

God'S Rest (Part 2)

The Peace of God

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We're going to begin this sermon in John 14:27. I'm sure that you understand that these words were spoken by Christ just prior His crucifixion, and so we're going into things that He felt would be very important for His disciples at that time, and of course they are very important to us right now as well.

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Judging by what Jesus says here, I think it is pretty clear that He wants us to have peace. It's part of His purpose for us and clearly part of His legacy to us. I think you'll also have to agree that judging by your own experience, peace is at best illusive. Many of us have been in the church for quite a period of time, and it seems as though we have it for a while, and then it is gone.

It's probably because of the state of the times that we live in that there is a very strong tendency in us to think first of peace in terms of a treaty between warring nations, or as a period of time in which there is an absence of war. However, the Bible and common English usage is broader than that. Generally its applications fall into two general categories. The first one is *harmony* and *accord* as in a group like with a family, or within a company, or among and between nations. The second application is *quiet tranquility, calm, and serenity*, as in peace of mind that is something that is emanating from within rather than imposed from without. Its antonyms are many. They include war, discontent, dissatisfaction, irritation, restlessness, annoyance, exasperation, displeasure, discomfort, and frustration.

A well-known Hebrew greeting, "Shalom" is generally translated "peace." A form of it appears in the word "Jerusalem," which roughly means "City of Peace." However, Shalom's application is actually broad enough to include anything considered good for a person's well being. It might be equivalent to what someone might say today, "May you have good fortune." That's general, not specific, but if you have good fortune, that's supposed to be good for your well being.

Our periods of contentment and tranquility are frequently punctuated by other periods

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that consist of anything from a mild apprehension to discontent, to some form of discouragement, to depression, to great anxiety, and perhaps all the way to sheer terror, so that we say, "Stop the world! I want to get off!" Well, we're not at peace really in any one of those situations. The variations in our state of mind I think can honestly be compared with the weather that always seems to be changing from fair and mild to cloudy, unsettled, and stormy.

Now is there any way we can go about changing things so that the ups and downs can be leveled to some degree? Can we do anything that will help so that life is not lived with such wide swings of temperament, that we are on top of the world one day feeling that all is well, and then the next day we are either in or on the very edge of anxiety, thinking surely everything is going to crash and you're going to be left with nothing?

Let me say right up front that there is no one specific and absolutely complete answer to this question, because there are so many causes of our periods of discontentment and anxiety, but there is one overall general solution to meeting the many causes of our lack of peace, and that is found within our relationship with God. I believe though that I can name the major causes of the lack of peace in our lives. In one way of looking at this, there are really two of them, but eventually they become blended, because both are aspects of human nature. The first is pride, which is considered to be the father of all sin. Let's take a look at a pattern here by turning to Ezekiel 28:14-17.

Ezekiel 28:14 You art the anointed cherub that covered: and I have set you so: you were upon the holy mountain of God; you have walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

God is obviously speaking to somebody who is not human, and we all understand that He was speaking of Satan.

Ezekiel 28:15-17 You were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, till iniquity was found in you. By the multitude of your merchandise they have filled the midst of you with violence, and you have sinned: therefore I will cast you as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty, you have corrupted your wisdom by reason of your brightness: I will cast you to the ground, I will lay you before kings, that they may behold you.

We can see in verse 17 that pride was the father of Satan's sin. His heart was lifted up because of his beauty. Beauty here does not simply mean mind-bogglingly beautiful. It actually includes everything that we might consider to be beautiful. He not only looked good, he was intelligent, he was creative, he was powerful in office, as well as a being simply powerful in terms of influence. So beauty includes a great deal more. You might almost say that as far as anybody, anything created by God, he was the epitome, and beauty stands for that epitome. We find that it was pride that goaded him into what he did.

