THE PEACE OF GOD

NO. 1397

A SERMON
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"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."
Philippians 4:7

"PEACE" is a heavenly word. When at the advent of our Lord angels came to sing among men a midnight sonnet their second note was "Peace on earth." Would God the shining ones would chant that song again till yonder Balkans heard the strain, and shook off the sulfurous cloud which now hangs around them. Those who have ever seen war, or even come near the trail of its bloody march, will be thankful to God for peace. I am almost of his mind who said that the worst peace is preferable to the very best war that was ever waged, if best there can be where all is bad as bad can be.

Peace is most pleasant when religion sits beneath its shade, and offers her joyful vows to heaven. How grateful we ought to be that we can meet together to worship God after that form which best satisfies our consciences without any fear of being hunted down by the authorities of the land. We have no watchman on the hilltops looking out for Claverhouse's dragoons. We put none at the front door of our conventicle to watch lest the constable should come to take off worshipper and minister, that they may suffer imprisonment or fine.

We worship God in unlimited liberty, and we ought to be exceedingly glad of the privilege, and infinitely more grateful for it than we are. Do we not sit every man under his own vine and fig tree, none making us afraid? Blessed is the land in which we dwell, and blessed are the days in which we live, when in all peace and quietness we worship God in public and sing His high praises as loudly as we please. Great God of peace, You have given us this peace, and in remembrance of our hunted forefathers we bless You with our whole hearts!

We have met tonight for the purpose of hearing the Gospel of peace, and many of us are afterwards coming to that sacred festival which celebrates peace, and is to all time the memorial of the great peace-making between God and man. And yet it may be that even all believers here are not quite at peace. Possibly you did not leave your family in peace this afternoon. Wars occur even among loving hearts.

Alas, even Sabbaths are sometimes disturbed, for evil tempers cannot be bound over to keep the peace, but are riotous even on this sweet restful day. Do Christian men ever permit angry feelings to rise within them? If they do, I am sure that even in coming away from home to the house of God, they come with a disturbed mind.

Ah, how insignificant a matter will mar our peace of mind, some little thing that happened in getting to your pew—some trifling incident even while you are in it waiting for worship to begin, may, like dust in your eye, cause you the greatest distress. Such poor creatures are we that we may lose our peace of mind even by a word or a look. Peace, in the form of perfect calm and serenity, is a very delicate and sensitive thing, and needs more careful handling than a Venice glass. It is hard for the sea of our heart to remain long in a smooth and glassy state, it may be rippled and ruffled by an infant's breath.

Perhaps, too, some of my brothers and sisters here have not been walking near to God, and if so their peace will not be perfect. It may be, my Brother, that during the week you have backslidden somewhat from your true standing, and if so, your peace has fled. Your heart is troubled, and though you are believing in Christ for salvation, and are therefore safe, yet for all that your inward rest may be broken. Therefore would I turn the text into a prayer, and pray for myself and for every believer in Jesus

Christ—that the peace of God which passeth all understanding may now keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. May you all know the text by experience. He who wrote it had felt it, may we who read it feel it too.

Paul had oftentimes enjoyed the brightness of peace in the darkness of a dungeon, and he had felt living peace in prospect of a sudden and cruel death. He loved peace, preached peace, lived in peace, died in peace, and behold he has entered into the fruition of peace, and dwells in peace before the throne of God.

Looking at the text and thinking how we might handle it best to our profit, I thought we would notice first of all *the unspeakable privilege*—"the peace of God, which passeth all understanding." Then, secondly, I thought that we might gather, from its connection, *the method of coming at it*, for the preceding sentences are linked on to our text by the word "and" which is not an incidental conjunction, but is placed there with a purpose. Paul means to say that if we do what he bids us do in the fourth, fifth, and sixth verses, then the peace of God shall keep our hearts and minds.

When we have looked at that matter for a few minutes, I shall need your careful attention, in the third place, to *the power of its operation*—for the peace of God "*shall* keep your hearts and minds." And then we shall close, in the fourth place, by noticing *the sphere of its action*, namely, "in Christ Jesus." The word should have been "in" rather than "through"—"shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." May the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of peace, now lead us into the center and secrets of our text.

I. First, then, here is AN UNSPEAKABLE PRIVILEGE—one which it is very hard to speak, because it passeth all understanding, and therefore, you may be sure, it must pass all description.

