

The Lord of Peace

Russell Elliott

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“The Lord of peace Himself give you peace” (2Thess 3:16).

“Let not your heart be troubled . . . Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you” (John 14:1,27).

We hear a great deal today about War Lords. They occupy a foremost place for the moment, and they are filling the world with distress and anguish. Have we ever thought that there is a Peace Lord? — “Now the Lord of peace Himself.”

Throughout the chapter from which these words are taken, the apostle has been referring again and again to the lordship of Christ. About nine times we have the title Lord mentioned, until, in verse 16, he speaks of Him as the Lord of Peace. Surely this is one of the sweetest and most suggestive titles that even our Lord and Saviour bears. In the Old Testament, He is spoken of as the Prince of Peace. In the New, as the Lord of Peace.

A Distressing Time

To the Thessalonians, who received the epistle, these words must have come as a most refreshing revelation. They were experiencing anything but an easy time. “Your patience and faith,” says the apostle, “in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure.” And again, “And to you who are troubled rest with us.” “That ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer.” To these tired and harassed disciples, not long converted, how much such words would mean: “Now the Lord of Peace Himself give you peace always by all means.”

Undisturbed Peace

Let us consider, first, that Christ Himself possesses peace. He is never cast down, never troubled, never perplexed. Peace was always His. When from eternity He looked forward to His earthly mission, with all that it meant of suffering and humiliation, He had peace. And when the earthly mission was entered upon, and brought with it an experience such as no human soul had ever known, His peace remained undisturbed. And still it is His, and will remain His through all the changes this sad earth witnesses, and may yet witness, and through all that the future may bring. Yes, He is the Lord of peace. How blessed, infinitely blessed, Christ has this possession. With ourselves, in our old nature, if we ever know peace, it comes as a very brief phase of our experience. It is fitful and fleeting. It is never the same as His, unless it comes from Him. How many people there are who seem to possess most things except this one essential thing. The world does not know peace (except of a false kind) and it cannot give it.

Christ Gives Peace

Peace is not only possessed by Christ, but He gives it. “Now the Lord of Peace Himself give you peace.” And this peace will be ours the more steadfastly we fix our gaze upon the Possessor of it. Here is not only one who counsels us to have peace; an earthly friend may do

that while not himself enjoying the peace he would advise; but we have to do here with the Lord of Peace Himself. And that very fact imparts peace. In a crisis, or moment of danger, what gives peace like being in the presence of one who is calm and undisturbed? That is precisely what we have here — not only peace but the Lord of Peace Himself. What an advantage, and what satisfaction, in such a turbulent scene as that in which we live, to know One whose title is “The Lord of Peace.”

Nor can we forget that peace is just what He gave to His troubled disciples before He left them. That dark, betrayal night with all it portended did not disturb the Lord of Peace, but it greatly disturbed His disciples. The shadow of His departure hung over them like a thick cloud, and the Lord detects all they were apprehending, and He says to them, “Sorrow hath filled your heart.” The disappointment of all they had hoped for chilled them, and so the Lord commenced that wonderful discourse of His which opens in John 14, with these peace-giving words: “Let not your heart be troubled.” And He spoke those words as no one else could speak them. We may try to comfort the bereaved, or the sorrowing, or the anxious, and we do it with faltering accents often, and we feel all the time how powerless we are to impart what we speak about. But Christ can say, “Let not your heart be troubled,” as a command as well as a consolation. The very fact that the Lord of Peace Himself says this, should dismiss from us all corroding care.

Peace Manward

And further on, He adds some other words: “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.” Our Lord dwells upon some of the greatest truths in the Bible in this discourse, and what a revelation of His character it affords that He thinks first of all of the distress of His downcast disciples and was not above ministering comfort to them.

What did the Lord mean by “Peace I leave with you?” Did it not mean that there was nothing either between themselves and God, or themselves and Him, to cause one moment’s disquiet? Every question would be settled by what He was about to do for them. He assures them it is all peace God-ward. But He adds to this: “My peace I give unto you,” that it might be all peace manward also. In the world, they would have tribulation. Men would be against them; circumstances might sometimes be hard, but so it had been with Him and yet His peace always remained. He gives that peace to them. My peace I give unto you. How can He impart His own peace? Just because He is the Lord of Peace; and because He is in us, and we are in Him. As He said later, “That in Me ye might have peace.” He is just a haven of peace, and in every storm and stress we hide in Him.

