Peace of Mind — In These Troubled Times

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Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither be afraid" (John 14:27). But the fact is many Christians do have troubled hearts — and they do live in fear! Many are secretly plagued with panic, turmoil and sleepless nights.

Jesus also said in the same verse, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." Yet few believers can honestly say they enjoy constant peace of mind. For many, peace comes and goes, leaving them worried, restless and battered by stress.

Yet here is what Zacharias prophesied of the coming Messiah: "That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1:74-75).

Beloved, this is why Jesus came to this earth and died for sinful man: so that we could walk with God without fear, enjoying His peace, all the days of our lives!

No fear... peace of mind and heart... all of our days! This includes days of suffering, turmoil, testing and uncertainty. It means both good days and bad days. No matter what comes our way, we are to enjoy peace at all times.

Zacharias added these words about Jesus: "To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death...to guide our feet into the way of peace" (verse 79). He was saying Jesus would guide all His children into the path of peace — not into restlessness, emptiness or fear, but into peace!

Jesus is the Prince of Peace. At His birth the angels sang, "Peace on earth...." His gospel is called the "gospel of peace." And He promised of Himself, "In Me ye (shall) have peace" (John 16:33).

Peace is what the gospel is all about: "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:36). Likewise, the apostle Paul outlines the acceptable way in which believers ought to serve Christ. Measure your life against what Paul describes:

"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Romans 14:17-19).

In this world we will face tribulation, persecution and fiery trials — "fightings without and fears within," according to Paul (2 Corinthians 7:5). We will be tempted, we will suffer for the sake of Christ. The winds of adversity will try to topple the house of faith we build on the Rock of our salvation, which is Jesus.

But still we are to serve Him in righteousness — full of peace and joy in the Holy Spirit — at all times. Paul's prayer for all believers was this: "May the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all" (2 Thessalonians 3:16, NAS).

Think of it — peace in every circumstance. Now I ask you: Do you have peace in every circumstance? In your
every waking hour are you full of absolute peace?

Here is the definition of peace: inner contentment, inner calm, serenity, tranquillity, free from all strife, at rest, an undisturbed spirit. I love to be around Christians who have that inner calm.

Regrettably, the world doesn't see this serenity in many of us. In times of crisis, many believers are not ruled by a calm, undisturbed spirit. Too often others see us panic-stricken, worried and frustrated.

Yet God’s goal for His children is that we live free of all care and worry! We know this, we say we believe it, and the Scriptures confirm it — but few of us have entered into this walk. So few are truly free!

Here is the Lord's desire for us: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7, NAS).

Do you take absolutely everything to God in prayer? I mean everything? Often I have boasted that I go to God asking nothing, just simply loving Him. But God invites us to come to Him making all our requests known. He is pleased when we do this!

The blessing in "making your requests known" isn't that you come out of the prayer room with your prayer suddenly answered — your sickness or pain gone, your problems solved. Rather, it's that you emerge with your heart changed because God has given you His peace.

When we go to the secret closet of prayer, unburdening our souls, weeping and making our requests known — we come away with peace. The sickness may still be there, the trouble may not be gone — but we are changed! The strife, the fear, the anxiety are gone.

How do we obtain such peace of mind in these troubled times?

1. It Is Impossible to Have True Peace Without Christ Living in You.

"For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us" (Ephesians 2:14).

I know of many sinful souls who claim to have peace, yet are living in sin. These people say, "I have peace, I'm not afraid, I have rest." But their peace is not a real peace. It's not real rest. It is a delusion, the result of a satanic lie. It is a false peace that will damn and destroy!

In Deuteronomy 29:18-19, we read of people "whose heart turneth away...from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of the nations." These people had a root of poison growing in them — and the Holy Spirit warned them. They were told that a curse would fall upon them because they left the Lord and had gone back to their sinful, stubborn ways. This was the warning:

"You shall find no rest, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the Lord will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul. So your life shall hang in doubt before you; and you shall be in dread night and day, and shall have no assurance of your life. In the morning you shall say, 'Would that it were evening!' And at evening you shall say, 'Would that it were morning!' because of the dread of your heart which you dread" (Deuteronomy 28:65-67, NAS).