It is one of those things which can be more readily experienced than explained. Good Joseph Stennett was right when he spoke of those who—

"Draw from heaven that sweet repose
Which none but he that feels it knows."

We may talk about inward rest and dilate upon the peace of God, and select the most choice expressions to declare the delicacy of its enjoyment, but we cannot convey to others the knowledge at second hand. They must feel it, or they cannot understand it.

If I were speaking to little children I would illustrate my point by the story of the boy at one of our mission stations who had a piece of loaf sugar given him one day at school.

He had not before tasted such essence of sweetness, and when he went home to his father, he told him that he had eaten something which was wonderfully sweet. His father said, "Was it as sweet as such a fruit?" "It was far sweeter than that." "Was it as sweet as such and such a food?" which he mentioned. "It was much sweeter than that. But father," said he, "I cannot tell you." He rushed out of the house back to the mission house, begged a piece of sugar, got it and brought it back, and said, "Father, taste and see, and then you will know how sweet it is."

So I venture to use that simple illustration and say, "O taste and see that the peace of God is good," for in very deed it surpasseth all the tongues of men and of angels to set it forth.

What is the peace of God? I would describe it first by saying it is, of course, *peace with God*, peace of conscience, actual peace with the Most High through the atoning sacrifice. Reconciliation, forgiveness, restoration to favor there must be, and the soul must be aware of it, there can be no peace of God apart from justification through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ received by faith.

A man conscious of being guilty can never know the peace of God till he becomes equally conscious of being forgiven. When his consciousness of pardon shall become as strong and vivid as his consciousness of guilt had been, then will he enter into the enjoyment of the peace of God which passeth all understanding!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ—you that have believed in Jesus—there is perfect peace between you and God now, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Your sin was the ground of the quarrel, but it has gone, it has ceased to be, it is blotted out, it is cast into the depth of the sea. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us. Our divine scapegoat has carried our iniquities into the wilderness. Our Lord and Master has finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness.

The cause of offense is gone, and gone forever, Jesus has taken our guilt, has suffered in our stead, has made full compensation to the injured law, and vindicated justice to the very highest. And now there is nothing which can excite the anger of God towards us, for our sin is removed, and our unrighteousness is covered. We are reconciled to God by Christ Jesus, and accepted in the Beloved.

Now this actual reconciliation brings to the heart a profound sense of peace. O that all of you possessed it now! O that those who know it knew it more fully! Remember, O soul, if Christ did indeed suffer in your stead and was made a curse for you, justice can never require at your hands the penalty which your Surety has discharged, for this would be to dishonor His sacrifice by making it of none effect. If Jesus stood as your Substitute, and bore what God required as the vindication of His law, then you are clear, beyond all hazard clear forever, saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.

If it were not so, why was there a Substitute permitted? Did God design to tantalize mankind by permitting an ineffectual substitution? What did that Substitute accomplish after all if He did not save those for whom He died? What meaning is there in the Gospel if it does not reveal an effectual atonement? But truly the Lord Jesus was made sin for us, and the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are saved. Here the soul rests, at the foot of the cross it finds a peace it never could have found elsewhere. I hope that many of you are now able to sing—

"Jesus was punish'd in my stead,
Without the gate my Surety bled
To expiate my stain:
On earth the Godhead deign'd to dwell,
And made of infinite avail
The sufferings of the man.

"And was He for such rebels given?
He was; the Incarnate King of Heaven
Did for His foes expire:
Amazed, O earth, the tidings hear;
He bore, that we might never bear
His Father's righteous ire."

There take your full of peace, for by this sacrifice a covenant of peace is now established between you and your God, and it is sealed by atoning blood.

"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding" also takes a second form, namely, that of *a consequent peace in the little kingdom within*. When we know that we are forgiven and that we are at peace with God, things within us come to a sudden and delightful change. By nature everything in our inner nature is at war with itself, it is a cage of evil beasts all rending and devouring each other. Man is out of order, out of order with God, with the universe, and with himself.

The machinery of manhood has fallen into serious disorder. Its cogs and wheels do not work in due harmony, but miss their touch and stroke. The passions, instead of being ruled by reason, often demand to hold the reins. And reason, instead of being guided by the knowledge which God communicates by His Word, chooses to obey a depraved imagination, and demands to become a separate power and to judge God Himself. There is not a faculty of our nature which is not in rebellion against God, and consequently in a state of confusion with regard to the rest of our system.

