

Intro: Korean islands being shelled, war games in the Sea, a bomber sat beyond the tree lit in festivity. Peace on earth, goodwill to men on whom His favor rests? Tears upon the pillow in another night's unrest, slaying invisible dragons of shame and worthlessness. Peace on earth, goodwill to men on whom His favor rests? Pursuing satisfaction in the bottle or the bed, faster surfing bigger plates more channels hide the dread. Changing houses, changing jobs, changing spouses like we change our jeans, potions made to soothe the soul have outcome yet unseen. Peace on earth, goodwill to men on whom His favor rests?

All around us, even within us, there are deeply disheveled souls. From the tears of anxious job-seeker to the hatred of spurned terrorist there is thread of consistency. There is no joyful peace. So, we are commanded to rejoice, to rest, to yield to others...and to pray. And here's the thing: There is promise attached to the Lord's command to pray. Bring all your petitions and all your prayers to Him and He promises to do something. He has not promised to make life easy, He has not promised to grant you your wish. He is not a genie in a bottle that comes to do your bidding no matter how hard you rub that lamp. He is God. He is near. What He has promised is His peace. Peace though dangers may surround you and peace though life may not "go your way." Peace that He is near, that He is good, that He is wise, that He is sovereign, that He loves you. Peace that comforts and rules our hearts to rejoice, rest, yield, and pray. Peace that sleeps in the boat while the storms around us rage on. Peace that marches to a cross while others turn away. Peace that sings with ecstatic souls though haters light the flames. Peace, true peace...it's called the peace of God.

There is a man who brings this peace. We celebrate His birth this season. It was prophesied of Him by Isaiah: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace..."

1. The Peace of God is Safety, Satisfaction, and Rest

- a. Peace, in the biblical revelation, has more to do with wholeness, complete satisfaction, than merely to the absence of conflict, although it is certainly that
 - i. It is an inner rest, the peace of a weaned baby sleeping on his mothers chest (Ps 131)
 - ii. It is the peace that surpasses the comprehension of thoughts raised up against it as to why one *shouldn't* rest, answering fears with surety
 - iii. Peace that pervades every dire circumstance and each mortal terror with a resounding rest and satisfaction "in Christ Jesus"
- b. Christ is Our Safety from Danger
 - i. The most terrifying danger of all is the terror of God's justice and righteousness.
 - 1. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb 10:31)
 - 2. There is no terror like the fear that transfixes itself upon our souls in the face of death, therefore the scripture says: "[Jesus] would free those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery." (Heb 2:15)
 - ii. The ills and terrors of this world are frightful, too, but only in so much as what lies behind and underneath them, the terror of judgment
 - 1. If we did not believe that there was a standard of righteousness that was expected us, or an exacting of vengeance upon injustices committed by us, then we would not fear death
 - 2. The expectation of "nothingness" does not invoke terror, but rather the expectation of judgment before an all-powerful God incites much fear in us
 - 3. It is His holy justice and perfect Law that rages against our sinful souls and blows with hurricane force against us, so that we respond, "Who is there to save us from this danger?!"
 - iii. In Christ there is an abundant provision of peace and safety:
 - 1. Is 32:2 – "There is a man (King of righteousness, Christ Jesus, from v1) like a refuge from the wind and shelter from the storm..."
 - a. Jesus Christ is our refuge from the storm of God's wrath, so that God is shown to be both just and merciful in the same stroke of His cross
 - b. If there be any reason for God's wrath to be upon you, Christ calls you to come to Him for shelter from the storm of God's wrath, and He will cover you and protect you, like a shelter keeps off the rain and wind

