

Is God Your Enemy?

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[0:00] Colossians 1, and we'll be reading verses 15 to 23. And in him all things hold together.

And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior, but now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation, if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.

This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant. Is God your enemy?

I think from time to time, we might all feel like God is at war with us. Unbelievers know that instinctively. God isn't pleased with me.

[1:51] I'm not doing right. And he's not okay with that. Romans makes it clear, although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they know that their sin is against him and that he is against them.

But of course, I think sometimes believers, we feel this, and it's not in a good way. Sometimes, not all the time, but I think sometimes we are like teenagers, and it feels like he's on us.

And I'm saying, when teenagers and parents are trying to figure out those boundaries, and that teenager's coming into his own, and so it feels like he's on us.

We say, why won't you leave me alone? And by which we mean, quit pointing out what's wrong with me. I know I need to change. I know I need to do better.

And so we feel like he's riding us. He's against us. He's not for us. And so, metaphorically speaking, we slam the door in his face, and we hide away in our room from our Heavenly Father.

[3:14] And in our hard thoughts about him, we make our Father our enemy. And so my question is, is that true?

Is that accurate? Is God your enemy? And our passage tonight clearly shows us that, no, God is a peacemaker. He's a peacemaker.

Now, our passage has three movements, and each of them build on each other. And the first one is simply this. What happened at the cross? What happened at the cross?

And you can see it in verses 19 and 20 there. For God was pleased to have all of his fullness dwell in him, and through him, through Jesus Christ, to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.

The first thing that we need to notice here, if we're going to understand what happened at the cross, is that God was doing something. The cross is, first of all, God's action.

[4:25] God is the main actor in verses 9 through 20. He is doing something. Well, what is he doing? There's these two words, but it's one idea. You see them in verse 20.

To reconcile and making peace. So God was taking the initiative to make peace. Now, religion is about man making peace with God.

Of doing this, I'll do this and that, and that will make, I'll satisfy God. I can be at peace with God.

And we come up with these ideas. We come up with our own plans and what we're going to do.

And we offer them to God as our peace offering. Well, the gospel is the other way around. The

gospel is God making peace with man. So I think we need to bring our hearts, and I know my heart is slow to believe, and so we need to bring our slow to believe hearts to this truth, to this verse.

Who took the first step in making peace with you and reconciling and becoming your friend? Well, God did.

[5:38] So who took the initiative? God did. Who wanted the relationship fixed? God did. So the cross was not first the work of sinful man in any shape or form.

It was an act of God. God was making peace. God was reconciling. And that point is driven home by who was on the cross. You see that, and this is where Paul is connecting this verse to what's gone before.

Who was on the cross? Who was shedding his blood? Well, look at verse 19. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him. In Jesus Christ.

So Jesus Christ had all the fullness of God in him, and it was he who was on the cross. He who had the fullness of God. And so Paul takes us down to the docks, and there is a cruise ship waiting there.

And so picture it. There's the gangplank or whatever. You walk up on the ship. And at the bottom of the ship. And at the bottom of that, on land, on the dock, is a lady, and she has a little small podium there, and she has a list of names.

[6:51] And on that list is all the people that are going on to that cruise. Now, this is a small cruise ship, so it only has 30 people or so. And the ship only holds 30 people.

In other words, it's completely booked. Every room is marked to be filled. And as people come on, she checks off her list. And finally, all 30 people have walked up the gangplank.

They have entered. They've gone onto the ship. And so she turns to the captain and says, that's it. We're full. It won't hold anymore. So everyone who was supposed to be there is there.

Now, in Jesus Christ, all the fullness of God is in him, is dwelling in human flesh. Everything that it means to be God is in him, is living in him.

All of God's attributes are there. Not one is missing. Not a single room. Not a single bed is empty. They are all there. The ship is full. So his wisdom is the wisdom of God.

[7:51] And his power is the power of God. And he is eternal, infinite, and unchangeable. And he is slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Everything that it means to be God, he is.

The fullness of God is in him. Nothing is lacking. Nothing is missing. So who was on that cross? It was him. It was the Son of God in the flesh.

