

Last week we talked about how we are the workmanship of God in Christ Jesus and created to serve the purpose of God, both individually and corporately. We briefly touched on how we are called into the Body of Christ to walk out His purpose. Today we'll finish the second chapter of Ephesians.

Let's read **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— 12 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. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 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, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. 17 And 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 our access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.*

There are a lot of directions we could take in these verses and so many valuable principles talked about. Today, we are going to look at one of the ways the enemy tries to kill, steal, and destroy the power of the Body of Christ -- by creating schisms and divisions. This is such a vast topic and can be looked at from so many different angles. This morning we are just starting a conversation that we, as Jesus Followers, will need to be very intentional about humbly seeking Him and courageously obeying Him in this area.

In these verses this morning Paul is specifically addressing the divide that existed between the Jews and the Gentiles. Basically, the Jews and everybody else. This was an Us – Them scenario that cut through every area of life – religion, culture, behavior, health practices, etc.

Paul emphasizes this in verse 12: *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.*

Many people have become so used to Us – Them scenarios that they become second nature and tend to be woven so deep into our lives or culture, they sometimes aren't even consciously aware of the damage that's being done. It's not benign, it's

constantly eroding God's best and we see the full ugliness of it when it manifests itself through prejudice, discrimination, abuse, racism, division, etc.

What drives these destructive Us – Them scenarios is fear, ignorance, pride, bitterness, etc.

The story of humanity and the story of our own country shows us the painful reality of this.

Part of the work of the cross was that Jesus abolished the Us – Them divide by bridging it with Himself – The Prince of Peace.

Ephesians 2:14-18 *For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 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, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. 17 And 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 our access in one Spirit to the Father.*

The enemy wants to divide and separate in order to diminish the power of His Peace.

The Greek word used here for peace is **eirene** (from verb **eiro** = to join or bind together that which has been separated) literally pictures the binding or joining together again of that which had been separated or divided and thus setting at one again. This word is used for the Hebrew word for peace, Shalom, in the Septuagint – the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

The ancient Hebrew concept of peace, rooted in the word "shalom," meant wholeness, completeness, soundness, health, safety and prosperity, carrying with it the implication of permanence.

Rabbi Robert I. Kahn of Houston, Texas, capsulizes the distinctives of "Roman" peace and "Hebrew" shalom:

One can dictate a peace; shalom is a mutual agreement.

Peace is a temporary pact; shalom is a permanent agreement.

One can make a peace treaty; shalom is the condition of peace.

Peace can be negative, the absence of commotion. Shalom is positive, the presence of serenity.

Peace can be partial; shalom is whole.

Peace can be piecemeal; shalom is complete.

Jesus not only established this kind of Peace through the cross, He actually embodies it – He Himself IS our peace.

Let's watch this Bible Project Video describing Shalom:
<https://vimeo.com/245281463>

The finished work of Christ on the cross didn't stop with reconciling us with the Father – He also began to bring reconciliation to the Us – Them aspect of fallen humanity. Vertical and horizontal Shalom.

He died and rose again to remove the destructive tendencies of Us – Them practices. He died and rose again to create One Body; connected through the Spirit with access to the Father in order to know the fulness of Him and His love and to be ambassadors of His grace to those who are still disconnected from Him.

That's His plan. He says when we walk that truth out in unity versus the Us – Them scenario, we will make an eternal Gospel impact on those around us.

John 17:22,23 *The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.*

Sadly, over the millennia, “Christians” have been some of the most disobedient ones when it comes to not walking in the Us – Them trap of the devil.

We could go on a long time discussing how this Us – Them mentality goes so deep in our lives, but we won't this morning. My desire this morning is that we each individually will take some time to honestly and vulnerably go to the Father and ask Him how we can live a consistent lifestyle that reflects His heart and plan for drawing us together into one as described in **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, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.*

He dwells in us individually AND He wants to dwell in US corporately. It's not an Either – Or situation, it's a Both – And one.

Hale Pule Questions to ponder on your own and discuss with others.

1) Ask the Father to show you what ways the Us – Them mentality may be present in your life.

2) Ask the Father to show you what the roots are of your Us – Them mentality. Things like fear, ignorance, pride, bitterness, etc.

3) Ask the Father what are some practical ways you can begin eliminating the Us – Them mentality from your life.

4) Ask the Father what are some practical things you can do to nurture unity and Shalom in the Body of Christ and then your community/sphere of influence.