



The Reunion of Grace

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Ephesians 2:13-16

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¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself 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.

(Pastor prays)

Let's get right to it. There's a statement in verse 14, it's not even an entire sentence, it's just a phrase. In English, it's six words: *For he himself is our peace*. Some of you are really looking for some kind of peace in your life. Look, peace comes when self dies, and self dies only at the foot of the cross. And so, on the front end of this message, you should know that this passage is overrun with allusions to the cross. In verse 13, you are brought near by the blood of Christ. In verse 14, He has broken down in His flesh. And in verse 16, He reconciled us to God in one body through the cross. It's so important to keep the centrality of our faith on the cross. If we believe what this book says, let's abandon all the useless hype and theaters and showmanship, and let's commit ourselves to the book and what the book says about the cross of Jesus. You sinners here today that have not come to the cross, you

pretenders here today that have yet to abandon the ways of the world, if it's not nailed to the cross, all your addictions and gossip and anger and bitterness and resentment and lust are not crucified. You're just playing a half-hearted religious game. Paul said in Galatians 2:20, *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.* And if yours is not a crucified Christianity, then it's no Christianity at all. You need something real, not some plastic self-help garbage. You need a divine love from a sovereign God to make things new.

The Cross of Christ Gives New Hope in Life

Let me show you where I get this. Remember the terrible things in verse 12 when Paul says, *remember that at that time you were 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.* But now in verse 14, there is something new. There are several things the cross of Christ does to give us new hope in life. Here is the first point, number one:

The Cross of Christ Gives Us A New Grasp On Nearness

Let me show you the word. It's in verse 13. *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.* The blood of Christ signifies the cross, so it's the cross that brings us near to God. Why nearness? Why that word? Why is nearness necessary? What brings us near to God? Why nearness? Why that word? Why is nearness necessary? In the Grand Canyon, Mack and I were in a two-man tent the first night. We came to a new understanding of the word *near*. On other nights, he slept out with the scorpions. What does the Bible say about God drawing near? James gives us the exhortation in James 4:8—*Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.* And we certainly believe that, but there are times when your mind is numb and your heart is cold. And you just don't feel like drawing near to anyone or anything. It's why I love the Psalms, especially Psalm 34. It was written when everything has gone wrong in David's life, to the point that he had lost all hope. And in Psalm 34:18, David says, *The LORD is near to the*

brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. He says again in Psalm 145:18, *The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.* That truth is Jesus Christ. The cross gives us a new grasp on the nearness of God. In Ephesians 2 it says, *Because of what Christ has done on the cross, all who place their faith in Christ are brought near to God.*

This means you were without Christ, but now you are in Christ. You were aliens, but now you are a holy nation. You were strangers, but now you are children. You had no hope, but now you are called in hope. You were without God, but now God is your Father.

There are two times—there are others, but there are two times—when God is especially near. The first is during tragedy and heartbreak. I already quoted Psalm 34:18, *The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.* Jesus quotes Isaiah when He says, “A bruised reed we will not break and a smoldering wick he will not quench.” Don’t waste the time of tragedy and heartbreak, that’s when the Lord is near.

The other may seem odd—that is in a time of temptation. There is a real sense of the Lord being near in the times we are tempted. When Cain was overcome with jealousy and anger, the Lord came to him and warned him that sin is crouching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it. Paul expresses this truth in 1 Corinthians 10:13: *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.* What a beautiful truth when temptation is at hand. God is there providing an alternative, a way out, so you can stand under pressure. The cross gives us a new grasp on nearness.

The Cross of Christ Gives Us A New Understanding of Peace

Notice what Paul says in verse 14: *For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.* It’s important to get this right. If you don’t, you will be looking for something else to make your life peaceful instead of Christ. If you don’t get this, you live for

the weekend. You dream of a time when you are not under so much pressure. You equate that with peace when Paul says, “He himself is our peace.” Isaiah 9:6 looks forward and calls Him the Prince of Peace. Isaiah 57:19 says, “Preaching peace to those who are far off and peace to those who are near.” Luke 2 says, “When Christ came to earth the angels say glory to God and peace on earth.” John 14:27 says, “The night before he died, Jesus told his followers, peace I leave you, and peace I give you.” After His resurrection, He came through locked doors and said, “Peace be with you.”

What do we do with all this peace? The first thing is to do away with the wrong idea of peace. Peace is not the absence of hardship. Before the crucifixion, Jesus told the disciples in John 16:33, *“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”*

A friend of mine, David Landrith, pastor of Long Hollow Baptist Church in Tennessee, has been used by God tremendously. He’s been battling cancer in his brain and lungs for a couple of years now. He recently received bad news, that the tumors continue to grow. I have been amazed, as I have watched from a distance, how he has continued to lead his congregation. He is the embodiment of Paul’s dictum: “To live is Christ and to die is gain.” The cross gives us a new grasp on nearness. The cross gives us a new understanding of peace. I’ll give you a third point, number three:

The Cross Gives Us A New Joy in Reconciliation

That’s really what is at the heart of all of this that Paul is saying here. In verse 14, he has made us both, Jew and Gentile, one. He has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility. Jews and Gentiles hated each other. Jews thought of the Gentiles as unclean and unworthy. Gentiles considered Jews pious and unfeeling. There was a division. But in verse 15, Paul tells us that, at the cross, Christ created one new man in the place of two, therefore making peace. Reconciliation is a rich term. It’s not just the idea of war ending, but it is the idea of turning from hostility to friendship.

Christ does this for us in two areas of our lives. He reconciles us to God by abolishing the law. He fulfilled the moral law and abolished the ceremonial law on the cross, and that brings us to God. He reconciles us to one another. The gospel is the greatest tool for racial reconciliation. The Jews and the Gentiles hated each other, but the gospel made them one new man.

Tony Evans illustrated this the best when he said, “Oil and water do not mix. We see this in any bottle of salad dressing where things have been settled and the oil and water are separated. In order to bring the oil and water back together, the bottle must be shaken. However, the togetherness doesn’t last. As soon as the bottle sits for a while, the ingredients segregate again and they go back to their own departments. They go back to their own separate bedrooms. They go back to their own sitting places. They go back to their own community. They go back because it’s intrinsic in their nature. They will not mix. Mayonnaise, on the other hand, doesn’t have to be shaken, even though it is also comprised of oil and water. That is because the mayonnaise contains an emulsifier. An emulsifier is that which brings things together. In mayonnaise, the egg brings together two entities that would not normally mix with one another. The egg infiltrates both so that they are able to come together and be a solid substance. The cross of Christ acts like an emulsifier to bring people together, even those who would not normally come together.”

The cross of Christ gives us a new grasp on nearness. The cross of Christ gives us a new understanding of peace. The cross gives us a new joy in reconciliation. Come to the cross of Jesus.

(Pastor prays)