

**Text: Ephesians 2:11-22; Ref: Rom 9:4-5; Rom 5:1; Isa 9:6; Micah 5:5; Col 1:19-22; Col 3:11; Gal 5:6; Rom 2:25-29; Gal 6:15; Isa 59:1-4; 2 Cor 5:11-22**

**Theme: Identity in Christ**

**Topic: I am Reconciled**

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**Summary of the sermon:**

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**Introduction: Yearning for reconciliation**

The movie *The Straight Story* is based on a true story and narrates the journey of a 73 year-old man to mend a broken relationship with his brother, whom he has not seen or spoken to in over ten years. Alvin Straight (played by Richard Farnsworth) lives in Laurens, Iowa.

Alvin has lost his driver's license because of impaired vision. When a call comes indicating that Lyle, Alvin's estranged brother, has had a stroke, Alvin determines to find a way to visit his brother and make things right. His only solution is to hitch a makeshift trailer to his 1966 John Deere riding lawn mower and set out on a 500-mile trip that will take him in excess of six weeks. Camping out in fields and backyards made available by hospitable people he meets along the way, Alvin Straight slowly but surely makes his way toward his destination. After crossing the Mississippi River and

entering into Wisconsin, Alvin camps out in a church cemetery, kindling a campfire between tombstones. The pastor of the adjoining church sees Alvin from his office, has pity on the "homeless" man, and brings him a plate of hot meatloaf and mashed potatoes. A conversation ensues.

"I can't help but notice your rather unlikely mode of transportation," the pastor says eyeing the riding mower. Alvin makes mention of his brother who lives in the area. The pastor recalls having met a man by that name while making calls in the hospital, but admits that he didn't recall the man making mention of having a brother.

"Neither one of us has had a brother for quite some time," Alvin explained. "Lyle and I grew up as close as brothers could be. We were raised in Morehead, Minnesota. We worked hard.... Me and Lyle would make games out of our chores....He and I used to sleep out in the yard most every summer night. We talked to each other till we went to sleep. It made our trials seem smaller. We pretty much talked each other through growing up."

The pastor asked, "Whatever happened between you two?"

Alvin's eyes tear-up as he explains. "The story's as old as Cain and Abel. Anger. Vanity. Mix that together with liquor, and you've got two brothers who haven't spoken in ten years."

Alvin's manner and voice indicates the depth at which he is grieving the barrier that exists between him and Lyle. He adds, "Whatever it was that made me and Lyle so mad, it doesn't matter anymore. I want to make peace and sit with him and look up at the stars like we used to do."

- The dictionary defines the word 'reconcile' to mean: to unite, to bring back to harmony, to settle, to make consistent or compatible. Therefore reconciliation/change – means "reestablishment of an interrupted or broken relationship". To reconcile is "the exchange of hostility for a friendly relationship". Reconciliation is transformative rather than reformative. It is upwards, inside and outwards.
- When the heavens and earth were created, the Creator and creature enjoyed uninterrupted fellowship. At the fall of man, the relationship experienced a tragic crisis. No longer were Maker and made in harmonious relation. Rather, man traded holy love for hatred toward the Lord. The enmity was not merely one-way however. God too, in righteous and holy anger, burned against those who had rebelled against Him. Creation was separated from its Creator, not only by man's sin, but by God's displeasure and hatred of such sin.
- For thousands of years the world functioned (or dysfunctioned) in this disorder characterized by chaos, rebellion and hostility. But God had no intention of failing in His purposes to be glorified through and by His creation, and He had promises to fulfill. This brings us to the incarnation, and then to the crucifixion and then to the resurrection. It is here that things are put right. What once was lovely and then was stained and strained would yet shine forth. Peace was made through the blood of the Son on the old wooden cross and all things were reconciled to Himself.
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**vii. Reconciled from Alienation- vs 11-12**

✓ **Characteristics of alienation-vs 11**

- ✓ Paul describes a rivalry that was deep, historical and complex between the Jews and the other peoples of the world who non- Jews in ethnic. This hostility led to ethnocentrism, racism, balkanization, tribalism, discrimination, exclusionism and alienation. The new church with its ethnic and cultural diversity struggled with this challenge which had the following characteristics:

✓ **Religious-** The term 'Gentile' was religiously used to connote those who did not know God. If they came to the Temple, they had their own court separated from the Jewish congregation. The violation of this wall of barrier attracted a death penalty. Consider the implication of the traditional AIC sitting with men on one side and women on the other side without any mixing which would draw condemnation or fresh teachings on orderly sitting in the church!

