

No Jesus, No Peace – Eph 2:14-18

Let's turn in our Bibles to Eph 2:14-18. After reminding us of our past enmity and alienation from God and his people in v11-12, and then our present state of nearness to God in v13; Paul tells us why. Why *the blood of Christ* at the end of v13 brings us close to God. And by implication, gives us peace.

[14] For he himself [Jesus himself, v14] is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility [15] by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, [16] and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. [17] And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. [18] For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

The Lord couldn't have ordained a better passage for our time. We yearn for peace. Peace in our hearts and peace in our land. And the point of this passage, is that Jesus is the key. No Jesus, no peace. I don't care how much justice is won. How much vengeance is wrought. How many statues are toppled. How much reform is made.

You say, "Oh pastor, that's so simplistic. No Jesus, no peace." And I say, "Oh loved one, that's so biblical. And so powerful." If only we believed it. Only we lived it. Said it. Repeated it. Preached it. Posted it. No Jesus, no peace. And *know* Jesus, K-N-O-W, know *peace*. Both.

And Paul gives us 4 reasons in this passage. Reasons I hope will bring you peace.

➤ Starting with this: No Jesus, no peace . . .

Because he alone is our peace. (v14a)

I think that's idea of the back-to-back pronouns in v14. *He himself is our peace*. He himself. Alone. All by himself, within himself, and only himself. So that apart from him, there's no peace.

Not only that, but it says he *is* our peace. He doesn't just offer peace or bring us peace, he *is* our peace. He embodies it. It's who he is. In 3 main respects.

1. He's **our only Prince of Peace**. He alone *is* our peace, because he's the only Prince of Peace. That's what Isaiah calls him in that familiar Christmas verse. *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given . . . and his name shall be called . . . Prince of Peace*. (Is 9:6) As in the one who leads in peace, reigns in peace, and rules in peace. Right now in our hearts, and yet to come in our world. It's who he is.

2. He's **our only source of peace**. He alone *is* our peace because he's our only source of peace. At least true peace. Lasting peace. No one else embodies it, and no one else gives it.

That's why Paul ends his letter in 2 Thessalonians by saying – *Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way*. May he do that. He himself. Because nobody else can. He's the source. The only source.

Sure, we can make peaceful *settings* for ourselves. From a cozy chair on the porch to a

cabin in the woods. But we can't give ourselves peace. That's a disposition of the heart.

Nor can we give it to others. We can offer comfort to one another. Like being there for someone who has lost a loved one. But we can't give them peace, rest, settled-ness.

➤ I'll never forget the funeral of my cousin recently. She died unexpectedly in the night at 52 years old, and left behind a husband, 2 young-adult daughters, and a 10 year old son.

And during the funeral, that little boy wailed. Like nobody I've ever heard. 30 minutes straight. Non-stop. Inconsolable. It didn't matter who held him, who comforted him, who spoke to him, nothing. Because his heart was broken and peaceless. Something only Jesus can heal. Only Jesus can give. Because he's our only source.

3. He's **our only path to peace**. Rom 5:1 says – *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith [declared righteous in God's sight, because of our belief], we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*. Through his death and resurrection on our behalf. A death and resurrection that enables God to *forgive* us. Providing a path to peace. The only path. The forgiveness of God, through Jesus, is our only path to peace.

The same is true when we forgive others. It provides a path to peace. A path well-cleared and well-trodden by Jesus himself.

➤ I know of no more powerful testimony in that respect, than the peace of **Rwanda** in the years following the massacres that took place there.

Rwanda is a country in East Africa, where in just 100 days during the summer of 1994, 800k Tutsis were massacred by the ethnic majority Hutus. Decades of generational hatred boiled over, and neighbors killed neighbors with impunity. No fear and no care. And yet, Rwanda exists in a state of peace today. Why?

