

Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 265

PEACE

My peace I give unto you.

John 14:27

Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

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PEACE

265

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ONE OF GOD'S RICHEST BLESSINGS

William S. Plumer (1802-1880)

PEACE is the opposite of war, persecution, temptation, condemnation, alarm, tumult, strife, contention, controversy, quarrelling.

In the Scriptures, the word *peace* relates to several different things. By nature, we are all enemies to God; and by wicked works, we evince¹ and strengthen our aversion² to God and holiness. But “being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1). By this peace with God, we are freed from condemnation. We are no longer hostile to God, nor He to us. We no longer contend with the Almighty, nor He with us. Christ is our Surety,³ our Sacrifice, our Peace. “Thorns grow everywhere, and from all things below; and from a soul transplanted out of itself into the root of Jesse, peace grows everywhere too from Him Who is called Our Peace, and Whom we still find the more to be so the more entirely we live in Him, being dead to the world and self and all things besides Him.”⁴ The repose of the soul in its God and Savior is wonderful. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (Isa 26:3). This “peace of God...passeth all understanding” (Phi 4:7). In its basis and in its effects no mortal has adequate conceptions of its richness as a blessing from God. “When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?” said Job (Job 34:29). And Jesus Christ Himself said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you” (Joh 14:27). Nothing can finally destroy this peace. “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom 8:34).

This is one of God's richest blessings. It is the sum and beginning of all mercies. It is a pledge that we shall never perish. This counsel of peace is between God and every soul that flees to Jesus. “The chastisement of our peace was upon him” (Isa 53:5). By Him we have access to God. We are entitled to call Him our Father and our God. God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. When God thus pardons and accepts us, every

¹ **evince** – show.

² **aversion** – feeling of intense dislike.

³ **Surety** – one who assumes the responsibilities or debts of another.

⁴ From a letter by Robert Leighton (1611-1684).

creature in the universe, whose friendship can do us permanent good, is made to be on our side. The angels become ministering spirits to aid and befriend us as God shall commission them. The stars in their courses no longer fight against us. He has even made a covenant for His chosen “with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground” (Hos 2:18). We may therefore speak boldly to all who have made peace with God by Jesus Christ, and say, “All things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s” (1Co 3:21-23). Paul seven times uses a phrase nowhere else found in Scripture. It is this, “The God of peace.” And surely a more striking delineation of the blessed character of God could not be given in so few words, unless we except those words of John, “God is love.” Let every man acquaint himself with God “and be at peace” (Job 22:21). So also our Savior is “the Prince of Peace” (Isa 9:6). In Him we have reconciliation with God and all other good things. He was sent “to guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luk 1:79). His kingdom is “not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom 14:17). So “to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Rom 8:6). And so also no greater blessing could be asked on others than this: “Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth” (Rev 1:4-5).

From peace with God through Christ naturally flows peace of conscience. This is a vast treasure. Nothing can compensate⁵ the lack of it. Nothing can make us happy without it. In the angels above, peace of conscience is the fruit of innocence. In man it is the purchase of a Savior’s blood.⁶ We must have our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, else the sting will remain, and rankle⁷ forever (Heb 10:22). Yes, we must have our consciences⁸ purged from dead works, or we never can acceptably serve the living God (Heb 9:14). If we are ever to be made perfect as pertaining to the conscience, it cannot be “without blood” (Heb 9:7, 9). The blood of Christ “turns our fears into hopes and our sorrows into songs...it may settle the agitations of our spirits; it may silence troubles in us...it is a ground of peace to us. That which hath been a sweet savor

⁵ **compensate** – repay.

⁶ See FGB 264, *Precious Blood*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁷ **rankle** – cause pain or distress.

⁸ See FGB 261, *Conscience*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

to pacify God wants not a savor to appease⁹ our consciences.”¹⁰ The great misery of the wicked is that to them “there is no peace” (Isa 48:22; 57:21). “The way of peace they know not” (Isa 59:8; Rom 3:17). Conscience of sin remaining, no man can be otherwise than a poor trembling, self-condemned creature. Nor can he by hardening his heart erect any strong bulwarks against the sudden invasion of extreme terrors.

This peace of conscience is often interrupted by our sins and follies. When worldliness takes the place of a tender walk; when principle is impinged on;¹¹ when practice is made to conform to temptation; when time seems more important than eternity; then we may know that sooner or later there will be an uproar in our consciences. But “great peace have they which love thy law” (Psa 119:165). It is in vain for anyone to hope for a blessing when he is saying, “I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart” (Deu 29:19).

A third kind of peace is when God disposes our fellow men to regard us with so much favor as to let us alone, not to tease, torment, persecute, or make war upon us, but to think, speak, and act in a friendly way towards us. This is a great blessing. When it is made sure to us, we ought to give hearty thanks to God for it, for He is its Author. “When a man’s ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Pro 16:7). Thus, for a long time Solomon “had peace on all sides round about him” (1Ki 4:24).

It is true that this peace is not, like the others, essential to our piety or our happiness. Jesus Christ said, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword” (Mat 10:34). And the effect of true piety under all dispensations has been to provoke the malice of wicked men, though oftentimes it is restrained by the good providence of God. He turns men’s hearts whithersoever He will.

From *Vital Godliness: A Treatise on Experimental and Practical Piety*
(New York; American Tract Society, 1864); 411-430;
in the public domain.

William S. Plumer (1802-1880): American Presbyterian minister and author; born in Greensburg, PA, USA.



⁹ **appease** – pacify; relieve.

¹⁰ Stephen Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, Vol. 4 (Edinburgh; London; Dublin: J. Nichol; J. Nisbet & Co.; W. Robertson; G. Herbert, 1864-1866), 585.

¹¹ **when...impinged on** – when something outside righteous principles gradually takes over.

MESSIAH'S COVENANT OF PEACE

Samuel Renihan

THE FUTURE MESSIAH: Judah was longing for the Lord to raise up His anointed one because God had promised it. When the kingship showed its flaws and sinfulness, the hope of Israel in the anointed one, or the Messiah, became less concrete and more abstract. It shifted from the present to the future. With each flawed ruler, Israel looked to the next one, awaiting a truly righteous king whose throne would be established. And once the exile came, the question in Israel's mind was simply, "Where is the Lord's anointed?"

When the promises of the Davidic Covenant are placed side by side with the events of Israel's history and the exile, it automatically creates questions as to the identity of the Messiah. Where is the Messiah? Who will be the faithful son of God? Who will deliver us from our enemies? Who will restore us to our inheritance? Who will keep the law for us? Who will lead us in pure worship? Who will cleanse the temple? Who will give the pure Word of God to us?

It was in this context that the prophets gave words of encouragement to the people of Judah, promising them that the Lord would raise up a Davidic descendant in whom the promises of the covenant would be fulfilled. It is necessary to read this passage in light of the rich biblical data covered to this point, from Adam to Noah to Abraham to Moses to David, to all of the history, to all of the sin and failure, to all of the hopes and expectations based on God's promises.

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness. For thus saith the LORD; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; Neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually (Jer 33:14-18).

The Lord will provide a Davidic descendant, a king who brings righteousness to the nation of Israel. He will do it. The days are coming. In the words of the prophets, the dawning light of Jesus Christ gleamed on the horizon. The prophets did not know Him, but Jesus Christ was the

hope of the Israelites. He was promised to them. Isaiah 9:1-7 adds to this.

Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

There will be a king on the throne of David. His kingdom will not end. His government will increase without opposition. He shall be called "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." That would be healing for the spirit of a disillusioned and exiled Israelite. A faithful son of David runs through-out the prophets' words to Israel. There will be a future Messiah.

The Messianic Promise of a New Covenant: The imperfections of the Israelite kingdom and its covenants, combined with the promises of God, produced a longing for something other and greater than what Israel experienced. The exile heightened this tension to its maximum. Life could not get worse for a people who had been promised something so much better. And as the prophets received their word from God, God began to put in the minds of His people a New Covenant through a future Messiah, a *covenant of peace* with a new sanctuary of God's presence.

And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever. Moreover I will make a *covenant of peace* with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I

the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore (Eze 37:24-28).

Given the burden of the law of the Mosaic Covenant and the curses poured out from the Mosaic and Davidic Covenants, this would have been wonderful news. And it is in this context of exilic devastation and the failures of the Davidic line that a well-known passage sings a song sweeter than any other.

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (Jer 31:31-34).

For those living under a covenant that is designed to remind its people of their sin on a repetitive basis, there would be nothing more soul-refreshing than to hear of a New Covenant whose fundamental promise is the forgiveness of iniquity and the casting of sin into oblivion. God is going to make a New Covenant that is not like the old one. God is going to make a new covenant that forgives sins, a covenant that places the law inside of you as your guide, not outside of you as your taskmaster. After all the sin from Adam to Noah to Abraham to Moses to David, at last this covenant will forgive sins. The Messianic hope of the Old Covenant, then, is nothing other than the New Covenant hope of the Old Covenant. When that future perfect Messiah comes, He will bring a new covenant with Him, and all the people of the Lord will know God.

In Genesis 12, God had promised that Abraham's line would produce a descendant through whom a blessing for the world would come. The descendant would provide that blessing, which is the New Covenant. The focusing of the Israelite kingdom and covenants into one person, the Davidic king, brought the silhouette of this figure into sharp focus, though it was the silhouette of a future Messiah, a future faithful son of David. The prophets declared that the blessings of the Messiah would extend beyond the offspring of Abraham. The Messiah will gather the nations in a restored and perfected temple. First, it is promised that the nations will flow to the house of God.

But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it (Mic 4:1-4; cf. Isa 2:2-4; 56:6-8; Hag 2:6-9).

Second, it is promised that the signal on God's mountain (i.e., temple) to which the nations are drawn is the Messiah, the son of David.

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious (Isa 11:1-10).

In the law, prophets, and writings, the mystery of Christ was made known. The Messiah of Israel, the son of David, will unite Israel and the nations in a new house of God through a new covenant of forgiveness and righteousness.

Many other passages in the prophets add to this... The Servant Songs of Isaiah say that the Servant of the Lord, the Lord's anointed, will speak Jehovah's word and will be given as a covenant to the people. He will die and suffer in their place, and by His wounds and death many will be made whole; many will be accounted righteous for His sake.

The kingdom of Israel and its covenants were typical shadows of Christ, the substance. As types, they were their own entities serving their own purposes in their own contexts. Yet also as types, they pointed upward and onward to something greater than themselves. The promises of the prophets contributed a great deal to pushing the Israelite hopes beyond their present situation to something more ideal, something more perfect, something more permanent.

Yet, for all the quantity of revelation given to Israel, it was given through the mode of mystery and the medium of typology. The promises of the future kingdom and covenant of Messiah are all contained within the language of the typical realm. The revelation of the perfected future through the imperfect present, that is, the typological nature of the kingdom of Israel and its covenants, constituted the mystery of Christ. The Messianic hopes of the people under the Old Covenant, therefore, were commonly restricted to an idealized version of their present existence. They saw the Messiah bringing them victory over foreign powers, rebuilding their temple, and inviting the nations to become Jewish. What God had in store for them, and the world, was far better than they could have imagined. They failed to realize just how much the New Covenant would not be like the Old Covenant, and why that was such a blessed reality.

Israel's hopes rose and fell with restoration from exile and the rebuilding of the temple. But they never regained their former glory, nor did one of their kings sit on the throne. Soon after, the prophetic voice of the Spirit fell silent for centuries. Until one day...

