

## ***The Mystery of the Church Part 2 “Real Peace” Eph.2:17-19*** **tape 218b 12-7-2003**

**His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. 19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.**

Last week we found that our former condition was that we were afar off from God, estranged from Him, without a Messiah, without hope, without God in the world. And it was all because we were separated from the great promises given to Israel – separated by a wall. And so the Lord Jesus Christ came down into this world and, at the cost of His own life, smashed that wall to pieces. He abolished the ceremonial law and obliterated any distinction between Jew and Gentile in the Church.

**15 ...His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace,**

This is the beginning of the revelation of a secret that God kept for thousands of years, and only revealed in our time: the glorious doctrine of the Church. And the primary thing that characterizes the Church is **peace**. Look how often that comes up in vv.14-17. Four times in four verses.

**14 For he himself is our peace**

**15 ...His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.**

His whole purpose was to create peace.

Last week we saw that

- the price for this peace was Jesus' blood,
- the prerequisite for peace was the destruction of that wall between us and Israel (the ceremonial law), and
- the plan for peace was the formation of the Church.

We talked about all that, but what I didn't do was talk to you about what the peace is. So let's define it.

## **Peace**

### **The world's idea**

We need to do that,

- 1) because it's such a rich and important topic in Scripture, and
- 2) because our world has such a twisted idea of what peace is.

It's amazing for what passes as peace in our world. In Scripture, peace between people is nothing short of bringing two parties from hating one another to embracing one another in love and true unity. The world sees that as so farfetched, it's not even a goal.

For the world, any reduction in the amount of killing is considered peace. And the hostility in the heart is not even on the radar screen when they talk about peace. The terrorists in the mid-east blow up civilian busses and schools in Israel, Israel retaliates with military strikes, and it escalates until finally the terrorists say, “We’ll cut back on murdering and maiming your people if you give us some of your land.” And if both sides agree, the killing slows down for a few weeks. And we call that “the peace process.” That’s what passes for peace in our world.

It’s not uncommon to see “peace protesters” shouting down their opponents in the streets or rioting. I’m always amazed that people will riot in order to make a statement about peace. The people who are the most vocal about peace seem like some of the angriest people around. In 1987 1200 people started out from LA in a peace march across the country. But they only made it as far as Barstow, just outside of LA, before their group fell apart and half of them went home. The remaining 600 got into a fight about who the true marchers were, since some were riding in vehicles. Then they got into a fight about a dress code. Then they tried to hold an election but couldn’t agree on who was allowed to vote. Then when they finally did vote the election was declared invalid. And by the time it was over, many of the peace marchers wouldn’t even speak to one another. The world doesn’t have a clue about real peace.

## True Peace

What is God’s idea of peace? There are two parts: peace with man and peace with God. And this passage discusses both.

### Peace with man

Peace with man is when there is no hostility in thought or attitude toward one another. It’s not just an issue of how you treat someone. It’s an issue of how people think about each other and feel about each other. Being at peace with someone is the opposite of being in the doghouse with that person. All is well between you and that person. There are no issues hindering the closeness of your relationship.

When Christ made the Church, He brought in Jews and Gentiles as brothers and sisters, bringing peace between them... But He did that not as an end in itself. The peace between Jews and Gentiles in the Church is just a byproduct of the fact that Christ has reconciled both groups to God.

### The Peace of a Body

It’s interesting that we see the word **body** in v.16. Everything in here has an OT background except that. In the NT, there are a lot of different metaphors used to describe the Church.

We are compared to

- a flock of sheep (Heb.13:20 compare Isa.53:6)
- an olive tree (Ro.11:24 compare Jer.11:16)
- a city (Heb.12:22 compare 1 Ki.8:44)
- a kingdom (Col.1:13 compare Ex.19:6)
- a mountain (Heb.12:22 compare 2 Ki.19:21)
- a family (1 Pe.1:22 compare Dt.15:11)
- a field (1 Cor.3:9 compare Jer.12:10)
- a wife (Eph.5:25-32 compare Hos.1:2)
- a holy nation (1 Pe.2:9 compare Ex.19:6)
- a kingdom of priests (1 Pe.2:9 compare Ex.19:6)

And each one of those metaphors is used in the OT to describe Israel. But of all the metaphors for the Church, one stands out as being the most prominent. And that particular metaphor is never used to describe Israel. A body.

