6. PEACE WITH GOD AND THE PEACE OF GOD

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.—John 14:27.

Peace with God is ours by our simple acceptance of it through faith. Christ Jesus, “having made peace through the blood of his cross,” our reconciliation with the Father is already accomplished. Faith has only to accept it and rest in it as a part of the Redeemer’s finished work. Here is a matter of fact, not a matter of feeling. Faith does not create anything or change anything; it simply apprehends what is and counts it true.

The lightning’s flash did not create
   The lovely prospect it revealed;
   It only showed the real state
   Of what the darkness had concealed.

“O Lord, open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.” The wondrous things are there already—atonement, redemption, peace—all accomplished realities, standing for their support alone in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. We need only sight to behold them and a believing trust to rest in them. When,
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“Oh Lord, open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wonderful things out of thy law.” The wondrous things are there already—atonement, redemption, peace—all accomplished realities, standing for their support alone in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. We need only sight to behold them and a believing trust to rest in them. When,
after a foreign war, our nation had sent ambassadors abroad to treat with the foe and they had returned, only the one word "Peace" was shouted from the ship that brought them into harbor, and in a few hours all the city was thrilling with joyful congratulations.* It was the truth that a reconciliation had been effected that brought this happy peace of mind to the people; it was not their peace of mind that brought the reconciliation. In other words, fact supplied the ground for feeling, and not feeling for fact.

"Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God." The faith which rests on Him who "is our peace," which trusts in Him who has "slain the enmity, so making peace"; which credits Him who "came and preached peace" (Ephesians 2:14,15,17)—this it is which brings a true sense of reconciliation to God. In other words, it is Christ's work for us that gives us peace with God, and not Christ's work in us. Talk we about making peace with God! That we cannot do, and are not required to do, since the Lord has done it for us already.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God." Here, as elsewhere, our Lord Jesus, the strong Son of God, has the highest beatitude. He is the great peacemaker mighty to save because a partaker of God's almightiness, and therefore alone of all the sons of men able to accept God's challenge: "Let him take hold of my strength that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me" (Isaiah 27:5). So then our peace with God rests solidly and solely upon the finished work of Christ.

The peace of God is quite another matter, depending for its reality on the work of the Holy Spirit within us.

* Memoir of Francis Wayland, p. 38.

This is an inward experience, as the other was an outward fact. "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts," says the Apostle (Colossians 3:15). The holy calm in which God dwells—without fear, without disquiet, without forebodings—can be so imparted to our souls, and by the Spirit of the Lord so translated into our personal experience, that it will become as truly ours as it is His. This is the soul's inward millennium, enjoyed while we are yet in the militant condition. Just as our Master said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33). It is God's calm amidst the earthly tumult enabling its possessor to enjoy "the most quiet and peaceful liberty, being uplifted above all fear and agitation of mind concerning death or hell, or any other things which might happen to the soul either in time or in eternity." * "My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth give I unto you." The world endeavors to effect an outward quiet; Christ gives an inward quiet; the one seeks rest from conflict, the other gives rest in conflict. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:3). As the ship's chronometer maintains its stable rest and poise amid all the heaving and agitations of the vessel, because stayed upon the solid globe, its double bearings releasing it from the influence of the ship and yielding it up to the influence of the earth's gravity, so the believer will be held in quiet who, letting go of earthly anxieties, yields himself utterly and without reserve to the sway of the divine will. As saith the Scripture again, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all
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* Tauler. 1290-1361.
understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus’’ (Philippians 4:6,7). Now this peace is distinctly named as one of the fruits of the Spirit; and they who have received the second blessing of the sealing of the Holy Ghost have often entered into this second peace and been filled with its unspeakable joy.

Let us give a marked example of such an experience. “But do you see it in your own heart?” was the penetrating question of Mr. Haldane which led to Merle D’Aubigné’s conversion. He saw the doctrine of the new birth theologically and as contained in Scripture; but as yet he had not known it experimentally as written in the heart. And now, while at the University in Geneva, he tells us that he sought and “experienced the joys of the new birth.” Being justified by faith he had peace with God; he knew himself forgiven and accepted. But still he lacked perfect joy and the peace of God keeping his heart and mind.

Some years after his conversion, he and two intimate friends. Frederick Monod and Charles Rieu, were found at an inn at Kiel, where the chances of travel had detained them, searching the word of God together for its hidden richies. D’Aubigné thus tells the story of what there passed in his own soul:

We were studying the Epistle to the Ephesians, and had got to the end of the third chapter, where we read the last two verses—“Now unto him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory, etc.” This expression fell upon my soul as a revelation from God. “He can do by his power,” I said to myself, “above all that we ask, above all even that we think; nay, exceeding abundantly above all.” A full trust in Christ for the work to be done within my poor heart now filled my soul. We all three knelt down, and although I had never fully confided my inward struggles to my friends, the prayer of Rieu was filled with such admirable faith as he would have uttered had he known all my wants. When I arose, in that inn room at Kiel, I felt as if my “wings were renewed as the wings of eagles.” From that time forward I comprehended that all my own efforts were of no avail; that Christ was able to do all by his “power that worketh in us,” and the habitual attitude of my soul was to lie at the foot of the cross, crying to him, “Here am I, bound hand and foot, unable to move, unable to do the least thing to get away from the enemy who oppresses me. Do all thyself. I know that thou wilt do it. Thou wilt even do exceeding abundantly above all that I ask.”

