



EPHESIANS

Six sermon outlines to
lead a church through life
in God's diverse family.

Based on Derwin Gray's
video Bible study
Ephesians.



A REVOLUTIONARY IDEA

I. Introduction

The apostle Paul visited Ephesus in a second missionary journey. It was a city that was filled with idolatry, there were temples to various Roman gods all over the place. And there's the apostle Paul planting the flag of Jesus' cross declaring that the God that so loves the world has come in the person of Jesus Christ. He came not only to forgive sins, but to create this new family. A new family that lives in the grace and mercy of God to show the world what love and life with God looks like.

Paul helped build these brand new upstart multiethnic churches. The problem was that Jews and Gentiles were having a difficult time getting along, which is very understandable when you look at the history of Jewish people and Gentile people in the first century. For 400 years, the Jewish people were slaves in Egypt through Gentiles. The Canaanites, Hittites, Jebusites, and Perizzites were Gentiles. They tried to destroy the Jewish people.

When the Jewish people did get to the Promised Land, because of their disobedience, the Babylonians, another Gentile power, carried them into captivity. In the promised land and throughout the Greco-Roman world, the Roman power structure suppressed and oppressed the Jewish people. The Gentiles knew that a Jewish attitude for the most part towards them was, "You're immoral. You're unclean. Therefore, we can't even be around you."

Resurrection power was required for Jews to love those who had mistreated them so badly. What the gospel did was break down those demonic powers and began to build up the Jews and the Gentiles into people of God who loved each other for the glory of God.

II. Teaching

A. In AD 58, the apostle Paul was under Roman Imprisonment. But what was he doing? One of the things that he was doing was penning a letter. Scholars call it a circular letter, because it was written to various churches in what we know as Ephesus or modern-day Turkey. And he was writing specifically to the young impressionable Jesus communities called Ecclesias or churches. And what was unique about these churches was they were unparalleled in the first century, Second Temple Jewish world that was occupied by Greco-Roman supremacy and these young churches were multiethnic.

They were trans-cultural. They had Jews in them, and they had Gentiles. By the way, a Gentile is everybody else except for Jews. Now they would have known that the apostle Paul had this thing about getting in trouble. And so they would have figured that he probably was in prison. Because we know from Acts chapter 21, 28, and 29, that he had been arrested for bringing a Ghonim, a Gentile, into the Jewish Temple. The apostle Paul could not help himself. He was always getting in trouble.

B. In the first century, in Paul's world, it was even more racially divided than our 21st century. Let's never forget that racism misses God's mark, God's goal, the word sin means to miss the mark. God's goal is for humanity to love each other as expressed through the person of Jesus Christ. It is a sacrificial love. It is a giving love. It is an affirming love. It is an inclusive love. It's a love that looks like the cross. It's a love that looks like the empty tomb.

And so the apostle Paul, in this racially divided world, gave his life for a revolutionary idea. The precious blood of Jesus not only forgives sins, but creates a family with different colored skins. And this family is a family of oneness. Because God creates this new multiethnic family, we are blessed.

C. Ephesians 1:1-6: "Blessed is the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ who's blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ." If you're in Christ, you are blessed in Christ. Well, what is the blessing? Paul tells us, "For he chose us in him before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight." Let's pause here. In the first century, Second Temple Jewish world of Jesus and Paul, the idea of chosenness or election meant this: you are chosen for a purpose and a task, and the way you get into that chosenness is by faith.

Jesus recapitulates or rewrites the story of Israel. Luke 9:35 says that Jesus is the chosen one or elect one before the foundations of the world. God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus himself chose that the humanity of Jesus would be the person that is set apart and chosen to redeem the world and give God his family. And so through faith in Christ, we become a part of his chosenness and what's true of Jesus is now true of us. Everything that's true of Jesus is now true of us. It's called grace. And grace creates this new race that is blessed in Christ.

The father chose us to be holy and blameless. Holy means to be set apart. We belong to him now. His agenda is ours. His redemptive purpose is ours. His life is ours. And the word blameless means this, Jesus has eradicated and erased all of our sin. We are blameless because of the blood of Christ. And he does this in love before him. The motivation is love. Our Abba loves us. He predestined us to be adopted as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ for himself. God has adopted us through Christ according to the good pleasure of his will to the praise of his glorious grace that he lavished on us in the beloved one.

We praise him because God says you are in my son, I have adopted you. You didn't earn it. You didn't achieve it. It's a gift that only you can receive. It's not by your worth, it's because of your new birth into the family of God. How does God do this? How does he make enemies into family? It's because the son redeems us with his blood.

D. Ephesians 1:7-10: We have redemption through his blood. The word redemption means to buy back, to set free. It comes out of the exodus—it comes out of the Exodus story. The story where God sets Israel free because of the blood on the door. Well the blood is no longer on a door, the blood is on you and Jesus has redeemed you. Jesus has set you free from what? He has set you free from sin so you could become a part of his new trans-cultural, multiethnic family.

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.” (Eph. 1:7-10)

What Paul is talking about is the beauty and the supremacy of Jesus. That through his redemptive work that even creation one day will be healed in a new heaven and new earth. The power of Jesus’ blood is immense. It is healing and transformative and all things will become new one day.

E. Ephesians 1:11-14: In him, in Christ, we have also received an inheritance. Because we were predestined according to the plan of the one who works out everything in agreement with the purpose of his will. Let me tell you really, really quick. God, isn’t worried, you don’t need to worry. There’s never been a moment that God did not know your situation or your circumstance. He knows it. He’s already planned for it. And God’s greatest purpose for predestining us is this: You’re predestined in Christ to be conformed to the image of Christ. Predestined simply means this, to prepare beforehand. So everyone who has faith in Christ, God has decided beforehand that we can walk in holiness, that we can walk in blamelessness. God is more concerned about our character than our comfort.

Our hope is in Christ and we bring praise to his glory. Let's look at Ephesians 1:13-14, "In him, you also were sealed with the promise of the Holy Spirit. When you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. And when you believed the Holy Spirit is the down payment of our inheritance until redemption of the possession to the praise of his glory."

Jesus is the elect one. And when we exercise faith in Christ, we are in him. And then the Holy Spirit, seals us for all eternity in Christ. Everything that's true about Jesus is true about us. And it's not just so that our little lives can get better, it's so that we can be the trans-cultural, multiethnic family of God that has been predestined to walk in holiness and blamelessness and love.