The Church is the body of Christ. We are His presence in the world. Everything you do, you do through your body. The Church is the mechanism Christ uses to carry out His work on the earth. This becomes a crucial image in ch.4, where he talks about each part doing its work. If you have a flock of sheep, and a few of them don't do anything, the flock still functions just fine. But each body part is needed for the body to function.

There are a lot of things that are seen more vividly in the imagery of a body than in any other illustration – especially peace. You can have a flock or a nation or even a family that is not at peace with itself. But the body is the most unified thing there is. The unity and harmony with which the parts of the body work together is beyond the grasp even of modern science to describe.

You could start talking about the way the heart works with the lungs and the cells and the systems of the body... And the brain and each organ – all united by the purposes of the soul... And you could study that the rest of your life without exhausting all that could be learned about it.

God made the Church a body, partly because He wanted unity. Obviously if He died in order to bring unity between Jews and Gentiles, there is no place for any kind of disunity in the body. If He gave us life so there would be no division between Jew and Gentile, for example, we can be assured He will tolerate no other racial or cultural disunity. He died for peace.

**16 and in this one body to reconcile<sup>1</sup> both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.**

He did it that way, because He didn't want division within His body.

## **Anti-anti-Semitism**

One obvious implication is that there is no place for any kind of anti-Semitism in the Church. When the Jews saw their spiritual privileges as an occasion to despise the Gentiles, that was wrong. And it's even worse for us who now enjoy the spiritual privileges promised to Israel to despise ethnic Israel herself! Your being in a position of blessing is not your doing. Romans 11 reminds us that it is a gift of God's grace. And what was given can also be taken away – just as it was taken from the Jews. Ro.11:17-26 speaks of God's chosen people as an olive tree.

**If some of the branches have been broken off, (unbelieving Jews) and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, 18 do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. 19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." 20 Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.**

**22 Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. 23 And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.**

**25 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.**

Our attitude toward unbelieving Jews should be the same as God's – love.

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<sup>1</sup> The word is always used of people or things being reconciled to God, not God being reconciled.

**28 As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs,**

(The patriarchs are those guys God originally made the promises of salvation to – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob)

Even though they reject the Gospel and are lost, God loves them. And we should love them. Our attitude should be like Paul’s: Ro.9:2-4

**I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, 4 the people of Israel.**

And I know for most, if not all of you, I don’t have to tell you this. While we have to admit in the history of Christianity there has been terrible anti-Semitism among people claiming to be Christians... Most true Christians love the Jews. I get excited if I just meet someone who is ethnically Jewish. And I know many of you are the same way. We’ve spent our lives reading in Scripture about the amazing love and affection God has for those people, and we can’t help but to love them. In fact, some Christians even take it too far and elevate Jewishness to too high a level. Last week I mentioned briefly the Messianic movement. At its best that movement is an effort to do as Paul did when he said

**1 Co.9:20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law**

A Messianic congregation is a church that preaches the Gospel, but who worships in a Jewish way – with Jewish customs so Jews are comfortable with it. So they blow a shofar and have a Jewish style in their music, etc. That is a wonderful thing to do, and I praise God for all the Jewish people who will be in heaven as a result of ministries like that. However, for some reason that movement has tended to collect a lot of kooks and nuts, and has been plagued with all kinds of terrible theology and heresy in many cases. You have people like John Hagee, who teaches there are two gospels – Gentiles are saved by grace through faith and Jews through the Law. And sometimes people in that movement become what I call Hebrew root snobs.

Have you ever met a Christian who is a Hebrew root snob? They look down on you if you aren’t an expert of ancient Hebrew customs? They look down on anyone who doesn’t pronounce certain words in Hebrew. They think something is wrong with you if you call Jesus “Jesus” instead of using the Hebrew form “Yashuah” (Even though the Apostles themselves didn’t do that – and they were very much in touch with their ancient Jewish roots – they were ancient Jews!)

Those faithful servants in the Messianic movement who are laboring to bring ethnic Jews into the Kingdom of true Israel so they can be one with the rest of the saints – praise God for those men and women. But those who are striving to rebuild the wall of separation that Christ tore down are doing harm and not good. Jesus Christ *died* to achieve unity in His Church, and there is to be no division between Jew and Gentile. And for that matter, there is to be no racial division at all.

## **Racism**

If Jesus gave His life to put an end to the hostility between Jews and Gentiles, can you imagine how He feels about racism in the Church? If there is some racial or cultural group you don’t like, realize this: there are no two cultures that have more drastic differences than Jews had with Gentiles. So if the death of Christ was enough to bring peace between Jews and Gentiles, it’s enough to bring peace between any two groups.