A cruel internal war often rages among our mental powers, animal instincts, and moral faculties, causing distress, fear and unhappiness. There is no cure for this but restoring grace.

O man, you cannot get your heart right, you cannot get your conscience right, you cannot get your understanding right, you cannot bring your various powers to their bearings and make them act in true harmony till first you are right with God. The King must occupy the throne, and then the estate of Mansoul will be duly settled, but till the chief authority has due eminence rebellion and riot will continue.

When the Lord breathes peace into a man, and the Holy Spirit descends like a dove to dwell within the soul, then is there quiet, where all was chaos order appears, the man is created anew, and becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. And though rebellious lusts still try to get the mastery, yet there is now a ruling power which keeps the man in order so that within him there is "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding."

This leads on to *peace in reference to all outward circumstances* by reason of our confidence that God orders them all rightly, and arranges them all for our good. The man who believes in Jesus and is reconciled to God has nothing outside of him that he needs to fear. Is he poor? He rejoices that Christ makes poor men rich. Does he prosper? He rejoices that there is grace to sanctify his prosperity lest it become intoxicating to him. Does there lie before him a great trouble? He thanks God for His promise that as his day his strength shall be.

Does he apprehend the loss of friends? He prays that the trial may be averted, for he is permitted so to pray, even as David begged for the life of his child. But having so done, he feels sure that God will not take away an earthly friend unless it be with kind intent to gather up our trust and confidence more fully to Himself. Does there lie before him the prospect of speedy death? The hope of resurrection gives peace to his dying pillow. He knows that his Redeemer lives, and he is content to let his body sleep in the dust awhile.

Is he reminded by Scripture of a day of judgment when all hearts shall be revealed? He has peace with regard to that dread mystery and all that surrounds it, for he knows whom he has believed, and he knows that He will protect him in that day.

Whatever may be suggested that might alarm or distress the believer, deep down in his soul he cannot be disturbed, because he sees his God at the helm of the vessel holding the rudder with a hand which defies the storm. This is peculiarly advantageous in days like these when all things wear a dreary aspect. The storm signals are flying, the clouds are gathering, flashes of lightning and grumblings of distant thunder are all around us.

If you read the papers, wars and rumors of wars are incessant. Your eyes light upon narratives of famine and drought. You see distress here, slackness of business there, and poverty and starvation in many places and the fear creeps over you that there are dark days yet to come, and seasons in which faces will grow pale and hands hang heavy.

Brethren, it is for the believer in such a case to feel no dismay, for our God is in the heavens and He does not forsake the throne. His purposes will be fulfilled and good will come out of evil, for at this very moment God sits in the council chambers of kings, and orders all things according to the counsel of His will. We are not children whose father has gone to sea and left us at home without a guardian. We read just now the words, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you," and we believe that gracious word. God is most near us and we are most safe.

Though we cannot see the future and do not wish to pry between the folded leaves of the book of destiny, we are absolutely certain that nothing is written upon the unopened page of the future which can contradict the divine faithfulness so conspicuous in the past. We are sure that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose, and therefore our soul as to all external circumstances casts anchor and enjoys the peace of God which passeth all understanding.

Nor is this all. God is pleased to give to His people peace *in reference to all His commands*. While the soul is unregenerate it rebels against the mind and will of God. If God forbids, the unrenewed heart longs for the forbidden thing. If God commands, the natural mind, for that very reason, refuses to do it. But when the change takes place, and we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son, then, beloved, we drop into the same line with God, and our deepest desire is to abide in full harmony with Him. His will becomes our delight and our only sorrow is that we cannot be perfectly conformed to it.

There is no precept of God which is grievous to a gracious heart. His statutes are our songs in the house of our pilgrimage. We also feel perfect peace *with regard to God's providential doings* because we believe that they are helping us to arrive at conformity with Him, and that is just what we want.

Oh that we could never have a thought or wish henceforth that would be disagreeable to the Lord. We love Him, we love His ways, we love His people, we love His Word, we love His day, we love His promises, we love His precepts—we are altogether agreed with Him through His rich grace, and in this sense we have a peace towards God which passeth all understanding.

What a wonderful description that is of this peace—*it* "*passeth all understanding*." It is not only beyond a common understanding, but it passeth *all* understanding. Some have said it means that the ungodly man cannot understand it. That statement is true, but it is not a tithe of the whole meaning, for even he who enjoys it cannot understand it. It is deeper, it is broader, it is sweeter, it is more heavenly than the joyful saint himself, can tell. He enjoys what he cannot understand. What a mercy that such a thing is possible, for otherwise our joys would be narrow indeed! Reason has limits far narrower than joy.