Peace Always.

How full is the declaration contained in this verse in Thessalonians, “The Lord of Peace Himself give you peace always by all means.” Always peace, this is the promise. Perhaps if one thing disturbs our peace more than another, it is that disappointments and disasters happen which we cannot account for, nor do we see any reason why they should have been allowed. Let us wait, and believe that all has happened for the best. If we knew all, we should

probably be praising God for that for which we are now ready to chide Him.

The late Reader Harris, K.C., in his book, *How I became an Agnostic, and how God saved me*, relates the following incident which occurred before he was saved. He had been several years in Bolivia as the government engineer, but hearing that his mother was ill in England he was very anxious to catch the first steamer home, having obtained six months leave of absence. "Being the government engineer," he says, "everything possible was done to expedite my journey. I rode 400 miles on mules, and then went another 300 miles by train traveling day and night to the coast. When I reached Mollendo, a miserable hole reeking with yellow fever, I learned to my intense disgust that I had missed the steamer by six hours! I paced up and down, and I cursed God. There was not another steamer for a fortnight. Why was it, I asked, that I was hindered in this innocent and laudable purpose of hastening home to comfort my mother in her illness? Every day as I awoke to find myself in that fever-stricken hole I cursed God afresh.

"At last the next steamer was due. It was late. Two days passed. If only the other steamer had been half as late, I should have caught it. When it did come I hurried on board.

"To my surprise the passengers seemed strangely silent. It was like a city of the dead. I asked what had happened. 'Haven't you heard?' they said. 'No! Heard what?' 'The steamer preceding us up the coast — the finest on the line — went down in the night and all hands were lost.' 'The S.S. — ?' I asked aghast. 'Yes.' 'What about the passengers?' 'They were fortunately very few, but they were all drowned in their bunks.'

"And that was the steamer I had missed,' Reader Harris adds, 'and cursed God for missing.'"

Peace Without Explanation

In the above case the individual was allowed to see the reason for his disappointment, and why his plans were thwarted. Is it not so always. Even in cases in which God does not give any explanation of His providential dealings, let us turn to the Lord of Peace Himself. He knows why all has been allowed, and He gives "peace always."

The other day, a missionary away out on the borders of China had arranged to return home on furlough. His wife was in Scotland awaiting his return. Just prior to the date of starting he was struck by lightning and killed. On the face of it, there seems nothing to explain why such a calamity was permitted. He had been a blessing to thousands; husband and wife were anticipating the joy of reunion after a long separation; yet the lightning was allowed to do its work. Not long before this tragic occurrence, he had penned the following lines to his wife: —

"Let not your heart be troubled, child beloved;
Cast all your care on Him
Whose love for thee so often hast thou proved,
E'en when thy faith was dim.

"One word of His good promise has not failed thee
In all the by-gone years:

And looking back across life's cheque red pathway,
What love and grace appears.

"Commit thy way unto the Lord, He knoweth
The sorrows of the way:
And to the one who walks with Him, He showeth
The path of endless day.

"'Tis but a little while, He'll come in glory,
Then we shall fully see
The meaning of this life's perfected story,
And praise eternally."

Yes, in the light of eternity many things will become clear which are now dark and mysterious. In the meantime, may all that is tangled and perplexing and disappointing in our life drive us nearer to the Lord of Peace.

The question was asked the other day, Do our loved ones who have gone before know all that happens to those dear to them who are left behind? Because, if so, would it not disturb their happiness? And at once the answer seemed to come: If they know anything, they know all. Theirs is a fuller knowledge than ours, and therefore they are not troubled. Our troubles down here so often arise from a partial knowledge. We see only a little bit at a time of God's plan and purpose, and the way it is all being worked out unrolls but slowly. If we knew more, and especially if we knew all, our fears and regrets would be gone. Those early disciples were troubled because their Lord was going away. This is why He prefaced His last discourse with the words, "Let not your heart be troubled." Yet had they known all the advantages which would accrue from His leaving them, they would have rejoiced rather than mourned.

Peace by All Means

And, lastly, not only does our text say "peace always," but "by all means," Whatever happens, may we have peace, seems to be the meaning here. The word translated "means" has the root idea of "to turn," a "revolution." So that amid all the changing scenes of life we are to have peace. Other translations give "in every sense," or "in every way." Thus, we are to have peace in every sense of the word and under all conditions. Blessed experience! It must be so, but only if the Lord of Peace Himself is with us. At every turn of the tide — whatever misfortune comes — peace. At every turn in the road — whatever new circumstances or scenes surround us — peace. And peace amidst all revolutions. Whatever else goes, peace always, by all means.

