

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

# God's Remedy for Racial Prejudice

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Ephesians 2:11-22

**1 There is prejudicial attitudes fostered all over the world.**

**In Africa it's skin color. Apartheid was so prevalent in South Africa up until the 1990's. Those attitudes of separation because of race are still a problem there. The point of view of racial separation here in the United States made the Civil Rights Movement a necessity in the 1960's.**

**In the Middle East it's religious faith. Since the creation of the nation of Israel in 1948 there has been bitterness and friction between Islam and Judaism. We now have a worldwide Islamic terrorism problem as a result.**

**The Second World War began partly because of the German concept of superiority of the Arian race. When my family and I lived in Germany in the 1980's, even then we were exposed to the perspective that European whites were superior to other races.**

**When we lived in South Korea, we felt an attitude of distrust among the Koreans of other nationalities, particularly of other Asians. After all, the threat of hostility from the northern border was apparent. The older generations had experienced brutal foreign occupation from two wars. Today all of them are very conscious of China and Russia's influence on North Korea. <sup>2</sup>**

**So, what's the answer? How can we stop divisive attitudes that foster hatred and bitterness racially? Does God have answers for all of this? <sup>3</sup>**

**Ephesians, chapter 2, verses 11 through 22 may help. Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men) — 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. But now in Christ Jesus you who**

once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.<sup>1</sup> 4

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.<sup>2</sup> 5

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 2:11-13.

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 2:14-18.

**temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.** <sup>3</sup>

**From this scripture we can see the cause for racial prejudice, what God did about it and how that affects you and me!** <sup>6</sup>

**The cause of this human problem is . . .**

## **I. Sin Separates - v11-12**

**Sin separates. The separations are huge!** <sup>7</sup> **Notice the phases of human separation.** <sup>8</sup>

**Sin provides separation from God.** Adam and Eve had to leave God's presence because of it. <sup>4</sup> <sup>9</sup>

**Sin provides separation of man from himself.** Adam was ashamed of his nakedness. <sup>5</sup> <sup>10</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 2: 19-22.

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 3:24 - After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 3:10 - I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.

**Sin separates mankind from nature.** The earth would no longer yield a good harvest without a lot of human toil. <sup>6</sup> <sub>11</sub>

**Sin separates us from life.** Adam lived 930 years, but then he died. <sup>7</sup> <sub>12</sub>

**Sin separates mankind from animals.** It produced fear. Mankind and animals kill and eat one another. <sup>8</sup> <sub>13</sub>

**Finally, sin separates men from his fellow men.** <sub>14</sub>

Adam passed the buck and blamed Eve for the sin problem. <sup>9</sup> The seedbed was begun for marital strife and divorce. <sub>15</sub>

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<sup>6</sup> Genesis 3:17 - To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life."

<sup>7</sup> Genesis 3:2-3 & 5:5 - The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" . . . Adam lived 930 years, and then he died.

<sup>8</sup> Genesis 9:2-3 - The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, upon every creature that moves along the ground, and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hands. Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.

**Cain killed his brother Able. <sup>10</sup> Here was the beginning of homicide and war. <sup>16</sup>**

**Secular man started to unify by building the Tower of Babel. <sup>11</sup> This displeased God so He confused their languages. Mankind dispersed in small groups to begin populating the rest of the world. <sup>17</sup>**

**Abraham was instructed by God to leave the City of Ur. <sup>12</sup> This began the separation of the Jews from the Gentiles (non-Jews). <sup>18</sup>**

**Where is the racial prejudice in this passage? <sup>19</sup> Jews and Gentiles were separated by attitude. One influential rabbi of ancient times said, “Gentiles are fuel for the fires of hell”. Jews were forbidden to help a Gentile mother in childbirth. If a Jew and a Gentile**

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<sup>9</sup> Genesis 3:12 - The man said, “The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

<sup>10</sup> Genesis 4:8 - Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

<sup>11</sup> Genesis 11:1-9.

