

# The Peacemaker

Romans 5:1-2, Luke 2:14

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## Introduction

Bethlehem was a nightmare. Due to the census, people from all across the region were returning home to be counted. The quaint, little town of Bethlehem was now bustling with crowded streets and rambunctious inns. I'm sure the Shepherds rejoiced being out in the field that Christmas night. They were able to get away from the busy streets of Bethlehem to enjoy the quiet and serene evening as they kept watch over the sheep. However, that Christmas night would be anything but quiet and serene! As the shepherds watched their flocks, grumbling about the busyness of Bethlehem, all the sudden an unexpected messenger appeared—the angel of the Lord!

As they gazed upon the radiance of the angelic being, their eyes struggled to adjust. Then they heard the angels announcement, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger" (Lk 2:10–12). While they were still in disbelief over the angel before them, a whole multitude appeared, a choir of heavenly hosts! Angels filled the night, declaring a message: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" (Lk 2:14).

The angels' announcement provides us with a great theme of Jesus' arrival and its significance. Jesus has come to bring peace. Today, as we commemorate the second Sunday of advent, we reflect on the idea of Peace. Jesus is the prince of peace. As the bringer of peace, he reconciles us to the Father by absorbing the wrath of God from our sin at the cross. Through the violence of Christ's death, he achieves peace. The peace treaty between God and men is written with the blood of Christ. The Father, in love, takes the initiative to send his Son to be the sacrifice of peace.

There are many ways Jesus brings peace. The scriptures say he brings peace with creation, as the lion will lay with the lamb (Is 66:25). He brings peace between the human race, removing the dividing wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile (Eph 2:14). But, I want to focus on the greatest way that Jesus brings peace. Jesus brings peace with God. In this I want to focus on two points. First, in sin, we are enemies with God. Second, in Jesus, we are reconciled to God.

## In Sin, We are Enemies of God

Before we understand the astonishing reality of Jesus' peace, we must first come to term with the consequences of our own sinful rebellion. The Scriptures are clear: in our sin, all of humanity rightly deserves God's judgement and wrath. I'm fully aware that a statement like that is incredibly provocative to our culture. Many in our world today doubt or reject the very existence of a God. Those who do believe in some God, have no desire for a God of wrath and judgement. As a result, many have constructed a God of their own making, designing a God suitable to their tastes. They get rid of any idea of sin, that there is anything wicked and rebellious in their own hearts. They cast aside any thought that God might be angry and wrathful towards them. In turn, they fabricate a God

palatable to Americans. But this conception of God is nothing but a figment of their imaginations. You don't get to tailor design your God, like a teddy bear from the build-a-bear workshop. God is not a mannequin that you can custom dress to suit your own style. The question is not, "What sort of God would I like?" Rather, the question is, "Who is God? What has he revealed about himself? Who does he say that he is?"

Thankfully, we don't have to wonder who God is, he has revealed himself to us in the Scriptures. As we study God's revealed word, we see an aspect of his character that is terribly neglected and incredibly offensive to our day and age. God is wrathful towards sinners like you and me. And this makes sense does it not? If Jesus brings peace, then without Jesus there is enmity, strife, and hostility. If Jesus mission was to bring peace with God, then without Jesus there is no peace, but only wrath!

The Scriptures say that we "were by nature children of wrath" (Eph 2:3). At the beginning of the book of Romans, Paul tells us, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth" (Rom 1:18). The prophet Isaiah records the words of the Lord, "'There is no peace,' says the Lord, 'for the wicked'" (Is 48:22). This is the scriptural witness—in our sinful rebellion of God, we justly deserve God's wrath.

