous phrase in Chapter 1, Verse 3—"every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

People of greater education have *no advantage* over those less educated. As a matter of fact, go study the beginning of First Corinthians and you might think just the *opposite*: "Not many wise...not many noble" are called (1:26).

There is no advantage for the earthly strong over the weak, no advantage of the rich over the poor, the powerful over the powerless, no advantage of man over woman, adult over child, master over slave. Everyone needs a Savior, there is *only* one Savior (Jn. 14:6), we all come to Him the same way, and we are made into "one new man" in Him.

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Let's see one more aspect of this, and then I want to move on to some more applications of the concept I introduced to you last week of the Sufficiency of the Gospel. There is The Ancient Alienation, and then there is The All-Embracing Access. Ephesians 2:17 and 18—"And He came and preached peace to you who were far away"—that's the message to the Gentiles—"and peace to those who were near"—you're *both* alienated from each other and from God, you're *both* at war with God, you're *both* at war with each other; you need "peace"—"for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father."

Now, for your collection of Bible trivia, here comes a nugget. Notice that Verse 18 contains an interesting phenomenon: It's one of those *few verses* that mentions the Trinity all in the same sentence. That's a handy piece of information to have. "Through Him"—through Christ—"we all have our access in one *Spirit* to the *Father*."

The first class I took in seminary was a class on Pauline Theology—the theology as poured out in the epistles of Paul—and the teacher had the audacity to put on the final exam that we needed to give him at least one verse which mentions the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. I thought, "No problem! Matthew 28:19...Well, wait a minute—Paul didn't write Matthew! Where am I going to find this?" Well, I actually got an "A"; I had enough time—I had answered everything else—I started madly going through my Bible—it was an open-Bible test—and I thought, "Maybe at the beginning or the end," and I *found* that one that we use always at the end of our services: Second Corinthians 13:14. Well, here's the one I *missed*, or at least *one* that I missed: Ephesians 2:18 also says that. Alright, that's trivia.

Now, remember the terminology from earlier in the paragraph. I've already said it many times: "you who were far away" refers to the Gentiles; "those who were near" refers to the Jews. Paul made an allusion there in Verse 17 to Isaiah 57:19. It is a call from God to people "far" and "near"—in other words, *everyone*—to come to Him to receive spiritual healing. Now, look what it says here that we gain through the Gospel—*exactly the same* for Jew and Gentile and *any other group* that you can identify:

We gain "access." "Access" is a term used for securing, for example, the privilege of an interview with the King or the governor or the judge or the CEO, or whatever. It's like somebody saying, "I can get you in, and get you access!"

Over in Romans Chapter 5, Verse 2, the same word is translated "introduction." It says: "by faith" we have "our introduction...into this grace in which we stand." You *get in* this way—"access," the "introduction."

Now, pay attention to this context. We began in Verse 14 with the words: "He Himself is our peace." Then that was connected to: "but now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ," and that is connected to: "through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father." What brought Jews and Gentiles together in the First Century, after *centuries* of *total alienation*—I mean, settled, ingrained *hatred* and disregard—what brought them together is the death of Jesus Christ. You can't bring them together any other way, except "in Christ."

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There can be peace established between groups because there is peace established between those individuals and God (cf. Eph. 4:32). And apart from that, you can't have peace (Is. 48:22). The only reason peace can be established is because "the blood of Christ" is what makes peace possible between you and God (Rom. 5:1; Col. 1:20).

And understand: You were the *enemy* of God when Christ died for you. It doesn't matter if you were Jew or Gentile, male or female, dark-skinned or light-skinned, wealthy or poor—Romans 5:10 says: "For if *while we were enemies* we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (cf. Jn. 5:24)

Because of what Christ did, we are reconciled to God. Because we are reconciled to God, now we can *live* according to that (Rom. 6:4). And things like "the barrier of the dividing wall" can come down.

What brings a person to be at "peace with God" (Rom. 5:1) is exactly the same thing that is needed for people to be at peace with one another. That's why I coined the term: "The Sufficiency of the Gospel." People *want* to solve these horrible, divisive, often *criminal* manifestations of sin that we call "racism," but there is no other true answer to racism—or any other sin that drives wedges between groups of people—than the Gospel.

