

“Peace with God”

On the night of Christ’s birth, a heavenly host of angels shouted these famous words: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”¹ Most of us have heard these words at Christmas time: yet, most people fail to see how these words could be true. As we look around us, we see corruption at every level of society. As we behold this sorry, sin-cursed world, we see injustice and cruelty. We see war and hatred on every hand. Therefore, many consider the promise of “peace on earth, good will toward men” to be a lie. As one poet put it, “For hate is strong, and mocks the song of peace on earth, good will to men.”

However, most people fail to understand the meaning of the angels’ words. There will be no “peace on earth” (in the sense of international peace, and freedom from oppression and war) until Christ returns to earth for the *second time*. When Christ came to earth 2,000 years ago, He came to die on the cross, so that we might be saved from our sin. However, when Christ returns to earth to set up His Kingdom, He will come to rule the world with perfect judgment and justice. When Christ comes back, there *will* be national peace all over the earth.

But not until then!

In fact, Jesus promised just the opposite. Jesus promised that during this present church age, there will be a sword of division! In Matthew 10, Jesus warned His disciples:

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” (Matthew 10:34-36)

The teaching that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God, and the Saviour of mankind, does not unite men; it *divides* men. The world does not love Jesus’ followers for telling them that they need to repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Sadly, most people choose to reject Christ. Consequently, those who *do* choose to follow Christ are often rejected by their own family members and loved ones. Belief in Jesus Christ naturally brings a “sword” of division.

Now, perhaps you are thinking, “Well, what good is this promise of ‘peace on earth,’ then? Maybe Christ will set up a peaceable Kingdom some day; but what good does that do *me*? If I’m guaranteed that being a Christian will bring a ‘sword’ of division, and that my friends will most likely part company with me if I become a true Christian, then why would I want

¹ Luke 2:13-14

Christ?” If this be your thinking, I am here to assure you that Christ *does* bring real and lasting peace in the “here and now.” Christ gives a peace that is far deeper, and infinitely more fulfilling, than any earthly relationship. He gives peace that is infinitely more important than external, political peace. The peace that you need is peace between your soul and God.

My friend, Christ came to this earth because He loves you! He died on the cross in order to pay your sin debt, all because he loves you. Because Jesus Christ died in your place, God the Father is able to accept you. In Romans 5:1 the Apostle Paul wrote to Christians, “Therefore being justified by faith, we *have peace with God* through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

What did Paul mean by this? Well, look at his words again. Paul said that in order to have “peace with God,” you must be “justified” (declared to be righteous). Furthermore, he says that you must be justified “by faith.” Does this imply that unless and until you place true faith in Jesus Christ, you are *not* justified in God’s sight, and that you are *not* at peace with God?

Yes, it does!

The Bible warns us that our sin has separated every one of us from God. The prophet Isaiah wrote, “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.”² Romans 3:23 says, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death.” What does all this mean? It means that because of our sin, we are all guilty and condemned before God. In Romans chapter 3, Paul gives this frightening summary of man’s sinful condition before a holy God:

“Now we know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” (Romans 3:19-20)

Whether we like it or not, the Bible says that we are, in our natural condition, strangers to and enemies of God, on account of our sin. In our natural condition, we all stand condemned and guilty before a holy God, with the sentence of eternal death upon our heads. The Apostle John makes it clear what the sentence of eternal death consists of. It consists of eternal separation from God in the Lake of Fire.

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

² Isaiah 59:1-2

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:11-15)

These words are not a joke. Nor are they poetic or figurative language. God is warning us, in clear, plain, literal language, what our sins have merited us, and what a sinner’s future is apart from His grace. Yet, there is good news. Christ died for you, shed His blood for you, took your sins upon Himself as though they were His own, and took your death penalty in your place, so that in exchange, God could declare you “righteous,” and accept you into His family. Second Corinthians 5:21 describes this wonderful exchange like this:

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

The Apostle Peter puts it this way:

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.” (1 Peter 2:24-25)

The “Shepherd” of our souls is Jesus Christ; and we are the wandering, lost sheep whom He desires to bring back to God. Yet, while He is the loving *Shepherd*, He is also the innocent *Lamb of God*, who went to the slaughter in order to pay for our sins. John the Baptist called him “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”³ In Isaiah 53, Isaiah made this powerful prophecy about what Christ would do in order that we might be made at peace with God:

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

³ John 1:29

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:3-6)

As Christ hung on the cross, the “chastisement of our peace” (the punishment on sin that was needed in order to satisfy God’s wrath, so that we could be at peace with Him) was placed upon Jesus. He took our sin on Himself, so that in exchange, we might have His perfect righteousness placed on our account. In Romans chapter 8, the Apostle Paul says that when you place your trust in Christ to save you, you are “justified” in His sight. (This means “judicially declared to be righteous.”) Instead of seeing your sin, God now sees you as though you had the perfect righteousness of His Son.⁴ You are “justified by faith.” And *being* justified by faith, you now **“have peace with God.”**⁵ Paul didn’t say that Christians should *strive* to have peace with God (as though it were not yet attained); rather, he said that those who are saved *“have peace with God”!* Everyone who has been justified by faith in Christ *“has”* peace with God here and now. At the moment when a sinner repents in his heart and trusts Christ to save Him, the enmity between that sinner and God is removed. He is “saved” for time and eternity. The Lord Jesus put it this way:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” (John 5:24)

