

In chapter 1, Paul lets us know who we are, who we belong to, and informs us of all the rights and power that comes with being a son of God. The Spirit through Paul (and Solomon in the Song of Songs) has equipped us with amazing weapons of truth with which we are to fight both the liar and the lies that have been spoken over our lives since we were just children.

I encourage you to keep these truths close in your heart and your mind. When you are feeling overwhelmed, attacked, or even powerless, turn to these passages and bathe in them as they will refresh in your mind and remind you that you do not belong to this world and you no longer belong to Satan, but you belong to God. You are His son and you have been seated with Christ in the heavenly places; with all the rights and privileges which He has bestowed upon His beloved. Besides, if you learn to actively live in these truths you will be protected from the enemy and all his attempts to destroy you will be futile.

In our passage tonight, Paul takes us on a historical and cultural journey to convince us of yet another truth about who we are in God—a truth that is to radically impact how we live and specifically how we are to be in relationship with each other. Paul tells us that we are members of God’s family along with all His holy people; we are His house which is built on the cornerstone of Christ; and we are carefully joined together becoming a holy temple for the Lord where God lives by His Spirit. In this truth we can understand how the Father is fulfilling Jesus’ prayer in **John 17:20** where He says: “I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me because of their testimony. My prayer for all of them is that they will be one, just as you and I are one.”

But like with all of us, before any truth can really sink deep within our souls such that it permanently impacts how we live, we need to have our pride, our bias, our prejudice, and our wrong beliefs about who we are peeled back from our souls. And this is what the Spirit attempts to accomplish with these Gentile believers, both in the passage we are going to study tonight and all throughout Chapter 3.

Ephesians 2:11-22

Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 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. AND 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 then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole

building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

This passage is so full; the Spirit imbeds a little bit of Jewish history, sarcasm, and Biblical numerology to help communicate His message. In addition, the Spirit seems to intentionally provokes both Gentiles and Jews, almost as if He wants to elicit an emotional response and bring to mind their embittered history which was based on years and years of prejudice, hate, and segregation.

As I thought about this I was really perplexed. Why would the Holy Spirit want to bring up these sensitive issues? Then I remembered that in order for these believers to truly experience God, they would have to learn to worship Him in Spirit and truth (**John 4:23-24**) and come face to face with everything in their soul that was not from Him—all that does not reflect His character and nature.

You see the historical backdrop of hostility and separation between Jews and Gentiles had quite naturally infiltrated the church and was negatively impacting the relationships between brothers and sisters in the Lord. The church found its beginnings in Jerusalem and was initially comprised entirely of Jews. But in Acts 10 we find that God sent Peter to preach the gospel to Gentiles under this charge: “if God says something is acceptable, don’t say it isn’t” (**Acts 10:15**). This was very difficult for Peter, a good Jew, to accept and when he went to the home of Cornelius he could not help but remind this Gentile of his proper place: “You know it is against the Jewish laws for me to come into a Gentile home like this. But God has shown me that I should never think of anyone as impure” (**Acts 10:28**).

Excuse me! How condescending and downright insulting! It was simply not enough for Peter to just go and, in love, do what God had commanded him; rather, he had to make a point and bring up the separation, division, and prejudice. It was almost as if he was saying, “look, I am doing you a big favor here because I have to not because I want to.”

But in obedience, Peter told them about life in Jesus and even while he was speaking the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the message (**Acts 10:44**). This was the beginning of the gospel spreading amongst the Gentile nations. And as would be expected, when Peter returned to Jerusalem he faced some intense hostility by the Jewish believers in his little community who were not cool with his having gone to a bunch of Gentiles. In their mind, Christianity was Jewish and belonged to the “chosen” ones and not to those who were considered to be inherently unclean and unacceptable.

This story of Peter and Cornelius gives us a glimpse into the deep seeded hostility and division between the two groups. We also have to understand that by the time Paul is writing this letter the “spiritual” tables have turned. The great growth in the church had primarily come from amongst Gentiles and not the Jews. Thus, the Gentiles had begun to grow their own identity separate from the Jews which just added to the cultural division that had existed for centuries.

But again, the Spirit’s goal is to bring unification between the two groups—a real healing—but he first has to start by tearing open the wound so he can apply the medicine of the truth. First of all, he reminds them that in their flesh they were just Gentiles. This is kind of a two sided comment. On the one hand he is

reminding them that they are not the “chosen ones,” while on the other hand he is hinting that in their Spirit they are altogether something new. Then he takes a crack at the Jews by saying that those who have historically looked down on the Gentiles, the so-called “Circumcision,” are really not “all that” since their circumcision was not of the heart and it was not performed by God but it was merely men keeping with religious traditions without any understanding that the physical act was to represent a spiritual reality—the cutting away of the old sinful nature from our souls.

