

Peace and Deliverance

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Let us begin by comparing two scriptures which will bring our subject fairly before us. The first is Romans 5: 1. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The second, Romans 7: 24, 25.

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death? [*margin*]. I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Peace with God, and deliverance from sin and the flesh within, are two great blessings, which the Gospel of God brings to us all. They go hand in hand, yet they are distinct! It is well for us to understand the difference between them, as also the way in which each is made our own. The cross of Christ of course is the great basis of both.

We may notice in the first place that the mischievous results of sin are seen in two directions, *externally* and *internally*.

Externally sin has severed the once happy link that united man, as an intelligent creature, to his Creator. Satan succeeded at the outset in using it to cut the line of communication between man and his true base of operations - God Himself, and ever since the human race has been in the position of the little city of which Solomon speaks. The great king has come against it, besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it (Ecc. 9: 14).

Sin has thus brought in distance, estrangement, and enmity on man's side against God, and all his relations Godward are in the direst confusion.

Internally, the wreck is no less complete. The sources of life have been poisoned; the mainspring of man's will and affection has broken. Chaos reigns supreme in the mind and heart of every sinner. Instead of his being joyous and free, moving with intelligent subjection in the sunlight of God's favour, he is in bondage. Instead of being master of himself, sin is his master. Instead of his spirit being in control of mind and body, it has become like a captain of a vessel, overpowered and battened down beneath hatches, at the mercy of a whole crew of evil passions and lusts.

Not many years ago the eyes of Europe, and indeed of the world, were specially drawn towards Russia. No nation presented just then a more pitiable spectacle. She was involved *externally* in a disastrous war, and *internally* in ruinous conflict, upheavals, and anarchy, until it looked as if her very existence as a nation was threatened. Her state at that time not inaptly illustrates our present theme.

Read Romans 1 to 3, and you will find the awful state portrayed, into which sin has plunged man as regards his relations with God. Then the divine remedy in the death and resurrection of Christ is set forth, and the result of this is *for faith*, "peace with God."

Then read Romans 7. What a revelation of internal anarchy and confusion! Into what a tangle of conflicting desires, emotions, and struggles has not sin plunged us! But out of all this we may emerge, thanks to the cross of Christ and the Spirit's power (Romans 8: 1-4), and the result here is "deliverance from the body of this death."

Peace, then, is "with God," the result of having all our relations with Him placed on a righteous and satisfactory footing through the work of Christ.

Deliverance is "from this body of death," *i.e.*, from this putrid corpse of corruption, which we each of us carry about within ourselves, the result of sin in the flesh.

There is, then, a clear distinction between these two great blessings, and yet both are declared to be "through Jesus Christ our Lord." His cross is the basis of both. It was at one and the same time the complete answer to all our guilt, so that we who believe are justified by God Himself (Rom. 3: 25, 26), and also the full condemnation of all that we were in ourselves as self-destroyed children of Adam (Rom. 6: 6; Rom. 8: 3), so that deliverance might reach us in the power of the risen Christ.

But though the basis of both is evidently the same, there is a difference between the ways in which they are received by us.

Peace, though it is preceded always by the anxiety, which is produced by having the eyes opened to one's dangerous position in regard to God, is distinctly said to be by *faith* (Rom. 5: 1). Many of us remember - do we not? - when out of the anxious depths our eyes were suddenly opened to gaze in faith on the once crucified, but now risen, Saviour. We saw every question settled, every obstacle removed, every cloud once between us and God rolled away; we could truthfully sing:

"From sinking sand He lifted me;
With tender hand He lifted me;
From shades of night to plains of light,
Oh, praise His Name, He lifted me!"

In one word the result was "Peace."

Deliverance, on the other hand, though it cannot be apart from faith, is largely linked up with *experience*. We wade through the mire of Romans 7 to reach the rock which rises before us at the end of the chapter.

We learn useful, but painful, lessons of "no good in the flesh" (v. 18), "no power in our best desires" (v. 23), even when those desires are the result of a new nature within, called here "the law of my mind," "the inward man." Then it is that, heartsick of sin and self, the weary soul looks for an outside deliverer, and finds one in the Lord Jesus Christ.

That deliverance is found in the knowledge of the meaning of Christ's cross as the condemnation of sin in the flesh, and in the power of the Spirit of God, who makes Christ so truly "a living bright Reality," that under His warm influence order begins to appear out of chaos, and victory is obtained over sin.

Is it possible to have one's sins forgiven and yet not have peace?

Upon what, then, does forgiveness depend? Evidently upon simple *faith in Christ*. "Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" is what Scripture says (Acts 10: 43).

Upon what does peace depend? Upon *faith in the Gospel of God*, which sets before us a Saviour "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4: 25).

