

**Victory of the Lamb October 31, and Nov 1, 2020 United: In Jesus We Trust**  
**Ephesians 2:11-23 Unity of Humanity Pastor Bill Limmer**

Old Glory. Thirteen stripes. Some red. Some white. Representing thirteen different colonies joined as one. Fifty white stars on a deep blue background. Representing 50 states united. To be sure we have had chinks in the armor from the beginning but I don't think since the days of the Civil War has there been as much division and separation as right now. (Collectively, we can't even come to a conclusion on singing the national anthem.)

Today we are continuing our series based on the book of the Bible called Ephesians. The series is - United: In Jesus We Trust. And we are going to look at the question: **"What does Jesus, and only Jesus, make possible?"** Let's dive into Ephesians chapter 2 and see all the things that were just waiting to separate the people.

**Ephesians 2:11-13 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)—<sup>12</sup> remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.** This community church, humanly speaking had all the ingredients to implode. The divide between Jews and Gentiles was not small or simple or shallow. It was huge and complex and deep.

It was, first, **religious**. The Jews had a long history of worshiping the true God but got sidetracked in work righteousness and the Gentiles had an equally long history of trying to appease multiple gods and now they are coming together to worship Jesus who did all the work for them.

The divide was also **cultural** with lots of customs, expectations, practices and traditions of the way things were supposed to be that were totally different.

The divide was **racial** with a bloodline for some going back to Abraham, and for some whose bloodline didn't go back to Abraham. The bricks for a wall of separation were all there and just as big or bigger than any divide that we face today between black and white, republican or democrat or other, male or female, the haves or the have nots, immigrants and native born, and yet they were one. How did that happen? We'll find out.

What are some of the walls of separation that separate you from others? Nationally there are Political Parties, Black Lives Matter, Blue Lives Matter, Racism, Pro-Choice, Pro-Life, LGBTQ, Masks, No Masks, In Person Learning, Virtual Learning. Relationally there are walls of separation that we have with our co-workers in the office. In the home with our spouse, our children. There are walls even in the back seat of our cars when our own sweet children draw an imaginary line between their car seats and spit out the venomous words, "Don't cross that line! Mom, she's touching me! He is looking at me."

In addition to these national and relational walls, we have built up inner walls too. A wall made up of bricks like sin, guilt, insecurity, regret, shame, self-righteousness. The cause of all these walls whether it is national, relational, or personal is sin.

You see, the issue of snubbing, suspicion, and mistreatment people of other religions, is not a religious issue, it is a sin issue. The issue of snubbing, suspicion, and mistreatment of other political parties, is not

a political issue, it is a sin issue. The issue of snubbing, suspicion, and mistreatment different ethnicities, is not an ethnicity issue, it is a sin issue. The issue of self—righteousness, snubbing, suspicion, and mistreatment because people are “less” than you, is a sin of self-righteous issue. And the sin issue transcends human relationships. Isaiah 59:2 confronts: **your iniquities have separated you from your God;** So the separating wall of animosity is not just between people and people but between each individual and God.

We are all amazing brick laying masons when it comes to building walls. Romans 3:20 **All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.** Humanly speaking the wall is up. And there is no human way to knock down the wall down. We can come up with legislation to give an appearance that wall is down but the evil that is inside the human heart is always looking for an edge, a way to separate itself from others. When we think we are above the fray, we show ourselves to be foundational bricks in holding the wall together.

Humanly speaking, we are hopelessly separated from deep relationship with God and with one another. And if weren't for Jesus I could walk off this stage right now and you would have the truth. But because of Jesus we can have deep relationship with God and with one another. And here is how we know.

Ephesians 2:13-18 **But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.** <sup>14</sup> **For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,** <sup>15</sup> **by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace,** <sup>16</sup> **and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.** <sup>17</sup> **He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.** <sup>18</sup> **For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.**

Christ's cross put an end to the Old Testament civil and ceremonial laws, and so removed the dividing wall of hostility between Jews and the Gentiles. But the real problem was not between Jew and Gentile, but between both groups and God. Just like the real problem is not between Republican and Democrats but between both groups and God. The real problem isn't between ethnicities but the problem every ethnicity has with God. The problem isn't between a rebellious life and a self-righteous life, it is an issue between both groups and God. The biggest wall of hostility in the universe is the wall built between us and God. If anyone had the right to be hostile toward us it would be God. We sinned against him. He didn't sin against us. But God's great in his great unconditional and love for us he knocked down the wall.

Romans 5:8 **But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** The cross of Jesus took away sin and removed the wall between sinful mankind and God. This is the good news of Jesus Christ. Jesus is not an ideology or philosophy. He is a person. A person who invites weary, burdened, broken, guilty, failing people to find love and forgiveness and grace and mercy and rest. The cross of Jesus brings us salvation instead of separation, unity instead of animosity, peace instead of payback. **Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,** <sup>2</sup> **because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.** <sup>3</sup> **For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering.** The wall is gone. **So what does Jesus only Jesus make possible? A.) Unity and peace with God.**

- **No Jesus, No Unity. Know Jesus, Know Unity.**
- **No Jesus No Peace. Know Jesus Know Peace.**

This is great news. Having unity and peace with God transforms our relationship with God and can transform our relationships with others as well. With all our bricks laying down on the ground we can see what Jesus has done not only for us but for all people. Ephesians 2:19-23 **Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household,** <sup>20</sup> **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.** <sup>21</sup> **In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.** <sup>22</sup> **And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.** Having unity and peace with God, and with Jesus living in us, we are free and brave to remove all the bricks that get in the way of our relationship with others.

Remember how Jesus demonstrated his unity is to reach all people? Here are a couple of examples of what it looked like in practical way in Jesus life. Jesus went to the Samaritan woman, different by religion, race, culture, politics, and Jesus offered her his very best living water for parched soul. Jesus called Zacchaeus who was different not only in looks but in lifestyle and offered him eternal hospitality.

Jesus, the guy who knocked down the wall separating us from God has knocked down the wall that separates us from others says, Luke 6:35 **love your enemies, do good to them,** So who is the other side of you? Is the separating wall there because someone trashed you on social media, supports a different political party than you do, maybe it is a family member who has a different belief system? Is the separating wall there because of your pride, jealousy, arrogance, self-righteousness? Is someone getting in the way of your career, comfort, convenience, finances, pleasure or recognition? What is the separating wall? I know many of you have a wounded soul. You are so tempted to dehumanize or demonize another sinful person in need of God's grace. You have hurtful things that you want to cling to and not let go. But you don't find healing by holding on to the hurt. Know there are things that only the grace and mercy of Jesus can take down. He took them down. So you can let it go. **What does Jesus, and only Jesus, make possible? A. 1. Unity and peace with God and 2. Unity and peace with other sinful people.**

The point is that God aims to create one new people in Christ who are reconciled to each other across all lines whether that is national, political, cultural, or racial or you name it. No strangers. No aliens. No enmity. No one far off. Nobody on the other side but people filled with God's love. let's live like our lives and the lives of others depend on the cross of Christ because it does.

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Here is what you can do starting right now. If you are in a Life Group you can have accountability and be an encouragement to others as well. Here is: Drop the brick called sin and pick up the mercy and grace of Jesus cross. Here is one way to do it: Name the specific sin that is causing separation. Ask God to help you drop it, knowing that Jesus has already knocked it down. And then repeat one sin brick at a time and the walls will come tumbling down. And then when we are in unity and peace with one another, instead of tearing each down we can build each other up. It is all possible only through the grace of Jesus.