In verse 14 we find that the greater—God the Creator—set the lesser, Satan, into his place, and it was a very high responsibility, as we all understand. But despite his beauty, and despite his position that he had been set into, his pride goaded him into believing that he was an unfairly treated victim. It motivated him to initiate a way of life based within a framework of competition. The "Day Star" became an adversary. He became an adversary because his pride would not allow him to feel content in what he had been set to. It actually drove him to believe that he could defeat his Creator in a war, and by his spirit he has deceitfully drawn humanity into this same frame of thinking.

I think that you are aware that in the book of Job, the adversary Satan, is called "the king over all the children of pride." He is its father, and that pride that he has is in us, and now we humans too can be children of pride. That kind of pride does not come from God the Father. The kind of pride that Satan has came from him, and it is in us. Because of what Satan has done, we are almost constantly running into each other in our desire to have, to get, or to be this or that.

Pride is the first cause. The second cause I believe is really an off-shoot of the first one, pride, and it is the desire, the drive, to have complete control of our lives, to have things be the way we want them to be. Just think of Satan again. His pride goads him into thinking that he is a victim. He became discontented. So then what did he do? He tried to control the situation. How did he try to do it? By making war. By making war, he became the adversary of God.

We're going to go now to Isaiah 14:12-14.

Isaiah 14:12-14 How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, [or "Day Star" as it says in the margin], son of the morning! How are you cut down to the ground, which did weaken the nations! For you have said in your heart, I will ascend into heaven, [he always had access to God's throne. This is picturing something different from just going up there.] I will *exalt my* throne [There it is! Pride—a position of power!], above the stars of God [Stars is a symbol of

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other angels. He is going to be above all of them.]: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north [where God's throne is]: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High [or as the Hebrew can be translated, "I will *be* the Most High." "I will be in complete control."]

Have you seen a pattern here, from a sense of victimization to a sense of discontent, to an action of taking, moving, to take control?

Satan played his cards very well. When he confronted Adam and Eve in the garden, he craftily used a measure of discontent to motivate Adam and Eve toward sin. Let's go back to Genesis 3:1-5.

Genesis 3:1-5 Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yes, has God said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die. And the serpent said unto the woman, You shall not surely die: For God does know that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

Satan opens his attack to influence them by saying, "Yes, has God said," or, as it is better translated into contemporary English, "Has God *indeed* said," There is an element of indignation in the way it was said that emphasizes his hypocritical amazement that God would restrict their freedom of choice. He is implying that, "If *I* were in control, I wouldn't do such a thing." You see, the first thing that he did was immediately suggest to them the thought that they were being victimized, that they weren't being fairly treated, that God was holding out on them.

You can tell actually by verse 2 that they had already fallen into the trap, because when she responded to what Satan said, she left out a very important word. If you want to check this back in Genesis 2:16, God said that they could "*freely* eat of all the trees of the garden." In other words, there was an unrestricted access to everything that was there except for that one tree. So discontentment is introduced, because it is much easier to lead a person into war if he is already discontented. Satan's opening remark therefore centered on a restriction rather than emphasizing the fact that God has also

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said they could freely eat the overwhelming majority of all the other trees.

Surely Satan was implying that God wouldn't deny them the pleasure of such a good thing. He then clinched the temptation in their minds by luring them with the desire that they could be as gods, implying that by following his suggestion they would have far more choices, and they would be in complete control. "You shall be as gods. You can set the standards."

This procedure here with Adam and Eve is nothing more than a crafty parallel of Isaiah 14:12-14 and Ezekiel 28:14.

I think that it is interesting to know, to understand, that God is teaching us this right at the very beginning of the book. We're only into chapter 3 and God is introducing the course of very much sin, because feelings of discontentment, annoyance and irritation are fertile breeding ground for much sin, and feelings of being victimized by somebody in authority usually.

Adam and Eve couldn't resist the process of evil without an element of annoyance mixed in with it. In addition to that there was incredulity at being denied what seems to have a pleasure within it. All of this together worked to destroy their sense of what they thought was fair, and right along with it their peace of mind. When the desire came to be in a different circumstance, they fell right into the trap and sinned.

