

The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON XXXI : VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL RECONCILIATION (2:11-22)

Discussion on the Reconciliation of the Gentiles with Jewish Christians (2:14-18)

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. (KJV)

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. (NIV)

for he is our peace, who did make both one, and the middle wall of the enclosure did break down, the enmity in his flesh, the law of the commands in ordinances having done away, that the two he might create in himself into one new man, making peace, and might reconcile both in one body to God through the cross, having slain the enmity in it, and having come, he did proclaim good news — peace to you — the far-off and the nigh, because through him we have the access — we both — in one Spirit unto the Father. (Young's Literal Translation)

v17 — PEACE — And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. —

καὶ ἔλθων εὐηγγελίσατο εἰρήνην ὑμῖν τοῖς μακρὰν καὶ εἰρήνην τοῖς ἐγγύς; [kai elthōn euēngelisato eirēnēn humin tois makran kai eirēnēn tois engus;] Paul now returns to the topic of peace, something he introduced in v. 14. “In vv. 14b-16 he is said to have made peace, but being peace and making peace do not avail or benefit unless the peace is made known: [Paul] brings this out by using Isa 57.19, to which he had already alluded in v. 13.... Christians have traditionally drawn the association of peace with the Gospel also from other OT passages, e.g. Nah 1.15; Isa 9.5f; 11.6-9; 54.10. There are allusions to Isa 52.7 in Acts 10.36; Rom 10.12, 15, in both cases in the context of the place of Gentiles in the church; Faust therefore suggests that Isa 52.7 may have been already in use prior to [Paul] in respect to Jewish-Gentile relations.” [Best, 270]

QUOTE FROM ISAIAH 57:19 — THE ‘FAR’ AND ‘NEAR’ — “Of course, the original reference of ‘far’ and ‘near’ in Isa 57:19 was not to Gentiles and Jews but to two groups of Jews, those in exile and those who remained in the land. In later Jewish interpretations of the text, however, ‘far’ and ‘near’ could refer to other divisions within Israel — those who through sin have fallen away from God and the righteous or repentant sinners and the righteous. But there was also a tradition which interpreted the ‘far’ of Isa 57:19 as Gentiles — Gentile proselytes.” [Lincoln, 146f]

preached peace — *εὐηγγελίσατο εἰρήνην [euēngelisato eirēnēn]* ‘Preached’ is a form of the same word from whence we get our word ‘gospel, good news.’ “He gospelized peace’ to both Jew and Gentile, ‘to the far off ones’ and ‘to the nigh ones.’” [Robertson, Word Pictures]

GENTILE / JEWISH VERTICAL RELATIONSHIP TO GOD PRIMARILY IN VIEW — “As we saw in v. 13 ‘far off’ and ‘near at hand’ refer respectively to Gentiles and Jews. In v. 17 [Paul] deals with the vertical aspect of the ambiguity running through our passage: the peace that is proclaimed is that between God and Gentile and between God and Jew and not that between Gentile and Jew. *There is no distinction in the way God offers peace to Jew and Gentile or in the nature of the peace as it is described in v. 18.*” [Best, 270f] “But what is the nature of the peace which is proclaimed? Is it peace between the two groups or is it peace with God, which v 16 has brought into the picture? If the wording were ‘preached peace to the far and near,’ it could be taken to mean primarily an announcement of peace between the two groups. However, the wording of the verse, which in fact has peace preached to the two groups separately, tips the scales against a horizontal reference for peace as the primary one. The force of the rewording is that a vertical reference for peace now becomes the primary one. Since v 16 has made it clear that both groups, ‘the near’ as well as ‘the far,’ require reconciliation with God, it is likely that v 17, by talking of a proclamation of peace by Christ to each of the groups, has this vertical dimension primarily in view.” [Lincoln, 147f]

WHEN DID CHRIST ‘PREACH PEACE’ TO THE GENTILES? — There are several thoughts as to when Christ ‘preached peace’ to the Gentiles:

- preaching prior to the incarnation
- the incarnation itself is a proclamation of peace
- Christ’s earthly life as itself his preaching; so Chrysostom; Ernest Best suggests this is one of the two which are

least objectionable. Lincoln considers the reference “as a retrospective reference to vv 14-16, i.e., to that coming of Christ which climaxed in his reconciling death. It is the effect of that accomplishment on the cross (v 16) which can be identified as a preaching of the good news of peace to the far off, the Gentiles, and a preaching of that same good news to the near, the Jews.” [Lincoln, 148f]