I was not disappointed: all my doubts were removed, my anguish quelled; and the Lord “extended to me peace as a river.” Then I could comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. Then I was able to say, “Return unto thy rest, O my soul! for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.”

Here, indeed, was a most blessed experience, but not something strange and exceptional in religious biography. We can trace the same thing under different names through many saintly lives. The “inward death” of Mysticism, the “divine stillness” of Quietism, the “rest of faith” of the brethren of the Higher Life—all these terms are readily translated back into the one idea of the peace of God ruling in the heart. It is, in a word, the perfect quiet which comes to the soul which is yielded up in perfect self-surrender to God. Tauler is constantly describing it as the fruition of that wonderful second life of his after his two years’ retirement from the pulpit into the cell. “If a man truly loves God,” he says, “and has no will but to do God’s
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will, the whole force of the river Rhine may run at him and will not disturb him or break his peace.” In another passage of exquisite beauty he describes at length the delights and richness of this experience. It is, as we must believe, the miniature of his own inner life, though we might almost suppose it to be a leaf from some angel’s biography. This is his language:

Christ reveals himself with an infinite love, sweetness, and richness, flowing forth from the power of the Holy Ghost, overflowing and streaming in a very flood of richness and sweetness into the heart that is waiting to receive it; and with this sweetness He not only reveals Himself to the soul, but unites Himself with her. Through this sweetness, the soul in its essence by grace flows out with power above all creatures, back into her first origin and fount. Then is the outward man obedient unto the inward man, even unto death, and liveth in constant peace in the service of God continually. That the Lord may thus come into our souls also, overthrowing and casting out all hindrances, bodily or spiritual, that we may become one here on earth and hereafter in the kingdom of heaven, may He help us evermore.

But let us pause to say that we should not dwell on such experiences merely to beget an appetite for religious luxury. Spiritual peace is of little value except as it can re-enforce our strength for spiritual conflict. The rest of faith by all means! But let that rest constitute a center of activity, not a center of stagnation. And this surely is the reason why God calls us to be sharers in His peace, that we may be thereby armed for His warfare. Have we noted sufficiently the twofold rest to which we are invited in our Lord’s oft-quoted invitation, “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”? (Mat-

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thew 11:28). Release, this means from legal bondage, from fruitless efforts at self-help, from fretting anxieties and from the burdens of sin. It is rest from labor, even from our own profitless, fleshly endeavors to save ourselves and to glorify God. But our Lord immediately adds, “Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, ... and ye shall find rest to your souls.” Here is the promise of rest in labor, as the other was a call to rest from labor. The attainment of this is the first and very highest condition of power. And it comes from perfect oneness of will and heart with God. “In him we live and move,” and just in proportion as we partake of the eternal repose of God by being centered in Him shall we partake also of the divine motion of God, and become laborers together with Him. Quiet and not agitation is the source of the highest energy.*

He who entered into rest on the seventh day, having finished the work of creation, is He who “worketh hitherto” and is still accomplishing our redemption, “according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead.” So it comes to pass that Christians who are most calm in the conscious enduement of power are those who have the greatest energy to stir others. We find an excellent illustration of this principle in the powerful ministry of William C. Burns, the eminent Scotch evangelist and missionary. The effects of his preaching were often as startling as those of Mr. Finney’s. We give a single instance from his own record. It is the account of a sermon preached at Kilsyth, July 23, 1839:

* “As opposed to passion, changefulness or laborious exertion, repose is the special and separating characteristic of the Eternal mind and power; it is the I am’ of the Creator as opposed to the I become’ of all creatures. It is the sign alike of the supreme knowledge which is incapable of surprise, the supreme power which is incapable of labor, and the supreme volition which is incapable of change.”—Ruskin.
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And just as I was speaking I felt my soul moved in a remarkable manner to plead with the unconverted before me, instantly to close with God's offers of mercy, and continued to do so until the power of the Lord's Spirit became so mighty upon their souls as to carry all before it, like the rushing mighty wind of Pentecost! During the whole time that I was speaking, the people listened with the most riveted and solemn attention, and with many silent tears and inward groanings of spirit; but at last their feelings became too strong for all ordinary restraints, and broke forth simultaneously in weeping and wailing, tears and groans, intermingled with shouts of joy and praise from the people of God. The appearance of a great part of the people from the pulpit gave me an awfully vivid picture of the state of the ungodly in the day of Christ's coming to judgment. Some were screaming in agony, others, and among them strong men, fell to the ground as if they had been dead. . . . To my own astonishment, during the progress of this wonderful scene, when almost all present were overpowered, it pleased the Lord to keep my soul perfectly calm.