Paul is telling the young multiethnic churches of Ephesus who are dealing with all types of racism and then their own personal sin and all types of oppression and in a crazy chaotic world, just like us, "Keep your eyes on the cross. In the midst of the chaos, look at the cross. In the midst of the fog, look at the cross. In the midst of uncertainty know for certain that he walked up out of that tomb." Never forget this, Jesus borrowed Joseph of Arimathea's tomb because he was not planning on staying there. Three days and he was out.

III. Application

Why did he come out? So he can come in to your life. Check this out, Ephesians 1:15. "This is why since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus, and your love for all the saints . . ." Saints means holy ones. God's people are called holy ones because we are in Christ and Christ is holy. He is set apart for God's purposes and so are we. Christ has no sin, we're seen as though we have no sin. That's why Paul says we are blameless. I know it's not fair. That's why it's called grace. We don't want fair, we want grace. Verse 16, "I never stopped giving thanks for you. As I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious father, would give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him."

Verses 18-23, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of his calling. What is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints. And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe according to the mighty working of his strength. He exercises his power in Christ by raising him from the dead and seating him at the right hand in the heavens. Far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given. Not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And he subjected everything under his feet and appointed him as head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way."

So the Jesus who rose from the dead, lives in Jews and Gentiles. The Jesus who rose from the dead now lives in Latinos and African-Americans and white people and people who are black and white at the same time, and Asian and rich people and poor people and male and females. This Jesus who rose from the dead lives in us. The father chose us in Christ. The son redeems us by his blood. The Holy Spirit seals us with his power and the resurrection power of the Spirit lives in us to do what?

To be Holy and blameless in love. To love each other and to show the world what love and life looks like as God's new race of grace called the church. So what is our soul tattoo? What is it that we grab from this message? It's this, we are the family God promised Abraham. We are chosen in Christ, redeemed in Christ and sealed by the Spirit, so we can fill the earth with the supremacy of Christ.



A NEW RACE OF GRACE

I. Introduction

Jesus is our Redeemer. We are blood-bought. His blood breaks the chains of sin and this incredible tyrant called death. The Holy spirit seals us into God's family and now we have a family of brothers and sisters of all ethnicities, of all cultures. This new multiethnic race of grace is alive in Christ.

Ephesians 2:1 says, "And you..."—when Paul uses the term you, he's speaking in what's called the second person plural. So, it doesn't mean you individually, it means you corporately and collectively, he's talking to all of us— "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you previously walked according to the ways of the world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient."

So let's go all the way back to the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were created in the image of God. They were to be priests before God, and their role was to make babies and to multiply throughout the earth, spreading God's glory so that the whole earth would be filled with his glory. What was happening in God's domain would happen in man's domain. And so Adam and Eve were to be co-heirs and co-rulers with God.

Now, the problem with being made in the image and likeness of God is we like to be God. And so when Adam and Eve had a choice between the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life, they chose the tree of knowledge of good and evil because the dark powers influenced them. And in essence, the influence always starts with this. Did God really say? Because once you doubt the faithfulness of God, the goodness of God, you think God is holding out on you. And here's what's beautiful. God is life, and all other life owes their life to him.

And so God is good, even when we don't feel it, even when we don't see it. Goodness is intrinsic to God's very nature. But the dark demonic powers get Adam and Eve to doubt God's goodness. And so when Adam and Eve choose the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, spiritual death invades humanity. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, become spiritually dead. And since that moment, every other human and being has been born spiritually dead.

In other words, we have been born in a hearse on our way to the cemetery, and we need to be revived. We need a new life. So, Jesus comes to reverse the curse. Theologians call this regeneration. We literally go from spiritual death to spiritual life. Never forget this: Jesus did not come to make bad people good. He came to make dead people alive. God, who is merciful, says, "I'm going to make you alive through the one who was resurrection life himself."

II. Teaching

A. Ephesians 2:3 says, "We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and our thoughts. And we were by nature children under wrath, as others were also." As followers of Christ, we should be the most humble people on the face of the earth, and here's why. Because we remember the tomb that Jesus pulled us out of. The only time we should ever look down on another human being is because we're extending a hand to lift them up. Because at the foot of the cross, all of us are spiritually dead and in need of resurrection, regeneration life. So our problem is not that we're bad, our problem is that we are dead.

Derwin Gray shares a personal story: "In 1996 when I played for the Colts, I had what's called the Derwin Gray Foundation, and my wife and I would provide football tickets for poor and at-risk youth. And there was a big old banner in the old RCA Dome, where the Indianapolis Colts used to play. And it said The Gray Zone."

And I would look up at that Gray Zone and I would go, 'Man, I am such a good person. Look at how I'm helping all these poor kids.' Now, what I did was good, but the motivation of what I did was not good. The only good motivation is God, not my will be done, but thy will be done. The only good motivation is a motivation that springs out of God's love for us. So even the good thing I did was infected by the deadness of my soul. I needed to be reborn. I needed to be made alive. All of us need to be made alive."

B. Ephesians 2:4 says, "But God," and whenever you see 'but' in the Bible, something big is about to happen. "But God." Some of the greatest words we could ever say are: "But God, who is rich in mercy." God doesn't run out of mercy. God is infinite. That means that you and I can draw on his account of mercy and it never runs dry. Mercy is God saying, "I see your need. You don't deserve it, but I'm going to be merciful." Mercy is God saying, "I'm coming, even though you're running." Mercy is God saying, "I'm meeting your greatest need for life."

And it continues. "But God, who is rich in mercy..."—Why would he offer us mercy?—"...because of his great love that he had for us." Simply put, that's his motivation, his great love for us. Our Abba, God the Father in Christ through the Spirit, his motivation is "I love you." And what's beautiful about God's kind of love is he says you don't have to clean yourself up because you can't. Only my blood is the holy cleanser that can make you clean. You don't have to fix yourself. You can't. My Son is the only carpenter that fixes broken hearts. God loves us. And what did he do? Made us alive with Christ. There's this theological doctrine called union with Christ. Because we're in Christ, we are alive with Christ.

When we were born the first time, we came through our mother's womb. When we're born the second time, we come from a womb called Jesus's tomb. The tomb of death is transformed into a womb of life by Jesus. And when he walked out of that tomb, supernaturally, we walked out with him. You are regenerated. You are alive with the very life of Christ.