The question then resolves itself into: "Is it possible to simply believe in Christ, and wholly trust in Him as a poor sinner, without believing with equal simplicity the Gospel message, which sets before

us not only Himself, but His work and its results?"

The answer must be, Alas! yes. All too many pay as much, if not more, attention to their feelings than to the unchanging Gospel, and therefore have not peace, though they fully trust in Christ.

Although this is so, such a state of things is not what God intends, nor what Scripture contemplates. It is the fruit of defective teaching, or the product of unbelief.

Must peace and deliverance always be received together? or may they be possessed at different times?

No rule is laid down in Scripture, though they are evidently treated in quite distinct fashion in the Epistle to the Romans. "Peace" is dealt with fully, Romans 1 to 5, before "deliverance" is dealt with, Romans 6 to 8.

In the actual history of Christians, it would seem that most frequently the question of sins, and how to meet God, entirely fills the vision till peace is known, and *afterwards* the Spirit of God raises the question of sin, and the flesh, and victory over both.

Yet there are not a few who would testify that in their cases both questions were involved in their anxieties and exercises, and it seemed as if light on both dawned together. The writer would testify that in his case he never had settled peace until light began to break on the subject of deliverance.

Can it be possible for a person to be continually overcome by sin, as detailed in Romans 7, and yet have peace with God?

Not exactly. Taking the chapter as it stands, one cannot but be struck with what the speaker does *not* mention. In all the verses from 7 to 24, not one allusion does he make to the redemption work of Christ, not one word is uttered as to the Spirit of God. These painful exercises are evidently those of one who, though "born again," and therefore with a new nature, is in his conscience under the law, does not know redemption, and has not the gift of the indwelling Spirit. Hence he is "carnal," "sold under sin," and absolutely *nothing* is right.

Yet the believer, having peace with God, may have an experience of this order, but modified, since he does know redemption and possess the Spirit. Though not sold under sin, and he may be nearly always in the gloom of ignominious failure, though not without one single ray of light, as is pictured in the chapter.

If a really converted person gets such an experience must it not show that something is radically wrong?

Yes, indeed, but wrong with him, not with his Christianity. The pity is that so many do *not* seem to have the experience. There is something wrong with them, but they don't seem to feel it.

The fact is, to "get into Romans 7" - as some Christians term it - is a sign of spiritual progress rather than the reverse. It betokens a sensitive conscience, and a real desire to walk in the paths of holiness, and the lessons which are learnt during the experience, though painful, are salutary.

Just as no one gets peace without previously being in the throes of soul-anxiety, so no believer reaches that deliverance from sin and self, which issues in a robust type of Christianity, without such an experience as detailed in Romans 7.

What is the secret of getting this deliverance?

Simply looking away from self to Christ. Note the incessant repetition of "I" and "me" - particularly the former - in verses 7 to 24, and then in this last verse the sudden change. Sickened and hopeless, the speaker lifts his eyes off himself and seeks an outside deliverer. It is not, "How shall I deliver myself?" but "Who shall deliver me?"

Is deliverance a thing which, like peace, we get at a definite moment, and once for all?

No. Peace is the result of receiving God's testimony as to the finished work of Christ, and often comes like the lightning's flash. Deliverance, on the other hand, not only depends on the work of Christ for us, but on the work of the Spirit in us. That is not something completed in a moment once for all, but a gradual work, which has not only to be maintained, but increased.

There is, of course, a definite moment when the soul cries out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" a moment when it begins to dawn upon us what it means to be "in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8: 1), and we first taste the sweetness of the liberty which is the result of coming under the control of "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (v. 2). That is the moment when deliverance begins, but it has to be maintained, and its measure should be increased so long as we are in this world.

Some believers have spent long years in vain struggles against the power of indwelling sin. What would you advise them to do?

Give it up; and look away to the great Deliverer! Lose yourself in the warm beams of His love and glory - that is deliverance indeed.

A well-known minister of the Gospel uses an allegory which aptly illustrates this. Its substance is as follows: -

"The drops of water on the surface of the ocean looked up at the fleecy clouds passing over the face of the sky, and ardently longed to leave the dull leaden depths and soar with ease in their company. So they determined to try.

"They called upon the wind to help them. It blew fiercely, and the frantic waves flung themselves in all their force against the rocks until it seemed as if the drops, now broken into fine spray, *must* reach to the clouds and stop there. But no! back at last they fell in fine showers upon the cold, dark waves. At last they sighed and said, 'It never will be.' The wind dropped and the storm was over.

"Then it was that the sun shone forth in its strength, the sea lay placid beneath its hot rays, and lo I almost ere they knew it, the drops were lifted by its mighty power, and without noise or effort they found themselves floating away as vapour into the blue sky."

Deliverance is even thus. Keep in the warm sunshine of the love of Christ to you, and soon you will be saying! "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7: 25).