Yes, and this is the demonstration of peace as the other fact was the demonstration of power. "Stand still and see the salvation of God." And they that looked on wondered as much at the calmness of the preacher as at the commotion of the people. Ah! but there is a very significant prelude to this scene of spiritual upheaving. His peacefulness was a calm between two powerful agitations, one in the closet and one in the pews. A friend of his records how the evening before a great field-day he found him lying on his face in an agony of prayer—"the source, doubtless, of that holy calm which so struck the hearers on the succeeding morning." Thus, once more, through the open closet door we discern secrets which no reasoning would have unfolded to us:

Mr. Burns went to his room, and whilst we waited for his coming downstairs to dinner we heard a heavy groan. Thinking he had been taken ill, Mrs. Thomas ran upstairs and found him lying upon his face on the floor, groaning before the Lord. He had gotten such an overwhelming sense of his responsibility for the souls of that people, that he could then think of nothing else. In his absence of mind he had left his door partially open, which Mrs. Thomas shut, and we did not see him again till late in the evening, when he came for the family worship. His prayer then was one continuous strain of self-loathing and pleading for mercy through the blood of the Lamb of God. It happened that his room was next to mine, and all that night I heard him still groaning in prayer.*

It is the old, wonderful story repeated of Jacob wrestling with God, taking hold of the divine strength and conquering a peace, until the "thou hast prevailed" and "thou hast power with God and with men" is spoken. The peace of God is the true source of power with men, and real power with men is marked by the most serene quiet. Remember what God says of His servant in whom He delighteth—"I will put my spirit upon him and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets." In other words, the enduement of the Spirit is characterized by tranquil strength and noiseless efficiency. The communion which links us to God's power links us to His peacefulness as well.† Let us insist with utmost emphasis that the peace which we commend shall not be sought for itself. This has been the grave defect alike of monkish asceticism and Protestant quietism. A stagnant peace is sure to breed

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† "God is a center to the soul; and just as in a circle what is nearest the center is subject to least motion, so the closer the soul is to God, the less the movement and agitation to which it is exposed."—Gotthold.
the malaria of doubt and discontent. That which God calls us to inherit is not of this kind. "Oh that thou hadst hearkened unto my commandments," He says by the prophet, "then had thy peace been as a river" (Isaiah 48:18). Like the river which purifies itself by its own motion, which keeps all the banks green and fertile along which it flows, and which as it widens and deepens takes up the ships of commerce and bears them on its bosom. It is the peace of motion, not of rest; of life, and not of death. Good Thomas à Kempis' counsel to the seeker after peace that he should find it, "in poverty, retirement and with God," was perhaps the best advice that he knew. But it does not satisfy the heart of one who longs supremely to serve God by serving his generation; and we can understand why a zealous spirit like that of John Wesley should have been repelled by the asceticism of the _Imitation of Christ_, while he was led by the perusal of the more practical and humane treatise, the _Holy Living and Dying_ of Jeremy Taylor, to dedicate "all his thoughts, words, and actions" to the service of God. There are some things which we may pursue as ends, and others which come to us as blessings attendant upon the search after higher objects. Happiness is the companion of virtue; joy is the inevitable reward of well-doing; peace is the certain fruit of whole-hearted consecration to God. But the moment any one of these blessings is sought for itself, it will lose its sweetness and savor. This principle is most clearly set forth by our Lord in that saying of His, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). Now, peace is one of the added things which will certainly come to those who trust Christ with all their heart and serve their generation with all their might; but it will constantly elude the grasp of those who pursue it merely for itself.

Nothing is said about our keeping peace with God by our toil and striving and watching. The peace of God is promised to keep us. We are not to be overanxious about it, as though it depended upon our efforts. When Gideon had heard the Lord saying to him, "Peace be unto thee," he built an altar in Ophrah and named it "Jehovah-shalom" (Judges 6:24), the Lord send peace, and then went forth in the way of duty and obedience. Though he had been very self-distrustful, because he was of poor family and the least in his father's house, and though the weapons of his warfare were very contemptible, yet he soon got the victory and brought his nation into long-continued peace, so that we read that "the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon." We see that he went forth from peace instead of going forth to seek peace; the altar and covenant of the Lord were his point of departure. Precisely this is our condition as believers. The cross of Christ inscribed with "Jehovah-shalom" is our starting point. Having peace with God through the blood of Christ we go forth to service, in warfare, in testimony, in toil, doing the will of God from the heart, anxious for nothing, and fixing the eye only upon the glory of God. Then as the certain income of our obedience will the peace of God be poured into our hearts. The more the spirit of the world gets possession of the Christian, the more of the world's unrest and conflict will he have; the more he is given up to the guidance of the control of the Spirit of the Lord, the more of God's peace will he enjoy, since "to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Let us rejoice, then, evermore, both in the work of Christ done for us, and in the work of the Spirit done in us.
PEACE WITH GOD AND THE PEACE OF GOD

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By the one we get the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, by the other the righteousness of Christ imparted to us. "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effects of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever."