

Peace, Peace (Part One): Peace With God

Christ's Redemptive Work

Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Given 02-Apr-26; Sermon #1866-PM

If you will, please turn to Jeremiah 6. We are going to be reading verses 10 through 15. This passage may seem like an odd place to start an Unleavened Bread message, but if you will, please bear with me. I am not giving a prophecy sermon today even though we are starting in the Prophets but of course, there are prophetic elements here, so take it as you will.

But this passage allows me to ease into my overall topic and not just today, but my last Day of Unleavened Bread message. Now before we read this, just a little background. The setting is not long before the Babylonian invasion and God through Jeremiah is speaking to the people there and God is venting His frustration a bit about how unreceptive the people of Judah are to His warnings and His calls to repentance. He sent them prophet after prophet and they just did not listen. They, as Jesus tells us later on in Matthew 23, every prophet that God sent, they persecuted and killed many of them. And so by this time, God had had it up to here.

Jeremiah 6:10 "To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear? Indeed, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot give heed. [Notice that, they *cannot* give heed.] Behold, the word of the Lord is a reproach to them; . . .

This is how far it has gone, and we can see this in our own society. You mention the Word of God to a good percentage of the people of this nation, and they want to fight with you or they are offended that you would bring God into the discussion. He says here at the end of verse 10,

Jeremiah 6:10-15 . . . they have no delight in it. Therefore [God says] I am full of the fury of the Lord. I am weary of holding it in. [Can you imagine God being weary of holding back His forbearance? He says] I will pour it out on the children outside, and on the assembly of young men together; for even the husband shall

be taken with the wife, the aged with him who is full of days. And their houses shall be turned over to others, fields and wives together, for I will stretch out My hand against the inhabitants of the land," says the Lord. "Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely. They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace!' when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No! [He answers His own question.] They were not at all ashamed; nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time I punish them, they shall be cast down," says the Lord.

You can understand after reading this why I say He has had it up to here. He is telling them, "Oh boy, you people are going to get it. I can't hold back any longer. You're going to fall. You're going to die. You're going to be at the spearhead, the wrong side of the spearhead, of My wrath." So, He promises them death and destruction for their covetousness, their deceit, and their idolatry. They are going to face the wrath of God.

Now in verse 14—I am narrowing my focus here to this verse—He speaks directly to the priests and the prophets. He singles them out for their spectacular ineffectiveness. Their jobs included helping to turn the people back to God and giving honest evaluations, objective evaluations of the seriousness of the coming wrath of God.

He wanted them to be able to see the signs of the times, to hear the words that He was giving them, and pass them on to let them know just how angry He was, but yet how He would give mercy if they turned back to Him. But instead, they comforted the people with their cries of "Peace, peace!" when it would have been better in the long run, it would have been better for more people had they aroused those people to repentance for their deep sinfulness. But instead they mollified the people and basically told them, maybe not explicitly but in the way they were speaking, to "go about your business, it's not going to be all that bad. Don't worry, God is merciful."

As we know from the very next chapter, they were all feeling good about things because they had the Temple with them. God surely would not destroy

His own Temple and the people He had chosen, so let us put our faith in that. That God may let a few things happen out here in the hinterlands of Judea, Judah. But He would never destroy Jerusalem. That is where God lives. And certainly not His Temple.

But they did not understand, these priests and prophets, that God did not want comfortable people. That has never been high on His list of priorities for His people. He wanted obedient, righteous, covenantal people loyal to the covenant. Now if these priests had been honest and objective, they would have seen the truth. I mean, they had their ways of getting news even back in those days. They had people telling the rulers of the land what was happening in other nations.

They would have known that a force was rising in the east and of course they always knew about Egypt and they had been greatly scourged, if you will, by Assyria a little bit over a century before. So they knew that the area was in turmoil and it was getting worse. They were beginning to go through those turbulent events of the Axial Period that my dad would talk about every now and then, when everything turned over in the Middle East. This was right in that time. All the old powers began to die and new powers were rising, and they were expanding as fast as they could, conquering, killing, destroying all along the way. That was pretty evident. They could see the armies of Babylon coming toward them, knowing that it was inevitable.

