



# CAPITOL COMMISSION™

## It Is Well, with My Soul (Ephesians 2:11-22)

8 FEBRUARY 2011

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*Bible studies are held Tuesday mornings at 7:15am for legislators, lobbyists, and staff. All Senate and House Members—all Democrats and all Republicans—are invited for a time of study and prayer on Tuesdays. The weekly Bible study is nonpartisan and non-denominational. The study for the 2011 General Assembly is the Book of Ephesians. I pray that this study will be edifying to you. I am here to serve you and to be a resource for prayer and counsel. Please accept my study in the Word of God, as an evidence of my desire to be serving you.*

### Introduction

According to Ephesians 2:11—3:12, there is a new society that is being built by Christ. There was once a barrier between ethnic races. The Gentiles “were excluded from the commonwealth of Israel” and therefore the two groups scorned one another. In the time of the Old Testament, a Gentile gained acceptance into Israel through proselytization. According to Ephesians 2:13-16, “the barrier of the dividing wall” between the two groups was destroyed by the redeeming work of Jesus Christ upon the cross.

The new society is composed of both Jews and Gentiles who have trusted in Christ alone for salvation (cf. Gal 3:28). The founding of this new society, which is the church, is identified as a mystery (i.e. something previously unknown) that is now known by the revelation of God’s Word. The church is composed of all those who recognize the holiness and love of God, and therefore trust in Jesus Christ and His work upon the cross as the remedy for their sinfulness. The church is God’s new society for reaching the world with His good news of salvation. The understanding and application of these truths is to have a direct impact upon our lives.

### PEACE THROUGH THE CROSS

(2:11-22) As defined in Scripture, peace can have various meanings. Peace can be the harmony that a person has personally and with others. The emphasis of the Old Testament is upon God’s outworking of His purposes through the nation of Israel. In the New Testament, however, the emphasis is upon God’s choosing to work through a new society, which is composed of both Jews and Gentiles.

### ALIENATION BETWEEN JEW AND GENTILE (2:11-12)

At the time that Ephesians was written, the early church had recently concurred that both Jews and Gentiles who heard the gospel and believed had their hearts cleansed by faith, and therefore, God made no distinction between them. Acts 15

reveals the defense of the Jerusalem council with regard to the position of Gentiles in the Body of Christ. The primary issue that created tension between the two groups was the rite of circumcision. God instituted the practice toward Abraham, and it became the external act that signified the blessing of the Abraham covenant (cf. Gen 12:1-3; 15:1-6; 17:1-27).

Although the Abraham covenant included a blessing to all nations, there were limitations for Gentiles. Verses 11-12 indicate five disadvantages of the Gentiles: (1) being “separate from Christ” (without knowledge of Him); (2) being “excluded” from the theocracy of Israel; (3) being “strangers to the covenant of promise” to Abraham, David, and others; (4) “having no hope” due to their many gods and many religions; and, (5) being “without [help from] God” because their gods and religions were human fabrications (i.e. rejection of the one God, and they were thus rejected by the Lord).

<b>PEACE (IN THE BIBLE)<sup>1</sup></b>	
Heb. <i>shālôm</i> (שָׁלוֹם), “health,” “peace” Gk. <i>eirēnē</i> (εἰρήνη), “concord,” “unity”	
<b>Outward tranquility</b> (individuals, churches, communities, nations)	<b>For example:</b> Numbers 6:26; 1 Samuel 7:14; 1 Kings 4:24; Acts 9:31
<b>Christian unity</b>	<b>For example:</b> Ephesians 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:13
<b>Spiritual peace through reconciliation with God</b>	<b>For example:</b> Isaiah 9:6-7; 26:3; Luke 2:14; John 14:27; Acts 10:36; Romans 1:7; 5:1; Galatians 5:22