And if that is going to strike us like it really does need to strike us, we have to remember that that cross was a bloody place. It was his blood.

And Paul mentions it. Blood shed on the cross. So his life is given to make peace. Now Paul says, in our view of Christ, in your view of Christ, you need to add this to what I've been saying.

Now Paul has been talking about how great Jesus is. He's the image of God. He's the firstborn over the creation. He's the firstborn from among the dead. He's the head of the church.

[8:58] Everything is from him and through him and to him. He's the Lord of the creation, Lord of the new creation. He's the beginning of a whole new world. But his authority and his glory as this Lord of the new heavens and the new earth was not just handed to him.

He did not just come into that office in that position because his father was somebody. Not just because he was the son. He didn't get the best job because his father was someone.

No, he is the Lord of creation. He has the supremacy in everything because none went lower than he did. The law of the kingdom of God is that the least will become the greatest and none suffered like he did and none served the creation like he did and the least became the greatest.

He served all and so he rules over all. So let's take a closer look at what God was doing through his son.

What did Christ do on the cross? Well, in some way, Paul says, it was for the whole created realm. He says all things.

[10:22] Five times Colossians, Paul in this little section uses that phrase all things and it means everything, all things, heaven, earth, anything included. It was to reconcile to God all of creation, the whole creation from top to bottom.

Now, is that saying, is Paul saying that every moral creature, whether you're an angel, you're a demon, every man, does that mean that everyone is saved, everyone is reconciled to God?

Well, some have thought so and some have gone to this verse and come up with a universalism where even someday hell will be completely empty.

But it can't mean that. It just doesn't fit in with so many other scriptures. But it does mean this, that creation as a whole was brought back into a place of blessing.

It was a restoration. And so remember after Adam fell, it wasn't just Adam who fell and just mankind that fell. All creation fell under a curse. And so when Adam sinned, it was the end of God blessing man in that way, but it was also the beginning of a curse for creation.

[11:33] And so now all of creation groans under the curse of sin. The curse of sin is something that is experienced by everything. Sin weighs down the whole creation and it destroys the shalom, the peace that this creation once knew.

So everything has unraveled. Everything has unraveled. The orchestra was doing fine. Everyone was on key. We all had the same sheet music before us.

We were all playing the same piece. We all could see the director. But when man fell, every instrument went out of tune and everyone started playing their own music and now no one can see the director.

And so they're cut off from the one who could bring them together. And so instead of an orchestra, instead of a symphony, it's a cacophony, it's a curse, there's no peace.

But what God was doing on the cross was making peace. He was bringing everything back into order, into shalom, or at least beginning to.

[12:45] So we usually think of salvation as something that humans experience, as something we have experienced, as something personal to us. But Paul here is pushing the boundaries of our view of salvation.

And he's saying it's cosmic in scope. Christ's cross had an effect not only on my life, not only on your life, but it had an effect in the heavens and on the earth below and all of creation.

And so Christ, the creator of creation, became Christ the savior of that same creation. He became the reconciler of heaven and earth. But that peace wasn't free.

creation's blessing cost him his place of blessing. Creation's peace cost him his peace.

And we've talked about the mental agony and the despair and the discouragement that wracked him as he went to the cross.

[13:48] He lost his peace. He lost his place, so to speak, with God. And a world of curse crashed into him and he experienced it. And so creation's life cost him his life.

Now, we should use this as an open window into God's heart. How great was God's desire to bless all of creation? Well, he gave his son in order to make that peace.

So what happened on the cross? God acted in his son to make peace. Now, the second movement comes out of that. What happened to you?

What happened in your life? What happened to you, Christian? Well, through the cross, something not just large scale, not something cosmic, but something very personal happened to you.

God made peace with you. Something happened in your life. And that's where verses 21 and 22 take us. Paul now turns his attention away from the cosmic and he turns his attention to these people in Colossae.

[14:56] So from the cosmic to the Colossian, from the large scale to something very dear and precious to me. What has happened in my heart? What has happened in my life? Well, God made peace with us.

And so we were, he says, we were once enemies alienated from God. Alienated, estranged.

Estranged, is the way you could translate it. Estranged from God.

