

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:20-21)

One of my favorite names of God is “the God of peace.” That is His exclusive title. There is no peace without God. The Bible is super abounding in comfort surrounding that name. Let’s look at some of His blessed words on the subject.

*“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, **peace**, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.”* (Galatians 5:13-26).

“Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, **peace**, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” (2 Timothy 2:22).

An external peace is not what is referenced in these verses; such as is sometimes enjoyed and is to be followed. See Hebrews 12:14: “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” Gill says, “‘follow peace,’ signifies an eager pursuit after it, in the use of proper means; exerting the utmost of a man’s power to

attain it, in all things possible: many things serve to enforce this upon the saints; this is most agreeable to all the three divine Persons; to God, who is the God of peace; to Christ, the Prince of peace; and to the Spirit, one of whose fruits is peace; and to the characters of the saints, who are sons of peace, and who are called to peace [1 Corinthians 7:15], and who make a profession of the Gospel of peace [Ephesians 6:15]; and to the privileges they enjoy, being interested in the covenant of peace, partaking of spiritual peace now, and being entitled to eternal peace hereafter.”

The peace we will talk about today is an internal, spiritual peace of soul; which is an ease of mind from distress through sin and a sense of the wrath of God. It is that peace described by our Kinsman Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ in John 14:27: “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.” As if he were describing what was in his last will and testament; he bequeathed peace unto them. Peace with God; peace of conscience so by the working of His mighty power we are enabled to “draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled [by the blood of Christ] from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” (Hebrews 10:22). That type of language and imagery communicates clearly that this peace is not within human power to command, control or acquire: it, like every gift arising from the grace of God, is granted by a sovereign God, as completely and totally unmerited; and irrevocable.

It is not that human peace that “the world giveth” which I explain in this sermon. “For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.” (1 Thessalonians 5:3). That lie, that deceitful thing, which they call “peace”, is shown in its true light by this verse: “Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts.” (Psalm 28:3). Is this the “peace” which the federal government and the 50 states and thousands of local municipalities promise and pretend to secure to their citizens in this sodomite nation by such unconstitutional legislation called, for example, “Let them rest in peace” acts? God mocks them with such vapid nonsense. The truth is that peace of any true and lasting value has been denied them; it has been taken from them by the God of peace. Your friends at Westboro Baptist

Church cannot grant it to you or take it away from you. That is God's exclusive prerogative. So your laws are useless. Our fellow americans have, with eyes wide opened and in the clear light of day, rejected and despised the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). As their just recompense the God of peace commands: "Enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament nor bemoan them: for I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the LORD, even lovingkindness and mercies." (Jeremiah 16:5). Beloved, listen to His word: "The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace." (Isaiah 59:8). "There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked." (Isaiah 48:22).

These verses in Galatians and Timothy identify that lasting peace promised to the believers at Westboro Baptist Church and delivered every day and for time immemorial to them: "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee." (Isaiah 54:10).

This peace is pursuant to the goodwill of God. (Luke 2:14). This grace of peace is reserved for the children of God: "Great shall be the peace of thy children," (Isa 54:13). Now the seat of this grace of peace in these subjects is the heart and mind; for it rules in the heart, and keeps and guards the heart and mind. Colossians 3:15: "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." Philippians 4:7: "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." It lies in the breast of a saint; and what protects, preserves, and keeps it there is, a breastplate of faith in Christ and love to him. "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love." (1 Thessalonians 5:8)

This great peace is necessary for what reason?

Sin, upon conviction, is made exceeding sinful, and is very distressing. "For by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:20). "I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." (Romans 7:7). "But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the

commandment might become exceeding sinful.” (Romans 7:13). Gill: “That the corruption of nature might not only be seen and known to be sin, but exceeding sinful; as being not only contrary to the pure and holy nature of God, but as taking occasion by the pure and holy law of God to exert itself the more, and so appear to be as the words may be rendered, "exceedingly a sinner," or "an exceeding great sinner"; that being the source and parent of all actual sins and transgressions; wherefore not the law, but sin, was the cause of death, which by the law is discovered to be so very sinful.”

David, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, describes it like this: “There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me” (Psalm 38:3, 4). There is a conscience in every one of God’s men; and when it does its work, it causes great anxiety, grief, and trouble, more or less. “Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Selah. ... I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off.” (Psalm 88:7, 15-16) So that sin convicts God’s elect and they are pricked and pained at their very hearts; and cry out, "What shall I do to be saved?" (Acts 2:37). They are wounded with a sense of sin, and the arrows of divine wrath stick fast in them; the hand of God presses them sore (Psalm 18:2); their wounds are grievous and intolerable (Isaiah 1:6); for "a wounded spirit, who can bear?" (Proverbs 18:14). This distress forces sincere expressions, smiting upon the breast, not daring to look up to heaven; as in the publican, crying out, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" and by smiting upon the thigh; as in Ephraim, saying, he was ashamed and confounded, because he bore the reproach of his youth, (Luke 18:13; Jeremiah 31:19). God’s sheep lament their lost and undone state, in the words of Isaiah, "Woe is me, I am undone!" (Isaiah 6:5).