Truly this peace is hid from the eyes of the ungodly and the unbelieving. It is far above, out of their sight. Now, there are kinds of peace in the world which the ungodly man can understand. There were the Stoics who schooled themselves to apathy, they would not feel, and so they attained a senseless peace, their secret is easily discovered, it does not pass understanding. Many a Red Indian has been as stolid as the greatest Stoic, and has, perhaps, surpassed him in hardening himself so that he would not groan if pierced with arrows or burned with fire.

Some men have had such mastery over themselves that it has seemed a matter of perfect indifference whether they suffered pain or not. But Christianity does not teach us stoicism, nor does it point in that direction. It cultivates tenderness, not insensibility. Its influence tends to make us sensitive rather than callous, and gives us a peace consistent with the utmost delicacy of feeling, yea, with a sensitiveness more intense than other men know since it makes our conscience more tender and causes the mind to be deeply distressed by the slightest frown of heaven.

Our peace is not the peace of apathy, but one of a far nobler sort. Others have aimed at the peace of levity, which the world can readily understand. They count it one of the wisest things to drive dull care away, and whatever happens of ill they drown reflection in the flowing bowl and laugh over it—making mirth when misery devours their souls. Christians do not attempt to get rid of the trials of life in that fashion. The world, therefore, cannot understand the believer's peace since he is neither apathetic nor frivolous.

Whence comes this peace? The jaunty answer of many a worldling is, "Oh, it comes from some fanatical delusion." But indeed, we are not deluded. The grounds of a Christian's peace are rational, logical, and well grounded. They are to be justified by common sense. A person who has been in debt and who is still in debt, ought not to be at peace. But suppose a man is found to be perfectly at his ease, who can blame him if he can say, "I have a right to be so, for my debt is paid"? No one can challenge such an argument.

He who believes that Christ Jesus suffered in his stead that which was due to God's justice, has a rational argument for being at peace which he may plead anywhere he pleases. God has forgiven for Christ's sake all his iniquity, why should he not be at peace? And if it be indeed so—that the Christian has become the child of God, ought he not to be at peace? If God his Father rules all things for his good, ought he not to be at peace? If for him there remains no hazard of eternal death—if for him there is

prepared a glorious resurrection, and if he is ultimately to shine with Christ in eternal glory, why should not the man have peace?

It is far more difficult, I should think, to rationally blame him for his happiness than it would be to justify him if he were in alarm. We are not victims of delusion, but speak the words of truth and soberness when we claim to be the most favored of mankind. The folly and the fanaticism lie with those who neglect God and eternity, and make a mockery at sin.

Hence the worldling does not understand our peace, and frequently sneers at it because he is puzzled by it. Even the Christian is sometimes surprised at his own peacefulness. I know what it is to suffer from terrible depression of spirit at times. Yet at the very moment when it has seemed to me that life was not worth one single bronze coin, I have been perfectly peaceful with regard to all the greater things. There is a possibility of having the surface of the mind lashed into storm while yet down deep in the caverns of one's inmost consciousness all is still, this I know by experience.

There are earthquakes upon this earth, and yet our globe pursues the even tenor of its way, and the like is true in the little world of a believer's nature. Why, sometimes the Christian will feel himself to be so flooded with a delicious peace that he could not express his rapture. He is almost afraid to sing, lest even the sound of his voice should break the spell. But he says to himself,

"Come, then, expressive silence, muse His praise."

Satan has breathed a whisper into the mind—"It is too good to be true," but the spirit, firmly believing in the truthfulness of God, has repelled the insinuation, and rested, in the faithfulness of God, in the eternal covenant, in the finished work of Christ, in the love of God manifested towards His people in Christ Jesus. This is the peace of God. "So he giveth his beloved sleep." It is a rest with an emphasis, rest in Jesus' sense when He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—rest in the most golden sense that we can ever give to the word, and much more. It passeth understanding, but it does not surpass experience.

Do you know it? Pray answer the question each one for himself, for I must come back to where I started from. It is not to be described, it must be tested to be known.

II. Now, I must, in the second place, with very much brevity, indicate, beloved friends, HOW THIS PEACE IS TO BE OBTAINED.