In Ephesians chapter 2, the Apostle Paul assured both Jewish and Gentile Christians in the church of Ephesus that they had been made at “peace”—not only with *each other*, but, more importantly, with *God*. It was all made possible because Jesus Christ, “who is our peace,” has abolished that “enmity” between us and God, through His saving work on the cross. Consider these words:

“Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*;

Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace;

⁴ Romans 4:1-25

⁵ Romans 5:1

And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” (Ephesians 2:11-18)

When Christ saves a sinner by His grace, the enmity between that soul and God is removed, and that person is now counted to be at peace with God. That is a Christian’s *judicial position* before God. God, as that person’s Judge, sees him as being at peace with Him, and no longer sees him as His enemy.

However, peace is more than a position. When Christ saves a person, and comes into that person’s life, that person is able to have *actual peace* in his heart, on a daily basis. Christ gives that Christian the assurance that his sins are forgiven, and that his guilt is removed. Even though Christians still have the sin nature, and even though they still often stumble and sin, God now deals with them as a Father would deal with his children.⁶ He lovingly rebukes and chastens His children, so as to bring them back to a close walk with Him; and He never leaves them, or casts them out of His family. Jesus promised:

“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” (John 6:37)

My friend, Christ can give you a peace in your heart that is real, and which will last forever. It is a peace that endures even when the world is crashing down around you. The peace that God gives is a peace that endures even through the darkest trials of life. (Having been saved and in God’s family for 36 of the 43 years of my life, and having gone through many dark trials, I can personally testify of this peace in my own life!) God gives these wonderful words of assurance to those who love and trust Him:

“Be careful [anxious, fearful] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:5-7)

Do you desire to have this lasting peace? You can! Salvation is a free gift, which Christ has already purchased for you in full. Time and time again, salvation is described as a gift.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

⁶ Hebrews 12:6-7

Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)

Salvation (and the “peace with God” that comes with it) is a free gift, my friend. Yet, like all gifts, it must be *received* on your part. You cannot receive this gift by trying to offer your own good works to God, because God cannot accept them. Our “good works” are absolutely worthless to the holy God. Isaiah said that “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.”⁷ Paul said that salvation is “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy.”⁸ If we could get to heaven by trying to be good, there would have been no need for Christ to die on the cross as our Sin-Bearer. No amount of clean living, church going, almsgiving, giving to a church or charity, or even self-inflicted punishment, can in any way pay the debt of your sin to God. No religious rituals (such as baptism, confirmation, confession, penances, rote prayers, pilgrimages, or indulgences) can atone for sin. Only *one* thing can atone for sin—and that is Christ’s once-for-all, finished sacrifice on the cross. Our part is simply to *receive* the gift that Christ has already provided. The Apostle John wrote:

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:12-13)

Did you catch what John said? He said that we must “receive” Christ in order to be “born” into God’s family, and become His children. Yet, how do we receive Him? John answers that question, as well. He says that we must “believe on His name.” To “believe on his name” means to trust in Him completely and entirely for your salvation. It means to stop trusting in your own worthless self-righteousness and religiosity, and instead trust in what Christ did for you on the cross. This is not a *head* belief, but a *heart* belief. Paul puts it this way:

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” (Romans 10:9-10)

To “believe on Christ” does not mean simply to agree *intellectually* that Jesus died for your sins: it means to *believe with your heart*. It means to turn your heart and life over to Him. It means to turn *to* Christ, *from* sin and self. Simply put, it means to “repent”—to turn your heart, mind, and will from sin to God. It means to be genuinely broken about your sin against God, and to be willing for Christ to come into your life and be your new Lord and Master, so that He can make you a new creation. Jesus Himself said, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of heaven is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel.”⁹

⁷ Isaiah 64:6

⁸ Titus 3:5

⁹ Mark 1:15

The Kingdom of Heaven truly is “at hand.” Christ is coming back some day—perhaps very soon. Yet, even if He should delay His coming for another thousand years, the fact remains that each person has only this short lifetime on earth to respond to God’s gracious offer of salvation.

Do you wish to have *real* peace—a peace which lasts for eternity? If so, are you willing to have this genuine peace on *God’s* terms of repentance and faith in His Son? If so, just call out to Him, and ask Him to save you from sin, death, and hell. In simple faith, tell Him that you are genuinely sorry for your sin; that you are resolved to turn from your sin in your heart; and that you believe that Jesus has already paid for your salvation through His death and resurrection. If you will ask Him to save you, and truly believe on Him with your heart, you *will* be saved today! The Scripture says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”¹⁰

If you have decided to make this decision to trust in Christ alone to save you, please let us know! Should you have questions, or if you would like to know more, please let us know, as well. We would love to share more about how you can have the “peace of God, which passeth all understanding.”

¹⁰ Acts 16:31