



# Study notes - week 10

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## A community that promotes peace and reconciliation

w/c 10 November 2019

*"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."* (Martin Luther King, Jr)

Peace in English tends to be about the absence of conflict rather than any positive relationship. Reconciliation, at its heart, should be about going that step further, to bring disagreeing sides back into friendship. As Paul was writing, thoughts in his mind of *peace* would have gone back through the Greek being used to the Hebrew *shalom* which was very much about more than just absence of conflict. It carries ideas of completeness and well-being (especially spiritual): of knowing the fullness of God's goodness.

### Read Isaiah 2:1-4

This is a vision, as the prophet says, of the "*last days*". How easy is it for us to think of this as something that God will do in the future and therefore not anything that need directly concern us yet?

The well-known bible scholar Alec Motyer preferred the phrase "*the culmination of the days*" – something "*...neither necessarily distant nor certainly near, but always imminent.*" With this in mind, how should we work towards turning swords in to ploughshares? What might count as 'swords' in our society today?

### Read 2 Corinthians 5:11-21

Paul's description of us as "ambassadors" echoes the thinking he expressed elsewhere (Colossians 1:13) where he likens becoming a Christian to a transfer from the rule of darkness to that of Jesus: we become citizens of another kingdom (see also Ephesians 2:19 and Philippians 3:20). We do though, of course, still live out our lives in the earthly realm – another country. Though exiles here on earth (see for example, 1 Peter 2:11), we are not simply to be passive but – as ambassadors – active representatives of our new nationality. How do we balance this foreignness with being an integral part of our local community?

Jeremiah (29:7) called on the Jewish exiles in Babylon to "*seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile.*" What does that mean for us here in Taunton in 2019? How can our understanding of being exiles help in our approach to those forced from their own country here on earth?

Paul (in Romans 5) makes it clear that there is a peace with God that can only come through faith. How do we balance the need to share this peace with work such as maintaining justice and supporting the fatherless as envisaged by the Old Testament prophets? How do we ensure that each is done for the right reasons; that we show love because that is the right thing to do, not as an excuse for preaching the gospel?

'*Speaking the truth in love*' is supposed (Ephesian 4:15) to make those involved more like Jesus. Too often though it can become a get out for cold, hard piety or simple judgementalism. How can we recover the art of doing it properly?

*"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me bring love."*  
(Anon; often attributed to Francis of Assisi)