



# PEACE

## ADVENT | Week 2

Peace is one of those words that we are all familiar with, whether it is used to describe a calmed spirit, the ceasing of war, or a casual greeting. Peace has its own iconic symbol that can be seen on bumper stickers and at the center of social movements.

It is a word that is also significant to the biblical story.

The angels announce “peace” to the shepherds on the hillside the night of Jesus birth (Luke 2:14).

Seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus Isaiah prophesied, “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. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end...” (Isa. 9:6-7).

The Gospel writer Luke records the days when Caesar Augustus was summoning the world under the name of peace to increase the burden of taxes. God was summoning the world to fulfill His Word, to establish the throne of His Son, and to make the way for a peace that will have no end.

God’s glory is revealed in the coming of His Son Jesus. God’s peace comes everywhere His Son is received. And the eternal promise is, of the increase, there will be no end!

Isaiah is looking forward. Luke is looking back. Both are looking at the same event. Both are seeing the same day. Isaiah writes with hope. Luke writes of fulfillment. Peace is announced. Peace has come!

## This Christmas, Think Trick or Treat

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"Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Therefore do not be partakers with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light."

### Ephesians 5:6-14 (NKJV)

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This is not your traditional Yuletide passage. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul knocks at the door, and—instead of bursting forth in song and carols—he says, "Trick or treat?" This is not what you are expecting to hear at Christmas, is it?

Perhaps if he had costumed as Batman, Paul might have knocked on the door and quoted him in that gravelly whisper, "It's not who I am underneath, but what I do that defines me." That line plays well in the movie theatre, and might be true for one who lives in darkness, but it is not true of one who lives in light. Paul is not Batman. Paul writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and he wants his readers to know, "IT'S WHAT IS ON THE INSIDE THAT DEFINES ME!" Paul wants his readers to be able to distinguish between the deception of living in darkness from the truth of living in light.

In this amazing passage, Paul warns his fellow saints not to be tricked! Do not rationalize your sin. Do not let others deceive you. Sin is sin. Sin is darkness. What is “the wrath of God”? That’s being turned over to one’s sin nature—the gravity of depravity. Who are the “sons of disobedience”? Believers can and do sin, some to the extent of living a lifestyle according to their sin nature (as opposed to their divine nature). They are living in darkness. So, Paul first warns, do not be tricked; those who live in disobedience will eventually be turned over to their sinful ways.

Paul goes on to give two more warnings: do not associate with those who are living in darkness and do not associate with the works of darkness. Paul does not say don’t minister to them. He does not say to not love them. He warns us, however, not to associate with the behaviors of darkness. Darkness is not something to trifle with.

When you trusted in Christ as your Savior, you were given a divine nature. God is light, and that light is in you. You can be like Batman and choose to live in darkness, or you can choose to live in His light. Paul says, “walk as children of light.” Walk refers to lifestyle. Throughout Scripture we read that we are to be imitators of Christ. Yes, we have a sin nature, but as believers in Christ we also have a divine nature and a light within.

We read passage after passage that says we are to walk by the Spirit, to walk in the light as He is in the light. And, as you search the Scriptures you find that those who “walk” in the light and by the Spirit experience the fullness of God’s joy and ultimate fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Therein is the greatest treat one can have. Fill your bag and let it overflow!

It has been said that “peace” is oneness with God. Don’t let the world trick you into darkness this holiday. Live in His light; abide in Him by abiding in obedience to His Word. Discover the joy of oneness with God. Walk by the Spirit, and He will fill your stocking with the greatest treat of all—“And Christ will give you light.”

**"Don't let the world trick you into darkness this holiday."**

## Further Reflection | Individual Study Questions

1. *Light*. God’s love language is obedience. “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). And, what did Jesus command? To believe and to love one another. What can you do this day to be in obedience to Christ and demonstrate His love toward someone?
2. *Darkness*. Even though, as believers in Christ, we have His light in us, we still battle our sin nature. However, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). What unconfessed sins are you carrying today?

3. *Peace*: In that act of confession, God is faithful and restores fellowship and intimacy with us. In this is peace. In this is oneness with God. Yes, your sin has been nailed to the cross. But, unconfessed sin is a barrier to experiencing true joy and peace. Bring it to God and agree with His standard. The light will displace the darkness and bring renewal to the soul.

### Further Reflection | Family Study Questions

1. *Light*: “Walk prudently when you go to the house of God,” (Eccles. 5:1a). A literal translation would render, guard your feet when you go to worship God. By application, it means behave yourself, behave righteously. As a family, share some behaviors that you have observed in another family member that demonstrates that he or she is “walking prudently.”
2. *Darkness*: “Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals’” (1 Cor. 15:33, NASB). Reflect on your life and share with your family a time when you made a poor decision in terms of picking friends. What were the consequences?
3. *Peace*: Psalm 85:8 says, “I will hear what God the LORD will speak, for He will speak peace to His people and to His saints; but let them not turn back to folly.” We have a choice in life: to walk in light or to walk in darkness. Share with your family a time when you knew you were in the light and a time you knew you were in the darkness. Describe the peace in one and the lack thereof in the other.

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