Well, not to them. To their eyes, God is going to stop them. We will have peace. But had those priests and the prophets had any kind of honesty, they would have known that it was evident that peace was not in the cards. They did not have CNN or any of the big news aggregating websites or anything like that, but they could tell by the tenor of the times and what was going on throughout the Middle East that things were bad and they were coming closer. They would not have peace. They would not have peace with the conqueror Nebuchadnezzar (that Jarod talked about last Sabbath), that God was calling and sending against them.

They would not have peace with God. He had told them through Isaiah and Jeremiah that He was not happy. He was angry at them and He would send His wrath because they were not repenting. Certainly the Judeans were not at peace among themselves. I do not know if you know anything about the

period, but there were Egyptian factions and there were Babylonian factions even within the government, and they would go one way or the other as these factions took more power.

And poor Jeremiah, he was on the wrong side when the Egyptian faction was strongest and got put in the pit because he was saying, "Let's make peace with Babylon. This is what God has decreed. God has called Babylon to us, and they are going to conquer us." And the king said, "I don't like you, Jeremiah. Why don't you talk like the other priests and the prophets and say, 'Peace, peace,' because oh, we've got the might of Egypt behind us." Really? When God says He has called this one from the east. Nope. That is not the way it works.

And of course the Judeans were not at peace *in themselves* either. There was all the stress of the times that they were having to work through. So the priests and the prophets cries of peace were lies. They were a superficial salve on open wounds. These days we make it a little cruder. We say that their 'Peace, peace' cries were lipstick on a pig.

And that is really what it was. It was trying to beautify a very ugly situation. And they were falling into rank idolatry and all their means of self-expression and syncretism of pagan ways and God's way and knifing each other in the back alleys and cheating each other on business hours and lying about each other and so on. There is no way to make that look or sound any better. It was all superficial.

Now, what we have seen here is an extreme example, albeit one we can learn from for the end of this age, because take out the names Judah and Babylon and put in the United States and whatever the beast power will be, it sounds remarkably the same.

And we have clergy across this nation who are basically saying 'peace, peace.' Hey, if we all get behind President Trump, it is going to be a beautiful future for America. And then the other side is saying, hey, if you just let it all go and do whatever you want and be free of all restraint, what a beautiful future we will have. And neither are the answer. The answer is "Repent." God wants His people to turn back to Him and obey His law and be the kind of people that are witnesses in this world to all those who do not

know God. But is that going to happen? Do not bet on that. Do not go to DraftKings and put a wager on that.

So, a more general perspective on it and especially one that helps us in our time, will allow us to apply the lessons here more universally. So let us ask a few questions about our time here. Are the nations of the world ever truly at peace? No. I do not know that there has ever been a year in which a war has not been fought. So we would have to say that our incessant wars say, no, the nations are not truly at peace.

Are the people of this world at peace with God? Mankind's mounting sins say, no. We can see a lot of proof on the opposite side here that says, No, people are not at peace with God. Are those same people, these people in the world, at peace with their neighbors? Our crime statistics say, no. I mean, many people get along with their neighbors if they know them. But there is a lot of places in this country and elsewhere where they do not get along.

Let us ask another question. Are these people at peace with themselves? Have you ever looked at the suicide rates in this world? Plummeting mental health statistics say, no. I mean, how could we be at peace with others and with God and as nations if we do not have any peace internally? It is just impossible. You got to start, you know, let it begin with me. You have to have it personally before you can begin having it externally with others.

Let us go back a few pages to Isaiah 59. We will read the first eight verses here.