Spiritual peace is a deliverance and freedom from this distress; which in general is wrought by the Spirit of God, being the comforter of convicted sinners; for that is His particular work. The Bible says: “The [Spirit] bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:8) It is pursuant to His divine prerogative. His choice, not

yours. He first convicts His elect of sin, righteousness, and judgment; and then he comforts them, by taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to them. He causes them to see their sicknesses and their wounds, and the inability of themselves and others to cure them, and then he heals and binds them up. (Isaiah 61: 1-3 ¶ The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.)

These are some of the particulars of the manner in which the Spirit of God delivers his people from this great distress:

---By leading mourning sheep to the blood of Christ, by which their wounds are healed; "With his stripes we are healed"; that is, with the blood flowing from them (Isaiah 53:6), the blood of Christ is the balm in Gilead, the cure-all for every wound, and he is the physician there (Jeremiah 8:22); he is the "Sun of righteousness" that arises on distressed souls in beams of light, and joy, and love, and with "healing in his wings" (Malachi 4:2); which healing is pardon of sin, and the application of that pardon: "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases" (Psalm 103:2-3). The result of that elixir is joy, peace, and tranquility of soul; "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee!" (Matthew 9:2). What can make a soul more cheerful, and give it more peace and pleasure, than a view of pardon by the blood of Jesus, and this given by Jesus himself? By that application of pardon, guilt is removed from the conscience, the burden is taken off. The blood of Christ applied, cleanses from all sin, takes away the guilt of every sin, and leaves none behind; the heart sprinkled by it from an evil conscience, is purged from dead works, which lay as a heavy burden upon it. (Hebrews 9:14). "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven," (Psalm 32:1) or is "lifted up," as the word signifies; which is lifted up from the sinner, and taken off from his conscience, as a burden on it, and he is eased of it. Most of you know the physical experience of a great

burden being lifted off of you; that is amplified a thousand fold in the soul as described here. "It is in this way that peace is spoken to a guilty sinner; hence the blood of Jesus is said to 'speak better things than that of Abel'; the blood of Abel called aloud for vengeance on the shedder of it; but the blood of Christ speaks pardon and peace to condemned criminals. Peace is made for enemies and rebels by the blood of Christ; and this blood, by the Spirit of God, applied to such consciences who have been awakened by him, produces peace and quietness there; let a soul be as it were in a storm and tempest, if pardon by the blood of Christ is pronounced, all is hush and quiet in a moment." (Gill).

---By leading his broken-hearted sheep to the righteousness of Christ; a man's own righteousness will not yield him any solid peace; for there is no justification nor salvation by it; and it must at best be extremely variable, unstable, imperfect, and inconstant; and it is most accurately described by Isaiah: "and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6); the Hebrew words are rendered "menstruous cloth"; and Trapp says: "a menstruous clout, nauseous and odious, such as a man would loathe to touch, much more to take up." God denounces your self-righteousness: "I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works; for they shall not profit thee." (Isaiah 57:12). But the righteousness of Christ, which is perfect, pure, and spotless, by which a man is justified from all his sins, lays a solid foundation for peace.

"Every religion," says Beza, "which opposes anything to the wrath of God, than the alone innocence, righteousness, and satisfaction of Jesus Christ, apprehended by faith, robs God both of his perfect justice and mercy; and therefore is false, and formed to deceive men."

This righteousness being revealed and applied to sinners--God's elect--and faith wrought in them to receive it, as their justifying righteousness before God; and the sentence of justification by it pronounced in their consciences by the Spirit of God, produces peace. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1). "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Romans 14:17). "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." (Isaiah 32:17).

---This comforting work for the distressed lambs is done as promised repeatedly by our Lord Jesus Christ in the book of John, by leading his elect people into the truths of the gospel: “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (John 14:16); “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (John 14:26); “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me” (John 15:26); “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you” (John 16:7); and, “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.” (John 16:13). It is by the gospel, and the truths of it, which the Spirit of God enlightens the minds of men into, and makes application of, that peace is enjoyed. It is called, "The gospel of peace," (Romans 10:15; Ephesians 6:15), not only because it proclaims peace made by the blood of Christ; but because it speaks peace to the conscience of a sinner, when Christ is revealed to them by his Spirit, and preaches peace unto them, and makes the word effectual to such a purpose because the various truths of the gospel speak comfort to them, and free them from that spirit of bondage of sin. God's elect “shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32), set you at liberty (Psalm 119:45), and fill you with joy and peace (Roman 15:13).

---God's great and permanent work of peace in the lambs' hearts is wrought by the Spirit of God, by leading his precious elect into the covenant of grace, its blessings and promises; which is a covenant of peace which cannot be removed; “Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.” (Ezekiel 37:26). It's called a covenant of peace because a primary term is that peace is to be made by Christ, the Mediator of it (1 Timothy 2:5—God Hates the Pope!); and because it lays a lasting foundation for peace and comfort; its blessings are the sure mercies of David, spiritual, solid, and substantial ones, and which last forever, which are founded in the free sovereign grace and will of God, and come to men through Christ being made a curse for

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them (Galatians 3:13). So, again, one of our favorite descriptions of this blessed covenant comes from our friend, David, close to the time he was to be taken from this world and having his sinful infirmities and family of troubles in plain view; who was afforded great peace by the greater view—a view that totally eclipses that distressing view--of this covenant of peace. “Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.” (2 Samuel 23:5).

