

Christ is Your Peace
Ephesians 2:14-18 (11/12/17)
Ernie Godshall
Faith Bible Church
Evansville, Indiana

Ephesians 2:14-18 *For He Himself is our **peace**, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing **peace**, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. 17 And he came and preached **peace** to you who were far away, and **peace** to those who were near; 18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.*

Welcome to a verse by verse study of Ephesians. We're in chapter two and God is teaching us about the church. The church is the body of Christ and consists of all people everywhere who have bowed their hearts in faith and repentance to Jesus Christ. As seen in our text, the heart and foundation of the church is the cross of Jesus Christ. When Christ died on that cross, He accomplished four major things, truths my seminary professor called sixteen cylinder words. You can use the shape of the cross to remember them. God-ward is Christ's great work of propitiation when He satisfied God's holy demands against sin by suffering the wrath of God in our place. Sin-ward is Christ's work of redemption. Through the cross Christ released us from the penalty and power of sin; we've been forgiven and set free. Man-ward is the result of the first two, what J. I. Packer calls "the sum and substance of the gospel," the great work of reconciliation. Through the cross God reconciled His enemies to Himself, making peace between God and man. The Satan-ward aspect of the cross is the destruction of Satan; Christ destroyed the work of the devil. Propitiation, redemption, reconciliation, and the destruction of Satan—these are four major accomplishments of Christ on the cross.

RECONCILIATION

This morning we're looking at the man-ward work of Christ for Jews and Gentiles and how He reconciled both groups to God, thereby establishing peace. Most of us fail to reflect and realize how precious peace with God really is. I'm not talking about the peace we know in our hearts, but the fact that we can actually have peace with the Almighty God. Even though rejected and ridiculed by those who have no idea who God really is, Jonathan Edwards' famous sermon was right on. We really are "sinners in the hands of an angry God." If you are not in Christ, if you are not trusting personally in Christ as your Lord and Savior, you are indeed a sinner in the hands of an angry God. God in His holiness must and will judge all sin wherever it is found. But the most wonderful news you will ever hear is that God is also a loving, gracious God and has done everything necessary through His Son to reconcile you to Himself. In Christ we become God's child and are loved tenderly in the arms of our heavenly Father.

Listen to this astounding verse:

2 Corinthians 5:19, *God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*

How did He do this?

2 Corinthians 5:21, *He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

Our passage this morning unfolds this most important doctrine of reconciliation.

First, you will never find true peace with you God outside of Jesus Christ, His Son. The world is constantly talking about peace, making peace treaties, and holding peace talks. People are looking for peace through therapy and medication and all kinds of activities, but they will never find it outside of Christ. Although they can't recognize it, the world's biggest problem is they don't have peace in their hearts because they are sinners and don't have peace with God. James 4 says we have conflicts and fights and jealousies and anger and hatred and bitterness and strife and division and war for one reason.

The root cause of all conflict is the sin at war in our hearts. We are born sinners and sinners get in each other's way, and so there is much conflict in marriages and families and between neighbors and tribes and villages and nations.

When Don Richardson took his family to Irian Jaya fifty or so years ago, he found himself among three villages that were at constant war. He taught them the gospel, but discovered that these people honored the courage of traitors and so they laughed at Jesus as a weakling and admired Judas as their hero. When the Richardson family announced to the villages that they were going to leave the area, the natives wanted them to stay. So in order to convince the Richardsons to stay, the natives decided they would make peace with their hated enemies. How did they attempt to make peace? One man ran from his tribe over to his hated foe carrying his infant son as a peace child. This was the price for peace. By doing this, the enemy tribe knew this man could be trusted and hostilities ended. Finally the Richardson saw a way of explaining Christ. They used the analogy between Christ and that peace child and explained Christ as the great Peace Child from God to us sinners.

Ephesians 2:14 announces, "For He Himself is our peace." Jesus Christ is the only way to peace with God, and with others. When you have a quarrel or get upset with your spouse or co-worker or fellow student, ask yourself, "Has God brought me into His peace? Do I have any right to fight with my brother or sister or hold grudges?" Christ is your Peace, your Prince of Peace, the great Reconciler between you and God. He is your peace and by His grace and strength, instead of being a trouble maker, you can be a peace maker. Blessed are the peace makers. Only with Jesus Christ will you find true, heart changing peace with God and others.