Now, that's good theology. We understand: Through "the blood of Christ"—"wall" torn down, "access," all that stuff. But you also need to realize: It took some time for the reconciliation to take root between people. We saw a couple of weeks ago, about the way that the barrier between Jews and Gentiles was going to be knocked down, and that unity was going to happen.

It was revealed by God through Peter, and we read this in Acts 11:17 and 18. This happened in the house of Cornelius: " 'Therefore if God gave to them'—that refers to Gentiles—"the same gift as He gave to us also"—that refers to Jews—"after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?' When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, 'Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.' " (cf. 2 Tim. 2:25)

Everybody there that day understood. But do you think that what happened in that one house that one day *solved* the problem, once for all? *No*, it didn't. Later—just a couple of chapters later, Acts-wise—Paul and Barnabas were sent on the First Missionary Journey; and every place they went, *they preached to the Jews*: "Peace! Come, be at peace with God." And they would take whoever believed; and then they would preach to the Gentiles: "Peace! Come, be at peace with God." And immediately, you had a blending of Jew and Gentile together "in Christ," with the "barrier" knocked down. It happened over and over on that trip.

Then, they came back, and they shared with their home-church—their sending church in Antioch—all that had gone on; and it reopened that entire can of worms! And it actually led to a showdown in Jerusalem.

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We read in Acts Chapter 15—this is after they had come back and reported it—it says: "Some men came down from Judea"—they came "down" elevation-wise from Judea, from Jerusalem to Antioch—"and began teaching the brethren"—so this was *in the church* now—"Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." Uh-oh! *That's* a problem! It was the view of some, even among the leadership of the Jews who had professed faith in Christ—their view was that the Gospel was *good*, but it wasn't *sufficient* to bring Jew and Gentile together. Maybe it can get an *individual* saved, but not equal fellowship with God and with one another.

So, read on: Acts 15:2-4—"And when Paul and Barnabas had *great dissension and debate* with them"—don't skim over that! This *wasn't a small deal*: "great dissension and debate"! And these were not flyweight theologians! These were the "big boys." After the "dissension and debate...the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them"—that's the ones in the sending-church in Antioch—"should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria"—get out a map; you can look and see what route they took—"describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren"—telling them about the Gospel jumping over the barrier to Gentiles—"When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them."

Now, by and large, the believers in Jerusalem—who were *almost* all Jews by background—they welcomed the news; certainly *the leaders* did, because they had begun to understand God's plan (cf. Is. 49:6), as He had outlined it in Acts Chapter 1, Verse 8—"Jerusalem...Judea...Samaria...the remotest part of the earth." Ah—it still wasn't over, though! Verse 5 of Acts 15—"But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed"—okay, background-wise, they were not only Jews, they were Pharisees; they were the most separatistic. They were educated and trained like Paul was—remember, he called himself a Pharisee of the Pharisees (cf. Acts 23:6; Phil. 3:5). He *really* had this separation stuff nailed. Well, some who had come from that background "who had believed stood up, saying, 'It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.' "

Now, understand: These are professing believers in Christ, probably true believers—I'll give them the benefit of the doubt. They had been trained like Paul, though: as Pharisees. They wanted Jews and Gentiles to have fellowship in Christ—but *their idea* of how Gentiles would have fellowship with Jews was simple: "You all become Jews! You all come to *our* side of the fence! You all do everything that we do, the way we do it! You keep all of the traditions that we have! You live under the laws of the Old Testament!" (cf. Est. 8:17; Is. 56:3-6) This was *no small controversy*! It was debated among the Apostles and the Elders. They resolved it, and of course they got the proper outcome. Read the rest of Acts 15 if you aren't sure how it played out. James, who was the half-brother of Jesus (Gal. 1:19)—he was the spokesman for the Apostles and the Elders in the conclusion, and the message was very clear.

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Now, even though that gathering was several years before Paul wrote Ephesians, I don't think there's any doubt how he and Barnabas and the others reasoned at the Jerusalem Council. I bet they mentioned words like "enmity" and "abolished" and "wall of partition"—they probably mentioned *all* of those words.

The dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles was *gone*. You don't now have to *climb* the wall—the wall *is gone*! You need to reach out and embrace your brothers and sisters, who are now "in Christ" with you! *It's gone*!

And understand: The *same Gospel* brought those who were "far off" and those who were "near." Jesus "is our peace"—He is the "Prince of Peace" (Is. 9:6). He "broke down the barrier of the dividing wall," He abolished "the enmity," He made "the two into one new man" in Christ.

So, there's a message to the Jews: "You have to let go! Come out of the synagogue! (see Heb. 4:1-11) You now are 'in Christ'—you are in the Messiah; His Holy Spirit is in you!" And there's a message to the Gentiles: "You need to come out of all of your various idol temples, *all* of your various backgrounds! (see 1 Thess. 1:9) You are now 'in Christ'—you are 'one new man' in Christ!"

This was a pretty ingrained feud that was going on between Jews and Gentiles. It wasn't all fixed in a day; it took *time* to apply all of this. Even Peter eventually got spiritual indigestion over it; you can read Galatians Chapter 2, Verses 11 through 21. There came the day that Paul had to confront Peter because Peter had done *really well* with eating with the Gentiles; and then some of the old Pharisees came around, and Peter quit eating with the Gentiles and would eat only with the Jewish ones. "Oh, I like their menu better! They still remember 'kosher'!"—or whatever it was. *Paul got in his face*—suddenly called him a hypocrite.

Now, all of this is to say: Reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles *was a big deal*. It was one of the most radical ramifications of Christ's coming to Earth—at least, in the First Century. But the answer is in the Gospel. And the Gospel is *sufficient* to bring hating parties together. It's the *only* thing that *actually solves the problem*, which is: sin, which is an issue in *the heart* (Matt. 15:19). The sufficiency of the Gospel is *profound*!

Paul spent three whole chapters in Romans—prior to Ephesians—explaining the theology of Israel and the Church, and how the two fit together in the plan of God: that the Church and Israel are distinct, but God has a plan; He's going to fulfill all of His promises to both parties (Rom. 11:25-26)—but *in the meantime*, brought together in Christ.

Now, for the Jews—they needed to accept their freedom from the Law; they had to accept their new Gentile brothers and sisters (e.g., Rom. 14:5; Col. 2:16-17). There were no more laws to keep them separate. That would be hard to adjust to! But for the Gentiles, there was *also* the need to not carry over into *their* new life some of their old baggage of the ways that *they* thought; and they needed to learn not to trample on the cultural norms of their Jewish brothers and sisters in Christ (Acts 15:19-21).

Sermon Title: He Put To Death The Enmity
Scripture Text: Eph. 2:15-18 (Ephesians #12)

Speaker: Jim Harris
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Why, you might say: "He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we *both* have our access in one Spirit to the Father."

So, let's consider some more applications of this passage to the *boiling* issue of racism in our world. It's *bad!* It's no worse than Jew versus Gentile, Samaritan versus Jew. The Gospel is sufficient! But here's what I am very concerned about; and I would have about half of next week's sermon already written, if I were to unload all of this on you: We are faced with a growing number of people who act as if *they don't believe that*—that they don't believe the Gospel will actually *completely* resolve these issues!

Last summer, we dealt a little bit with the so-called "Social Justice Movement." We commented on the "Black Lives Matter" organization. We said a little bit about the concepts of identity politics and "Critical Race Theory." Now, all of those *sound good* on the surface; I mean, who doesn't want to apply a theory that will fix the race problems? We understand that everybody has an identity; we all have a past; we all have things that we are identified with. *Of course*, Black lives matter!

But we are talking about *the organization* called "Black Lives Matter"—which is *specifically Anti-Christian*, specifically pro-homosexual, pro-transgender, specifically in favor of *destroying* the culture in which we live! And, by the way: If you hear somebody say, "Black lives matter" and you say, "*Of course* they do, because *all lives matter!*"—That is automatically taken to be a statement of White Supremacy! You're just condescending! You're just showing your "white privilege"! *And you don't even understand* that you are racist! Now, this is a big deal, and things like that are being brought into the Church!

