

Reconciliation in Two Directions



Forgiveness (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we continue with our beautiful theme for this week: Forgiveness.

Today, I want to speak about the horizontal direction of forgiveness and I want to say that it goes both ways. We need to forgive and we need to be forgiven by our fellow men. This is very clearly set forth in the writings of Paul in Ephesians chapter 2 verses 11 through 18. I'm going to work through these verses with you and point out what Paul is saying. His meaning is not altogether easy, but I'll try to make it plain to you. Beginning in Ephesians chapter 2 verses 11 through 13, Paul talks about the division in the human race that was made actually by God Himself. The division between Israel, God's covenant people, and the Gentiles, the other nations. And at the time of the New Testament, the Gentiles had come to be known by the Jewish people as the uncircumcision. They referred to themselves as the circumcision. So this is what Paul says, writing to the Gentiles:

> "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."

What a terrible condition to be in—having no hope and without God. Let me tell you that if you are without God, you certainly have no hope in this world or in the next. But thank God, God didn't let the matter rest there. Through Jesus Christ He offered forgiveness and reconciliation and hope. Not only to God's people, Israel, but to the whole Gentile world. And so Paul continues in verse 13:

> "But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off [that's the Gentiles] have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

The shed blood of Jesus on the cross made a way for the Gentiles to find their way back to God from the depths of

their ignorance and their shame and their licentious horrible way of life. It's possible through the blood of Jesus Christ to come back to God.

Then Paul goes on in the next verses, beginning at Ephesians 2:14 about how this has changed all the relationships. He says:

> "For He Himself [that's Jesus] is our peace, who made both groups into one, [that's Jews and Gentiles] and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, [I want you to see that at the cross all barriers between humanity are broken down. There are no more divisions. Then it goes on.] by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two [that's Jew and Gentile] into one new man, thus, establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity."

Paul uses the word "enmity" there twice. The first time he speaks of enmity on the horizontal plane, between Jew and Gentile. Enmity that in a certain sense was brought about by the Law which separated Israel and made them a distinct people from all other peoples. The second time he uses the word enmity, it's on the vertical plane. He's speaking about the enmity of the whole human race and it's sin and rebellion toward God. And he's saying that by His death on the cross where those two beams met, at that very point, there was reconciliation in both directions. Reconciliation from God to man and from man to his fellow man. Both enmities were destroyed by the cross. And then Paul goes on in Ephesians 2:17 and 18:

> "He [that is Jesus] 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."

See, the great message of the cross is forgiveness. And through forgiveness—peace. Remember the punishment of our peace was upon Him we read in Isaiah 53 yesterday. When sin has been dealt with, forgiveness has been given, then there is peace.

But it's very, very important for us to see, especially in this strife torn, bitter, hatred filled world of ours today that the cross makes peace in both directions—from man to God and from man to his fellow man. All the barriers are broken down. The barrier that kept man from having access to God, we who were far off have been made near by the blood of Jesus—near to God. And the barrier between man and his fellow man, the separations, the divisions, the enmities, the suspicions, and the mistrusts—all have been dealt with by that one single act of God—the death of Jesus on the cross. In this world of ours today, no message is more desperately needed than the message of what was accomplished on behalf of the whole human race by the death of Jesus on the cross. See, He has preached peace to those who were near and to those who were far away. He had given us both access through one Spirit, through the Holy Spirit, to the Father—He has made us all the children of God, irrespective of race or religious background or any other difference. We all have access by the one Holy Spirit to God as our Father.

In Colossians chapter 3, Paul gives us another picture of what has been achieved by the cross of the out working of this reconciliation. In Colossians 3 verses 9, 10 and 11 he writes this:

> "Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices."

You see, the old self died in Jesus on the cross. The scriptures says our old self, our old man was crucified with Him. That was dealt with, that old rebel was put to death there on the cross. So, Paul says since you've taken off your old self and it's practices, and have put on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its creator, in the new self, in Jesus Christ, the image of God that was marred by man's sin is being restored. And speaking about this new creation in Christ, and our relationships in that new creation, he goes on to say here:

> "There is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all."

So there, every kind of barrier, separation and division in the human race, the barrier between the Jew and the Gentile, between the religious and the nonreligious, between the educated and the noneducated, between the employer and the employee, class divisions, racial divisions, caste divisions, all have been done away with in Jesus in the new creation by His atoning sacrifice on the cross, that place where the two beams met—the vertical and the horizontal. And it's interesting what Paul says in the light of this. It's a real message that we need to hear. He begins by saying, "Do not lie to each other, we've got to put off all kind of deceit, subterfuge, mistrust, dishonesty. We have to be absolutely open with one another as God's people. All the barriers, all the pretenses, all the subterfuges have been done away with.

It's openness and honesty.

I often think of the story of Noah's Ark. You remember that God made provision for the preservation of a selected number of animals from the old order before the world was plunged beneath the flood? God supernaturally caused them to come to Noah, and at a certain point the went into the Ark. And it says there were every kind of animal. Now many of those animals were by nature at enmity with one another. They preyed upon one another, they killed one another, they feared one another. But inside the Ark there was peace. Have you ever thought about that? Because the Ark is a picture of Christ. No matter what background you come from, or what kind of attitudes you had, when you come into the Ark they're done away with. You're a new creation. You have a new relationship. There's peace where there was strife, and disharmony and natural hatreds before. All have been replaced by the peace of God through the reconciliation of Jesus on the cross.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be speaking about a parable of Jesus' that emphasized the need of forgiving our fellow human beings.

Radio Program

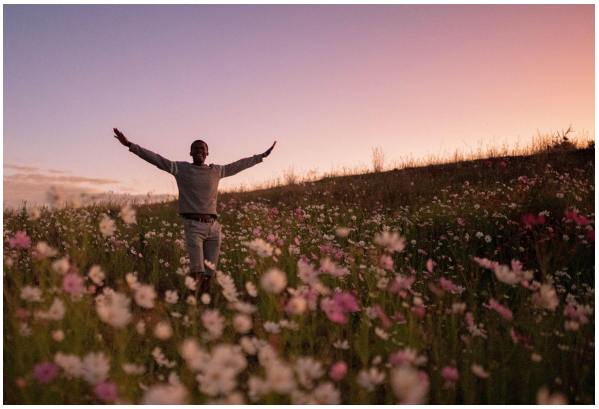
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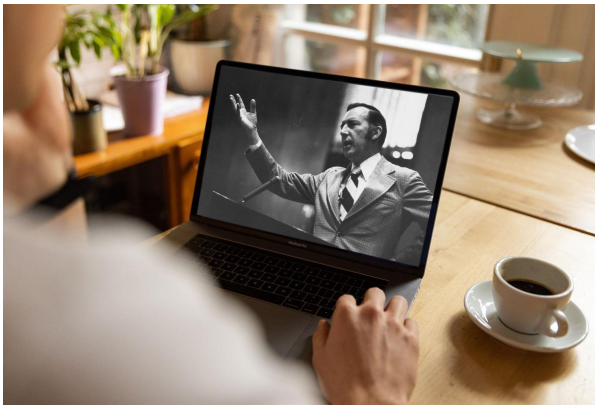
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