Second, Christ has done everything needed for you to live in peace with every other person in the body of Christ – vv. 14b and 15.

Ephesians 2:14-15, For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make (create - ESV) the two into one new man, thus establishing peace.

Now we get into a difficult passage. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said this is the most closely knit argument in Scripture. Let's stand back a minute. Paul is explaining how Christ has brought two long-term enemies together into one body in the church. These two groups of people, Jews and Gentiles, hated each other and Jew-Gentile enmity has continued to our day. Anti-Semitism is still alive and well. It didn't end in the gas chambers of Auschwitz. But one of the most amazing, supernatural realities of the first century church is how God through Christ reconciled Jews and Gentiles, bringing them together from all over the Mediterranean world to worship Christ side by side. How did Christ do this?

Let's look at the temple in the first century to see how divisive a culture it was. In the temple area was a chest-high wall separating the Gentiles from the Jews with a warning in Latin and Greek forbidding Gentiles to come any further: "Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death." There were also other divisions: the court of the women, then Jews, then priests. Finally once a year the high priest could go into the area known as the "holy of holies." He entered through a huge curtain, maybe four inches thick, 60 feet high and 30 feet wide, which separated the holy of holies from the holy place. Everything in the temple spoke of separation and exclusion. When Jesus hung on the cross outside the city of Jerusalem and experienced the real wrath of God you and I deserved, He cried out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" Then He cried out, "It is finished." And finally He cried out, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." At that final cry of Jesus on the cross, that huge curtain in the temple back in Jerusalem ripped from top to bottom. God did that! And that powerful act of God symbolized that everything which separated Jews and Gentiles and everything which separated sinners from God had been destroyed.

You see this in verse 14: Christ broke down the dividing wall, the barrier. In verse 15: Christ abolished the enmity – the hatred between Jews and Gentiles. How did He do this? He did it by removing the barrier of the broken law that had always separated Jews and Gentiles. He had completely fulfilled the just requirements that the Mosaic Law required against sinners. He fulfilled every aspect of the civil and moral

law that we had broken. He lived a perfect life for you and me, and He died the death, suffered the wrath the law required against our sin. The Law of Moses in all its aspects not longer divided the two groups.

And what's the result? He established peace between Jew and Gentile. In fact, He created out of these two groups and all the various groups in the entire world this new united body, the church. Don't miss this. The church is God's new humanity. Men have tried to create a new man throughout history, but it never works and sometimes resulted in the murder of millions of people. They've tried the liberal new man, the socialist new man, the communist new man, the fascist new man, and the transhumanist new man. Whatever each of them means, they are complete failures. This is man's effort at imposing a re-engineered society on people. John Piper details the 20th century efforts of godless social and political engineering in his book *A Peculiar Glory*. Six million Jews murdered in Germany, 60 million in the soviet regime, forty million under Chairman Mao, and over a million slaughtered in the killing fields of Cambodia. All efforts to create a new man. All complete failures.

But look what God does through His Son for all those who bow the knee to Him. In Christ He created this new man, the church, the body of Christ. How? Not by force or genocide of enemies, but by reconciliation through His cross, bringing about peace. There are no divisions in this body. Everyone is called to receive and love everyone else, regardless of their national origin. We're all going to heaven as one new man. Heaven won't have Chinatown and Little Italy and the French Quarter and a British colony, African Americans over here and Latinos over there, Anglo Saxons go there, Jewish believers here and Arab Christians over there. Vegans, Vegetarians, and Red Meaters won't have their separate places at the table. Remember the Corinthians? This was their problem: "We're of Paul. We're of Apollos." (1 Cor. 1:12). Today we hear similar distinctions. We're KJVers. We keep the Sabbath. We're of the No TV church. And so it goes. We may speak different languages, have different facial features and skin colors, and have different styles of music, but we are to be united. Listen to Romans 14:17, "for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." This is the new humanity Christ has created through His demolishing all the barriers that bred hostility. But now Paul takes us to the God-ward side of reconciliation.

Third, you must understand the reconciling work of God for sinners through His Son – v. 16

Ephesians 2:16, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

To reconcile means to thoroughly and completely change the relationship of two people, or in this case, between God and sinners. Jesus told us what to do when we know we've offended someone. Even when we're in the middle of a church meeting and ready to join in worship and we remember that we offended a brother, here's what to do:

Matthew 5:23-24 "Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

First be reconciled. You're all set ready to sing songs of worship and you remember how you offended a brother recently. Do whatever it takes to bring about a complete and thorough change from offense to friendship. Humble yourself, go and confess how wrong you were when you said that nasty thing, and hopefully your brother will quickly forgive you and receive you as his friend. Then you come back and join in worshiping God.