2. “Those who are in trouble and distressing fear, if they come to Jesus Christ, have this to ease them of their fears, that Christ has promised them that He will protect them; that they come upon His invitation; that Christ has plighted his faith for their security if they will close to Him; and that he is engaged by covenant to God the Father that he will save those afflicted and distressed souls that come to him...By His own act, he has engaged to be responsible for them; so that if they have exposed themselves to God’s wrath, and to the stroke of justice, it is not their concern, but his, how to answer or satisfy for what they have done. Let there be never so much wrath that they have deserved, they are as safe as if they never had deserved any, because he has undertaken to stand for them.” (Jonathan Edwards, Knowing Christ)
 3. If one is “in Christ” by faith, then the Father’s acceptance of the Son must also include His Body as well, being members of Him.
 - a. So His perfect, sinless, God-honoring obedience became ours as well, so there is no danger of God’s wrath upon us and we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ
 - b. His resurrection from the dead proves that the Father fully accepts His Son in our stead and has poured out His full and just mercy upon those who cling to Christ in grateful dependence.
 4. Come to Christ by faith to be guarded by the peace of God
 - a. If you are not in Christ, fly to Him now for safety from that which terrifies you
 - b. If you are in Christ, but have fallen to fear again in some circumstance, fly to Christ again to find Him a shelter from the wind and the storms
 - i. Doubt of His provision leads us to fear
 - ii. The remedy is the renewed faith to fly to Him as the provision of safety and defense, “When I am afraid, I will trust in you.” (Ps 56:3)
- c. Christ is Our Satisfaction in All Things
- i. Paul is going to talk about contentment in the following verses, but peace by definition involves and includes contentment, satisfaction, fullness
 - ii. Back to Is 32:2, “[The man] will be...channels of water in a dry place...”
 1. Pictured here is a dry place of the Arabian deserts, parched, sun-baked, cracked-lips.
 - a. Think of the longing you have for water on a hot day, now magnify that into a dry, sandy, arid place like the Arabian desert. This is the kind of craving that is in the background of “dry place”
 - b. When your soul is longing, pining after something that will quench its dry, hardened, fruitless, joyless ground
 2. Jesus is the channels of water in that place
 - a. not merely a trickle or a drink, but an abundance of multiple streams of clear and running water
 - b. The good news of Jesus Christ is like a great river: shallow enough for the youngest and most tentative believer to wade in and be refreshed and deep enough for the most bold and tenacious believer to plunge headlong into and find joyful satisfaction
 - i. Every reflection upon the majesty and glories of Jesus satisfies the soul and at the same time bids us deeper and deeper to swim in His excellencies
 3. Jesus is our life-giver and sustainer
 - a. Refreshment and invigoration lie in His presence
 - b. From the death of the desert’s door to the fullness and joyful flow of life from His reconciliation and life poured out upon and within us, we are called to life in Him
 4. Christ is the peace of the soul
 - a. The satisfaction in Him and in His excellent provision is like having a quenched thirst, a contented spirit, a full stomach

- b. It is the peace that leads us to leave the “things too difficult for me” in His hands and to simply drink Him in
- c. When the idols of our hearts and the craven cries of the salesmen of the soulish things reach our ears, we find that our hearts and minds are stuffed so full of God’s goodness in the gospel of Christ that we don’t even desire the empty things, the “Turkish delight” that would quickly enslave us more than satisfy us.
- d. Christ is Our Rest From Striving
 - i. Is 32:2 – “[The man] will be...like the shade of a great rock in a weary land”
 - 1. Rest from weariness and striving, from contending and defending, from struggle and the heat of life’s toils brought upon us by sin
 - a. The desert is an apt description of what we have done to this world through our sin, from the starving of goodness and the drying up of blessings, to scorpions and snakes
 - b. It is in this sin-ruined desert that Jesus enters in by His grace, to bear the heat as the unchangeable and rest-giving rock of surety
 - 2. Often our sin hounds us like the noon-day sun in the desert, haunting us and taunting us, bearing down upon us with feverish power laying low our souls in bitter guilt and fearful desperation
 - 3. Coming to Christ in humble trust is find a cure for our guilt and the power of our sin
 - a. He is like the coolness of shade, the relief from the heat of our guilt and it’s threat upon our souls
 - b. He delivers us from sin’s condemnation by becoming the condemnation for us, standing in the heat of it’s fire, bearing our shame and destruction upon the Cross so that we can sit in His cool righteousness
 - c. He even goes beyond this to make us a new creature, bearing us forth with His Spirit to new life, full of living water, to stand and labor again with joyful rest
 - 4. Coming to Christ also give us rest in the midst of afflictions
 - a. What a comfort it is to know that we have a Savior who has suffered afflictions, too, and knows what pain is, even choosing pain in order to bring us into eternal peace and wholeness
 - b. What a rest, too, to know that Christ brings us into poverty and affliction and suffering and yet He does so in order to walk with us, to be near to us, to graciously reveal to us His excellence and provision and super-abundance so that these sufferings produce an eternal weight of glory