- **the resurrection as Christ’s preaching;** so Ambrosiaster, Aquinas, Bengel, Murray;
- **the preaching of Christ in the coming of the Spirit;** so Meyer, Wescott, Hodge, Alford;
- **Christ preaches in that he instructs and inspires those who then proclaim the Gospel to Jew and Gentile; since he is the content of what they preach he may be regarded as himself the proclaimer;** this is the other least objectionable solution according to Ernest Best. “‘And He came and preached good tidings of peace.’ The preceding verses showed how Christ secured peace; this, how He proclaimed it. This, therefore, is posterior, and hence cannot refer to His life on earth.... Bengel interprets the ‘coming and preaching’ as that of Christ personally after the resurrection. *But it is much better to understand the words of Christ preaching by His Spirit in the apostles and other messengers of His.... for what is thus done by Christ’s Spirit is properly said to be done by Him.*” [Abbott, 66f] “His apostles were afterwards employed as trumpets for proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles. What they did, not only in his name, and by his command, but as it were in his own person, is justly ascribed to none other than himself. We too speak as if Christ himself exhorted you by us. (2 Corinthians 5:20)” [Calvin, Ephesians]
- **the ascent of the crucified Savior to heaven;** this is among the favorites of those who see a strong Gnostic teaching in Ephesians;
- **the cross itself may be the proclamation.** A. T. Robertson combines this with the preaching of the gospel through the apostles as the solution to this problem: “‘He gospelized peace’ to both Jew and Gentile, ‘to the far off ones’ and ‘to the high ones.’ By the Cross and after the Cross Christ could preach that message.” [Robertson, Word Pictures]

Best concludes: “None of these solutions is wholly satisfactory and perhaps Barth is correct when he says that it is impossible to tie the reference down to any one solution. Attempts to combine more than one do not appear any more successful; they simply open the door to even more negative arguments.... Whatever the meaning it is the same Gospel which is preached to those near, the Jews, and those afar, the Gentiles. Even if Jews are not within the church, they are not outside the range of the Gospel; in this respect Jews and Gentiles are equal.” [Best, 273]

PREACHING TO BOTH THE ‘FAR’ AND ‘NEAR’ REINFORCES THE CONCEPT THAT THE CHURCH IS A NEW ENTITY — “*This verse reinforces the idea of the formation of an entirely new entity. Both the ‘far’ and ‘near’ hear the message of peace. If the Gentiles actually became Jews, then the near would not need the message of peace; rather those who were far away would enter into the fold of the near. On the contrary, the picture is that the ‘near’ also need a message of peace, and on acceptance they, with the Gentiles, enter the new fold, the church. It is the new humanity that is created.*” [Hoehner, 387] *This speaks strongly for a local church interpretation!*

v18 — Note the parallels between vv. 16 and 18:

‘[that] he might reconcile to God’	‘we have access to the Father’
‘them both’	‘we both’
‘in one body’	‘in one Spirit’
‘through the cross’	‘through him’

For through him – ὅτι δι’ αὐτοῦ [hoti di’ autou] **for** — ὅτι [hoti] could be used in the sense of giving the reason for what has just been said, or it could be used in a summarizing fashion. Andrew Lincoln understands it to give the reason for the preceding: “‘For’ introduces this statement as one which provides the grounds for the assertion of the previous verse that Christ has proclaimed peace to the far off and peace to the near. This reinforces our interpretation of the nature of the peace announced to the two groups. Since both have access to the Father through Christ in the one Spirit, the same good news of peace with God can be brought to both.” [Lincoln, 149] Ernest Best differs and believes this sentence summarizes the preceding: “[T]he Gospel of peace is the joint access of Jew and Gentile (note the first person plural as in v. 14a) to the Father. Such access is only possible once enmity has been removed, both have been made into a new type of being and form one body, and peace exists. We find in Rom 5.1 the same close association of peace with access and there as here a present tense indicates a continuing experience on the part of believers (contrast the perfect tense of Rom 5.2).” [Best, 273] There is very little difference between these two senses.

we both have access — ἔχομεν τὴν προσαγωγὴν οἱ ἀμφοτέροι [echomen tēn prosagōgēn hoi amphoterōi] **we both** — Jew and Gentile. “‘Both’ – Masculine plural, as ver. 16. Both the great groups, in all their individual members, have this access.” [Moule, 82] **access** — προσαγωγὴν [prostagōgēn] has the basic meaning of “freedom or right to enter.” It could be taken transitively (= introduction) or intransitively (= access). “Either sense is grammatically possible.... If it is intransitive, then Christ is the one who acts to create access; if transitive, then he (through him) is the one who introduces believers to God. The former is preferable.... There is however very little difference in essential meaning: *believers come to God only through what Christ has done for them or as he introduces them. The root was used in the contemporary world to describe the approach of people to a ruler and, more importantly, for the offering of sacrificial gifts (Lev 1.2, 3, 10, etc.).... Christ presents believers to his Father.*