So do you have any estranged relatives? People that used to be at the family reunion, used to be at Thanksgiving, but now that relationship is broken.

You're estranged. Now, in our family estrangements, we can say, well, what happened was this? I said this, and then they said that, and then we had a misunderstanding, and then I did this, and I know I shouldn't have done it, but I did it, and then they responded in this way, and it wasn't a good way.

And so we can say, in our family estrangements, there is enough fault, usually, to go around.

Everyone can take the log out of their own eye. But Paul won't let us say that about our estrangement from God.

[16:06] It's all our fault. Paul is clearly putting the blame on this broken relationship on us. Look at what he says, verse 21, you were alienated from God and were enemies in your mind.

The enmity, the hatred, the broken relationship lived in our minds. That breach, that broken peace is our fault. We were the enemies. We did the wrong.

And Paul is uncovering. He's being so factual and so clear. He's saying and doing things that just normal society can't accept.

Because how many people say, yes, I love God. Yes, I love God. I want a relationship with God. But they love God no more than they love lithium. They don't love lithium.

They don't even think about it. They don't love God. They don't even think about Him. But no one will be honest and own up to that enmity. And say, you know what?

[17:08] When I hear the God of the Bible, I find Him to be a nuisance. I would rather have nothing to do with Him. I wish He would rather, I wish He wouldn't even exist.

But we're so good at pretending. We're so good at pretending like, well, I'm not sure why the relationship is so bad. I love Him. I'm not sure what's going on.

But Paul points out, Paul puts his finger and points out our naked emperor that's going on with no clothes on. He points to the true state of things. And he says, you can talk all you want.

And we can. We have these little fallen unbelievers. We have this little group think that goes on.

And he says, I love Him. Yes, I love Him. I love Him too. Yes. And we get together and we say, yeah, we're good with God.

We have peace with God. We love Him. But Paul cuts through it all and he says, no, you were estranged. You were enemies in your mind. And the NIV says, because of your evil behavior. That's probably not the best way, the clearest way to translate it.

[18:15] It is kind of confusing. Literally, it says, the enemies in your minds in your evil behavior. You were expressing your enmity and your anger and your hatred for God in your evil behavior.

You showed that enmity by what you did. Anyway, in our evil deeds. And so you can talk all about how you love God, but actions speak louder than words.

And we show our hand by what we do. We show our hand, we show our heart, we show our affections by what we do. And he says, do this. And I say, no, I can't do that.

I don't want to do that. I don't like that. Matter of fact, I'm against that. That's not a good idea. I'd rather do this instead. And so the enmity is on our side. Now, does God respond to our sin?

Does God oppose the proud and give grace to the humble? Does God respond to our sin? Does he confront us in our sin? Is he angry with our sin? Yes.

[19:24] Just because we went from holy to unholy doesn't mean that God went with us, that he compromised himself, that he changed along with us to accommodate us. We became sinful and he stayed holy.

And so the relationship was broken. And there can be no coming to terms until that's dealt with. death. But who went out of his way to fix it?

It wasn't us. It was him. It wasn't us. It was him. He initiated this peacemaking. You see that in verse 22.

But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death. death. Now we have to understand what Paul is talking about here.

He's not talking about the relationship in a subjective sense. He's not talking about the attitudes of our mind. He's not talking about how I feel about God here.

[20:26] At this juncture, what Paul is talking about is the relationship in the objective sense. So this reconciliation is objective, not subjective here.

So he's not talking about changing our minds. He's not talking about changing our attitudes. He's talking about the objective issue between God and us.

And the objective issue is our sin. Our sin. And so what separates you from God? It's nothing but your sin.

God's greatness and your smallness, that doesn't separate you from God. The vastness of the difference between the creator and the creature, that doesn't separate you from God.

At least in this relationship, God lives with the humble in heart. God walked with Adam in the garden. It wasn't like God shirked Adam because he was God who was so great and Adam was just this creature, this man that was born yesterday.

[21:24] But when Adam sinned, God drove him out of the garden and those evening walks ended. the objective problem, the objective issue was our sin.