Because so many have walked the path to peace, with an offering of forgiveness. In fact, they're so serious about it, that the country has six "reconciliation villages." Villages where convicted murderers, who have served their sentence and apologized for their crimes, live side by side with survivors of the genocide, who have forgiven them. Forgiven them because Jesus paid the price and paved the way.*****

No Jesus no peace, because he alone rules in peace, he's our only source of peace, and he's our only path to peace.

Second, no Jesus no peace . . .

Because only he can unite us. (v14-16)

Only he can take such a diverse group of people and put us on the same page. With the same love, same grace, same mercy, and same goal of glorifying God. No Jesus no unity, and no unity no peace. V14.

[14] For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one [united us] and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility [15] by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, [16] and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross.

He *made us both one*, v14. He created *one new man*, v15. And he made us *one body*, v16. One, one, and one. That's unity.

Jesus is in the business of unity. Unifying those who are his, just like parents want nothing more than to see their kids get along.

Only he does it . . .

1. **By changing our identity.** 3 ways Jesus unites us. He changes our identity from children of man to *children of God*. *Born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God*. John 1:13. The moment we receive Christ as Lord, the moment we're saved, we have a new identity: child of God.

And the more we think of ourselves that way – instead of thinking of ourselves as products of our parents, or our culture, or our skin color, or something else – the more we think of ourselves as *God* thinks of us, the more united we will be.

Followers of Christ are first and foremost Christians. Our old identity is gone, and the new has come. An identity only Jesus can give. And the more we embrace it, the more we remember it, the more we think of it, the more united we will be.

2. Jesus unites us **by connecting us** to one another. As a body and a family. Jesus reconciles us to God, v16, *in one body*. And Rom 12:5 says – *We, though many, are one body in Christ*. One entity. Connected via the Holy Spirit within us and between us. A spiritual body that's just as real as our physical body.

Not only that, but the New Testament repeatedly refers to us siblings in a *family*. As in brothers and sisters in Christ. Like in Phil 1:12. Paul says, *I want you to know brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel*. The Greek word is “adelphoi,” and means siblings in a family. Brothers and sisters.

So Jesus unites us by connecting us to one another. It's real.

3. Jesus unites us **by creating a new people**. v15. *He himself is our peace . . . that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two*.

Through the death and resurrection of Christ, we are brought together to form a new people group, a new humanity. Instead of two, or three, or twenty separate groups, we're one. Instead of something old or recycled, we're new. *One new man*.

Only Jesus does that. Only Jesus unites us. And only Jesus can. By changing our identity, connecting us, and making us new. No Jesus no unity, and no unity no peace.

Third, no Jesus no peace . . .

Because only his death can break down walls (v14b-16)

He himself is our peace [v14], *who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility*. “In his flesh” referring to his death on the cross. Where he *bore our sins in his body* (1 Pet 2:24). And when he did, he tore down the walls that divide us. The *wall of hostility* as Paul says it.

Now, *the wall* to which Paul refers is obviously metaphorical, or symbolic, but he may

very well have had in mind the wall within the **temple courts** in Jerusalem. Because it fits.

There was a wall in the temple compound that separated the Court of the Gentiles from the inner courts where only Jews could go. And according to Josephus, a Jewish historian of that time, it was about 4½ feet tall with warning signs posted in Latin and Greek.

In fact (**signs**), two of those signs have been found. And say this:

“No foreigner is to enter within the railing and enclosure around the temple. Whoever is caught shall have himself to blame for his consequent death.”

Strong words.***** And a perfect illustration of the walls in our lives and our world, that the death of Jesus breaks down to give us peace.

Starting with . . .

1. **Walls of culture.** Like the food laws, sabbath restrictions, and circumcision that would have separated the Jews from everyone else. Or cultural differences in our day and age. From different styles of dress, to different ways of speaking, to different foods we eat. In Christ, those things are secondary. Non-issues.

Not that cultural differences should cease to exist, but that they should decrease in significance so as not to divide us. And will, as we keep our eyes on things above instead of things below. It's one of the reasons Jesus died.

And when you consider that we're going to be together for all eternity – with people from *every* tribe, tongue, and nation – we might as well get used to each other now. In fact, to the extent we don't, we build the very walls Jesus died to break.

