

# CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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## CHRIST'S WORK IN CONSTITUTING HIS CHURCH

**Y**ou will often hear people quote the Bible to Support their particular position on some civil or political issue. Christianity has suffered a great deal from this type of abuse; and perhaps on no subject more than the subject of "peace". The common understanding of this term centers around two points: one, men desire peace in a world full of hostility, that is, people want to see war and bloodshed abolished; and two, men want peace of mind, a subjective disposition of calm and well-being. The trouble (very literally) is that sinful man can never possess peace, either outwardly or inwardly. He may convince himself in one way or another that he is at peace and has peace of mind, but apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ it is a Satanic delusion. Our understanding of peace is basically Greek. The Greek understanding of peace (*EIRENE*) was primarily negative, the mere absence of turbulence or conflict. The Hebraic sense is rooted in the word *SHALOM*. When the Jewish writers used the word *EIRENE*, they impregnated it with *SHALOM*, which understood peace more in a positive sense; not merely the absence of strife but the additional element of well-being, harmony and totality. The Pauline sense is even more emphatic. Peace is the result of a restored relationship where the wrath of God has been dealt with in Christ (cf. Rom 5:1ff), *EIRENE* is found over ninety times in the New Testament almost half (forty-three times) of these in letters of Paul. It is therefore an important concept in Paul's thinking, as our text will go on to show.

**REVIEW:** Paul is still seeking to communicate the "incomparably great power for us who believe" (1:19). The knowledge of that power is made known only by the Holy Spirit (1:17). It is illustrated by the resurrection of Christ and demonstrated in the lives of those who were dead in sin (2:1). It is solely by grace (2:8). It is extended to those who at one time were completely cut off from God's covenant dealings (2:11-13). God has done something in Christ. His purposes center on the Church, composed of Jew and Gentile. However, the Apostle is not content to let the matter rest there; he must unfold how God accomplished this fact. He has done something entirely new.

### **I. THE SOURCE OF PEACE: THE PEACE-MAKER (v. 14a)**

"For he himself is our peace." The Greek text puts the pronoun HE in the emphatic position. The conjunction connects the verse with what has just preceded it (v. 13). PEACE has the article (*EIRENE*). The article used with the predicate noun presents the predicate as something well known or as that which alone merits the designation; i.e., the only thing to be considered. Christ is THE PEACE. He is the "Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6). He promises HIS PEACE to His own (Jn. 14:27; 16:33). Angels sang at His birth, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth PEACE among men with whom he is pleased (Lk. 2:14). Our peace with God comes at His expense (Isa. 53:5; Rom 5:1ff). Because of Jesus Christ, God is "The God of Peace" (Rom. 15:33, 16:20; I Cor. 14:33; II Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9; I Th. 5:23; II Th. 3:16; Heb. 13:20, 21).

### **II. THE WORK OF THE PEACE-MAKER (14b-16)**

There was an obstacle to peace. First and foremost, it was man's enmity and hostility to God and God's judicial wrath against sinners. This had to be dealt with first. Also, the purpose of God entailed uniting Jew and Gentile as one in the Body of Christ, the Church; this necessitated removing another obstacle. In D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones's discussion of this passage there is a helpful summary of

what this powerful word “reconciliation” means. It has five parts, according to this writer: “It means *first* of all a change from a hostile to a friendly relationship. That is the simplest meaning, the most basic meaning . . .

In the *second* place, it does not merely mean a friendship after an estrangement, a mere doing away with the estrangement. It is not merely that it brings people into speaking terms again who formerly passed one another without even looking at each other. It means more; it means really bringing together again, a reuniting, a re-connecting. It carries that meaning.

In the *third* place, it is a word also that emphasizes the completeness of the action. It means that the enmity is so completely laid aside that complete amity follows . . . It is not a compromise, the kind of thing that happens so often when a conference has gone on for days and there has been a deadlock and somebody suddenly gets a bright idea and suggests introducing a particular word or formula, which just patches up the problem for the moment. It is not that. It is a complete action; it produces complete amity and concord where there was formerly hostility.

But in the *fourth* place, it also means this. It is not merely that the two partners to the trouble or the dispute or the quarrel have decided to come together. This word that the apostle uses implies that it is *one* of the parties that takes the action, and it is the *upper* one that does it. A part of this word indicates an action that comes down from above. It is the Greek word *kata*. . . It is not that the two sides come together as it were voluntarily; it is the one bringing the other into this position of complete amity and accord.

And finally, in the *fifth* place, the word carries the meaning that it is a restoration of something that was there before. Now our word ‘reconcile,’ which is really a transliteration of the Latin word, in and of itself suggests that. Re-concile! They were conciled before, they are now re-conciled, brought back to where they were.”<sup>1</sup>

