

Advent 2025: Peace – Ephesians 2:13-18

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Date: 14 December 2025

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[0:00] Paul's letter to the Ephesians. You may remember last year's love candle,! Pop quiz. Who preached it?

! It was Jake. I looked it up.! This morning, but it is a part two for Jake.

So, this is the peace candle. And if I were to title this message, it would be this. Christ is peace.

Christ makes peace. Christ proclaims peace. That's our structure.

So, if you're taking notes, that's the three points of the body of this message. Christ is peace. Christ makes peace. Christ proclaims peace. So, before we get there, what is peace?

[1:10] What do you think of when you think of peace? You may think of world events, wars. You may think of the Big C Church, Universal Church, and peace within it.

Or maybe the local church. Or maybe your family. Or maybe inside your marriage and your children. You think of desiring to have a peaceful home, maybe.

Maybe you think of the reason we long for peace, and that is because of sin. You may think of peace and sin. It's the reason we all long for peace, whether we know it or not.

All these are important and necessary. I don't want to say they're not. But I think there are two categories that would help us think that the text really brings out here of peace.

There's two types. I'm going to call them horizontal peace and vertical peace. Horizontal peace could be worldly peace, not worldly in a negative sense, but in a sense that our relationships to one another would be horizontal.

[2:23] It's horizontal peace, having peace with one another. But the second one, and it's more of a biblical sense of peace, I'm going to call vertical peace.

It's our vertical relationship with us as a creation, with our creator. That's our vertical peace, or heavenly peace, maybe.

And here's one of my points here. One cannot rightly understand horizontal peace with one another unless we understand vertical peace between us and God.

And so with worldly peace, let's take those two in turn. With worldly peace or horizontal peace, it's maybe an absence of war, absence of strife, absence of conflict, spouses or your children.

It's concerned with peace only between others, and that's why I say horizontal. And at the center of this is man. It's not negative. It just is one aspect of two.

[3:32] And I think we naturally only emphasize this horizontal peace. So in this way, we often, oftentimes, it's the offender who initiates the process of reconciliation with the offended.

Meaning, so let's take your children, for example. So one child offends another. No peace. It is out. It's out absolute war in your house between these two children.

And you encourage them to, the one who offended, you talk to them and they, you encourage them to initiate the process of reconciling with their sibling, who was the offended.

But we will come back to this at the end. And this is actually not how God has dealt with us. Even though that is good and necessary for horizontal peace, it's different for vertical peace, as our text and whole Bible teaches.

So before we get to that, pray with me. Father, I ask that you would help me during this time to have clear words that everyone here would hear your word and your truth and not my words.

[5:00] Help the gospel be clear. Help our concept of peace to be more of what you desire and what you have done more than what we do.

Help us to keep our eyes on you, especially during this season, that we can look and see true peace with you through your son. Amen.

So let's do a little biblical theology of peace here. So heavenly peace. Here at the Old Testament, it teaches that if we were to divide the Old Testament into two parts, it would be law and prophets.

Law, a means of making peace with God, was through sacrifice. Through sacrificial law, it was a means of making peace with God.

God established that through the first five books of the Old Testament. And it was how to make peace with God. But astute Bible readers would know that Israel, once given to the law, never had actual peace.

[6:06] If you read, you read through kings, like judges and kings. It is an absolute wreck of what the law meant for it to be, to bring peace before God and his people.

So the prophets make this clear. There is a change in language that makes what was concealed in the law made it a little more clear in the prophets, in which the New Testament will make completely clear through Christ.

But the prophets, there's a need for a redeemer who emerges, who emerges this figure, who will embody peace and bring it to his people.

This person will embody peace himself and bring it to his people. So we actually already, we're going to talk about two texts here and we already read together, which is perfect, Isaiah 9, 6 and 7, but listen to it as I read.

Isaiah 9, 6 and 7. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

[7:33] Of the increase of his government and of peace, there will be no end on the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. One more we'll look at is Haggai 2, 9. Haggai 2, 9 says, the later glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts.

And in this place, I will give peace, declares the Lord of hosts. So this all is driving at the opening of the New Testament.

So the Christmas story. So if you, in Luke chapter 1, 2, in Zechariah's prophecy, at the very end of Zechariah's prophecy, says, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Harking back to the Old Testament prophecy that we just read. Luke 2, this is the angels to the shepherds. And you all know this. Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.

[8 : 55] On earth peace. And later, Peter in Acts, preaching on the conversion of the Gentiles in Acts chapter 10, Peter says, as for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ.

He is Lord of all. Making it clear that this peace on earth comes through one man and that man is Christ. Now, this earthly, or this heavenly, this vertical peace is concerned with, like I said, creator and his creation.

That's why I say vertical. And at the center of this is God. It is Christ. One cannot rightly understand horizontal peace unless we understand the vertical peace displayed through Christ's sacrificial death on the cross.

So, for that long intro, please turn with me or look down in your copy of God's word to Paul writing to the church of Ephesus in chapter 2. And I will read 11 and 12, but our main text will be 13 through 18.

So, verse 11. Therefore, remember that at one time, or we could say formerly, you were Gentiles in the flesh, called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands.

[10 : 20] Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

And here's our text. But now, but now in Christ Jesus, you who were, once were, we could say formerly, far off, have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility. By abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

And he came and preached peace to you who were far off, and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one spirit to the Father.

Before we jump in too deeply, let's look at this from above. So if we're thinking about structure and how Paul is structuring his argument, it would help us to understand his message more deeply.

[11 : 51] So if you've ever been, if you're a guy and been to our Sunday evening times of prayer, we have a Bible study. I always ask two questions of a text, and are there any repeated words, and are there any contrasts?

And it helps us to look at a text more deeply. So if we ask, what are the contrasts? Paul loves his contrasting. There are many. So just, I'm going to list off some that you may have already picked up on.

There's the far off to the near. There's the peace to the hostility. There's both into one. And then there's one new man, and we could say two men.

And there's reconcile, and there's the cross. All these contrasts helps us understand the structure here. Are there any repeated words?

Do you see any repeated words? There's actually a couple. Only, I'll just point out two here. There are three. There's actually, before we deep dive into the repeated words, there's a Trinitarian formula here.

[13 : 03] I wonder if you caught it here. The Trinity is clear in this text, actually, if we think about are there any repeated words. So the repeated word I'm going to give your attention to is both in one.

That both in one is repeated three times in connection with one person of the Trinity. So both in one. So if you look at verse 14, it's the Son.

So verse 14, He Himself is our peace. He has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility. Who is He Himself?

Who has made? It is Christ, the Son. In verse 16, it's the Father. Notice, He might reconcile us both to God in one body.

Who? God. To God. And then the Holy Spirit in verse 18, at the very last. For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

[14:08] In one Spirit, the Holy Spirit. There's a Trinitarian shape to this text as well. Other words repeated? Obviously, there's peace.

So, Christ is our peace in 14. Christ made peace in 15. 17, Christ proclaimed peace.

So I'm going to say at the center of this is the last part of verse 15. So making peace. peace. So, there are two, for our structure, if the center is so making peace, if there's three times He's using the word peace, I'm going to take so making peace the middle.

The first and the last part, I hope you probably thought about this, it's mirrored image. The first corresponds to the last and vice versa. And it's based on the far and near imagery.

So, verse 13, you who once were far off have been brought near. That's verse 13 in the beginning. But, last, verse 17, you who were far off, you were near.

[15:24] They're mirrored. And so, in the middle is making peace. Christ making peace. And the far is being brought near. And that's what, that's the connection.

Christ is peace. Christ makes peace. Christ proclaims peace. So, for our first point, verses 13 and 14, Christ is peace.

So, look with me, verse 13. But, now, in Christ Jesus, you once, we'd say formerly, were far off, have been brought or moved near by the blood of Christ.

Those who are far away, that is another word for saying Gentiles. Gentiles, and we can see that in verse 11 above, that we just read.

Those who are far away, but have been brought near, this figurative moving, brought near by the blood of Christ.

[16:31] Now, if we think about the Gentiles and those who are far away, being moved near, this is already pointing to, after our text, in verse 19, this, using the temple language for the people of God, from 19 to the end of the chapter.

And, if you think, what is the temple? The temple is where God dwells. God dwells with his people in the temple. And, Paul is referencing that relationship from the far away to the near, because what's nearest is God dwelling with his people.

And, that's why he uses the temple language after our text, from 19 to the end of the chapter. And, to make it clear how this happens, Paul writes, by the blood of Christ.

It's the means by which those who are far off, have been brought near. It's the means by which, far off to near by the blood of Christ.

Verse 14, for he himself is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.

[17:48] That last part, and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility. If we were going to be a little more literalistic, we could render it something like, and destroy the fence or barrier that divides.

That is, the hostility in his flesh. So, when we see, for he himself is our peace, Christ himself is our peace.

When you see is in scripture, you can put an equal sign. So, peace equals Christ. Christ. That is the vertical peace. And this is the first of the two into one concept of the Trinitarian formula.

Who is making both into one? Christ, the Son. Which, this formula, if you are astute, you will know he does it twice for the Son. Only once for the Father, once for the Holy Spirit.

But who is both? Who is the two? Who is the, we could say it is both groups. It is Gentiles and Israel. Two groups.

[18:53] Gentiles and Israel. We can see this in verse 11 with Gentiles, verse 12 with Israel. It is not as if Gentiles are against Israel, or Israel is against Gentiles.

It is not that. They are not opposed to each other. What he is bringing together is it is not against each other, but both have been hostile to God. They have the same problem.

That is the connection between the two groups, but into one, and there is one solution to their problem. They have a sin problem, both, but now there is one solution.

And thus, the two becoming one by the blood of Christ. Both groups into one by the blood of Christ. And hostility, it is not with those two groups, it is with God, the vertical.

So, Christ is peace, Christ makes peace. Journal of me, 15, verse 15, Christ makes peace.

