

MAKING PEACE

Monday, April 15

Reading: Ephesians 2:14-18

Ephesians 2:14 *For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by setting aside in His flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in Himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace,*

In describing the Gentiles' condition before Christ (2:11-13), Paul constantly used the word "you" to show the separation between the Jews and non-Jews. The Jewish people had received the promise of Messiah, the promises of God, and the covenants and laws from God. This brought conflict and separation between the Jews and everyone else. This "wall of hostility" was literally displayed by the wall that divided the Jerusalem Temple. Any Gentile who went beyond this wall into the temple proper would be killed for defiling God's house.

But now Paul writes that Christ "is OUR peace." He has united Jews and Gentiles into one body through His death on the cross. There is now no barrier between believers. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ and all have to same access to God the Father through the Holy Spirit.

LESSON ONE: "Setting Aside...the Law." The biggest barrier between Jew and Gentile was the Law of Moses. All the regulations and rules made it very difficult for Gentiles to come to God. It also had the effect of making the Jews arrogant about their special relationship with God and despise the other nations. Jesus' death changed all that! The word translated "set aside" means to abolish, render inactive, or ineffective. The path to God is not a set of commandments; it is in the Person of Jesus Christ! When we make rules and regulations the basis of salvation we are missing the point. Do you think following "the rules" is how you live the Christian life? Do you tend to judge others by how they follow or don't follow YOUR rules?

LESSON TWO: "To Reconcile Both of Them to God." The wall that separated Jews and Gentiles was destroyed by Christ. In Galatians 3:28, Paul says, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Christ's death not only reconciled us to God but also to each other. The word "reconcile" means to bring together as one. We are all united in Christ! We may not realize it but we often put up walls without knowing it. We have the same little cliques we meet with every service and ignore other groups in the church. What can you do this week to make all people feel welcome and accepted in your church? What actions or attitudes might you need to change to break down these walls?

LESSON THREE: "We Have Access." Once again, we see the whole Trinity at work. We have access to God the Father through the Holy Spirit because of Christ's death on the cross. This means that no believer has "greater" access with God than another. God does not listen to some believers and ignore others! His ears are always open to the prayers of His faithful. How should this idea of access affect the way you pray?