

First, I want to express my appreciation to Pastor Mike, Pastor Lyall and the Board of Elders for the opportunity to highlight the ministry of TWR and consider the message of peace and hope that it presents across the world. This summer & fall we have been focussing our attention on being **Strong in the Lord**, and being **Stronger Together** and I would like to build on that foundation this morning.

Please open your Bibles to Ephesians 2 and follow along as I read from verse 11 to 18. Let's notice how often and in how many ways, the concept of either being divided or being united together occur.

¹¹ 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. 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**. ¹⁷ And he came and preached **peace** to you who **were far off** and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him **we both have access in one Spirit to the father.**"

Prayer:

The need for peace is universal.

Mankind seems to have an uncanny knack of dividing the world into two classes of people. These two classes might be the Irish and those who wish they were; or Jews/Gentiles; or us/them; or our particular group/their particular group, whatever that might be.

When we were reading the passage in Ephesians a few moments ago, did you notice how frequently the idea of being different, or being outsiders or being alienated in some way occurred?

In verse 11, we read about 'the uncircumcision'. We can easily miss the animosity and contempt reflected in the term 'uncircumcision' when it was used by those known as 'the circumcision', the Jews.

The derision included in this term 'uncircumcision' went back at least to when David spoke about Goliath in I Sam. 17:26 ". . . who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

In verse 12 we saw such words as, separated, alienated, strangers, 'having no hope', without God. Is it possible that some of these terms accurately describe someone who is here this morning? Do you feel like that this morning? Are you an outsider? Or are you a believer in Christ? Have you been born again by the Spirit of God, or not? If you have not yet been born again, let me remind you that God does not wish anyone to perish, but calls everyone to repentance & faith in Christ as Savior & Lord (2 Pet 3:9).

Did you know that Islam divides the world into two parts as well.

They use the terms '**Dhar-ul Islam**' and '**Dhar-ul Harb**' to divide the world into two distinct groups. In English these terms mean the '**territory of Islam**' and the '**territory of war**'. **The message contained in these terms** is clear. Any people group which does not live under Islamic control, is considered as remaining to be conquered. They live in the '**territory of war**'.

But the idea of conflict doesn't stop there. Many people who used to live in the 'territory of war', now live in the 'territory of Islam' but they probably feel they are still living in a war-zone. Consider the Syrian people today. More than 100,000 of them have been killed & a further 2,000,000 are living in refugee camps as a result of the fighting between **two different groups within Islam**.

Similar animosity can be seen between the Sunni & Shia branches of Islam in Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen or any other Muslim country in the world. Peace does not exist between these two main branches of Islam, let alone between Islam and other religious groups.

More than 30 years ago, the UN passed a resolution proclaiming an International Day of Peace and, as usual, it was celebrated on September 21 again this year. But there was no celebration of peace in **Syria** that day, nor at the Westgate shopping centre in **Nairobi** where 72 were killed, nor at the funeral in **Baghdad** where more than 60 people were killed, or the next day when 75 were killed by a bomb outside All Saints Church in **Peshawar, Pakistan** or in numerous other places where Islamic extremists were waging war against people who would not submit to their ideology.

In the west, Muslim leaders often speak of Islam as the religion of peace. Every day, on the sidewalk outside the Eaton Centre in Toronto, they set up a book table & promote Islam as a religion of peace. However, our daily news broadcasts portray a very different story.

Isn't it ironic that attacks on people in Syria **because of their religion** did not start a couple of years ago. They began at least 2,000 years ago! In Acts 9:1 we read "But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus (Syria), so that if he found any belonging to the way (i.e. Christians), men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem". But God intercepted Saul that day, which was a great surprise to a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. Saul had been blinded by a flash of light from heaven, and the Lord asked Ananias to go and heal him. In **verse 13** Ananias said, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name." **15** But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before **the Gentiles** and kings **and the children of Israel**. And God used Saul powerfully to bring the message of peace to both **Jews and Gentiles**.

Social peace is a legitimate desire.

Peace in society, or what we might call 'social peace', is a legitimate desire for any people. Numerous scriptures affirm the pursuit of social peace as a valid goal.

Psalms 34:14. Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

2 Corinthians 13:11. ". . . live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

Hebrews 12:14. Strive for peace with everyone

1 Peter 3:10-11. For whoever desires to love life and see good days . . . let him seek peace and pursue it.

It is a wonderful privilege to live in a society where peace flourishes. Let us thank God for being able to gather together in worship today, or to go shopping tomorrow, or to attend a funeral the next day,

without fear of attack. But living in peace with our fellow-man is only a small part of the story. An even more important aspect of peace, is to be at peace with God.

The source of peace is Jesus Christ:

The Bible tells us that the source of peace is not found in any religion or philosophy or political system. It is found in a Person, (Eph. 2:14) and that person is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Jeshua, Yaweh, the Prince of Peace, Emmanuel, God with us. He is the One who set aside His glory and took on Himself the form of man, so that He could identify with us, and die as a satisfactory and sufficient substitute for us, to pay the penalty of our sin and reconcile us to God! **That** is the message of peace that people in Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Kenya, Nigeria and everywhere else need to hear, if they ever hope to experience real peace.

Peace is not cheap although it is offered to us freely. Paul wrote this epistle to a mainly Gentile group of people in Ephesus, who realized they had been far away from God. But the Jewish readers were also far away from God, forgetting that God had appointed them to be a light to the Gentiles (Isaiah 49:6). In Ephesians 2:3 Paul says “we all (**Jews included**) once lived in the passions of our flesh . . . and were children of wrath like the rest of mankind”. The Jews were just like the Gentiles in this respect.

Time after time throughout the Old Testament, God would bless his people, delivering them from their enemies or oppressors, and then they would rebel against Him and go back into idolatry. So God would discipline them, and call them back to Himself once more. In the 400 years immediately before Jesus came into this world as the Prince of Peace, God had not spoken once to His people, Israel, through a prophet. They were far from Him, and they were suffering under the yoke of their Roman oppressors.

The Jews had been chosen by God **to be His special people**, through whom the Saviour of the world would come. No other people had such a privilege, and they became proud. They looked down on everyone else, calling them the ‘uncircumcision’, maligning them because they had no covenantal relationship with God. The non-Jews, or Gentiles, were without hope and without God in the world.

But the Jews essentially turned their backs on their privileged position. They rejected God’s messengers, the prophets, and refused their calls to repentance. Oh, they continued to practise their religious rituals, but time after time, **they neglected Him**. They pursued other priorities, and did not worship God with their whole heart, much like some of us here this morning.

The message of peace is declared around the world.

And God has raised up the ministry of Trans World Radio, the largest broadcasting network in the world to share this message of **peace with God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ**, to hopeless and despairing millions in the Middle East and across the world.

The message of the gospel in Christ, the message of peace that is available only in Christ, the message of how a person can be reconciled to God, is the message that TWR broadcasts on a daily basis in some 230 languages around the world. Most of the world’s population can hear this message of peace in their own language. People **need to hear and believe this message** if they are ever going to experience the peace and reconciliation with God, that Christ purchased for them on the cross.

It is fascinating for me to recall that Paul Freed, the founder of TWR, grew up in Syria and in Palestine, where his parents served as Alliance missionaries for 27 years. Dr. Freed wanted to reach them with this message of peace, but peace must seem like a distant dream to people living there these days.

If Colleen Shoemaker were standing here today, she could explain how TWR shares this message of peace and hope with women in more than 60 languages in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

If Rejean Joly were here, he would explain how God is using our radio and TV broadcasts, as well as the internet to spread this message in French throughout Quebec, France and French West Africa.

If William Tsui, the director of our Chinese ministry were here, he would share about the ministry's impact across China and beyond.

If Tony, the director of our Persian ministry were standing here, he would explain how God is using our Persian broadcasts to change people's lives in Iran and surrounding countries. But he is not here today.

Instead of having Tony or one of our other ministry directors, explain what, how and where we broadcast, and how God is using those broadcasts, we have some special guests with us this morning. These dear friends ***listened*** to our broadcasts for many years while living in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Shahri family came to Canada almost a year and a half ago. I would like you to meet them, hear some of their background and appreciate what the broadcasts meant to them, while living in Isfahan, Iran. Please join me in welcoming Davoud, Mina, Niloufar and Danial Shahri with us this morning.