This is interesting because there is kind of another side to this that is helpful to us, and that is that it seems to be that in just a moment or two, they went from being the most blessed of all people, to discontented victims. Even though they were surrounded by the utmost in beauty and productivity, it was all forgotten in the desire to satisfy the unsettling feeling of victimization, combined with the desire to be in control. Using the same source of crafty reasoning, Satan has managed to convince, to lure all of mankind into following him. Let's go back and just re-confirm this in Ephesians 2. Revelation 12:9 says that "Satan has deceived the whole world," and this is how he has done it.

Ephesians 2:2 Wherein in time past you walked [you lived your life] according to the course [the tendency, the path, the thought, the pursuit, the deeds] of this world [a system based upon philosophies, values that are not of God, or they are mixed with good and evil values, ways], according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.

There is a play on words in regard to this word "spirit," because at one and the same time it indicates a spirit being, and that spirit being is named "the prince of the power of the air." We understand that this is Satan. The other part of this play on the word spirit is that it is an invisible influence, a power as it were, emanating and affecting us. This is the spirit that drives this world, destroying peaceful cooperation.

Considering what we have just seen, beginning in Ezekiel 28, Isaiah 14, Genesis 3, is it any wonder that God charges us not to love the world, all of which is based upon the pattern of thinking that has its source in the "king of pride"? Now we were born into a system that is founded upon and operates on values that are guaranteed to produce a range of intensity of war. Romans 8:6 says, "to be carnally minded is death," because "the carnal mind is enmity [it's at war] against God." (Romans 8:7). Romans 8:6 also says "that to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

We don't want to be at war with God, but the prince of the power of the air *is* at war against God, and his spirit affects us. It affects all of mankind, and brings us into war, at enmity against God, "for it is not subject to the law of God." And not being subject to the law of God, we sin. That's what sin is. Sin is the transgression of God's law, and so we show God our heart toward Him through sin, which is breaking God's law, and the carnal mind cannot be changed. It says, "neither indeed can be" subject to the law of God. But we were born into this system that is founded upon Satan's values, and so it is bound to produce a wide range of intensity of war.

Let me go on record at this point to let you know that not all feelings of discontent and victimization that disturbs our peace are wrong. I'm not saying that we should never take action against them. I am saying that it is a time when we get disturbed, when our peace is broken and discontentment enters in, when we begin feeling like a victim. I am saying that it is a time to be very careful, because we might just be ready to step into a mine field—a mine field that is laden with destructive sin, rather than an equitable solution to a mind-disturbing circumstance. The solution to this lies in a complex picture of the truer understanding of vision, of self-control, and of patience.

Let's go to I Timothy 6:1-10. I want to read the whole paragraph because all of it touches in some way on this subject.

I Timothy 6:1-10 Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren: but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and

exhort. If any man teaches otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness: He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof comes envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings. Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw yourself. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Humanly we attempt to alleviate, or to moderate, or to take the edge off our feelings of discontent by relentlessly pursuing such things as money, or it might be better to say "pleasurable things," and/or circumstances.

Now overlooking here in this paragraph is an illustration of this process that produced Satan's war against God. Did you notice how the paragraph ended? It ended, in the last three or four verses, with an admonition to be careful about the pursuit of money.

Why do we pursue money? I'm not talking about us specifically, but we have to think about the principle that Paul is talking about here, because we know that there are many people who do pursue money. The reason is because we believe that money gives us the power to control circumstances so that we won't be so subject to so many variables, and thus we can be at peace. To some degree it works, but what is Paul getting at here?

We'll see as we go along that one of the things that he is getting at here is that money does not change human nature. Money will not change the spirit that is working within us, and so a person can get a lot of money and still, after a little while, become discontented. What then do we want? We want more money, or more things, or more power. This is why someone like J. Paul Getty said, "I would give all of my wealth for one good marriage." I believe he had at least five marriages. This statement he made is kind of mind-boggling. I don't know whether he really meant it, but at least he meant the thought that was behind it. I don't know what the problem was. Did he pick his wives up the wrong way, at the wrong place? Did he use the wrong kind of judgment? I don't know what it was. He didn't know, you see, and his money was not changing the

restless nature that was within him.