In addition to this curse, these words were preached to the idolaters: "And it shall be when he hears the words of this curse, that he will boast, saying, 'I have peace though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart'" (Deuteronomy 29:19, NAS).

God says such people can't have real peace — and that the peace they claim is a delusion. The Bible says, "There is no peace for the wicked, but the wicked are like the tossing sea, for it cannot be quiet" (Isaiah 57:20-21, NAS). "They have made their paths crooked; whoever treads on them does not know peace" (Isaiah 59:8, NAS). Further, God's Word says it is impossible for the sinner to know peace because the Lord will single him out for adversity" (Deuteronomy 29:21).
This is one thing the world can't handle — adversity. Cults can't handle adversity, other than to deny it by escaping into a world of illusion. They won't face it head on. Their instruction is to go into a room, meditate and give yourself over to "nothingness." But such "peace" only lasts a day or two before the worries and pressures of this world come flooding back in.

By contrast, Jesus is glorified most in His church during times of adversity. Those are the times Christianity clearly triumphs over all other religions — because Jesus faces every crisis head on! And He bestows abundant peace to us in the midst of every trouble.

Some of the most deluded people on earth are those who claim peace without Christ. They have a false security. If you ask a man on the street, "Do you have peace with God? Is your heart at peace?", he most likely will answer, "Yes. I'm not what you would call a Christian, but I have peace. I'm not afraid."

Another man will say, "Oh, I've had peace now for fifteen years." Ask him how he got that peace, and he says, "Years ago I was in all kinds of turmoil, and someone taught me to meditate. I went into a room with my mantra, and I began to repeat it. I began to withdraw from this world, and a spirit swept over me like fresh, cool water."

You ask, "But what is the source, the spring of your peace? How can you prove it is genuine?"

He answers, "I can't tell you where it came from or how I got it. All I know is, I have a peaceful, calm heart. I feel happy and content. And if I become troubled, I go into my room and repeat my mantra. I shut everything out."

America is now full of oriental doctrines, all of them boasting they offer peace of mind. They call it "nirvana." Yet it is not peace at all. Rather, it is self-surrender to nothingness. God offers no such emptiness. Instead, he offers fullness. He gives peace like a river — ever flowing, always fresh, continually renewing!

Another person testifies, "I was going down the wrong path, hurting myself and my family. I knew it was time for me to change — so I decided to turn over a new leaf. I quit running around, gave up my bad habits and started doing what was right. I'm not the same person I used to be. I worked hard to earn this peace. And I believe God is pleased with me."

But the Bible says, "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Romans 3:20). The next time this person falls into some sin, he will discover that his peace is gone — that it was all a false dream.

Peace claimed by the sinner is not real peace — it is numbness! It is spiritual blindness. Only righteousness can produce peace, and nothing else: "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever" (Isaiah 32:17).

You may say, "I am not wicked. I don't do the things wicked people do." But wickedness in the eyes of God is more than lust or drinking or drug abuse. In God's eyes, a wicked person is one who knows Christ is the source of all peace — but rejects Him and refuses His gift. Wickedness is resisting Christ's call to embrace Him as the Prince of Peace.

It doesn't matter if you seem perfect. You may not drink, smoke or cheat. You may even seem to have almost every good quality a person could have. But if you turn your back on Christ, you are wicked in the eyes of God, because you have rejected the way of salvation. And God states plainly there will be no peace for that kind of person.

2. True Peace Is the Result of Being Justified by Faith.

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

There must be a foundation for our peace — and Scripture says that foundation is our justification. We have peace because Jesus Christ has justified us before the Father.