And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end (Luke 1:26-33).

That child was born, and shepherds and royal wise men were informed of the birth of the King of the Jews. Then a man named John declared the arrival of the Lord, One vastly greater than he, and "now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of

God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mar 1:14-15). Neighbors heard that a man named Jesus was healing diseases and casting out demons and preaching about the kingdom of God. And Andrew found his brother Simon (Peter) and said, “We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ” (Joh 1:41). At last, this is it. He is here.

Conclusion: In a world cursed through Adam and stabilized through Noah, a special kingdom was formed through covenants made with Abraham and his descendants in Canaan. In this kingdom and its covenants, a mystery took shape. This nation will bring a blessing to the nations. From Abraham to David, the mystery revealed that a Davidic son, a Messiah, would gather the nations in the house of God through a new covenant. This revelation of mystery, declared and gathered over centuries, was contained in typology. Present realities pointed to future realities greater and other than themselves. The Messiah ushered in the age of those new realities, those perfected realities, those eternal realities, in a new and eternal covenant granting an inheritance in a new and eternal kingdom.

From *The Mystery of Christ, His Covenant, and His Kingdom* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2019), 173-178; www.founders.org, used by permission.

Samuel Renihan: Particular Baptist pastor of Trinity Reformed Baptist Church, La Mirada, CA, USA.



“This cup is the New Testament in my blood.” The blood seals the covenant, and the cup is the symbol of that seal. It is “the everlasting covenant” (Heb 13:20); the “covenant of peace” (Isa 54:10); “the New Covenant” (Jer 31:31); the covenant that is absolute and unconditional; that not only gives to each sinner who believes a present standing before God of favor and love, but which secures his eternal future beyond the possibility of a second fall. The blood of the covenant makes us safe for ever. O blood-sealed covenant, ordered in all things and sure, what a foundation art thou for our faith to rest upon and for our hope to rejoice in! Yes, and the ages to come are all contained within thine ample compass.—*Horatius Bonar*

That covenant, which is ordered in all things, which is stored with heavenly promises, replete with spiritual blessings, and absolutely sure; that covenant of peace which never shall be removed, runs thus: “They shall be my people, and I will be their God. And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for the good of them and of their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.” (Jer 32:38-40). The stability of the New Covenant is here asserted in the strongest terms.—*Abraham Booth*

CHRIST THE ROCK OF PEACE

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

LET me show you...the rock from which justification and peace with God flow. *That rock is Christ.* The true Christian is not justified because of any goodness of his own. His peace is not to be traced to any work that he has done. It is not purchased by his prayers and regularity, his repentance and his amendment, his morality and his charity. All these are utterly unable to justify him. In themselves they are defective in many things and need a large forgiveness. And as to justifying him, such a thing is not to be named. Tried by the perfect standard of God's law, the best of Christians is nothing better than a justified sinner, a pardoned criminal. As to merit, worthiness, desert, or claim upon God's mercy, he has none. Peace built on any such foundations as these is utterly worthless. The man who rests upon them is miserably deceived.

I believe that no man can be justified by his works before God in the slightest possible degree. Before man he may be justified; his works may evidence the reality of his Christianity. Before God he cannot be justified by anything that he can do. He will be always defective, always imperfect, always short-coming, always far below the mark, so long as he lives. It is not by works of his own that anyone ever has peace and is a justified man.

But how then is a true Christian justified? What is the secret of that peace and sense of pardon which he enjoys? How can we understand a Holy God dealing with a sinful man as with one innocent, and reckoning him righteous notwithstanding his many sins?

The answer to all these questions is short and simple. The true Christian is counted righteous for the sake of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is justified because of the death and atonement of Christ. He has peace because "Christ died for [his] sins according to the scriptures" (1Co 15:3). This is the key that unlocks the mighty mystery. Here the great problem is solved, how God can be just and yet justify the ungodly. The life and death of the Lord Jesus explain all. "He is our peace" (Eph 2:14).

Christ has *stood in the place* of the true Christian. He has become his Surety and his Substitute. He undertook to bear all that was to be borne, and to do all that was to be done, and what He undertook He performed. Hence the true Christian is a justified man (Isa 53:6).

Christ has *suffered for sins*, the “just for the unjust.” He has endured our punishment in His own body on the cross. He has allowed the wrath of God, which we deserved, to fall on His own head. Hence the true Christian is a justified man (1Pe 3:18).

Christ has *paid the debt* the Christian owed, by His own blood. He has reckoned¹ for it and discharged it to the uttermost farthing by His own death. God is a just God and will not require His debts to be paid twice over. Hence the true Christian is a justified man (Act 20:28; 1Pe 1:18-19).

Christ has *obeyed the law* of God perfectly. The devil, the prince of this world, could find no fault in Him. By so fulfilling it, He brought in an everlasting righteousness, in which all His people are clothed in the sight of God. Hence the true Christian is a justified man (Dan 9:24; Rom 10:4).

Christ, in one word, has lived for the true Christian. Christ has died for him. Christ has gone to the grave for him. Christ has risen again for him. Christ has ascended on high for him and gone into heaven to intercede for his soul. Christ has done all, paid all, suffered all that was needful for his redemption. Hence arises the true Christian’s justification—hence his peace. In himself there is nothing, but in Christ he has all things that his soul can require (Col 2:3; 3:11).

Who can tell the blessedness of the exchange that takes place between the true Christian and the Lord Jesus Christ! Christ’s righteousness is placed upon him, and his sins are placed upon Christ. Christ has been reckoned a sinner for his sake, and now he is reckoned innocent for Christ’s sake. Christ has been condemned for his sake though there was no fault in Him. And now he is acquitted for Christ’s sake, though he is covered with sins, faults, and shortcomings. Here is wisdom indeed! God can now be just and yet pardon the ungodly. Man can feel that he is a sinner, and yet have a good hope of heaven and feel peace within. Who among men could have imagined such a thing? Who ought not to admire it when he hears it? (2Co 5:21).

But we read in gospel history of a display of love... We read of Jesus, the Son of God, coming down to a world of sinners, who neither cared for Him before He came, nor honored Him when He appeared. We read of Him going down to the prison-house, and submitting to be bound, that we the poor prisoners might be able to go free. We read of Him becoming obedient to death—and that the death of the cross—that we, the unworthy children of Adam, might have a door opened to life everlasting. We read of Him being content to bear our sins and carry our

¹ **reckoned** – counted the cost.

transgressions, that we might wear His righteousness and walk in the light and liberty of the sons of God (Phi 2:8).

This may well be called a “love that passeth knowledge”! In no way could free grace ever have shone so brightly as in the way of *justification by Christ* (Eph 3:19).

This is *the old way* by which alone the children of Adam, who have been justified from the beginning of the world, have found their peace. From Abel downwards, no man or woman has ever had one drop of mercy except through Christ. To Him every altar that was raised before the time of Moses was intended to point. To Him every sacrifice and ordinance of the Jewish law was meant to direct the children of Israel. Of Him all the prophets testified. In a word, if you lose sight of justification by Christ, a large part of the Old Testament Scripture will become an unmeaning tangled maze.

This, above all, is the way of justification which exactly *meets the wants and requirements of human nature*. There is a conscience left in man, although he is a fallen being. There is a dim sense of his own need, which in his better moments will make itself heard, and which nothing but Christ can satisfy. So long as his conscience is not hungry, any religious toy will satisfy a man’s soul and keep him quiet. But once let his conscience become hungry, and nothing will quiet him but real spiritual food and no food but Christ.

There is something within a man, when his conscience is really awake, which whispers, “*There must be a price paid for my soul, or no peace.*” At once the gospel meets him with Christ. Christ has already paid a ransom for his redemption. Christ has given Himself for him. Christ has redeemed him from the curse of the law, being made a curse for him (Gal 2:20; 3:13).

There is something within a man, when his conscience is really awake, which whispers, “*I must have some righteousness or title to heaven, or no peace.*” At once the gospel meets him with Christ. He has brought in an everlasting righteousness. He “is the end of the law for righteousness” (Rom 10:4). His name is called “the LORD our Righteousness” (Jer 23:6). God has “made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21).

There is something within a man, when his conscience is really awake, which whispers, “*There must be punishment and suffering because of my sins, or no peace.*” At once the gospel meets him with Christ. Christ hath suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, to bring him to God. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. By His stripes we are healed

(1Pe 2:24; 3:18).

There is something within a man, when his conscience is really awake, which whispers, “*I must have a priest for my soul, or no peace.*” At once the gospel meets him with Christ. Christ is sealed and appointed by God the Father to be the Mediator² between Himself and man. He is the ordained Advocate³ for sinners. He is the accredited Counsellor and Physician of sick souls. He is the great High Priest, the Almighty Absolver,⁴ the Gracious Confessor⁵ of heavy-laden sinners (1Ti 2:5; Heb 8:1).

I know there are thousands of professing Christians who see no peculiar beauty in this doctrine of justification by Christ. Their hearts are buried in the things of the world. Their consciences are palsied, benumbed, and speechless. But whenever a man’s conscience begins really to feel and speak, he will see something in Christ’s atonement and priestly office which he never saw before. Light does not suit the eye nor music the ear more perfectly than Christ suits the real wants of a sinful soul.

This is the one true way of peace: justification by Christ. Hold fast the truth of God about justification and be not deceived...Oh, believe me, there is *no peace with God except through Christ!* Peace is His peculiar gift. Peace is that legacy which He alone had power to leave behind Him when He left the world. All other peace beside this is a mockery and a delusion. When hunger can be relieved without food, and thirst quenched without drink, and weariness removed without rest, then, and not till then, will men find peace without Christ.

Now, is this peace your own? Bought by Christ with His own blood, offered by Christ freely to all who are willing to receive it—is this peace your own? Oh, rest not! Rest not till you can give a satisfactory answer to my question: *Have you peace?*

From *Old Paths: Being Plain Statements of Some of the Weightier Matters of Christianity* (London: C. J. Thynne, 1898), 219-238; in the public domain.

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900): Bishop of the Anglican Church; born at Macclesfield, Cheshire County, England, UK.



² **Mediator** – a go-between. As the Mediator between God and man, Christ is the Prophet, Priest, and King. He is Head and Savior of His Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world. See the *1689 London Baptist Confession* 8.1 and FGB 183, *Christ the Mediator*, both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

³ **Advocate** – one who pleads for another in a court of justice.

⁴ **Absolver** – one who has the power to forgive sins.

⁵ **Confessor** – one appointed to hear sinners’ confessions.

SPIRITUAL PEACE

Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711)

THE word *peace* is used in a great variety of ways in the Word of God. In *general*, it refers to every sort of felicity¹ and prosperity. In a *special* sense it refers to either civil or spiritual peace. Civil peace refers to the tranquil coexistence of authorities, cities, families, and individuals. Believers are obligated from their side to do everything in their power to prevent disturbance and to promote whatever is subservient² to peace. “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (Rom 12:18). However, light and darkness, fire and water, life and death, Christ and the devil, and faithful children of God and unbelieving children of the devil, cannot agree to all eternity. Therefore, the godly ought not to imagine that they will have much external peace in the world, for the world hates them (Joh 15:18). The world therefore does whatever it can to arouse hatred against the godly, so that the godly should be prepared to endure tribulation. The Lord Jesus says concerning this, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword” (Mat 10:34). We shall here not discuss this peace, but *spiritual* peace. This in turn pertains either to believers in their mutual relationship or to God and the conscience. It is the latter we shall discuss here.

