

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one. *Eph2.14.*

If there is one verse which sums up the letter to the Ephesians, it's this one. And what a beautiful verse it is! Everything the world yearns for is summed up in those twelve simple words: peace, and bringing people together. There's a Spanish story of a father and son who had become estranged. The son ran away, and the father set off to find him. He searched for months but to no avail. Finally, in a last desperate effort to find him, the father put this ad in a Madrid newspaper:

*Dear Paco, Meet me in front of this newspaper office at noon on Saturday. All is forgiven. I love you. Your Father.*

Do you know that happened? On Saturday 800 Pacos showed up, looking for forgiveness and love from their fathers.

I have already mentioned the bitter border dispute between Argentina and Chile at the end of the 19thC which became so vicious that our own King Edward VII was called in to mediate. When it was finally settled, the bronze cannon were melted down to make a statue of Christ the Redeemer of the Andes at the Bermejo Pass on the Argentine-Chilean border. At the base of the statue was our text from *Eph 2.14*: 'For he is our peace who hath made both one'.

We have already seen in chap 1 vv9-10 that God has revealed to us in the Bible that he has not finished with this world yet. He see all the brokenness and division, and he has a plan to bring it all together in Christ ... We also know that God is *able* to do this impossible thing, because he has already done the impossible by raising Jesus from the dead, vv19b-20...

*Actually*, this bringing together of divided people has

already begun. When our text says, 'for he is our peace who has made the two one', who are 'the two'? The clue is earlier in v11. The 'you' Paul is talking to refers to 'you, Gentiles'... They (actually 'we', for we are Gentiles) were originally not part of God's chosen people. Over the years the Jews saw themselves as special in God's eyes, and the Gentiles (the rest of the world, us) as trash, v12... For countless generations there was a huge dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles. Gentiles were 'foreigners and aliens', v19a...

But because of Jesus Christ, all that is now history, vv12-13... So God's plan to join together the world's brokenness has already begun with the abolition of one of the world's great divisions - that between Jew and Gentile. There's a lot more to come. Just watch this space! What God promised in chap 1 v10 is slowly coming to pass. Trust him!

We all *long* for peace, for reconciliation, the end to division, whether we're Christians or not. The Bible's great insight is that this can take place *only* in Jesus Christ, *not* through the League of Nations, the UN, politicians' utopian dreams, but only through Christ. I want to explore that now.

Do you remember that I once said that if a good sermon should have a text, the Bible itself has a text? That text is *Gen 12.2-3*, God's promise to Abraham ... I want you to notice that it is not a promise to bless only Jews, but to bless 'all the peoples of the earth', and to bless them *through* Abraham. *From* Abraham descended the people of Israel. Unfortunately, they turned out, like the rest of us, to be a pretty faithless lot. But there was one who alone was what an Israelite was

called to be, Jesus of Nazareth, descended from Abraham.

Through Jesus God would bless all the peoples of the earth. And what does it mean for God to *bless* us? It means he will give us good things. He will save us from sin and punishment, and bring us to eternity with him. It means he will mend what is broken - broken hearts, broken relationships, broken personalities.

The mending process can take place only through Christ, because we human beings are the problem and cannot therefore be the solution. Only Jesus is sinless. And this is the way God has planned it. 'Through you, Abraham, through a descendant of yours, all the peoples of the earth will be blessed'. And that descendant, the only sinless descendant of Abraham is Jesus.

Peace comes when we can find common ground. There is only one thing which every single person in the world has in common, and that is that we are all sinners. If we all took our own sinfulness, our moral failure and weakness seriously, we wouldn't always be finding fault with our wives and husbands, with our work colleagues and fellow members of the congregation. 'There but for the grace go I?' Do we really look at each other in that light? If we really believed that,, we would accept each other better, and stop criticising and fighting. We would also find that we all had Jesus in common as the One who died to save us. Isn't that the thought behind *Eph* 2.19-22, p1174, with Jesus as the chief corner-stone ...?

This mending process is more than mere political posturing or international idealism, because the brokenness of the world was and is caused by Satan himself. As I have said before, the devil divides, but Jesus joins. If there is a row in your

office or workplace, your school, your family, or even congregation, you can be sure that it is the devil up to his old tricks. He loves to set people against each other. Turn to p1074 to hear what Jesus said, *John 8.44* ... 'The devil is a murderer and the father of all lies'. The devil divides, but Jesus joins. Why did Jesus come to earth? Turn to p1226, to 1 *John 3.8*... 'Jesus came to destroy the devil's work'. Jesus joins what the devil divided. Jesus builds bridges where the devil builds walls. Let's go back to *Eph 2.14*, p1174 ...

'Christ himself is our peace'. We all want and need this peace. We want peace in our marriages, at work, in our homes, between nations. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (with over 300 British dead) sicken us. So does the hatred between Palestinian and Israeli. This is all the devil's work. So is the inner conflict in your own lives. Drugs, drink, a new husband or wife, retail therapy won't give you peace.

It never works, does it? But we keep doing it. It's like drinking saltwater. The more you drink it, the thirstier you feel. St Augustine tried everything to find that deep peace. If it wasn't womanising, it was drinking, then every fashionable school of philosophy under the sun. His mother, Monica, prayed every day for years for her emotionally and intellectually restless son to find Christ. And one day he did. One day he stopped fighting and he let Jesus in. And it was then that he felt the full blessing of God he had always been looking for, that satisfaction which can be found only in Jesus. He prayed from the depths of his own painful experience this prayer:

O Lord, you have made us for yourselves, and our souls are restless until they find their rest in you.