

Peace of Mind in These Troubled Times



David Wilkerson August 25, 2015

Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). Christ shared these words with his disciples on the eve of his crucifixion. It was meant to give them comfort and reassurance in what would be the darkest hour of their faith. Since that time Christians down through the ages have drawn comfort from Jesus' words here, to sustain them through their most difficult trials.

Yet today many Christians *do* have troubled hearts and *do* live in fear. I know from the letters sent to our ministry that many believers are secretly plagued with panic, turmoil and sleepless nights.

Christ adds yet another assurance in the same verse: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." Yet many Christians find themselves unable to find peace of mind. For many, peace comes and goes, leaving them worried, restless, battered by stress.

In Luke's Gospel, the prophet Zacharias said 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).

Here is one of the primary reasons Jesus came to earth and died for sinful humankind: *that we might walk with God without fear, enjoying his peace all the days of our lives*. This seems impossible when facing disasters, afflictions and awful sorrows, and in our periods of suffering, testing and uncertainty. In times like these we feel overwhelmed and fear grips our heart. How can we stay in peace when all seems out of control?

Zacharias said this about the Messiah: "To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death... *to guide our feet into the way of peace*" (1:79, my italics). He was saying that Jesus would guide us all in the path of peace — not into restlessness, emptiness or fear, but into calm and rest. This is his promise, but to some the path seems just the opposite.

Scripture calls Jesus the Prince of Peace. At his birth the angels declared in song, "Peace on earth!" The apostle Paul describes the Good News of Christ as the "gospel of peace." Jesus himself said, "In me ye (shall) have peace" (John 16:33). Simply put, 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).

When Paul outlines the acceptable way we are to serve the Lord, it includes walking in God's peace: "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, my italics).

In this world we will face tribulation, persecution, fiery trials, "fightings without and fears within," as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 7:5. We will be tempted and we will suffer. The winds of adversity will try to topple the house of faith we build on Jesus, the Rock of our salvation.

But still we are to serve him in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Paul's prayer for the church 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). Think of it: peace in our circumstance!

God is set on providing peace for us even in our worst circumstance.

God's goal for his children is that we live free of all care and worry. We know this, we profess it and the Scriptures confirm it, but many of us have not entered into such a walk. God desires for us to be set free: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanks—giving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6–7).

Paul says here that by taking everything to God in prayer — all our anxieties and requests — we obtain his peace. So, do you take everything to God in prayer? It is not a mark of humility to withhold requests from him. This verse says he invites *all* our requests. And he is pleased when we do this.

Yet we are not to misunderstand Paul's meaning here. The blessing of making our requests known isn't that we come out of the prayer closet with our request suddenly answered — our sickness gone, our problem solved. It is that we emerge having been touched by God, our heart set at peace. In short, our strife, fear and anxiety are removed because we have been with the Creator.

It is impossible to have true peace without a fresh touch of his hand in the midst of trouble.

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

The most tragically deluded people on earth are those who claim peace outside of Jesus. Their "peace" rests in a false sense of security. Right now America is full of various eastern religions and doctrines, all purporting to offer peace of mind. Many adherents claim that meditating in solitude or repeating a mantra brings them peace. They say, "If I become troubled, I go into my room and meditate. That helps me shut everything out."

Contrast this with Jesus. In his days on earth, our Lord was most glorified during times of adversity. He faced every crisis head on. And as the Head of the church today, he can bestow his peace on his people in the midst of every trouble we face.

If you think about it, there is one thing the world cannot handle: adversity. Those who are drawn to cults simply deny the adversity in their life by escaping into a world of illusion. Likewise, followers of eastern practices give themselves over to "nothingness." Any sense of peace they obtain dissipates after a day or two as the pressures of the world come flooding back in.

What Jesus offers isn't emptiness. On the contrary, he offers *fullness* — a peace that is continually renewing. It doesn't empty us but rather restores us with abundant life.

Others in the world rely on self-determination to overcome problems and worries. They claim, "I was going down the wrong path, hurting myself and my family. I knew it was time to make a change, so I turned over a new leaf. I weaned myself from all my bad habits and started doing what was right. Today I'm not the same person I used to be. I worked hard to earn this peace I have. And I believe God is pleased with me."

We who follow Christ know from his Word, "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Romans 3:20). The next time the self-determined person falls into sin, all his hard-earned peace will be gone. And he'll be devastated that he was deceived by a false dream.

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 solid foundation for our peace. Scripture says that foundation is *justification*. We are able to have peace because Jesus Christ has justified us before the heavenly Father.

Yet some Christians have never entered into the great peace that this justification brings. It is vital that we understand what "justified" means, because this concept holds the key to our peace.

Justification entails two principles. First, it says that *my sins are blotted out*. I have been acquitted of all iniquity by the blood of Jesus Christ. Those sins are no longer held against me because when Christ went to the cross he paid for them all.

