

AT PEACE WITH GOD

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 5:1.

Many have known something of the horrors of war. Many of the bravest and best of our countrymen have gone to untimely graves because of wars.

If there is any word which can excite pleasing sensations in the human breast, that word is peace. From time immemorial man has longed for peace, sought peace, lived for peace, fought for peace and died for peace. All of us long for peace and many pray for peace.

Peace is a great blessing in many relationships of life. Peace is a blessing in national life when, instead of being engaged in the work of destruction, the resources of men and material are being employed in the useful arts and devoted to the welfare of people and the prosperity of the nation.

It is a happy situation when neighbors are at peace with each other. It is a real joy to be associated with people with whom you have splendid relations as neighbors.

Peace within a family is a great blessing. One can visualize the tragic situation in the home about which Tennyson wrote saying "Who can but listen at the gates, and hear the household jar within." Some husbands and wives maintain a perpetual feud in the family. What a pity it is when children are reared in a home which has been converted into a battlefield!

In the lives of many, the heart is a place of conflict or a theatre of contention, because there are elements in the nature of the individual which are at war with each other. Such a person does not know what it is to have peace of mind.

It is an unspeakable blessing to have peace in all of these spheres - national, social, domestic and personal. Wonderful as is the peace in all of these realms of life, it is nothing in comparison to peace with God. A soul at war with his Creator is the tragedy of tragedies. "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!"

A moment's contemplation should arouse any person to the terror and horror of being at war with God. For a creature to be in rebellion against his Creator is an appalling thing indeed.

What is peace? The fundamental thought in the word is that of harmony with the will of God. No soul can be at peace at the roots of his being until he is reconciled to God. Prior to that experience there is always a deep inward conflict. The soul is agitated, the mind is ill at ease and the heart aches for something that wealth cannot buy.

Even though he is in the midst of strife, the Christian can be serene and happy at heart. His peace is not dependent upon the condition of the world, but upon the right relationship of his heart to God. Just as the needle in the compass never stands still until it points to the North, so the heart of man never finds peace until it trusts in and rests upon God.

Peace is mentioned in three ways in God's Word: the peace of God (this is the peace that God enjoys Himself); peace from God (this is the peace that God gives); and peace with God. Peace with God, which is enjoyed by true believers, is twofold. It has a judicial phase, which concerns the believer's

standing, and which is the blessed result of justification. It is also a peace which concerns the believer's fellowship. Peace with God may be felt and known. I hope that you can say with Paul, "Being justified by faith, I have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

When Paul used these words he spoke not only for himself but for all true Christians. All of them find an evil principle within, warring against their spiritual welfare day by day. All of them find their adversary, the devil, waging an endless battle with their souls. They find that they must endure the enmity of the world. But, notwithstanding all of this, to a greater or lesser degree they have peace with God.

This peace with God is a calm, intelligent sense of friendship with the Lord. He who has it feels as if there was no barrier between himself and his holy Maker. He can think of himself as being under the eye of an all-seeing Being, and yet not feel afraid. He can believe that this all-seeing Being beholds him without displeasure. I do not know of any happiness compared to that which this peace affords. A calm sea after a storm, a blue sky after a black thunder cloud, health after sickness, light after darkness and rest after toil are beautiful and pleasant things. But none of these things, nor all of them put together, can give more than a feeble idea of the comfort which those enjoy who have been brought into the state of peace with God. It is a peace "which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7).

It is the lack of this peace which causes so many to be unhappy. Thousands have everything that is thought to be able to give pleasure, and yet they are never satisfied. Their hearts are always aching. There is a constant sense of emptiness within. The secret of all this lies in the fact that they are not at peace with God.

Peace with God is that quietness, rest and calm assurance which comes when the heart is no longer under the burden of unconfessed, unforsaken and unforgiven sin. It means peace on the inside; that sweet poise and repose which comes to one when he can truly say, "It is well with my soul." Peace with God means that tranquility and harmony that comes when the war is over and an eternal armistice has been signed and there is nothing between the soul and the Saviour. It is not the peace of stagnation nor inactivity nor death, but the peace of right adjustment to the will and way of God. That means a peaceful conscience, mind, heart and soul.

The foundation of this peace with God lies in what is done for us by Christ. When "the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him," He purchased and procured our full reconciliation. This peace was wrought in us by the Holy Spirit in the application of the work of Christ. It is made sure to us in the everlasting covenant and the precious promises of the Bible.