Let's go to Ecclesiastes 7:12 to see an important principle in regard to this. Solomon saw it, and so in his meditation and writings, he wrote this down:

Ecclesiastes 7:12 For wisdom is a defense, . . .

My Bible margin has a note on this word "defense," and says it is "a protective shade." It is a shield that protects people from the vicissitudes of life. Solomon goes on to say:

Ecclesiastes 7:12 . . . and money is a defense, . . .

Remember that I said that people pursue money because they want to be in a circumstance where they can control a great deal more, and I said that to some degree it works. Here's the word of God that agrees that money is a defense. But he also says:

Ecclesiastes 7:12 . . . but the excellency [advantage] of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to them that have it.

That is something money cannot do. Wisdom *is* a protective shade against the assaults of life, and it has the advantage over money in that wisdom has the possibility of doing something that money can never do, and that is give life.

Go now to Romans 7, and we'll just pick up a thought of Paul's, because we always have to be aware of it, and I know that we are aware of it, but it gives us an insight to why wisdom (knowledge) is better than money. It is better to pursue wisdom. Of course, what the Bible is talking about is the knowledge of God.

Romans 7:22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.

This is something in his heart and mind, and he loved it. He took delight in it.

Romans 7:23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Ah! That "spirit of the world" was there. It is in human nature, and human nature is *driven* by it. The advantage that wisdom and knowledge have over money is that if it is the wisdom and knowledge of God, then it will drive human nature out, as we will see as we go along.

Let's go back again to I Timothy. I want you to notice some things that Paul says as he leads up to that admonition.

I Timothy 6:4 He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof comes envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings.

Did you note in this paragraph that people, who by their conduct, reveal that they are pursuing the wrong things? The first thing he said is that they are proud. If you look in a modern translation it may say "conceited." Conceit is just a form of pride. They are "proud" and "doting." Do you know what the word "doting" means in Greek? They are "doting about questions and strifes of words"? It means that they are obsessed with disputes. There's the evidence. They go to war. They go to war over words, over the meanings of words, splitting hairs about things.

Paul is showing here that there is evidence that comes up about people, revealing that they are pursuing the wrong things. "Doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof comes envy." Look at this fruit again in verse 4, which says, "whereof comes envy." Oh boy! This really produces peaceful situations, doesn't it? It produces "envy, strife, railings (or revilings), evil surmisings." Do you know what evil surmisings are? That means you're being suspicious.

Paul then goes on to say that such people are "perverse." This is interesting. Modern translations say "they involve themselves in useless wranglings." They have "corrupt minds that are destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness." In other words, these discontented people carnally use church as a means of improving one's self in this world.

Understand what money stands for here, because the pursuit of money is not the only thing that fits the principle that Paul is writing about here. What he is talking about here is the spirit of personal profit motive. We might call it "personal profit" or "advantage." That is a whole, wrong approach to the worship of God, because it has its basis in discontentment. That's a wrong place from which to begin the worship of God, as we saw all the way back in Genesis 3.

This spirit of personal profit shown here can be extended to such things as healing; being in the church to be healed; improving one's social life, or even marriage for that matter. Now none of these things is any more sinful than money is. Money is a neutral. Those things of and by themselves are good, but they are *not* the reason we are in the church. That's what he's getting at here. We are not in the church for personal gain.

What is shown here is that these people's discontentment is motivating them into venting their energies in the wrong direction, and that these people either lost or never had the right focus. That why he says "destitute of the truth." They never really had the right focus as to why they were called. Paul gives ample evidence in the paragraph that the people carrying these thoughts and activities have brought them into the church, and have not confronted them nor overcome them.

Now brethren, here comes a measure of understanding of wisdom that helps a great deal in dealing with the vicissitudes of life, and is a step in the right direction toward producing peace. We must always remember *why* we have been called into the church, and why the church even exists. In plain language, we have been called into the church to prepare for the Kingdom of God, and the church exists to teach us factors of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom toward achieving success in this.

