

Peace with God and More

People like to know where they stand. It gives us a sense of security, and is important for us to determine how we relate to our surroundings or how we associate with others and them with us. When you know where you are corresponding to people or things it makes it much easier to move forward in life or make a decision to not go any further in the event that it could bring harm to you. It also allows you to take appraisal of your current position and decide whether or not you are in fact where you want to be. This is why it is so very important for us to see the truth of where we stand with God. I beg for you to listen. For some of you this message will be a revelation that you are in a place that you do not want to be and possibly never knew you were. How can a person that is blind know of darkness when darkness is all they have seen? But God can shine light into your gloom and reveal His way out for you. Others may have been freed from their dark prison and not understood that Our Father offers his children so much more than liberty, yet we live in unnecessary boredom and needlessly long for joy this side of heaven when Jesus has placed the potential of true happiness in our hearts now. It is your choice to bury your face in your hands, close your eyes or drift in your mind to other things. But I encourage you to listen for a moment; Jesus just might change your life.

Natural Man is God's Enemy

One of Christianity Today's writers, Mark Dever asked, "Does God have enemies? How would you answer this question? If you are one kind of Muslim, you might answer that question, "Yes, God's enemies are the Americans and Israelis!" If you are a Hindu nationalist, you might say, "Yes, it's the Muslims and the Christians!" If you are like most Americans, you probably find the whole question strange, maybe to the point of being absurd: "God? Have enemies?" Perhaps the last time most Americans would have said yes to this question would have been in the 1950s, when God's enemies were "those godless communists"! But these days, the whole idea of God having enemies seems to go against the whole definition of God. Having "enemies" is not something God does, right? People have enemies, sure, but not God!"

A Pastor Lev Humphries said, 'If I were to ask the average person on the street, "Are you for God or the Devil?" most would very strongly protest, "For God of Course!" Most people do not view themselves as ENEMIES OF GOD. In all these years of preaching and witnessing, I find the most common cause of a person's failure to accept the Gospel and respond to "The way of Peace" is man's failure to understand that he has an inherited "enmity (or opposition) with God." We may have people here today that don't realize the truth of their position before

God. You may have either come to believe on your own or someone has dreadfully missed informed you that you maintain a neutral stance between God and His wrath, but there is no middle ground Brothers and Sisters, we are either in Christ's camp or destined to punishment with Satan and the other fallen Angels. I do not care to bring the old days of preachers spitting out fire and brimstone, but there were times they had served a purpose. People knew that God wasn't a pushover without a backbone or he was a restaurant manager where the customer is always right. The Church and the World must realize the fullness of who God is and who we are with or without him.

Ephesians 2:1–3 states “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.” We looked to ourselves; we looked for satisfaction, purpose and joy in earthly perishable destructive things, and ultimately making idols and false gods of ourselves. Mark Dever writes, “We give obsessive attention to our appearance, our bodies, our possessions, our accomplishments, our jobs, or our friendships. We trust in them to bring peace and security. All of these things, of course, are extensions of our own power, reflections of our own ability, and declarations of our own proud independence from God.” This sinful arrogance brings upon us God's wrath. The Canadian theologian Brad Jersak said about God's wrath, “The wrath of God is understood as divine consent to our own self destructive defiance”.

We have now undoubtedly seen that unrepentant man is an enemy of God. But is God an Enemy to Natural Man? Does he wage a war of sorts against unrepentant man? Let's look at the definition of an Enemy: a person who is actively opposed or hostile to someone or something, a hostile nation or its armed forces or citizens, especially in time of war, a thing that harms or weakens something else. God is the oppositional force to the way sinners want to live; unrepentant man is the enemy of God. Not by God's choice but by man's sin-loving preference. In the past the Bible has shown He has brought his wrath to bear on unforgiven man before: The Great Flood, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and the Edomites and Canaanites; before we say that this is only happened in the Old Testament let us not forget Ananias and Sapphira in Acts. This demonstrates that God does take a dynamic antagonistic role against the sin of natural men. We must not forget that God is God and we are not. As a Holy Sovereign God He is doing what He is expected and entitled to do as our Creator, King, Judge and Executioner. Tim Challies, “The judge is a person of power, to execute sentence. The modern judge does no more than pronounce the sentence; another department of the judicial executive then carries it out. The same was true in the ancient world.

But God is his own executioner. He is holy and righteous as he legislates, sentences, and punishes. All judicial functions combine in him.” We sometimes get confused: How can God love me and you say he sees me as an enemy? Stating that a person is an enemy only declares what he is in standing towards you and you them. It is not sinful to call someone your enemy if they are, nor is it righteous to call an adversary a friend. You are simply calling a spade a spade and Jesus did this many times. Let us not forget that God says in Romans 5:10 “For if while we were enemies”. We must realize the iniquity is not calling a person that is hostile to us an enemy, this is being truthful. But thankfully, God shows how truly loving and incredible he is by showing us how he handles us while we were still his enemies.

We are his Creation, but not all His Children.

Before I move on I must tackle one last potential argument from some people who might declare: “How can I or any man be God’s enemy, aren’t we all his children.” That is a common mistake people make, and it sounds nice but it is a lie all the same. We are all the offspring of God in the sense we are His products of the creative work of God (Acts 17:25ff), all men are not the children of God in a personal sense as a father with a son or daughter. Scripture teaches that God only dwells in those who have put their faith in Christ. All other people, while God’s offspring by creation, have been separated from Him because of sin. The Bible is clear that all people are God’s creation (Colossians 1:16), and that God loves the entire world (John 3:16), but only those who are born again are children of God (John 1:12; 11:52; Romans 8:16; 1 John 3:1-10).