In short, this justification is by faith in the Rock, our foundation of all peace in God. To "justify" means to pronounce one guiltless. It is to proclaim our debt fully paid by Christ and that God is satisfied. Jesus was "delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25). He was raised to declare us free from all blame.

Yet being justified means 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. Not only have I been declared innocent and guiltless, *but I also have been declared holy in God's eyes*.

You can work hard to have victory over every besetting sin. You can be faultless, gaining control over every habit, conquering your temper or evil thoughts, casting aside all evil speaking. Yet through it all you may still be building on the wrong foundation. Why? Because your peace cannot come from what you do or how you feel.

I acknowledge I have lived this way at times in my life. During those brief periods, I knew in my heart I've been saved by grace through faith and that my good works would not save me. Yet like so many others I expected God to bless me according to my performance. My peace would come and go according to my sense of "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. But you judge your standing in God by "how you're doing" rather than by what Jesus has done for you. If you're honest, you would see you're judging your inner peace and even your salvation by your performance.

No, never! You cannot justify yourself by any human means. And you simply can't know the peace of God through Christ until you understand its foundation. *It comes only from knowing you are right in the sight of God through Jesus' shed blood*. It is for this reason alone you are "accepted in the beloved."

The people of God are to pursue peace in a much different way by entering into the truth of what Christ has done for us. His Word says, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which ye also 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. And our faith in him will continually produce in us a sanctifying power. "That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:18).

We know we are accepted by him because he invites us to come boldly to his throne.

Let me ask you: Why would God invite you to his throne if he were mad at you? You may condemn yourself because you had a bad day or did something you knew grieved the Holy Spirit. But at such times, what does his Word call you to do? You are to run to the Lord, crying, "Jesus, my heart is repentant. I know you can blot out all my iniquity."

The Father hasn't turned his back on you. Yet many Christians live as if he has. They live with constant anxiety, thinking they're saved one moment and unsaved the next. They live with needless confusion because they don't have this foundation: "I am justified in the sight of God, by the blood of the Lamb. And not only am I made righteous in his eyes, I'm also 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 this gross sinner forgiven, kissed on the neck and given a robe and a new ring, he was also invited to sit at his father's table to enjoy the feast. That is the true picture of justification: We are not left to try to appease God and work ourselves into his good graces. He has done it for us.

Satan stands right now before God, charging you with all kinds of sins: unfaithfulness, lies, dishonesty,

short-comings. He has a long list of every wrong thing you've done recently. "The accuser of our brethren...which accused them before our God day and night" (Revelation 12:10). The devil says to God, "How can that one be saved with all the things I've seen him do? I want justice! You can't be a just God if you let him get away with that."

The devil is right in many of his accusations. You have failed at times. You have fallen short of God's glory. You have done things that are so unlike Jesus.

But our Judge is unmoved and unimpressed by any accusation. I hear him in heaven telling our accuser, "I need no word from you, father of lies. You have no case. You're bringing accusations against someone I have already acquitted. Now, be gone!"

We need not be afraid of our Judge. He is on our side and 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 our accuser, demanding, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth" (Romans 8:33).

Some reading this are simply living beneath your privileges. You are carrying a load of guilt and worry that you need not carry. God wants you to know how clear you are in heaven, that even now you are ready for glory. And he wants you to appropriate the peace that is yours.

In his second epistle, Peter speaks of a final world meltdown. Yet even in the midst of such a horrendous time — at the world's most troubled hour — we are called to have 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 that day when we stand before the Lord, we'll look at his nail-scarred hands and realize the source of our justification has done more for us than we could ever accomplish with a lifetime of penance or performance.

God wants us to appropriate his blessing of peace right now.

Our Father wants us to be able to look at Jesus' wounds and declare to the devil, "That is payment for my sins. You can't accuse me of those things anymore, Satan. Jesus pleads my case for me. And because of him I am justified in God's sight."

Recently I prayed, "Lord, I want your peace at all costs. I won't listen to the devil's lies any longer. I know my salvation is not in my performance. No, Jesus, you alone plead my case. I rest in what you've done for me."

Can you say the same by faith? That you're not going to try to work your way into God's good pleasure? That Jesus has taken on all your sins, and that you are able to enter God's presence through him?

The fact is when God looks at you he sees Christ. He doesn't see the "old man" Paul refers to, but a new creature in Christ. As Jesus is in glory, so are we in this world: redeemed, justified and set free.

So, are you worried or afraid? Are you condemning yourself? You don't have to live in guilt or anxiety anymore. If you've confessed your sins and trust in the blood of Jesus, those sins are gone, blotted out completely. You are justified.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1). God says, in effect, "I didn't give you this fear or condemnation. The devil put it on you. Get rid of it by faith, saying, 'I am washed and cleansed by faith in Jesus. And I know God loves me.'"

If you have done this, the Lord is pleased with you. You are giving him great joy! That is why he says, "Come boldly into my presence, make your requests known to me, and ask largely that your joy may be fulfilled." This is true peace!

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