✓ **Cultural-** There were different value systems, different customs, different traditions and different practices. The belief systems and practices separated 'them' from 'us'. The most obvious practice which continues to divide people groups down the centuries is 'circumcision'. The removal of the foreskin means different things to different people groups. To the Jewish people, it was the embodiment of belonging to the people of God. Any other community that did not undergo such practices were considered heathen. It is more than a hygienic practice, it is a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. Any persons

✓ **Racial-** Race as a negative social construct: physical appearance is used to discriminate, to exclude, to exploit, to abuse, and/or to profile, as in educational systems, traffic and criminal systems, housing and banking/mortgage lending, and medical care. Physical appearance becomes a way of allowing particular groups of people to feel that they are the only "true" citizens, that they are "better than" others who are made to feel "less than" full citizens. The Jews boasted of having the pure blood of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob flowing through them.

✓ **Consequences of alienation- vs 12**

✓ **Christ-less-**They were considered to be without Christ and outside of Christ. They were considered to be without the Messianic hope-the hope of a deliverer who was to be anointed by God. The one who would deliver his people from their sins. There are times when people who are saved have tried to exclude those who are not. Sometimes they will not greet you; sometimes they will not eat with you; sometimes they will not attend your function.

✓ **Commonwealth-less-** Israel was considered to be a commonwealth, which meant they were a nation under God's rule or Theocracy. They were the embodiment of God and considered themselves to have certain privileges, rights and protections that no one else had. They expressed a sense of entitlement for being the people of God. Entitlement is an attitude that destroys nations, communities and institutions. It is a concept expressed in the Animal farm which argues that all animals are equal but some animals are more equal

than others. The sense that we are the ones who fought for it; we are the ones whose community is the majority; we are the ones who wedded you; we are the ones who prayed for you; we are the ones who took you to college;

- ✓ **Covenant-less-** They were considered to have the covenants. The Israelites were considered to be the custodians of God's covenants. There were a series of covenant God made with the Israelites: They were also not part of a covenant people. The term "covenants" implies a series of covenants: Abrahamic (Gen 15:7-21; 17:1-21), Isaac (Gen 26:2-5); Jacob (Gen 28:13-15); Israel (Ex 24:1-8); Davidic (2 Sam 7).
- ✓ **Hopeless-** Hopeless is a state of despairing about the future. In connection to the state of man and his future, hopeless means having no confidence about the possibility of deliverance from an oppressive and enslaving situation but also at the same time having to possibility of deliverance in the future. Hopelessness is like living in a place that has battled a long drought. Everywhere you look, the soil is cracked, dusty and lifeless. It is like it never rained there. It might seem like crops or trees would never grow again. But, if you have lived very long, you know that even the longest drought can be broken by rainfall. In life, we can feel like that dry, cracked soil. Everything goes wrong; we face a long, dry season, hoping to experience something that brings hope and joy. But you can move from hopelessness to joy! It doesn't matter what people tell you about your situation and circumstances that seem hopeless, Jesus Christ can bring hope to your life again.
- ✓ **Godless-** The Gentile nations did not have a personal God. But because God created a God shaped vacuum in the human heart, they still followed after idols and Baals to fill the void in their hearts. They bowed to graven images and made sacrifices to them. However, that did not bring them closer to God, it took them far away from God and brought the wrath of God upon them.
- ✓ The characteristics and consequences of alienation can only be transformed through reconciliation. God has opened a new way of reconciliation which is more powerful than the reconciliation methods of this world. There is no situation which he cannot reconcile; there is no strained relationship which he cannot reconcile; he reconciled Joseph with his brothers; he reconciled the prodigal son with his father; he can reconcile your with that brother, sister, son, daughter, wife, husband, neighbor or colleague!

**viii. Reconciled by the Cross- vs 13-16**

- ✓ There is a contrast of our former state of alienation and the present state in Christ. The contrast is also transitory, ushering us into a new state, a new position, a position of reconciliation. It is a position that has been achieved for us and on our behalf by Christ.
- ✓ The blood- The Cross is a symbol of what Jesus Christ did.
  - ✓ **Substitutionary death-** Jesus died in our place as a substitutionary sacrifice. He took upon him our sin, our hostility, our rebellion, our wickedness and died in our place. He represented us before God as the second Adam, so that just as

sin entered the world through the first Adam, reconciliation may be accomplished through the second Adam, Jesus.