Now, mark you, the apostle was addressing himself only to believers in the Lord Jesus, and I must beg you to take heed to the limitation. I am not addressing myself to the ungodly, I speak to Christians alone. You are always at peace with God, though you do not always enjoy the sense of it. But if you wish to realize it, how are you to do so? The connection tells you. In the fourth verse Paul says, "*Rejoice in the Lord alway*; *and again I say*, *Rejoice*."

If you want to have peace of mind make God your joy, and place all your joy in God. You cannot rejoice in yourself, but you ought to rejoice in God. You cannot always rejoice in your circumstances, for they greatly vary, but the Lord never changes. "Rejoice in the Lord alway." If you have rejoicing in earthly things you must indulge it moderately. But rejoicing in the Lord may be used without the possibility of excess, for the apostle adds, "Again I say, Rejoice"—rejoice, and rejoice again. Delight yourselves in the Lord.

Who has such a God as you have? "Their rock is not as our Rock, our enemies themselves being judges." Who has such a Friend, such a Father, such a Savior, such a Comforter as you have in the Lord your God? To think of God as our exceeding Joy is to find "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding."

Go on to the fifth verse, where the apostle says, "*Let your moderation be known unto all men*." That is to say, While all your joy is in God, deal with all earthly things on the principle of caution. If any man praises you, do not exult. If, on the contrary, you are censured, do not let your spirit sink. If you have prosperity, thank God for it, but do not be sanguine that it will continue. If property be yours, take it, but

do not let it become your treasure or the chief consideration of your mind. Do you suffer adversity? Pray God to help you, but do not be so cast down as to despair.

Drink of earthly cups by sips, do not be foolish like the fly which drowns itself in sweets. Use the things of time as not abusing them. Do not wade far out into the dangerous sea of this world's comfort. Take the good that God provides you, but say of it, "It passeth away," for indeed it is but a temporary supply for a temporary need.

Never suffer your goods to become your god. Rejoice in God alone, and as for all else, come or go, rise or fall, let it neither distress you nor make you exult. Take matters quietly and calmly, and if you do that you will have peace. If you idolize any earthly good your peace will depart, but keep the world under your feet, and the peace of God shall keep your heart and mind.

Three rules are then added by the apostle which you will be sure to recollect. He tells us to *be careful for nothing*, *to be prayerful for everything*, *and to be thankful for anything*. Anyone who can keep these three rules, with the other two, will be quite sure to have a peaceful mind. "Be careful for nothing," that is—leave your care with God. Having done your best to provide things honest in the sight of all men, take no distressing, disturbing, anxious thought about anything, but cast your burden on the Lord.

Then pray about everything, little as well as great, joyous as well as sad. "In everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God." That which you pray over will have the sting taken out of it if it be evil, and the sweetness of it will be sanctified if it be good. The tribulation which you pray over will become bearable, even if it be not changed into a subject for rejoicing. A trouble prayed over is a dead lion with honey in the carcass.

And then we are bidden to be thankful for anything, for the apostle says, "In every thing with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Thankfulness is the great promoter of peace, it is the mother and nurse of restfulness. Doubtless our peace is often broken because we receive mercies from God without acknowledging them, neglected praises sour into unquiet forebodings. If we render to the Lord the fragrant incense of holy gratitude we shall find our soul perfumed with the sweet peace of God.

Take those five things, then, as the connection sets them before you. Pile up all your joy into the sacred storehouse of your God, and be glad in the Lord. Next, leave, as much as you can, the things of this world alone, touch them with a light finger—"Let your moderation be known unto all men." And then pray much, care for nothing, and bless God from morning to night. In such an atmosphere shall peace grow as rare flowers and fruits bloom, beneath sunny skies in well-watered gardens. May the Holy Spirit work these things in us and cause us to rest.

III. This brings me to the third point of our subject tonight, which was THE OPERATION OF THIS BLESSED PRIVILEGE UPON OUR HEARTS.

It is said that the peace of God will keep our hearts and minds. The Greek word is *phroureo*, which signifies keeping guard, keeping as with a garrison, so completely and so effectually does the peace of God keep our hearts and minds. Look, then, our hearts need keeping, keeping from sinking, for our poor spirits are very apt to faint, even under small trials. They also need keeping from wandering, for how soon are they beguiled! What feeble charms are able to attract us away from the altogether lovely One!