If God is to be encountered the way must be opened, not from our end but from his. [Best, 273f] H.G.T. Moule agrees this word should have the understanding of ‘introduction’: ***“Access’ – Better, ‘our introduction;’ the proper meaning of the original word, reminding the accepted Christian that he owes his freedom of entrance to Another. True, the freedom is present, perpetual, and assured; but it not only was first secured by the Redeemer’s work, but rests every moment on that work for its permanence. We are, thanks be to God, evermore free to and in His presence-chamber, but we are also evermore free there ‘through His Son,’ Who ‘ever liveth to make intercession for us.’”*** [Moule, 82] “Paul’s language is similar to that of Romans 5:1 and 2, where peace with God and having access to grace are linked. The keyword ‘access’ appears in both passages, as well as in Ephesians 3:12. Although in classical Greek the term conjured up the scene in an oriental court where subjects were granted an audience with the king or emperor and presented to him, it is more likely that ***Paul’s imagery derives from an Old Testament cultic context of bringing offerings in order to come into God’s presence*** (cf. Lev 1:3; 3:3; 4:14). This word with its cultic associations pointed to a free entry into the sanctuary as the place of God’s presence.” [O’Brien, 209] ***“Within his family the Father makes no distinction between those children who are Jewish by birth and those who are Gentile. To us the abolition of the barrier separating Jews and Gentiles may not be so revolutionary as it was for Paul and his associates; but there are other divisions within the human family which are equally irrelevant in the sight of God and ought to be irrelevant in his children’s sight.”*** [Bruce, 301]

THIS ACCESS IS CORPORATE IN NATURE IN THIS VERSE — “The religious and philosophical systems of the ancient world offered different and unsatisfactory ways to God. ***Access is not conceived here individualistically, every man his own priest, but is an access of the whole church comprising both Jews and Gentiles, an access experienced in worship. Through their cultus Jews already had access, though of a limited nature; Gentiles had none; now both have the same free access.***” [Best, 274]

in one Spirit — ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι [en henī pneumati] Is this (a) the divine Spirit, (b) the human spirit, or (c) the human spirit as affected by the divine Spirit? “There is a certain parallelism between v. 16 and v. 18 for both speak of a relation to God; in v. 16 it takes place ‘in one body’, here ‘in one Spirit’. Where in 4.4 body and Spirit are again linked it is certainly the divine Spirit which is in mind, and we may therefore assume the same here.” [Best, 274]

NOTE THE TRINITY REFERENCE — to the Father. — πρὸς τὸν πατέρα. [pros ton patera.] We should not miss the reference here to the triune Godhead which is common in Ephesians: ***“For through [Christ] we both have access in one [Holy] Spirit to the Father.”*** ***“Through him’ – Christ.... ‘In one Spirit’ – The Holy Spirit. ‘Unto the Father.’ So the Trinity as in 1:13f. The Three Persons all share in the work of redemption.”*** [Robertson, Word Pictures] “Through Christ, God is experienced as the Father of believers, and the Spirit plays his part in mediating a consciousness of that relationship.... [I]t is interesting to note how naturally his thought expresses itself in the ‘trinitarian’ pattern of ‘through Christ in the Spirit to the Father’ (cf. also 1:3, 17; 4:4-6). ***Access to God as Father through Christ and in the Spirit is the ground of peace proclaimed to both Jews and Gentiles, but it is also true that the exercises of this new privilege by both groups in the one Spirit is the sign of the peace between them.***” [Lincoln, 149f] “Observe that the approach of the soul is here, as always, ultimately to the Father. Not that the Son, and the Spirit, are not eternal and Divine; but He is – the FATHER.... ‘The Father’ – ‘His Father and our Father;’ John xx. 17. This profound word, rich in life, love, and joy, was indeed a new treasure, in its Christian sense, to ‘them that were afar off.’ No pagan mythology, or philosophy, though the word was not unknown to them, knew the thing; the Divine reality of an eternal and paternal Holy Love. To the Israelite the Lord was indeed known as ‘like unto a Father pitying his children’ (Psal. ciii. 13); ‘doubtless our Father’ (Isai. lxiii. 16); but even to him the word would develop into inexhaustible riches when read in the light of the Sonship of the true Messiah.” [Moule, 82]

APPENDIX A: Greek Detail for Christ’s ‘Coming’ to Preach Peace

For those interest in the Greek: the word for ‘he came’ is ἐλθὼν [elthōn] and is an *aorist participle* formed from the root ἔρχομαι [erchomai] ‘to come, to go.’ Some background on the tense in the Greek:

“A cursory look at what some of the grammars say about the aorist participle may yield more confusion than enlightenment. The following statements are found in *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, F. Blass and A. Debrunner, translated by Robert W. Funk.

‘... the idea of relative past time became associated to a certain degree with the aorist participle’ § 339, p. 174

‘The notion of relative past time, however is not at all necessarily inherent in the aorist participle’ § 339, p. 175

“Similar seemingly divergent statements can be found in *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, by A. T. Robertson on pp. 1112ff. But if you look closely, what these statements are saying is that while antecedent action is not inherent in the aorist participle, it came to be routine to use the aorist participle for such, so much so that the idea of antecedent action was often associated with the aorist participle. Ernest De Will Burton explained this more thoroughly than some.

“The assumption that the Aorist Participle properly denotes past time, from the point of view either of the speaker or of the principal verb, leads to constant misinterpretation of the form. The action denoted by the Aorist Participle may be past, present, or future with Reference to the speaker, and antecedent to, coincident with, or subsequent to, the action of the principal verb. The Aorist Participle, like the participles of the other tenses, may be most simply thought of as a noun or adjective, the designation of

one who performs the action denoted by the verb, and like any other noun or adjective timeless. The distinction of the Aorist Participle is not that it expresses a different time-relation from that expressed by the Present or Perfect, but that it conceives of the action denoted by it, not as in progress (Present), nor as an existing result (Perfect), but as a simple fact. Such an adjective or noun will not ordinarily be used if contemporaneousness with the action of the principal verb is distinctly in mind, since contemporaneousness suggests action in progress, and action in progress is expressed, not by the Aorist, but by the Present tense. Nor will it be used when the mind distinctly contemplates the existence of the result of the action, it being the function, not of the Aorist, but of the Perfect, to express existing result. Nor, again, will the Aorist noun be used if the writer desires distinctly to indicate that the doer of the action will perform it in time subsequent to that of the principal verb, the Aorist being incapable in itself of suggesting subsequence or futurity. But, when these cases have been excluded, there remains a considerable variety of relations to which the Aorist is applicable, the common mark of them all being that the action denoted by the participle is thought of simply as an event. Among these various relations the case of action antecedent to that of the principal verb furnishes the largest number of instances. It is thus, numerically considered, the leading use of the Aorist Participle, and this fact has even to some extent reacted on the meaning of the tense, so that there is associated with the tense as a secondary, acquired, and wholly subordinate characteristic a certain suggestion of antecedence. Yet this use is no more than the other uses a primary function of the tense, nor did it ever displace the others, or force them into a position of subordination or abnormality. The instances in which the action denoted by the participle is not antecedent to the action of the principal verb are as normal as that in which it is so, and were evidently so recognized alike in classical and in New Testament Greek. The Aorist Participle of Antecedent Action does not denote antecedence; it is used of antecedent action, where antecedence is implied, not by the Aorist tense as a tense of past time, but in some other way. [as found online at www.dabar.org/BurtonMoodsTenses/15-AOR-part.htm#132.]

“Let’s summarize what Burton has said in bullets, modifying his language for simplicity:

- It is not accurate to say the Aorist Participle properly denotes past time.
- The action denoted by the Aorist Participle may be past, present, or future either with reference to the speaker or relative to the leading verb. [Robertson denies that it is ever future relative to the leading verb, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 861ff.]
- The Aorist Participle is distinguished from the present or perfect participle in terms of kind of action, not time of action, in that it conceives of action not as in progress (Present), nor as an existing result (Perfect), but as a simple fact.
- The aorist participle will not ordinarily be used when one wishes to indicate action as coincident with the leading verb, because that idea necessitates ongoing activity and is therefore better described by the present tense.
- Nor will the aorist participle be used when the result of the action is especially in view, because that idea is best expressed by the perfect tense.
- Nor will the Aorist be used if the writer desires distinctly to indicate that the doer of the action will perform it in time subsequent to that of the principal verb, the Aorist being incapable in itself of suggesting subsequence or futurity.
- Excluding these instances, the aorist is useful in many instances when the action denoted by the participle is thought of simply as an event.
- Action antecedent to that of the principal verb furnishes the largest number of these instances.
- So it can be said action antecedent to that of the principal verb is the most frequent use of the Aorist Participle

“If we continue with Burton, he goes on to suggest that in fact this usage may have had an impact on the meaning of the aorist participle itself. But in saying this, he seems to contradict the statement with which he began. From the perspective of descriptive grammar, it is either true that the aorist participle is characteristically used of antecedent action or it isn’t true. I think we end up having to agree that it isn’t true. It is true that the aorist participle is often used in this way; we can even say more often than not. But we cannot say it is characteristically so. Its use with antecedent meaning is not sufficiently consistent that we could say the meaning of the aorist participle (as opposed, say, to the present) is antecedent action. We can say that if one wishes to use a participle to describe antecedent action, the aorist is often better suited for such use than the present.” [from <http://www.ntgreek.net/lesson33.htm#burton>; July 19, 2014]