

# Peace

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The commencement of another year witnesses the world in the grip of increasing turmoil and unrest; discontent and unhappiness affect every sphere of life; the efforts of rulers and the legislation of governments are seen to be impotent in dealing successfully with the growing dissatisfaction which abounds on every hand. In His Word (Romans 3: 17) God, speaking of all men, makes the solemn pronouncement — "the way of peace have they not known."

The Scriptures leave us in no doubt at all as to the source from which this unrest, this lack of peace, and man's complete ignorance of the way to successfully deal with it, came. When God placed man in the garden of Eden there was, without doubt, an atmosphere of tranquillity. The second chapter of Genesis records no feature of unrest. God the Creator and man His creation were in happy communion! In 1 Corinthians 14: 33 we read — "*God* is not the Author of confusion, but of peace." It was by *man* that sin came in, with all its consequent ruin and disorder. To disobey the command of God was an act of unrighteousness on the part of man, and Scripture most definitely asserts that peace cannot be known and enjoyed if unrighteousness prevails. "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever" (Isaiah 32: 17). "The kingdom of God" — where His rights are acknowledged — "is . . . righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14: 17). If God Himself has not His right place in any sphere then all relationships are in confusion. Hence the tactics of Satan (cf. Genesis chapter 4). He is the Adversary — the Attacker — and his object was to displace God in the affections of His creature. Adam, by his fall introduced the principle of sin into the habitable world. Satan had already, by sin, brought confusion and disorder into the universe — he sinned from the outset ( 1 John 3: 8). In his pride he exalted himself saying "I will be like the Most High" (Isaiah 14), and it was this spirit of self-exaltation which he so successfully introduced into the heart of man — "Ye shall be as gods." Throughout history men and nations have persisted in this course with its consequent disregard of the rights of God. "Go to, let us build us a city and a tower . . . and let us make us a name" is the language of Genesis 11. "Therefore is the name of it called Babel" (confusion). Languages were confounded, nations were scattered and confusion, enmity and unrest have characterised the movements of men throughout the centuries. Every effort to find a *permanent* basis for peace has failed, emphasising the truth of God — "There is no peace saith the Lord, unto the wicked" (Isaiah 48: 22 and Isaiah 57: 21).

Wherein lies the remedy? With adoring hearts we understand and appreciate that our God is the "God of peace" — a title so frequently given to Him in the New Testament, and covering His activities in the past, the present and the future. The *whole* situation is secure in His powerful hand!

At the birth of Jesus it was predicated that "peace on earth" should follow the manifestation of "glory to God." That glorious Person came to establish the rights of God; to make room for those rights in the hearts of men; taking from them the pursuit of their own glory, and giving them to respond to the voice of the God of glory Himself. When God (and His Word) has the true place, either in individuals or in nations — then and then only, peace results.

All depends upon the revelation of God's purpose made known in Christ. Man was the author of confusion — hence the wreckage; Christ is the Author of *Salvation* — the ruin and disorder shall be banished for ever, for that salvation is eternal in character. Man has been, and is, marked by independence and self-seeking; Christ is the Author of *faith*, and the believer in Him has full and

complete confidence that God — the God of peace — will give effect to *all* His will.

We have noticed the dual cause of the ruin — sin in man and the opposition of Satan to God. If peace is to be established these evils must be dealt with and righteously removed. This necessitated the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ as we read in Colossians 1 — "having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself." Thus the sin, sorrow, breakdown and distance from God has been dealt with to God's complete satisfaction in the precious blood of Christ. The preceding verses would bow our hearts in worship as we contemplate the personal greatness of the One blessed Person alone competent to effect this — One in whom "all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell." The work of such a Person must of necessity result in the satisfying of every claim of Godhead glory. How gladly do we say Amen to the Spirit's testimony "that in all things *He* might have the pre-eminence."

In the death and resurrection of Christ Satan has been completely defeated and in the will of God the day will arrive when his malign influence will be no more — and he himself banished in the lake of fire for ever. Thus the unrest and disorder has been traced to its source, dealt with in perfect accord with the righteousness of God — and the believer in Christ is free to enjoy, even in this scene of tumult, "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4: 7).

In Isaiah 9 one of the Names given prophetically to our Lord is "Prince of Peace" — a word indicating His right to supremacy in that realm of tranquillity. Several passages in the New Testament confirm that true peace can be enjoyed only as Christ has this supreme place in the believer's heart and life. In Acts 10 Peter, in the house of Cornelius, was found "preaching peace by Jesus Christ," and the Holy Spirit adds the immensely important parenthesis — "He is Lord of all." Again in 2 Thessalonians 3: 16 we read, "Now the *Lord* of peace Himself give you peace always by all means" — the dispensing of peace is ever in His blessed hands. Colossians 3: 15 enjoins us to "let the peace of God (of Christ, New Trans.) *rule* in your hearts" — affections thus brought into the practical gain of the dominion of peace. Paul in writing to the Philippians in Phil. 4 (already referred to) tells the believers that if their hearts and thoughts are subject to the guarding of Christ Jesus, and the truths contained in his ministry are the subject engaging their minds, then the God of Peace will Himself be with them. Precious possession in this present scene of unrest!

Divine Persons all have their part in this matter of peace as the portion of the believer in Christ.

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus" — the *past*.

"Make you perfect in every good work to do His will" (Hebrews 13: 20, 21) — the *present*.

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly . . . your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5: 23) — the *present*.

"And the God of peace shall bruise Satan shortly under your feet" (Romans 16: 20) — the *future*.

What precious content there is in this last reference — in Romans 3, the feet of those who knew not the way of peace were marked by violence; now through the precious "gospel of peace" they are of such moral worth and dignity that God can use them for the "complete crushing" (the true meaning of the word) of he who introduced violence and murder into this world. The perfection of beauty is seen in Christ as publishing peace (Isaiah 52: 7; Nahum 1: 15); that same beauty is seen in measure in the movements of believers who delight, as sent of the Lord, to preach the gospel of peace in a sin disturbed world (Romans 10).

In Galatians 5 part of the fruit of the Spirit is "peace," and in Romans 8 we read "the mind of the

Spirit life and peace" (New Trans.). The subject is inexhaustible! Of our blessed Lord we read-

1. "He made peace." All that brought in confusion dealt with at Calvary.

2. "He is our peace." The man who sought his own glory gone from our gaze.

3. He gives us His own peace. The tranquil spirit in which He ever moved in devotion to the will of His Father.

Divine love in all its sweetness and power is behind all. Every attribute of God is subservient to His love. That love can be our present joy as we retire in thought and desire from the disorder of man's world and find our rest, as John did, in the eternal bosom of the Saviour's love. As reclining there we reach the very heart of the God of Peace Himself, for as in the bosom of Christ we find our portion in the love of One whose own home is and ever was the Father's bosom (John 17: 24).

In the enjoyment of this unruffled calm may we seek to obey the apostle's command of love, "Be in peace among yourselves," eschewing the disturbing influences of the world around us and seeking the help of the Lord that we might "follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart, (2 Timothy 2: 22).

Oh! the peace for ever flowing,  
From God's thought of His own Son,  
Oh! the peace of simply knowing,  
On the cross that all was done.  
*All* taint of sin shall be removed,  
All evil done away;  
And we shall dwell with God's beloved,  
Through God's eternal day.