- A. THE DIVIDING WALL OF HOSTILITY – What is meant by this? Some commentators have suggested that it refers to the barrier which separated the inner courts of the Jerusalem temple from the court of the Gentiles (cf. Acts 21:27ff). Other restrictions were placed upon Jewish women and laymen right up to the High Priest, who alone could enter the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement. This picture may be in the background, but surely the foremost thought is that personal hatred and hostility which existed between the groups. The bond of unity between the two is Christ. He is what they have in common. How is this accomplished? How was this peace made? Paul tells us first negatively and then positively:
1. **NEGATIVELY – CHRIST ABOLISHED (Gk. *KATARGESAS*, to make null and/or void) THE LAW (Note: *TON NOMON*) WITH ITS COMMANDMENTS AND REGULATIONS.** The law is a unit. Paul is not speaking simply of the ceremonial law. Men are not justified by the law (Gal. 3:19-4:5). But, on the other hand, the holy law of God is NOT abrogated by the law of faith (Rom. 3:31, 7:22, 13:8-10). To what, then, is Paul referring? The context has direct references to Jew and Gentile. The law created a division between the two (cf. 1 Kgs. 8:53; Deut. 33:3-4). Christ made void the divisive function of the law. The law was not given to Israel as a means of either justification or sanctification. It served to make a distinction between the Jew and Gentile and was identified with the external “ordinances”. The abolishing took place **IN HIS FLESH**: that is, by the agency of the Messiah’s death.
  2. **POSITIVELY – CHRIST CREATED IN HIMSELF ONE NEW MAN OUT OF THE TWO.** The word for NEW is *KAINOS*. There are two words in Greek for “new”; *NEOS*, which means new in reference to time, and *KAINOS*, which means “New in quality, new in character, unfamiliar, fresh, introducing something which has not been there before and which could not even have been there before”<sup>2</sup> The point is that Christ “creates” a new man. He does not turn a

Jew into a Gentile or a Gentile into a Jew. Peace is made in the new man, in Christ – nowhere else.

- B. THE MEANS BY WHICH CHRIST WROUGHT PEACE – THROUGH THE CROSS (Gk. *DIA TOU STAROU*, lit. by means of the cross). The cross reconciles man to God and man to man. Christ has PUT TO DEATH (Gk. *APOKTEINAS*, aorist participle, used to express means) THEIR HOSTILITY. This is done by the death of Christ in His physical body and He unites Jew and Gentile in ONE BODY, which is the Church. The price of peace, both with God and between men, was the blood of Christ.

### III. THE PROCLAMATION OF THE PEACE-MAKER (v. 17)

This does not primarily refer to the preaching of Christ during His earthly life, but to His cross-work. When the work of reconciliation was accomplished, then the “good news” was proclaimed. The message of peace is preached because of the death of the peace-maker, who made peace by means of His death and in His death slew the enmity of Jew and Gentile. The expression TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY is directed to Gentiles and TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR is addressed to Jews (cf. Isa. 57:19). It is only by the cross and after the cross that such a message can be preached.

### IV. THE RESULT OF PEACE (v. 18)

Through Christ Jesus men have peace with God and peace with each other. But specifically, Jew and Gentile in Christ have ACCESS (Gk. *PROSAGOGEN*, approach lit. an introduction cf. Rom 5:2). We have the freedom to approach God (cf. Heb. 4:16, 10:22). In light of the preceding verses (2:1ff) this is astounding. It is by Christ IN ONE SPIRIT UNTO THE FATHER. Note again the Trinitarian emphasis (comp. Eph. 4:4; I Cor. 12:13).

CONCLUSION: How are men ever to know peace? Apart from Jesus Christ there is no peace, nor will this world ever know peace outside of the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah wrote, “There is no peace, says the LORD, for the wicked” (48:22 and 57:21). The peace that Christ brings is not by His example or teachings, but by His atoning death. The reconciliation that He effects is by means of His shed blood. Unless men have been stained with His blood and washed whiter than snow, they will continue to stain themselves with the blood of other men. All the efforts of the world to bring about peace outside of Christ are doomed to complete failure. All seeking after peace apart from Christ is an illusion. He is our peace. I like the way the late Jim Boice applied our text. “There are two final points. *First*, if you are in Christ, then in God’s sight you are one with every other believer – whether Jew or Gentile, male or female, bond or free – regardless of any distinction whatever. Therefore, you must act like that. You may not see eye to eye with every other Christian on everything. No one expects you to. But you must not break with them! And you must realize that regardless of your differences of opinion, the unity that you have with them is greater than the unity you will ever have with anyone else in the world, even if the unbeliever is of the same class, race, nationality, sex (or whatever) as you are. Your duty is to live in harmony with these brothers and sisters in Christ, and to let the world know that you are members of one spiritual family. That in itself should be a large portion of your witness. *Second*, if you are not yet “in Christ,” you should learn that in the final analysis the solution to your most basic problems is to be found in that relationship. That is, it is to be found in your personal relationship to him. There is an objective side to Christ’s work. It is described as his “making peace” between men and “reconcile[ing] both . . . to God through the cross” (vv. 15, 16). It is what Jesus did on Calvary by his death. But there is a subjective side as well. It is the part in which we are joined to him by faith as we hear and respond to the gospel. This is why verse 17 speaks of preaching: “He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.” So the final question is this: Are you in him? If not, you remain divided from countless other human beings and, what is much worse, from God himself. If you come to him, he will remove the barrier and make you a part of that new humanity that he is uniting in himself.”<sup>3</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> D. Martin Lloyd Jones *God’s Way of Reconciliation: Studies in Ephesians 2* (Baker, 1972) p. 224

<sup>2</sup> W. Barclay, *The Letter to the Galatians and Ephesians* (St. Andrew Press, 1958) p. 128

<sup>3</sup> J.M. Boice, *Ephesians: An Expository Commentary* (Baker, 1997) p. 87