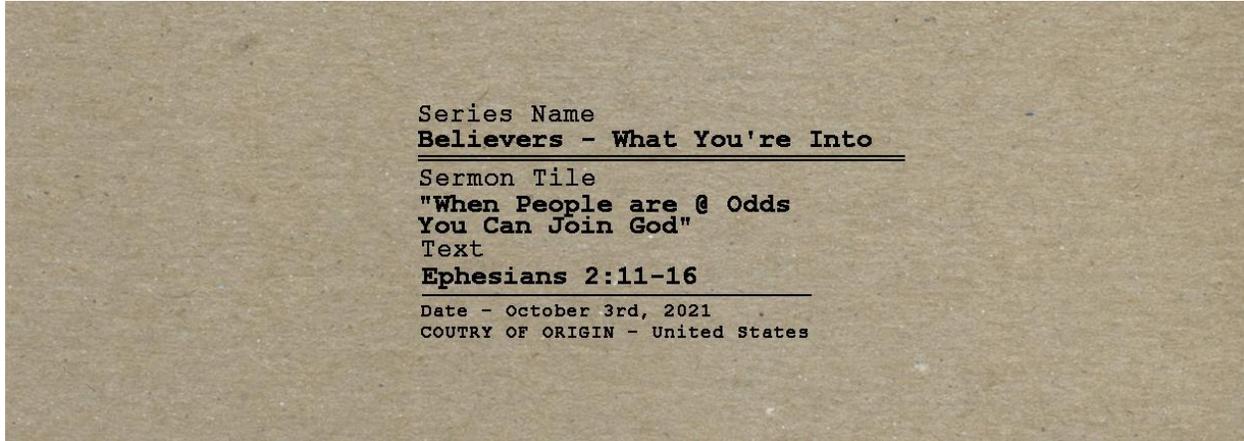


"When People are @ Odds, You Can Join God"



[Ephesians 2:11-16](#)

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—¹² 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. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵ 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, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

Sermon Slides Are Available [HERE](#).

Video of sermon is available [HERE](#).

Sermon Transcription:

Pastor Thom Rittichier

(Watched a short video from One For Israel big connect. If you want to get online, you can go to oneforisrael.org and see what they're doing there. They talk about 99% of the Israelis not knowing Yeshua, as Messiah and the ministry there. The Messianic Jewish community is a group of people that talk about the discipleship going on there and the gospel going out. So it's a ministry well worth our consideration and fits really well with what we're looking at today. I'm gonna ask you to take your Bible and turn to the book of Ephesians, chapter two. It seems everyone has experienced it, what we're going to talk about this morning, from Ephesians, chapter two. People are at odds with each other.

Recently, we had an opportunity to go visit our son in Boston, in the Boston area. And as we were visiting him, and walking around the area of Boston where our granddaughter goes to school now, it was striking to me how different it is. Different in the sense that every time you walk out on the streets, you hear another language being spoken, and being spoken quite fluently. Around here we hear Spanish, every now and then. And there is a Chinese restaurant in town and the people there, at least some of them, I don't think really speak English well, but that's about it. And yet every time we went out, we heard those different languages. Our son said that he, being from the Midwest, is a novelty in Boston, it's strange. And there are so many nationalities. And as you went around in the communities, you saw signs posted in residential areas. signs like this, #stopasianhate. And it was put on the fences of residents out there. You saw other signs, like Black Lives Matter, not only on the residents, but you saw it also stenciled on the sidewalk in communities, Black Lives Matter. And in some of those communities, you saw spray paint over that Black Lives Matter, spray painting it out over and over and over again. We've all experienced it seems, people are at odds with each other. Around here, we see signs like this, Support Our Law Enforcement, support the blue line. And sometimes that takes to the streets and becomes a bit agitated, it raises your ponderence over this thing. And sometimes it gets pretty militant. This poster says, I will never apologize for supporting the blue line, picturing a well armed silhouette in saying that. And this picture about the Black Lives Matter. The Black Lives Matter. The Black Lives Matter. People are at odds with each other. And by the way, these two pictures show that these two groups are seeming to be at odds with each other right here in the United States, the Thin Blue Line and Black Lives Matter. Have you noticed the tension on that? Have you noticed that? Yeah. Yeah. And sometimes the tension of people being at odds becomes very personal. Like right in your own family, right in your own social circle. By the way, those weren't the only signs we saw in Boston, we also saw signs like, Support the Thin Red Line. And that was about fire fighters.

