

“Christ is our peace” (Eph. 2:11-18)

1. Without hope in this world

11-12

¹¹ Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)— ¹² remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

Let us review a little about what the previous verses talk. We used to be dead in our transgressions and sins. But God had mercy on us and saved us because of his unconditional, abundant love and grace. And He transforms us and renews us as his workmanship. By faith, we can receive this.

And it reaches today's part. V.11 starts like this: “Therefore, remember...” It asks us to look back the past one more time. Here, it commends us to remember what our relationship with God was like in the past. In short, we were totally separated from God by birth. We used to live far from God. We were totally separated with God. There was no hope at all. The Bible asks us to remember those days.

What about the Jews who had the Law? What about the Jews who were circumcised, who were in the covenants of the promise as Israelites?

The Jews had a great pride in the fact that they were the descendants of Abraham. They thought they were the chosen people of God, and God's special blessings were upon them. And they thought as they were given the Law, by observing it, they would be forgiven and share in God's holiness.

One of the regulations of the Law is circumcision. For Israelites, circumcision was indispensable in order to be the people of the covenants of God. So they thought uncircumcised people cannot be within this covenants.

Then as long as they were circumcised, will they be okay? As they have the Law, will everything be all right with them? They indeed had the Law. They were fervent in teaching it and trying to observe it. They practiced circumcision. But actually it was an empty trial. Even though they have the law and know about it, unless it has become the true nature of their life styles and their way of thinking,

circumcision has no meaning (Rom. 2:17-25).

The conclusion is this;

“Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin” (Rom. 3:20).

No matter how hard they try, anything done by the hands of men are only about the external. Being circumcised doesn't enable them to observe the law. Neither did it mean that they have fulfilled the law.

Col. 2:21-23

²¹ "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? ²² These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. ²³ Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

After all, human commands, teaching and effort cannot transform sinners. Indeed, gentiles were far away from God by birth. They had no hope in this world. In the same way, the Jews who had the law were also without hope in this world. They tried to fulfill the law by their own strength. And they thought they would be all right because they are trying. But it was a vain effort, for they had no way to fulfill it. They also had no hope.

2. Christ is our peace

When we interpret the Word of God incorrectly, our lives will end up being all tied up. It is not only true with the Jews in those days, but also true with us, Christians today. We have the Bible, we read it, and we can understand what it says. If we take it as a law, we feel “we should do this”, or “we shouldn't do that.” Now we fall into the pitfall of the law, “performance trap”.

We say “Christian life is joy, thanks-giving and praise”. It sounds good but it will end up being “a pie in the sky”. In fact, if we try to do it by our own strength, there will be nothing more distressful than this. The more we read the Bible, the more we feel tiresome, painful and depressed. We feel annoyed to see people who are rejoicing, giving thanks, and praising. And we observe them closely if there is anything wrong with them, and when we find anything, we take that

opportunity and accuse them harshly.

Since we repent, we desire to come near to God, and walk in the light of God. But as soon as we fall into the performance trap, we will build a barrier, the dividing wall that separates us from God, and from others.

Jesus removed this dividing wall in his body. Not only that, he brings the peace of God.

13-15

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations.

Jesus removes the dividing wall, and brings God's peace. He demonstrated these throughout his life. In the gospel, we see many examples of these. Let's see one of them.

Luke 5:29-32

²⁹ Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. ³⁰ But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" ³¹ Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Here we can see that the Pharisees and the teachers of the law in those days had the tendency to separate people according to their kinds. Tax collectors and some others also had the same tendency. They themselves thought they were sinners. If not, they wouldn't have been baptized. They wouldn't have come to Jesus (Luke 3:12-13). And they must have attacked Jesus together with the Pharisees, when they hear Jesus say, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

What kind of people are the 'sinners' who ate and drank with Jesus here? When we hear the word 'sinners', we tend to think of criminals. But if they are

really criminals, they cannot eat openly with others here. They would be hiding somewhere. Or otherwise, they would be already caught in prison.

