

**THE PEACE OF THE RIGHTEOUS****~Other Speakers G-L: Allan Halton:**

Just about everybody, I suppose, wants peace, so they can do the things they want to do and live a happy untroubled life.

But how many want righteousness? It's interesting to note in the Bible how consistently peace and righteousness are linked together. In fact they are inseparable. According to the Bible there is no peace without righteousness.

Six times in the Bible God is called "the God of peace." This God of peace dwelt in a Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is therefore called the Prince of peace (Isa. 9.6), the Lord of peace (2 Thes. 3.16), and the king of peace (Heb. 7.2). This last title is combined with another—king of righteousness. It's here that many lose interest in being this king's subjects. Sure, they would like His rule of peace, who wouldn't. But they don't want to sit under His rule of righteousness. So they forfeit His rule of peace, and choose rather a way that means contention, discord, turmoil, strife... and ultimately war.

The way they choose is called—sorry, I know it's kind of a dirty word these days but I am going to use it anyway—it's called wickedness. And what is the portion the wicked cut out for themselves?

But the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked (Isa. 57.20,21).

As our great high priest after the model of Melchizedek, Christ is king of peace only because He is king of righteousness. First and foremost it is righteousness that is His domain. He has the power to minister His righteousness to those who dwell in His kingdom. The result of this righteousness is His peace. He is king of righteousness and king of peace. His kingdom is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14.17).

This king, ministering the blessing upon His subjects, would therefore raise His hand and pronounce, "Righteousness and peace be unto you."

However, His New Covenant emissaries often used the salutation (or some form of it), "Grace and peace be unto you" ( Rom. 1.7, 1 Cor. 1.3, 2 Cor. 1.2, Gal. 1.3, Eph. 1.2, 1 Pt. 1.2, 2 Pt. 1.2, etc.).

It can only be because the gift of the grace of God is the gift of righteousness.

...Much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ (Rom. 5.17).

It's wrong thinking to think of God's grace as something that makes allowances for unrighteousness, and we can sin because God is gracious. No. What His grace does is enable us to walk in His righteousness. The righteousness of God is a gift infused with His grace, thus enabling those who receive it to walk in it.

And this is the key to the peace of God. When we are right with God, listening to Him, seeking to please Him, to obey Him, to follow through with what He is saying to us, the result will be His presiding peace in our lives. It will be automatic.

And how are we made right with God? First, and primarily, by receiving the peace offering He proffered us at Calvary.

Therefore being justified (made righteous) by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ... (Rom. 5.1).

It was there at Calvary that God made peace with you and me and all those who were at enmity with Him. For in the Cross He dealt with the source of all enmity—our sin—and offered us freely the gift of righteousness. So if we haven't already done so, let us humble ourselves and receive this gracious offering and gift. And when we have done so let us stand our ground here, regardless of the whisperings and reminders of the Accuser about past sins. He is a deceiver; we are accepted in the Beloved, and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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Secondly, God has provision for you and me—His grace—to continue to walk in His righteousness. And as long as I do this, and keep in right relationship with Him, I can expect and enjoy His peace. If I disobey or happen to stumble into sin— though it is not necessary to do so, He has provision for a walk of righteousness— He has provision for me to get right with Him again (1 Jn. 2.1), and continue on in righteousness. And enjoy His peace again.

Only where there is righteousness is there peace.

And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance (confidence) forever (Isa. 32.17).

George Fox sought to encourage Friends who in his day were being troubled and harassed and persecuted and jailed in stinking jails. He wrote to them:

Yet all this cannot disturb the peace of the righteous.

I love that phrase—the peace of the righteous. That is the secret of peace—righteousness—and not our own righteousness, but the righteousness of God. I may not have happy circumstances. I may be afflicted. I may be deluged with problems and troubles. Sorrows like sea billows may roll. But do I have God's righteousness? Then, regardless of all else, whatever my state, I have peace with God. Where righteousness (or grace) reigns so does peace reign, though troubles may be all about me.

Just as Jesus encouraged His disciples as He was about to leave them:

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (Jn. 14.27).

These things have I spoken unto you that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world (Jn. 16.33).

Let me conclude with this promise. Peter talks of a day when this whole world will be in the midst of the flames of judgment. It sounds very frightening, very fearsome. And Peter realized this. For he goes on, “Nevertheless we according to His promise look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pt. 3.13). Nevertheless, Peter says. In other words, as frightening as it is, there's a promise in the midst of the coming judgments. Though judgments are at hand, God's purpose being to deal with all wickedness and sin and unrighteousness, the end result will be a world in which righteousness is at home.

And oh... that can only mean one thing. Peace. And oh, what peace. Oh, the peace of a world in which righteousness—our Lord Jesus Christ Himself—is not an unwanted alien, but is now at home and welcome!

My response is... Lord Jesus, I can't wait for that! I want your righteousness to be at home even now. Let righteousness—You Yourself—be at home in me. In my heart. That way I can enjoy the peace of God that passeth understanding though all is turmoil about me. Amen.