We have not been called into the church for personal profit in such things as money, healing, marriage, social position, or whatever. It is our calling that separates us from this world in *order* that we focus on preparation for the kingdom of God. That calling is intended to redirect the focus of life away from ourselves, the world, and the achievements those in the world strive for in order to calm the disquieting spirit of victimization and lack of control that they feel in their heart of hearts. There is a better way and a better end to do this than the world's methods.

Sometimes one's calling involves dramatic changes in status, in direction of life, manner of thinking, and perspective of what life is all about. I want you to turn with me to Hebrews 11, because we're going to jump through this. We won't spend a great deal of time here, but just enough time so that we see what happened to these men as they were called, and why they were a success at what they did.

Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear [with deep respect], prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

I don't know what Noah was before his calling. But when he was called, what was he called to do? He was called to make a witness against the world by building a boat. I'm pretty sure that Noah was not a boat builder, and so Noah's life was completely reoriented toward an end that he never dreamed of until it was revealed by the Creator, that He was in retaliation against man's sins and was going to unleash the worst period of warfare the world of mankind has ever seen. God would be the One making war, and He wiped out the world completely.

What I am driving at is what did Noah do that produced the peaceful result? He did the work that God gave him to do. He prepared an ark to the saving of his house, and he had a place of safety while the warfare was going on. He was at peace while the rest of the world got killed.

Hebrews 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing where he went.

I don't know whether you have ever done any reading of the world from which Abraham departed. It was highly developed. It was a far cry from what this world has a tendency to think and teaches us about Ur of the Chaldees. The evolutionary thinking that is prevalent in academia makes us think that Abraham came from an uneducated group of people, clod-kicking country bumpkins. No, he did not. I will not go into it. He turned from a highly developed civilization to become a pilgrim who never owned a solid permanent home or a piece of land, except for a burial plot for Sarah and himself, in order to meet God's requirement for him. That's what God called him to do in order for him to be prepared to be "the father of the faithful." "Abraham, *this* is My will for you."

There are strong indications that Abraham was an astronomer, a mathematician. That world knew how to do calculus. They had homes that had running water on the second floor. They had indoor toilets. That's far enough for right now.

Hebrews 11:22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

Think about Joseph. He went from spoiled favorite son to hostage, to innocent jailbird, to chief advisor to Pharaoh, to patriarch of Abraham's seed—all at God's direction—to prepare him for what he will be doing in the resurrection. Of course, God accomplished

a great deal through him in the meantime.

Are you beginning to get the idea? When God calls us and puts us in His church, it is to depart from the world that we have been called from, and the course of that world, and the systems of that world, to be prepared to learn God's systems, God's ways, God's standards, and to learn to be content with what He supplies to us and requires of us as we go along the way.

Hebrews 11:24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

Moses was raised as part of Pharaoh's family, right in the heart of Egypt's ruling household. He was a man schooled in all the wisdom of this world, and accustomed to the dignity of office, of power and social station, to become a vagabond from Egyptian justice, in order to become a leader with a shepherd's heart.

Now Paul is not named here, but his life too shows a dramatic redirection of the course of his life, beginning at his calling. He then had a life of pretty much economic instability, and as far as we're able to tell, poor health, a great deal of movement from place to place, imprisonment, shipwreck, persecution, beatings, no family life as far as we know, and martyrdom.

Hebrews 11:32-35 And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.

Do you suppose any of those folks were discontented? I think they were, but I think they conquered the feelings. How did they conquer it? By turning their energies in the right direction: according to the will of God.

Hebrews 11:36-39 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were

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sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.

Much of what these people went through was not a pleasant prospect for us to think upon, but they did what they did by faith, believing that they had been called to a different goal in life than others. They put the suffering behind them with a calm understanding that they walked to the beat of a different drummer.

