**Christ Is Our Peace, Part 3**

**Ephesians 2:15-16**

**September 6, 2020**

1. Introduction
   1. Back in the 90s there was a popular bumper sticker Christians would put on their cars: “No Jesus, No Peace. Know Jesus, Know Peace.”
      1. I haven’t seen that bumper sticker in years and years, but it seems like such a relevant statement for our cultural moment.
      2. The slogan that has become popular in the world today is, “No justice, no peace.”
         1. The bumper sticker was not a threat of violence against those who did not know Christ, but rather a plea for people to look to Jesus to find peace.
         2. But the modern slogan of “No justice, no peace,” has become a threat of violence.
         3. A threat that if you do not give us what we want, what we define as justice, you will not have peace.
         4. We will burn down your businesses and riot in your streets and chase you out of restaurants and potentially assault or even murder you.
         5. And the thing about this current statement about “no peace” is that it shouldn’t shock anyone who knows the Bible at all.
         6. The world has no concept of genuine peace, and it has no mechanism to achieve it.
         7. The best the world can hope for in terms of peace is that their enemies will begrudgingly surrender under threat of violence and death.
      3. If we go back a decade prior to the 90s, we had Ronald Reagan’s mantra: peace through strength.
         1. What Reagan meant by that was that if the United States had the strongest military in the world, then the United States and our allies would enjoy peace.
         2. And the reality is that there is a lot of truth to that at a superficial level because if you have the most power and the greatest military and the biggest bombs, then people will think twice before they attack you.
         3. That’s just the way it works in the world.
         4. But what that didn’t address, and what the world can never address, is that just because people don’t attack you does not mean that they don’t want to attack you.
         5. You might be able to enjoy quiet and tranquility at an external level, but you will not enjoy true peace because there is still hostility.
         6. And it’s only a matter of time before your enemies try to figure out some other way to attack you and defeat you.
         7. These are temporal, political solutions to a spiritual problem, the problem of division in the world and in the hearts of men, the problem of sin that creates this hostility toward one another.
      4. But we can go back further still, to the time that Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians.
         1. We perhaps think of this era as a violent and dangerous time because Rome was a violent and imperialistic empire.
         2. But for people who were Roman citizens living a normal, godless life, this was one of the greatest periods of peace the world had ever known.
         3. This was the time of what was known as the *pax romana*, the Roman peace, when Rome had established itself as a mighty empire and the Roman emperors were seen and even worshiped as gods.
         4. In general, wars and battles were uncommon for the typical Roman citizen just trying to get by, and life was fairly tranquil in comparison to the history of the world leading up to this time.
         5. But that was all external because Rome had the biggest guns, and so everyone sort of kept their head down and did what they were supposed to because if they didn’t, the wrath of the empire would fall on them.
      5. When Paul, then, writes Ephesians and asserts in Eph 2:14 that Christ Himself is our peace, you have to understand this was a shot across the bow at the emperor and the Imperial cult that claimed it had brought peace to the world.
         1. Paul exposes human peace for what it is, which is really just people waiting for an opportunity to express their hatred for one another.
         2. It is a superficial peace where everything looks peaceful externally but underneath the surface there is a seething hatred and rage.
         3. Paul reminds the Ephesians, who were mostly Gentiles, that they should not feel at home in the *pax Romana* because that was not their real peace.
         4. In fact, it wasn’t even worthy of the term peace.
         5. Our peace is not achieved through empires or kings or armies or weapons of war.
         6. Our peace is achieved through a bloodied, wooden cross where the Son of God died for us.
         7. This peace not only causes former hostilities to cease but it creates genuine love and friendship between parties that were at one time hostile toward one another.