Spiritual Peace Defined: Peace between God and the conscience refers to man’s former, present, and future state. In reference to his former state, it pertains to a ceasing from and a laying aside of former enmity. Due to sin, there was enmity between God and man (Rom 5:10). Sin made a separation between them both, causing God to hide His countenance from man (Isa 59:2). God hates the sinner and abhors him (Psa 5:5-6). The face of the LORD is against him (Psa 34:16), and His wrath is ready to destroy him (Rom 2:5-6, 9). Conversely, man from his side has no desire after God (Job 21:14), does not delight in Him (Job 34:9), and hates God (Rom 1:30). “The carnal mind is enmity against God” (Rom 8:7), and “he runneth upon him, even on his neck, upon the thick bosses of his bucklers³” (Job 15:26).

In this peace, the former enmity is taken away. God desists from this,⁴

¹ **felicity** – happiness.

² **subservient** – instrumental; serving as a means to an end.

³ **bosses...bucklers** – studs of his shields.

⁴ **desists from this** – stops treating us as enemies.

now being reconciled by the blood of His Son. And believers desist from this, now having received another heart by the Holy Spirit. The apostle speaks of this: "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled" (Col 1:19-21).

In reference to both the present and future state, peace consists in fellowship between the believing soul and God, this being characterized by oneness of heart, intimacy, friendliness, and love. There is unity: "that they also may be one in us" (Joh 17:21); "My beloved is mine, and I am his" (Song 2:16). There is intimate fellowship: "Nevertheless I am continually with thee" (Psa 73:23); "What doth the LORD require of thee...but to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic 6:8). There is a delightful friendship: "I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (Joh 15:15); "He [Abraham] was called the friend of God" (Jam 2:23). There is fellowship, in a mutual manifestation of love: "And I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God" (Hos 2:23).

The Father loves them: "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer 31:3). Believers love God in return: "I will love thee, O LORD, my strength" (Psa 18:1). The Lord has loving encounters with them: "Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it" (Isa 38:17). The believer in turn cleaves to the Lord Jesus: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" (Song 8:5).

A Triune God: The Cause of this Peace: God is the cause of this peace. Man would have never applied to God for peace; and furthermore, due to sin, it was impossible that he would obtain peace. However, O wonder of wonders, God Himself begins from His side!

(1) From eternity God has had thoughts of peace toward sinners, and in *the Counsel of Peace* has ordained the Son to be a Surety to accomplish this peace by Him. He has a peaceful heart and delights in peace; for this reason, He is frequently called the God of peace. "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom 16:20).

(2) The Son's entry into the world was accompanied by the holy

angels who jubilated,⁵ “On earth peace” (Luk 2:14). He reconciles the elect with God by His death. “The chastisement of our peace was upon Him” (Isa 53:5). For this reason, He bears the name “Prince of Peace” (Isa 9:6), “Melchizedek, king of Salem,” that is, peace (Heb 7:1-2), and He is called “our peace” (Eph 2:14).

(3) The Holy Spirit brings this peace into the heart of believers: “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom 14:17).

To make believers partakers of this peace, the Lord uses the gospel as the external means and faith as the internal means. The Lord makes the elect partakers of this peace by bringing them into covenant with Him, which is called a covenant of peace. “Neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed” (Isa 54:10). By means of the gospel, He calls and invites men to enter this covenant, which therefore is called the “gospel of peace”: “Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (Eph 6:15). The Lord uses men to make this gospel known. He sends them forth as His messengers, putting the word of reconciliation in their mouths (2Co 5:19-20). They are called the “messengers of peace”: “The ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly” (Isa 33:7); “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace” (Isa 52:7); “O Zion, that bringest good tidings” (Isa 40:9). By these means, the Lord brings man to faith; and faith, being in exercise, generates peace in the conscience. “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing” (Rom 15:13).

This peace is the portion of believers only. The unconverted and ungodly frequently have a dead and insensitive conscience. They, not being smitten by their conscience, imagine within themselves that all is well before God and that they have peace with God. How rudely they will be awakened, however, and come to the realization that they are children of wrath and never have had peace with God! “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isa 57:20-21). This peace is a hidden treasure that is kept for the elect only, which the Lord permits His children to taste as often as He deems best. “I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near” (Isa 57:18-19). “And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it” (Luk 10:6).

All believers are equally partakers of this peace, that is, as far as their

⁵ **jubilated** – celebrated with immense joy.

state and the veracity of this matter are concerned. The application of this peace, however, varies greatly as far as its sensible enjoyment is concerned. Some enjoy it in a greater measure and others in a lesser measure. Some remain in this peaceful condition for a long period, and so to speak live in it; others experience this peace rarely and it rapidly dissipates...

The Various Ways in Which This Peace Manifests Itself: A believer is often as Samuel who as yet did not know the voice of God. The Lord frequently speaks peace to the soul; however, if this peace does not engender a disposition that in his opinion it ought to bring forth, he does not acknowledge it as such. He must therefore know in what manner and in which steps the soul enjoys peace.

First, sometimes this peace will reveal itself in a *hope* that one will as yet attain it. The soul, in her mourning, praying, and looking unto Christ, sometimes does not receive a certain assurance that she is at peace with God, but is nevertheless encouraged that God Who has begun a good work in her will further deal with her, and this hope sustains her as an anchor sustains a ship in a storm (Heb 6:19).

Secondly, it manifests itself sometimes in *quietness* within the soul—even though the soul neither dares nor is able to determine that she is a partaker of Christ, and although she cannot yet be assured by way of the reflex act of faith,⁶ the grounds of which she does indeed behold. In this manner, a calm and sweet quietness comes within the soul (she knows not how). Even if this is not experienced by having communion with God, it is nevertheless so in the exercise of the soul toward God. Fear is gone, terror has disappeared, and, due to promises which she secretly believes, the soul is quiet. “Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation” (Psa 62:1).

Thirdly, this peace sometimes manifests itself in *being delighted and satisfied*. This is the request of an absolute and unconditional surrender into the hand of the Lord of herself, her salvation, and the way in which it will please the Lord to lead her. This is accompanied with a secret confidence in His power, goodness, veracity, and faithfulness, trusting that He will make all things well, saying, “The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me” (Psa 138:8). The soul dares to place its trust in this.

Fourthly, sometimes this peace manifests itself in *being assured* of the forgiveness of sins and of being in the state of grace—this being true, however, in the absence of joy and many sweet inner motions. She knows

⁶ reflex act of faith – response to Christ in faith.

in Whom she has believed, entrusts herself to Him, believes that she will be saved, and upon that truth stands firm even though she does not have the taste of the blessedness of her state which would enable her to find sweet delight in it. “But I obtained mercy” (1Ti 1:13); “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2Ti 1:12); “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory” (Psa 73:24).

Fifthly, this peace sometimes manifests itself in *having free access to the throne of grace*. The soul approaches as an adopted child, acknowledges God as her Father, and in this disposition comes to God through Christ with approbation, delight, confidence, and in the lifting of her heart, exclaiming, “Abba, Father!” (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6).

Sixthly, this peace sometimes manifests itself in *a delightful joy*—that the Lord has been reconciled with her, her sins forgiven her, that the Lord has made her one of His favored ones and the recipient of salvation. Her soul rejoices in this and leaps for joy. “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Isa 61:10).

Seventhly, this peace sometimes manifests itself in its *essential form and excellency*. God, Who is peace, fills the soul with His peace and fully encompasses her with peace; and the soul is thus irradiated⁷ with peace from all sides. The passions are too limited, the understanding falls short, and words fail to express what it means to have peace with God. “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phi 4:7).

Behold, believers, these are the many different ways in which this peace manifests itself. Who of the godly...would dare to deny that he has ever enjoyed something of this peace? And if he has experienced something of this, let him be assured that, even though the feeling vanishes, this peace between God and his soul will never be broken.

From Wilhelmus à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, Vol. 2
(Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1993), 439-453;
used by permission.

Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711): Dutch theologian and major representative of the Dutch Second Reformation; born in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands.



⁷ irradiated – brightened.

THE PRINCE OF PEACE

Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.—Isaiah 9:6

DOCTRINE: Jesus Christ presented and given to us of the Father is the peaceful Prince...In what respects is Christ the peaceful Prince?

First, more generally, we take it up in these three particulars. He is the peaceful Prince,

1. In respect of disposition. He is a prince of the most peaceful disposition: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Mat 11:29). Peace is woven into His nature. Though He is the mighty One, Who is of such power as to frown a sinner to destruction, yet His great power is tempered with the greatest meekness and peacefulness. The prince of this world is the roaring lion, the Prince of heaven, the Lamb (Joh 1:29), even on His throne (Rev 5:6).

2. In respect of action and operation. Peace is His work He pursued all along and doth still pursue: “For he is our peace” (Eph 2:14). He is the great peacemaker. Adam’s sin and the sin of his posterity set all at red war and kept them so: but Christ the second Adam travels for peace. “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Mat 5:9), and He is blessed forever on His peacemaking (Phi 2:8-9).

3. In respect of the state of His kingdom: “The kingdom of God is...peace” (Rom 14:17). Peace in the language of the Holy Ghost in the Old Testament is prosperity; so, a peaceful prince is a prosperous one. Thus, Solomon was a type of Him Who had a reign of the greatest peace and prosperity (Psa 72:7). His subjects may enjoy peace whoever [else may] lack it.

Secondly, more particularly,

1st, He is the peaceful Prince, peaceful of disposition, in the following respects:

1. He bears long with His enemies; He is longsuffering (2Pe 3:9). Many calls He gives them which they neglect; but He calls them still. Many affronts they do to Him, yet His deserved wrath is held in, and

still He waits, if so be they may be brought to repentance (Rom 2:4). There must be a mighty inclination to peace where it is so.

2. He bears much at the hands of His friends, but never casts them off (Joh 13:2). Oh, the weakness, witlessness,¹ and folly that hangs about them! Oh, the ingratitude, untenderness, and backslidings they fall into! They reflect dishonor many times on Him by their way; but they experience Him to be the Prince of peace (Psa 78:38).

3. He is easy of access for poor sinners. The worst of sinners may have access to Him if they will. “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (Joh 6:37)...Whoever comes to Him is welcome. And there needs none to God but Him.² Whatever is their business in the court of heaven, He will readily do it for them.

4. He is “ready to forgive” (Psa 86:5). His offending friends are readily pardoned and restored to wonted favor; His rebellious enemies are readily pardoned on their submission and received into the number of His friends. His peacefulness is such that peace is His delight.

5. He is very familiar with His true subjects. He treats all His servants, not as servants, but as friends; and communicates to them His secrets: “Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you” (Joh 15:15). Love and goodwill shine forth in His countenance.

6. The afflicting of His people is as it were against the grain with Him. “He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men” (Lam 3:33). There is a necessity for it, for which He is obliged to do it. “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations” (1Pe 1:6). The apostle distinguished between men’s correcting and His in Hebrews 12:10: “They verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.” And in it He carries along the pity of a father (Psa 103:13-14), and so is afflicted in their affliction (Isa 63:9).

7. Lastly, He bore His own sufferings with the utmost peaceableness, meekness, and patience. The angels sang at His birth, “Peace on earth” (see Luk 2:14); and the earth never saw such a pattern of peace. In His life, which was a continued suffering, He never showed the least discomposure. In His death, He prayed for His enemies.

¹ **witlessness** – foolishness.

² **needs none...but Him** – Christ alone is needed for all our business before God.

