

Ephesians 2:8-18(ESV) ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. ¹¹Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—¹²remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

At the center of this church is the answer to all the hostilities and enmities for every person and nation in this world. It is the solution to the problem of evil and death. Every heartbreak you have ever experienced can be healed, every sin you have ever involved yourself can be forgiven, and all because of the work that Jesus Christ did on the cross. The proof of what I just said to be absolute truth is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and Jesus’ ascension into heaven. **1. Jesus’ work on the cross was perfect, complete, and satisfied God the Father completely.** Had the work of Jesus been incomplete on the cross, the Father never would have raised Jesus from the dead and let Jesus back into heaven. The Father would have said, “Son, you have to go back for you did not accomplish that for which you were sent.” Jesus only spoke truth. Jesus never lied nor could He lie. On the cross Jesus told us His work was completed perfectly when he said, “It is finished.” Everything the Father wanted Jesus to accomplish had been completed perfectly.

Please never tire of putting your brain to work considering all that Jesus did for you on the cross. Please let the work that Jesus did there enter your mind every single day. Sometimes in our home we take turns at who does the dishes. Therefore, not one person has to do it every day. Personally, I find doing dishes to be relaxing. If none of us did the dishes all

we would have in our home would be dirty dishes and the smell would be horrendous. As you and I every day contemplate the cross of Jesus Christ, the death and resurrection, the work that Jesus did for you becomes so much clearer and has a cleansing effect on our lives. By contemplating the cross, you are opening yourself up to experience every blessing that Christ paid for on the cross. By ignoring the cross of Christ, you miss out on the greatest work ever accomplished in the entire universe. There is no greater accomplishment ever than Jesus' work on the cross which of course includes the resurrection and ascension.

Friends if we did not do our dishes, would we ever stink. If farmers did not work their ground every year, we would have no food to eat. If athletes failed to exercise, they would not be athletes. As Christians we owe everything to Jesus in general and most specifically the work He completed on the cross. Please do not go a day without considering all that Jesus did for you there. The stink of our sin piles up until we ponder the cross. It is there we receive the fragrant aroma of Jesus Christ and much much more. The resurrection and ascension mean *tetelestai*, the Father accepted the perfect work of Jesus on the cross. It is well with our souls and one day all will be well when Jesus comes again, and we see firsthand all the benefits of Jesus' finished work on the cross.

1. The biggest chasm between people groups in all of human history was that between the Jews and the Gentiles. Today the battles between the races, between the sexes, between east and west, north and south, between democrats and republicans are minor compared to the loathing between the Jews and Gentiles of the ancient world, the world into which Jesus was born.

Please hear this. Before the sin of Adam and Eve there was no hostility, no enmity at all. Adam and Eve loved each other perfectly in every way. After the fall, after they sinned, this is when hostility and enmity and hatred and animosity entered the human race. Adam and Eve's first two son's relationship ended in Cain killing Abel. Murder took place in the first family after

sin entered the human race. In our old sinful nature, we have inherited hostility and enmity that if not kept under control wreaks havoc in more ways than can be expressed. **2. All of the murders in Chicago are a direct result of the fall, the hostilities and animosities out of control.** Our old sinful human nature is rotten to the core. The new nature that God gives to us when we become alive in Christ has the ability to overcome our inner hostile natures but now I am getting ahead of myself.

In the ancient world the Jews believed the only reason for the existence of the Gentiles was to fuel the fires of Hell (R Kent Hughes, Ephesians pg. 87). The Gentiles had their own narrow-minded hatred for anyone not like them, especially for the Jews. The Jews called the Gentiles “dogs.” Those two words most often went together when a Jewish person spoke, “Gentile dogs.” The Gentiles saw the Jewish people as homicidal enemies of the human race. The hostilities between the Jew and the Gentile grew with the centuries.

The reason for this vast alienation is not social or cultural, but spiritual (Ibid. pg. 87). Jews and Gentiles at one time were alienated from God as described by Paul in the verses previous to this passage one through ten.