         8. This is a real and deep and true peace.
         9. Christ Himself is our peace and, while we might be thankful for other things that create a superficial tranquility that allows us to live godly lives in dignity and quietness, we must never give the impression that any peace brought about by worldly means is true peace.
         10. As Christians we must always put things the way the Bible puts them, and we must therefore insist that the only source of peace between man and God and between man and his fellow man is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.
   2. We have been unfolding the first reason why Christ is our peace over the past couple weeks, namely because of…
2. What He accomplished (vv. 14-15)
   1. You can see what He accomplished in vv. 14-15.
      1. He made two groups one.
      2. He destroyed the dividing wall that separated them.
      3. And He did those things by abolishing the old covenant.
   2. Now, before we move on, I want to call your attention to the word **enmity** in v. 15.
      1. Notice that Christ abolished the Law with all of its various commandments and ordinances and decrees.
      2. And Paul also adds that He abolished **the enmity**.
         1. Our translation equates the enmity with the Law, and I think that is an appropriate way to handle the text here.
         2. But in what sense should we say that the Law was **the enmity**?
      3. One interpretation of this is that the enmity that Paul references is the enmity between Jews and Gentiles in Christ.
         1. We have already seen in v. 14 that this was the case, that Paul put an end to the barrier that separated Jews and Gentiles in Him.
         2. The obstacle, or the provocation of the hostility between these two groups, was destroyed when the Old Covenant was rendered inoperative.
         3. And so in one sense it is true that the Law was a source of enmity that God ordained between Jews and Gentiles.
         4. But I don’t think that is the primary reference here when Paul mentions the enmity in connection with the Law.
      4. Another way to understand this, and I think a better way, is to understand the enmity in v. 15 as the enmity the Law created between God and man.
      5. Let me give you a few reasons for that.
         1. First, notice the structure of the passage.
            1. Verse 14 begins by noting what Christ did to reconcile Jews and Gentiles to one another.
            2. The second statement, which begins in v. 15, is what we are wondering about, so we’ll leave it aside for now.
            3. The third statement, in the second half of v. 15, is parallel to the first statement in v. 14, dealing with horizontal alienation, showing how Christ has made peace between two groups that were at war.
            4. But the fourth statement, found in v. 16, very clearly is not about the horizontal problem of people hostile toward one another but the need to be reconciled to God.
            5. We have been reconciled to God, see?
            6. And how were we reconciled to God?
            7. Through the cross where Jesus put to death **the enmity**.
            8. Virtually all commentators are agreed that the enmity in v. 16 is a reference to the enmity between God and man because the reconciliation in v. 16 is between God and man.
            9. If we put this together, then, we have a statement about two groups being one first and third.
            10. Then we have a statement about the enmity being abolished and the enmity being killed in statements two and four, and the fourth statement clearly a reference to the vertical alienation that endangers our souls.
            11. The structure of the passage, then, seems to indicate that the enmity Paul has in view in v. 15 is not between Jews and Gentiles but between God and man.
         2. Second, this seems likely because of how **enmity** is used in Romans 8:7.
            1. Outside of Ephesians 2:14 and 16, enmity is only used four other times in the NT, so it is not a terribly common word.
            2. One of those places is Romans 8:7, which is very similar in concept to Eph 2:14-16.
            3. Without going into too much a digression on Romans, the point Paul is making is that apart from the Spirit through the work of Christ, we are dominated by the flesh and unable to please God.
            4. This is the situation of being under the Law rather than being under grace.
            5. Notice what He says in Romans 8:7…