Then, what kind of people are those who are called 'sinners' by the teachers of the law? We see some hints before and after this chapter.

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied" (Luke 6:20-21).

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18).

Jesus preached the gospel to the poor. Actually he preached to rich men too. And when they heard Jesus' preaching, they thought "Hey, it's good news!"

Think about it, they are the poor, some face difficulty even finding food for today. They cannot offer sacrifice as it is written in the law. It is not that they don't know the law, nor do they ignore it, nor they don't want to do it. Even if they want to observe the law, they had no way to do it. If they don't offer sacrifice as the law commands, their sin will not be forgiven. So they are sinners. They didn't have to listen to the teachers of the law's telling them so. They knew very well that they were sinners.

There were dividing walls, not just in the minds of Pharisees and the teachers of the law, but also in the minds of tax collectors and the poor who are called 'sinners' here. Using the law people created the barriers in the human relationships.

But Jesus had relationships with the 'sinners', overcoming these barriers. He brought God's peace, broke the barriers and enabled us to have peace with others. That's the power of the gospel.

Jesus spent his life on the earth in order to bring peace among people, and to bring true rest for them. And he was misunderstood, and criticized for that. But Jesus was not afraid of that. In front of the people who clearly tried to trap him, he broke the dividing walls, overcoming the conventional rules and reaching out to people.

This Jesus is now still living and working among us through the Word and the Holy Spirit. Jesus brings true peace and rest for us today. He will break and remove the dividing wall there.

Jesus reached out to people, overcoming the dividing wall and brought God's peace. He broke the barriers there and enabled people to have peace with other people. As a result, Jesus was envied and hated by religious leaders. And

finally he was crucified. And it was this cross that broke the dividing wall that separated God and Man. Jesus was crucified in order to remove the barrier between Holy God and sinners. And he brought God's peace there.

In v. 15 it says "in his flesh". Jesus literally offered his own body as a sacrifice on the cross. By this sacrifice, he removed the dividing wall between God and people who oppose him, envy him and hate him. By the cross, peace was brought between God and sinners.

15-16

His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace,¹⁶ and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

Through the law, we come to know that we have sin. Without the law, we would not have known what sin was. Through the law, we come to know sin in ourselves and sin in others. And we blame one another, and it creates hatred. Originally we are supposed to love and help one another, but we end up opposing and hating one another. Through the relationships, we are damaged, our hearts are broken. We cannot fully understand the peace with God.

By the cross, the hostility was removed. When we apply this in our relationship with one another, we will experience healing, forgiveness, acceptance, reconciliation and peace in our relationship. That is good news!

And that will help us to be aware that our relationship with God was also restored. We will come to realize that our "peace with God" is real that is already happening in our lives, not just a theological theme. Through our reconciliation with others, we will come to know that we are truly forgiven, loved and accepted by God. We will experience how deep, wide and powerful God's love for us is.

"For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility" (v14). The dividing wall was already broken. There is no such thing any longer.

Satan, our enemy doesn't want us to stand on the truth. He whispers a lie into our ears. What happens then? We feel the blame on our sins. How can we overcome? We should listen to the Word of God:

Col. 2:13-14

¹³ When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

You can insert your own name in place of “you”, and declare this Word to yourself. Then, you will understand it very well. There is nothing to accuse us any longer.

We can take one more step further. Sometimes we are frustrated by other people’s sins. “How can he do this?” It will be especially annoying if that causes us some disadvantage. “I don’t want to see him any longer. I will never forgive that.”

Now, think about it. God has also canceled the written code that was against that person at the cross. The cross I believe is for the forgiveness of my sin. At the same time, it is for the forgiveness of that person’s sin as well. I believe in the cross, and I was released from the debt of sin that was against me. And the same cross also released that person too.

If there is nothing to accuse me any longer by the cross, in the same way, there is nothing to accuse that person also. By the cross, the written code that was against him was also canceled.

Let us declare this to ourselves: “At the cross, the dividing wall was already broken. The wall God has broken, we should not build it again by ourselves.”