2. He breaks down **walls of hostility**. Just like it says. Hate, fear, distrust, you name it. Walls of hostility. As we think like him and act like him, he does to us what he did to Jericho.

In fact, he already has. v14 again. *He . . . has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility*. Has broken. Past tense.

Not only that, but he killed hostility itself. In us. v16b. *He . . . has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility . . . [that he] might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility*.

Jesus was killed by the hostility of the cross, to kill the hostility in our hearts. Far be it from us that we should harbor it.

3. He breaks down **walls of disagreement**. What's right and what's wrong. What's better and what's best. Like he did then by ending the Old Covenant and offering the New. Or as it says in v15 – *by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances*. The Mosaic Law found in the Old Testament. He broke down *that* wall of disagreement by abolishing it.

Not that the Law is passé and useless, but that it's no longer the means by which we are reconciled to God. It's abolished in that sense. And no longer divides us.

Nor does a lack of *help* divide us. Insight. Revelation. From the Word of God to the Spirit of God. We have help. To build *up* the body of Christ, instead of tear it down over disagreements. To have the mind of Christ instead of the mind of man. God's perspective instead of the culture's.

Jesus preserves peace by breaking down walls of disagreement.

4. He breaks down **walls of separation**. Separation between us and God, and us and one another. Both. V16 – He has broken down walls that he *might reconcile us both to God* [breaking down *that* wall of separation] *in one body* [breaking down *our* walls of separation]. Both-and. Jesus breaks down walls of separation.

And it's all *through the cross* (16). His death for our sin. Which brings us right back to where we started from. No Jesus no peace, because only his death can break down walls that divide us. It's through the cross, and only the cross. Keep your eyes on the cross.

And last, no Jesus no peace . . .

Because he alone gives us access to peace (v17-18)

[17] *And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. [18] For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.* Access to peace. Because he's the *God* of peace.

He preached peace to the whole world, including us through his apostles and now his Word, so that we have access to the God of peace. Reiterated over and over in the **Scriptures**.

Rom 15:33 – *May the God of peace be with you all.*

2 Cor 13:11 – *Live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.*

1 Thess 5:23 – *May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely.*

God and peace go hand in hand. So if you have access to God, you have access to peace.*****

➤ And Jesus alone gives it, via the Holy Spirit. *For through him* [v18] *we both* [i.e. all who are in Christ] *have access in one Spirit to the Father.* Jesus alone gives us access to peace, via the Holy Spirit.

It's like the **space capsule** that delivered 2 astronauts to the International Space Station recently. Designed and built by SpaceX, it's the most advanced delivery vehicle in the world. Requiring years of investment, both in the equipment *and* the astronauts.

The end result being, that *through* SpaceX – through their choosing, training, and preparation of the astronauts – both **men** were delivered in *one* capsule, *to the* station, floating peacefully high above the earth.

They didn't get there separately. They didn't arrive via different means or different capsules. And they didn't go to different places.

Through SpaceX, both were given access, in one capsule, to the station.

➤ Just like us, through Jesus. Through Jesus – who chooses, justifies, and equips *us* – we

have access in one Spirit, to the Father. The Father in heaven. The God of peace, in the place of peace.*****

Which means, apart from Jesus we're stuck on earth, and stuck in strife. No Jesus, no peace. It's why he came and what he preached.

➤ The question is, are you listening? Are you taking it to heart? Not only for yourself, but for our culture.

I hope so. Because he's our only hope. Our only hope of peace in our heart when the world falls apart, and peace in our world when we're far apart. (**Summary**)

No Jesus, no peace. Because he alone is our peace. Only he can unite us in peace. Only his death can lead to peace. And he alone gives us access to peace.

Prayer – Lord, *you keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you* (Is 26:3). So we trust. We trust in your reconciling death. And we rest. Full of gratitude for the peace we have, and full of hope that you will preserve it. Use us God, to spread it. To be a people of peace, who offer peace. Through faith in you, and you alone.