

# THE END OF HOSTILITY

August 13, 2017 | Pastor Randy Remington

For life groups that may be studying this sermon series at a later time, the context is, our country is reeling from terrible events unfolding in Charlottesville, Virginia. This incident was characterized by hatred, racism, hostility and deep divisions. Pastor Randy addressed the deeper issues that are an undercurrent in this and other situations, and God's solution.

There is no doubt that a war is going on; but this war is not a conflict between flesh and blood but a spiritual battle. For some in our life groups, this may be insulting to their intelligence. But the scriptures are very clear about the nature of evil in our world which points us to the true conflict and the role Jesus death on the cross had in this battle...more as we move along.

This lesson will be a starting point for a short series on "Spiritual Warfare". We need to understand this or become a casualty.

Years ago when the first President Bush was in office, Saddam Hussein invaded a small country named Kuwait. President Bush organized a coalition of several countries saying; 'no you're not going to do that". There was a "line drawn in the sand", this coalition is a picture of the church who is confronted with hate, discord and hostility and says "no".

It is worth noting that Saddam in response launched "scud missiles" on Israel. This was an obvious attempt to bring division in the coalition, much like our enemy attempts to do. Let's look at our passage, especially in light of what we're considering in this lesson:

***"Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)– 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 by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in 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. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his 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 temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."***

***(Ephesians 2:11-22)***

The primary emphasis of our passage is the removal of walls and barriers. The reality is, we build these walls and barriers. In this passage, there are two general categories; the Jews and the Gentiles. Even the sign of God's covenant with the nation of Israel, circumcision became a point of division.

The whole purpose for the existence of the nation of Israel was to be a blessing to all nations. They were meant to draw people of the world to God, but they failed. We also build walls, between ourselves and people that are different than us.

Jesus came as the "vine" so that all of us could be grafted into God's life and family. It is an odd phenomenon, but our identity, that makes us feel so good about ourselves, can become a superiority issue and can divide people and cause hostility.

It's important to see that most arguments go after the mind, but Jesus went after the heart.

The victory at the cross was a triumph over all the works of the enemy, including hate and hostility. On the cross, Jesus had to destroy hate and hostility; he actually absorbed them into his own flesh. The correct way to look at this is, that Jesus was killed by hate in order to destroy hate.

## ***“CHRIST IN HIS DEATH WAS SLAIN, BUT THE SLAIN WAS A SLAYER TOO.”***

He made a choice, but we as his church, make a choice to be a filter or a conduit. Let's look at some practical examples and then see the application to our lives:

### **FILTER VS CONDUIT**

#### **Conduit:**



A conduit will channel electricity from one place to another. So if we are a conduit in the area we're talking about in this lesson we would channel the hate that comes our way and send it to others.

So what is the option to being a conduit that just continues to channel hate and discord? God wants us to become filters. Ironically Jesus modeled this so well in his life on earth and especially while dying on the cross.

#### **Filter:**



Pastor Randy shared that they were in the process of moving to a house that had well water. When they arrived they noticed what is pictured above in their garage.

Randy learned from a water expert that the well water contained heavy toxins and impurities, even arsenic. This filter system takes in all the impurities to its system and pure water comes out the other side.

Jesus death on the cross took all the hate and gave back love, grace, forgiveness and blessing. He took murder and brought forth life. To be like Jesus, we function as a filter to those things that would divide us.

***“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.”***

***(Ephesians 2:14-16)***

Jesus died to destroy the barrier and “dividing wall of hostility” and make two groups into one, “one new humanity”. So our identity is not first and foremost our race, our sex, sexual identity, political persuasion or a hundred other things.

The matter of the fact is, we have more in common with other believers who may look at things differently than unbelievers who would agree with our opinions on politics, etc.

We first and foremost find our identity in Christ, as a son or daughter of God. God's answer to the hate we see around us, is one new person. I am this first, which shapes everything else and it flows out of our identity in Christ.

**“We know who we are, because we know whose we are”**

Jesus told us in John 13:35,

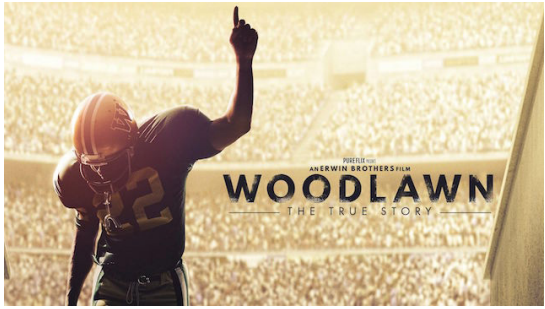
***“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”***

2 Corinthians 5:17-19 points out something important to us;

***“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation”.***

Not only are we reconciled to him, but he;

*“gave us the ministry of reconciliation”.*



One great example of this, is the movie “Woodlawn”. This is a true depiction of the events at Woodlawn high school in 1973, in Birmingham Alabama. The movie displays the power of the Gospel in the midst of hatred, racism and terrible hostility.

*“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.”*

*(Ephesians 2:12)*

The Father wants us to remember that we were once on the outside looking in, separated from Christ. This will help us live out the love we have received.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. For us who are studying this lesson while the terrible events are unfolding in Charlottesville, Virginia, what are you feeling? “It will never change”, “hopeless” “scared” or? Pastor Randy pointed to the fact that the true battle was not against flesh and blood but the enemy of our souls, revealing the true nature of evil in our world. We will be studying this in the weeks to come, but how do you see this event and its correlation to spiritual warfare?
2. After reading the Ephesians 2 passage, discuss these areas: what is the primary emphasis of our passage? Who actually builds these walls and barriers? Have you seen people, maybe yourself, who have taken God’s blessing and actually made a wall or barrier out of it? Even circumcision, that was a “sign of God’s covenant”, became a point of hostility between the Jews and Gentiles. Can you think of other examples in people’s lives today?
3. If you were one of those that felt hopeless because of these current events, understand that the victory at the cross was a triumph over all the works of the enemy, including hate and hostility. At the top of page 3 of your notes, we learned; “Jesus had to destroy hate and hostility; he actually absorbed them into his own flesh”. What does this mean to you? Ironically Jesus was killed by hate in order to destroy hate; again what does this mean to you? (Pretty deep stuff, hang in there!)
4. Discuss what it means to be a Filter verses a Conduit. Don’t miss the notes at the bottom of page 4 and how Jesus became our filter and the challenge for us to be a filter with all this hate and hostility around us.
5. Starting on page 5, we read in Ephesians 2:14-16, that God has made us, “one new humanity”. What does this mean to you? Also discuss our identity; refer to your page 5 notes.
6. In 2 Cor. 5:17-19 we are told that not only are we reconciled to him, but he “gave us the ministry of reconciliation”. How does this play-out in your life?