Our hearts need keeping up and keeping right. The way to keep the heart, according to the text, is to let it be filled with the peace of God which passeth all understanding. A quiet spirit, calm, restful, happy, is one that will neither sink nor wander, how can it? If the peace of God be in you, what can cause you distress? You will be like those great buoys moored out at sea which cannot sink. It matters not what storms may be raging, they always rise above all. Our souls, moored fast and rendered buoyant with peace, will be as fixed marks whereby others may know their way.

Moreover, a man who has his heart full of peace is not likely to wander, for he says to himself, "Why should I wander? Where can such sweetness be found as I have tasted in my Lord? Why should I seek elsewhere?" The best way to keep a person in your service is to make it worth his while to stop.

And if he is so happy and so content that he feels he could not better himself, you are likely to retain him for many a long day.

Now, our Lord and Master has made His service such that we could not better ourselves. When He said to some of His servants, "Will ye also go away?" they said, "To whom shall we go?" Ah, indeed! To whom could we go? Eyes, will you leave the light for the thick darkness? Ears, will you turn away from the music of Jesus' voice? Heart, will you leave a faithful lover for a deceiver? Understanding, will you go abroad after novelties when you have found the old, sure, satisfactory truth? Conscience, will you burden yourself again with your former load? When you are so perfectly satisfied with the work and person of Christ, will you not stay where you are? Oh yes, the heart is held with bands as strong as they are tender when it is full of the peace of God which passeth understanding.

You young people get tempted, I know, and who among us does not? And the world has many charms for you. I recommend you, therefore, pray to the Lord to maintain your happiness in Christ, your joy in the Lord, for if you get out of heart with regard to your Lord and Master, it may be the devil may catch you when you are bad tempered and cross-grained towards your great Lord and entice you away from your allegiance. But if your heart is always peaceful you will have a strength about you with which to resist the suggestions of the evil one.

Rivets of peace are good fastenings for Christian loyalty. It is a very serious thing for a Christian to be in an uncomfortable state, for he is then weak in an important point. "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people," are God's words to His prophets, because He knows that when we lose comfort, or lose peace, we lose one of the most valuable pieces of armor of which our panoply is composed.

But the text also adds that this will keep our *mind* as well as our heart. Now in all ages we find that the minds of Christians have been apt to be disturbed and vexed upon vital truths. I think sometimes that this is the worst age for error which has ever darkened the world. I get distressed and bowed to the earth as I see the treachery of ministers, professed ministers of Christ, who deny the inspiration of Scripture and lay the axe at the very root of all the doctrines which we hold dear, while yet they continue to occupy Christian pulpits.

But when I look back all through history I find it was always so. From the days of Judas Iscariot until now there have been traitors and there have been men of ready speech and of quick thought who have used both fair speech and subtle thought to turn away simple minds from the Gospel, insomuch that they would deceive, if it were possible, the very elect. But why are not the elect deceived? As a rule it is because they find such peace—such perfect peace—in the truths which they have received, that deceivers vainly attempt to entice them away from it.

"Ah," cries the restful believer, "I cannot give up the Gospel. It is my life, my strength, my solace, my all. It was the comfort of my dying mother, and it remains the mainstay of my aged father. It was that which brought me to a Savior's feet and gives me grace to remain there. It has helped me in the hour of trial again and again. I feel I want its consolations, and therefore I can never part with it." And so he grows indignant with the man who casts a doubt thereon, especially if he be of the clerical order, and a pretender to the Christian ministry.

Brethren, we cannot move one single inch from the truth which we have been taught by the Holy Ghost in our soul, and it is only such truth as that which can bring into the heart the peace of God which passeth understanding. When the Lord has brought His own truth into our minds by His own power and made the sweet savor of it to pervade our frame, and given us to drink thereof till we have been filled with joy and peace unutterable, we cannot, then, depart from it. Truth taught us by man we may forget, but that which the Holy Ghost engraves upon the inmost heart we cannot depart from. So help us God, we *must* stand to it, even if we die for it.

And what are the inventions they offer us instead of the choice things of the covenant of peace? They are trifles light as air. If they were true they would not be worth propagating, they might be left among the minor matters which are of no practical value to the sons of men. They bring us no new grounds of solid peace or fresh discovered arguments for holy joy. The negative theology promises no

blessings to mankind. It is an empty-handed plunderer, robbing us of every solace, but offering nothing in return.