Who could be against a "Social Justice" movement? *Who doesn't want justice* in their society? Well, all of those things share in common the desire to address the sin of racism, and the *awful* things that are done because of racist attitudes. It's a good thing to hate what God hates (Ps. 97:10), and God hates racism. But what I need to help you see is that there are influences working their way into the Church which are *trying* to deal with racism, but using methods which *attack* the sufficiency of the Gospel.

Anyone who believes the Bible, and is anchored in Christ, wants justice. But the "Social Justice *Movement*" employs a definition of justice which is *different* from what the Bible says! The definition of "justice" within the "Social Justice Movement" is *not* about equality of how people are treated, and fairness in how laws are applied, and dealing with people with honesty and integrity. "Social Justice," as the term itself, has actually made it into the Oxford English Dictionary! The Oxford English Dictionary is kind of the hallmark of "Here is what words mean in the English language." Next year's edition, I hope, includes the phrase: "The Sufficiency of the Gospel"—I kind of *don't think* that's going to happen. "Social Justice" and "Social Justice Movement" *has* made it in, but their definition is *not* honesty, integrity, equality; it is "*Distributive Justice*." In other words: It is a set of demands for *state-controlled*—government controlled—*redistribution* of wealth and property! That is *very different* from what God's justice is!

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Do you think that everyone that gets into Heaven is going to come from a background in which everyone has exactly the same amount of stuff? *No!* (cf. 1 Tim. 6:17) That's not what "justice" means! That kind of justice is not a heart issue—the "Distributive Justice"—as with the word "justice" as it is used in the Scriptures; it's not about responsibility and forgiveness of personal sins, because it's not about persons—it's all about *groups*.

The whole system defines people according to identity politics, by the groups that they belong to—black, white, brown; male, female; non-binary, transgender; Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, etc.

And further, that system categorically states that every person belongs either to a group that is "oppressed," or they are in a group that "oppresses" others. The *whole idea of individuals*—souls created in the image of God, alienated from God—that's *glossed over* in that whole movement.

So, you can't say: "We believe in the Gospel, *and* we also believe in identity politics, the 'Social Justice Movement,' 'Critical Race Theory.'" We'll say a little bit more about it next Sunday, Lord willing.

I've said all along that CRT—the "Critical Race Theory" mindset, as people are teaching it and applying it in our culture—very sadly, it is *a racist approach* to combating racism! Remember how I said the one idea of how Jew and Gentile could be together in Christ is: "Well, all you Gentiles—you come over here and become Jews!" This is basically saying: "All you who are the oppressors have to have all your stuff taken away, and given to all the people that have been oppressed!"

Now, when there has been injustice, we *need* "justice" (Deut. 16:19-20)! When there have been crimes, we need penalties (Ecc. 8:11). We're not disagreeing with any of that. We are saying: You cannot import an anti-biblical definition of man, and then have a good conclusion come out of it (see Jer. 8:9; cf. Prov. 28:5).

The Gospel is the answer to racism! It removes *all of the walls* of separation.

I'll skip a whole lot of stuff; I'll save it up for next week; I'll marinate it a little bit more. Maybe it will be even better. But when it comes to racism in *any* country, in *any* setting, involving *any* groups of people in *any* combination, locked in ongoing hatred, understand this: You can't fix that! But Christ can—and *only* Christ can!

And as we work on being "peacemakers" in the world (Matt. 5:9), as we work on being evangelists (Matt. 28:19-20), understand: You can't start with a foundation of presuming *a faulty, ungodly, anti-biblical* concept—such as, that there are different "races"—*you can't start there* and come out right! You have to understand: There is *one race*, and it is *alienated from God*, and we *all need a Savior!* (Rom. 3:23-24) You come to the Savior—we can take care of *anything* between the people! It might not happen overnight, but it all has to happen "in Christ."

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So, let's pray—and next week, Lord willing, we'll finish this paragraph:

Our Father, how we thank You for all that is ours in Christ. Thank You for what He accomplished on the Cross. Thank You for what You've given us through "the blood of Christ." Thank You that He "put to death the enmity." Thank You that we all—far away, far off, and very near—we all hear the same message; we all need the same message: "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures," that Jew and Gentile can be "one in Christ," and only "in Christ." Thank You, Father, for Your amazing grace, that we now have access to Your "grace in which we stand." In Jesus' name. Amen.