

Ready to Live

Study 3—Made Ready by Christ's Peace

We're being shown how to live in what God calls the real world he has opened up to us—the 'heavenlies'. It's all about whether we will relate to God or not—and about the opposition to this.

We need God's announcement of peace to prepare us for the battle with Satan (Eph. 6:15).

- ❑ This is not peace as the world gives (John 14:27).
- ❑ Don Carson writes: 'There is sufficient hatred, selfishness, bitterness, malice, anxiety and fear that every attempt at peace is rapidly swamped. ... attempts to achieve personal equanimity or merely political stability whether by ritual mysticism or propaganda, without dealing with the fundamental reasons for strife are intrinsically loathsome' (The Gospel according to John, p. 506. Cf. Jer. 6:13-15).

The letter of Ephesians tells us how this is so.

First, peace is Christ's authoritative word.

- ❑ Paul borrows from Isaiah—'How beautiful are the feet of him who ... publishes peace'.
- ❑ It is based on God reigning (Isa. 52:7). A judgement has given way to peace.
- ❑ Jesus sends 70 out to let their peace *come upon* the villages they visit (Matt. 10:13).
- ❑ Christ has won the right to announce the peace—and its terms (John 20:19).
- ❑ Now the church is sent out to announce God's peace (Rom. 10:15; 2 Cor. 5:20).

Second, peace is reconciliation with God.

- ❑ Peace is a relationship, not a feeling.
- ❑ The world assumes God is an enemy to be hated, or a delusion to destroy. This leads to the demands of passions, submission to Satan and inclusion among the damned (Eph. 2:1-3).
- ❑ Human knowledge of God is not eradicated by atheism but turned into foreboding and defiance.
- ❑ We are brought near to God by Christ's blood—the averting of wrath. Christ himself is our peace (2:13-14).
- ❑ These are 'unsearchable riches' (3:8). Paul is no longer angry. He is forgiven and at peace. Satan has lost his man!
- ❑ If our sins are forgiven, our whole being can operate properly.

Third, peace is reconciliation of all who come to God (Eph. 2:12-18).

- ❑ This is the core of what Paul says we need—to be able to share the riches of Christ with Gentiles (3:6).
- ❑ He had thought it necessary to be a Jew to know God.
- ❑ Christ enters his space through Stephen's and church's testimony to a gospel for all.
- ❑ He is angry and attacks the enemy he can see—the church.
- ❑ Jesus speaks to him as a friend. 'You're having a hard time Saul. Why are you fighting me?'
- ❑ Paul has come to God with war in his heart. Jesus comes to Paul with an announcement of peace. (Acts 22:7; James 3:17-18).

- ❑ Paul now knows the way to have peace with God. And he knows this is the way of peace for the world—Jews and Gentiles (2:13-14).
- ❑ The reason for Paul to defend his ‘territory’ is gone. Jews and Gentiles can be in the same family. God himself comes to live with his people (2:18-22).
- ❑ Paul’s religion has been tribal. Now, he can relate freely—travelling with Christ into all the places God takes him. His ‘shoes’ can take him anywhere—and they do!
- ❑ This specifically parades God’s wisdom to alien powers (3:8-10).
- ❑ It names and shames this whole hostility thing and says, ‘You don’t need to be angry!’ That is, not selfishly angry.
- ❑ If you can’t see the real battle, you have to maintain the rage. And we do! And we are! Even in countries that have no political oppressor, we find one thing after another to fight about.
- ❑ How good to be readied by the gospel of peace!
- ❑ This proclamation of peace invades all the other ‘territories’ we create for ourselves.
 - our religion (Col. 3:10f; Gal. 5:6)
 - our social status (1 Cor. 12:13)
 - our race (Rom. 10:12)
 - our gender (Gal. 3:28).

Fourth, this announcement of peace prepares us for battle in the real world—against cosmic powers.

- ❑ Paul is astonished that he has been entrusted with such good news for the world (3:4-9).
- ❑ He is ready to go anywhere and do anything that will enable others to know it is true. He is ready to live!
- ❑ The peace of Christ puts to rest the seeds of our discontent, frees us to love without necessarily agreeing, and discuss without being spiteful.
- ❑ We learn this, even if with some difficulty, as we relate to our fellow Christians.
- ❑ This gives us ways to relate to others as we move out into the world.
- ❑ We can announce Jesus Christ as God’s way of peace!
- ❑ Many will scorn it of course. But some will find that the wars they are conducting are not the main game.
- ❑ They will discover that the currents of God’s loving are more powerful and persuasive than all the puff of the world and its Prince.
- ❑ Satan is foiled!

Fifth, Paul is telling us to wear this announcement of peace like shoes!

- ❑ These ‘shoes’ don’t pinch! They give good traction with the terrain we must travel on.
- ❑ We shouldn’t go anywhere without God’s peace in our hearts.
- ❑ We shouldn’t say or do anything that merely defends our territory.
- ❑ We should never be ashamed of the blood of Jesus by which this precious peace has been announced to us.
- ❑ With Jesus, we may say to those who persecute us, ‘It is hard for you to kick against the peace Christ has established!’