Verse 4 continues, "Even though we were dead in our trespasses, you are saved by grace." You see, grace creates this new race. Grace means that God rescues us simply because of God. The only part we played was to have faith, and even our faith is a response to God's grace reaching out to us and calling our name. We were stuck in a tomb and Jesus said, "Get up." Jesus said, "Come out," and Jesus extended his nail-pierced hands to you and extended his nail-pierced hands to me, and he brought us out of that tomb. We're saved by grace.

The word saved, the way it's written there in the Greek language, it's a continual saving. It's an unending saving. It's an always saving and rescuing. In other words, God's love does not run out on us. God's love does not forsake us. God's love does not abandon us. God's love does not leave us. It's a love that keeps on saving by grace.

C. The new multiethnic race of grace is characterized by humility in Christ. Paul is teaching this new family how to get along and there's bad blood from the past, there's racism, there's all types of junk, and the way we get along, the way we love, is by humility. God's new multiethnic race of grace is characterized by humility in Christ. Where do we get this from? Ephesians 2:8-9. "For you are saved by grace through faith. And this is not from yourselves. It is God's gift, not from works, so that no one can boast."

So what's happening here? For the Gentiles who came to Jesus by faith, what he's saying is remember the false gods that you used to follow? They were so demanding, and they asked and asked and you had to perform and perform. You had to sacrifice, you had to do all these things, and they may be pleased with you. In other words, they were on the performance trap. Am I good enough? Have I done enough? And Jesus is saying, "Listen, I did it all. It's called grace. You don't have to perform for my love because it'll never be good enough.

I stepped on the dance stage of life and I dance to the rhythm of God's grace, and I invited you to the ball. I paid the price of admission, not with a cryptocurrency, not with diamonds or pearls, but with my blood. It's by grace you're a part of this family. It's by grace that you take on a family resemblance."

What was God's grace? It was Jesus living a sinless life for 33 years. It was Jesus dying an atoning death on the cross to forgive our sins to break the power of sin, death, and evil. It was Jesus raising from the dead and the sending of the Holy Spirit. It is grace. So God's people now boast in Jesus and Jesus alone. It's a new race of grace, and our boast is in Christ and Christ alone.

D. This new race of grace is characterized by living in his story, God's story. God has an amazing story, and this is so important. If you and I don't understand God's story, we're going to try to get God to fit into our story. And that's one of the big problems in American Christianity that leads to frustration and a lack of discipleship, God does not meet our expectations. And here's the thing, God never told you that his goal was to meet your expectations or my expectations. The goal has always been that by faith, he sweeps us up into his long story.

And what is his story? The apostle Paul in essence tells us in Ephesians 2:10-12. After this incredible symphony of grace, Jews and Gentiles both now are the people of grace, this new race. He says this. "For we are his workmanship." That's the word *poiema*, poem or artwork. So regardless of your ethnicity, gender, or class, in Christ, you are a paintbrush, and the world becomes a canvas for God to display the beauty of his kingdom through you. And that's when you find fulfillment. Matthew 5:6, "Blessed or happy are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." Being filled means "God, my life is yours, create beauty through me." And the most beautiful thing that you can create is to love God and to love your neighbor as you love yourself.

Ephesians 2:12 says this. "At that time, you were without Christ, excluded from the citizenship of Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of promise."

Jesus comes and through his sinless life, his atoning death on the cross, his resurrection and the sending of the Spirit, Jesus is saying, "My daddy is faithful to keep his promise." So our unity is beauty because it displays that Jesus kept his Father's promise.

III. Application

Verse 12 goes on. It says, "Without hope and without God in the world." Can you imagine living without hope? We don't have to imagine it, because God has given us every spiritual blessing in Christ. He loves us and died on a cross so through his grace we can love each other. And as we love each other across demonic barriers of ethnicity, of class, of male or female, we love each other like this supernatural family. That gives hope to the world. The world is like a little kid at a candy store. They're looking into the candy store and they go, "Wow, look at all the candy."

Well, when the world looks in on God's people loving each other across these barriers, across these boundaries, the world gets hopeful and they ask us, "How do you love this way? How do you live this way? How do you have hope?" And you know what we do? We tell them that hope has a name, and his name is Jesus. And he's the one who has redeemed us so that we could be part of this new race of grace called the church.

Our soul tattoo is this. God creates a new race called the church. The church is not a building, the church is a people. The church is the family that God promised Abraham and his family. It has black people in it and white people in it and Asian people in it and Latino people in it, and all kinds of people in it. And all these people, this beautiful mosaic, are in Christ. And all that's true about Christ is true about them.

Based on Derwin Gray's
video Bible study
*Ephesians: Life in God's
Diverse Family.*



A FAMILY OF PEACE

I. Introduction

We are exploring the mind of God for His community through this former antagonist to the church, the apostle Paul. The apostle Paul was a man that was committed to his version of pharisaical Judaism so much so that he actually persecuted the church. He even admits that he ravaged the church, but then he met Jesus and Jesus did not ravage him. Jesus knocked him off of a horse, which is symbolic of his pride, put him on his gluteus maximus, met him with grace, and transformed his life. The apostle Paul went from a theological racist to a gracist. And now he's trying to help the churches in Ephesus, which is modern day Turkey.

These transcultural, social, economically diverse churches and people bringing in all of their stuff. Can you imagine? You had the Gentiles who came into Jesus's family with the background of idol worship, sexual immorality, all types of things. Then you had the Jewish people as well and in the midst of that chaos, like a rose blossoming, the cross of Christ teaches them how to love each other.

II. Teaching

We're going to look at Ephesians Chapter 2:14-22. First, I want to speak to those of you who are new to the faith or exploring the faith. I want you to know God is patient with you. I remember the first time that I heard the name Ephesians, someone asked me had I ever read Ephesians? I had no clue that Ephesians was actually a letter or a book that Paul wrote to help Christians live out this new familiness that we have in Christ. So remember, God is patient. He loves you and He's going to teach you. Just sit at His feet and learn.

So let's dive in to it. This new race of grace is characterized by living in and sharing the peace of Christ. The first century Greco-Roman world was a chaotic world, just like our world. In recent times, in the United States of America and the world, we've had a global pandemic, we've had racial unrest, we've had riots, we've had all types of things. Well, this wasn't anything new to Jesus or his church, because the same thing was happening in Rome.

As a matter of fact, one of Jesus's disciples was a riot starter. He was a zealot, right? And you had people like Matthew who worked for the government and you had zealots who were trying to take down the Roman government. There was diversity in the group, yet God moved all that aside, brought peace, and He created this family.