Racism is an ugly thing. Just the other day a man in our congregation told me his girlfriend broke up with him when she found out his mother is Mexican. If Jesus died to bring reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles, there should be no racial division of any kind in the Church. If it was so important for the Lord to mix together Jew and Gentile in the Church because of how delighted He is by unity, certainly it would be pleasing to Him to look at our church and see all different kinds of people worshipping together. And what a great testimony to the world that is. The greater the variety of cultures and ethnic backgrounds we have at Creekside, the better. And I know many of you have that same desire, because so many have expressed it to me. But I should tell you – if that’s what we want, it will cost us something. If we want people from other cultural backgrounds, in order to make them feel welcomed we will need to defer to some of the things that make them comfortable – some of their cultural preferences. That’s why you can’t have peace or unity without love. I’m not going to sacrifice my preferences for your preferences unless I really love you.

Terry and I were talking last week about our desire to train up more and more worship leaders, so we can have a variety of worship leaders at Creekside. I would love to have a worship leader who has grown up in a black church as one of our leaders – wouldn’t that be great? Wouldn’t it be great if our brothers and sisters who are black could come to Creekside without having to completely give up the worship styles of their culture? So there is no place for anti-semitism, there is no place for racial division of any kind, in fact, there’s no place for any kind of division within the Church.

## **Unreconciled Relationships**

We should not be at odds with groups of people, nor should we be at odds with individuals. Jesus gave His life to reconcile Jew to Gentile, therefore all unreconciled relationships in the Church fly in the face of what Christ has done in creating the body. We must be a reconciling people because we are a reconciled people. When someone becomes a Christian, God makes that person a brother or sister to all the saints. In fact, that’s a great way to test the reality of your conversion.

Very often people doubt whether they are truly saved, and they want to test their hearts to see if they truly are in the faith. That is a very healthy thing to do. And one way to do it is to ask yourself, “Is it evident that I am a member of God’s household?” Are you more at home among saints or in the world? Do you relate more naturally and comfortably to the world, or to the Church?

## **The Unity through Reconciliation Principle**

And that principle is foundational to much of Paul’s argument later in the book, when he talks about unity in the Church. True unity will only come when there is peace. And peace will only come when there is reconciliation. And reconciliation only comes through the blood of Christ.

God brought Jew and Gentile together not by reconciling them to each other, but by reconciling both of them to God. That’s a model for any kind of unity. You don’t tune an orchestra by trying to tune each instrument to the guy next to him. You all just tune to one perfect standard (the tuning fork), and then you all match each other. When you are right with God, and someone else is right with God, you are automatically right with each other. It’s impossible to have a relational problem with someone if both you and he are right with God. If there is some bitterness, or unforgiveness, or grudge, or assumption of a bad motive, or self-pity, or any thing like that between you and another person... Then you not only have something between the two of you, you have something between you and God. This is such an important lesson for us to learn about unity. Unity doesn’t come through preaching about unity. Unity doesn’t come through organizational affiliation. Unity doesn’t come through glossing over your theological differences and pretending they don’t exist. Unity comes only through reconciliation in Christ – when Christ, through His death, makes you right with God. I can get up here and exhort you all to be unified

until I'm hoarse, but that's not going to bring it about. We will be unified as a church when each one of us deals with the sin that's between us and God.

Many people today think if you can get a coalition of denominations to get together for an ecumenical prayer meeting or service project, you have achieved unity. Others figure if we can just find one thing we can all agree on, that's unity. Just this week I got an e-mail from a church in our area that is launching an internet music ministry and asked if we wanted to be involved. So I looked up their mission statement: "The mission is to unite the Christian community around issues, artists, individuals, and organizations...using...inspired music and thought-provoking interviews"

Getting everyone to like the same music and the same people is not unity. There is only one thing we can unity around, and it's the Gospel. When Jesus prayed that we would be one as the Trinity is one, He wasn't praying for organizational unity. He wasn't hoping we would believe radically different things about the Gospel, and then come together and forget our differences. He wants us to actually be of one mind. This principle applies and broadly or as narrowly as you want to apply it. You can apply it to nations and kingdoms, and you can apply it to your marriage or friendships. Want peace in the mid-east? Picketing isn't going to do it. War isn't going to do it. Pacifism isn't going to do it. If you really want peace in the mid-east, go preach the Gospel to the Muslims and the Jews and win them to Christ. And once they are reconciled to God, they will already be reconciled to each other. The real peace process over there is the work of the missionaries and churches. The same goes for your marriage. When I do pre-engagement counseling, I don't try to figure out if their personalities are compatible. I wouldn't have any idea how to do that anyway.