Then the Spirit employs a fascinating Biblical literary technique where he incorporates a form of Biblical numerology to make his point. As we have studied before, God is big on numbers throughout the Bible; numbers which because of the pattern in which they are used come to signify very specific concepts. A few examples of some of the most commonly used numbers are: 1 which refers to unity (the Lord(s) our God is one); 2 which refers to division; 3 is understood as the number of divine perfection; 6 is the number of man; 7 is the number of completion; 8 is the number of new beginnings or new life; and 40 is the number of trial or testing.

But in this passage the Spirit uses the number **5** which has a dualistic meaning that is kind of like the flip sides of a coin. On the one hand the number **5** means God’s grace (the grace that is extended and bestowed upon us) and on the other hand it represents our absolute need for the grace which God has freely given. The number **5**, therefore, encapsulates God’s strength and provision as well as our weakness and utter destitution.

In this passage, the Spirit actually gives us **3** of **8** lists of **5**'s which are found beginning in ***Ephesians 1:3***. It took me a while to see what He had done, but the more I stared at the passage the more He showed me the marvelous and intriguing design which He gave to Paul. In ***Ephesians 1:3-2:10***, he gave us **5** lists of **5**'s (all of which we will review). He started with **3** lists of **5**'s which first speak to the perfectly divine magnitude, or opulent abundance, in which God grace has provided for our need. Then he added **1** list of **5**'s which addresses our uniform and desperate need for the grace which God has provided. He then caps that section with another **1** list of **5**'s which speaks to how the grace has been imparted to us and has unified our experience into Christ's experience.

Then in our passage tonight in ***Ephesians 2:12-22***, he gives us **3** more lists of **5**'s. **1** list of **5**'s which speaks to why all the Gentiles were, uniformly, in place of total destitution and he follows it with **2** more lists of **5**'s which are intended to draw a complete division between our true life, which is hidden in Christ in God, and our former lives as Gentiles who did not know God.

Let's first review the list in ***Ephesians 2:1-3***, which indicates why everyone, both Jew and Gentile, are desperately in need of the grace which only God provides.

1. We were dead in our trespasses and sins,
2. We walked according to the course of this world,
3. We walked according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience,
4. We formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and

5. We were by nature children of wrath.

The second list, found in ***Ephesians 2:12***, focuses on why we—the Gentiles—were especially bad off since we did not even really know about God.

1. We were separate, or living apart, from Christ,
2. We were excluded from the commonwealth of Israel (or God’s “chosen people”),
3. We were strangers to the covenants of promise,
4. We had no hope, and
5. We lived without God in the world.

This is a pretty intense list; yet, it captures the primary (but not exclusive) dispensation of how God chose to work in times past. He made Himself known to the Jews, they were His chosen people, He gave to them a whole slew of covenants and promises by which they could know Him and experience Him, they had hope of eternal life, and they lived in this world with the Spirit of God literally dwelling within their midst.

In contrast, the Gentile nations received only the scraps that fell from the table of the Jews. Even when a Gentile chose to believe that the God of the Jews is God and were converted (circumcised even), they were still kept separate from participating in the formal worship. Literally, there was a wall in the Temple which kept even these believing Gentiles separated from the Jews.

And while this contrast and division comes across to us as unfair to the Gentiles, the Holy Spirit brought His medicine of grace in order to bring healing to this great

wound with which we and others have always struggled to understand. And boy did He ever bring an abundant supply of His grace. Let's review the first **3** lists of **5**'s which indicate that there has been a perfect and divine outpouring of God's grace toward us who believe. Let's review: ***Ephesians 1:3-6***

1. He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,
2. He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world,
3. In order that we would be holy and blameless before Him,
4. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, and
5. All of it was according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

This first list speaks of the plan which God put into place and then caused to come to fruition on our behalf. The second list, in ***Ephesians 1:7-14***, speaks of the way this plan to pour His grace out on our lives has specifically been manifested toward us believers.