*"The changes that are sure to come,
I do not fear to see."*

It is recorded of Barnard Gilpin, a reformer who lived in the days of the Marian martyrdoms and was called the Apostle of the North, that he was famous for never murmuring or complaining, whatever happened to him — circumstances were always the best. Towards the close of Queen Mary's reign, he was suddenly summoned to come up from Durham to London

to be tried for heresy, and, in all probability, like Ridley and Latimer, to be burned. The good man quietly obeyed the summons. On his journey his horse fell and Gilpin's leg was broken; and he was laid up at a roadside inn. His friends challenged him as to whether he could say now that all was well. But he still affirmed that all had happened for the best, and so it proved. Weeks and weeks passed before his leg was healed, and he was able to resume his journey. But during these weeks the unhappy Queen Mary died, the persecutions were stopped, and the worthy old reformer returned to his northern home rejoicing.

In this case, we can see how an accident, painful as it was in itself, proved the means of escape from a greater calamity. Many an illness that we know of may have saved us from a greater ill of which we do not know. Our Lord said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me." The point is, we must believe. Believe in God; believe in Christ, and then all must be well. In any case, this faith will bring peace.

The Atmosphere of Peace

If it is true that every individual by his very presence brings a certain atmosphere with him, how true must it be of the Lord of Peace Himself. In His presence, we are in an atmosphere of peace, and in that atmosphere fear cannot dwell. It is not merely some peace-giving word, or an injunction to have peace, or even a promise of peace, which our text contains; it is peace personified — the Lord of Peace Himself. This is the glory of Christianity — that "all that it has, and all that it offers, is treasured up in a Person."

"Peace I leave with you . . . My peace I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." No one but Christ can speak such words. He places Himself in contrast with the whole world, and challenges it to give what He gives. The world can offer many things to its votaries — wealth, pleasure, fame — but peace it cannot give, for it does not possess it; and what are all these other things worth without peace? A servant of the Lord was on his way to catch a train, and he passed a blind woman at the entrance to the station. After taking his ticket he regretted that he had passed her without a word, and he went back. He commiserated upon her loss of sight. And in reply came the answer: "There are other things to make me happy." She was a Christian. She had the Lord of Peace Himself with her.

Peace in the Middle of Trouble

Do you know these "other things" that can make us happy? There is One, but only one, who can say to us, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

What is it that is troubling you or making you afraid, today? Is it the slowness with which your goal is being reached and your purposes achieved? Someone has said: —

"The most searching discipline of life is never reached until things begin to be terribly slow. Slowness is one of the most exacting tests of character. We want to get there, we want to reap the harvest today. When the snow begins to fall, and the rain comes down in a deluge, and all the roads of progress become muddy, we are apt to lose heart. When the funeral train arrives instead of the wedding chariot, when we sigh, How long, O Lord, how long?"

then we have reached life's most exacting season. Can we endure slowness, which is the most burdensome part of hardness? Can we, if need be, go slow and keep on going? Can we walk and not faint?"

What is the burden you have to bear? What is it that is testing your strength of endurance? May the Lord of Peace Himself give you peace always by all means. And may the gain also be yours which every grief carries within itself, when we accept it "in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live."

"The more the cross, the better Christian!
God lays the touchstone to each soul;
How many a garden must lie waste,
Did not a tear-storm o'er it roll?
Refining grief, a living coal,
Upon the Christian's heart is placed.

"The more the cross, the more believing!
In desert lands the palm trees grow!
And when the grape is strongly pressed,
Then doth its sweetness overflow;
And strength lies hid in every woe,
As pearls do in the salt wave rest.

"The more the cross, the more the
praying!
The bruised plants yield sweetest balm;
Man doth not seek to find the pole
In quiet seas and steady calms;
And how should we have David's psalms,
Had he not had a troubled soul?

"O, Jesus Lord, the crucified!
Now let the cross more welcome be,
Nor let my soul complaining toss,
But plant Thou such a heart in me,
As patiently shall look to Thee
For gain up yonder, for my loss."

Angels in White — OR — Words to the Worried. P. 168