2dly, He is the peaceful Prince, peaceful in action and operation. He acted for peace, as never another did. He brought about such peace as had never been known if He had not taken it in hand. And here we may consider,

1. What peace is effected by this Prince of peace.

(1) Peace with God. “The chastisement of our peace was upon him” (Isa 53:5). Sinners were at war with God, and God with them; and there could be no peace betwixt the parties till the Prince of peace turned to be Mediator of the peace. The war went on, sinners doing as they could against God, and God in a state of war with the sinner, blocking up all commerce with heaven of a saving sort, etc. But He steps in, lays hands on both, and makes up the peace.

(2) Peace among men. Men’s peace with God being lost, the peace among themselves was broken too. See the case of mankind by nature in this point: “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another” (Ti 3:3). But Christ brings them together in Him again, to love and charity one to another (Isa 11:6). And wherever He makes peace with God for a man, He implants love to men in that man’s heart. Particularly, He made peace between Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2:14).

(3) Peace within men, peace of conscience. “The kingdom of God is...righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom 14:17). Sin by itself breaks the peace within one’s own breast. The guilt of it is like a thorn in the flesh, that till it be plucked out ceases not to gall. The reign of it is like a tyrant in the house that enslaves and keeps in disturbance all therein. Christ the Prince of peace, by His blood and Spirit, only can restore the true peace within.

2. What is His work about peace—that threefold peace?

(1) He purchased it by His precious blood (Eph 2:14-15). There is a peace the wicked have that is a stolen and usurped peace known by this mark, that it is a peace in sin (Jam 3:17). But the peace of the Prince of peace is a dear-bought peace. It cost Him to be denied to His own peace, and swim through a red sea of suffering for it. “The chastisement of our peace was upon him” (Isa 53:5).

(2) He makes the peace by His own efficacy. The covenant of grace is the covenant of peace, and He is the Mediator of it. He travels betwixt God and the rebel sinner, till the reconciliation is made. He does by His Spirit bring the sinner into the covenant of peace, and by His intercession obtains peace with God for him. He by the same Spirit unites men to Himself by faith, and to one another in love. And by His blood

sprinkled on the soul, He removes the guilt of sin, and plucks out the thorn; and by His sanctifying Spirit breaks the power of turbulent lusts, and so creates peace (Isa 57:19).

(3) He maintains the peace made. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (Isa 26:3). He is the believer’s resident at the court of Heaven, that takes up emergent differences, and hinders matters to come to a total rupture betwixt God and them anymore. And it is by the efficacy of His blood and Spirit that peace within men, and love among men who are His, are continued.

(4) He restores the peace when at any time it is brangled.³ “I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners” (Isa 57:18). While believers are in this world, they are upon a sea; and in that sea they often meet with storms. Sometimes the storm blows from above, sometimes from without, sometimes from within; sometimes fightings without, and fears within; yes, sometimes all three blow together. But the Prince of peace again clears the sky above (Job 33:23-24). He stills “the tumult of the people” (Psa 65:7) and quells all disturbance within (Isa 57:19).

(5) Lastly, He perfects peace. It is begun now, but He will not leave it imperfect. “The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me” (Psa 138:8). He began Israel’s peace in bringing them out of Egypt and perfected it in bringing them to Canaan; so He begins His people’s peace in their conversion and perfects it in glorification. Their peace now is liable to a great mixture of disturbance; but He will render it perfect at length, without the least trouble (Rev 21:4).

3dly, He is the peaceful Prince in the peaceful state of His kingdom, in the prosperity attending it. He is the true Solomon (peaceful); and no king of Israel had such a peaceable and prosperous reign as Solomon, that His kingdom might be a type of Christ’s, the Prince of peace, as David’s was a type of it in the wars thereof. And,

1. Every one of His subjects is, by His wise management, put in a state of peace. “They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid” (Mic 4:4). He has procured them peace with God, among themselves, and within themselves; what then should discompose them? It is true, in the world they must have tribulation; but in their prince they have peace to balance that (Joh 16:33). Having a good God, communion with good people, and a good conscience, they may, in

³ **brangled** – shaken; rendered uncertain.

peace, bear through all the troubles of a present evil world.

2. The peace of His kingdom is the fruit of war, and victory in that war. What made Solomon's reign so peaceable was David's wars and victories. Our Lord Christ was a man of war. He fought and overcame sin, death, and the devil; and the peace of His kingdom now is the fruit of that. The wicked's peace is the fruit of a conquest,⁴ like that of Issachar, who "saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute" (Gen 49:15); and like that of the strong man's keeping the house, in which case all things are at peace (Luk 11:21). So, their peace is merely precarious; but God's people's peace is sure.

3. Hence in His kingdom is the greatest wealth and abundance. There is "abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness," which His subjects receive (Rom 5:17); so that they are made "a royal priesthood" (1Pe 2:9). The fruits of the victory over sin, death, and Satan are among them; they are enriched with the spoil of their enemies; free commerce is settled between heaven and them; and all that oppose their entrance into the heavenly Canaan are overcome.

4. The good of His kingdom is advanced from all airths,⁵ and there is nothing but it is turned to the profit thereof, by the infinite wisdom of the Prince (Rom 8:28). Go matters what way they will, His kingdom is advanced by them; His subjects reap benefit by them. Out of the eater is brought forth meat by our Lord Jesus; yea, peace, order, and prosperity out of war by the Prince of peace. Is not that a prosperous kingdom that prospers in all emergencies?

5. Lastly, in [the] end the peace of His kingdom will be absolute. Solomon's reign was more peaceable in the beginning of it than toward the end. But Christ's kingdom is contrariwise, though indeed it will never end. But at last, all occasion of disturbance from without or from within will be utterly cut off.

From *The Whole Works of Thomas Boston: A Series of Sermons and the Christian Life Delineated*, ed. Samuel M'Millan, Vol. 10 (Aberdeen: George and Robert King, 1851), 259-267; in the public domain.

Thomas Boston (1676-1732): Scottish Presbyterian minister and theologian; born in Duns, Berwickshire, UK.



⁴ **fruit of a conquest** – Sin has conquered them, and they make no effective resistance.

⁵ **airths** – points on the compass; directions.

BLESSED PEACEMAKERS¹

Jeremiah Burroughs (1599-1647)

I find that the word translated *peacemakers* is generally understood by interpreters [as] those that either keep peace or make peace, any that are furtherances of² peace [in] any way for the preserving of it where it is or the procuring³ of it where it is not. It is a blessed thing to have a peaceable heart oneself, to keep peace within one's own soul. It is blessed to be of a peaceable disposition towards all with whom we live. A froward,⁴ perverse disposition is a cursed disposition; but a peaceable, quiet, and gentle disposition is a blessed disposition. But further, it is more blessed to be a means to procure peace in the places where we live, among those with whom we converse.⁵ And if ever we had cause to account it a blessed thing to be a peacemaker, then at this day, *blessed are the peacemakers.*

Blessed are those that labor to make peace between man and God. They are the words of Christ, and therefore we must understand them in the most spiritual sense...Blessed are those who, having found the blessedness of peace themselves, and so having peace with God, they are very desirous to make peace between other men and God. Finding the sweetnesses in their own hearts of their peace with God, their earnest desires are that they could bring others to be at peace with God too. When the husband hath had the work of God in purifying his heart by faith and hath found the sweetnesses of peace with God, he says, "Oh, that I could be a means to make peace between the soul of my wife and God too." And so, the wife that hath made her peace with God, having her heart purified by faith and feeling the sweetness of it, says, "Oh, now that I could do anything in the world...with prayers, tears, and walking convincingly before my husband to work his heart to God that there may be peace between God and his soul likewise." So, one brother having his heart purified by faith, and having the sweetness of peace with God, says, "Oh, that I could but do anything before I die to further this great work of peace between the soul of my brother and God. Oh, the grace of God to my soul, in bringing it to be at peace with Him; and

¹ **EDITOR'S NOTE:** This article has been edited more than usual for the benefit of modern readers.

² **furtherances of** – ones who help promote.

³ **procuring** – bringing about by care or with effort; obtaining.

⁴ **froward** – willfully contrary.

⁵ **converse** – dwell.

oh, that I could be instrumental in the furtherance of the work of the grace of God on the soul of my brother!” And so, one kinsman to another and one neighbor to another. Certainly, those that have ever known what the peace of God meant will endeavor what they can to make peace between their brethren and God by telling them what their condition was: “There was a time that I went on in a wretched way, as you are now going on in. I was an enemy to God; there was nothing in my heart but enmity against God. Oh, I would not for ten thousand, thousand worlds be one hour in that condition that I was once in, for fear I should die in it and so be eternally an enemy to God! Oh, that you would consider your ways! The way that you go on in is certainly a way of enmity against the blessed and eternal God. Oh, consider what God hath revealed in His Word concerning the glorious work of reconciliation of sinners to Himself!”

Thus, we should be pleading one with another, praying one for another, and laboring to instruct one another to be at peace with God. Oh, blessed is that man or woman that hath in a gracious way labored to draw any to be at peace with God and whom God hath blessed in these endeavors.

Hath God brought thy heart to be at peace with Him and to desire that others might be brought in to love the ways of God? Oh, blessed that ever thou wert [used] to be an instrument of so great a good, if it be but to bring in one soul to be at peace with God, so that God hath one less enemy in the world through thy means and endeavors...Though I am a poor wretch myself and was a long time an enemy to God, yet the Lord did not only bring my soul to be at peace with Him, but made me an instrument to bring others to be at peace with Him likewise, so that the Lord hath one enemy less in the world through my endeavors...Blessed art thou that hast a hand in this work, for it is the greatest work that ever took up the heart of God from all eternity. Of all the works that ever were in the heart of God from eternity, the work of reconciling souls to Himself was the greatest work of all! And of all the things that God expects glory from unto all eternity, the work of reconciling souls to Himself is the thing that God makes account to have the greatest glory from that ever He shall have to all eternity.

Now then, if God shall employ thee to be instrumental in so great a work as this is, blessed art thou that ever thou didst live in the world. That man is not blessed who is great⁶ in the world or hath fine clothes, but that man is blessed whom the Lord makes instrumental for the furtherance of that work. For His heart is most in that above all things.

⁶ great – wealthy.

Besides, we might speak of the great evils that thou deliverest the soul of thy brother from, the great good that thou bringest to the soul of thy brother, and the great blessing that thy brother's soul does bless thee with, if thou be an instrument to make peace between him and God. Oh, those that are instrumental this way have the blessing of those unto whom they have been instrumental of good! They bless God that ever they saw such a one's face: "Oh, the blessing of God be upon such a man or woman! I was going on in the ways of eternal death, and partly through the holy carriage⁷ of such a one, I was convinced; and partly through their holy persuasions, I was brought to the Word. There I met with those things that wrought upon my heart that I would not have been without for ten thousand worlds!" Oh, the blessing of God be upon the soul of such a man, of such a woman; for when such a one shall lie dying, going the way of all flesh, lancing⁸ into the infinite ocean of eternity, he shall lie blessing God that ever he knew you. Yes, and when he shall come to heaven, he shall be there blessing God that ever he knew you! Is it not a blessed thing to labor to draw others to be at peace with God?

