

# The Abolition of Enmity – *Ephesians 2:11-18*

**Introduction** – Why does the world have such a hard time living in peace? James 4:1-3 addresses this. To summarize, we are at war with one another because of our pride and envy. Outside of Christ we cannot keep either of the two great commandments. The secular world erroneously tries to lead the world to peace through Christ-less means (and most of the church is following along), but these do not address our core problem. We are estranged from God and from one another due to our sinfulness. There is no peace apart from Christ, the Prince of Peace. And in Jesus, Who is our peace, we find that all enmity has been put to death. Therefore, whether it is familial strife, marital strife, political, national, or ethnic strife, the only answer is Jesus Christ crucified and raised, and the new man we have all become in Him. Every other attempt will only be, in the long run, rearranging the enmity, strife, and hatred.

**Brought Near by the Blood of Christ** (vv11-13) – The depths of our sinfulness and the heights of our salvation were proclaimed in vv1-10. We were dead men walking and God made us alive, raising us up in and with Him to be His great workmanship. Now, Paul, a Jew, turns to the mostly Gentile church and reminds them of what a hopeless state they were in before Christ came. They were Gentiles *"in the flesh"* and at odds with *"the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands"* (v11). Both groups, in their pride, hated the other group. Both had ethnic pride, the kind that enflamed enmity and hatred towards one another. The Greeks had a particular pride/idolatry in Ephesus: their worship of Diana (the goddess of fertility). The Greeks, along with all Gentile nations, were fivefold separated from God. They were *"without Christ-Messiah"* (v12) for Diana and all the other gods could not save. They were *"aliens of the commonwealth of Israel"* and it should be noted they were aliens by choice (v12). They were *"strangers to the covenants of promise"* (v12); they lacked the promises of God and the covenants that could bring them close to Him. They had *"no hope"* (v12) for their people, for eternal life, or for any eternal destiny (1 Thess 4:13) – and historians tell us that a great cloud of hopelessness covered the ancient world. Finally, they were *"without God in the world"* (v12), and their false gods were harsh taskmasters. *"But now in Christ Jesus"* (v13), in one fell swoop, it was all erased, all over, all made new. They were brought near by the blood of Christ. The blood of Christ is the cleansing power of our Savior Who took the penalty for our sin upon the cross. It is the glorious truth of our forgiveness.

**The Abolition of Enmity** (vv14-18) – And so, in Christ we have peace with God (Rom 5:1). But Christ doesn't just make peace; He is our peace (v14). Our peace is personal, relational. And it is so with God and with one another. The wall of separation, the formal ordinances of division, were all abolished in Christ, so that there is just one man from the two (v15) *"thus making peace"* between all distinctions (Gal 3:28). When men are reconciled to God in Christ, they are reconciled to one another because Jesus has just one body (v16). The enmity between ethnic groups was put to death on the cross (v16). When the gospel is preached, Jesus is preaching, for He is that word, that evangel, that gospel (v17) and it is the same message to every people group that ever existed (Rev 7:9). There is only one Spirit Who gives us access through Jesus to the Father (v18); this salvation and reconciliation is Trinitarian, full of unity and diversity.

**Thinking about Race and Racism** – Scripture tells us that we are one blood (Acts 17:26). God loves the glorious diversity of people-groups and of course He does as that reflects the fact that we are image-bearers of the Triune God. This is why God established the nations (Acts 19:26-28). And as He established the nations, He promised that the seed of Abraham would be a great blessing to them all (Gen 12:3). Racism is simply a sin of the old man, *"For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another"* (Titus 3:3). Without the reconciliatory work of Christ, we hate God, and we hate God's image-bearers. There is no peace, there can only be, at best, a cold war peace treaty – but not peace. We might find ways to stop fighting but we will not love one another. And the enmity just gets shifted around because we aren't reckoning it crucified in Christ. In fact, when attacking a particular sin becomes attractive outside of the church, we should all get a little nervous – because they aren't doing so based on an absolute standard. Relativistic secular humanism loves its book, *"On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life"* by Charles Darwin, they are just a little embarrassed by the full title these days. Being a racist is just not in vogue in today's secular culture, but neither is caring for hundreds of black lives murdered in the womb this same day – and there is no standard for either of those values. There is no peace outside of Christ, only fickle opinions that blow with the wind. To offer peace without Christ at the center, is to preach a false gospel. If we could be at peace with God and with one another, if we could keep the two great commandments, without Christ, then we don't need Christ. And if we teach this, then we will drive people further and further away from Christ. Let me be clear: If we fight for racial reconciliation without Christ at the center, we will lead people away from Christ.

**Christ is Sufficient** – Instead, we are to preach Christ crucified. Crucified for all of our stupid, selfish, petty, and wicked sins. Racism is not the problem; it is one of the symptoms. Separation and alienation from God is the problem. We could do nothing about that problem. Nothing. But God abolished the enmity (towards Him and His image-bearers), reconciling us to God through the blood of Jesus Christ, the forgiveness of our sins, and the creating in Himself one new man.

Preaching Christ crucified is preaching the abolition of enmity. Here is the good news. Racial reconciliation already has been accomplished. Christ did it. This is not something we have to achieve; it is something we have to believe. Just like our own salvation. Jesus came to bring peace on earth, and He is the only Way to bring peace on earth because He is the only way to the Father. You have to be reconciled with the Father before you can be reconciled with His kids. But if you are reconciled with the Father you are, by definition, reconciled with His kids because you are in Christ and He only has one body.

But then why is there all of this violence? Why are there wars? Why is there such enmity, division and brokenness – in families, in marriages, in communities, between ethnic groups and nations? Because we have turned away from Christ. We have turned away from the Prince of Peace. The Word is clear – you cannot say you love God and hate your brother. And what of your enemy? Jesus says to love your enemy – in the same way He loved you. But you can only do that if you have peace with God. And you can only have peace with God through Jesus Christ.

Some will say that the gospel is not enough, and they are right if they mean a truncated gospel ("believe in Jesus and one day you will go to heaven"). Jesus said to go and disciple the nations (ethnos, ethnic groups). Gospel includes "*teaching them to observe all things I have commanded*" (Matt 28:19). That means we proclaim peace and then we teach how to walk in that peace because the believer, full of the Spirit can walk in His fruit, "*love, joy, peace...*" This will not happen among good people, because there are no good people. This will happen among remade people, reborn people, people who find themselves in one body and that body is Christ – Who has put to death the enmity.

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*Dave Hatcher – June 14, 2020*