Interesting, the atmosphere in which we have right now, well, this morning, we're going to talk about when people are at odds, because that's precisely what comes up here in Ephesians, chapter two. And the point that we're going to make is: You can join God when people are at odds. Yes, and I have to say this, sometimes it's me that's at odds, in my mind, in my heart, and I venture to say this, sometimes it's you that's at odds with other people, or another person, in your mind and in your heart. The point of this passage is: You can join God when people are at odds. Now let me say this thing of people being at odds that we're going to look at from this Ephesians passage, this thing has a long history on the planet. A long history. Let's see. How long? Well, oh yeah. The Garden of Eden. When God said, Where are you? And he made inquiry. And Adam responded to God's inquiry by saying, It is the woman who you gave me. She's the culpri. Don't pin this on me. It's her! Can't you just imagine how that went over in their relationship there? The flesh and the deeds of the flesh were introduced here by sin. And remember what the deeds of the flesh are: dissension, contention, strife, outburst of anger. And can you imagine him explaining that to Eve in the garden. Well, no, it was right after the garden, because they went out of the garden. And since then, this thing of people being at odds with each other has been very, very present. Do you know what I'm talking about? Do you know the experience of this? Have you seen it, have you been in it, been a part of it. People are at odds. It is not new.

As a matter of fact, in the context of what we're going to look at here in Ephesians, chapter two, John MacArthur said, "It is a part of sinful human nature to build barriers that shut out other people. In New Testament times one of the greatest barriers was between slaves and freemen, especially between slaves and their owners. Those who were free looked down on slaves as being inferior, slightly above animals. Many slaves looked at their masters with contempt and resentment. Consequently, one of the greatest problems of the early church was in getting Christian slave owners and Christian slaves to treat each other as spiritual equals. For the most part, women were also looked down on as inferior beings." By the way, aren't these faces interesting here? This one right here looks like a face that I used to see quite often. Not from my wife but from my sister. I would almost say that's exactly her profile. Yeah, there was some "at odds" situations there. "For the most part, women were looked down on as inferior beings. Husbands often treated their wives little better than they did their slaves. When a wife became a Christian, her entire life, outlook and value system changed. An unbelieving husband would likely divorce her simply because she had made such a radical decision without his consent." People at odds, ongoing today. "The Greeks were so proud of their culture and supposed racial superiority that they considered everyone else to be barbarians, a belief to which Paul alludes in Romans 1:14 and Colossians 3:11. The Greek language was considered to be the language of the gods. One Roman statesman Cicero wrote, As the Greeks say, All men are divided into two classes, Greeks and barbarians." And, you've heard of "the master race", the master race which gave rise to the conflicts of World War 2. People at odds.

God speaks to us about this long historical thing of people being at odds. Let me ask before we take a look at that, what is God's view of people being at odds? What is his view? He doesn't like it. And yet he himself put a distinction and a difference on his chosen people, as a purpose of a witness and a testimony. And there were some people at odds from that. Let me put this Proverb up here, because this will help us. The Lord's view, "There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him" That's in Proverbs chapter six, he lists out five of those things. And then he concludes with these two things, "a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers." The Lord hates this, he hates this. And when he gave his laws and his commandments and his directions to a chosen people, he had a purpose in that, a purpose that his chosen people would be different for the benefit of the world. A difference, a difference that would reflect him, that would attract people to him. You know, there were people that were called Jewish proselyts. People who were Gentiles, they even built it into the temple designed by God's direction, the Court of the Gentiles. Gentiles were being drawn to this God of Israel, because of the way, in the world at that time, that the Jewish values were and their lives were being seen, their God. But the Jews allow that to bolster their pride and then to despise the Gentiles. From the very hour that God called Abraham in Genesis chapter 12, and began to make him distinct, there was the "being at odds" that were put into play. But there was the testimony that was to be a witness, and a draw to this God of Israel, that that time that he called Abraham, he said, was to bless the nation. But he did it by putting people at odds. Some were attracted, and some despised it. The Jews despised the Gentiles. As a matter of fact, some of the times when you hear about what the Gentiles did, some Jews considered the Gentiles to be fuel for hell. Many believed that God loved Israel and hated every other nation.