That's what reconciliation means. We were God's enemies, offending God with all our pride and selfishness and lawbreaking, again, sinners in the hands of an angry God. But the heart of the gospel is that Jesus put to death, killed, and eliminated that enmity and God's anger toward us. He did this by suffering in our place as our substitute, by taking that wrath, by redeeming us from sin and removing the barrier of the broken law and the curse it had on us. Through His work on the cross, Jesus completely demolished every barrier between us sinners and the holy God of the universe. Christ reconciled every believer to God, regardless of color, nationality, culture, and brought us into eternal friendship with God Almighty. Romans 8:1 puts it like this, "There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ

Jesus.” Why? Christ did for us what the law could not do. The law could never bring us into a reconciled state. It only shows us our sin and inability to please God. The Law condemns us. But Christ took our condemnation, died in our place, and now we are reconciled to God. No wonder Packer says reconciliation is the sum and substance of the gospel.

Fourth, God’s greatest of all gifts to sinners is peace through His Son – v. 17

Ephesians 2:17, and He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near.

What did the angels cry out when Jesus was born? Luke 2:14, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased." Here Jesus came, from heaven, God’s “Peace Child.” He’s called the Prince of Peace. He preached peace to the near and far ever since He made peace for sinners on that cross. Whenever the gospel is preached, Christ is preaching peace. He preached through the apostles and He also preaches through us. He’s preaching peace to you right now through His Word. Jesus is the only way to peace with your creator God. Jesus came and lived a perfect life and died a substitutionary death in the place of sinners. Come to Him and receive true and eternal peace. Come to Him now. When you trust in Christ, God imputes or places Christ’s perfect righteousness to you and imputes or places your sin and guilt, no matter how ugly and disgusting, to Christ on that cross when He died. You have no greater reason to praise God than for this great transaction on your behalf. Once you were God’s enemies, now you are friends forever with our God. Once shut out, now welcomed.

Fifth, do you value this new relationship Christ has gained for us with our heavenly Father? v. 18

Ephesians 2:18, for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.

Reconciliation is the heart and foundation of the church. Of all the groups and clubs and religions and organizations on planet earth, no matter what they claim, only one Person has the password and can give you access into the very presence of God. You can try a Masonic secret or an Islamic prayer or a Jewish chant or an eastern mantra; all will fail. The Pope and his indulgences won’t get you in. Your grandma or even your church won’t gain you access. None will gain you access. But Christ brings us right into the presence of God by His Spirit indwelling every one of His new creation forming the church.

SO WHAT?

J. I. Packer in his little book *God’s Words* said this, “Reconciliation is the very heart of the gospel, and must forever be the crowning theme of Christian praise.” Your peace with God is the most precious possession of your heart. And God Himself is the source of that peace.

How do reconciled people live? They live reconciling lives. God has made you His friend and brought you into His loving arms while you were His enemies. Now live like a reconciled person. This is why when things fall apart for you, when you get sideways with your spouse or some other relationship gets all tangled up, or you’re not getting what you want and you’re angry about it, you can respond as a reconciled sinner and handle conflict God’s way. First remember that God has reconciled you for no reason in you. Don’t dwell on what someone else has done or said to you, but consider how gracious God has been to you and let that guide your actions. A reconciled believer in Christ must walk in peace with others. Romans 12:18 says, “so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” Be quick to confess and quick to forgive. Refuse to hold bitterness or grudges. Pray for those who despise you.

Robert Louis Stevenson tells the story of two unmarried sisters who had a nasty falling out over some matter of theology. Each stood their ground and refused to reconcile and never talked again. They lived in the same house in one large room, but drew a chalk line to separate their two lives. They lived this way for years, hearing the other rattling the dishes and clopping across the wooden floor. They went to sleep each night hearing their “enemy’s” heavy breathing as they drifted off, refusing to reconcile, though both claimed to know God.

Don’t keep chalk lines; let Jesus remove them. He reconciled you to God. Now, as much as lies in you, live at peace with all men. That’s how a reconciled child of God lives in the body of Christ.