God’s Love, Salvation, and Justification

Now let us focus on how we enter into peace with God and refrain from the wrath that we justly deserve. Paul says in Verse 6 - 8: “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” This demonstrates how much God loved us, is truly benevolent, and how he wants us to love our enemies. Notice he never said we were his friends, children or anything that is near being pleasant in standing to each other, he said enemies. But even as an enemy God still loved us so much that He set in motion and did the work that only he could do to bring about peace between us and Him through his son Jesus. We did not deserve it; we were sons of disobedience and hostile to his ways, yet he took action through his love and provided a means of escape. Justification refers to being made just or right. Literally, it means being made straight—perfectly lined up (with God). We are justified or affiliated with God

when we confess our sin and place our faith in Christ's shed blood for the payment of our depravity. Justification is part and parcel of salvation. It is God freeing a person from the penalty of sin—the pronouncement of "not guilty" on a sinner and thus the once condemned man is now released from punishment and wrath.

Romans 5:9 says: "Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!"

After Justification: True Peace with God, His Child, and More

Once God declares us 'not guilty' or justified before him we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ and we are saved from God's anger. And this is where most Christians think the benefits of the love and blessings of God ends. But when God does something it isn't mediocre, nor does he give sparingly, he is not frugal in giving his love! Our God is an incredibly charitable Father. Some of us Christians have thought that the work of salvation was just fire insurance. But Jesus opened the door for so much more! I had just recently watched a YouTube video of a bull. Now as being in the food industry and some of you having grown up on farms, we do realize that cattle tend to end up on a dinner plate so this might be a poor analogy but I hope you give me a moment to show you were this is going. This bull had been chained to a post in a stall all of his life. You could see how he developed an obsessive habit of butting his head against the wall or scraping his head against the post. There was evidence of scars from his tormented confines. After years in this prison, a man from a rescue program that saves abused animals came and released him from his chains. When I first saw this I was, "This man is crazy!" And I had pictures of the bull goring him and stomping him into the dust! But, the bull timidly came out on unsteady legs, and more and more awkwardly gained confidence and soon he was bounding around like a spring calf. I don't know cattle, but it was evident to see that this animal understood the joy of freedom. At times he would slowly come up to the man and nuzzle him and they would place their foreheads together gently, then he was bounding off again. It reminded me of this scripture: Malachi 4:2 (ESV) says: "But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall."

Yet, if most Christians were that bull, from what I have seen over the years, some haven't left the prison even though they are free from their bondage. And others, while they come out of confinement remain only feet from it because they are either too scared to venture further or do not realize they are free to roam and finally partake in green pastures and enjoy life. Furthermore, others go about life absent of the joy and thankfulness they should rightly feel. I see Brothers and Sisters, gripe and grimace through life or don't show happiness in praise during our worship service. For the Christian, because we are now justified or deemed not

guilty by God here is but a taste of what God has given us to experience in our new found freedom. God tells us through Paul:

1. V. 1, “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
2. V. 2, “we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand.”
 - a. This state of kindness and approval, and a state in which we receive, mercy, charity, blessing and favor to help in every time of need.
3. V.3, “we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”
 - a. That glory which the “children of the kingdom” shall share with the Messiah Himself when His eternal reign begins.
 - b. C.S. Lewis preached a great sermon on June 8, 1941, called “The Weight of Glory.” He said, “Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations — these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat.”
4. V. 3-5, “we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame,”
 - a. Were once suffering only produced tears, despair and a deep sense of hopelessness for us, through Jesus we God can take our sorrow and torment and turn it into a means of molding us more into the likeness of Christ and develops in us more faith and hope in Him.
 - b. The world’s pattern of suffering is a downward spiral, but for the Christian as we abide in Christ and turn to God our suffering although real, can eventually take us upward if we allow the Holy Spirit to guide and comfort us. As we walk more and more with Jesus we come to realize that overtime he has proven to us to be trusted and soon we can truly and honestly exalt him in our tribulations.
5. V. 5, “God's love has been poured into our hearts”
 - a. John Piper says, “I take the phrase “love of God” in verse 5 (“the love of God has been poured out within our hearts”) to refer mainly to God’s love for us, not our love for God.” We have within our being God’s love for us. I can recall times when I have questioned whether or not God loved me, this would often come during my times of doubt or depression, but it is the love of God that he has poured into me that come to bear against these thoughts like a crashing wave and reminds me how much he truly cares for me.
6. V. 5, “the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”
 - a. God said through Ezekiel "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you will be careful to observe my ordinances.

- b. Jesus said in John "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.
- c. Every Christian has the very Spirit of God within them. He is the same Powerful Spirit that worked God's plan and miracles throughout the Bible.

As I look out amongst you, I pray that God's message stirs life within some of your souls. These are promises that God has given to his children. It is my prayer that you can take hold of one of these gifts that our loving Father has given to us, which was purchased at a very high price. Ask God to show you which one to grasp tightly and apply to your life so that you might finally begin to walk further with him in your freedom. You have been justified, there is no wrath, only peace and much more.

My hope is that you were able to hear whatever God had for you this morning. Where do you stand with your Creator? Have you seen yourself as an enemy that requires peace? Then pray for Jesus to help you gain that peace through Him? Are you a child that hasn't experienced all that our Father WANTS to give you and you need to bask in his gifts? Then ask him to help you live fully in his love? Or have you once felt that joy and lost the gratitude and thankfulness we should give to Jesus with hearts bursting? Then pray for the Holy Spirit to rekindle the love you once had for him!

Let us pray!