<sup>12</sup> Genesis 12:1, 4 - The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you . . . So Abram left, as the LORD had told him . . . Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran.

married there would be a funeral in the Jewish family for the Jewish partner. <sup>20</sup>

In verse 11 there is a prejudicial separation because of circumcision. **Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (that done in the body by the hands of men) . . . . All Jewish boys were circumcised on the eighth day. Gentile (non-Jewish) boys normally were not.** <sup>21</sup>

In verse 14 there was actually a prejudicial wall at the Temple in Jerusalem. It was called **the dividing wall of hostility. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility . . . .** It was located between the Court of the Gentiles and the Court of the Women on the Temple grounds. <sup>22</sup> In 1871 one of the signs from this wall was discovered which read, “Let no one of any other nation come within the fence around the holy place or he will be responsible for his own



death".<sup>23</sup> The Apostle Paul's arrest in Jerusalem was a result of this attitude.<sup>13 24</sup>

Then, in verse 15, there was a prejudicial separation from obedience, or disobedience, to the Law of Moses. . . . **by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace . . . .**

Human sin provided prejudicial separation.<sup>25</sup>

## **II. Lord Jesus Reconciles and Unites - v13-18**

Lord Jesus reconciles and unites.<sup>26</sup> So, what did God do about it?<sup>27</sup>

Notice verse 13; **But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.** The phrase **brought near** in the original language<sup>14</sup> was a technical phrase.<sup>15</sup> It refers

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<sup>13</sup> Acts 21:28-29 - . . . **He has brought Greeks into the temple area and defiled this holy place.**" (They had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with Paul and assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple area.)

<sup>14</sup> ἐγενήθητε ἐγγύς.

to the process a Gentile goes through to accept the Jewish faith. Proselyte baptism was part of this ritual.

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“The baptism was to be performed in the presence of three witnesses, ordinarily Sanhedrists (Yebam. 47 *b*), but in case of necessity others might act. The person to be baptized, having cut his hair and nails, undressed completely, made fresh profession of his faith before what were designated ‘the fathers of the baptism’ (our Godfathers, Kethub. 11 *a*; Erub. 15 *a*), and then immersed completely, so that every part of the body was touched by the water.<sup>29</sup> The rite would, of course, be accompanied by exhortations and benedictions (*Maimonides*, Hilkh. Milah 3:4; Hilkh. Iss. Biah 14:6). Baptism was not to be administered at night, nor on a Sabbath or feast-day (Yebam. 46 *b*).

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<sup>15</sup> A technical term or phrase is a meaning that has evolved beyond the literal meaning of the actual words themselves.

Women were attended by those of their own sex, the Rabbis standing at the door outside.”<sup>16</sup><sub>30</sub>

In verse 14 and 15 we read, **For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations.**

Two things here: the Lord destroyed **the dividing wall of hostility** we talked about previously.<sup>31</sup> Second, He **abolished**,<sup>17</sup> literally, “rendered inoperative” the commands and regulations of the Law of Moses.<sup>32</sup>

What are the results? Verse 15 tells us, **His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace . . . .**<sup>33</sup> The word **new** here<sup>18</sup> doesn't mean new in time (that's a different New Testament word), but rather new of a different type!<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Edersheim, A. (1896). *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Vol. 2, pp. 745–746). New York: Longmans, Green, and Co.

<sup>17</sup> καταργέω.

<sup>18</sup> καινός.

You and I are a new creation! **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.** <sup>19</sup> <sub>35</sub>

Hostility is replaced with peace! <sub>36</sub>

Verse 18 tells us what we are given so we can approach the Father, **For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.**

So, what now? How should this affect us? <sub>37</sub>

### **III. We Can Now Grow in Christ Together -**

**v19-22**

**We can now grow in Christ together!** <sub>38</sub>

**How can we do this?** <sub>39</sub>

Verse 19, **Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, . . . . We do it by binding together as fellow Christians in God's holy nation, regardless of our differences racially.** <sub>40</sub> And,

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<sup>19</sup> II Corinthians 5:17.

we do it by appreciating our family relationships in God's divine family. <sup>41</sup>

Finally, notice verses 20 through 22, . . . **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.** You and I are fellow bricks in God's Temple! Together we are a dwelling place for God's Holy Spirit!

Have you ever been to a symphony concert? Before the musical piece begins the orchestra warms up their instruments. It sounds awful! Each instrument is playing a different unrelated note. Then, usually an assistant conductor steps to the podium and points to one orchestra member. He plays a Concert B Flat. Then all the instruments play that same note until they get it right. When the orchestra begins playing the music it sounds wonderful because all of the

**instruments, tuned together, blend together perfectly.  
It became a beautiful event! 42**

**The church needs to become like a symphony  
concert! When we have disunity it's like the orchestra  
warming up. But when we have unity it's like the start  
of the concert; beautiful! 43**

**All of us are created in the image of God! Let's band  
together as God intended His church to be to  
encourage and build one another up in faith.**

**Let's present ourselves to God in concert!**

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