***Peace

Colossians 1:15-20

COL-153***

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Our subject is "Hymn in Honor of Christ," segment number 43 in Colossians 1:15-20.

Before Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, he enjoyed a constant spirit of peace in his soul with God. He feared God in the sense of having respect for His creator, but he was not fearful of God. Daily meetings with God were eagerly anticipated with great joy because Adam was not in conflict with the will of God. Death and eternal separation from God were only a threat to fear if Adam disobeyed God. As long as he was on track, he had nothing to worry about. Adam honored God. He was completely at ease in His presence. He was, in short, at peace with God.

Adam's sin of disobedience, however, to God's law, destroyed his peace with God. In that moment, Adam acquired a sin nature so that he was constantly thereafter in conflict with God's laws and God's will. God was pulling in one direction, and Adam, by nature, was pulling in another direction. Adam was, of course, ashamed of what he had done, and he was afraid to meet God. He tried to hide in the garden in order to avoid a meeting. Conflict with God, however, soon spread to conflict with his wife Eve. And, in time, it permeated the whole human race. People are now born sinners in Adam's likeness, and they had no peace with God because they like God's quality of righteousness. People, therefore, fear death, because they know that they are at odds with God. Many of them have a lot of misconceptions because they're not knowledgeable in the Word of God, but they know that they're not what they should be. They know that, even by their own standards of what they would expect a person to be, they don't live up to their own standard. Therefore, they know that there must be a higher standard that is required by God. And they certainly can't meet that.

So, people are afraid of death because they're at odds with God, and they anticipate eternal punishment when they face Him. They try various religions, that men have created, to try to find peace, but it does not come. And the closer to the possibility of death comes, the more nervous many people are. Others just resigned themselves. Sometimes, in military experiences (in combat situations), those who have no salvation (who have not accepted Christ), or who do not understand what God's grace has provided, we use the phrase, when lives are in jeopardy in a combat situation, "Well, I'll see you in hell." And men flippantly pass off that it's just going to be one place that people are; another place that people are; and, life goes on. No, it doesn't. To be in hell is to be without one of the most important things that a human being needs, and that's peace. And in the lake of fire, there will never be any peace. That will never be any fulfillment. There will never be a moment of relaxation.

The grace of God, however, has extended mercy to mankind in its condition of enmity with God, and their lack of inner peace. Mercy is the keyword. God the Father sent Jesus Christ, His Son, to pay the penalty of death for us all, for the sins of mankind. So, God's justice was satisfied toward the center, and the believer in Christ was reconciled to God, the Creator, once more through Jesus Christ. It was God's mercy. Mercy always deals with our solving suffering, meaning the removal of agony. That's what mercy is. God, to remove our lack of peace, came in, and through Christ, made that provision. For this reason, mercy is associated with the satisfaction of God relative to our sins. That's what His mercy did.

In the Old Testament, the Ark of the Covenant had a lid on top, on which were the two cherubim angels, facing one another, with their wings outstretched across the lid of that box. The lid of the Ark of the Covenant was called the Mercy Seat. That was the point at which the priest had to satisfy the judgment of God against the people of Israel. So, once a year on the great day of Atonement, the priest would go through a stipulated ceremony, and he himself would walk, on that occasion only, behind that great curtain that divided the holy of holies from the holy place. He'd go behind that curtain with the animal's blood, and he would sprinkle it on the mercy seat, so that God was atoned; that is, He was satisfied for the sins of the nation for one more year. And the people were covered for one more year.

This was always a frightful occasion. It was not an occasion of joy. On the bottom of the priest's garments there were little bells. And these little bells would make little ringing, tinkling sound as he moved about, and the people were listening. As long as they'd hear the little bells ringing, they knew that all was well, and that the priest had not been struck dead by God because he had done something wrong in the ceremony, or touched the Ark of the Covenant. But that lid was the place where the blood went, symbolic of the future blood of Christ. And that's where God was propitiated. God was satisfied, which is what mercy is all about. Mercy is God being satisfied toward a sinner.

So, when somebody dies, it is quite inappropriate for people to say, "May God have mercy on his soul." Very often in the naval service, when a ship sinks, or a submarine goes down, they'll say: "30 souls were lost. May God have mercy on their souls." Now, that is an insult. They should say that. It is asking God to do something to be propitiated toward those people – something that he has already done.

You may remember in Luke 18:13, we have the record of two men who went to the temple to pray. Luke 18:13. One was a tax gatherer, and the other was a publican – a man who was a religiously prominent person. The Pharisee said there. He was religiously prominent. The publican was not very well-liked because he was a tax gatherer. So, they're both up there before God, praying. The Pharisee is very proud of himself. And he tells God how much he has done in verse 11, and that he's not like others, including this publican tax gatherer. He fasts twice a week. He pays all of his tides. He has all of the religious rituals down right.

However, in verse 13, the tax gatherer (or the publican) was standing some distance away. He was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me – a sinner." Was that a proper thing for him to say? At his time, it was. And because he was a Jew trained in Scripture, this phrase was significant to him – for God to be merciful. How was God going to be merciful? Well, on the other side of that curtain that led into the holy of holies was the mercy seat on which the blood had to be sprinkled so that God would be propitiated. And what he was calling upon God to do was to be propitiated toward him, a sinner – to satisfy God's own justice toward him, so that he would not go to the lake of fire. He could pray that because Christ did not yet come, and God was not yet propitiated. Therefore, he could say, "God have mercy on my soul: God be merciful to me – the sinner."

