

~Other Speakers M-R: Thomas Reade:

65. ON PEACE

There is something peculiarly calming to the soul in these beautiful words; "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you." This is a world of sin and trouble. Here, thorns and thistles grow around us; painful emblems of the human heart, and of the sad change which passed on Adam at the fall.

Though painful the change, yet, with a pleasing mournful recollection, our minds delight to contemplate the first parents of our race enjoying communion with their God, and happy communion with each other in the bowers of Eden. All was, then, serene and peaceful. No indulged sin poisoned their joys, or caused the divine countenance to be turned away from them. They had no feeling, but love and gratitude; no desire, but to serve and please their Almighty Creator. This happy state was, alas! of short duration. They listened to the voice of the tempter, and fell from holiness, from happiness, and from God.

He, who lately held sweet converse with his creatures, now banished them from Paradise, denied them all access to the tree of life, that pledge of immortality, and, in righteous judgment, pronounced the curse upon them. They now became dying creatures doomed through their willful disobedience to present and eternal misery. The ground was cursed for their sake. Refusing its spontaneous fruitfulness, it required their toil and labor; while the prickly thorn and thistle sprang up as silent monitors to remind them of their sins.

May we not ask with anxious solicitude, How can such fallen, wretched creatures be kept in peace, "in perfect peace?" What warrant have we to trust in God, or stay our minds upon him, as our righteousness and strength? This important question has been answered by God himself. He graciously promised a Savior, even at the time when Justice pronounced death on the transgressors. Thus mercy rejoiced against judgment, and shed a ray of heavenly light over the benighted souls of our fallen parents.

In the fullness of time, Jesus, the promised seed of the woman, was born. The ransom-price was paid by his precious blood-shedding upon the cross; and the gates of heaven were opened to all believers. The Gospel was preached, and pardon proclaimed to every humble, penitent, believing soul. All who lived before the advent of Christ, looking to the promise, and resting in the covenant of grace, were accepted in the beloved; and those who have lived since his advent in the flesh, can say, "whom having not seen, we love; and in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." To all such, the prophet proclaims peace; "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you."

Here, then, we learn the nature of true religion. It is staying the mind upon God. As unbelieving sinners, we cannot do this; as believing penitents, we may. Yes! it is the privilege of every contrite soul, thus to repose upon the mercies of God in Christ Jesus.

Oh blessed truth! though by nature far from God, we are brought near by the blood of Christ; though lying under the curse of a broken law, we are delivered from condemnation through the death of Jesus; though helpless, restless, and wretched in ourselves, we are privileged, through faith, to stay our minds upon God, as our strength, our rest, and our peace. Oh what a work of grace, mercy, and love! Bless the Lord, Oh my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name.

We also learn where true stability is to be found. It is in God. Everything here in this world is fickle and changing. But that God who gives peace unto his people, "changes not, nor knows the shadow of a turn." The soul, therefore, which is stayed on him, finds rest and peace. If I rest my hopes upon an earthly friend, death removes the prop, and I fall, and mourn, and weep. If I place my confidence on riches, they fly away as an eagle towards heaven, and leave me to regret the folly of my covetous desires. If I build upon the breath of fame, it dies away, or changes into scorn or slander. If I repose upon the rosy couch of earthly comforts, how ever lawful and endearing, these lovely flowers will quickly fade, and leave me nothing but the thorns. Jesus is the only source of comfort; the only spring of joy. From him proceed all the peace and purity which gladden and beautify the church of God.

Oh my soul, never look for peace from the creature; never expect it from yourself. He who made peace for you by the blood of his cross, can alone impart peace to your trembling conscience. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. While rejecting his salvation, peace can never be enjoyed. "There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked." Solemn truth! no less engraven on the sinner's heart, than recorded in the book of God. How can peace dwell in a bosom on which the heavy curse of the Almighty continually abides?

The world may appear smiling and happy, but its appearances are deceitful. True peace descends from above. It is the fruit of faith. The Holy Spirit alone can produce this blessedness in the soul; and, therefore, none can possess it but the faithful in Christ Jesus. The world can yield no solid peace to its most zealous votaries. Whatever I possess, without the presence of my heavenly Father, is unsatisfying and unstable. Oh my soul, seek a higher bliss than any which earth can give.

"Blessed Spirit of peace and love, place me on the rock of ages; let me never, never stray from you. Be the guide of my steps, and the guardian of my days. Give me your peace always by all means, and make me a living

temple consecrated wholly unto you".
How great the peace, how blest the joy,
Each true believer only feels!
Satan can never the bliss destroy,
Which faith in Jesus sweetly yields.
Amid the ruffling scenes of life,
Amid the storms which rage below,
A calm retreat, removed from strife,
Does Jesus on his saints bestow.
He kindly spreads his loving arms,
As parent wings protect their brood;
He shields from danger and alarms;
He fills his saints with every good.
Oh could I call this blessing mine;
How rich, how vast the sacred store!
Blest Savior! grant one gracious smile,
And earth shall hold my heart no more.
One gracious smile of heavenly love
Would melt my heart and lay me low;
One blissful smile, which saints above,
Which happy angels ever know.