- ✓ **Propitiation-** Jesus died to pay a price we could not pay- he became the propitiation, the price giver on our behalf. The price which he paid was his own blood, his own dead. He did not deserve to die, but the wrath of God upon our sin demanded the shedding of blood, the death of a sinner, therefore he took the punishment which was meant for us upon himself and in obedience, he offered himself freely as the perfect lamb of God who take away the sin of the world. (substitutionary, propitiation and
- ✓ **Efficacious-** The blood of Jesus Christ has the power, the ability to produce the results that God desires for mankind-the cleansing and forgiveness of sin
- **Mediation-** A mediator is a go-between who brings together parties who are not in communication and who may be alienated, estranged, and at war with each other. The mediator must have links with both sides in order to identify with and maintain the interests of both and represent each to the other on a basis of good will. Thus Moses was mediator between God and Israel (Gal. 3:19), speaking to Israel on God's behalf when God gave the law (Exod. 20:18-21) and speaking to God on Israel's behalf when Israel had sinned (Exod. 32:9-33:17).
  - ✓ Every member of our fallen and rebellious race is by nature "hostile to God" (Rom. 8:7) and stands under God's wrath (i.e., the punitive rejection whereby as Judge he expresses active anger at our sins, Rom. 1:18; 2:5-9; 3:5-6). Reconciliation of the warring parties is needed, but this can occur only if God's wrath is somehow absorbed and quenched and man's anti-God heart, which motivates his anti-God life, is somehow changed. In mercy, God the angry Judge sent his Son into the world to bring about the needed reconciliation. It was not that the kindly Son acted to placate his harsh Father; the initiative was the Father's own. In Calvin's words, "in an inconceivable way he loved us even when he hated us," and his gift to us of the Son as our sin bearer was the fruit of that love (John 3:14-16; Rom. 5:5-8; 1 John 4:8-10). In all his mediatorial ministry the Son was doing his Father's will.
  - ✓ Christ achieved reconciliation for us through penal substitution. On the cross he took our place, carried our identity as it were, bore the curse due to us (Gal. 3:13), and by his sacrificial blood-shedding made peace for us (Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20). Peace here means an end to hostility, guilt, and exposure to the retributive punishment that was otherwise unavoidable—in other words, pardon for all the past and permanent personal acceptance for the future. Those who have received reconciliation through faith in Christ are justified and have peace with God (Rom. 5:1, 10). The mediator's present work, which he carries forward through human messengers, is to persuade those for whom he achieved reconciliation actually to receive it (John 12:32; Rom. 15:18; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Eph. 2:17).
  - ✓ Jesus is "the mediator of a new covenant" (Heb. 9:15; 12:24)—that is, the initiator of a new relationship of conscious peace with God, going beyond what the less effective Old Testament arrangements for dealing with the guilt of sin could ever secure (Heb. 9:11-10:18).