In the Church any two personalities are compatible. When I do pre-engagement counseling I'm looking to see how close each person is to God. Because any two godly, spiritually mature people will get along great. If two kids are fighting, the solution isn't to referee their arguments. The solution is to find the sin and bring them to repentance. Then when they are right with God, they will be fine with each other. And so that's what God did with the Jews who were close to Him, and us Gentiles who were afar off.

### **17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.**

Most of that preaching came through the Apostles after His ascension. In the OT the language about those who were far and those who were near was talking about Jews who were exiled and Jews who lived in Palestine. But Paul applies that language to Jews vs. Gentiles.

## **Missions**

And this has implications for missions. Christ preached peace to both groups, far and near, because He desired a Church comprised of people from every people group. Remember, from the very beginning His desire has been to bless the whole world – people from every people, nation, language and tribe. And at the climax of human history that's exactly what we see.

**Rev 5:8-10 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song:**

**"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."**

Part of Jesus' worthiness to be praised has to do with the fact that He will save people out of every people group. That's why He commissioned us to go and make disciples of all nations. When we send a

missionary to reach a new people group with the Gospel, we are bringing about that glorious peace that Jesus died to achieve.

The goal of missions is not just to get the maximum number of people saved. It's also to put into effect this plan of peace that unites people from every different culture. I think that would explain what would otherwise be a very strange statement in Ro.15

**Ro.15:17-24 So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. 20 It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known...22 This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you. 23 But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you, 24 I plan to do so when I go to Spain.**

Paul says there is no place for him to work from Jerusalem all the way over to Italy, and so he's going to Spain. Does that mean every person in the Roman Empire had heard the Gospel? No. Does that mean Timothy didn't need to do the work of an evangelist in this area? No. It means the various people groups in that area had been reached, and so Paul wanted to go a people group where the Gospel had never been preached. When it says Jesus preached peace to those far away, it's talking about His preaching through the Church. During His earthly life Jesus preached only to Jews. And now through us He is preaching to the ends of the earth. And the more different races and cultures and languages and tribes who become Christians and become part of the Body of Christ, the more worthy Christ is of praise for bringing about this peace.

## Peace with God: Access

The other great application of the idea of peace in the NT is peace with God. Peace with God is salvation. The book of Romans explains that formerly the wrath of God was against us, but now that we have believed, we have been justified.

**Ro.5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...10 when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son**

**Col.1:21-23 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. 22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation- 23 if you continue in your faith**

As we found last week – some people think that before they knew Jesus Christ, they were on pretty good terms with God. They weren't Christians yet, but they feel they were on good terms with God. They are wrong. They were alienated from God, and God counted them as His enemies. Romans 1 says they were living a life of suppressing the truth, which brought the wrath of God.

Before that day you became a Christian the alienation and hostility between you and God was as great an alienation as is possible. Whether you knew it or not, you and God were bitter enemies – such bitter enemies that achieving reconciliation cost Jesus His life. But God so desired reconciliation that He was willing to pay that price. Peace with people is the elimination of any hindrance to closeness and unity in the relationship. And peace with God is the same thing, which means reconciliation and salvation. Or, to use the term in v.18 – peace with God means **access**.

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

The reason He proclaimed to both those far and near is because both now have access. And it's through Jesus Christ alone that there is access to God.

1 Peter 3:18

**Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.**

It's hard for us to appreciate what it means to have access to God. It's something we take for granted. We get more excited about getting access to the guy from tech support sometimes than we do about having access to God. For us it's a big deal if we have free access to the CEO of the company we work for, or if some wonderful friend grants you access to his life... Or if we somehow gain access to some important dignitary...

Some of the great leaders of the Church have been drawn toward compromise because of the prospect of gaining access to the President of the United States. Those things mean a lot to us. But access to Almighty God? Ho hum. We take it for granted. And we do that because we didn't grow up around the Temple.

For hundreds of years the Jews understood what a monumental thing access to God is. God's dwelling place was the Holy of Holies in the Temple. If a Gentile came within three courts of the building that housed the Holy of Holies he would die. Unless he was born into the tribe of Levi and was a priest, even the average Israelite had a zero percent chance of ever going in that building. I'm sure they all spent a lot of time wondering what it was like in there. It was a massive and beautiful building that was the centerpiece of Jerusalem.