What a blessed work is the work of the ministry then! And the calling is a blessed calling. Oh, "how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace" (Isa 52:7). So should people account⁹ it. And the first work that a minister hath to do when he comes to a place is to say "peace" to that place (Mat 10:13). To us, saith Paul, is committed "the word of reconciliation" (2Co 5:19). That is our great embassy;¹⁰ this is the work that the Lord hath designed some men to. God may bless the endeavors of some private men to be peacemakers in this sense, but the work of the ministry is appointed by God. God hath set them apart to be His great ordinance for reconciling the world to Himself. Saith the Lord, "There are a company of poor wretches that are now in ways of enmity against Me; yet I have thoughts of peace towards them, and I send you among them for to carry the embassy of peace unto them. I require and command you that you open the glad tidings of peace to them and that you tell them how My heart is towards peace with them, and that you show them the way how they may come to be reconciled to Me"...

And if so, oh, how blessed is that great peacemaker Jesus Christ, Whom the Father designed to make up peace between man and Him!

⁷ carriage – behavior; conduct.

⁸ lancing – launching.

⁹ account – consider; regard.

¹⁰ embassy – message of an ambassador.

All the children of men, being fallen from God in *Adam*, are all in an estate of enmity against God. That is certain. And all the angels in heaven and men upon earth—all the creatures in heaven and earth—could not make peace between God and one sinful soul! It was too great a work for any creature. But now Jesus Christ, the wisdom of the Father, the Second Person,¹¹ looks upon the wretched miserable state of the children of men, and saw that if they were left to themselves, they were all undone and would be eternally enemies to God and God an eternal enemy to them! He now steps in between, and through the appointment of the Father, He mediates between wretched man and God to make peace. He stands (I say) as the great Mediator of the second covenant.¹² And His heart was so much in the work of making peace between man and God as He was content to lay down His life, to the end¹³ He might make peace: “Having made peace through the blood of his cross” (Col 1:20).

Mark,¹⁴ Jesus Christ’s heart was so much in being a peacemaker between the world and God, though He knew it would cost Him His dearest heart blood, Christ saith, “It shall go!” Yes, the Scripture tells us He was content to be a curse for man. Oh, do but consider (you children of men) what a distance there was between God and you, that Christ—God and man—must come to make peace between God and you. He must shed His blood! He must be made a curse for the accomplishing of this great work of God! This, my brethren, is the great mystery of godliness. This is what we should spend all our days in admiring, in standing and wondering, and in blessing our Savior the great Peacemaker!

From “Sermon XXVIII” in *The Saints’ Happiness* (London: Greenhill; Yates; Bridge; Aderly; Nye; Mead, 1660), 447; in the public domain.

Jeremiah Burroughs (1599-1647): Congregational preacher and theologian; born in East Anglia, East of England, UK.



I appeal to your consciences in this question: When did you spend time above in your closets, admiring the glory of God in that great work of the mediation of Jesus Christ in making peace between God and your souls? When were your hearts ever taken with that great work above all things in the world and your spirits raised in admiring and worshipping God and Jesus Christ, that great Peacemaker?

—*Jeremiah Burroughs*

¹¹ **Second Person** – the eternal Son of God, Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

¹² **second covenant** – New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34; 1Co 11:25).

¹³ **to the end** – for the purpose that.

¹⁴ **mark** – take notice of; observe.

Keeping Peace with Others¹

William S. Plumer (1802-1880)

THE word *peace* is applied to our habits, pursuits, and dispositions towards others. “Follow peace with all men” (Heb 12:14). Each of the other kinds of peace is a rich blessing. This is a weighty duty. On this point the Scriptures are very clear and full...Paul says, “Let us...follow after the things which make for peace” (Rom 14:19). “God hath called us to peace” (1Co 7:15). “The fruit of the Spirit is...peace” (Gal 5:22). “Live in peace” (2Co 13:11). “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3). He also commands us to pray for our rulers, “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (1Ti 2:2). The apostle James also says, “The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable”; and, “the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace” (Jam 3:17, 18). Our blessed Savior also said to His disciples, “Have peace one with another” (Mar 9:50). So that there is not left the shadow of a doubt respecting the binding obligation upon all men to have and to manifest peaceable dispositions at all times. Nor should we ever forget that the duty is enjoined with great frequency and solemnity. We should therefore address this with much seriousness and earnestness. Nor are we at liberty to limit our endeavors after peace to friendly relations. We must “follow peace with all men.” We are not at liberty to confine our efforts in this behalf to a few, and those of our own circle or party. We must let our endeavors extend to all with whom we have dealings. “If a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him” (Lev 19:33). What then is enjoined on us in maintaining peace with our fellow men?

The answer is that, first, we are bound to entertain peaceable and friendly thoughts respecting all men. In the heart is the seat of every virtue. “As [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Pro 23:7). If men be not in their temper and disposition peaceable, it is certain that they do in their hearts violate the whole spirit of the gospel. Nor will it be possible for such to make their outward conduct conform to the scriptural standard...

Another thing to be done in fulfilment of our duty is to *speak* peaceably. The peace of neighborhoods is often destroyed by words.

¹ EDITOR’S NOTE – This article has been edited more than usual.

“Grievous words stir up anger” (Pro 15:1). “Where no wood is, the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth” (Pro 26:20). “The words of a talebearer are as wounds” (Pro 18:8). Render not railing for railing (see 1Pe 3:9). Paul warns us against strifes of words (1Ti 6:5; 2Ti 2:14). Rash words may have as ill an effect as those which are the fruit of a truly malignant design in destroying the peace of families and of neighborhoods. “A whisperer separateth chief friends” (Pro 16:28); and “an angry man stirreth up strife” (Pro 29:22). We cannot therefore be too guarded in our speech. “Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Pro 18:21). And every prudent man will pray, “Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips” (Psa 141:3). A good man has said, “Before we allow ourselves to find fault with any person behind his back, we should ask ourselves three questions: 1. Is it true? 2. Is it kind? 3. Is it necessary?” A little heart-searching, even a little reflection before a hard speech, would effectually prevent much misery.

Another matter required of us is to act peaceably. “A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly” (Pro 18:24). And here the Scriptures furnish us both with rules and with examples. Take the case of Abram and Lot, the uncle and the nephew. These two great men had each many flocks and herds and tents. “And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram’s cattle and the herdmen of Lot’s cattle...And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left” (Gen 13:6-9). Strife can hardly subsist where such a temper is manifested. There is no fuel to keep the fire burning.

One of the most serious hindrances to the peace of many men and many communities is found in occasional outbursts of bad temper. Some men are constitutionally moody. They are not, and without a miracle they could not be, uniform. Their feelings vary with the wind, with the state of their stomachs, and with other mutable things. Others are nervous and are easily provoked to tears or to passion. Some are naturally choleric and excitable. Many from early infancy have had bad precepts and worse examples held up before them. Some are fretted and crossed in childhood and youth, until they are like the trained whelps of the tiger. All this is to be greatly deplored; for “a wrathful man stirreth up strife” (Pro 15:18). Indeed, the first bursts of passion are often

like coals thrown among shavings. There is no telling what will be the end of the mischief done.

It would vastly conduce to peace if men could be induced to guard against all causes, occasions, and beginnings of discord. “The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with” (Pro 17:14). “Nip the evil in the bud,” is one of the best rules. Nor do we follow peace when we allow ourselves to be made parties to contests which do not concern us. “He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears” (Pro 26:17).

One of the greatest disturbers of peace is pride. It is sure to be insolent. It struts, and boasts, and vapors,² and provokes others. “He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife” (Pro 28:25). “Only by pride cometh contention” (Pro 13:10). There is a wrath of pride (Pro 21:24).

Ambition also begets many contests. There never was a more unhappy state of feeling in the family of our Savior than when “there was also a strife among them, which of them should be...greatest” (Luk 22:24).

It would greatly conduce to the advancement of peace if men could be induced to put a just estimate on its value. In the eyes of a wise and good man, it is always of great price. In Scripture it is mentioned side by side with the most excellent things. By one prophet God says, “Love the truth and peace” (Zec 8:19). By one apostle He says, “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). So that if truth and holiness are of great price in the eyes of God and good men, so is peace. In his old age, John Newton wrote, “Peace and holiness...are the peculiar characteristics of a disciple of Jesus; they are the richest part of the enjoyments of heaven...and they are more inseparably connected between themselves than some of us are aware of. The longer I live, the more I see of the vanity and sinfulness of our unchristian disputes; they eat up the very vitals of religion.”³

Our great guarantee against a disturbed, distracted existence is to be found in God alone. He is our refuge as well as our strength. Thus says David, “Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues” (Psa 31:20).

Nor can we easily overestimate the evils that flow from a state of

² vapors – brags; exaggerates.

³ John Newton and Richard Cecil, *The Works of John Newton*, Vol. 2 (London: Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1824), 65.

carnal strife between man and man, or between the sections of a community. “Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work” (Jam 3:16; see also Gal 5:15).

Yet so inveterate⁴ is this spirit of contention, and so dreadfully does it blind the mind, that it is with great difficulty men of strife can be brought to believe that they are injuring and degrading themselves by all their malice. “It is an honor for a man to cease from strife; but every fool will be meddling” (Pro 20:3). Such a sentence is either not heeded by them, or it strikes terror into their consciences. Other portions of God’s Word are no less explicit. Paul puts wrath and strife in a list of vices of the most hateful character (Gal 5:19-21). James says, “If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth” (Jam 3:14).

Nothing should more arouse us to this duty than the example of our blessed Lord. Of Him, it was foretold that “he shall not strive nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets” (Mat 12:19). “When he was reviled, [he] reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not” (1Pe 2:23).

We can now see why our blessed Savior spoke as He did concerning those who, with a good will, seek to promote peace around them. “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Mat 5:9). And can any imagine a more interesting sight than a community regulated by such principles as the gospel enjoins on this subject, where would be nothing to hurt or destroy in all God’s holy mountain?

But the question arises, How far are we to bear and forbear? How much must we yield for peace? Is it possible for us to control other people’s minds and acts in this matter? And here it is pleasant to be able to say that the Bible prescribes no impossible tasks. Its language is, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (Rom 12:18). How plain and how safe is this rule. Up to the measure of our ability we must go, but the law extends no further. Nay, the Scriptures tell us of one great and good man whose lament was, “My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war” (Psa 120:6-7). They go further and tell us of some who “preach Christ even of envy and strife” (Phi 1:15-16). There is no limit to the contentious propensities of some. They introduce virulence even into their most solemn public acts in religion. Some do all this, and yet add all the time great professions of love. Thus in the days of Micah,

⁴ **inveterate** – deeply rooted.

God speaks of “prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him” (Mic 3:5).

We are then not at liberty to forsake God or deny His truth in order to promote peace. On the contrary, we must obey God rather than man. We must contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. We must never make shipwreck of faith. We must never part with a good conscience. “Buy the truth, and sell it not” (Pro 23:23)—sell it not even for peace. The world asks too dear a price for its smiles or its favor, when it asks us to renounce the faith of God’s people, or purity of mind.

Nor is it necessarily proof of a wrong spirit in us to refuse to surrender our just and legal rights merely because others choose to attempt to take them from us. Paul exclaimed, “I am a Roman citizen.” “I appeal unto Cesar” (Act 25:11). Nor can any sober man deny that his retention of his rights in these cases was every way justifiable. This will suggest our right course respecting lawsuits. We should not engage in these from ambition or a love of contention. We should not be litigious. Oftentimes “a bad settlement is better than a good lawsuit.” Those who love to resort to courts seldom thrive. As the wolf spends all his strength in escaping from the dogs and the hunters, although he eats many sheep, so the enormous expenses of the practiced litigant, even when successful, very much exhaust his means and keep him poor.