Too many believers have never entered into this great peace the Lord has promised. Beloved, we who believe are justified — and it is important for us to understand what this great word means, because it is the secret to our peace!
Justification entails two principles: First, it says my sins are blotted out. I've been acquitted of them by the blood of the lamb. They are no longer held against me because Jesus went to the cross for me and paid for them all.

This justification by faith is the rock, the foundation of all peace with God. To “justify” means to pronounce one guiltless — to proclaim that his debt has been fully paid by Christ, and that God is satisfied. Jesus was "delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25). He was raised to declare us free from all blame!

Yet being justified means much more than just being forgiven. Jesus not only cleared me of all my sins — He also made me acceptable to the Father by His sacrifice. This is the second great part of justification. I have been declared innocent and guiltless — and I also have been declared holy in God's eyes!

You can work hard to have victory over every besetting sin. You can gain control over every habit, conquer your temper or evil thoughts, and cast aside all evil speaking. You can be faultless. Yet you still can be building on the wrong foundation — because your peace cannot come from what you do or how you feel.

I've lived that kind of life at times. I've known in my heart I've been saved by grace through faith; I've know my good works would not save me. And yet, like so many others, I've expected God to bless me according to my performance.

I used to go through the week thinking I was worthy of God's peace only if I hadn't done anything wrong. I'd look back and see I'd been kind to my wife...I'd remained steadfast in prayer and the Word...and I would say, “Thank You, God, for your peace.” And I would continue to thank Him — until the next day, when I blew it!

My peace would come and go according to either my goodness — or an outbreak of "badness." Failure of any kind would bring despair and a loss of peace.

Perhaps you've had this struggle. You so want to please the Lord and for Him to be pleased with you — but you look too much at how you are doing rather than what Jesus have already done for you. You find you are judging yourself, your salvation and your peace by your "performance."

You think that if you've prayed effectively...read the holy Scriptures for several hours...done all you could for others...only then could God smile down on you! You think, "If only I have enough of the fear of God in me, or feed the poor and hungry, or am diligent, or avoid all appearances of evil — then I can enjoy peace!"

But, beloved, you cannot justify yourself. You simply can't know the peace of God through Jesus Christ until you understand its foundation. And it comes only from knowing you are right in the sight of God through Jesus' shed blood. For that reason alone you are “accepted in the beloved.”

We must pursue our peace in a much different way — by entering into the truth of what Christ has done for us. The Word says, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful" (Colossians 3:15). Jesus will keep on justifying us — all the way until we meet Him in eternity!

Yet I must add there is a deadly doctrine in Christian circles today that offers believers a false security. This teaching says you are made the righteousness of Christ no matter how you live in the flesh. Many Christians today run around doing as they please — cheating, fornicating, living carelessly and sinning at will. They boast, "No sweat — I am the righteousness of God in Christ! His blood covers all my past, present or future sins."

These people are being deceived: No one can be justified who continues in sin and rebellion. We are "made the righteousness of God in Him" when we honestly repent and humble ourselves before Him.

Yes, Jesus was raised for our justification, and He becomes our righteousness. But forgiveness and justification are offered to those who choose to turn from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to the power of God. These things are not imputed to us or accounted ours until we repent, turn from our wicked ways, and believe and obey God.

Jesus came "to open blind eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts
26:18). Faith in Christ produces a sanctifying power in you!

3. We Know We Are Accepted by Him Because He Invites Us to Come Boldly to His Throne.

Why would God invite you to His throne if He were mad at you? You may condemn yourself because you had a bad day, took a fall or did something you knew grieved the Holy Spirit. But what must you do at such times? You must run to the Lord! You must say, "Jesus, my heart is repentant, and I know You can blot out all my iniquity."

The Father hasn't turned His back on you. Yet too many Christians live as if they believe He has. They live on the edge all the time, believing they're saved one day and unsaved the next.

I'm not preaching eternal security. I believe only in the eternal security of the eternal believer. That is, if you walk faithfully with the Lord and love Him with all your heart all the days of your life, then you are saved — all the days of your life!

