

World Peace – *Ephesians 2:14-18*

Introduction – Why does the world have such a hard time living in peace? James 4:1-3 addresses this. To summarize, we are at war with one another because of our pride and envy. Outside of Christ we cannot keep either of the two great commandments. Our secular world erroneously tries to lead the world to peace through Christ-less means, but these do not address our core problem. We are estranged from God and from one another due to our sinfulness. Or, as Larry Norman put it, "The Beatles said 'All you need is love' and then they broke up." Peace with one another eludes us apart from the gospel work of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

Christ is Our Peace – "*For He Himself is our peace...*" (Eph 2:14). The promise of the Messiah is that He would be the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6) and that He would be Israel's peace (Mic 5:5). This was proclaimed by the angels at Christ's birth, "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth Peace, Goodwill toward men*" (Luke 2:14). God did not make peace for Himself by destroying His enemies but by making them His friends through the reconciling work of His Son. Likewise, He did not bring peace to Israel ultimately by destroying their enemies but by reconciling Jew and Gentile in His Son Who is Peace.

"...thus making peace" (v15). Abolishing the badges of differences between Jew and Gentile, He selected neither Jew nor Gentile, but created "*a new man from the two, thus making peace.*"

"And He came and preached peace..." (v17). Literally, "Coming, He evangelized peace." The declaration of the Good News is the announcement of peace: peace with God and with one another. Jesus would say that His new commandment was this, "*love one another, as I have loved you*" (John 13:34-35). This would be the striking difference of the New Covenant community.

The End of Enmity – God had established a separation between Jew and Gentile. He did so, sanctifying to Himself the nation of Israel and establishing a holiness code which Paul describes here as "the law of commandments contained in ordinances" (v15). God had done this to redeem both groups and not just the Jews alone. There was a wall of separation between the Court of the Gentiles and the rest of the Temple with a warning sign that no Gentiles could cross over with the threat of death. This is probably the place where Paul was wrongly accused of bringing Trophimus, the Ephesian, into the Israelite portion of the Temple (Acts 21:27-29). The sinful nature of man (both Jew and Gentile) had allowed these distinctions to create enmity and hostility between nations. But this was God's point as well. Christ not only broke down the wall between man and God, He also broke down the wall between Jew and Gentile. All aspects of God's law, the moral as well as the ceremonial, were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, establishing the Way for peace in all relationships.

Having Made the Two One – What has the "*evangelization of peace*" done? It has "*made both one*" (v14), "*...so as to create in Himself one new man from the two...*" (v15). What God did through Jesus reconciled "*them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity*" (v16). The enmity is dead because the category of Jew and Gentile is now dead. The language used to describe the leaving and cleaving of two to be made one is strikingly similar to the language of God creating a new family in marriage – "*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh*" (5:31). And both, the joining of Jew and Gentile in one new man, as well as the joining together of a husband and a wife, are considered mysteries revealed through the work of Christ (3:1-7, 5:32).

The Unity We Have with One Another; The Love We Have for One Another – And so again, here is the only basis for all true reconciliation – the Cross of Jesus Christ. This theme will come up again and again in Ephesians, but let us consider some other Scriptures now –

What Jesus Said (John 15:9-17) – Jesus taught that an abiding love was ours in Christ and that abiding love would manifest itself in how we loved God and one another, fulfilling the two Great Commandments. In John 17:20-23, Jesus prayed for all who would be in Him that they would be one just as He and the Father were one and that that unity would be used by God to bring others to faith.

What John Said (1 John 3:11-18) – One of the assurances of our salvation is that we love one another. The church is the community of life, love and peace.

What Paul Said (Eph 2:18) – For everyone, there is only One Way to the Father and that is Jesus. And there is only One Person by which we have access and that is the Holy Spirit.

Peace at the World Level and Peace at all Individual Relationships – At best, two unbelievers or two unbelieving nations, can live together as cobelligerents or in an agreed upon cease-fire for a time. But they cannot live in true peace with one another because they have rejected Peace. They cannot live at peace with one another until they are at peace with God. Conversely, once a man is at peace with God, he is definitively at peace with his fellow brother and sister in Christ and by the Spirit of Christ will live this out. If he is not, he is either succumbing to father of lies or he is not in Christ Who is our Peace.

The Indicatives – Remember where we are in Ephesians. This is not a paragraph of commands but a paragraph of statements of fact. This is only true when we find ourselves in Christ and when we find ourselves seated with Him in His resurrection power (1:19-21).