## ix. Reconciled for relationships- Vertical & Horizontal

- God created us to have a close, personal relationship with Him and with one another. Jesus said that the greatest commandment in the Law is to love God with our entire being. The second greatest is that we should love our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 22:37-39). Those are both relational commandments. But when sin entered the human race, it alienated Adam and Eve from God and from one another. They tried to hide from the presence of God and then Adam blamed God and Eve for his own sin (Gen. 3:8, 12). Sin always causes alienation towards God and between people.
- Therefore, the great problem of the human race is, how can we be reconciled to a holy God from whom we are estranged because of our sin and rebellion? How can we be reconciled to one another? We need peace between nations in this war-torn world. We need peace in our communities. We need peace between our political parties. We need peace in our churches, which are supposed to be models of Christ's love, but often are marked by division and strife. And, we need peace in our immediate and extended families. But, how?
- Paul begins here with peace between formerly alienated people (2:14-15) and then goes to the underlying cause of this reconciliation, namely, reconciliation between those groups and God (2:16-18). Perhaps his heart was burdened with the very real danger of the Jewish and Gentile wings of the church splitting into factions. So he begins with the problem at hand and then goes deeper to the foundational reconciliation with God that results in reconciliation between formerly hostile groups. When there are conflicts and risks, the balance of the multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-ethnic entities in the church is usually threatened.
- *Through the cross, Christ reconciled us all to one another and to God-horizontally and vertically.*
- It's easy to discern Paul's theme here. He uses the word "peace" four times (2:14, 15, 17 [twice]). He talks about Christ making the two groups into one, breaking down the wall between them, and creating the two into one new man. He mentions twice that Christ removed the enmity and that He reconciled the two groups into one body, so that they both have common access to the Father through the one Holy Spirit. Reconciliation is his theme.
- Through the cross, Christ reconciled us all to one another. Paul has just rehearsed the sad plight of the Gentiles before Christ (2:11-12). They were separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. While the Jews were God's chosen people because of His grace alone, not because of anything meritorious in them, they had become proud and had developed an intense hatred for the Gentiles. They viewed them as uncircumcised dogs. They shook the dust off their feet after traveling in Gentile territory before coming back to the Holy Land, so as not to defile the land. They would never eat with a Gentile. Even Gentile converts to Judaism had to keep their distance in the temple.
- We cannot begin to understand the radical nature of what Paul proclaims here unless we keep in mind this centuries-long hostility that had existed between the Jews and the Gentiles. We might compare it to the divide being witnessed in our Country as a result of the political divide. Paul is making the radical assertion that Christ has erased these centuries of racial hatred. So it is vital for the local church to display the peace of Christ in

order to glorify Him before a world that only knows strife and conflict. Note three things from these verses:

- ✓ A part from the cross, there is deep alienation between those from different backgrounds.
  - ✓ The source of the hostility between the Jews and Gentiles was sinful pride.
  - ✓ Pride is at the heart of all racism and all sin.
- Paul pictured the alienation between the Jews and Gentiles in his day as “the barrier of the dividing wall.” He was probably referring to a four-foot wall in the temple area that physically divided the court of the Gentiles from where the rest of the Jews could worship. On this wall were inscriptions that have been discovered by archaeologists, which warn that if a Gentile goes beyond the barrier, he will have himself to blame for his death which follows. If Paul was writing to the Ephesians from his imprisonment in Rome, they probably would have known about this barrier, even if they had never visited Jerusalem, because the incident that had led to Paul’s imprisonment involved one of their men. Paul was in the temple when a mob falsely accused him of bringing Trophimus, an Ephesian Gentile, beyond the barrier (Acts 21:27-36). This led to a riot, which led to Paul’s imprisonment. This barrier in the temple symbolized the deep hostilities between the Jews and the Gentiles. At the root of those hostilities was religious and ethnic pride on the part of the Jews.
  - Pride and selfishness account for everything from wars between nations to conflicts in our families. Rulers want greater power and more territory because it feeds their pride. Husbands and wives argue and fight because each one wants his or her way and is not willing to consider the other’s point of view. Children rebel against their parents because they want their way. Selfish pride is at the root of most of the anger that divides families.
  - The greater the social and cultural differences between people, the more likely it is that conflict will increase. Because men and women are different, we are prone to conflict in our marriages. Teenagers think that their parents don’t understand the younger generation. People from one nationality have difficulty understanding those from other nationalities. The rich think that the poor are lazy and the poor think that the rich are greedy. So it goes!
  - At the heart of all of these conflicts is sin. But the world refuses to acknowledge this. For example, many in our country say that if we had just used diplomacy with the Muslim extremists, we could have avoided war. But they grossly underestimate the sin problem. Invariably, pacifists make the mistake of thinking that people are basically good (not basically evil) and if we just treat them nicely and sit down and talk, they will be nice to us in return. Neville Chamberlain made that mistake with Hitler. He thought that he had negotiated “peace in our times,” but he ignored Hitler’s pride and evil intent.
  - I’m not suggesting that we should be quick to go to war, but I am saying that if we try to negotiate, we had better keep in mind the fact that all people are selfish, proud sinners. To underestimate the sinfulness of the human heart only leads to disaster later. There cannot be any lasting peace among sinners apart from the radical solution of the cross. As John MacArthur put it (*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Ephesians* [Moody Press], p. 76), “Peace comes only when self dies, and the only place self truly dies is at the foot of Calvary.”