Isaiah 59:1-8 Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perversity. No one calls for justice, nor does any plead for truth. They trust in empty words and speak lies; they conceive evil and bring forth iniquity. They hatch vipers' eggs and he who eats of their eggs dies, and from that which is crushed a viper breaks out. Their webs will not become garments, nor will they cover themselves with their works; their

works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands. Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they have not known, and there is no justice in their ways; they have made themselves crooked paths; whoever takes that way shall not know peace.

Which is quite the opposite of what we heard in the morning sermon. Martin was imploring us to take that way of peace. But it says these people have made themselves crooked paths. They did not go on a way that was already laid out for them from God. They said, I want to go my own way. And God says, Okay, fine, you take that way. You will never know peace.

Now this passage makes me conclude that as well. It says it right there, humanity has never really known peace. Not the peace of God that He wants us to live. And Isaiah does a fantastic job here of tying their lack of peace with their sins. It was their sins that made peace impossible. Their iniquities were so contrary to the way of peace that it could never even begin. There was so much sin that had built up in their lifetimes that they had an absolute inability to acknowledge and follow the truth, which is another way of talking about the way of peace.

Can there be peace among people when children despise their parents? Can there be peace among people when neighbor kills neighbor? We saw the example of Cain and Abel this morning. We did not get quite to that verse, but after the offerings, the outcome of that was Cain killed Abel. Can there be peace among people when spouses are unfaithful to each other?

Can there be peace among people when neighbor, maybe he does not kill his neighbor, but neighbor robs neighbor? Can there be peace among people when neighbor lies to neighbor, is deceitful in his dealings? Can there be peace among people when neighbors covet each other's possessions?

Obviously I have just done the last six commandments. But it just goes to show you here that when you break God's commandments—sin—there is no

way you can have peace with another person, especially the one you robbed from or bonked on the head and killed or what have you. Peace is impossible in the presence of sin.

Notice what James says about this in James 3:18. We are just going to pick up this one verse and the one principle.

James 3:18 Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

He is saying here just generally the conditions of peace are where the fruits or the seeds of righteousness can sprout and grow and produce fruit. And if there is no peace, well, it is pretty much impossible to grow fruit because the environment is full of iniquity. Because it is that iniquity that makes the environment where you have no peace. So God has to make sure that His people have an environment of peace for them to grow. And you know we have something to contribute to that. We contribute to that by repenting of our sins and following the truth. And then He takes care of the rest. And in that situation, in that environment, we can begin to grow.

But if we do not have peace because we are dealing with our sins and the turmoil that that causes in our lives, we are kind of stuck. We are stuck in place treading water. We have got to deal with those sins before we can make headway and begin to grow. So if you are dealing with a long time sin, you are going to have a hard time growing and producing fruit until you get a hold of that sin and repent of it fully. And then allow God to give you the peace to make strides forward toward the image of Jesus Christ.

Now my sermons during this Feast of Unleavened Bread will focus on peace. I have probably used the word 35 times already. But particularly two kinds of peace. Did you know that there was more than one kind of peace? They are related, peace pieces, kinds of peace, types of peace, but they are not the same. These types of peace are available only to believers, only to you and me and those others who have been given the Spirit of God. I should take it back further, those who have been called by God and who have accepted the blood of Jesus Christ and been baptized and been given the Holy Spirit. And then we have the peace that we need, these two types of peace, one first and then the other, so that we can grow in righteousness, as James pointed out.

So just as a summary, we could say that only those who have made the New Covenant with God have access to these two types of peace. But they do not come upon us automatically. They both must be sought, maintained, and nurtured. God will supply what He will supply, but there is a lot that we need to do so that this atmosphere of peace can grow.

Now the first one is more of His doing, but we still have a lot to do in that because we have got to come out of this world with His help. But if we do, if we do seek these two types of peace and we do struggle to maintain them and we nurture them to growth, then the abundant life that Christ promises will be ours.

I am going to cherry pick a few verses here just to give you, well, just to hammer home the fact that human beings have all sinned. So let us go first to Romans 1, verse 18. These will all be in Romans. I could have gone to other scriptures throughout the Bible, but I just want these, kind of keep them concentrated here in the book of Romans. So first, Romans 1:18. You will hear Jeremiah 6 in this a little bit.

Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

Does that not sound like what we went over there in Jeremiah 6? You have a whole nation of ungodly, unrighteous men and you have the prophets and the priests basically suppressing the truth of what God wants and what God is doing.

Let us go to chapter 3. It should be just one turning of the page here to verse 9 and we will read down through verse 12 and then pick up 19 and 23.

Romans 3:9-12 What then? Are we better than they? [he is speaking of the Jews] Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin [both Jews and Greeks]. As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one;

there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all gone out of the way; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one."

That is pretty astounding and he includes everybody in this. *Everybody* has sinned. No righteous at all. Let us go down to verse 19.

Romans 3:19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

There is no tribe in Africa, there is no city in Kazakhstan or whatever, where there are righteous people. Certainly not among the children of Israel in these modern times. They lead the way.

Verse 23, just as a conclusion.

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

I should have counted how many times Paul just including chapters 1 through 3, has said that there are none righteous. There is no one who has not sinned. He wants to make it very plain that everyone is guilty. Romans 6:23 says the wages of sin is death (I just want that one clause) which tells us that if all are guilty of sin, if everyone has sinned, then they are all under the sentence of death. Them's the truth. That is reality.

Chapter 8, verses 6 through 8, just to ram this home.

Romans 8:6-8 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. [But we saw that the world does not have peace. So what are we to think?] Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

Put this together with what Paul has already said. Everybody, all those who have not been called, are under the penalty of death. They are the carnal-minded. And even those of us who have been called still have carnal minds

that we need to improve or actually Paul tells us to kill it. Mortify the flesh, mortify all those urgings of human nature to be selfish and to turn against God's way. So from Adam's day to this very second, people have sinned, early and often. In sinning, they have become guilty and subject to death and the wrath of a just and righteous God.

Even one sin—just one sin!—puts us on the negative side of the ledger. One sin and we might as well just do the perp walk because we are guilty. What is worse, one sin makes us enemies of God because we have given in to the enmity of the carnal mind against God. One sin and we are in rebellion. And He can come down on us with His wrath anytime He chooses, and we have no recourse because we are guilty.

So, humanity has a rebellious nature against God and His law to the point that man, as it says here in Romans 8:7, man cannot be subject to God or His law, neither indeed can be. That is astounding! Carnal humans *cannot* do the things that please God. Because they are full of sin it taints everything they do. In fact, even if they have a desire to square the debt of sin with God, humans can do nothing to correct the situation. Not a single thing can they do to get on the good side of the ledger. They owe a debt they cannot pay.

I am talking about they could pay if they died. But once we sin, we have no recourse to make it up. Any kind of doing good later, which we call works, those things cannot do anything to erase the sin. It is always there accusing us and making us guilty. It hangs there perpetually attached to us and dragging us down as sin is added to sin and it just mounts up and gets more burdensome and we become more insane. And I mean that. We are not in our right minds as we pile up sin after sin because the right mind would say, "I've sinned, I must turn to God."

But does that happen? Hardly ever. People become numb to their sins, and soon they are sinning willy-nilly. And as I mentioned, really the only payment that can be made is death. That is, the sinner's death. Death absolves us because our life pays the penalty for those sins that we committed in our lives. That is what the world has to look forward to. They die in their sin. So men, carnal men, are perpetually at war with God. They are perpetual enemies of God.

They may not think that. They may have been told things that tell them that they can have peace with God if they do this or that, you know, do so many Hail Marys or whatever it is that their priests or ministers tell them that will make them right with God. But there is only one way that they can actually go to have that sin, that burden of sin taken away. And you know what? In this age, God only allows a very few to find that way. Because it all begins with Him. John 6:44 tells us that He is the one who calls and brings people to Jesus Christ.

Men, full of sin, at war with God, enemies in their sin, in their iniquity, cannot seek God. They may think they are, but they do not really even know what to look for because they have an imperfect idea of what God is and what He requires and what they must do. So if they do not have the calling of God, they are just bound to live in their iniquity and their guilt before God. So being perpetually at war with sinful mankind, God as the Judge perpetually pronounces their guilt and the sentence is death. So in this relationship between God and men we are at a stalemate. There is nothing happening but more sin and more wrath on God's part.

So we have guilt on the one hand and we have perfect justice on the other. And God's perfect justice is wrath and death. That is the only way it could be unless He does something. There is no peace, as Jeremiah said. As God says in Isaiah 48:22, "there is no peace for the wicked." It is a sad, sorry, hopeless situation. And it is all our fault, all humanity's fault. God did everything He could do without making us automatons.

Now God knew this from the beginning, which is why those two wonderful God beings we call the Father and the Son planned to provide the solution to this impossible conundrum. The One who became the Son *volunteered* to break the impasse, *volunteered* to pay the price of redemption, to bring sinful mankind back to zero and let them, once converted, try again with a new life, a new perspective. And then knowing that they would sin even after that, provide constant forgiveness to help them along, as long as they stayed on the straight and narrow on the way, on that path Martin was talking about to the Kingdom of God.

Revelation 13:8 says that He, the Son, the Christ, is the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." This was not a Hail Mary, pardon the expression,

at the last minute, "Oh no! We've got to do something. Look at men, they're sinning!" No. Our God is so much more foresightful (is that even a word?) They saw, They knew, They knew what They had created. They knew that They were putting mud together and making it stick and giving life to that mud and you know, They knew that being mud, we would act muddy. We would do carnal things. We are made of flesh. We are not perfect.

There is really no way that we could remain sinless in the flesh. There is just too much selfishness and too much going on. They knew that someone would sin eventually. And my own idea about when this happened in the Garden of Eden is, almost immediately. I cannot imagine people living very long without that selfish nature coming up, especially with the stupid snake whispering in their ears. Now it may have been longer. I have heard years. Adam and Eve were in the Garden for years and suddenly, you know, they said, "I don't think so."

Even without the carnality of the world and other people around to get people to go into sin, I do not think their fleshly bodies allowed them to be perfect for very long. That is just my own idea of what happened there. I may be wrong. I must be a cynic. But I will just say from my own perspective, I think I would have lasted about 30 seconds. Boy, that fruit looks good. And then I would have convinced myself, "Oh yeah, God said not to, but He didn't mean it. He wants me to eat, doesn't He? Keep these rosy red cheeks."

I mean, you convince yourself to do stuff in a trice, to use an old expression. It does not take us very long to give in to our selfish nature, and I just have to think that it did not take very long for Adam and Eve to sin as well.

But we were talking about the foundation of the world. Generally, people think that the foundation of the world was when God made Adam and Eve and they sinned. That was the foundation of *this* world. The foundation of this world is sinful. And before that time They had made a decision that They would do something to give people redemption. That They would have a plan for fixing this problem, for surmounting this loggerheads that humanity has with God so that there could be peace.

God the Father and Jesus Christ hate disunity. They hate this enmity that is between Them and people. They want a peaceful environment for Their people, the ones that have been called and converted, to grow in. But for Their own purposes They are now allowing this enmity to last, to be perpetuated in this world, except among a few that They specifically call. This is one of those great miracles where They turn evil to good. And only They can do it. And we have the opportunity to be in on the ground floor of actually being at peace with God. And then being at peace with one another as we go.

But I want to now go through a few statements. I am going to use the book of John, which shows that Jesus was very clear about His purpose, about what He was here to do, and this goes on with the verse that I quoted in Revelation 13:8 about He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. And John, throughout his book, the gospel of John, gives statement after statement after statement of Jesus telling *us* or His disciples what He was here to do. So let us just pick up the first one. This is actually from John the Baptist, but Jesus did not contradict him.

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

That is a truth. He came as the Lamb of God to take away sin.

Let us go on to another one, chapter 3, verses 14 through 17.

John 3:14-17 "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

Let us go on chapter 10, verse 11, and then we will drop down to 14 and 15 and then 17 and 18.

John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."

John 10:14-15 "I am the good shepherd, and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father, and I lay down My life for the sheep."

John 10:17-18 "Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."

They were in it from the beginning. And God the Father loved the Son because of His loving volunteer sacrifice to lay down His life for His sheep.

Let us go on. Chapter 12, verses 27 through 32.

John 12:27-32 "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose, I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him." Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself."

So Jesus was very clear about His purpose. We could have gone to many more declarations throughout the other gospels. He came to give His life for His sheep, for sinners who believed, giving them an opportunity for eternal life in God's Kingdom. And He volunteered for it.

Let us go back to Matthew the 20th chapter, verses 20 through 28.

Matthew 20:20-22 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one of them on Your right hand and the other on Your left in Your kingdom." But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink [meaning His crucifixion], and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"

Do you really understand what all of that entails, all the grief and the sorrow and the pain, the agony of what He was going through? Do you really, really understand what it takes to sit on the right and the left side of Jesus? How do you get to that position?

Matthew 20:22-28 They said to Him, "We are able." So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father." And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brothers. But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you, but whoever desires to become great among you; let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

This is another one of those very clear statements about His purpose. It may be the most direct statement of His redemptive purpose in the Gospels. What He does here in this passage, and that is why I read all of that from verse 20 on, is He connects high position, or leadership we might say, with service and sacrifice, using His own example of giving His life for a ransom of many as the prime illustration of what that looks like. It is far more than kneeling down and washing your brothers' feet. Jesus served and sacrificed, showing His leadership by dying the most despicable, bloody, agonizing death that you can imagine.

This is why He asked John and James, can you do this? If you want to be a true leader in the church or in the Kingdom of God, are you willing to take it this far? "Oh yeah, we can do it. Let's go." Stupid men. Jesus is the ultimate example in each category: leadership or high position, service, and sacrifice. It does not get any better than Him in all three of those categories. And the instruction for His disciples is that godly leadership is shown in sacrificial service to others. I think we understand that general principle.

But it is in this way, in doing these things that He just mentioned here in Matthew 20, that He set free the captives to sin. That impossible conundrum was solved by Him volunteering from the highest position in the universe to sacrifice and serve humanity to the point of death on the cross. That is how that impossible hurdle was overcome. Because He was willing to go all the way, give everything He had in order to break that deadlock so that man would have a way to overcome the penalty of sin. He paid the seemingly impossible price to spring them from prison.

Remember Mr. Armstrong's book from way back, *A World Held Captive*? That is what Jesus did. He opened the prison and ransomed all those who had been detained and were held because they were guilty of sin. So He died. Remember, I said the only solution was death. So He said, "I'll die for them." And in doing so He cleared all of those sinners, all the billions, and all their billions and billions and billions of sin from the books. They could go out with all the charges dismissed. What an incredible thing!

This is the theological concept of substitutionary atonement. We will see it just in two verses here in Colossians 2. We will put some biblical theology behind what I just said. Colossians 2, we want just verses 13 and 14.

Colossians 2:13-14 And you, being dead in your trespasses [Notice that, you were dead, you were as good as dead because all this guilt was against you. There was no way out.] and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He [God] has made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, . . .

That is, the record of our sins, all those sins that the jailer had and says, no, you are not getting out. You did this, you did this, you did this, your rap

sheet is three miles long. You are guilty and you are going to die. Your execution date is, you know, whatever.

Colossians 2:14 . . . which was contrary to us.

Yeah, sure it was. It was being held there as the reason why we are going to go to the scaffold. We are going to die. We merit execution. That is certainly against us, is it not? That was a black mark. But Jesus Christ in doing what He did was able to pay for that sin, all that sin.

Colossians 2:14 And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

He exsanguinated. Good formal term for bled out. And His blood covers our sins. He took all our sins in His body and we now have a way of escape, a way to get out from under that heavy burden of guilt. Because Someone had the love to pay the price for us and ransom us from those sins.

So in Matthew 20, by saying He would give His life as a ransom for many, He connects some very important principles and concepts. He connects His atoning work for mankind's redemption from sin to the idea of the suffering Servant, which the disciples knew. They understood their Old Testament. They knew that Isaiah 53 was in there, and it describes this suffering Servant taking the burden of sin upon himself.

That chapter, which we will read in a few minutes, concludes with, "My righteous Servant shall justify many." That is in verse 11. And in verse 12, it says, "He bore the sin of many." And what Matthew 20:28 says is that He gave "His life a ransom for many." He was pointing back to Isaiah 53. The One who was prophesied to come and do this for many is Jesus Christ, who will pay the ransom for many. And that is exactly what He did. What the suffering Servant would do as prophesied is what Jesus would do. Ergo, Jesus is the suffering Servant accomplishing all that was prophesied of Him.

Let us go back there to Isaiah 53 and let us just read it.

Isaiah 53:1-12 Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? [I think that is really interesting. When Jesus came and He said this to His disciples, He revealed the arm of the Lord.] For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray [Did He not say He would come for His sheep and give His life for His sheep?]; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken. And they have made His grave with the wicked—but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When you make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Let us also go to chapter 61, verses 1 and 2. Jesus quoted this, proclaimed this in Luke 4:18-19.

Isaiah 61:1-2 "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

That is all that Jesus quoted from there.

These two passages that I have just read may be the clearest statement of Christ's redemptive mission in the whole Bible. Once you connect Christ with the suffering Servant, it becomes so clear. So many prophecies were fulfilled in what He did at Golgotha. Isaiah 53 focuses on the suffering and His sorrow leading to His death, along with taking on Himself the wrath of God in the form of our sins and bearing them and making intercession for us.

I want to draw your attention to verse 5, the phrase, "the chastisement for our peace was upon Him." Just kind of single this out. It may be a little bit unclear what is being spoken about here and I thought I would try to clarify it. We can paraphrase (I was going to say translate) this particular clause to mean or to read, "God disciplined Him to bring us peace." Or we could say, "God chastised Him," God spanked Him, God gave Him discipline for our well-being. Or another way to think of the concept of peace here is that He was chastised. He was given the sentence in our stead and made to suffer to restore us to wholeness. It is parallel to the next clause, "by His stripes, we are healed." It really gets to the point that when we sin, we are wounded, we are sick and we need healing. And God allowed Jesus Christ to be the object of His wrath to help restore us to good health, to well-being.

So He did not just restore sinners to legal innocence, if you will, and remove their guilt. But He did the major work of restoring their ability to have a relationship with God. See, that was the missing part of it. They can have peace but only when Jesus took their sins and God granted that sacrifice, the ability by grace to cover our sins.

The Creator God's blood shed for all of us was worth more than what was required to cover the sins of mankind. And so God said, "Okay, I am satisfied. We can have peace now. The guilt is removed. But only for those who believe."

So by what He did, Jesus Christ that is, He removed the chasm sin had created between humanity and God. As is talked about (we will not read it) in Isaiah 59 which we did read earlier about that our iniquities have separated us from God.

Now we went to Isaiah 61. Isaiah 61 comes at this divine act of redemption which Jesus did from a slightly wider angle. He includes not just Jesus' sacrifice, but also all the work of His life, including all His preaching of the gospel. Let us read it again.