Consequently, some Jewish women refuse to help non Jewish women give birth, because they didn't want to be responsible for bringing another despised Gentile into the world. When a Jew entered Palestine, he would often shake off the dust from his sandals in order not to contaminate the Holy Land with the dust of the Gentiles. Because Samaritans were partly Gentiles, most Jews went out of their way to avoid traveling through Samaria. Remember, Jesus said he must go through Samaria. If a young Jewish man or woman who married a Gentile, their family would have a funeral service symbolizing the death of their child.

And I want you to know that came home to me starkly at Kent State University after becoming a believer, and hanging around with a believer, we lived close to Cleveland and there was a Jewish population there. And one of the students there one day, at the fellowship, broke down in tears because her family had put her to death and had her funeral for becoming a Christian. This animosity, this people at odds thing is true. And One For Israel is on the front lines of that, and this is real. We live in the Midwest, we hear Spanish every once in a while and Chinese once in awhile but that's the extent. This is animosity. This is the people at odds and this is a real thing. And the church has faced it from its very beginning with Jews and Gentiles becoming believers, and Greeks with these other Gentile believers, and it's gone on, this people are at odds.

Now if you're with me in Ephesians, chapter two, I would like you to look with me at verse 16. Just at the last phrase, because we're going to build there on joining God. Ephesians chapter two, verse 16, the last phrase, what God has done, what we can do in joining him. Look at the last phrase, "thereby killing the hostility"-ESV, putting to death, the enmity, the strife, the opposition. You know, that is so big that I have written that verse out from different translations: "Our hostility towards each other was put to death"-NLT, "by which he put to death their hostility"-NIV, "thereby killing the mutual enmity and bringing the feud to an end"-AMPC. Folks, this is big, this is important. This is their time, this is our time. We have people at odds. And quite frankly, we will have people at odds till the end of time if I look at the book of Revelation correctly. But we, as a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a people for God's own possession, like he intended with the Jews, can join him in what he's doing, and kill the hostility. We can, we're called.

This morning, we're going to take a look at this. Remember time past, remember. Then we're going to consider now, but now, considered this right now. And then he says, take action, take action concerning what God was up to, that he might, we take action. Now let me put the rest of this in here. 1)Remember-"time past", being alienated, verses 11 and 12, you're being alienated. 2)Consider-"but now" in Christ what you have, verses 13-15a, what we have in Christ, and then 3) this action that we are to take with him, to see what God might do, that we might do, by taking to heart God's aim here. Take-"that he might", verses 15b and 16. Now all of these in parentheses are exact quotes from the scripture to put this passage in order for us that we can see what God is driving at as we join. Take, that he might, to heart as God's aim. I know we live in a world where people are at odds. As a matter of fact, I'm to be attending a conference this week, a conference in biblical counseling. It's something that I haven't done for a bit and I need to do. So we're doing that. This week, we got to communication that this area that we're going to

has now issued an ordinance that all gatherings, religious gatherings, are to wear masks. And boy, you know, there is some people at odds about this. One of the things they said in this communication was, we know that lots of folks have differing opinions. This is a biblical counseling conference. And they gave an option of doing it virtually or wearing the mask and coming. And boy, you know, what brings up whole issues about vaxxers and anti-vaxxers doesn't it. That has put Christians at odds, a lot of people at odds. You know, people have left churches because of what they perceive, their view on their vaxxer or being an anti-vaxxer has done. Did you know that has split churches in our time, people at odds over whether to get the COVID vaccine or not. It takes away my freedoms to dictate and to demand this of me, say anti vaxxers. The vaxxers say, the public health and welfare are at stake. And it has caused people at odds in social circles, churches and families. We have this in our time. It has a long history on the planet for all kinds of reasons. People who are at odds.