x. **Reconciled for Peace- vs 17-18**

- ✓ **Christ is the prince of peace-** “For He Himself is our peace...” (2:14). Christ did not only *make* peace, but He *is* our peace. Peace can be found *only* in one place, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, because He alone can deal with our inherent sin problem. When He saves us, we are “created in Christ Jesus” (2:10). If you are *in Christ* and I am *in Christ*, then He Himself becomes the source of peace within us and between us. We have to view any and all conflict through the lens of the person of Christ. This intrinsic quality of peace is only possible with Christ.
  - ✓ This presupposes that anyone in whom Christ dwells has intrinsic peace.
  - ✓ Nothing can bring inner peace but Jesus Christ
  - ✓ No one can bring inner peace but Jesus Christ
  - ✓ No status can bring inner peace but Jesus Christ
  - ✓ No religion can bring inner peace but Jesus Christ.
- ✓ **Christian as the peace maker-** The fact that Christ is our peace does not mean that peace happens automatically, even between sincere, godly believers.
  - ✓ The Corinthian church was rife with conflicts and divisions.
  - ✓ Two faithful women in the Philippian church had some sort of conflict, which Paul was concerned about (Phil. 4:2-3).
  - ✓ Even Paul and Barnabas had a sharp dispute that led them to part ways in their missionary endeavors (Acts 15:36-40).
  - ✓ Paul seemed to realize that sometimes peace is not fully attainable when he wrote (Rom. 12:18), “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live at peace with all men.”
  - ✓ He says (Rom. 14:19), “So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.” The Bible says that we must “seek peace and pursue it” (1 Pet. 3:11).
- ✓ So even though we are prone toward conflict, even with other believers, the way toward peace is to have Christ reigning as Lord in each heart. To the extent that He is truly Lord of your life and my life, we will experience peace between us, because He does not fight with Himself.
- ✓ One of the marks of true conversion is when those who formerly were deeply hostile towards one another begin to pursue peace with one another. At the source of this new peace is that Christ has come to dwell in each heart, subduing our selfishness and pride.
- ✓ Believers with different cultural, racial or ethnic background can co-exist with each other because Jesus Christ has brought us peace. Paul explains how Christ established this new peace between the Jews and Gentiles:

- ✓ **First, Christ established peace through the cross by abolishing the old covenant law.**
- ✓ Jesus Christ broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, which created enmity between the Jews and the Gentiles. He further explains that the source of this enmity was “the Law of commandments contained in ordinances.” The word “abolished” means “nullified” or “rendered inoperative.” “In His flesh” refers to Christ’s death on the cross. Paul goes on to say (2:16) that through the cross, Christ put to death the enmity.
- ✓ Paul is saying here what he elsewhere states (Rom. 10:4), that “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” God ordained the Law for Israel to demonstrate the impossibility of sinners earning standing before God through law-keeping (Gal. 3:19-24). The law shut up everyone under sin. God’s holy law created a barrier between sinners and God.
- ✓ But the law also created a barrier between the Jews and the Gentiles. The law was given exclusively to Israel as God’s covenant people.
- ✓ Many stipulations in the law excluded Gentiles from the Jewish forms of worship. The priests alone could perform the sacrifices and ceremonies.
- ✓ Only Jews who had properly gone through the cleansing rituals could approach the altar with their sacrifices. So the law created a barrier between the Jews and the Gentiles.
- ✓ Through the cross, Christ fulfilled and thereby nullified or abolished the old covenant law (this harmonizes Eph. 2:15 with Matt. 5:17-19). He instituted the new covenant in His blood, which puts His holy law into the hearts of believers (Heb. 8:6-13). So, as Paul writes, because Christ bore the curse of the law on the cross (Gal. 3:14), “in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”
- ✓ So through the cross, Christ established the basis for peace between sinners and the holy God and peace between the Jews and the Gentiles. In Christ, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).
- ✓ Secondly, Christ established peace through the cross by creating the new one man, the church.
  - The Greek word translated “make” (NASB, 2:15) is literally, “create.” What Adam and Eve lost through sin in the original creation, Christ is recovering through the new man, the church, which is His new creation. F. F. Bruce points out (*The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* [Eerdmans], pp. 295-296), “Whereas Jews formerly tended to speak of the division of humanity into Jews and Gentiles, Paul makes a threefold classification into Jews, Greeks (Gentiles), and church of God (1 Cor. 10:32), the last embracing former Jews and Gentiles.” Thus the church is a new humanity or new race.
- ✓ The practical implication of this is that there is no basis for dividing the church along racial lines, unless there is a language barrier that keeps us from worshipping together. By being multi-racial and multi-cultural, the church should demonstrate to the world this one new man, which Christ created through the cross. Thus Paul’s

first point is that through the cross, Christ reconciled us all to one another. Christ Himself is our peace. Also,