From *Vital Godliness: A Treatise on Experimental and Practical Piety*
(New York; American Tract Society, 1864); 411-430;
in the public domain.



“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3). The unity about which the Apostle is concerned here is produced and created by the Holy Spirit Himself. He alone can produce this unity; and it is He alone Who does produce this unity. This is obviously a matter of fundamental importance. The apostle makes it quite clear that this is a unity that you and I can never produce. He does not even ask us to do so, he does not call upon us to do so, he does not exhort us to do so. What he asks us to do is to be careful not to break the unity that is already there, and which has been produced and created by the Holy Spirit Himself. We are to maintain it, not create it. It is the unity of the Spirit. It is His work; it is something that He does in us.—*David Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

He is most for holiness, who is most for peace in a right way. Seek the peace of the church, by preserving “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3). Take heed of schisms, rents, divisions, separations: pray that the church may have rest, that, walking in the fear of the Lord and comfort of the Holy Ghost, believers may be multiplied and edified.

—*John Sheffield*

NO PEACE TO THE WICKED

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.—Isaiah 57:21

AMONG the greatest privileges of the believer in Christ are those choice blessings, rest and peace. Believing in Christ Jesus unto eternal life, he knows that his sin is pardoned, that he is a child of God, that omnipotence will preserve him even to the end, and that he will, by-and-by, be with Christ where He is, not only to behold, but also to share His glory forever and ever. Consequently, his heart is at rest, for he leaves all that concerns him, whether in the present or the future, in the hands of his Heavenly Father, casting all his care upon Him Who careth for him. Therefore, he has peace, perfect peace, in his soul. This peace and rest, which the believer enjoys even here and now, will deepen and increase until in eternity they will reach their perfection, and the child of God will forever and forevermore in the blessed state above be without even the slightest disturbance of heart, and will rest in the presence of God with his glorified spirit as full of joy as it can possibly be! The apostle Paul truly writes, “We which have believed do enter into rest” (Heb 4:3); but he also adds, just as truly, “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God” (Heb 4:9).

These choice privileges of rest and peace belong, however, exclusively to believers; “the wicked” have no portion in them. They are, according to the testimony of Holy Writ, like the restless sea, which is never quite quiet, even in its greatest calm. [It] is never to be trusted for a resting place but, ever and anon,¹ is lashed into fury, seething like the contents of a huge cauldron, and hurling up from its depths the mire and dirt that have lain there unseen. Such is the condition of the unregenerate heart of unrenewed man.

First, then, here is a fact observed: The wicked are like the troubled sea. Who are these wicked people, who are like the restless waves of the turbulent ocean? I take the term to describe two classes of sinners.

First, by the expression *the wicked*. As used in the Scriptures, we must often understand *overt transgressors*—persons who are living in the indulgence of open and known sin. Then, secondly, there is another class of sinners—not open transgressors, like the others I have mentioned.

¹ ever and anon – now and then.

Still, they have heard the gospel, and they have rejected it. Consequently, since we cannot put them down in any other category, and since their sin has a special aggravation about it because of the light and privileges that they have enjoyed and yet despised or neglected, they also must be put down with “the wicked.” They, too, “are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest” (Isa 57:20). Let us begin with those whose “sins,” as Paul says, “are open beforehand, going before to judgment” (1Ti 5:24). Why are they unrestful and unpeaceful?

First, because they are themselves swayed by restless passions. There are some sins, which will not let a man be quiet so long as he indulges in them. Take the sin of lust, for instance; who can ever satisfy its cravings? Let a man once indulge his evil passions, and can those passions ever be satisfied? No, they keep on getting more and more hungry, as a man would become the more thirsty through drinking brine. Does lust ever, of its own accord, cease its cravings? No, it is insatiable as the grave itself, and it will suck a man’s very life away unless the grace of God shall mercifully and miraculously interpose. If thou, young man, dost give thyself up to what is erroneously called the pursuit of pleasure, it is quite certain that thou wilt not find rest for thy soul in that direction! Thou hast taken a dose of poison that will make thy blood hot and feverish, and that will cause true rest to flee from thy pillow. This is a subject upon which I cannot say more, in this public assembly, except to add, with the preacher of old, “Know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment” (Ecc 11:9)...The first reason, then, why the wicked man’s heart is like the troubled sea is because there are evil passions within it which will not let it rest.

The next reason is because the wicked man is agitated by the memory of his old sins. Suppose him to have been, for some years, engaged in an evil course—dishonesty or unchastity. He cannot, even if he tries, forget his sins. They have burnt themselves into his very soul. What is even worse than the memory of sin, I suppose that you know how every sin breeds other sins, so that, every time you sin, you have a still greater tendency to commit more sin. This is a fact that is strangely true as to the body and as to the soul. We wear tracks for ourselves where there were none before. If we have, at first, to force our way through the brushwood of conscience and to cut down, as it were, the old timber of our early instruction and the gracious examples set before us in our childhood, by-and-by we make a trail for ourselves and then a beaten track. It becomes ever easier and yet easier to sin; no, more than that, there seems to be a pressure put by habit upon a wicked man so that what he once did from choice, he comes at last to do because he *must*. Sin in the soul is like leaven

in the dough; it heaves and ferments. Though it was, perhaps, put into you twenty years ago or more, it will go on fermenting and working until the whole of your manhood shall be soured by it.

Beside all this, the ungodly man is like the sea for restlessness because, like the sea, he is governed by a greater power than his own. The sea feels the force of the moon and is agitated and stirred by the mysterious agency of the winds; and the wicked man is under the dominion of the prince of the power of the air. If, for a while, he would be at rest, Satan will not permit him to be in peace. He puts opportunities of sinning before him, and then excites the desire to indulge in the evil thing. Satan is no myth. They who think that he is surely cannot have opened their eyes or else they would have discovered in their very unbelief in his existence that he had given them that unbelief. Those, who have stood foot to foot with Apollyon, fought with him, and overcome him in the hour of temptation, will never doubt that there is a great fallen spirit who strives to lead men into sin. Satan and his myriads of myrmidons² still lie in wait for the ungodly or openly drive them into fierce lusts and evil passions so that they sin again and again...

I do not wonder that a wicked man cannot rest because such a man is out of gear with the entire universe of God. Lift your eyes to yonder starry orbs and remember there is not one of them disobedient to the law of its Maker. The comet, which was thought to be eccentric,³ obeys in all respects its great Creator's will. Everything that you can see, from the tiny atom of dust that is borne along by the wind, up to the huge Atlantic billow in which the leviathan feels at home, is under the power of the divine law. From the archangel before the throne of God, down to the midge⁴ that dances in the summer sunbeam, everything is obedient to the Lord of all, except the wicked man; and he says, "I will not obey Him." Well, as he is out of gear with all the rest of the universe, is it any wonder that he is restless as the waves of the sea, and that there is no peace for him? If you were to set yourselves to disobey the physical laws of the universe, for instance, paying no regard to the law of gravitation, but leaping from a church spire or falling down a precipice, you know what would come of such madness. If you ever set yourself up in opposition to law, you may depend upon it that law will get the mastery over you; and the man, who lives in disobedience to God's moral law, will find that it will be the same with him, and he will have no rest for ever and ever. As God's servant, I must say to you, very plainly, and very earnestly: you cannot

² **myrmidons** – host of loyal servants or unquestioning followers.

³ **eccentric** – with an irregular orbit.

⁴ **midge** – small insect resembling a gnat, occurring in dancing swarms near water.

possibly find rest and peace in the course you are now pursuing. May God enable you to escape from your sins and to trust in Jesus Christ, His Son, that you may have both joy and peace in believing!

Let me say to you, who are living without Christ, that, however excellent and amiable you may be, I know that you are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest. I know some special times when you cannot rest—when you hear of others being converted, your brothers or sisters coming forward to confess Christ, your friends or relatives rejoicing in Jesus as their Savior. “Ah,” you say to yourself, “they are restful and peaceful; but I am not.” I know how you feel on communion nights, sometimes, when you must go away or to look on as others gathered around the table of the Lord. You do not feel easy, then, do you? And you feel very uneasy, too, when any of your companions die—those who are very much of your own sort. You attend their funeral, and the thought strikes you, “Shall I die as they have done, without Christ and without hope? Shall I pass away from under the sound of the gospel without having given any evidence of conversion?” You do not feel easy then, I know; and, sometimes, you feel very much like the troubled sea when conscience begins to call you to account... You are not at rest, for you have not come to Christ, Who alone can give you rest...

If you hear the gospel faithfully preached, you cannot be at rest. Some of you try to be satisfied with a false peace; but, by God’s grace, we will *plague* you to Christ yet; we will *love* you to Christ; we will *incessantly worry* you until, at last, you yield yourself up to Jesus. Some of you are getting on in business; God has been very gracious in preserving you in life, restoring you from sickness, or keeping you in health. You have a better situation now than you ever had before, yet you are not restful. You feel grateful to God for all his goodness to you, yet you say, “There is something more needed.” Yes, and that something is the one thing needful. I am thankful that God is prospering you, but I hope you will never be able to rest until you have that one thing needful—the *grace of God*. Some of you are very thoughtful, and when you get alone for half an hour, it is very awkward for you; for there are certain problems that you cannot solve, and they sorely perplex you. Worst of all are your forecasts for the future. Sometimes, you look ahead, and you picture yourself upon a sick bed, and you say, “Can I die triumphantly as I am?” You know you cannot. And then, sometimes, you picture yourself rising from the dead, when the angel’s trumpet blast is sounding, and the quick and the dead are standing before the Judgment Seat of Christ.⁵

⁵ See FGB 210, *Day of Judgment*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

You cannot bear to think of that great white throne, and the separation of the righteous from the wicked, for you know where you must go unless a great change is wrought in you. Though not outwardly wicked, you do not belong to the sheep; then you must go with the goats. And when you think of this, and the future stands, for the moment, present before your mind's eye, your spirit is "like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (Isa 57:20). I would that you had rest...

Now, secondly, and only for a minute or two, in our text there is a sentence pronounced: "No peace." You notice that the words *there is* are in italics because they are not in the original. So, the text runs, "No peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

It is God Himself Who says it. There may be a truce, for God is slow to anger. But there is "no peace." God is at war with you if you are among "the wicked." You may be under the delusion that there is peace, but God's voice of truth shatters that delusion to pieces. There can be no peace where there is unpardoned sin. Until you have humbled yourself before God and sought and found mercy, God is at war with you, and you are at war with Him. There can be no peace where there is no purity. God has no peace with sin and never can have. Like a devouring fire, His holiness burns against sin; and thou must be made pure, thy nature must be changed, the love of sin must be killed in thee, and thou must as vehemently love that which is good and right; or else God's voice still thunders from heaven's burning throne, "No peace! No peace! No peace!"

"But I will go to church, and receive the sacrament," says one. You will get no peace that way, except a false peace that is worse than none. "But I will attend the means of grace with the Dissenters,"⁶ says another. You will get no peace that way if that is all that you do. If your sin be unforgiven by God, and if your nature be unchanged by the Holy Spirit, all the religiousness in the world will bring you no peace. "But I will weep an ocean of tears, and I will offer prayers continually." No peace will come to you that way, so long as you remain wicked, for God says, "No peace! No peace!" And "wicked" you must remain until Jesus washes you white in the fountain filled with His precious blood and until the Spirit of God renews your nature.

⁶ **Dissenters** – persons who refuse to accept the authority of, or conform to, the laws of an established church. The term *Dissenters* was commonly used in 17th century England, especially after passage of the Toleration Act in 1689, to denote groups who separated from the Church of England.