Sin ruined the relationship. Sin was the barrier. We needed more than a change of mind. We did need a change of mind. We needed a change of heart. But the objective, that wall had to come down.

That sin had to be dealt with. And so what did God do? He confronted the guilt of our sin head on. He confronted our sin head on.

He reconciled us by putting his son to death for our sins. He forgave us the guilt of our sins through his son dying for our sins.

His son taking the blame for our sins. So dear believer, read your Lord's heart here. The cross is the sweetest love letter that anyone has ever written.

[22 : 28] it's written in the impassion of blood. He buried his sword in his son so that he could make you his child.

And I dare say in heaven, God sometimes must say and must wonder, what must I do to prove my love to you? To prove my good will to you?

How long will you go on thinking I'm not your friend? I'm not for you. I don't love you. My son suffered for you. And I did that to bring you.

I did that to become your friend. I did that to be reconciled to you. I have blood on my hands for your sake. That's how I love you. Well, that's what happened to you.

God made peace by sacrificing his son. Now, what will happen? So this is the third movement.

What will happen to you? What will happen to you?

[23 : 31] So what happened on the cross? What happened to you? In your life? What will happen to you? Look at verse 22. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight without blemish and free from accusation.

accusation. So now we're fast forwarding all the way to the end. And what Paul is talking about here is the last day, the last judgment. Paul's saying, this relationship with God is so reconciled, there is such peace, sin has been dealt with so well, that on the last day he will present you as holy, without blemish, and free from accusation.

So on the last day when judgment is being dealt out, when every deed is being paid for, when punishments for every crime and sin are carried out, no one in heaven, no one on earth, not God on the throne, not any man, not any devil in hell will be able to say anything against you.

Will be able to find anything against you. Not a word will be said against you. So imagine what Paul is saying, imagine you shining in glory and holiness.

And the Lord Jesus with a smile on his face saying, this is my brother, this is my sister, and he's perfect. There's no spot on him.

[25 : 05] No one can accuse him of anything. The devil himself will put his hand over his mouth, and he'll have nothing to say. He says, you'll be free from accusation.

You know, it's one thing to be innocent. It's another thing to be free from accusation. A lot of innocent people are accused, but it's another, it's something totally different to say, no one can even try to bring you in the court.

No one can accuse you of a single thing. that's how effective Christ's death was for you.

But this is what God is going to do for you, and Paul adds some material there. He says, if, if, this is not absolutely certain, he says, if, verse 23, if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out to you in the gospel.

What a big if. Your whole eternity rides on this if, if you continue in the faith. So this great blessing of absolute spotless righteousness before God and man, before the whole heavens and earth, this great vindication, freedom from accusation, this great blessing is only going to come to us if, if we keep believing.

[26 : 34] If you hold on to Jesus Christ. So Paul is putting the axe to the root of, of what these false teachers were saying, what our world says.

People were saying, oh, Jesus is good, but you need something more. You need something different. You need to keep these rules. You need to keep these Jewish rules. You need to get this mysterious knowledge.

You need to have this understanding. You need something more than Jesus. And our hearts are good at making up these rules. We don't hear them just from the outside. We come up with them on the inside and we add things to Jesus.

We want to add things. Our sinful hearts want to do this, but Paul says, all that matters, all that will get you through on that great day is your faith in Jesus Christ.

Will you be leaning entirely on him? If you will, then this is the blessing for you. So what a big if?

And that leads us to our practical applications in the close.

[27 : 33] Three things very briefly. Number one, watch what you trust in. Watch what you're trusting in. There's two ways not to persevere in the faith, not to continue established and firm like Paul is saying.

one is to believe the wrong things, to put your trust in the wrong things. And that's what the Colossians were in danger of.

There were winds of doctrine blowing, ideas that were coming through, other saviors were calling, and if they got carried away, and if they put their trust in those things, Paul's saying you'll lose everything.

Now where I went to school in Ohio, I think it was down in a valley, and it was in the middle of the cornfields, and the wind would get so strong.

And you know when the wind is gusting and you're walking somewhere, it can really knock you about, and you have to lean into the wind. Well the world is always doing that.