For the sake of time, Danial has agreed to be the spokesman for the family. Hopefully, he will have time to include a synopsis of what caused him to flee Iran in late 2010, and the rest of the family to join him as asylum seekers in Turkey. Eventually they were granted refugee status by the UN, and subsequently accepted by the Canadian government to come to Canada as permanent residents in May 2012.

Danial, please come and share **your** family's story with **our** church family.

Danial: Testimony

My father was born blind and since it was considered a disgrace in Iranian society to have a handicapped child, his parents gave him to a government run orphanage where he stayed until he was 3.

At that time, foreign missionaries were going to different cities in Iran looking for blind children who might be transferred to them for ongoing care, and my dad was entrusted to them. The missionaries faithfully explained the gospel, and dad trusted Christ as his Saviour when he was 6 or 7 years old. When he was about 14, Pastor Sayah baptized him upon confession of his faith. After the revolution Pastor Sayah was martyred for his faith in Christ.

My dad was about 18 years old when he first heard a TWR broadcast coming from Radio Monte Carlo. From then on, he would listen to the broadcast every night. Sometimes he would invite other residents at the orphanage to listen with him, and often times they would do so. Some of them said, not only is Davoud a Christian, but his radio is Christian also.

Being blind and living in Iran, where Christian materials are not readily accessible, the radio broadcasts were a rich source of Christian teaching for my dad. He said, as we all know, faith comes by hearing, and hearing from the word of God. The programs helped him grow in his faith and in his knowledge of God's word. They gave him access to a consistent source of Christian sermons, songs and teachings which would not have been possible without the TWR broadcasts.

One morning he went to work and one of his colleagues told him that he listened to a Christian radio program and he suddenly started to sing a Christian song he had heard from the radio station. That

happened in their office in a government insurance company! I remember my dad was overjoyed that day, firstly to know that his colleague was listening to Christian radio programs and that he remembered that Christian song and sang it back to him in their office.

In another instance, one of my dad's blind friends told him that he listened to the Christian radio programs on a regular basis and that when Brother Tony spoke about Jesus on the radio, he could not help but listen to his words. That friend of my dad was also raised by German missionaries, but unfortunately hadn't yet given his heart to Jesus. However, these radio programs kept feeding him with the word of God after the missionaries had to leave the country as a result of the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

My mother was born with very limited sight, and became completely blind by the age of 6. Her parents left her at an orphanage in Tehran but when she was about 1 year old, she was transferred to an orphanage in Isfahan which was operated by missionaries from England.

One time, my mom received a radio from one of her sponsors in England and she began to listen to the TWR broadcasts as well. The teaching and the consistent Christian life style of the missionaries formed such a deep impression on my mom, that she put her faith in Christ when she was about 13 years old.

When my dad and mom were in primary school, they lived in the same orphanage and knew each other. However, at about age 10 the boys were moved to a different orphanage operated by German missionaries. On Sundays everyone (boys & girls) would attend the same church services. During their youth, my dad and mom had some contact with each other during Bible Study classes and various social activities following the church services.

After my dad found a job, he started praying for a Christian wife. He firmly believed that a Christian should only marry another believer. As he was praying in this way, he was getting to know the girls who lived in the other orphanage. He was attracted to my mom mainly because of her faithfulness to the Lord. He also liked her personality and I think she liked his music. (pic 1)

My dad and mom began to correspond simply as brothers and sisters in Christ, but these letters gradually became love letters. They did not give the letter directly to the other person, but they would give their letters to the school bus driver, who would pass it on to the intended recipient.