**xi. Reconciled in One Spirit- vs 18**

- ✓ Verse 18 is deliberately trinitarian, because the Trinity demonstrates perfectly the harmony and unity that we are to strive for in the church. While the doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery that we cannot completely explain or understand, the Bible is clear that the one God exists in three eternal persons, each of whom is fully God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They each are distinct persons and yet they are not three gods, but one God. The one God has enjoyed perfect fellowship and love between the three persons from eternity.
- ✓ Here Paul says (2:18), “through Him [Christ], we both [Jew and Gentile] have our access in one Spirit to the Father.” At the heart of the gospel is that we now have access to God, whom Paul here calls, “the Father.” This means that Christianity is not a religion of rituals. It is a personal relationship with the Father through Jesus Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- ✓ Inclusive access to God- “Access” means introduction, gaining entry, much as a common person would be introduced to the king through the king’s representative. Jesus Christ gains us access to the God of the universe, who is a Father to us because of the cross! What an indescribable privilege, to be able to come into the presence of the Father, through the Son, in dependence on the Holy Spirit! Whether Jew or Gentile, the way into God’s presence is the same: it is through the cross of Christ.

**xii. Reconciled into a Community- vs 19-22**

- **Citizens** – Paul says that they no longer are refugees. Now, they have a citizenship. This citizenship is Kingdom citizenship. They are not second-class citizens, in someone else’s territory. They are full members of the kingdom.
  - ✓ The kingdom of God is where God rules his people. That is where his privileges are enjoyed and the responsibilities are carried out. We are waiting for the King to return and set up the full realization of this kingdom.
  - ✓ Paul is writing during a time in which Roman citizenship was prized. Its citizens had great privileges. Citizenship in a great country is a blessing, but there’s nothing like being a citizen of the kingdom of God. (cf., Phil 3:20)
  - ✓ When you are a stranger in another city or country you feel vulnerable. You have to keep your papers with you at all times. But he says you don’t have to feel this way. You belong. You are part of the kingdom that has no end. This is the only kingdom that has no end. You inherit all the privileges, rights and protection of a citizen
- **Household**- Paul’s metaphor of God’s new community changes to something more personal: a family. One might imagine Jew and Gentile together in one kingdom, but to be one family is stunning. Elsewhere, Paul says we are the “household of God” (1 Tim 3:15)
  - How are we one family?
    - ✓ We have the same Father. We have access to “the Father.” All those who received him, all who believed in him irrespective of gender, color, language, culture are children of God-John 1:12