Notice I said, "justly." God's wrath is what we truly deserve. God isn't a grumpy old man who blows up in fits of anger without cause. No, it is *right* for God to be wrathful. He *should* be wrathful towards us. God is a holy God, morally pure in stainless righteousness. In the perfection of his character and attributes, he exalts that which is the greatest good and eliminates that which is evil. As the supreme deity, that which brings glory to God is the greatest good. Since God *himself* is the

greatest good, there is no one greater than God! As a result, the idolatry from his human creatures vandalizes his glory. Our sin maligns the name of God and makes him appear weak, cheap, and worthless. As human beings, designed to reflect God's own image in worship, we have worshiped created things rather than the creator. In our sin, we've decided that God is not glorious enough for us. He isn't our treasure. He isn't the desire of our heart. He isn't the one who satisfies us. Thus, we throw our creator to the curb. We spit in the face of God, mocking and jeering at him as we run into the arms of false lovers. Like the prostitute, we give ourselves over to adultery. Like the whore, we abandon the one who loves us. Whether you realize it or not, this is who you are. Your heart is rebellious and wicked. Your heart wanders from lover to lover, spurning your creator God. You go from one idol to another looking for rest, satisfaction, and peace.

Is it any wonder then that God is wrathful towards us? He who fiercely defends the goodness of his holiness and the glory of his name, how could he not be offended at our idolatry? As the good God that he is, he cannot allow his image bearers to exalt creation above the creator! Therefore, the wrath of God has been revealed, which all of us clearly and irrefutably deserve!

It is a frightful thing to find yourself in the hands of a wrathful God. This God is the great God, the creator of all that their eyes, who called into existence billions of stars. He holds the oceans of the earth in the hollow of his hands. He transcends both space and time, and this cosmic, all-powerful God is angry and wrathful towards you and your wickedness! If you are not in Christ, the wrath of God remains on you. Jesus tells us, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him" (John 3:36, ESV). We will see the lavish grace of God as Jesus makes peace, but we have to first sit in this reality for a moment. If you are not in Christ, then

the full weight of God's judgement rests on you, and you are in danger of plugging into eternity in the fires of hell.

As Jonathan Edwards warns us,

*"The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood."*

Consider the patience of God towards us! It is by the "mere pleasure of God" that this judgement is delayed. Yet, in our rebellion, the waters of God's wrath grow, mounting in pressure, and it is but the extravagant patience of God that holds back the flood! It is only the mercy of God that he has not yet let go of the bow of wrath bent and ready to slay you in your sin!

If you are unconverted, if you are not a Christian, you must see the dire state of your soul! You are at risk. At any second your life could end, and then you plunge into hell. Do you not know that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? (Rom 2:4). It is by the sheer mercy of God that his wrath has yet to be poured out on your soul! By his patience, he withholds his hand from striking you down this very moment. Awake to the danger that you are in, for you are a rebellious soul who mocks the living God. You have scoffed at the God, who is omnipotent in power, perfect in justice, and swift in his judgement!

I say this not to hurt you, but to warn you. What sort of person would I be, if you were about to walk off a cliff, but I didn't warn you of the danger? Today you hang over the pit of eternity, and it is only the slender thread of God's grace keep you from falling into the fiery abyss! For you are an enemy of God, and in your sin there is no peace. In sin, we are enemies of God!

But God is so patient and filled with love! Because even though we deserve wrath, God has provided peace. This is the good news of Christmas—God sends Jesus into this world to make peace by the blood of the cross. That leads us to our second truth this morning: In Jesus, we are reconciled to God.

## In Jesus, We are Reconciled to God

Listen to the good news of Romans 5:1-2

*"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Romans 5:1-2, ESV)*

Though in our sin, we have no peace, God makes peace through our Lord Jesus Christ. Instead of leaving us in the condemnation of our sin, God in love sent his Son into the world. The incarnate Jesus succeeded where we failed. He perfectly fulfills the demands of the law in our place. Thus, Jesus goes to the cross. He ascends Golgotha's hill, and as he is nailed to the cross he does so in our place. The darkness of God's judgement covers the land, as the broken savior hangs, gasping for breath. As the mocking crowds jeers, Jesus utters, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Even on the cross, Jesus understood his mission to be one of forgiveness. The Father sends the Son, the Son rescues humanity by taking the punishment of sin upon his own shoulders. By his stripes we are healed.