At first, my mom was really not interested in marriage because she had been mistreated by other men in the past. If it was not for my dad's kind and Christ-like personality and behaviour, she would not have been willing to consider marriage. Mom saw the work of Christ in him & was convinced that he was different than other men. They were married in Isfahan in 1983. (pic 5)

By this time, my dad was working as a telephone operator and my mom, as an assistant radiology technician. They rented a house within the church compound where they could live securely. In the following years, God graciously gave Niloo and me to them and our family lived in this compound until we fled from Iran. (pic 6 and 8)

You know, those radio broadcasts were part of our life. We always listened to them as a source of Christian material that was not readily accessible. When we had new believers who didn't have the opportunity to access Christian resources on a regular basis we would encourage them to listen to TWR programs. Once when our church ran out of Bibles, my dad requested two Bibles from the radio program. They sent us two Bibles, but only one was delivered to us. The other had probably been seized by the Iranian postal service which is run by government.

Around 50 people altogether were part of our house church, including about 10 young people. We never actually all met together at one time in anyone's house. We actually divided everyone up into groups of 10-15, and kept them totally separated for security reasons.

TWR conducted conferences outside Iran which were essential to our house-church ministry inside the country. It was there that we received teaching to be able to disciple others. Also, it was possible for believers to be baptized, which could not be done inside the country because of persecution by the government.

Sometimes when we returned home from a conference, we brought a number of Bibles with us to use for evangelism, and to distribute among those who wanted a Bible to read. We also used them in our house church meetings.

We decided to develop an internet ministry, because of the wide use of the Internet among Iranian youth. We thought it was a golden opportunity to reach out to the younger generation and also provide content to new believers.

I was arrested in April 2010 because of my involvement in house church activities, as well as my role in developing a Christian website. I was held in prison for two weeks and subjected to intensive interrogation about our house church, about other believers, about outreach activities and about Bible conferences that we attended outside the country.

I was officially charged with a) spreading lies and desecrating Islamic holy figures, b) illegal internet activities related to the church, c) being involved in evangelistic activities and d) participating and contributing to an underground church. During the interrogation sessions, I was also informally accused of spying for foreign countries, of being a Zionist Christian and of undermining national security.

During those two weeks, the authorities summoned my sister, Niloufar, for interrogation as well. She was also involved in house-church activities and had attended a number of TWR and other Christian conferences abroad. She was subjected to intense interrogation, repeatedly threatened with imprisonment, and strongly warned against attending any more religious conferences. However, she was released at the end of the day. Praise the Lord!

When I was released I was told to wait for an order to appear in court, at a date to be determined later. I was committed to our house church and its plans for the years ahead. I had never considered the possibility of not being a part of its ministry but was eventually persuaded to flee to Turkey. The alternative was to stay in Iran, and face the likelihood of a 10-15 year prison sentence because of the serious charges against me. So, with great reluctance, and with my parents' blessing, I fled to Turkey later that year. Niloo & our parents followed a short time later. Our family was granted refugee status by the UN and we arrived in Toronto in May 2012. We praise the Lord for the peace He has given us as He led us from our home in Iran, to Turkey, and finally to our new home in Canada.

I continue to be involved in ministry to Iranian people and others from Islamic countries, while studying computer science at Seneca College in Toronto. Niloo is working part time in a doctor's office in Richmond Hill and also studying part-time to become a lab technician. My parents maintain a variety of physical activities as well as corresponding online with friends in Iran, the US, Africa and Europe, many of whom have also fled persecution in their homeland.

We praise the Lord for the privilege of being with you this morning and we want to thank you for your support for the vital ministry of Trans World Radio which means so much to our family.

Gerald's finishing words:

Friends, the message that TWR broadcasts today is primarily intended to tell lost, hopeless souls around the world how they can have peace with God and then to help believers grow in their new found faith. As Peter boldly told the Jewish rulers of his day "This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:11-12).

Dr. Paul Freed began the ministry of TWR 61 years ago using a 2,500 watt Army surplus transmitter in Tangiers, Morocco. The video you are about to see illustrates how greatly the technology has changed from that original analog transmitter, and the static that was so common then, to the digital technology, that we use today to proclaim the message of peace and hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Following the video, Pastor Lyall will come to conclude the service. If you would like to pick up any literature or talk with one of the TWR staff, please stop at the table in the South Foyer immediately following the service. Thank you.

TWR VIDEO: (*TWR_ Speaking Hope to the World*) (5 minutes)

Pastor Lyall: Close service (and receive offering for TWR).

Worship team: Final song (while offering is being received).

Benediction: Pastor Lyall