

# Recommit Yourself to Christ

*RPTS Chapel Message*

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**Bible Text:** Ephesians 2:17-18; Isaiah 57:19

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I direct your attention to Ephesians the second chapter and just two verses there, Ephesians 2:17 and 18.

AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.<sup>1</sup>

Let's pray.

*Lord, we do thank you for the work of Christ and the message of Christ and we thank you that it is through his work and his message that we have peace and we pray that we might be those who are committed to his work and his message we ask these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.*

I know many of you are familiar with family conferences and camps. No doubt you have attended a few. At these family conferences and camps there are often what in the Reformed Presbyterian Church we have called Consecration Services. These services are evangelistic in thrust. The pastor who is preaching will call men and women and young people and children to faith in Christ, to commit themselves to Christ, and to recommit themselves to Christ.

On one such occasion when I was privileged to preach at such a service a fellow pastor came to me before the service to ask me a question. He said, "Would it be all right if I explain the use of the commitment cards before the service?" I said, "Well, I think not. I would rather not." My rationale was this. It is the work of Christ and the message of Christ that brings the results of Christ, that is, peace to men and women. We don't need to use other things to facilitate the work of Christ and the message of Christ. And so we proceeded with the service.

Our text this morning gives us the main thrust of the message of Christ and the work of Christ that brings the peace of Christ. And although this isn't a consecration service, it is a chapel service. And we are at the beginning of 2008. It therefore seems to me a good

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 2:17-18.

time for us to think about our commitment to Christ and perhaps our need, your need, to recommit your life to Christ. And so I call you in the name of Christ to recommit your life to Christ because his work and his message is the path to real peace.

When we look at our text in verse 17, first of all, we see that it is Christ who is preaching. He came and preached peace. And we gather that it is Christ who is preaching because of the context. Look at and read with me from verse 11 into verse 14.

Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “Uncircumcision” by the so-called “Circumcision,” which is performed in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace.<sup>2</sup>

Yes, Jesus Christ is our peace. Paul speaks of him. Verse 16 continues.

And might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. AND HE [you see, this is Christ] CAME AND PREACHED PEACE.<sup>3</sup>

And so from the context we gather very clearly that it is Christ who is preaching. You will remember from the Scriptures that long ago Christ preached through Noah to the generation of Noah. Peter says that he preached to those—as he puts it standing in his own time—he preached to those who are now in prison because they failed to heed the message concerning Christ.<sup>4</sup>

And then later, Christ preached through the apostles. How did he do this? By the Spirit. Look at verse 18. “For through Him we both have our access in [or by] one Spirit to the Father.”<sup>5</sup> And so how did Christ preach? He came and preached by means of the Spirit through his appointed ministry. This is a wonderful thing. And because this is the case, you have the opportunity to hear the voice of Christ.

Not only so, the text speaks of Christ preaching to those who are far off and to those who are near. That is, to Gentiles as well as Jews. Look at verse 17 again. “HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR.”<sup>6</sup> Well, all we have to do is read the context again and we understand that Paul is speaking about the Gentiles. He is not speaking about those who are geographically far away. He is speaking about those who are spiritually far away. Let’s read the context again.

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<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 2:11-14.

<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 2:16-17.

<sup>4</sup> See 1 Peter 3:19.

<sup>5</sup> Ephesians 2:18.

<sup>6</sup> Ephesians 2:17.

Verse 11.

Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “Uncircumcision” by the so-called “Circumcision,” which is performed in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.<sup>7</sup>

You were far away, far away from God’s promises, far away from the hope of God. But Paul says in verse 13, “But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”<sup>8</sup> And so to whom is Paul referring? He is referring to the Gentiles, to those who were far off from the covenant promises.

This past Lord’s Day I had the privilege of preaching from this passage at First Reformed in Penn Hills. First Reformed is a good sized congregation. And I asked the congregation, “How many of you—and I would like to see a show of hands—how many of you are of Jewish heritage?” Do you know how many raised their hands? One of 200 or 250 people.