“Oh!” says another, “but I will promise to be better and to do better; I will amend my ways.” So you may, and so you should; but still saith my God unto the wicked, “No peace!” What say you to all this? Behold your God in arms against you! Omnipotence comes forth to war against you, the creature of an hour! Will you submit? Be wise, I pray you! Cast down your weapons, cry for mercy, accept the reconciliation that Christ has wrought. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has suffered, “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (1Pe 3:8). If thou wilt but trust Him, what He did shall be accounted as thine; that is to say, the punishment that He suffered shall be reckoned as if thou hadst suffered it, and the righteousness He wrought shall be counted as if thou hadst wrought it; and God shall accept thee in His Son’s place and for His Son’s sake. More than that, the Spirit of God will overshadow thee, give thee a new heart and a right spirit, and take away the heart of stone out of thy flesh and give thee a heart of flesh. Art thou willing now to yield and end this unequal war and be at peace with God? Then the Lord, Who gave His Son once, gives thee His Son over again into thine heart, and He says, “Peace! Peace! Go in peace; thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee.” He who with his heart forsakes his sin and unfeignedly⁷ believes in Jesus shall have “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding” (Phi 4:7); but he who will keep his sin and so remain among the wicked, or who will keep his self-righteousness and so refuse the salvation of Christ, has nothing to go home with but this: “No peace! No peace!” And, oh, to die with that terrible knell⁸ ringing in one’s ears! To look up to God, and to hear Him say, “No peace!” To have the prayers of your friends for you, but to feel no peace! To lift your own eye to heaven, but to find prayer freeze upon your soul as you hear again this sentence from God the Judge, “No peace!” And then follows eternity in which there is no peace! God grant this may not be the sad portion of any one of us, but may the Lord give to each of us peace, perfect peace, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

From a sermon published on Thursday, June 2, 1904, delivered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, on Lord’s Day evening, May 21, 1876.

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): Influential English Baptist preacher; born at Kelvedon, Essex, England, UK.



⁷ **unfeignedly** – sincerely; genuinely.

⁸ **knell** – signal of disaster; in this case, “No peace.”

IDENTIFYING FALSE PEACE

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)

WHAT are the characteristics of false peace? It generally results from thinking that faith simply means believing and giving an intellectual assent to certain propositions and truths. That was the essence of the heresy known as Sandemanianism...It is based, as the Sandemanians based it, on Romans 10:9: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus." They taught, and teach, that any man who says, "I believe Jesus is Lord; I believe He is the Son of God," is thereby saved and that all is well with his soul. But all may not be well. You can subscribe to the truth and give an intellectual assent to it, and yet not really be saved by it. There are men who have "a form of godliness but deny the power thereof" (see 2Ti 3:5)...

Secondly, the person with a false peace is generally found to be resting on his or her *faith* rather than on Christ and His work. They really look at their own believing rather than at Christ and what He has done. They say, "I now believe; therefore, I must be all right." They persuade themselves...They are not looking to Christ; they are looking to their own faith, and they turn faith into a kind of work on which they rest.

Another characteristic of false peace is somewhat surprising and unexpected. The man who has a false peace is never troubled by doubts. But that is where the devil makes a mistake. The counterfeit is always too wonderful, the counterfeit always goes much further than the true experience. When the devil gives a man a false peace counterfeiting the true peace, he creates a condition in which the man is never troubled at all. He is in a psychological state. He does not truly face the truth, so there is nothing to make him unhappy. Let me put this in the form of a practical question. Can you sit in an evangelistic service without being made to feel uncomfortable at all? If you can, you had better examine yourself seriously. I am assuming, of course, that the gospel is being preached truly, that it is the true evangel which starts with the wrath of God and man's helplessness. It matters not how long you may have been saved, if you are truly justified you will be made to feel unhappy, you may even be made to feel miserable temporarily, and you will thank God again for justification by faith and have to apply it to yourself. But the intellectual believers are never troubled at all, they are always perfectly at ease, without a doubt or any trouble. They say, "Ever since I made my decision, I have never had a moment's trouble." Such talk is

always indicative of a very dangerous condition, is always very suspicious because it is too good to be true.

To put it in another way, I say that this kind of person is always much too “healthy.” The people who have this false, counterfeit peace are much too glib, much too light-hearted. Compare them with the New Testament picture of the Christian. The New Testament Christian is “grave,” “sober,” and he approaches God with “reverence and godly fear.” But the people with the false peace know nothing of that. They are perfectly healthy; all is well; and they are supremely happy. Nothing like that is to be found in the Scriptures. Can you imagine the Apostle Paul speaking in that manner, with such glib clichés falling from his lips? His speech is, “Knowing...the terror of the Lord we persuade men,” and, “I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling,” and, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (2Co 5:11; 1Co 2:3; Phi 2:12).

Another invariable characteristic of the man with the false peace is that it is only interested in forgiveness and not in righteousness. The man who has the false peace is only interested in forgiveness. He does not want to go to Hell, and he wants to be forgiven. He has not stopped to think about being positively righteous, he is not concerned about being holy and walking in holiness before God, so he is negligent about his life, and does not pursue holiness. He does not heed that exhortation in the Epistle to the Hebrews, “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). He is an Antinomian, only interested in forgiveness, and negligent with regard to living the Christian life.

Another invariable characteristic of the man with the false peace is that when this man falls again into sin he takes it much too lightly. He is not like the person I have just been describing whose faith is shaken by Satan when he falls into sin. This man says almost as soon as he has fallen, “It is all right, the blood of Christ covers me.” And up he gets and on he goes as if nothing had happened. You cannot do that if you have any true conception of what sin means, and what the holiness of God really is. This man with a false peace heals himself much too quickly, much too easily, much too lightly. It is because he takes sin as a whole too lightly.

From *Romans, An Exposition of Chapter 5: Assurance*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1971), 25-26. Available on banneroftruth.org; used by permission.

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981): Welsh expository preacher and author; born in Cardiff, Wales, UK.



THE LORD OF PEACE HIMSELF

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

*Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means.
The Lord be with you all.—2 Thessalonians 3:16*

WE shall get into the very heart of our text while we consider for a minute or two the sole person from whom this peace must come: "Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace." Who is this "Lord of peace" but the Lord Jesus, the Prince of peace, born into the world when there was peace all over the world? It was but a little interval in which the gates of the temple of war were closed, and lo, Jesus came to Bethlehem, and angels sang, "Peace on earth." He came to establish an empire of peace that shall be universal and under whose influence they shall hang the useless helmet high and study war no more. "The Prince of peace!" How blessed is the title! So was it written of old by Esaias; and Paul, the true successor of Isaiah, changing but a word, now speaks of "the Lord of peace." This is He Who, being in Himself essential peace, undertook to be the Father's great Ambassador. And having made peace by the blood of His cross, [He] ended the strife between man and his offended Maker. This is He Who is our peace, Who hath made Jew and Gentile one and broken down the middle wall of partition that stood between us. This is the Lord Who, when He stood in the midst of His disciples, gave them peace by saying, "Peace be unto you" (Joh 20:21); and this is He Who in His departure made His last will and testament and wrote therein this grand legacy: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you" (Joh 14:27). This is that Lord of peace to Whom it is part of His nature and office to give peace.

I want to call particular attention to the apostle's words in this place. He does not say, "May the Lord of peace send His angel to give you peace." It were a great mercy if he did, and we might be as glad as Jacob was at Mahanaim, when the angels of God met him. He does not even say, "May the Lord of peace send his minister to give you peace." If he did, we might be as happy as Abraham when Melchizedek refreshed him with bread and wine. He does not even say, "May the Lord of peace at the communion table, or in reading the Word, or in prayer, or in some other sacred exercise give you peace." In all these we might well be as refreshed as Israel was at Elim where wells and palm trees gladdened

the tribes. But he says, “The Lord of peace *himself* give you peace,” as if He alone in His own person could give peace, and as if His presence were the sole means of such a divine peace as he desires.

“The Lord of peace himself give you peace.” The words are inexpressibly sweet to me. If you will think for a minute, you will see that we never do obtain peace except from the Lord Himself. What, after all, in your worst times will bring you peace? I will tell you. “This man shall be the peace” (Mic 5:5). To me it has often afforded great peace to think of His mysterious person. He is a man tempted in all points like as I am, a man who knows every grief of the soul and every pain of the body, hence His tender sympathy and power to succor. Have you not often derived peace from that sweet reflection? You know you have. His person then is a source of peace. And have you not been rested in your soul by meditating upon His death? You have viewed Him wounded, bleeding, dying on the tree; and, insensibly to yourself, a wondrous calm has stolen over your heart, and you have felt pacified concerning all things. Yes, Jesus is Himself that bundle of myrrh and spice from which peace flows like a sweet perfume. When He comes very near your heart and lays bare His wounds, and speaks His love home to you, making you feel its divine fervency—when He assures you that you are one with Him, united to Him in an everlasting wedlock, which knows of no divorce—then it is that your soul is steeped in peace. This is an experimental¹ business, and no mere words can express it. “The Lord of peace himself give you peace.” This, I say, He does mainly by manifesting Himself to the heart of His servants.

Then notice that the text says, “*give* you peace.” Not merely offer it to you or argue with you that you ought to have peace or show you the grounds of peace, but “give you peace.” He has the power to breathe peace into the heart, to create peace in the soul, and lull the spirit into that sweet sleep of the beloved which is the peculiar gift of heaven. “I will give you rest,” said He (Mat 11:28), and He can and will do it.

“*The Lord be with you all*”: as much as to say, “That is what I mean.” I pray that Jesus may be with you, for if He is present, you must enjoy peace. Let the sea rage and let every timber of the ship be strained. Yes, let her leak until between each timber there yawns a hungry mouth to swallow you up quick; yet when Jesus arises, He will rebuke the winds and the waves, and there will be a great calm. “It is I; be not afraid” (Mar 6:50), is enough to create peace at once. May you always know this peace that Jesus alone can give.

¹ experimental – experiential.

Now I must conclude with...a consideration of the sweep of the prayer: "The Lord of peace himself give you peace *always*."

What! *Always* at peace? Yes, that is what the apostle desires for you. May you have peace given you *always*. "Well, sir, I feel very happy on Sabbath days. I have such peace that I wish I could have a week of Sundays." May the Lord Himself give you peace *always*, on all the weekdays as well as on the Lord's days. "Truly, I have been very happy of late," says one, "God has prospered us, and everyone has been very loving in the family; but I do not know how I should be if I had an awkward husband and unruly children." Sister, I will tell you what I want you to be. I would have you restful under all circumstances: "The Lord of peace give you peace always." "I enjoy such peace in the prayer meeting," says one. I want you to have peace in the workshop also. "I do have peace when I get alone with my Bible," cries another. We pray that you may have equal peace when you are troubled with the ledger and tired with those unpaid bills, dull trade, and cross currents of business. You need peace always...Numbers of professors are very fretful, excitable, agitated, hasty, and fickle. It should not be so, brethren! You ought to have more weight about you, more grace, more solidity. Your soul's affairs are all right, are they not? All is right forever, everything is signed, sealed, and delivered. The covenant is ordered in all things and sure, and everything is in divine hands for our good. Well, then, why not let us be as happy as the angels are? Why are we troubled? Is there anything worth shedding a tear for now that all is well for eternity? Our want of peace arises from the fact that we have not realized the fulness of our text. "The Lord of peace himself give you peace always" (2Th 3:16). He can always give you peace, for He never changes. There is always the same reason for peace. You may always go to Him for peace, and He is always ready to bestow it. Oh, that we might always possess it!