1. In Him we have redemption through His blood,
2. We have the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us,
3. In Him we also we have obtained an inheritance,
4. We were predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, and
5. We were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a

pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

This third list, found in ***Ephesians 1:19-23***, expresses how the Father has backed up everything He promises and confirmed that His grace is perfect and is enough for our lives because it is all been lavished upon us in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ:

1. When He raised Him from the dead,
2. When He seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,
3. When He seated Him far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come,
4. When He subjected all things under Jesus' feet, and
5. When He gave Jesus as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

So the Father ensured that His power was manifested to Jesus in order that through Jesus the Father might similarly manifest the same power toward us. According to ***Ephesians 2:5-10***, we can have complete confidence in the reality of what this grace has done for us because:

1. He made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),
2. He raised us up with Him,

3. He seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus,
4. For by grace we have been saved through faith; and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, and
5. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

And in the final **2** lists of **5**'s, in ***Ephesians 2:13-18***, we see that the division which was caused by our being Gentiles no longer exists in Christ for we have been brought together in new life. The first list captures what God did through Christ.

1. We have been brought near by the blood of Christ,
2. He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,
3. He abolished 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,
4. He reconciled them both [*Jews and Gentiles*] in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR, and
5. Through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.

This second list, found in ***Ephesians 2:19-22***, captures the effectiveness of what the Father did through Christ in our lives—how His grace is manifested toward us:

1. We are no longer strangers and aliens,
2. We are fellow citizens with the saints,
3. We are of God's household,
4. We have been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, and
5. We are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

We are going to back track and talk deeper about ***verses 13-22***, but I wanted to show you the way that the Holy Spirit architected every aspect of the Word of God with such beauty and magnificence such that the very structure of the words, even the way He has gathered them together, speaks to the power and potency of the message. **8** lists of **5**'s—all of which speak to why we (whether Jew or Gentile) have through grace found new life and an entirely new beginning in Christ. A new life free from everything that haunted us in the past: 1) free from our selves, 2) free from our old nature, 3) free from the enemy and all his vicious attempts to lie to us, 4) free from the hate, prejudice and division that marked our lives, and 5) free to live both individually and corporately as a new man who always remains in perfect peace with the Father. It's so beautiful! The whole thing is simply beautiful!

Ephesians 2:13-16

But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 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.

Just so you know, “have been brought near” is in the past tense (it’s been done); yet, “He is our peace” is in the present active tense. Therefore, because of the fact that we belong to God—we have been brought into His presence by the blood of Jesus—we can every moment of every day enjoy a personal and intimate relationship with Jesus Himself and thereby experience the all “illusiv” peace for which all of humanity searches.

As we studied in the gospel of John, peace is not some end of itself; which is why all the pursuits of men to find peace, to create peace, never result in “peace on earth” or even an ongoing form of individual peace. The peace which man seeks is completely illusive and once you think you have found the way to enjoy it, whether through religion, meditation, or by achieving some level of health, wealth, prosperity, and independence, circumstances suddenly change and the pursuit starts all over again, and again, and again.

True lasting peace is a fruit of knowing Jesus and daily, presently, actively, trusting Him. He is peace! When we choose to let go of the control over our lives and believe that He is God and we are not, and when we are fully convinced that He loves us and we are accepted in Him, we will experience sustained peace because we will rest in the **fact** that every aspect (yes, every detail) of our lives is controlled by Him, authored by Him, and is part of His plan for us to experience Him deeper. We will rest knowing that even when we blow it, He will cause all things to work together in order for us to become further convinced of our need to trust ourselves to Him. That is why all He ever asks of us is to believe what He has said about Himself and what He has said about who we are in Him. Believing is the only pathway to the One who is our peace!

His peace also allows us to live with others in peace; specifically, in this passage, with our Jewish brethren. Now for us here in America this is a bit of a theoretical notion since there does not seem to be such ardent hostility toward Jewish believers, just because they are Jews. But there are parts of this world where racial hostility toward the Jews is a real issue, even amongst believers. It is totally a demonic thing.

But Christ, in His body, through His death on the cross, destroyed any reason for separation because both Jew and Gentile have been made into “one” new man that lives through Jesus. Individually we have been made into these amazing new creations, hand crafted by the Father in His image, imbued with His nature, and collectively we have been made into **one** body to be presented to Jesus who is our head. We have been made into **one** and all parts of this body are essential for the whole to be healthy and functioning in the way God desires.

Because we have been made **one** in Christ, all the commandments (the dividing wall) which were aimed at keeping the Jews a separate and distinct group of people among the nations have been abolished or made null and void because this new man has been set apart and made distinct not by rules and rituals but by God choosing us before the foundations of the world to belong to Him.