A. God is still wanting to bring peace to earth. He leaves us here as Christians to bring the peace of heaven to earth. But it's peace in relationships. Paul says this, and here comes one of these big buts again. "But now," here's the word again, "in Christ." How exciting! You are in Christ. You cannot be lodged away from Christ. You cannot be stolen from Christ. You are gripped in His nail-pierced hands. His blood has forever glued you to Him. That is good news. Whether you're black, whether you're white, whether you're male, whether you're female, whether you're Asian, whatever your political affiliation is, your Christness is what's most important about you.

B. "But in Christ Jesus, you who are far away," in the Old Testament far away means Gentiles. "Those of you who are far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ." There it is. We've been brought near by the blood of Christ. Near to what? Near to God the Father's heart. You've been brought near to your daddy's heart. You've been brought near to his family.

In the ancient days, the work of Jesus tore down the demonic dividing walls that kept people from each other and from relationships. Specifically, the Jewish people would have known that Paul was talking about the dividing wall in the temple. You had the outer courts where Gentiles and women could be, but the inner court had a sign that said this, "If you are a Gentile and you pass this barrier, you can be executed." You could be killed. Why? Because that was a barrier that separated Jews from Gentiles.

Paul is saying that on the cross, Jesus presented a new way to be human. He presented a way that says, "I am your peace." Peace is not something we have to work for, peace with each other is a gift that God gives us. And He's saying, "I have given you a gift that keeps on giving. Why don't you live in it? Why don't you receive it?"

C. Jesus took Jews and Gentiles and made them into a new humanity. The ancient church father said the Christians were a third race—Jew, Gentile, and now the race of resurrection includes both Jews and Gentiles. God takes the two, He makes them one. Now think about it, think about what the dark demonic powers have done, our ego and our selfishness. Within Christianity, there have been so many problems with racism and prejudice, and here's the thing, God has given us the peace. It's like having a trillion dollars in a bank account and we don't access it. It just sits there.

We have the peace and we've been created into this new humanity. We are a new race of grace and peace marks us. He did this so that we might reconcile both groups to God in one body. How did he do it? Through the cross by which He put the hostility to death. Family, our cross has been too small. If you believe in a cross that only sends you to heaven when you die but doesn't bring the peace between people on earth, that is a cross that is not worthy of the one that Jesus Himself carried. He carried a cross to the Jerusalem garbage dump to destroy sin, to destroy death, to usher in peace so that we could love each other.

He came and proclaimed the good news of peace to those of you who were far away, Gentiles, and peace to those of you who were near, Jews. For through Him, we both have access in one spirit to the father. In Christ, Abba, God the Father has no favorites. Let me say it again. Abba has no favorites. Whether you're black or white or Asian, Latino, male, female, rich, poor, middle-class. Abba has no favorites. You know why? Because we are all His favorites. You know why? Because all of us are in Christ. I am my brother's keeper. I am my sister's keeper. Why? Because we are kept in Christ. So therefore we treat each other like we are in Christ.

D. Matthew 5:9 says this, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons and daughters of God." One of the characteristics of belonging to God is we desire to make peace across the demonic boundaries that separate us. I often think that dark powers are okay with us believing the gospel sends us to heaven but does not unleash us to be peacemakers on earth. Family, you and I are the answer to so many prayers. Jesus, the Prince of Peace has left us here to be peacemakers.

God and Christ made peace with us through the cross. That is our fundamental starting place. Treat everyone like Jesus died for them. The immigrant? Jesus died for them. Whatever ethnic group you may have issues with? Jesus died for them. Treat everybody like Jesus died for them. We start there.

Love laments how we rebuild walls that Jesus tore down. While doing his doctoral research, Derwin Gray came across this quote from historians Thomas Kidd and Barry Hankins in a book called *Baptists in America, A History*. "Typical white Baptists in the South viewed civil rights as at best irrelevant to Christian faith and at worst a threat to their culture." Now that's some strong medicine, but I need you to drink it. It's kind of like your grandma when you were sick, she'd give you some medicine. You didn't know what it was, but she was like, "Baby, just trust me. You're going to be all right." I need you to drink that strong medicine. Here's why. Injustice anywhere is injustice everywhere. And if your brothers and sisters have injustice or oppression going up against them, then God calls us to enter into the fray with them. The weapons we use are faith and hope and love.

And so we lament how we have not engaged those who are hurting. One example, I lament for my Native American brothers and sisters who live on reservations where mental health and suicide and addiction is running rampant. When I learned to lament what breaks God's heart, then I learned to lament what broke their heart. I was learning to become more human because I was learning to love. Growing in our capacity to care for people and to care for things that don't affect us means that we are growing in Christ's likeness because sin did not affect Jesus, death did not affect Jesus. Yet Jesus came, lived, and died and rose again for something that did not affect Him because it was affecting us and his Abba loved them so He was motivated to action. And that's the same for us. We give away what He gave to us.

Peacemaking is about love and love labors for reconciliation and racial justice. Love says, "How do I embody the justice?" What does justice mean? Justice means this, I want people to be treated the way I am and when they're not, I want to step in the gap and be the presence of Christ to heal a hurt, to right a wrong, to capture a tear in a bottle, to be the Prince of Peace in bodily form as the Holy Spirit lives through us. And so love labors for reconciliation and racial justice.

III. Application

Is your life multiethnic? People who are different matter. We all matter to God. And if we all matter to God, everyone should matter to us.

Love labors for reconciliation and racial justice. That's why the apostle Paul was writing this letter to Ephesians from prison. It was because he was bringing Gentiles into the temple. He was telling his Jewish brothers and sisters the good news that all of us are welcome at God's table. It's a table that He promised for the children of Abraham. And what makes us God's people is we are all the same color, the color red. Now, what that means is this, that the blood of Christ redeemed us to put us in the family of Christ and we don't become color blind, we actually become color blessed. Your culture, my culture, your difference, my difference make us different and better for the glory of God.

Love leverages our lives as ambassadors of reconciliation. Second Corinthians 5:18 says that God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. You and I are the healing to this hurting world as it pertains to injustice, ethnic and class division. Dark powers love disunity, the blood of Jesus brings unity.

This new race of grace is characterized by worship. Ephesians 2:19-22 says, "So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone. In Him, the whole building being put together grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him, you're also being built together for God's dwelling in the spirit."

For a first century Jewish person and also for a Gentile who became a follower of Christ, the temple was where heaven and earth would meet. Now the apostle Paul is saying the good news is that through Christ, through His bloody cross, through the resurrection we become God's dwelling, and our unity and our love for each other and for Him is an act of worship. Worship is not just singing songs. Worship is living a life of love. So family, here's our soul tattoo. This new race of grace is characterized by peace. We experience ethnic unity as the church becomes peacemakers in the church and in the world.