The whole Temple area was about 35 acres (3 football fields long and a third of a mile wide). First you would pass through the Court of the Gentiles, then, if you were a Jew, pass through the soreg into the Court of the Women, which was almost exactly an acre). Next came the Court of the Men - for laying hands on animals. It was 20 ft. deep, and was separated from the court of the priests by polished stones. Beyond that was the Court of the Priests, where the altar was. (By the way, don't get too hung up on who was able to go where. The point is, God is so Holy, the closer you get to his presence, the more serious a matter it is and the more restrictions there are. *Who* is restricted is irrelevant.) The altar was gigantic. 48ft X 48ft X 24ft high. Beyond that was the actual building - the Holy Place. It took 60 men to open or close the brass gates leading in to the holy place. It was 170 ft high with a dropped ceiling that was 90 ft. high. Everything in there was gold. Then came the curtain, and behind that curtain was the Holy of Holies, which was a 30 ft. cube. And that was the dwelling place of God. No one could ever approach there and come out alive except one man, once a year. On the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month of the year (The Day of Atonement) the High Priest and the High Priest only could enter. But even then it was on very specific terms. He had to follow the exact procedure prescribed by God. You may have heard that they tied a rope around him so they could drag him out if he died. That's a legend that cropped up in the Middle Ages sometime, but has no corroboration in Scripture or history... And it's probably not true, since, given the structure of the curtain and the holy place it probably wouldn't be possible to drag a dead body out with a rope (it would be like dragging a body through a maze).<sup>2</sup> However, whoever started that tradition had the right idea regarding the seriousness of entering the Holy of Holies. There was a possibility of the High Priest dying if he didn't follow the right procedure. That's mentioned in Lv.16:2 as well as in v.13.

Lev.16:13-14

**He is to put the incense on the fire before the LORD, and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover above the Testimony, so that he will not die. 14 He is to take some of the bull's**

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<sup>2</sup> Another part of that tradition was that the High Priest wore bells so the people outside could hear if he was still moving. Bells were part of the High Priest's clothing, but prior to entering the Holy of Holies he was to change out of those clothes into some other, special clothes.

**blood and with his finger sprinkle it on the front of the atonement cover; then he shall sprinkle some of it with his finger seven times before the atonement cover.**

While the High Priest was in there, there had to be smoke between him and the cover of the ark, because if he was exposed directly to the ark the High Priest would die. That's what you call restricted access to God. Now, why was it so restricted? It was because of the holiness and greatness of God. God is perfectly holy and perfectly set apart from sin. And He will tolerate no sin or defilement in His presence at all. If anything sinful does enter His presence it is instantly consumed in the fire of His holiness. The restrictions on how far you could progress through the Temple were not a matter of tradition or protocol or crowd control... They were like that fence they put up around Mount Sinai when God descended on it. The purpose was to keep you from venturing too close and getting killed by the holiness of God. And God was serious about it. In the case of that fence He commanded that if even an animal touched it, that animal was to be killed... But they weren't to touch it while killing it. It had to be stoned. This is very important to God. There is chapter after chapter in Exodus on the setup of the Tabernacle (550 vv.). The creation of the entire universe is described in 50vv. God went out of His way to set up the Temple in such a way as to teach the people the gravity of approaching Him. And when people came into the Temple and took that lightly, Jesus became violent. And it's all because God is so awesome and so holy. Now, Paul says we have access. What does that mean?

**Heb.4:14-16 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us ... 16 approach the throne of grace with confidence**

We are in Christ, and He absorbs the awesome, terrifying, consuming glory of God, and we are shielded. That means what happened this morning when you all sat down and the music started and we began to worship, for those of you who have been born again... What happened was that you walked right through the Court of the Gentiles, passed through the *soreg*...

Ladies, you went beyond the Court of the Women, right through the Court of the Men, right past the Court of the Priests... Past the Altar, through the brass doors, into the Holy Place... Past the curtain, which was torn from top to bottom the moment Jesus died... Right up to the ark itself. And you not only touched that gold cover, but you lifted it up, and climbed in! That's what he means by access.

Now let me ask you something: Can we do all that now because God a different God than He was in Exodus? Has He softened up or chilled out since Mt. Sinai? Has He mellowed since Isa.6? Do we now have access to the presence of God because He is less awesome and less holy? No.

The fact that Jesus died and paved the way for us to approach God didn't change the nature of God. When you bow your head to pray or offer a song in worship, realize that you are approaching that very same God of Isa.6 and Mt. Sinai and the ark of the Covenant.