            6. The hostility, which is the same word in Eph 2:14, 16, is between man and God, and it is because life under the Law is life lived in the flesh.
            7. And so as long as the Law is operative, there is enmity between God and man because of man’s rebellion against God’s Law.
            8. To get rid of this hostility, what needs to happen?
            9. We need to live according to the Spirit, we need the Law to be rendered inoperative, we need to be in Christ.
            10. We need the work of Christ in Eph 2:15 on the cross to abolish the Law so that we might no longer have this hostility toward God but live by the Spirit a life characterized by peace, according to Rom 8:6.
            11. This parallel intrigues me, and I think it is a weighty argument that the enmity Christ abolished at the cross was the enmity between God and man created by the Law.
         3. There’s also a parallel in Colossians 2 that is so similar to Eph 2, it must be factored into how we understand this text.
            1. Look at Col 2:13-14…
            2. Verse 13 is basically a one verse summary of Eph 2:1-10!
            3. And then v. 14 looks very similar to the discussion of our reconciliation with God in Eph 2:11-22.
            4. The word **hostile** here is not the same as the word hostile in Eph 2, but it comes from a group of words that were all used to indicate division and hostility.
            5. Notice that the Law was hostile to us because of how many times we had violated it.
            6. The law became a certificate of debt with all of its decrees being against us because we did not obey them.
            7. And Christ took this debt, this law that pronounced death on us, and He removed it, canceled it, and nailed it to the cross when He died.
            8. The hostility thus was crucified when Christ was crucified, it was taken out of the way!
            9. We see once again that the Law, though being holy and righteous and good, was a source of enmity between God and man because man does not keep the Law.
            10. And so if the problem of alienation were ever to be solved, something had to be done about the Law and all of its decrees against us that brought the wrath of God upon us.
      6. It’s no wonder, then, that Paul calls the Law **the enmity** in Eph 2:15!
      7. Because of our sin, the Law was a source of hostility between God and man, and Christ had to render the law inoperative to deal with this problem of enmity.
   3. That, then, is what Christ did in vv. 14-15 to show that He Himself is our peace.
   4. Now, to show that He Himself is our peace, we also need to see…
3. The results of His work (vv. 15-16)
   1. What were the results of abolishing the old covenant and shattering the dividing wall and making Jews and Gentiles into one group?
      1. The words **so that** in v. 15 can indicate purpose or result.
      2. But when it comes to God, those ideas often merge because whatever God purposes ends up being the result!
      3. We might in our fallenness and finite minds intend to do something but have find out we had a very different result than we intended.
      4. We might think of a quarterback who intends to throw a pass to his receiver for a touchdown, but the result of the throw ends up being an interception and a touchdown for the other team.
      5. God never throws any interceptions.
      6. And so here we see the intended results of Christ’s work, and these intended results are the actual results as well.
      7. There are two results of Christ’s work in vv. 15-16…
   2. New creation (v. 15b)
      1. When we looked at v. 14, we raised the question, “What is the one group in which both groups were united?”
         1. We noted that for this to happen either one group had to join the other or both groups had to become something entirely new and leave their old groups behind.
         2. And here we find the answer.
      2. Christ created one new man out of the two groups.
         1. The word **made** is unfortunate here, because the Greek word is literally *created*, as the NASB marginal note indicates.
            1. This is a brand-new work of creation!
            2. God did not merely renovate one of the old groups and call it good.
            3. God created a new man, or perhaps more clearly, a new humanity.
         2. The key to understanding this new humanity is the phrase **in Himself.**
            1. This new humanity has a location, it has a sphere, it is created in Christ Himself.
            2. If we think about the old covenant and the old humanity, how was it divided?