Do you have peace with God? If you have, you are rich. You have that which will endure forever. You have a treasure which you will not lose when you die and leave this world. You will carry it with you beyond the grave. You will have it and enjoy it through all eternity. You may not have any money. You may never enjoy the praise of men. But, if you have peace with God, you have that which is far better than these other things. If you do not have peace with God, you are truly poor. You have nothing which will last. Your body may be carried to the grave with pomp and ceremony and a marble monument may be erected in your honor and memory, but it will still be a pauper's burial if you die without peace with God.

According to our text faith brings to the soul two blessings. Faith is not the creator of these blessings, but it is the channel through which they come to us. First, faith brings us a state of peace -- "being justified by faith"; and secondly, faith brings us a sense of peace -- "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." By nature the sinner is at variance with the holy God. There is a breach between the rebellious creature and the righteous Creator.

Justification is effected through Christ and is ours by faith. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Christ wrought out a righteousness for us. He fulfilled the requirements of God's holy law to absolute perfection.

The sense of peace follows upon the state of peace. We do not have peace with God until we are justified. Neither is peace a means to justification. God justifies the ungodly. We do not have any peace until that is done. The Word of God teaches that it is only through Christ that justification is attainable. It has pleased God to make Christ the medium of all His gracious communications to man.

Peace has been made by the blood of the cross. All who will may now avail themselves of the blessedness of it. You cannot make your own peace with God. It is both needless and useless to try to do so. Peace is already made and you may enter into it when you believe on Christ as your Saviour. Do not rob your soul of the enjoyment of this peace by refusing to receive it on God's own terms.

"A mind at perfect peace with God,
O what a word is this!
A sinner reconciled by blood
This, this, indeed is peace.

By nature and by practice far,
So very far from God;
But now by grace brought nigh to Him
Through faith in Jesus' blood."

After a sinner has been clad in the perfect righteousness of the Son of God, he is able to stand before the throne with perfect confidence. God has accepted him because he is "accepted in the Beloved." That is a blissful experience because he is aware of a restored relationship, and of a peace which human tongue cannot describe.

When a man can say that he has peace with God, what then? The very first effect is joy. A person cannot be at peace with God the Father and not be happy. Peace with God enables one to have a calm resignation or a delightful acquiescence in His blessed will. Why should a man fear who is at peace with God? God provides for him through life. Christ has conquered death and the grave for him and prepared a home for him in heaven.

Christ is the source and real author of peace. He says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). He wants His disciples to enjoy the peace which characterized Him; the same serenity in danger, the same equanimity in troublous circumstances, the same freedom from anxiety about results, the same speedy recovery of com--

posure. Peace is superior to outward circumstances. Peace with God is the most valuable blessing one can enjoy on earth.

When our Lord was bidding His disciples farewell as they stood around Him in speechless sorrow peace was the gift which He singled out, above all others, to bestow upon them as a parting legacy. He, Who was the Lord of all, had the whole universe out of which to choose a gift for them in that hour of parting tenderness, and the one which He selected as the most precious to them in their hour of dire need was peace with God. This peace is the only real support amid the trials and sorrows of life. The man who has this peace can meet earthly trials not only calm and undaunted, but rejoicing in all the appointments of God. Christ's legacy of peace is the most precious of gifts, an inheritance which the world can neither give nor take away.

"Having been justified by faith, let us go on enjoying peace with God." Let us not permit sin to obscure the brightness of the divine glory or to disturb our fellowship with God. Many Christians are conscious of a broken and disturbed peace. They have a conscious uneasiness. Conscience is causing them trouble, due to the making of wrong choices.

"O, what peace we often forfeit,
O, what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer."

Since we are at peace with God, it is our privilege and duty to come boldly to the throne of grace and obtain help in every time of need. Our unfessed sins need forgiveness and our evil ways need to be renounced.

Do you have peace with God? You have heard or read that there is such a thing. You know where and how it is to be found. But, do you possess it? Is it your very own? Do you have peace with God? If you do not have it, you are in great danger, because the wrath of God is abiding upon you. "He that believeth not is condemned already." Your thoughts, your motives, your words and your actions are a continual offense to God. You are very foolish if you do not accept the mighty Saviour, Who is both able and willing to save you and to enable you to be at peace with God.