SERVANTS OF THE GOSPEL

I. Introduction

In this message, we're going to look at Ephesians 3:1-21. This new race of grace is a servant to the King Jesus gospel. Derwin Gray shares this illustration, "In my former life, I did this sport called football. Growing up in the state of Texas, that's just kind of what you do is you play football at the age of 13. Football for me became not just a game, it became a way out of the environment that I was in. I wasn't a Christian and every heart is going to worship something. So I worshiped football and football served me well for a while. It got me a football scholarship, it got me to the national football league. And when I made it to the NFL, one of my roles as the team captain was to sacrifice myself for the good of the team. Now you don't need to know the details but just know this, there's this thing called kickoff return where the other team kicks you the ball, you get it and you run it.

The position that people look at most of the time is the position where you run the ball. That's where the glory is. In the words of Nacho Libre, "To taste the glory," that's where it's at. So my job was not the glory position, my job was to sprint back 25 yards full speed. And while I'm running looking backwards, there's a big angry man about 250 pounds that is running at me to run through me, to knock my soul out of my body so that he can get the ball carrier. So my job run, turn around, stand still and block him while he's running full speed. And here's what's crazy, I actually looked forward to sacrificing myself for the good of the team. And there would be times where I'd get hit and I'd block. He'd drive me back and I'd hold him up then all of a sudden, the guy with the ball, the glory position would come and just run me over.

And afterwards, I would jump up and slap him on the gluteus maximus and go, 'Great job.' Now I look at that and go, 'Oh my goodness, I was out of my everlasting mind.'" What's the point here? Just as this new grace of race is a servant to King Jesus, we serve each other because of the gospel. We lay ourselves on the line for the glory of God, the good of our brothers and sisters. Just as Jesus sacrificed by His grace, I become a sacrifice. And when you lay down your life for your brother or your sister, regardless of ethnicity, regardless of male, female, regardless of class, there's a supernatural beauty in that.

II. Teaching

Ephesians 3:1-8: Paul says this, "For this reason, I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles," Paul is in prison under Roman authority, but he doesn't say I'm in prison under Roman authority. He says, "I am a prisoner of Christ Jesus." Never forget this, you and I will never, ever be more free than when we are prisoners of Christ Jesus because the truth will set you free. And He is the way, the truth and the life. He says, "Assuming you've heard about the administration of God's grace, that He gave me for you. The mystery that was made known to me by revelation, as I have briefly written." Verse four, "By reading this, you are able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ." What's the mystery of Christ? Here it is. "This was not made known to people in other generations, as it is now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. The Gentiles are co-heirs, members of the same body and partners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel."

Review. The promise is God told Abraham in Genesis 12, "I'm going to get my family back." And Jesus through his sinless life, his atoning, sacrificial, justifying, rescuing, redeeming work on the cross and through his resurrection and the descending of the Spirit, God fulfills His promise. And He says, Jews and Gentiles are in the same family, the same body. What is that? The body of Christ. So check this out. For followers of Jesus to look down upon other followers of Jesus, whether it's prejudice, whether it's ethnocentrism, whether it's pride; it is actually spiritual insanity because you're looking down upon yourself because we are the body of Christ.

What if we treated each other and looked at each other as though we were looking at Jesus. By the way, we are the body of Christ. That's the mystery of the gospel, the promise. Paul says this, "I was made a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the working of His power." He says, "I'm a servant to this gospel." My hope and my prayer, more importantly God's hope and God's prayer is that we see that we are servants of this gospel that breaks down barriers, that unites. The gospel tears down the walls of division and disunity and creates unity and beauty. And isn't it beautiful that God gives us the power to do it, the resurrection power? This new race of grace is a sign of King Jesus' victory over the dark powers. Verse 8 says this, "This grace was given to me, the least of all the saints." Paul is saying I'm the least of all of the apostles, "To proclaim to the Gentiles the incalculable riches of Christ."

When I think of Paul, I think of a man that is intoxicated by the love of Jesus. I think of a man who was intoxicated by the grace of Jesus. I often think that perhaps as he was sitting in his prison cell, or perhaps when he was on his missionary journeys, or perhaps when he was just sitting down eating fish, that he remembered his life before Jesus. That he was a zealot, that he persecuted, that he ravaged the very people that he was trying to share the gospel with and the very people that God loves. Many of them were killed. And I can just imagine him going, "I am so unworthy. I am so unworthy. God, I could never, ever pay you back." And God is going, "You don't have to pay me back because I am rich beyond belief." God is the unsearchable riches revealed in Christ Jesus.

Friends, my prayer for you is that you would be intoxicated with Jesus. His death for you, His sinless life for you, His resurrection for you, His passion for you, His affections for you, would transform you. So that when you talk to people about Jesus, it's not about do's and don'ts. It's about what He's done, it's about His unsearchable riches. Unsearchable riches is spelled G-R-A-C-E, grace. "To shed light for all about the administration of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things. This is so that God's manifested wisdom may be made known through the church to the rulers and authority in the heavens."

A. The word faceted or manifold means multi-colored. And so in Paul's day, if a person wore a coat that had multi-colors, that's the word that would be used. And so when these multi-faceted congregations that had Africans, and Romans, and Greeks, and Syrians, and Asians and all the various diversity of the Roman world were in community together, they were in unity together around the person of Jesus Christ. Paul is saying our unity, our togetherness, are in Christness.

Our faithful and collective witness to love each other when the world says you shouldn't love each other because of this, because of this, we go, no, the blood of Jesus makes us brothers and sisters and our unity and our servanthood and the gospel tells the dark powers, "You lost, you didn't win." Verse 11, "This is according to the eternal purpose accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord." Do you see how big the gospel is? Do you see that it's so much bigger than God forgave me?

B. I'm so thankful for God's forgiveness. I'm so thankful that He took an etch-a-sketch to my sin and shook it up and it says forgiven. It says, holy, it says blameless, it says love. But that's not just for me. God transformed me so I can be in His community of difference. And it's our differences that make us better. But this is the eternal purpose. Eternal means this, that there's never not been a time that God was going to send His only begotten son so that there could be more sons and daughters to be in the family that He promised Abraham. Our faithfulness to love Jesus and to love each other across demonic barriers is a sign and seal of Jesus' victory.