We need to hear what God says. Remember, times past. You know one of the biggest distinctions, I've already described to you, of people being at odd was these Gentiles who were despised by the Jews, because the Jews were an elect chosen people of God. And we have been provided, by God, for them. And these Gentiles are dogs and they're subhuman. Being alienated, and God begins to speak. He says first of all, remember, look at verse number 11. "Therefore", he says based on what God has done in Christ, when we were dead in transgressions and sins, God made us to live together with Christ. He seated us in the very throne room of heaven, where this council goes on. And he made this in our lives, by grace through faith, for good works, for things that are beneficial that we do here. "Therefore", based on what God has done in Christ, he talks about you and me in time past. Now the key word here, in this which we're going to look at, is alienated. It's to be in opposition. It's to be opposed to, at odds with others. Now, he says, remember, "Therefore remember, that at one time" in the past, at time in the past, "you Gentiles in the flesh", you Gentiles, were socially alienated, socially at odds, you Gentiles "called the uncircumcision", which was a slam, you uncircumcised Gentile, you below human level Gentile, "by what is called", by the Jews, "the circumcision" and their pride. There was, in the time past, this social alienation. And it's around today. It's Jewish communities against Gentile communities, they have those little black beanies and they're long beards and this distinctive lifestyle and they are at odds even today with the Gentiles.

You know, that even went on in the early church? Do you remember Peter, who had something descend from heaven to him? Do you remember that? Do you remember what was on this? It was a blanket and had all these foods and the angel said not to call anything unclean that God calls clean. And then do you remember later, when Peter was with the Galatians, and attempting to minister to him that Paul had to withstand him to his face? Do you remember that? And you remember why? Because Peter was kind of with those Gentiles, eating and drinking they're kind of stuff. And when people from Jerusalem came, he kind of backed away from that, and he wasn't straightforward about the gospel. You see, this thing carried on even in the church, big time in the church. Just like other things that put people at odds carries over into the believing community. It carried over. That's what they had in time past.

Let me add this, in your life "you were", that's a direct quote from scripture, "in the flesh you Gentiles", in your life you were spiritually alienated. The key term here is alienated, being at odds, in opposition, spiritually alienated. As you look at alienated, the the idea is being without. The Gentiles were alienated, at odds, because they were without it. And beginning in verse 12, he begins to list things that you're without, "Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ". First of all you are without Christ, you are without the promised Messiah who was going to come to this earth, take control and bring everything back in accord with God. As matter of fact, the book of Revelation is the description of what the earth has to go through in order to have this kingdom ushered in for Christ to take rule again. Without the Messiah, they were without Christ, without any hope of a Messiah to set things in order. Now and forever, things are going to be like they are. Boy, that's a term you heard now days, Is this never going to change? This is horrible! I remember people asking me, Do you think this unrest will ever change, will it ever be different? Well, without the Messiah, no.

He goes on to say, you are without "the commonwealth", the community "of Israel". They were without this community of people that knew how to take care of the poor and do it well, how to administer social justice and do it adequately, how to reinstate somebody who's financially destroyed, all of those things. It was a commonwealth that God had provided to Israel, a community for them, a community not politically, but through God. And yes, they were part of the government.

