

# EPHESIANS

GOD'S PLAN FOR GOD'S CHURCH REVEALED

SERMON TITLE: Peacemaking Grace

DATE: September 19, 2021

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 2:11-22

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The Book of Ephesians is a beautiful picture of the spiritual blessings we have in Christ and as members together in Jesus' Church. When he arrived, Jesus revealed what was once hidden from us throughout the ages through the power of the Holy Spirit. As a result, we're introduced to something new—a life in Christ where we find THE answer to the brokenness of this world. But what should this look like? How should we, in the power of the Holy Spirit, live this new life? Jesus' church is meant to be a source of wholeness and life amidst a world of brokenness and death. What does this entail? What does it mean practically? In this letter to the Ephesians, Paul explains the mystery of the church and gives us practical insight into living as believers who have been raised from death to life by faith in Christ.

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I'm always encouraged each and every Sunday as I see the Church coming together to worship Jesus. There are so many differences amongst us, but there is a common unity in Jesus Christ.

Many of us have become discouraged over the past 17-18 months, in particular, at the realization that the one thing that unites us, Jesus, has seemingly taken a back seat to the 100's of differences. And it's not even that differences are wrong; it's just that we often put them in the wrong place of importance, and at times we don't examine our heart, attitude, and mindset underneath our differences. And when that happens, we don't look around and see what we have in common in Jesus Christ as brothers and sisters in Christ—we primarily see the differences. And in the midst of the Church that should have Jesus in the center in his rightful place has grown preferred differences in the center with Jesus tacked on to make your differences seem better than other people's differences, and underneath the difference is an attitude of I'm right, and you are wrong. And if I'm right, then I'm better. And if I'm better, then obviously God's with me and my preferred difference. Differences aren't wrong, but if underneath the difference is pride, selfishness, self-righteousness... God loves me and my differences more... then we're not extending the grace available to us through Jesus to others, and when we aren't extending grace, we won't fully experience the peace that is ours as a Church through Jesus.

Every time Paul took out his pen to write a letter, he either began or ended that letter with some form of that statement...Grace and Peace. I think Paul knew that grace comes before peace because an unhindered relationship or a peaceful relationship depends upon and thrives upon grace—unmerited favor. Graceful People are Peaceful People. As Paul writes to the Church at Ephesus, the Jews and Gentiles hated each other. There was a sinful pride and arrogance and bigotry and self-righteousness that was at the root of all the hostility. When you peeled back the onion that is "differences,"...you found I'm better than you...you are below me...I'm worth more than you. And hostility was the result.

But Paul wants to remind them of God's miraculous intervention that has given the Jew and Gentile alike a new nationhood. They are God's people. He has given them a new bloodline, the bloodline of Jesus, thus making them one new family. He has made them a new building—indeed more, a temple in which God himself lives! He has killed the hostility. By the blood of Jesus, there is no more "I'm better than you." Grace not only connects us to Christ, which we saw last week in the first ten verses of chapter 2, but grace also connects us to one another. Grace & Peace. And this grace and peace was so costly.

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 of 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. Through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, all division and hostility have been killed. Because of his grace, we can know the Prince of Peace, and we can extend peace.

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Community Group Questions:

- Read Ephesians 2:11-22...
- If you have not taken time as a group to have everyone share how they came to Jesus, today would be a great time to do so.
- In what ways do pride and self-righteousness often sit underneath our "differences"?
- In what ways are you practically proclaiming, to your circle of influence, a gospel of peace with your life?
- Are there any areas of your life where you are not extending grace and peace as someone who has received the grace and peace of Jesus?

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Discussion Starters —

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