Verse 12 says this, "In Him we have boldness and confident access through faith in him. So that I ask you not to be discouraged over my afflictions on your behalf for therefore your glory." Paul is in prison and he's saying, don't worry about me. It's often in the midst of adversity that it becomes God's university and we learn Him deeper and truer. Never trust a person that doesn't walk with a limp. What do I mean by that? Those of us who've walked through pain, walk with a limp because Jesus is carrying us. And when Jesus carries us, we carry His message.

C. This new race of grace is a people of prayer. Prayer deepens our gratitude for being included in God's new race of grace. Look at Ephesians 3:14, "For this reason I kneel before the Father from whom every family in heaven on earth is named." That goes back to the covenant of Abraham. Prayer deepens our reliance on the Spirit's power. Paul says, "I pray that He may grant you according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power and your inner being through a spirit that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." Prayer deepens our roots in God's love. He says, "I pray that you being rooted and firmly established in love."

D. Now keep in mind, the book of Ephesians was not written to people who were not followers of Jesus. It was written to followers of Jesus learning how to follow him, learning how to be family. In Ephesians 3, Paul is still talking about love. He says, "I pray that you be rooted and firmly established in love," and God is love. One of the tattoos of God's people, the ultimate tattoo of being marked out by God is that you love God, that you love self, that you love your neighbor. It's not a love that originated with you, it's not a love that you cause. It's a love that's a gift that causes you to give that gift away.

And it says, "May be able to comprehend with all the saints," that is just the holy ones that were set apart for God, "What is the length and width and height and depth of God's love?" Notice that makes a cross. If you ever doubt God loves you, look at the cross. Whenever it's hard to love someone, look at the cross. There is power in the cross. There is power in the blood. The bloody cross transforms life and it shows us a living portrait of what love is.

The love of Christ surpasses knowledge so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. The apostle Paul asks, "Do you want to be filled with the fullness of God?" Meditate on the love of Jesus. Marinade in the love of Jesus. Whatever you do: going to work, the gym, fishing, on a date, train your heart and your mind to allow the love of God to surround you, to go before you, to go behind you, to be above you, to be below you, be to your left and to your right. You will see the blessing that He is, is clearly inside.

III. Application

Prayer deepens our allegiance to King Jesus and His church. It's not me, Jesus and my Bible. It's we, Jesus and the family of God being informed by the word of God. So listen to what Paul says here, "Now to Him who is able to do above and beyond all we ask or think, according to the power that works in us." So let me pause there. Typically this passage of scripture is used applicationally for all sorts of things. But in context, Paul is saying to Jews and Gentiles—and if he was speaking to us, he would say, rich, poor, middle-class, male, female, Asian, Latino, white, black, whatever your ethnicity—we are able to love each other because of the power of God that is at work in us.

Growing up as a kid, there was a show called Good Times. And there was a character named JJ Evans. And his thing is he would go, "Dyn-o-mite!" and it was hilarious, dyn-o-mite. Well the Greek word for dynamite is the word dunamis. And what Paul is saying here is that Jesus gives us dyn-o-mite, that we've got the power of God, the same power that rose Jesus from the dead lives in you. To love through you, to forgive through you, to show compassion through you, to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit.

"Now unto Him who is able," not unto you, unto Him. What God requires, God Himself is the provision and it's spelled grace. This grace creates this new race who has power. "To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, to all generations forever and ever. Amen."



LIFE IN GOD'S FAMILY

I. Introduction

You know you can't even spell grace without race, and we are the race of those who've been united by the blood of Jesus. We are the family that God promised Abraham, and that Jesus came and got, and that the Holy Spirit sealed together. That's who we are. Understanding who we are transforms us.

We have every spiritual blessing in Christ. It's like God is telling us who we are in Christ. We didn't achieve it. It's a gift that we receive. It's not based on worth. It's because of our new birth in Christ. This is who we are, a new race of grace. This is who we are in Christ. Everything that's true of him is true of us.

II. Teaching

This new race of grace is characterized by holiness in Christ. Holiness is a word that we as Christians don't use anymore, but it's a beautiful Jesus-centered, gospel-shaped word. It means this, that the minute that you and I say yes to Jesus as our Redeemer, our Savior, our King, our friend, we are set apart. That means we are transferred from the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of light, and we have every spiritual blessing in Christ, and now God uses the rest of our life to live out what he's already put into us.

We don't live for affirmation. We live from affirmation. We don't live to gain. We live because we already have Christ and Christ expresses himself through us. That's what holiness means. It means to be conformed to the pattern of Christ, through the spirit of Christ, because of God the Father's love, that we become this Holy people.

A. Ephesians 4:1-6: Paul says, "Therefore, I, the prisoner of the Lord ... " There he is again. He goes, "Listen, I'm locked up, but these people don't have me locked up. I may be in a Roman prison cell, but I am free as can be, because I am a prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ." "Therefore, I, the prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk worthy of the calling you have received." Notice, you have received, not achieved. God has already put into you the life of Christ, the spirit of Christ, so that we can walk worthy of the calling.

Listen to these words, "with all humility and gentleness." Humility means God-reliant. That the very air we breathe is a gift. When the sun rises, it's a gift. When you look at the word gentleness, it means men controlled power. "With all humility and gentleness, with patience." Wow, God is so patient with us. Therefore, we can be patient with each other. We can be patient with ourselves. Some of you are so busy trying to go somewhere, but never forget that wherever you go, you take you with you. So it's not your destination that changes you. It's who you're becoming on the way.

"Bearing with one another in love." Notice that. So in these multiethnic churches, and in our multiethnic world with all the conflict, we have to bear with one another in love. This doesn't mean it's easy. God never calls us to easy. Grace is not easy. Grace simply means God gives us the power to do it, bear with one another in love. Listen to this, "Making every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace."

The unity is there because of the blood. Jesus is our peace. We already have unity. God just calls us to walk in it, to make every effort to do it. Once again, let's don't steal the context of Paul's words. He's dealing in a racially divided culture, and as you know, when you come to Christ, your sins are forgiven, but those thoughts and manifestations of those sins don't go away.

Holiness is God working on him, but he's saying this, "Bearing with one another in love, be patient, keep the unity through peace. There's one body and one spirit, just as you were called to one hope at your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in all."

This is not Paul becoming the doctrine of pantheism, which says that God is everything. No, what Paul is saying is this, "Jews, Gentiles, male, female, rich, poor, middle-class, in Christ, Jesus is now how we see each other. Treat each other as you would treat Jesus." That's what Paul is saying. The way we would treat Jesus is in response to how Jesus treated us, and that is gracious.