---This peace is imparted to God’s meek sheep, by that Spirit leading them into the love of God; for this is the Spirit’s discriminating work (God does not love everybody, friend!); by whom not only the love of God is shed abroad into the hearts of his people (Romans 5:5), which occasions peace and joy, and even glorying in the midst of tribulations (Romans 5:3); but they are directed and guided by him into it. 2 Thessalonians 3:5: “And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.” “The Lord,” that is, the Lord the Spirit, as he stands distinguished from the other persons in the text, “direct your hearts into the love of God.” That word “direct” means: as in and by a straight line, immediately into it, not in a roundabout way, in a long train similar to when Shirl tells you a very interesting story—she takes a trip all the way around the barn yard--No! The Spirit takes the most direct route with no stops along the way. The Spirit leads directly into a view of your interest in it, and bears witness to your interest in it, and grants a delightful sense of your interest in it. The effect of this is a solid, permanent peace. So you are enabled to say: "There is no fear in love"; the love of God the Spirit leads into; "But perfect love casteth out fear." Slavish, distressing, tormenting fear; and where that tries to enter or enters; the Lord the Spirit directs your heart and minds into tranquility and peace of mind by causing his love to fill up and overflow in your hearts (Romans 5:5). That love drowns out that fear; no room for it. Take a glass and fill it with water: it displaces everything else in that glass. The Lord is faithful who has promised. “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.” (1 John 4:18).

It is essential that we rehearse for whom this peace is reserved and secured in this age of lawlessness:

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---Justified and pardoned sinners have true, solid peace in themselves; those who are justified by Christ's righteousness have peace with God through him, and whose sins are pardoned through his blood, they are blessed, and blessed especially with peace (Romans 5:1); for with such righteous and happy ones it will be well at death, and to all eternity; when they die they enter into peace, and rest in their beds (Isaiah 57:2); the end of the perfect and upright man is peace (Psalm 37:37); he enjoys much now, and shall be perfectly possessed of it hereafter (Daniel 7:22).

---These blessed by God are also known as believers in Christ, and who trust in the Lord, enjoy true peace of soul. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." (Isaiah 26:3). They are "not afraid of evil tidings" (Psalm 112:7); from the suggestions of their own hearts, from the temptations of Satan, or from the world and wicked men in it; the falsehood of which they are soon able to detect; and their faith and trust in God fortifies them against them.

---Spiritually minded persons have a large share of inward peace of soul; "To be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Romans 8:6). They who mind carnal and earthly things (Philippians 3:18-19), though they seek peace to themselves in this way, do not find it; for "a man's life" the peace, comfort, and happiness of it, "consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15); for though he promises himself much peace, and that lasting, in the goods he has accumulated and laid up; yet these may be soon taken away from him, or he from them. (Luke 12:16-21).

---They that love the law of God, his doctrines, ordinances, ways, and worship, enjoy much peace of soul; as the Psalmist of Israel attests by his own knowledge and experience; "Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." (Psalm 119:165) This love leads them to walk in paths of peace (Jeremiah 6:16). "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." (Galatians 6:16).

Friends and fellow laborers at Westboro Baptist Church, whom our Lord calls "blessed peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9), we are granted that title because this Gospel of peace we have been entrusted with is one of the key instruments God has employed on

the earth for delivering His words of peace to those souls who are granted like precious faith to enable them to highly value God's peace. (Romans 10:14; 1 Corinthians 1:21). I say to you, "watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." (2 Timothy 4:5). This excellent peace of God, this most precious gift, which none can give but God himself, is worth praying for and worth having; "Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means" (2Thessalonians 3:16). It is a free gift, unmerited, and springs from grace, and is what the world cannot give (John 14:27). When the Lord blesses his people it is with peace. "The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace." (Psalm 29:11). "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them." (Psalm 119:165). It is great in quality and sometimes great in quantity. "For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees." (Isaiah 66:12). "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." (Isaiah 26:3). When the love of God changes, when the covenant of peace is removed, and when the virtue and efficacy of the person, blood and righteousness of Christ is diminished, all of which is impossible, so will your peace from God fail, friends. Therefore, it is a peace which "passeth all understanding," (Philippians 4:7) of a natural and unregenerate man, who is a stranger to it, and can form no judgment about it. It is what cannot be taken away; "When he (God) giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" (Job 34:29); it cannot be destroyed; not by the world's tribulations, nor by Satan's temptations, nor by a man's own corruptions. In his epistle to the church at Philippi, Paul wrote: "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you." (Philippians 4:9). Therefore, this will be my prayer for you:

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

"Now the God of peace be with you all. [I love you]. Amen." (Romans 15:33)