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## Reconciled

As we survey the condition of our world, we observe much strife among various ethnic, national and religious groups. The Bible tells us this is to be expected because of our natural sinful condition as individuals and, subsequently, our natural alienation from others in society. In Paul's day the greatest divide was between Jew and Gentile, who deeply despised each other. The amazing power of the gospel, however, is demonstrated in reconciling even these two parties to one another in one family.

### Ephesians 2:11-18

<sup>11</sup> Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—<sup>12</sup> remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility <sup>15</sup> 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, <sup>16</sup> and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. <sup>17</sup> And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Notice in verses 11-13, the spectacular accomplishment of Jesus Christ in healing perhaps the greatest social rift in human history: that between Jew and Gentile. Here Paul is writing to Christian Gentiles reminding them of what John Stott calls their “fivefold deficiency”: they are Christless, churchless, aimless, hopeless, and Godless. But Christ, in the gospel, has brought them near to God.

Let's observe how Christ has done that. In verses 14 and 15, Paul describes the “horizontal reconciliation” Christ has accomplished among us, and in verses 16-18 he describes the “vertical reconciliation” that Christ accomplished for us.

Christ accomplished our horizontal reconciliation first of all by His blood, that is, by His death on the cross. In His death, He destroyed the religious rituals and customs (like circumcision) that had created a “dividing wall of hostility” between Jew and Gentile. Secondly, Christ engrafted us into one body, making us one new humanity, so that we are now real family. Regardless of racial, religious or socioeconomic backgrounds, we are family with each other in Christ.

Christ achieved our vertical reconciliation through three great accomplishments: 1) by His substitutionary death He removed from both Jew and Gentile the hostility between them and God; 2) through the Apostolic Church He has preached the peace of the gospel to both Jew and Gentile; and 3) He has gained access to the Father for both groups in one Spirit.

What Paul teaches us here about the Church provides a foundation for all of the ethical instructions in the ensuing chapters of Ephesians.

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**Discussion Questions**

1. Why do different national, ethnic, religious and socioeconomic groups regularly experience strife and discord?
2. What is the solution for this alienation among the peoples in the world? How does the gospel solve this alienation?
3. Describe the oneness we have with other believers in Christ.
4. Since the gospel reconciles all believers into one family, why is it that American churches continue to segregate from one another based on race and socioeconomic circumstances? What should be done about that?
5. How can we at Second act like family with all of the believers in Memphis and around the world?

**Going Deeper**

1. List three things you would like to do to experience, embrace, and express your oneness with other believers in Memphis from different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.
2. To whom will you “preach” the peace of Christ and whom will you invite to your church family this next month?