Besides, both Jew and Gentile believers are reconciled together in this common truth: the grace of God has been lavished upon those who were dead men, sentenced and condemned to spend an eternity separated from God. This is our common truth which we share with all believers; and faith—presently actively believing and betting our lives on the truth—is how we come together and mutually experience and live in His peace.

Ephesians 2:17-18

AND 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.

The phrase “and He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near” comes from a beautiful passage in Isaiah 57.

Isaiah 57:15-19

For thus says the high and exalted One who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite." For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry; for the spirit would grow faint before Me, and the breath of those whom I have made. "Because of the iniquity of his unjust gain I was angry and struck him; I hid My face and was angry, and he went on turning away, in the way of his heart." I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort to him and to his mourners, creating the praise of the lips. Peace, peace to him who is far and to him who is near," says the Lord, "and I will heal him."

Jesus to him who is far (the Gentiles) and Jesus to him who is near (the Jews); for in Him every wound of division and hostility is healed. Praise Jesus! What is impossible with man is always possible with God!

Then to think that Jesus gave us all access in one Spirit to the Father. When you consider the historical context of this statement, it is radically crazy. Imagine, the Gentiles could never actively participate in the ritual worship of God. As I said, even Gentile's who converted to Judaism had to stay behind the wall. But now, as Gentiles, we get to walk right past that wall and into the court of the Jews. We can go through the doors that will lead us into the Holy Place. And even then we will see that the curtain which blocked the way into the Holy of Holies has been torn, ripped from the top to the bottom. Therefore, we get to boldly walk right into the presence of God where His glory is manifested as His Spirit rests over the

mercy seat above the ark of God. We get to experience Him and enjoy the blessing of being in His presence any time we want. This is what makes prayer such a privilege. And since God is our Dad, we can lay it all out to Him, no holds barred. It is truly amazing and a privilege unlike any other

Ephesians 2:19-22

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

As a result of what Jesus did for us on the cross, we belong! We have a home! We have a family! We are all united in Him! There is no more division! And what's best is that our family is eternal. We will be with each other for all time. We will be with the ones we love and all those that we have only read about and are dying to meet. We will be able to enjoy relationships with Paul, Abraham, Sarah, David, Peter, Stephen, Elijah, Elisha, Deborah, Daniel, and all the saints throughout time. Story time will be amazing.

I want us to think for a moment about this word picture of a Temple. God uses this metaphor quite often to describe those who belong to Him. Consider that the Temple was the center of the cultural, spiritual, and even economic life in the

community of Israel. It was the place to be—the heartbeat of the Jewish society. The Temple was a structure that God, the creator of the universe, chose to inhabit. Now the Temple could never contain God, but He chose to let His presence be visible and made known in that place.

Likewise, we are center of God's economy. We are the structures, individually and corporately, in which He has chosen to dwell and make His presence visible and known. Every believer who walks in the Spirit of God is a marvel for a lost and dying world that desperately needs that grace that Jesus desires to bestow upon all who will come to Him. As we trust ourselves to Jesus, His glory shines in us so that others will either desire to be warmed by His light or will choose to affix their decision to live in darkness.

The Apostles and prophets laid the path before us and have set the example for us to follow. They have shown us that it is entirely possible to trust ourselves to Jesus and be at rest with Him in this world. Jesus is our immovable rock, the foundation upon which our lives rest, the foundation upon which every promise has been made to us. Everything rests upon Him.

But this metaphor of a Temple also speaks to the manner in which we need each other and why it is so important for us to stay connected in the Spirit. It starts with each of us in this little fellowship. We need each other. Each one of us has been chosen by God to be here to fulfill a very specific purpose in each other's lives. Each of us has been chosen to express a unique aspect of God's character that the others all need. This is why, in the Spirit, we must stay connected in fellowship with the common goal of experiencing the One who is our peace. He has to at the center of all our relationships and everything we do.

Over time, our connectedness will eventually extend to others who have built their lives on the foundation of Christ and not the foundation of demonic lies. We have already seen that happen with our friends and family in North Carolina, New Mexico, Washington, and elsewhere. Though we are not physically present with each other, we are close and our lives are supernaturally intertwined. It is a beautiful thing! And one day, the Father will sum all things up in Christ and all the pieces will fit perfectly; we will be one big, gigundus, happy family—a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Again, it is all simply beautiful beyond description. Through the grace of God we have been afforded a new life in Christ, a new family in Christ, and a new beginning; free to know and experience the grace of God as it is poured out new every day (every moment of every day). Again, Praise Jesus that we belong to Him!

Let's Pray