[19:57] By abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace.

So making peace. This is the center of the text here. This abolishing word we should pause on. It could be something like nullifying, but it's also using up, invalidating, setting aside, setting free.

There's a lot of nuance here, but abolishing, nullifying. I don't want you to get this confused with in Matthew chapter five when Jesus says, do not think that I have come to abolish the law of the prophets, but to fulfill them.

That's a different word. So that's why I probably think that nullifying is a better word there, but think of that. Also, with expressed in ordinances, it's decrees, or this is where we get our word for dogma, or for doctrine, dogma, doctrine, that's where we get our word.

It's a formulized set of rules, and Paul probably is thinking, so should we, from Romans 7, 4, this is similar, maybe give light to this, what he means here.

[21:18] Romans 7, 4, it reads, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.

I think he's having those same points here. Notice two men into one new man.

Verse 16, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

You could say, and might reconcile us both together into one body to God through the cross, putting to death the enmity through it.

A little more literalistic there. This is a second Trinitarian formula here, God the Father here, two into one. And this is the means by the cross, in him, through the cross is the means by which there is vertical peace.

[22:53] He's hammering it over and over and over again. And this is the purpose, the killing of the hostility. Notice the hostility is the first part of that verse is reconcile us both and thereby killing the hostility.

The answer to the hostility is the reconciling. And he moves on. So Christ is peace, Christ makes peace, Christ proclaims peace.

Verse 17, read with me. And he came and preached peace. He proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.

Notice there is a Christmas text here. It is the incarnation. He came, he came, he preached peace.

So Christ came, it's the incarnation. He took on flesh and dwelt among us. It should be resonating in your mind here. Christ's death is above, we just read, so it's Christ's death, Christ's birth here, and Christ's message of preaching peace.

[24 : 12] It's as if Paul is writing his entire, Jesus' entire story here in these words. He died, he came, he preached peace.

peace. And this is a call to preach this good news. Don't let this slip by here. Especially during this season, this incarnation, thinking about the incarnation, this is the Christmas season that we especially remember Christ and his coming into the world on our behalf and looking to his cross.

He came, but also, look, and he came and preached peace. Don't let the proclaiming peace slip by. During this season especially, if you're in Christ, I encourage you to pray for opportunities for this, for speaking this truth of peace by the blood of the cross, by the blood of Christ, to speak this truth and love with all the many random family members and friends you will see in the next couple of days.

Pray for specific opportunities. That's a dangerous prayer, but I encourage you to ask the Lord for specific opportunities for those who do not know this peace.

And we can have confidence in going to these family and friends that may be hostile to this message. we can have confidence only rooted in Christ because in Christ he has gone before us and proclaimed this truth himself.

[26 : 03] And all we need to do is point to Christ. It is the evangelistic message to proclaim this peace, this true vertical peace through the blood of Christ.

And I encourage you to pray specific prayers during this season for that. So last verse, verse 18 here. For through him we both together have access in one spirit to the Father.

This is the third and final Trinitarian formula, the Spirit, the Holy Spirit. And here the center of this verse is access. The result of Christ's work.

is our access. And that, I pray, would give you joy. Only through one man can we have access to the Father in one spirit.

And that is the man, Christ, Jesus. So in conclusion, if we go back and think about our worldly peace, our general definition, if we go back and think about your two children being at war together.

[27 : 20] But the worldly peace, or the horizontal, typically is that the offender initiates the process of reconciliation with the offended.

But as we have seen, biblical or vertical or heavenly peace, it's different. The gospel turns that upside down.

the offended initiates the process of reconciliation with the offenders. It flips the definition. It is not humans who approach God to make peace, but God does.

The one who is offended initiates that process of reconciliation. reconciliation. God initiates the process of reconciliation with us through the blood of Christ.

Now, do you believe this? Do you just know this? Or do you truly believe and trust in the Lord in this? Because this is what's easier is to have a worldly peace, the horizontal peace.

[28 : 31] It's much more difficult to believe and apply to your life. hope that the offended one initiates the process of reconciliation. That goes to the heart of our pride, because we want to do something.

We want to be the hero. Does this give you dread? Or does this give you joy that you can look to Christ and see that God has initiated reconciliation for your sin?

Does that give you joy? I hope it does. I hope that you see this as a beautiful truth that you can proclaim. If you don't, I encourage you to turn to the Lord who extends this peace to you through his Son.

I pray that you would read this, you would be confused by it, drawn to it, that you would turn and go to him with this truth. But if you do, if you do know this true to be true, I pray that the Lord would give you peace in this life while remembering the ultimate peace accomplished through Christ, God's Son.

I pray that the Lord would give us wisdom and courage to proclaim this peace to those who do not yet know or who have hardened hearts.

[30 : 07] Pray those specific prayers this week. Christ is peace. Christ makes peace. Christ proclaims peace.

I'll have Paul have the last word. Look with me. verse 19 at the end of our text. So then, you are no longer, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

Pray with me. God to God to God to God to God!!