If modern thought could be proved to be true, the next thing that ought to be done would be to hang the world in sackcloth, because such vanity of vanities has taken the place of the delightful truth which once gladdened the hearts of men. It were the saddest of all facts if we were assured that the doctrines of grace are after all a fiction. But they are not so. They cannot be, they bear their own witness within themselves.

Some of us can speak about them as Christian replied to Atheist, when Atheist said, "Go back: go back!" Christian's reply was, "We are seeking the Celestial City." "Oh," said Atheist, "but I have gone farther than any of you, and I tell you that there is no such place. I have met with many learned men who have studied the whole matter, and it is all a delusion. Go back: go back." Then Christian said, "What! No Celestial City? Did we not see it from the top of Mount Clear, when we were with the shepherds and looked through the telescopic glass?"

So we say—No atonement? Have we not felt the peace with which it soothes the conscience? No regeneration? Are we not ourselves the living evidence that men are made new creatures in Christ Jesus? No answers to prayer? Surely then we are not sane men at all, and our senses have failed us. No final perseverance? What then has kept us to this day? No work of the Holy Ghost? What? Are we asleep? Is even our existence a delusion?

No, as we rub our eyes we feel that we have not been dreaming, but we feel sure that some other people are dozing and doting, and we pray that God in mercy may end their dream, and bring them to know those glorious and substantial verities which fill us with the peace of God which passeth all understanding, and in so doing keep our hearts minds.

We are bound to the cross forever, nailed to the wood with Christ forever. The blood-red colors of the atonement are fastened to our masthead, to fly there till our vessel sinks, if sink it must, but never to be struck, though man or devil, priest or philosopher, fire hot shot into our vessel We dare not change, but stand faithful to that which Jesus has taught us, at whose feet we sat in our youth, and who continues to teach us still. His peace keeps our heart and mind, and therefore we will with heart and mind keep His truth, come what may.

IV. Lastly, let us observe THE SPHERE OF ITS ACTION.

The text says, "In Christ Jesus." Now, beloved, I beg you to note this with interest. The apostle never mentions the name of Jesus too often. You cannot say that he drags it in, but he mentions it as often as he can, for he delights in the sound of it. "In Christ Jesus." These words touch every point of our text all the way through. Are we speaking of ourselves? We are in Christ Jesus. Our faith has realized our union with His sacred person. He is our Head, and we are His members. He is the Cornerstone, and we are built upon Him. There is nothing about ourselves worth thinking of apart from Him, and it will be well if we dismiss the thought.

Then if we dwell upon the peace of God, we still think of our Lord Jesus, for it is all in Him. No peace is to be found out of Christ. No peace can warm our heart while we forget Christ. "He is our peace." Never go, dear brethren and sisters, for your peace to the law or to your own experience, to your own past achievements, or even to your own faith. All your peace is in Jesus.

And then our hearts and our minds, mentioned in the text, must all be in Jesus, the heart loving Him and loved of Him. The mind believing Him, resting in Him, using its faculties for Him—all in Him. If I leave that last thought with you it will be the best ending for my sermon, namely, that to get peace, and to get your hearts and minds kept, the grand necessity is to be in Christ—in your dying, risen, reigning Lord. Let Him be upon your thoughts now and always. His table is now spread, come hither to commune with Him. Come hither with your Master, to see your Master, and to eat His flesh, and drink His blood, after a spiritual fashion, at His own table.

A word to you who do not know our Lord. How I wish you did know Him. You can never possess peace till you possess Christ. What a blessed beginning of Sabbaths it would be to your souls if you

were to seek Christ tonight. You have not far to go to find Him. He is not far from any of us. Cover your eyes and breathe a prayer to Him. Stand behind one of the columns outside, or get into the street and let your heart say, "Savior, I want peace, and peace I can never have till I have found You. Behold, I trust You. Manifest Yourself to me at this moment and say unto my soul, 'I am thy salvation.'" God grant you may so pray.

It seems to me very full of wonder that we should need to persuade men to think of their own interests, and to care for their own selves. In other things they are always sharp enough to look after what they call "number one," but when it comes to the most solemn concern, the greatest blessing, and the purest happiness that can be had, they are so foolish as to let all other things attract them more than the Lord Jesus. The Lord save you all for His infinite mercy's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 14

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—711,728

[EARNEST prayer is desired for the special services now being held at the Tabernacle, and also for Mr. SPURGEON, that he may be fully restored, and may return to his people in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of peace. He is already greatly improved in health.]

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.