- ✓ We are adopted children. The church is made up of adopted brothers and sisters. We were grafted into the family of God. We now have a belonging, acceptance and security in the family of God.
- ✓ We have responsibilities in the family. That's what a church is about. We are one family, each fulfilling his or her role, bringing glory to our father.
- ✓ In 1 Timothy 5:1-2, Paul says that we should treat one another like family. Our Christian family ties is stronger than our ethnic, racial or tribal family.
- ✓ **Building** – Paul's third metaphor would have been very vivid. For nearly one thousand years, the temple had been a focal point of Israel identity – Solomon to Zerubbabel to Herod. Now there was a new temple, made up of people not of stones.
  - ✓ **Common foundation-** He says that the foundation of the temple is God's word. The apostles and prophets were teachers, and what Paul is emphasizing here, their teaching. The church stands or falls based upon its faithfulness to God's Word.
  - ✓ A friend recently met with what was left of the leadership of a church about purchasing their building. They had dwindled down to only a handful of people. The problem? They left the truth of Scripture, turned to motivational speeches and as a result lost all of their people. My friend was speaking to them, and quoted a few Bible verses. It is the faithful, deep teaching of the scriptures that will root the church as God's building making it firm and strong able to stand every wind of teachings and doctrine. Acts 2:42 says that the early church "devoted themselves to the apostles teaching." That's foundational.
- ✓ **Common cornerstone-** Jesus Christ. There's only one cornerstone: Jesus. The work of the cornerstone is to hold the enter building together providing unity and strength. He makes the whole building possible. He is what the whole community is built upon. He gives security to the building, and gives it alignment. (cf., Isaiah 28:16, Rom 9:32, 10:11, 1 Pet 2:4-8).
  - ✓ While the apostles' teaching is being emphasized, Jesus' person and work is being emphasized.
  - ✓ Jesus is also how the church grows and is held together. There is no unity nor growth if Christ is not the cornerstone.
  - ✓ Verse 21- Paul likens the people to stones. He says "in whom you also are built into it." Peter says something like this as well, calling us "living stones."
  - ✓ We are carefully shaped building blocks, fitted to build this temple. Each new member is added to it.
  - ✓ In 1 Corinthians 6:19, Paul refers to individuals being a temple of the Spirit. But here (and in other places like 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:16), the people make up the temple.
  - ✓ By saying, "you also" he is referring to the Gentiles, being added to this building.
  - ✓ Before the Gentiles were not allowed to enter the temple, but now they are a part of it!
  - ✓
- ✓ **Common purpose-** dwelling place for God. Even though the Israelites knew that God didn't dwell in temples made by hands, they recognized that God promised to dwell in the temple's inner sanctuary.
  - ✓ Now, his special presence is not limited to a place, or a building, or a race. God's presence is spread worldwide, wherever people believe in Christ.

- ✓ Notice it is “in Christ” that we are a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Through Christ, by the Spirit of God, God dwells in us personally and as a community. Ultimately, this reality will be fully realized and enjoyed in the New Heavens and New Earth, when God makes his dwelling place with man.
- ✓ In Ephesus they had a great temple. In Jerusalem they had a great temple (Artemis), but Paul says, through Christ, by the Spirit, there is a better temple – it’s made up of people, from every tribe and tongue.
- ✓ We are joined together and built together. Each one is related to the other in a special way; and we are all growing together in Christ. Practically, that means every person counts.
- ✓ We need each other’s time, talent, treasure; love and resources; encouragement and rebuke.
- ✓ We are to live the Christian life together, as a multi-ethnic temple, centered in Christ, rooted in the teaching of Scripture.

### **Praising God for reconciliation**

I rejoice and thank You Father that I have peace with You through our Lord Jesus Christ and have wonderful access to Your amazing gift of grace – through simply believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank You that although I was far away from You and wallowing in my sin and disobedience, I have been brought close to You Father, through the precious blood of my Jesus Christ –my Saviour. It is a thing most wonderful to know that through the cross of Christ the hostility that I had with You Lord, has been removed and I have been reconciled back to God and have not only become a citizen of heaven along with all who trust in Christ Jesus and have been made a member of God’s household but also His beloved child and joint-heir with Christ Himself – There are no words sufficient for the thanks that I give You and pray that I may worship You for ever and ever.

I glorify Your wonderful name that there is now no condemnation and that my reconciliation with God almighty is both permanent and eternal – for the wrath of God was poured out upon the innocent life of the Lord Jesus – Who took my place, so that I could be brought back into fellowship with You – and reconciled with God.

Praise Your wonderful name for ever and ever and ever,

Amen and Amen

### **Prayer for reconciliation in Kenya**

O God of peace and healing, we pray for our beloved country Kenya,  
We come before you feeling powerless to stop the hatred that divides races and nations.

We come before you saddened and angered by the violence, destruction of property, crime, political grandstanding, impunity, corruption, tribalism, enmity and denial of human rights in our land.

We come before you with wounds deep in our hearts that we long to have healed.

We come before you with struggles in our personal lives that it seems will not go away.

And we pray Lord, How long? How long to peace? How long to reconciliation? And we hear, "Not long, because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." How long for tribal justice? "Not long, because no lie can live forever."

How long for our wounded hearts? Not long, I call you by name, you are with me; you are mine. How long for our struggles? Not long, for my grace is sufficient. I hold you in my everlasting arms beneath which you cannot fall.

How long for the healing of what is broken inside and all around us? Not long, for we shall overcome, together in partnership, human holy partnership, we shall overcome.

AMEN.