What marvelous grace this is, that Christ should die for me! God has so set his love on me from eternity past, that he would love me, despite my weaknesses, rebellion, and disrespect. His love would overcome my idolatrous and wayward heart, and bring me into his marvelous grace. As Paul states, It is "through him" we have obtained access. In Christ alone, have we received this grace. We receive

this grace by humble faith. We call out on the name of the Lord and we will be saved. At the moment of faith, we are justified, forgiven of our sin and made right with God! Then and only then, will you have peace with God, only "through our Lord Jesus Christ."

*"Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." (Romans 5:9-10, ESV)*

God has spared you from his wrath, by Jesus. Through the blood of Christ, God has atoned your sins. Though you were a God-hater and enemy, through Jesus, God has reconciled you unto himself. The relationship between God and men can now be restored, through the redemptive work of Christ!

If you sit this day, and listen to this message, as an enemy of God, then you are in danger of eternal condemnation, but, today, the love of God is extended to you! In your rebellion, God offers you his peace, a peace purchased by Jesus on the cross. Be reconciled unto God this day. Look to the prince of peace who hangs upon the cross for you. By his blood, God has purchased for you peace. He can save you from his wrath, and can bring you into salvation. If the Spirit has awakened your heart to feel the judgement deserved for your sins, then with the eyes of faith look to Christ and be healed.

This is the Gospel. This is what Christmas is all about. In the chaos and hostility of this world, Jesus arrives as the bringer of peace. In order to make peace, God had to become one of us. He took on flesh and dwelt among us, so that as one of us, he could take on our condemnation. That which Christ has not assumed, he cannot heal. By taking on flesh, Jesus liberated us from the bondage of sin and brings peace between God and man. As Colossians 1:19-20 tells us,

*"For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross." (Colossians 1:19–20, ESV)*

Friends, do you know this God who has made peace? Do you have peace with God? If you are not a Christian, call out to this God of peace who loves you and sent Christ to take on your punishment and sin! If you are a Christian, fall on your face and worship. This Christmas season, remember what God has done for you. In Christ, dwells all the fullness of God, and he came to reconcile all things to himself, making peace by the blood of his cross. If you need peace in your life, look to Jesus!

I think the lyrics to a song called *Grace and Peace* aptly captures the glory of these truths.

#### **VERSE 1**

*Grace and peace, oh how can this be  
For lawbreakers and thieves  
For the worthless, the least  
You have said, that our judgment is death  
For all eternity  
Without hope, without rest  
Oh, what an amazing mystery  
What an amazing mystery  
That Your grace has come to me*

#### **VERSE 2**

*Grace and peace, oh how can this be?  
The matchless King of all  
Paid the blood price for me  
Slaughtered Lamb, what atonement You bring!  
The vilest sinner's heart  
Can be cleansed, can be free  
Oh, what an amazing mystery  
What an amazing mystery*

*That Your grace has come to me*

**VERSE 3**

*Grace and peace, oh how can this be?*

*Let songs of gratefulness*

*Ever rise, never cease*

*Loved by God and called as a saint*

*My heart is satisfied*

*In the riches of Christ*

*Oh, what an amazing mystery*

*What an amazing mystery*

*That Your grace has come to me*

## Final Thoughts

That leads us back to that first Christmas night in the shepherd's field. Now the angelic message is filled with much deeper meaning, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" The birth of Jesus signified that God brings peace with humanity. Jesus accomplishes that peace for us by his death on the cross. The shepherds didn't understand the full ramifications of what was taking place that night, not even Mary and Joseph. They knew Jesus was special, that he was the Messiah, but they did not fully comprehend that here was God in the flesh, who would go to the cross to bring peace to the world!

Like the angels, our only response to God's love in Jesus is humble worship, "Glory to God in the highest!" Our God is glorious for his love, for sparing us from judgement, for reconciling the world unto himself in the person of Jesus. This Christmas, be amazed at the God who brings peace, bend your knee and worship the Lord Jesus Christ. Like the angels, proclaim Jesus to the world! As recipients of God's peace, may we eagerly proclaim this Gospel to the world! Though in your sin, you are an enemy of God, In Jesus, you are reconciled to the God of peace.