You had those who were in Israel and under the Law, and you had those who were not in Israel and who were outside the covenants and estranged from God.

But the defining division of humanity, of the old humanity, was the Law.

* + - * 1. The new humanity also has a division as well, but now the way humanity is divided is totally different.

No longer is the law central to how people are categorized.

Now, the only marker that matters is Christ.

All humanity can be divided into two classes of people: Those who are in Christ, and those who are not in Christ.

Those who are in Christ are part of this new man, this new body, the body of Christ, the church.

And those who are not in Christ are still living life the old way, with all of their factions and rivalries and dissensions and divisions, alienated from God and alienated from one another.

Those outside of Christ, of course, divide themselves up into all kinds of groups.

In Paul’s day, unbelieving Jews and unbelieving Gentiles still saw the Law as an important marker of identity, and they were divided by these old things.

Slaves were divided from masters, men were divided from women, Greeks were divided from barbarians, rich were divided from poor, and so on.

The irony, of course, is that all of those people outside of Christ are actually in the same group, the old humanity that is under the wrath of God.

They find their identity in their superficial differences, but spiritually they are the same as those who are trapped in the domain of darkness.

And sadly, Christians also have divided themselves up like this from time to time, forgetting that we are no longer part of the old humanity in any meaningful way.

Now we are one body in Christ, part of one new humanity, living under one new covenant.

* + - * 1. Perhaps you remember that I said a few weeks ago that Paul is now laying the foundation for everything he is going to say in chapter 4.

We are in Christ.

We are a new creation.

We are united in Him.

* + - * 1. People all the time want to talk about reconciliation.

We have to get these groups together, we have to work toward reconciliation, we have to have all of these strategies for reconciliation.

What work is left to be done, brothers and sisters?

What more are you going to do?

Christ has created you new, His work on the cross has resulted in a new creation, a new humanity.

Do you have something to add to that?

Do you have a way you can help Christ accomplish this?

Was what He did not enough?

Here’s the problem: the problem isn’t that we need to do something to be reconciled to one another if we are in Christ.

The problem is that we need to live like the people we are who already have been reconciled in Christ.

If you call yourself a Christian, but you are a racist, or you think of yourself as different and not reconciled to some other group of Christians because of your background or what you look like or your nationality or ethnicity, friend, you are a walking contradiction.

If you are in Christ, you have been reconciled to everyone else in Christ and there is nothing left for you to do.

You just need to be what you are, that’s all.

I love that statement.

I don’t know if Martyn Lloyd-Jones coined it or got it from someone else, but he used to say it all the time to his church members: be what you are.

Don’t live life walking around as a contradiction of the gospel, talking about your need to be reconciled.

Just be what you are, which is a part of a new humanity.

You are a member of the body of Christ, and it’s one reconciled body.

* + - 1. When the world talks about reconciliation, we should be able to look at the world and say, “Yeah, you need to be reconciled. We don’t. We’re already reconciled in Christ. But you need to be reconciled to God through Christ, and then you’ll be brand new, too, and part of this one new humanity found only in Jesus Christ.”
    1. The first result of Christ’s work is a new creation that establishes peace, peace among people who are in Christ.
       1. Paul describes this peace like this in Col 3:9-11…
          1. I can’t tell you how much I love v. 11.
          2. You have been created new, Paul says in v. 10.
          3. And in that new creation there are no more distinctions like the world recognizes, none!

No Greeks

No Jews

No circumcised

No uncircumcised

No barbarians

No Scythians, which were basically so barbaric they made barbarians look like princesses

No slaves

No freemen

All of those things are still true of people, of course, physically, but they are all meaningless.

We don’t even factor those things in now that we are new creations of God in Christ.

Why not?

* + - * 1. Because Christ is all.

When I look at you, you beautiful new creation, all I see is Christ.

I don’t see Jew, I don’t see Greek, I don’t see barbarian or slave or free: Christ is all that matters.

Christ is all that defines us.

Christ is our only identity.

* + - * 1. Why is that?

Because Christ, notice, is in all.

He doesn’t mean that Christ is in every person in the world; he means that Christ is in all believers, all who are part of this new humanity.

The most dominant trait, the most important characteristic about me as a Christian, is that Christ is in me.

And that is the most important thing about you.

It’s so important, that really Christ is all.

It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.