I went through all these examples because I want us to see that faith in this vision, faith in this understanding, that God is really working in and through us, is the key element to facing the tribulations of life with a calm assurance that allows one to act to produce solutions without going to war, as Satan and this world does.

We're going to look at five scriptures, and I won't be spending a lot of time expounding on them, because I think that as we begin to read they will put together in this sequence a few principles that are good to know.

Turn to John 16:33.

John 16:33 These things I have spoken unto you that in Me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Let's look again at the verse we started with in John 14:27.

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Go now to II Peter 1:3.

II Peter 1:3-4 According as His divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness [Do you see that? We have already been given all things that pertain to life and godliness], through the knowledge of

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Him that has called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.

James 3:18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

We can see that all these scriptures have to do with peace in some way or another. From this series of verses we can learn that peace is a quality that we possess *in Christ*. "My peace I *give* unto you." It says, "*in Christ*," meaning as a part of His spiritual body, as a part of this calling. It is an aspect of our relationship with Him.

This peace has two aspects to it. First, it deals with or involves reconciliation with God. Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." I read this because it is entirely possible that we overlook, or forget, or maybe never know, because we don't realize how much disturbance of mind that we have is directly the fruit of the enmity of the carnal mind (Romans 8:7), of human nature in its silent rage against God. Does Satan rage against God? You had better believe that he does! Is Satan's spirit going out over this world? Has he deceived this whole world? Has he pumped his spirit so that it becomes the foundation for the course of this world? Absolutely! This is what we were born into. That mind of Satan's is constantly at war. It is restless, discontented. He wants to gain control yet, so much of our discontent, disturbance of mind, is directly the fruit, like Paul says there in Romans 7, of this law that is working within us; another law in our members—human nature in its silent rage against God.

The second is in reality an outgrowth, a fruit, of the first. Peace is a quiet and comforting assurance that all is well. Remember I said that peace has two parts to it: 1) Reconciliation with God, and 2) a quiet and comforting assurance that all is well, because the relationship established through the reconciliation is being supported and strengthened. This one becomes ever more important as we move through life, as we shall see before this sermon is over.

Remember from John 16:33, that Christ did not promise us uninterrupted tranquility. He said, "In the world you *shall* have tribulation." The primary meaning of "tribulation" is "pressure." Pressure produces discontentment. Pressure disturbs our peace of mind. These pressures of which Christ speaks are those that come to the Christian directly because of his relationship to Christ, and what happened to Christ happens to us. This world, driven by the spirit of Satan, hates Christ and anybody *in Christ*, and therefore attempts to derail the relationship, just like he did with Adam and Eve at the very beginning. That was what he was trying to do. He was trying to derail the relationship that they had with God.

The mind-disturbing pressure is not merely the obvious persecution, but also temptations the world and its ways throw against the Christian's path. I know that you feel that. This world is a constant pressure on us.

We learn from two of those verses that peace is something given, and that this peace is accomplished in a different manner from the world's. See, "Not as the world give I unto you." The general answer is that this peace is accomplished through faith in doing the work of God within our calling, and faith, because it is the foundation of all things *in Christ*. It is also given as an element or a quality of receiving the divine nature. (II Peter 1:3) "[He] has given unto us all things [including peace], . . . through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue."

We know that our sins are forgiven. We know that we have been given His spirit, and so Romans 5:5 adds to this to help us understand how peace can come to us. Paul says, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the spirit," and so is peace, because peace is an element of the divine nature.

From these five verses we learn from Galatians 5:22 that peace can be produced within a person as a fruit of the spirit. Now understand this to mean that it is a quality intensified by using God's spirit.

Finally we are shown that those who *have* this peace can *make* peace beyond themselves for the benefit of others. It's only because we stop ourselves, we control ourselves, not allowing ourselves to go to war.

Christ is intimating that His peace is a different kind of peace from what is available through the normal channels of the world. The world's peace largely results from having the discontent calmed by means of things, or thinking that one has enough power to have control. Christ's peace is a result of faith, and it is because of a relationship established through faith. The faith of God is in control, that God is working out a

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purpose in and through us—in fact even in spite of us to a very great degree. It is a faith that we are not merely pawns, but actual participants in the most wonderful process and program that could ever happen to a human being: to be called.

Let's go to Psalm 119:165. This is one of those verses that ought to be in our memory bank.

Psalm 119:165 Great peace have they which love thy law; and nothing shall offend them.

This is not merely peace, but *great* peace. It means overflowing, abundant, broad, deep, consistent. Understanding this verse opens up a very important aspect of peace. The first thing we're going to do here is look more closely at the word *law*. I'm doing this because when we hear the word "law," the first thing that usually leaps to our mind is the Ten Commandments. That's fine, but it's very limited, and we cannot stop there with our thinking, especially within the context of this Psalm and its connection to peace. There is much more involved here than merely an abstract loving of God's law. What does the author intend that we understand by his use of the word "law"?

Turn to Psalm 119:1

Psalm 119:1 Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.

Now here we are confronted by law once again, but in the following verses we also confront seven synonyms: in verse 2, *testimonies*; in verse 4, *precepts*; in verse 5, *statutes*; in verse 6, *commandments*; in verse 7, *judgments*; in verse 9, *word*; and then there is another Hebrew word that is translated "word," and it means a little bit different from the normal one we see in verse 9. It could actually and probably should be translated into our English word "promise."

In addition to that we also find very frequently in this Psalm the word "way," meaning path or course, and "name," standing for God's reputation of all that He is—His character, His personality, His powers, and so forth—and faithfulness. All of these terms are related.

The word "law" is the very familiar "Torah" which is derived from a verbal root meaning "to teach." Let's feed that right in Psalm 119:165. "O how I love your teaching!" So we

get away from the more correct use of the word "law." It begins to push a specific code or regulation into the background, and we come to the more common, broader term "teaching." This verbal root in its noun form means teaching, instruction, or doctrine. "O how I love your instruction!" "O how I love your doctrine!"

When we put all of these other terms like testimonies, precepts, statutes, and commandments together, it leads to the undeniable conclusion that the entire Psalm is a paean of praise and gratitude for the Bible—the whole shmear, and not just the Ten Commandments, and not just a specific regulation. It encompasses the whole word of God. The word of God, the Bible, is the express *will* of God, involving duties for us. We could put the word "will" in there. "O how I love Your will!—the whole will!" "O how I love the duties that You require of me!" The psalmist is telling us that loving God's word will produce peace. But don't overlook his use of the word "love." His use includes loving the Creator with just as much intensity as loving His instruction, because the Creator *gave* the word.

Now do we show that love in practical application by submitting to the Lawgiver in obedience? I ask this because there are plenty of religious people around in this world who know a great deal about the Bible and they study it frequently. They will tell you that they love it, but they don't obey God in many areas that are obvious to you—things that anybody in his study would surely come across.

Now love has two sides to it. I John 5:3 says, "This is the love of God, that you keep His commandments." Love is keeping, submitting to, and obeying God's commandments. That's the duty-side of love, but love is also an intense affection. The great commandment of the law, Jesus said, is to love God with all of our heart, with all of our soul, and with all of our mind (Matthew 22). "Heart" is put there for "affection." Incidentally, it's interesting that comes first. "Soul," meaning our life, and then "mind," has to do with the processes of decision making, and then obeying. He says, "The second is like it. You are to love your neighbor as yourself." That is, we are to love God with all of our being in every aspect of life.

Now let's feed that back into Psalm 119:165, and we begin to see that there is a gold mine of ways to peace here. The love of His instruction must begin with and have its roots in a love for Him personally, and extend out to a love for His word, as shown by submission to His instruction. We love the law only when and because we first love Him.