B. This new race of grace is equipped for ministry. The word ministry simply means to serve, serving in your local church, serving through your job, serving in your relationships. Ephesians 4:11-16 says this "And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and the knowledge of God's son, growing into maturity with a stature measured by Christ's fullness. Then we will no longer be like little children tossed by the waves, blown around by every wind of teaching by human cunning, with cleverness and techniques of deceit, but speaking to truth and love, let us grow in every way into him, who is the head, Christ. For him, the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building itself up in love by the proper working of each individual part."

All of us matter. So let's look at a few key words. In verse 12, the word equip. That word, equipment, in Greek was a word used of a doctor who resets a bone, or it could be described of a fishing net that has holes in it that needed to be mended. So holiness and transformation is God mending us back together, fitting us. So understand this. Every Christian is in full-time ministry in some way or another. God has called you. God has gifted you. He's given you his son. He's given you his spirit. He's given you his love, to do what? To help the body grow and mature, that every individual part has a role.

Derwin Gray shares from his life: "The person that's talking to you right now grew up as a compulsive stutterer. One of my greatest fears in life was talking, because it was so painful, because it was so difficult, and you know what God did in his grace? He made me a part of his new race, which means I've got resurrection power, which means I got the blood of Jesus, which means I got the mind of Christ, which means this, that if God can raise his son from the dead, he can raise my tongue to talk, and he will do great and exceedingly above-and-beyond things in your life when it's for his glory. But trust him, everybody matters. There's no little people in God's kingdom. This new race of grace has a new self in Christ." God will give you the grace to accomplish what he calls you to do.

C. Ephesians 4:17-24: "Therefore I say this and testify in the Lord." There's Paul again. He loves the phrase, in the Lord, in Christ. Never dislocate yourself from being in Christ. Have you ever dislocated a bone or a joint? It's painful, right? Well, when you and I dislocate ourselves from Christ through sin, it's painful. God is saying, "No, no, you're in Christ. You're in Christ." I know you think, I'm not worthy. You're not. Jesus is our worthiness. I know you think you're not good enough. You're not. Jesus is our good enough. That's what makes grace so amazing, that it is for the not good enoughs.

"You should no longer walk as the Gentiles do." So he's going, "Now that you're in Christ, those old patterns of living, the temptation is there, but you don't have to surrender to it because you've got the power of the spirit."

Paul continues, "They are darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God. Because of the ignorance that is in them and because of the hardness of their hearts, they became callous and gave themselves over to promiscuity for the practice of every kind of impurity, with a desire for more, and more, and more." Sin will take you further than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and take more than you have. It will demand more, and more, and more, until like a vampire, it sucks all of your blood out and you're dead. But here's the thing, sin is never individualistic, it affects those who are around us.

“But ... ” There’s one of these big buts coming. “But this is not how you came to Christ. Assuming you heard about him and were taught about him as the truth is in Jesus to take off your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires,” now watch this, “to be renewed in the spirit of your minds and to put on the new self, the one created according to God’s likeness, and righteousness, and purity, and truth.”

This is our starting point. When you say yes to Christ, you have a new self. You may have old thoughts, you may have old temptations, but you don’t have to go the old way because you’ve got a new way. You’ve got a new thought life. The way you can live this text out is this way. For example, if you see a sign that says “Wet paint, don’t touch,” it’s like a magnet. “I’ve got to touch it. Oh, it’s wet.” Instead, the sign should say this, “After you touch the wet paint, wash your hand.” It takes away the feel, right?

Well, don’t think about overcoming sin. Don’t think about running from sin. Think about Jesus. Fill your mind with Jesus, the new self, that you are in righteousness, and purity, and truth, and the more you think about Jesus, you’ll go in the direction of the new self, not the old self.

D. This new race of grace is forgiving. Paul says, “And don’t grieve God’s Holy Spirit. You are sealed by him for the day of redemption.” The day of redemption is simply this, there’s going to be new heaven, and new earth, and resurrected glorified bodies. It’s going to be awesome. We’re going to be co-heirs with Christ, so that Holy spirit that came in you at the beginning will carry you through all the way to the end, which is really not an end because we have eternal life, ruling and reigning with our God of great grace.

“Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander be removed from you along with all malice.” Those things destroy and corrupt us. Bitterness is like drinking poison and hoping that the person you’re mad at dies. Grace frees us from that hell. “And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.

E. Paul is always pointing us back to Jesus. The way we live in unity, the way we live in community, the way we live in the power of the blood that unites this new race of grace is pointing back to Jesus and what he's done for us.

F. This new race of grace lives out the ethics of Jesus. Ephesians 5:1-5, "Therefore be imitators of God." He tells us who we are, "Dearly loved children." Children love to hear this word. I love you. I believe in you. I am for you. When you make mistakes, I'm not running out. When you mess up, I'm going to give you the biggest hug to clean you up. "And walk in love as Christ also loved us and gave himself for us, a sacrificial and fragrant offering to God."

III. Application

Do you see how Jesus-focused Paul is? I pray that you're like that six-year-old in small kids' church, where, when the teacher asks them a question, the only thing they know is Jesus. Man, I pray that that's us. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, and more Jesus. We're always pointing back to him because that's what Paul did.

Verse three, "But sexual immorality and impurity or greed should not even be heard among you as proper for the saints." Why? Because we've got a new self. "Obstinacy and foolish talking or crude joking are not suitable, but rather give thanks. For know and recognize this. Every sexual, immoral or impure, or greedy person who is an idolater does not have an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

Paul is reminding them, these false gods can't satisfy. Whatever we worship, we become like, so worship God. His affections for us are unlimited and unending, because he created us to know him and to be formed to his image because the way he hardwired us is that whatever we worship, we become like, and God is constantly fighting for our hearts. Why? So that we can become like him.

Family, here's our soul tattoo. This new race of grace is a family of holiness in Christ. What God demands and commands, God himself is the provision for us to live it out. In Christ, God believes in you. You have been sealed by the spirit. The same power that raised Christ from the dead lives in you.



EMPOWERED TO STAND

I. Introduction

So, what we have in the book of Ephesians, is the apostle Paul and the apostle Paul is intoxicated with the person of Jesus Christ. He is intoxicated with the revolutionary idea that God the Father, who promised Abraham a family that would be made up of all the families, he's intoxicated with the idea that he is joining God and Christ by the spirit to get God the Father his family. And it's a family of Jews, it's a family of Gentiles, it's a family of black people, of white people, of Asian people, of Latino people, of rich people, poor people, male and female that God is in passionate pursuit of. As believers in Jesus Christ we are adopted into this family. We are in a new race of grace and this new family is alive with Christ.