[28 : 36] The world is always blowing, giving you something else to trust in. The devil is always doing this. They want to give you something else to believe, something to move you off of Jesus. It might be just to your good works, and most of the time it is.

It's something that, well, makes sense in a sort of a way. But don't let them move you from Christ. Jesus' death is enough. Jesus' life is enough.

He made peace with God. He washed you clean. You don't need anything else except for him. And so Paul is saying stay where you are. Stay rooted in the faith.

Keep a hold of Jesus Christ. And if giving you something else to believe in doesn't work, the world has another way. It has a way of scaring you off of Jesus Christ. If you read the book of Revelation, you see that's the devil's, he has two ways of taking care of Christians and dealing and confronting them and getting them to abandon their faith.

One, he seduces them, and the other is he threatens them to destroy them. And so if seducing you doesn't work, then sometimes the threat will.

[29 : 46] Will they try to scare you? Will they try to kill you? And if they do, what will keep you from tucking your tail in and running away and abandoning Jesus Christ?

I think one thing that will keep you is just this thought that someday the whole world is going to stand before God in judgment, and God is going to present me as holy in his sight.

And I'll be free from accusation, and God with a smile will welcome me home. So I'm staying right here. The world can't do anything to me.

That's number one. Number two is this watch your life. So the other way to leave the faith is to leave it ethically, to let sin in and follow that sin right off the path.

So the faith is a road with two hedges. One is what you believe in, what you trust in, and the other is what is ethics, what you do.

[30 : 53] And there's danger on both sides. There's two ways of getting off the faith and leaving the faith. So Demas, he left the faith. Why? Because he loved the world.

Pastors have left the faith because of sexual failures. Men and women leave Jesus because they want sin more. And so are you letting sin get a grip on your life?

Are there some secret sins in your heart that aren't being dealt with, that are just being tolerated?

And maybe you're coating them with a thin veneer of grace and forgiveness, but you're not repenting, you're not dealing with it.

Watch out. That promise of free from accusation is a promise for those who continue in the faith. So watch your life.

And finally, number three, if God went to such lengths to make peace with you, shouldn't you go to great lengths to make peace with your brothers and sisters in Christ?

[32 : 01] So if God sent his son to die so that they could be his friends, shouldn't I do all I can to live at peace with them, to overcome obstacles, to cover over their wrongs in love, to protect, to keep those relationships, to make peace with them?

You know, a person who thinks God is always after them, always criticizing them, always angry at them, still an enemy with them, he has no problem, she has no problem treating others like that.

They have no problem criticizing and giving up on them and saying, well, they didn't do what they were supposed to and so that's it. They have no problem acting like that because that's how they think God acts.

But God isn't like that. Colossians is showing us he's this great peacemaker and so Jesus' words for us are blessed are those, blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called the sons of God, like father, like son.

And so bring your struggles to get along with your brothers and sisters in the faith, bring your struggles to get along with your husband, your wife, your children, your co-workers, bring your problems with peacemaking to the cross.

[33 : 17] Where does the fruit of the spirit, which one of them is peace? Where does it come from? It comes from living at this cross. God made peace with you and it cost him his son.

You need to carry that into your relationships. I need to carry that into my relationships. Peace cost Christ his life. God eternal was humbled to the grave to give you peace, to restore you, to rescue your relationship.

And so, how can we be so small and petty and easily offended? And how can we not forgive them? How can we give up on peace so easily when God went to such lengths to restore us to him, to reconcile us?

Well, let's pray. Heavenly Father, I do pray that you would help us to carry these things into our week. You would help us to remember these things when we're in the tug and the pull of relationships and sin.

When we need help and when we need strength, will you bring these words to us? Spirit of the living God, will you please bring your gospel, the gospel of peace, to our hearts in those moments that your truth might sanctify us and that we might walk in greater strength and greater humility and greater patience because God has been so patient with us, so kind to us.

[34 : 56] Will you help us to remember your grace? Help us to remember the truth of the gospel.

And I pray for those who are outside of Jesus Christ. Will you show them that one day they will have to stand before you and they have no hope except for Jesus.

Will you show them Jesus Christ and drive them to him, to believe on him. It's in Jesus' name I pray. Amen.