Is anyone of you of Jewish heritage here this morning? Do you want to raise your hand? None. None. This message is for you. Who are you? You are the Gentiles. Is that not right? You are representative of the nations. Look at verse 17 once again. “AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU.”<sup>9</sup> This is not theoretical. This is real. This is a message for you and for me. Christ came and preached to you and me.

As we go on, we see Paul is validating the fact that this message is for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews. He quotes from the prophet Isaiah.

Do you notice verse 17? It is a reference to Isaiah. If not a quote from the Hebrew, it is a quote from the Septuagint. It is a reference to Isaiah chapter 57 and verse 19. I’d like you to turn back there now to Isaiah chapter 57 and verse 19. I will read you a little bit of the context here in Isaiah 57 so you get the idea of what is going on.

Let’s look at verse 17 in Isaiah 57. “Because of the iniquity of his unjust gain I was angry and struck him; I hid My face and was angry.”<sup>10</sup> This is Isaiah’s message to Judea, to the Jews. Ok. Continuing on.

“And he went on turning away, in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort to him and to his mourners, Creating the praise [or the fruit] of the lips. Peace, peace to

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<sup>7</sup> Ephesians 2:11-12.

<sup>8</sup> Ephesians 2:13.

<sup>9</sup> Ephesians 2:17.

<sup>10</sup> Isaiah 57:17.

him who is far and to him who is near,” Says the LORD, “and I will heal him.”<sup>11</sup>

Here is the reference that Paul is picking up. You see it in verse 19. “Peace, peace to him who is far and to him who is near.”<sup>12</sup> Now many of the commentators will say that because Isaiah is speaking to the Jews here, to Judea, and Isaiah speaks much about the Babylonian captivity, this is what Isaiah has in mind. He is thinking of those who are far off, that is geographically far off; they are far off in captivity in Babylon. Those who are near are those who are in Judea. They are yet in Jerusalem.

But Paul is not interpreting the text in this way. And I would submit to you that the apostle Paul is no isogete. He is not pulling this text out of context. All you have to do is look at the wider context a little bit and you realize that it is the spiritually deprived to whom Isaiah is speaking.

Go back to Isaiah 56 just for a moment. And look at verse four in Isaiah 56.

For thus says the LORD, “To the eunuchs who keep My sabbaths, And choose what pleases Me, And hold fast My covenant, To them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial, And a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off.”<sup>13</sup>

To the eunuchs, to those who are ceremonially unclean, what will God do? He will bring them in. He will bring them into his house. There is an eschatological reference here. There is an eschatological thrust here because it is at the time of the Messiah that those who are ceremonially unclean will be brought in to the house of God.

And then Isaiah goes on. “Also the foreigners,” verse six:

...who join themselves to the LORD, To minister to Him, and to love the name of the LORD, To be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath And holds fast My covenant; Even those I will bring to My holy mountain And make them joyful in My house of prayer.<sup>14</sup>

Even the foreigners, the goyim (goy-eem’), the nations, will be brought in, you see. The Messiah will bring in the nations. Isaiah is promising that these people will be brought in. And then another text quoted in the New Testament is from Isaiah 56:7. Jesus, quoting, makes this statement, “For My house will be called a house of prayer.”<sup>15</sup> Then he adds these telling words, “For all the peoples, for all the peoples.”<sup>16</sup> And so Paul is no

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<sup>11</sup> Isaiah 57:17-19.

<sup>12</sup> Isaiah 57:19.

<sup>13</sup> Isaiah 56:4-5.

<sup>14</sup> Isaiah 56:6-7.

<sup>15</sup> Isaiah 56:7.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

isogete as I say. He is truly interpreting the words of Isaiah that the Gentiles are to be brought in and made a part of the fellowship and the household of God.