And they were without covenants of promise. The beginning of the covenants is in Genesis chapter 12. Before that, we have a world that is fallen from God, at odds with each, other people killing each other, it getting so horribly bad, that God sends a judgment on the earth because the thought of man's heart was only evil continuously. And it grieved him that he made man, that man came to this state. And so he sent the flood and the flood begins to take that out and start over. But guess what happens right away, the sin is present again there and it grows in a unity against God, to place where God has to confuse languages. And they've sent out over the whole world. That's what the Gentiles had, no commonwealth of Israel, alienated from the covenants. The covenant of Abraham, beginning in Genesis, when God brings this back into order to bless every nation on the planet through Abraham, to bring them good and benefit through Abraham. And of course, the Jews become arrogant, and they despise them, and they don't handle this. And they become morally just like the rest of the nations. And they so mess up the picture that God had intended. You, at one time, were without Christ, without the commonwealth, without covenants of promise. And also without hope, this hope doesn't mean just like a religious thing. It's hope that anything worthwhile will take place. Hope, you know that is probably one of the biggest things for people is the despair. When you look at the despair that was among the Gentiles historically and people today, the things that they grab to give meaning actually undermined hope for the future. Drugs and money and trying to hang on to elicit relationships and your wealth and all of that actually sees it going from your hands and it destroys hope, without hope.

And the biggest one, without God in God's world. They're without an idea of how he created this to run. Without God, in his person, in this world. You know, when I first

read this, just after coming to Christ, I was completely taken back, because that was me. That was me! No hope. Just looking at making something of my career in my life, just what I can grab for myself. And without God, in God's world, trying to do this, in a world he made to run like he planned, and being totally without him in it, in his world. You know, that's like trying to play football in a group of synchronized swimmers. That's exactly what that's like. Because it doesn't fit. And that's where they lived without hope, without God in his world. Now, the point he says is remember, in times past, this is where you were. Maybe if you never even felt it, it's still where you were. It would be a benefit and a help if you felt it. But that's where you were.

Now he says, consider-"But now", verse 13, "But now". It's the same kind of thing like when it says "But God" in verse 4, when we were dead in sin, "But God". "But now", he says, verse 13, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off, far away, have been brought near by the blood of Christ." The key term here is you have, you have been brought near. You were distant from this God in his world, and his hope, and his commonwealth, and his community, and all of that, you were far off of it as Gentiles. The Jews had an exposure to it, he was working with the Jews, he was touching the world through the Jews, you were far off. But now you've been brought near by the blood of Christ. This is huge. This blood of Christ thing is huge. We celebrate the Lord's table all the time. That it's the blood of the new covenant, the new agreement. It is the blood, the life of the flesh is in the blood. It is the blood that covers the sins of the soul. That's what he taught in Leviticus. This was the commonwealth of Israel. This was having God in the world, there is sin present here. This is how it came. This is what it brings, death to everything all around, it destroys hope. It is the blood that covers the sin of the soul before God. And in Christ, this blood became the propitiation, Romans three, the satisfying payment for our soul, the death of Christ, the shedding of his blood, completely satisfied the sin debt before God, if we trust him, if we trust him, it is propitiation through his blood.

Now, you are near to God. And the fact of our life is we can get nearer and nearer and nearer. Help me with this quote, "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.", James 4:8a. Now, in Christ, you've been brought near, through that blood, close to God and you can get closer and closer and closer and know him better and better and better and see him acting over and over and over in your life. You know, I wanted to mention that I have a privilege, I have the privilege of working with folks who are in engaged in doing good works. Remember, that's what we're created in Christ Jesus for. Last week, we had folks who went out and helped another church group doing an outreach, and then rushed here and set up things here, good works. We have privileges, I have a privilege of those good works. It is a privilege. All of that grows as we draw near the recognition, the appreciation, the benefit of those beneficial, good, that's what the term means, good works in people's lives. I've got the privilege of working with people who God is working in their life, they get a snag but God works them through it, and their lives change. We get together and pray, leaders, guys on Thursdays, and it's good as we go through those prayer requests to review the way God is working in people's lives and the change and the compassion that they have for people and ministry. And they carry on these requests over and over and over and over. And we go there because it's like, Wow! So exciting! Like when you're watching the Super Bowl. No, it's not. It's like, You

feel it in your soul, this is so good and so neat. This is being brought near. It's our privilege. Do you know that? Personally, are you picking that up? You've been brought near.