Isaiah 61:1-2 "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

This was all accomplished in His first coming. His redemptive work for which He was sent, is broken up into three parts here, healing, or as the margin says, binding up the brokenhearted. The second one is proclaiming liberty to the captives, and the third is opening the prisons to those who are bound. So His work included binding wounds, announcing freedom or a kind of amnesty or pardon, and also releasing those who were in prison.

Now it may be helpful to see the background of this passage as a war scenario. Maybe you had not thought of it this way, but I think it will help you to understand what is going on here. The war scenario is that there has been a revolution against the anointed or rightful king. Wounded rebel prisoners have been taken and jailed. These are all the sinners in rebellion against God. Through their sin they have been wounded and because of their sin they have been jailed. They are guilty. They have not only been put in jail, but they have been tried and convicted of rebellion. They just are waiting for the sentence to be executed.

Now to end this war, the king anoints His heir to preach good news to the captives. And what is that good news? Reconciliation with the king is available to all you rebels. Repent and believe the good news (Mark 1:14-15). Then in addition, He sends His heir to the prison to bandage those among the prisoners who were wounded in the fighting and doomed to die. But not all of them; only those who were brokenhearted about joining the rebellion. Then the king declares to those brokenhearted amnesty, pardon, forgiveness for their rebellions against Him. He says their sins will be wiped away. If they accept the conditions of amnesty, they will go free. Their rebellion will be wiped off the books.

Then the heir opens the prison and releases those brokenhearted, repentant ones from their chains once they have accepted the conditions. Their day of salvation—the acceptable year of the Lord—has arrived. And now they can live at liberty because they and the king are at peace with one another.

Kind of a nice story, do you not think? All is well in the Kingdom of God.

The apostle Paul writes of this process frequently in his epistles. In his explanations of what Christ's sacrifice accomplished, specifically justification by faith, showing that we have redemption and salvation by grace, as an act of God's unilateral action to deliver us from sin and reestablish that broken relationship. Through Christ's paying of the penalty for our sins in our stead, through the shedding of His blood, and the Father's gracious acceptance of that blood to cover our sins, we have that great theological term, justification. And what does justification accomplish? *Peace with God*. We are now, through the blood of Christ, upright, justified. Our sins have been wiped away. We are now at zero again. And we can suddenly, through Jesus Christ, have a relationship with God.

That relationship is no longer hostile because we have been reconciled with the Father. And because of that, if we accept all the terms and go through the process of baptism, then He graciously gives us His Spirit to develop us so that we become more like the Son. We can only do this in an atmosphere of peace—peace with God.

Let us just go through a montage of Paul's scriptures. I am not going to explain them. I am just going to read them. We will start in Romans 5; and this is not all of them. Paul talked about this all the time. So we are only going to read bits and pieces of what happened, but let us hear it from him, the great theologian of the first century. Romans 5, verse 1, we read this at the Passover service.

Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Romans 5:6-11 For when we were still without strength [We were nothing. We were totally unable to do anything about the situation.], in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. [We are no longer on death row.] For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

We are now at peace through His work.

Let us go to Ephesians 2. Very familiar scriptures starting in verse 4.

Ephesians 2:4-10 But God, who is rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness

toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Jump down to verse 14,

Ephesians 2:14-16 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us [He is talking about Jews and Gentiles necessarily here. But it could also be the wall between God and humanity.], having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace.

Then go to Colossians 1, which we also read at Passover, verses 19 through verse 22.

Colossians 1:19-22 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and irreproachable in His sight.

These are just a few of the many passages that explain how Christ reconciled us with the Father, creating peace between us and the Father, and thus the conditions for growth in righteousness to the fullness of Christ's character are met. And we can begin the process, that pilgrimage that Martin talked about.

Let us end in Isaiah 9. If you know your chapters, you know Isaiah 9 is the virgin shall conceive chapter. But we are going to read verses 6 and 7.

Isaiah 9:6-7 For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

What a wonderful Savior we have showing that perfect servant leadership. No wonder He is called the Prince of Peace!