And what is this peace, then, that Christ preached? Go back to Ephesians chapter two and verse 17. “AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR.”<sup>17</sup> Well, again, the context tells us. Verses 14 and 15 in Ephesians chapter two. Listen to this. “For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups [that is, Jew and Gentile] one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall.”<sup>18</sup> Christ broke down the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile Christ.

And what is this dividing wall? Paul tells us. “By abolishing in His flesh the enmity which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances.”<sup>19</sup> Now let’s be careful here because the apostle Paul is not saying that Christ is abolishing the 10 Commandments. The 10 Commandments remain a perpetual standard for living for you and for me. The apostle Paul is very careful in what he says. Look at it again in verse 15, “which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances.”<sup>20</sup> He did away with the law of commandments contained in ordinances. The ordinances are the ordinances of the ceremonial law. This is significant.

What do we call baptism in the Church today? It is an ordinance. We speak of the ordinance of baptism and the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper. These are specifically religious ordinances that have to do with worship. And this is what the apostle Paul is zeroing in on. Christ did away with the religious worship contained in the sacrificial system, that is, in the ceremonial law. He did away with those sacrifices. He did away with the temple. He did away with those sacrifices.

Why? He did so to establish his own sacrifice as the permanent, once for all sacrifice that is adequate to pay for your sins and my sins. And by his own sacrifice, by this final sacrifice, he establishes peace and breaks down the wall of enmity between Jew and Gentile.

If you understand the enmity that was between Jew and Gentile, you understand the enmity that can be between groups of people. We heard a little bit about that this morning in the prayer requests regarding violence in Kenya. Such violence can and does affect our own cities. What does Christ do? He breaks down the barriers between peoples. This is what he does. He thus brings peace. And he does this by his cross work.

And in what does this result? Verse 18. “For through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.”<sup>21</sup> Praise God. What happens then? What do doth groups of

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<sup>17</sup> Ephesians 2:17.

<sup>18</sup> Ephesians 2:14.

<sup>19</sup> Ephesians 2:15.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ephesians 2:18.

people, Jew and Gentile, or different groups of people have? They all have access to the one Father who is in heaven.

I remember years ago when I was at odds with my earthly father. I actually asked the U.S. Army to send me to Korea to get as far away from my father as I possibly could. The Army complied. I was sent to the other side of the world. In God's providence I was converted to faith in Christ in Korea. An interesting thing happened. God took the taste of alcohol out of my mouth when I was converted. God had good reason for doing this. My father taught me to drink. I could well have become an alcoholic. When I went home, I went home with fear and trepidation because my father and I were at odds. But my father, knowing through my testimony that things had changed for me, went out and did something very uncharacteristic. He went out and he bought me a carton of Coke. And this was a signal to me. I was always very grateful for that carton of Coke. This was a signal to me. The message was simple, "Denny, we are all right. I accept you. I accept you."

And through Jesus Christ the Father in heaven accepts you. You have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This peace is peace with the Father and peace with one another. It is peace between individuals. It is peace between groups of people.

And so, I submit to you, it is the work of Christ and the message of Christ that brings about real peace. You and I are in the same boat. You need and I need to recommit our lives to Jesus Christ.

This isn't a consecration service. But, again, it is a chapel service at the beginning of 2008, a new year. And I say to you, recommit your life to Jesus Christ. Only his work and only his message produces the peace you need. Only his work and only his message produces the peace that men and women and people groups in the world need. As you study to prepare to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ what do you need more than anything else? A commitment to Christ and a commitment to his message because again, his work and his message is the path to real, authentic peace. Recommit your life to Christ because his work and his message is the path to real peace.

Let's pray together.

*Father, thank you for your Word. Thank you that you give it to us. Thank you that we have the privilege of studying your Word. May we be individuals who are truly committed to Jesus Christ and to this message because it is not just something that is theoretical. It is not something that is esoteric. It is a message for men and women like us and a message that is needed so much in our world from Kenya to Cincinnati. And we pray that we will be people who are deeply committed to Christ and this message. Hear us we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.*