“Remember” says Paul in verse 12, *“that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in this world”* (ibid. pg. 88). Up until the time of Christ the Gentiles were separated from God without any hope of a Messiah to come. All the promises were given to the Jews and had yet to be opened to the Gentiles. The Gentiles were friendless and strangers to the covenants of promise (ibid. pg. 88). Please remember that our gift of salvation came from the Jews. Without hope for a Messiah the Gentiles were hopeless and godless, an embarrassment to the human race according to Jewish culture. In those days the pagan world was quite religious. There were temples everywhere where the pagans worshipped false gods.

“The first century was an age of suicide” (ibid pg. 88). For the Gentile’s history was going nowhere. There was no Messiah, no hope, only alienation from God and man. This leads to dehumanizing and horrendous results. It is the root of racism. It is the reason so many well-intentioned cannot get along (ibid. pg. 89). **3. Every human has an inner core of hostility, enmity and has the ability to feel alienated from one another and God.** It leads to war in our homes, in churches, in schools, at work, in every public square. Families are torn apart as are nations.

Now that the problem has been stated what is the answer? What is the solution that reconciles us to God and to one another?

Paul makes it so clear. **Ephesians 2:13-18(NLT)** ¹³But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For Christ himself is our peace has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. ¹⁵He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. ¹⁶Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death. ¹⁷He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near. ¹⁸Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.

4. Gentiles and Jews are made into a new race, a race that belongs to God. Jesus’ death on the cross bought peace with God. Brought peace with God, so much so that we can all be reconciled to God and to each other. On the cross Jesus died for the sin of the world. In one way or another the entire human race was placed at the foot of the cross 2000 years ago. Everyone who has ever lived or will live was somehow there at the cross when Jesus shed his

blood for the sins of the world. Salvation is available to all. Sadly, not all accept it or receive it. Some make the choice to stay alienated from God, estranged from God and die without hope. On the other hand, all are welcome to believe in and receive the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved by grace through faith, not by works but all by grace through faith. Jesus Himself is our peace.

Paul says that Christ ripped this odious barrier down, the wall between Jews and Gentiles such as the wall at Herod's temple. Thus, Jew and Gentile alike, the entire human race has access to God and spiritual unity. We no longer have to hate each other. In Christ we are free to love each other as much as Jesus loves us.

5. All of the hostilities of this world were placed on Christ. All the sinful divisions of people groups were laid on Christ. He died for every single sin, including the sin of racism and all the isms of this world. At the cross of Jesus Christ, we are all one in Christ, to those who believe in and receive the Lord Jesus Christ. The entire problem of people groups being at war with each other boils down to one word, sin. It is in our sinful nature to be hostile. Jesus bore all those hostilities so we can be free of them. The hostilities will not change in our nation but will only get worse as this nation alienates itself from Jesus. True reconciliation to one another comes only through Jesus. In Christ we are reconciled to God and to one another, thus God creating a third race whereby we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. We are all one nation under God, the people of God, born anew, born from above, born again by the grace through faith mentioned earlier. We no longer have to hate each other. We are motivated by Christ to love one another. This is all made possible due to Jesus' death on the cross. Jesus bore all the enmities and hostilities that divided us from God and from each other. And He has given to us the ministry of reconciliation, being reconciled to God and to each other. Man's laws can never achieve this. Only God's law can, the law of love most specifically demonstrated by Jesus on the cross. We too are to take up our crosses and die to hate and live to love.

I close with this. I am holding a crucifix in my hand. There is nothing magical about holding a crucifix and some people are offended by a crucifix. I am not here to offend you. One truth that I am deeply convicted by when I strongly dislike another person is this. Jesus loves that person and proved it by dying on the cross for that person. That person is created in the image of God. When those sinful, hostile thoughts go through my mind, thinking of Jesus dying for them on the cross humbles me to the core. **6. At the foot of the cross we are all equals, people in need of Christ. At the foot of the cross, we are all equal sinners.** No one stands out more than the rest. **7. At the foot of the cross we are made right with God, receiving the grace of God paid for by Jesus on the cross.** **8. At the foot of the cross we are all made one in Christ by God's grace through faith.** Please never reject the work of Jesus on the cross. Amen and Amen.