And you have, he says in verse 14, this is so good. He says, "For he himself is our peace, who made us both", this Jew at odds with this Gentile, "one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility". You have he himself as your peace. Christ is our peace. He didn't just accomplish peace. He is our peace. He, his person, what he's accomplished, who he is to us, how he is present in our life, the way he directs our life. He is our peace, this is peace. This is the settling down to a harmony and a tranquility in the midst of a chaotic, opposing one another world of human beings. It's Christ, who is our peace. He himself is that peace and where he goes is to this, breaking down the wall of hostility. Breaking it down. Breaking it down, the hostility, the dividing wall of hostility.

You know, in the temple, I have already mentioned there was the Court of the Gentiles. Have you ever seen a diagram of the temple? Some of you have. You'd be benefited to see it because it was designed by God. There was this area outside that was the Court of the Gentiles and then there was this inner court where the Jews could go and then there was the Holiest of Holies and that was for only a priest once a year and all the sacrifices and all of that. In that dividing wall, between the Court of the Gentiles and where the Jews could go, there were plaques that were put up. I have a quote here of the plaque in the Jewish temple. "No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the sanctuary and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death." That was posted there. Do you remember in the book of Acts, where Paul was suddenly attacked with the guy who had the shaved head, and the guy who came with him, they did that, attacked him because the Jews thought that Paul had taken a Gentile into that court. That was the attack. Christ has broken down that dividing wall between Jew and Gentile. That's what's pictured. That's why in Israel, One For Israel, can bring Arabs and Jews together. When the Arabs can't even get together with Arabs. That's why Christ can because he's broken it down, the dividing wall. And he did this in abolishing the commandments. Now, it's not that the 10 commandments and the other laws are bad, they reflected God and his character and the good qualities. But what it did is removed, because of the fulfillment of these commandments for all people in Christ, it removed the distinction, the despising, the looking down on the less than human, for all of them. That's what we have now in Christ, it's what we have. It's where we're at.

And finally this, the call to action. Take-"that he might" and by the way, that is the key thing there, "That he might". This word, as is used here and he says it twice, in verses 15 and 16, he used the word might. This is God's aim. This is what he's up to. It's what he was up to with Israel, to be a testimony and blessing to the nations. They became arrogant, despised others, were at odds with people, they didn't realize they were to bless the world. That was his aim. His aim with the church is to be a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a people for God's own possession, that we may show the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. That's a direct quote. That's what we are. But it's a might here, because there's a question of our willingness to

participate, just like the Jews. And by the way, the scripture does point this out, how it goes. Take to heart "that he might create in himself with one new man in place of two, so making peace.", verse 15. That's what God is doing. He is making peace. He's making peace with himself, people with himself. He was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, making peace with people to himself. That's what he's doing. That's what his aim is, one new humanity. And by the way, Ephesians says that he accomplishes this because in the fullness of time, he brings and puts everything together in Christ.

He accomplishes it, the question is our participation in it. That he might reconcile both Jew and Gentile. By the way, what is a Gentile? Anybody who's not a Jew. That he "reconcile us both, Jew and Gentile, to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.", verse 16. Killing the hostility between people and people, between Jew and Gentile, between Arab and Lithuanian. Things that set us at odds idealistically killed. And for sure, for sure, every one of us in Christ is an ambassador of reconciliation. We are an ambassador. The world looks for one upmanship. Something that pushes them ahead, makes them significant in something. And the believer looks to see people at odds come back together with God first and then people. We are ambassadors of reconciliation. That's how you join God. Pray for the peace of Israel. Pray for the Arabs and the Jews. Pray for Gentile participation in bringing people back into a reconciled relationship with God. Pray that the Lord open your eyes to the opportunities we have all around us to do good. Pray for those opportunities come into play to talk about Jesus and what he done. Join God in what is doing.

Father in heaven, we bow for you because we so need you. Oh God, you are our refuge and our strength. A very present help in a time of trouble when people are at odds. When they're leaving churches because of a view of a vaccine and what my opinion is thought about. People are splitting churches, they are at odds. Oh Father, we need to be agents of reconciliation. And you are the mighty fortress to accomplish it. In Jesus name, Amen.