2. The Peace of God Surpasses Our Thoughts

- a. “surpasses” (from *υπερεχω*) has two primary spheres of meaning
 - i. Value – “to be more valuable than, or better than”
 - ii. Authority – “to be over one in power or control”
- b. In either case, the peace of God transcends and primarily precedes the “thought” or “reason”
 - i. The Lord doesn’t ask us to comprehensively comprehend His will or His work, but rather to trust Him and live according to the truth that He proclaims to be true about Himself and about us
 - ii. Therefore, believing that He is near with His love, sovereign power, and wisdom in peace through Christ then...
 - 1. ...is sweeter than every reasoning
 - a. the peace of God is more valuable than our thoughts and ponderings, our wondering and questions
 - b. To be at peace, with the peace that comes from God is sweeter to the soul than comprehensive understanding of the deep things of God
 - 2. ...controls every reasoning
 - a. I’m apt to go with “controls” every thought rather than a statement of value (2 Cor 10:5), although the peace of God is more valuable than comprehensive

- comprehension of philosophical ponderings over things that have not been revealed by God
 - b. This truth, peace with God, actually transforms our thinking by renewing our minds into the likeness of the mind of Christ (Rom 12:2; Eph 4:23; 1 Cor 2)
 - c. The peace of God in Christ rules over all of our thoughts
 - i. The safety we possess by the substitutionary death and resurrected life of Christ supersedes our fear of danger or our striving after security in other things, whether it be by my own religious performance, or the achievement of some idol (wealth, power, honor, etc.)
 - ii. The satisfaction of the soul in the excellence of Christ supersedes any offer of fulfillment from some lesser object, so that I am completely satisfied in Him and all my thoughts are held captive by this central thought so my longings are not “over-desires” that rule my heart or affections
 - iii. The rest that I find in the deep, deep love of Christ supersedes any attainment or achievement of my own that makes such deceptive offers of rest, so that I have the inner peace and joyful hope in Christ even in the midst of loss or labor
 - d. This is the result of our prayers
 - i. note the transition: “but in everything by prayer and petitions let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God...”
 - ii. When we close to Christ in prayer, asking God for the things which we need in the midst of our anxious longings and our fearful joylessness, He brings us near and promises to grant us peace
3. The Peace of God Protects Our Emotions and Our Thoughts
- a. Will guard
 - i. encloses or surrounds in order to protect
 - ii. The peace of God, as ruling our thoughts, guards us from fear, anxiety, and self-righteousness by confirming to us through His Holy Spirit that we are safe from danger, satisfied with the excellence of Christ, and have rest through His blood and sovereign goodness
 - b. your hearts and your minds
 - i. your feelings, emotions, affections (hearts)
 - ii. your thoughts, reasonings, ponderings, understandings
 - c. in Christ Jesus
 - i. Always in Christ Jesus
 - ii. Our peace only comes to us inasmuch as we are bound up with Christ, so that all that He has has been given to us as an inheritance: fellowship with the Father, enjoying the relationship of love and majesty, purity...holy, holy, holy excellence

Conclusion:

That central statement of reality, “The Lord is near,” is meant to give us great hope and joy. We are commanded, therefore, to pray with great hope and with great expectation, not of granted wishes or results that line up with what we think should be, but rather we are given expectation of the peace of God. His deep, sacrificial love gives us peace that He is for us, not against us. And if God is for us, who can stand against us to bring us fear? His supreme excellence and awesome majesty woos our hearts to fullness of life and satisfaction in His presence, so that our prayers find in Him communion of spirit that calms our fears and brings us instead to the fullness of joy. Bringing our requests to this Great Shepherd of Goodness, who laid down His life for the sheep, the One who was raised from the dead to rule over all things on heaven, on the earth, and under the earth, reveals the green grass of His provision so that we can rest in the coolness of His presence and provision, trusting Him with all things great and small, things too difficult for us. We can sleep because He never does.

The Lord is near. Let us pray with this promise in mind, that when we close to Him in whatever our need, whatever the imperfection of our faith may be, He has promised to bring His peace to rule our thoughts and guard our hearts and minds with His perfect presence. So, close to Him today. Fly to Jesus for your peace and find in Him safety from the greatest threat, satisfaction for your thirsty soul, and rest from your weary strivings after wind. He is near and He is faithful.