### RECONCILIATION OF JEW AND GENTILE (2:13-18)

The alienation between Jew and Gentile is an outward manifestation of anger toward God. Both groups need to be reconciled to God. Prior to the death of Christ, the Law of Moses was a “dividing wall” between the two groups. The Law was given to the Jews; consequently, they believed this granted them special privilege and status before God. As a result of Christ’s work upon the cross, the Law of Moses has been rendered inoperative (cf. Rom 10:4; Eph 3:6; 2 Cor 3:2-11;

Heb 7:19); therefore, because God is satisfied with Christ's work, both Jew and Gentile are able to have "access in one Spirit to the Father" through Christ. Both groups have access to God through Christ. The believer's access to God is by grace through faith, and therefore those who trust Christ have "the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

## PARTICIPATION IN PRIVILEGES AND RIGHTS (2:19-22)

As members of "God's household," believers participate in the teachings of the apostles and prophets of the New Testament, and Christ Jesus Himself who is the cornerstone. The unity of the church is based upon the Person of Jesus Christ. God has accomplished the unity and commands believers to maintain it by "growing into a holy temple in the Lord."

The believer's access to God is beyond imagination. Not only have believers be reconciled to Him, but they are also united spiritually with Him, having become the children of God. The truth with regard to heavenly realities should seize perspective as regards all earthly endeavors and experiences.

## OCCUPATION WITH THE ETERNAL

The popular hymn, "It is Well with my Soul," was written in 1873 by Horatio G. Spafford in response to two major traumas in his life. Spafford was a wealthy businessman and experienced his first distress from the Chicago Fire of October 1871, which devastated his finances. Shortly after the fire, his wife and four daughters were crossing the Atlantic Ocean and their vessel collided with another ship. All four daughters died. His wife sent a telegram: "saved alone." Several weeks later, Spafford's own ship passed near the location where his daughters died, and he penned the words to the popular hymn.

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll;  
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,  
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

*(Refrain)*  
It is well, with my soul,  
It is well, with my soul,  
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,  
Let this blest assurance control,  
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,  
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!  
My sin, not in part but the whole,  
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live:  
If Jordan above me shall roll,  
No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life  
Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.

But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,  
The sky, not the grave, is our goal;  
Oh trump of the angel! Oh voice of the Lord!  
Blessèd hope, blessèd rest of my soul!

And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,  
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;  
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,  
Even so, it is well with my soul.

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"HOPE IS ONE OF THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES."

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Spafford's hymn is testimony to the eternal hope of every believer, without regard for the agony and difficulties experienced in life. Hope in the present and for eternal life is based upon Christ's salvation. We cannot fully comprehend what God has accomplished on behalf of those who trust Christ. God has not only forgiven believers of their sins, but has granted privileges and rights as His spiritual children. Such honor results in thanks because we are not worthy. Let us live in thankfulness for the hope and joy of God's salvation, and live with an eternal perspective.

Hope is one of the theological virtues. This means that a continual looking forward to the eternal world is not (as some modern people think) a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things a Christian is meant to do. It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth "thrown in": aim at earth and you will get neither.<sup>2</sup>

## ABOUT CAPITOL COMMISSION

Capitol Commission state directors are pastors/missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. These Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. The love and grace of God compels us to proclaim the truth of the Gospel with a heartfelt compassion for the Capitol community, to faithfully teach and apply the Word of God, and it is our desire to build meaningful relationships that bear fruit for an eternity to come.

With the Bible as our foundation and authority, the mission of Capitol Commission is obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) within the Capitol communities of the world. We are not a lobbying group attempting to garner votes or reform society. Our mandate is to see the hearts and lives of elected officials transformed with the Word of God. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through the verse-by-verse teaching of Scripture. In the Bible, we see God's great love for the world, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you.

The church is instructed to submit and to honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and to pray for their eternal salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). The desire of Capitol Commission is to witness God transform the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four major areas of making disciples: (1) *evangelize* those who have not experienced saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to grow in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.

<sup>1</sup> R. K. Harrison, ed., *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988) 980-81.

<sup>2</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, rev. ed. (New York: Collier, 1952) 118.