* + - 1. Paul says much the same thing in Gal 3:28…
         1. Here he puts in male and female for some of the items in Colossians 3:11.
         2. Why?
         3. Because these were important identity markers for people in the ancient world, and they still are today.
         4. But in Christ, in this new humanity, what defines who we are is our unity in Christ.
      2. There is now peace for all of these groups that formerly were at odds.
         1. So the issue is not that we need to make peace in the body of Christ.
         2. The issue is we need to live out this peace that Christ has already accomplished for us!
    1. The first result, then, of Christ’s work, is a new creation. Second, we see His work results in…
  1. Reconciliation with God
     1. Not only peace with one another in a new humanity, but more fundamentally and more importantly, reconciliation with God.
        1. Paul says that we have been reconciled **to God**.
           1. Reconciliation language is used very carefully in the NT.
           2. The NT always put it like this: We have been reconciled to God.
           3. It never says that God has been reconciled to us.
        2. The reason why we are reconciled to God, and not the other way around, is because God is the one who is rightfully offended and angry with us because of our sins.
           1. See, when we see we have been reconciled to God, that means the problem was not on our side, the problem was on God’s side.
           2. The obstacle that had to be overcome was not on the side of humanity, but on the side of God.
           3. Humanity might be angry with God, humanity might hate God, humanity might want to kill God.
           4. I saw an article this week about a religious studies professor at UCSB who said that if he could go back in time 2000 years, the one thing he would do is find Jesus of Nazareth and assassinate Him.
           5. As a professor of religious studies, you’d think he would know they got a group together and did that very thing, and it didn’t work out so well for them.
           6. People hate God, they hate Christ, they hate the gospel.
           7. And we might say, “See the problem is on the human side!”
           8. But the reason the problem is not on the human side is because we have no right or reason to be offended by God.
           9. God has not wronged us, God has not mistreated us, God has not rebelled against us.
           10. If we hate God, God doesn’t need to be reconciled to us because we are in the wrong.
           11. God doesn’t need to do anything to placate our wrath or our anger because our wrath and anger is unrighteous and unjustified.
           12. We need to be reconciled to God because we have offended God, and God is justly angry, justly offended, justly wrathful because of our sins.
           13. The problem between man and God is that God is rightfully offended by man.
           14. People today talk about being offended, and how offended they are.
           15. But people better stop worrying about how offended they are and start to realize how offensive they are to a holy God.
           16. God’s wrath must be satisfied if there is to be reconciliation because what stands between God and the sinner is the holy and righteous wrath of God.
           17. And the good news of the gospel is that Christ, through His death on the cross, put to death the enmity, the hostility that existed from God toward man because of man’s sin.
           18. One writer put it this way: the slain became the slayer.
           19. Jesus was killed, and by being killed, He killed God’s wrath against us.
        3. The glorious truth of the gospel is that Christ has satisfied God’s wrath in our place, so that we now have peace with God through the cross.
        4. We are reconciled to God.
     2. Notice that this reconciliation happens in one body.
        1. That means that there is one and only one way of salvation.
           1. There is one and only one way to be reconciled to God.
           2. Anyone who is reconciled to God is only reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.
           3. The cross is the only means of reconciliation, and any and all attempts to find peace with God or peace with others without the cross are denials of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
        2. This one body is the church, and we know that from Eph 1:22-23.
           1. Jews and Gentiles, and any other classification of humanity into different identities, are all now part of this glorious body of Christ known as the church.
           2. And we are reconciled to God not only individually but collectively, as a group, as an assembly, as the people God has gathered into one body in His Son.
           3. Sometimes perhaps we think of our identity in Christ too individualistically.
           4. But I need to remember that I am reconciled to God with you, and you need to remember that you are reconciled to God with me.
           5. We have a collective identity as well, this unity in one body in which we are all, together, reconciled to God.
           6. And when we view it that way, doesn’t it make for living out the peace among us that Christ accomplished at the cross?
           7. I’m not saved without the rest of the body, and the rest of the body isn’t saved without me; we are all saved together in this one, unique, creative, diverse, united body of Christ.
     3. This salvation, this reconciliation, Paul says, was **through the cross**.
        1. The cross was the instrument of reconciliation.
        2. It was the means God used to satisfy His wrath and bring us into a relationship of peace with Himself and with one another.

1. Conclusion
   1. Brothers and sisters, as we look at these verses, everything in them points our attention to Christ and Him crucified.
      1. He is our peace.
      2. This peace with God and with one another comes only through what He accomplished.
      3. And this work of Christ had these amazing results: a new humanity that establishes peace horizontally between people and reconciliation to God through the cross that puts to death the enmity between God and us.
      4. Christ did all of this.
      5. Christ came into this world, lived a perfect, sinless life, and died a horrific death on the cross, to purchase these benefits for all who believe.
   2. If you are here this morning and you don’t know Christ, what is it that keeps you from coming to Him for peace and reconciliation? …