Believing in the cross, and the dividing wall was removed from me. This person and also that person believed in the cross, and the dividing wall was removed from them. Now what is there among us? There is the peace of God among us. And in this relationship, we will come to realize, “I’m truly reconciled with God. God made me alive in his peace. How happy I am.” If more and more people come to know this, this joy and peace will be even greater.

We believe our sins were buried at the cross with Jesus. That belief brings peace among one another. We will come to realize that truly we are reconciled with God.

3. Make the two one

17-18

¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Jesus proclaimed the peace to those who were far away, and also to those who are near. Fundamentally, it refers to Israel, God's chosen people and gentiles. Jesus proclaimed the gospel of peace to both of them. He made the two one.

Jesus himself is our peace. When we believe in Him who is peace, the two will be made one.

First of all, we are reconciled with God. We used to avoid God intentionally. We opposed God. But our relationship with God was changed by Jesus. We start to rejoice in God (Rom. 5:11). We have no fear that God may accuse us nor judge us.

As the dividing wall is broken, our relationship with others will be fixed. The Holy Spirit will transform a person who believes in Jesus into his likeness and grow him day by day. The love of Jesus, the forgiveness of Jesus and the peace of Jesus will flow out from him.

We made a dividing wall in our mind sometimes. "Those people are far away from God. The truth doesn't mean anything to them. Thank you God, I'm different." The Holy Spirit shows that we built different kinds of dividing walls in our minds, and he will remove them.

God designed his creation in diversity. God's riches, greatness and depth are expressed in his creation. The same is true with people. Because of this diversity, we can make this rich, beautiful harmony resound. When those who are different accept each other, it makes the peace among them all the more powerful, rich, broad, and attractive.

When we deal with issues in church, we must be aware that there are three levels. The level 1 is absolute essential things like Trinity, salvation by grace through faith, authority of the Bible, and so on. The level 2 is conviction things. There are different positions. Each position has conviction, based on the Bible. The classic examples are Holy communion and church governance style. The

level 3 is personal preference. I like this kind of songs. I don't like the topic the pastor preaches, and so on.

We should not change or even compromise the things of level 1. Otherwise the church will no longer be a church. When we face the issues in level 2 and 3, we must be careful how to handle it. It's not about which is good or bad. It's not about who will win and who will lose. Our intention should be: how I can make the peace from God in this issue. How I can keep the unity Jesus brought in this church. What I can do in order that he can experience the peace by the Holy Spirit in this issue. If each one of us thinks and does it like this, there is no room for conflict in church. It's easy to understand the principle, but it's not easy to do it. We must practice it so that we can do it better. NLIF is the good classroom.

This is not the peace Man make up. This is the peace Jesus brought in us, among us. We cannot proclaim the gospel without being united with God. Each Christian and each church becomes one with God, the peace of God will form itself, grow and bear fruit in them. There will be peace in each person, in each church, and peace among churches. The world will see the reality of the Gospel.

Finally, the worship will be one.

At the well in Sychar, the Samaritan woman said, "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem" (John 4:20-22).

The two worships which are incompatible according to human ideas were made one by Jesus. And how is this true worship described in the end?

"A great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9-10).

This is already amazing. But it doesn't end here.

"Every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" (Rev. 5:13).

Whole universe, everything there are praising God together! We will be

part of it. We are going to join them!

Every Sunday, we taste a bit of it. Our life of worship is definitely, without a doubt heading toward this worship. Just the thought of it will make us really excited. Amen!

Jesus made the two incompatible things according to human idea one. Jesus is our peace. We are brought into this peace by the cross. And this peace is entrusted to us to share with others so that it will spread through the world.

For LifeNet group and personal refraction:

1) Is there anything you hoped would work or would come true, but you found out that it didn't? What was it? How and why did you get the hope?

2) Christ is our peace. In what area in your life are you seeking the peace? How does the Holy Spirit guide you to have it?

3) Christ made the two one. Do you have any experience of it? How does the Word challenge you about this truth now? What is your response?