That God of...

**Ps.104:32 he who looks at the earth, and it trembles, who touches the mountains, and they smoke.**

**Na.1:5 The mountains quake before him and the hills melt away. The earth trembles at his presence, the world and all who live in it.**

**Isa.8:13 The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread,**

That's why Heb.12:28 says

**let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our "God is a consuming fire."**

## Trinity

If you understand what it means to approach God, v.18 sounds unthinkable.

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

By the way, the whole Trinity is in that one verse. There is one God, but God is three distinct persons, and all three are in this verse. For modalists like T.D. Jakes or the oneness Pentecostals who reject the idea of three distinct persons existing simultaneously, verses like this become nonsense.

### by one Spirit

The fact that all three persons are mentioned in this verse shows us what a massive problem our sin was. It was not a simple problem that God could deal with in a simple way ("I'm a loving God. So I'll just overlook their sin"). We've made the point before that our sin problem was so serious that God the Son had to come to earth, take on human flesh, be born and live as a man and then give His life in our place to pay the penalty for our sin. But that's not all. Even the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was not all there was to God's solution to our sin problem. It also requires that the Holy Spirit come to earth and constantly work at sanctifying the Church and maintaining the unity the Christ accomplished on the cross. The Holy Spirit is continually at work in us. We are the Body of Christ, and it is the Holy Spirit who animates that body. He is the life in the Body. He is what makes us a living, growing Body rather than a dead corpse.

The things being achieved worldwide by the Church are the intentional work of the Holy Spirit. And specifically our access to God is achieved in the Holy Spirit. Our access comes by means of Christ legally and by means of the Holy Spirit personally. Jesus Christ opened the way for us to have access to God legally, by paying the penalty for our sin. But that still leaves us unable to approach God. We can't just get in a space shuttle and fly up to heaven. Now that we have legal access, how, in a practical way are we going to have personal interaction with God? That comes through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is who enables us to relate to God personally in a real way.

Php.3:2-3

**Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. 3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God**

Jude 20

**But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit**

Eph.6:17-18

**And pray in the Spirit on all occasions**

Ro.8:26-27

**In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.**

Ro.8:15-16

**you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.**

Through Christ we gain legal access. Through the Spirit we enjoy personal access. And because He's now our Father, we have equal-access.

## **Equal Access**

**19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people lit. the saints.**

Paul uses two different words for non-citizens to highlight the point that there is no sense in which any Christian is a secondary citizen or belongs to the community in some lesser way than others. Some of you know what it's like to belong to a group, but to have second-class status in that group. You're considered a member, but you're not a member like some others are members. There are even churches like that. You're a member, but if you haven't been here a certain amount of time, or if you don't fit some profile, you are a secondary member. You're not part of the inner circle of important people. If you have gotten that impression from some Christians, it's an impression that doesn't correspond to reality. In their eyes you might be second-class, or in your eyes you might be second-class, but it's neither they nor you that determines who's who in the Church.

The one who determines who's who in the Church is the Father. And He gave His Son to see to it that there are no foreigners or even resident aliens in the Church – only full-blown citizens. If you have spent your life in gross immorality and sin and just became a Christian yesterday, you have the same access to God as the pastor or theologian who has spent 50 years studying and teaching God's Word. Obviously he will have a greater knowledge of God than you, but you both have the same rights and privileges and blessings as citizens in the nation of saints. The word **saints** refers to all genuine believers of all ages. As soon as you believe, you are justified in God's sight. He makes you holy. And that's what the word **saint** means: "holy one."

If you have a Roman Catholic background, you might think only certain great Christians qualify as saints. That's not true. Every Christian is a saint. And not only are we all equal citizens...

### **and members of God's household**

You not only have access as a full citizen. You have access as a family member. My children have equal access to me. I don't have two groups of children – one that can come talk to me anytime, and another who have to set up an appointment. I remember last time I was at Grace Church there was a long line of pastors waiting for a chance to talk with John McArthur, and one of his little grandkids just walked right up past everyone and he stopped his conversation and picked her up in his arms. That's the kind of access we have to God.

Rev.22:17

**The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.**

Benediction

**2 Thes.3:16 Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.**

Review Questions:

1. How is peace between people attained?
2. What are the implications of the breaking down of the wall for...

anti-semitism, racism, and discord in the body?

Missions?

3. What is the role of the Son and the Spirit in our gaining access to the Father?