But many Christians are up-and-down, hot-and-cold. You never know where they stand — because they don't know where they stand. They don't have this foundation: "I'm justified in the sight of God, by the blood of the Lamb. And not only am I made righteous in His eyes, I'm accepted by the Father as holy. I have a right to enter into His presence!"

That's what the story of the Prodigal Son is all about. Not only was he forgiven, kissed on the neck, given a robe and a new ring — but he was also invited to come in and sit at his father's table to feast. This is a true picture of justification — one where we're not left to try to appease God and work ourselves into His good graces.

Satan stands right now before God, charging you with all kinds of sins: unfaithfulness, lies, dishonesty, shortcomings. He has a long list of every wrong thing you have done in recent weeks. "The accuser of our brethren...which accused them before our God night and day" (Revelation 12:10). He says to God, "How can that person be saved, when I've just seen him do the things he's done? I want justice! You can't be a just God and let him get away with that!"

And he is right in many of his accusations! You did fail at times. You did fall short of the glory of God. You did do things unlike Christ. You did not live up to your testimony.

But our Judge is unmoved, unimpressed. I can hear my Father in heaven telling Satan, "I need no word from you, father of lies! You are wasting your time, you have no case. You are accusing someone I have already acquitted. Be gone!"

We need not be afraid of our Judge. He is on our side — and He has blotted out all our transgressions: "Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back" (Isaiah 38:17). "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Isaiah 43:25).

I see the King of Glory standing before all accusers and crying out, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth" (Romans 8:33).

Many of you reading this are living beneath your privileges. You are carrying a load of guilt and worry you need not carry. God wants you to know how clear you are in heaven — that you are ready for glory. And He wants you to appropriate your peace right now!

In 2 Peter 3, we find awful warnings of a final world meltdown, probably a nuclear holocaust. In it, everything will be dissolved. Yet in the midst of the world’s most troubled times, we are called to practice peace of mind:

"All these things shall be dissolved...the elements shall melt with fervent heat.... Wherefore beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2 Peter 3:11, 12,14).

On the day we stand before Him, we're going to look at His nail-scarred hands — and we'll realize the Source of our
justification has done more for us than we could ever accomplish during a lifetime of penance. God wants us to appropriate that blessing now. He wants us to live in peace — to look at Jesus' wounds and be able to say, "He paid for my sins, devil! You can't look at my sins anymore. Look at those nail prints — look at Him, for He pleads my case. I'm justified in the sight of God!"

Recently I told God, "Lord, I'm going to have Your peace at all costs. I'm not going to let the devil tell me any more lies. I know my salvation is not in my performance. If I cried a river of tears, or if I were perfect according to the law, I'd still be lost. I would have gained nothing. No, Jesus — You plead my case. I rest in what You've done for me."

Can you say this by faith right now? "Lord, I'm not going to try to work my way into Your good pleasure. I'm going to enter in through Christ. He pleases you, He's sinless — and I come to You through Jesus, my Lord."

When you have that kind of faith, God does not see you — He sees the Christ in you. He doesn't see the "old man," the one that passed away when you became a new creature in Christ. No, God sees only one man: the Christ-man. And as Jesus is in glory, so are we in this world — redeemed, justified and set free.

Are you worried? fretting? afraid? Are you condemning yourself? If so, you don't have to live in guilt anymore. If you've confessed your sins and are trusting in the blood of Jesus Christ, your sins are gone — blotted out. You are justified.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1). God says, "I didn't give you fear or condemnation. The devil put it on you. Get rid of it by faith and say, 'Jesus, I stand before You now boldly, through the blood of the Lamb. I'm washed, I'm cleansed, and I know You love me.'"

If you've done this, then Jesus is getting joy out of you, and God is pleased with you. That's why He says, "Come boldly into My presence...make your petitions known...ask largely, that your joy may be fulfilled."

*That is true peace!*

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