Notice, again, it is written, "May the Lord of peace...give you peace always *by all means*." Can He give us peace by all means? I know He can give us peace by some means, but can all means be made subservient to this end? Some agencies evidently work towards peace, but can He give us peace by opposing forces? Yes, certainly. He can give peace by the bitter as well as by the sweet, peace by the storm as well as by the calm, peace by loss as well as by gain, peace by death as well as by life. For, notice there are two grand ways of giving us peace: and one is by taking away all that disquiets us. Here is a man who frets because he does not make money, or because he has lost much of his wealth. Suppose the Lord takes away from him all covetousness, all greed of gain, all love of the world—is he not at once filled with peace? He is at peace not

because he has more money, but because he has less of grasping desire. Another man is very ambitious, he wants to be somebody, he must be great, and yet he never will be, and therefore he is restless. Suppose the grace of God should humble him and take away his lofty aspirations, so that he only wishes to be and to do what the Lord wills. Do you not see how readily he rests? Another man has an angry temper and is soon put out: the Lord does not alter the people that are round about him, but he changes the man himself, makes him quiet, ready to forgive, and of a gentle spirit. What peace the man now feels! Another person has had an envious eye. He did not like to see others prosper, and if others were better off than himself he always thought hardly of them. The Lord wrings that bitter drop of envy out of his heart, and now see how peaceful he is! He is glad to see others advanced, and if he is tried himself it helps to make him happy to think that others are more favored. It is a great blessing when the Lord removes the disturbing elements from the heart.

Even curiosity may be a source of unrest. Many are a great deal worried by curiosity. I have sometimes wanted to know why the Lord does this and that with me. Blessed be His name! I am resolved not to question Him any more in that fashion. Somebody prayed the other day that I might see the reason why the Lord has lately afflicted me. I hope the brother will not pray that anymore, for I do not want to know the Lord's reasons. Why should I? I know He has done right, and I will not dishonor Him by catechizing² Him and wanting Him to explain Himself to a poor worm. This is where the mischief has been with most of us, that we have wanted to see how this and that can be right. Why should we? If God conceals a thing, let us be anxious to keep it concealed. A servant was passing through a street with a dish that was curiously covered. There met him a fellow who said, "I am most anxious to know what thy lord has put in that dish, for he has so carefully covered it." But the servant said, "Therefore shouldst thou not desire to know; for seeing my lord has so carefully covered it, it is clear that it is no business of thine." So whenever a providence puzzles you, take it as a sign that the Lord does not mean you to understand it, and be content to take it upon faith. When curiosity and other restless things are gone, peace is enjoyed.

Then the Lord has ways of giving us peace by making discoveries of Himself. Some of you do not know as yet the things which would give you peace. For instance, if you did but know that He loved you from before the foundation of the world, and that whom once He loves He never leaves, you who are now afraid that you have fallen from grace

² catechizing – questioning; interrogating.

would obtain strong consolation. Ay, and if you understood the grand doctrine of the divine decree, and saw that the Lord will not fail nor be discouraged, nor turn aside from one jot or tittle of His purpose, then you would see how you, poor insignificant believers though you be, are one stitch in the great fabric that must not be suffered to drop, or else the whole fabric will be marred. You would understand how the eternal purpose ordered in wisdom, and backed up with sovereign power, guarantees your salvation as much as it does the glory of God, and so you would have peace.

Many a soul has not the peace it might have, because it does not fully understand the atoning blood. The great doctrine of substitution is not seen in all its length and breadth by some minds. But when they come to see Christ standing in the place of His chosen, made sin for them, and the chosen standing in Christ's place, "the righteousness of God in him" (2Co 5:21), then will their peace be like a river. The grand truth of the union of the saints with Christ, if it be once understood—what a means of peace it is! He that believeth in Christ is one with Him, a member "of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Eph 5:30), one with Christ by eternal and indissoluble union, even as the Father is one with the Son. If this be known, together with the doctrine of the covenant, the attribute of immutability, the eternal purpose, and the marriage union between Christ and His elect, deep peace must be enjoyed, like the calm of heaven, like the bliss of immortality.

But there are some to whom this peace cannot come, some concerning whom the Lord saith, "What hast thou to do with peace?...There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (2Ki 9:19; Isa 57:21). Your works, your prayers, your repentances, none of these can bring you peace. As for the world and the pleasures thereof, they are destructive to all hope of peace. Come ye this day and believe in the great sacrifice which God Himself has prepared in the person of His crucified Son. Come look into Emmanuel's face and read where peace is to be found. Come to the great gash in Jesus' side and see the cleft of the rock where God's elect abide in peace. Trust in Jesus and you shall begin a peace that shall widen and deepen into the peace of God which passeth all understanding, which shall keep your hearts and minds by Christ Jesus. Amen.

From a sermon delivered on Lord's Day morning, March 18, 1877,
at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.



Peace is a high duty, rich blessing, and singular benefit that a Christian is bound to follow, pursue, press after, and labor for, and that "with all men."—*John Sheffield*

IN PERFECT PEACE

Thomas Reade (1776-1841)

THERE is something peculiarly calming to the soul in these beautiful words: “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (Isa 26:3). This is a world of sin and trouble. Here, thorns and thistles grow around us, painful emblems of the human heart and of the sad change that passed on Adam at the Fall.

Though painful the change, yet, with a pleasing mournful recollection, our minds delight to contemplate the first parents of our race enjoying communion with their God and happy communion with each other in the bowers¹ of Eden. All was then serene and peaceful. No indulged sin poisoned their joys or caused the divine countenance to be turned away from them. They had no feeling but love and gratitude, no desire but to serve and please their almighty Creator. This happy state was, alas, of short duration. They listened to the voice of the tempter and fell from holiness, from happiness, and from God.

He, who lately held sweet converse with His creatures, now banished them from Paradise, denied them all access to the Tree of Life, that pledge of immortality, and, in righteous judgment, pronounced the curse upon them. They now became dying creatures, doomed through their willful disobedience to present and eternal misery. The ground was cursed for their sake. Refusing its spontaneous fruitfulness, it required their toil and labor, while the prickly thorn and thistle sprang up as silent monitors to remind them of their sins.

May we not ask with anxious solicitude, How can such fallen, wretched creatures be kept in peace, “in perfect peace” (Isa 26:3)? What warrant have we to trust in God or stay our minds upon Him as our righteousness and strength? This important question has been answered by God Himself. He graciously promised a Savior, even at the time when justice pronounced death on the transgressors. Thus, mercy rejoiced against judgment and shed a ray of heavenly light over the benighted souls of our fallen parents.

In the fullness of time, Jesus, the promised seed of the woman, was born. The ransom price was paid by His precious blood-shedding upon

¹ **bowers** – pleasant shady places under trees or climbing plants in a garden.

the cross, and the gates of heaven were opened to all believers. The gospel was preached and pardon proclaimed to every humble, penitent,² believing soul. All who lived before the advent³ of Christ, looking to the promise and resting in the covenant of grace, were accepted in the Beloved; and those who have lived since His advent in the flesh can say: "Whom having not seen, [we] love; [and] in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, [we] rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1Pe 1:8). To all such, the prophet proclaims peace: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee" (Isa 26:3).

Here, then, we learn the nature of true religion. It is staying the mind upon God. As unbelieving sinners, we cannot do this; as believing penitents, we may. Yes, it is the privilege of every contrite⁴ soul thus to repose⁵ upon the mercies of God in Christ Jesus.

Oh, blessed truth! Though by nature far from God, we are brought near by the blood of Christ. Though lying under the curse of a broken law, we are delivered from condemnation through the death of Jesus. Though helpless, restless, and wretched in ourselves, we are privileged, through faith, to stay our minds upon God as our strength, our peace. Oh, what a work of grace, mercy, and love! "Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name" (Psa 103:1). We also learn where true stability is to be found. It is in God. Everything here in this world is fickle and changing. But that God Who gives peace unto His people changeth not, nor knoweth the shadow of a turn (Jam 1:17). The soul, therefore, which is stayed on Him finds rest and peace.

If I rest my hopes upon an earthly friend, death removes the prop,⁶ and I fall and mourn and weep. If I place my confidence on riches, they fly away as an eagle towards heaven and leave me to regret the folly of my covetous desires. If I build upon the breath of fame, it dies away or changes into scorn or slander. If I repose upon the rosy couch of earthly comforts, however lawful and endearing, these lovely flowers will quickly fade and leave me nothing but the thorns. Jesus is the only source of comfort, the only spring of joy. From Him proceed all the peace and purity that gladden and beautify the church of God.

O my soul, never look for peace from the creature; never expect it from yourself. He Who made peace for you by the blood of His cross can alone impart peace to your trembling conscience. Jesus is the Prince

² **penitent** – repentant; regretting one's sins.

³ **advent** – first coming.

⁴ **contrite** – broken in spirit by a sense of sin.

⁵ **repose** – rest.

⁶ **prop** – support to keep something from falling or in place.

of Peace. While rejecting His salvation, peace can never be enjoyed. “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isa 57:21). Solemn truth, no less engraven on the sinner’s heart than recorded in the Book of God. How can peace dwell in a bosom on which the heavy curse of the Almighty continually abides?

The world may appear smiling and happy, but its appearances are deceitful. True peace descends from above. It is the fruit of faith. The Holy Spirit alone can produce this blessedness in the soul; and, therefore, none can possess it but the faithful in Christ Jesus. The world can yield no solid peace to its most zealous votaries.⁷ Whatever I possess, without the presence of my heavenly Father, is unsatisfying and unstable. O my soul, seek a higher bliss than any that earth can give!

“Blessed Spirit of peace and love, place me on the Rock of Ages; let me never, never stray from Thee. Be the guide of my steps and the guardian of my days. Give me Thy peace always by all means, and make me a living temple consecrated wholly unto Thee.”

From *Spiritual Exercises of the Heart*, Reformation Heritage Books,
www.heritagebooks.org; used by permission.

Thomas Reade (1776-1841): English layman and author; born in Manchester, England, UK.



“My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you” (Joh 14:27). There is no other peace like it, though the unregenerate often mistake the sleep of death, a drugged conscience, worldly prosperity, the enjoyment of temporal comforts, for the same. The only true resting place is for our wills to be lost in God’s, to meekly submit to His sovereign dispensations, to thankfully receive from His hand whatever enters our lives. Uniquely was that the case with the Lord Jesus. When favored Capernaum despised His gracious overtures, instead of being riled thereby, He exclaimed, “Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight” (Mat 11:26). He had placed Himself unreservedly under the government of God; consequently, He accepted all afflictions as coming from His hand: “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (Joh 18:11). When His very soul was wrung with the most acute anguish, so far from a word of complaint escaping His lips, He declared, “Father, not my will, but thine be done” (Luk 22:42). When enduring the sufferings of the Cross—tormented by man and experiencing the wrath of God—He meekly bowed His head, praying for His enemies, committing His spirit into the hands of the Father. The fact is that none but those who are born of God can understand or enter this blessed truth. The peace which the world gives is a false one, it is continued by an uncertain tenure, and at the last takes away its gift,

leaving its deluded votaries to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. But the Lord

Jesus gives what is truly good, solid and lasting: “When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?” (Job 34:29).—*A. W. Pink*

⁷ **votaries** – devoted followers.