This new family reveals the mystery of Christ—the Jewish Savior, has always been a Savior for the world. Not just saves us as individuals, not just saves me. He saves “me” for the “we,” the different colors in God’s family. In Christ, we’re not color blind, we’re color blessed. We learn from each other, we listen to each other, we walk with each other, and our differences pull out better parts of us. We actually become more human because of the differences of our brothers and sisters and our unity and our community displays to the rulers, the dark powers, that Jesus is victorious.

II. Teaching

A. Ephesians 6:10-20: this new race of grace is strengthened by the Lord himself. Ephesians 6:10, Paul says this to the multi-ethnic churches “Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and his vast strength.” Notice, he doesn’t say, you be strong, you can do this. He goes, “No, be strengthened by the Lord and his vast strength.” God is your strength.

Now listen, this is so important, in order for us to be filled with God, we must be emptied of ourselves. This is a total posture of saying, God, you are my strength. And you know what? His strength is vast, it means that it is boundless, it is endless, it is eternal, it never ever runs out and we have access to it by faith.

B. This new race of grace has the armor of God. Ephesians 6:11 says to put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil.

Notice, it doesn't say the schemes of another person, it says the schemes of the devil, the accuser, that there are dark powers and dark dominions that desire for us to not love God, to not love ourselves and to not love our neighbors, our brothers and sisters. To live divided, to live disunified and as the church. I believe there are demonic barriers that have been built up, but the blood of Jesus is a sledgehammer that knocks those barriers down. But we have to put on the full armor of God.

There are so many Christians who do not "armor up" every day. Every day as soon as our feet touch the floor in the morning, we have to start by saying, God, clothe me in your armor for this battle that I'm going to be in today. We stand against the schemes of the devil. What are schemes? Schemes are strategies. The dark demonic powers study you, they study me, they know our triggers, the hurts of our past, they know our prejudice of our past, they know our stereotypes of the past. They study us and so it's important that in order to withstand those schemes, we wear the full armor of God.

C. This new race of grace understands that people are not the enemy. We live in a culture that loves to counsel people, that loves to demonize people. Now, I expect that of people who are not a part of this race of grace, but for those of us of grace we must fundamentally understand that human beings are not the enemy.

Paul reminds us our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces and the heavens. Stop hating on people. Every person that you're mad at, every person that I'm mad at, Jesus Christ died for. When a person is not in the kingdom of light, they are in the kingdom of darkness, being used and abused and you and I are called to liberate them with the power of the spirit and the power of the gospel.

How can we reach people we don't love? How can we reach people we don't like? How can we rage against the culture Jesus wants to save? You and I have every spiritual blessing in Christ and sharing His good news is one of the greatest ways that we reach people who don't know Jesus. We can show love across the boundaries of ethnicity, across the boundaries of social economic diversity, across political boundaries. So, Paul is saying, we've got to put on the full armor of God and we've got to know that people are not the enemy.

The difference between following Jesus and every other worldview is that we live from what he's done, not from what we do. Because even the things that we do are a result of what he's done. It is so freeing to understand that Jesus himself, through the power of the Holy Spirit and the love of Abba Father, is the armor that allows us to stand. Listen, the devil loves that the most segregated institution in the United States of America is Jesus' church. The devil loves that Christians of different ethnicities don't know each other and we are stereotypes to each other.

We have to stand united. The devil loves for us to be divided. Jesus has already united us, all we have to do is learn how to walk in it and the way we walk in it is through the power of God himself. We need the armor of God, so check this out. Verse 14 says this, "stand therefore, with truth like a belt wrapped around your waist." So, a belt keeps your pants from falling down. Can you imagine being in a battle and you're fighting for your life, some big gladiator's coming and you're like, "Hold on. My pants fell down, let me tie my belt." Well, a lot of Christians, as it pertains to unity, have pants that have fallen down and we're stumbling without the belt of truth. So, what is the truth? The truth is a person and his name is Jesus.

The truth is that Jesus got God the Father his family back and it's a family of grace that creates this new race of oneness, of beauty and unity. Not only forgiven of sins but unified brothers and sisters in Christ with different color skins. We are our brother's keeper, we are our sister's keeper. And here's why, because we are the body of Christ, that's the truth. In every situation, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

D. What's the shield of faith? The shield of faith is our faith in Jesus himself. When doubts come into mind concerning other people and relationships and insecurity, the shield of faith reminds us to not let bitterness or anger build up but in love, forgive each other, be patient with each other, have compassion for each other. That's what faith allows us to do. And never forget this, it's not about how big your faith is, it's about how big Jesus is. He'll take your little bit of faith and do a lot of big stuff. He'll teach you how to love.

E. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. Wallpaper your mind with the truth of God's salvation. See life through the salvific eyes of Jesus. Paul continues with the sword of the spirit—the word of God. We want to be people of the book because that is where we grow in our knowledge and understanding of God's plan and Jesus' unconditional love for us.

III. Application

When Paul was locked up and in prison he was free with boldness to say this, "Romans there is a new king, it's not Caesar, it is the Lord Jesus Christ and through his sinless life, his atoning death on the cross, his resurrection and ascending of the spirit, you can be a part of God's Holy, blameless, beloved family."

And it's a family that is united by the blood of Jesus. It is a family that is filled and sealed by the spirit of Jesus. It's the family that you were created for. My prayer for you and for me, is that the bold love of Christ would move us to understanding that the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, has given God his family and it's a family with every spiritual blessing in Christ. It's not by accident that God the Father tells Abraham, "I'm going to bless you to be a blessing." And then Paul starts Ephesians 1, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who's blessed us with spiritual blessings.

You see, the blessing is never for yourself, the blessing is a person and his name is Jesus. And the blessing is to bring us into the family, this new race of grace, to bless the world and say, "This is what God looks like. He looks like loving your brothers and sisters who are different but yet we are the same because we are covered by the blood of Jesus." Our soul tattoo is this, this new race of grace is characterized by God's strength, not our own. We live in the love of God the Father, the victory of King Jesus and the Spirit's power. This new race of grace is the family promised to Abraham, our love and unity sends shockwaves through the kingdom of darkness, it proclaims the victory of King Jesus.