I saw something in the movies a while back. This was a movie with Clark Gable and Jane Russell in it. Clark Gable played the part of a cowboy named Ben, who was a man of high character and respected by those who knew him well. They were on a cattle

drive, and Jane Russell asked one of the cowboys, "Why are you so devoted to Ben?" This cowboy replied, "Oh, two times he saved my life." And then he said a great deal more, giving some specifics of what happened and how it came that Ben had saved his life, and then he ended by saying, "How can you help but not love the man who saved your life?"

Now apply this to Christ. Has He saved our life? How can we help but love Him? And then this ranch-hand went on to say, "If I was told tomorrow I have to die for Ben, I would say, 'What time do you want me to do it?'" He said that in order to show his devotion. He was at peace with that.

We're leading to something here. It is this combination of love for the Creator and love for His way that produces peace. There's a little bit more to it yet. In order to reach this one must really know God. When one really knows God, he knows that despite the way things might look on the surface, the overall reality is that all is well because we couldn't be in better hands anywhere, at any time. This is faith in action, and we will act and feel accordingly, and so there is peace despite the pressures.

There are people who calmly react in certain situations because they are confident in their own abilities to handle the situation. But we are confident and at peace in God because of His sovereignty over all, and therefore we have a different kind of peace. We have a peace "not as the world gives." I John 2:17 says, "He that does the will of God abides forever." If we love Him and His will, we will do His will.

Are you beginning to understand that discontent and war, in all their degrees of intensity, are the fruits of going contrary to the word, the will of God, either by you or by those people around you? Our human spirit, to one degree or another, rages against God and His will and His way, and so is everybody else's around us, and that is where all of the discontent, all of the turmoil, all of the war, all of the feelings of victimization are generated. The solution is to do the will of God, the instruction of God, and grow to love Him.

Let me show you something that is really rich. Notice the last phrase in Psalm 119:165. "Great peace have they which love thy law: and *nothing* shall offend them." That is a promise. "*Nothing* shall offend them." My Bible margin has another translation of this. It says, "There is no stumbling block to them." This is interesting because in I John 2:10, John quotes this, but he changes it just a little bit. John wrote, "He that loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no *cause* for stumbling in him." You see, there is no cause in him for stumbling.

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Now why do we sin? We sin because we give in to temptation to sin. What the author of this Psalm is saying (and of course we know the real author is God), is that the combination of loving God and His express will, with both affection and duty in submission, will destroy, it will nullify the power of temptation to sin. Sin will lose its attraction, and there will be no occasion of stumbling in us.

Let me give a simple illustration. Men, women, you ought to be able to relate to this. Do you love your husband? Do you love your wife? I will tell you this, that if you really love your mate you will do absolutely nothing to break the bond of trust and fidelity that there is between the two of you. Sin loses its temptation—the sin of adultery, the sin of lust—because that other person means so much to you that you won't even think of letting that thing ever get started. That's what the psalmist is saying here. He is saying that if we love God and His will with that kind of intensity, sin almost becomes impossible to do.

Can you understand why Jesus didn't sin? He loved His Father so much He wouldn't let it get started. Paul confirms this in Philippians 4:7.

Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep [guard, preserve] your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Let's go back to Genesis 1:31.

Genesis 1:31 And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

Genesis 2:1-2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made.

The word "rest" is a synonym of the word "peace." We could put "Sabbath" in there as well, because Sabbath means "rest." God Himself set the example of how peace is produced. God found rest, satisfaction, comfort, and a sense of accomplishment. When we look back to Genesis 1:1-2, we read this:

Genesis 1:1-2 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, And

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the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

The book opens up with God's spirit going across the earth, as it were, surveying all of the damage that was on the earth. But in the following verses, all the way through the chapter, what does God do? He begins to carry out His will of reconstructing things in preparation for the next step in His purpose. When all of that is complete, He finds rest, peace, in what He accomplishes according to His will.

Right there, brethren, in the first chapter of the Bible, is the pattern. Peace is found. It is accomplished. It is the fruit of doing God's will. Even God gets peace from doing His will, and His sons will also find peace in doing His will. Peace is destroyed through pride and the desire to control according to one's own will. Peace is achieved through faith, working through love for God and doing His will.