Every now and then, some prominent evangelist picks this little phrase. And instead of telling people how to really be saved by believing the gospel, and trusting in Christ, they kick out this little phrase, and tell people to pray: "God be merciful to me – a sinner." One of the first signs that you know that you're dealing with a disoriented preacher is when he tells people to pray to be saved. That gives you a big clue – that here you have someone that Satan has completely deluded. You don't pray to be saved. You believe something. You believe the gospel. That's the only way you get saved. And to say, "God be merciful to me – a sinner" is an insult. Don't ever tell anybody to do that. Don't tell anybody to seek the mercy of God. They've already got the mercy of God because mercy is God satisfying His own justice, and He has done that. He has satisfied Himself.

So, God, through the death of Christ, made it possible for all those who trust in the Lord for salvation to be reconciled once more to God. The curse of the moral law of God has been removed by the sacrifice of Christ. That had to be done first. The curse of the law had to be removed. Now, once that was done by the death of Christ, God could now permanently forgive us – not just covering it. Atonement is not really forgiveness. It's the covering of sin: holding it off for another year; or, holding it all for the next time you sin and have to come back to the priest. Forgiveness of sin was now possible, and God was able to impute absolute righteousness to the believer.

Now, with God's declaration that one is justified, the reconciliation of man to God is an irrevocable reality. His whole project (this whole process) of getting from concern and the fear to peace with God is entirely the work of God. He is the one that carries a person from fear to peace. The peace that Jesus gives, then, is the product of His shed blood on the cross as the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.

**Peace**

Colossians 1:20, therefore has said: "Having made peace through the blood of His cross, and through that peace, to reconcile everything in heaven and on earth to God." The subject of peace is one that we may look into in some detail now, by looking at Romans 5:1. So will turn there in your Bibles? "Therefore." The context tells what God has done to justify the sinner. Therefore, having been justified by faith (justification by faith in Christ), we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This word "we have," in the Greek Bible, is the main verb in this sentence. And it means "to possess something." Here, by the context, it's possessing something by means of the work of Christ. The Greek word is "echo" e c h o. "Echo" means "to possess something." This is in the present tense, so it tells us that we constantly have something. In the Greek, that means that you always have this. You can't lose it. It's in the active voice, so this word tells us that the Christian personally experiences this. This is in a subjective sense. And it's an indicative statement of fact: "We have peace." And that means that we have something for once and for all for good, because God has provided us with this quality of peace. The word "peace" connotes a sense of general well-being. It's a sense of prosperity; a sense of health; contentedness; and, a sense of order.

The concept of peace is connected with being whole. When a person is not all together, the person is not at peace. It is when a person is all together (he is whole) that there is peace. This is indicated in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, for example: "Now, may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely (set you apart, or make you whole). And may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The God of peace puts you apart so that you're entirely whole in your spirit, your soul, and your body.

This word: "we have peace with God," in Romans 5:1, stands first in the Greek sentence. That tells us that this is the main idea. It is put there for emphasis. Peace is what we have as a result of God's justification. There are a variety of uses of this word "peace." One of them illustrates the idea of harmonious relationships between men. For example, we see this in Matthew 10:34: "Do not think," Jesus said, "that I came to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." The Lord Jesus Christ came to the earth with truth. And the truth that He had is resisted by man. And it brings conflict. And in the religious world, there has been a lot of fighting and use of the sword in the process of religious debates.

You may also see this in Acts 7:26, Romans 14:19, and Ephesians 4:3. All of these refer to peace as a harmonious relationship between people. This use of peace means "live and let live."

Then there's another use of peace in terms, very naturally, of the lack of war between nations. We have this, for example, in Luke 14:32. It is used in that way: "Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation, and asks terms of peace." Verse 31 talks about their considering whether they should go to battle or not. Here, this man decides what the odds are against him. So, he sends a delegation to ask for the terms of peace – the cessation of war. This is also used in this way in Acts 12:20 and Revelation 6:4.

Now this word "peace" is use 91 times and the New Testament, and 43 of those are used by the apostle Paul – ten times in the book of Romans itself. So, this is a very significant word.

A third way that the word "peace" is used is in terms of the idea of friendliness. You have this in Acts 15:33: "After they had spent time there (that is, Judas and Silas) they were sent away from the brethren in peace to those who had sent them out." They had come to minister to these people here at Antioch. And after a while, they were ready to leave, and they left in peace;" that is, in a spirit of friendliness. You also have this word use that way in 1 Corinthians 16:1 and Hebrews 11:31.

Another way of using this word is in Luke 11:21, where it means "freedom from molestation." This is peace with the idea of not being molested. Luke 11:21 deals with it in that way: "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own homestead, his possessions are undisturbed." They're in peace. "When a strong man defends his possessions, then he has peace."

In Luke 19:42, we have the same idea, as well as in Acts 9:31.

A fifth way that this word "peace" is used is in the condition that exists politically in a state in the country. You have this used in this way in Acts 24:2. After Paul had been summoned to Tertullus began to accuse him, saying to the governor, 'Since we have, through you, attained much peace, and since, by your providence, reforms are being carried out for this nation," and so on. He first butters-up the judge, and he praises the judge, and he says to him that they have attained peace in the political arena because of this political agent, Tertullus. So, peace is used in that sense.

Peace is also used in a very important way in terms of peace in the local church. 1 Corinthians 14:33 speaks of this: "For God is not a God of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints." This is something that the Bible has a great deal of esteem for. Christians should be at peace with one another. Does that mean that you agree with each other? No. The mature Christian knows that he'll have an opinion that may be quite convincing to him, but it's not accepted by the group, or not accepted by somebody in leadership. Does that mean that he will not have peace, because he does not agree? No. What he does is, because he's mature, he says, "Now I turn this over to God. And God is going to change somebody. God is going to demonstrate what His will is. God is going to demonstrate what His purposes. But in the meantime, nobody is going to go for anybody's jugular vein. Nobody is going to start gathering sides to an attack. Nobody is going to get emissaries to run interference for them. Peace will reign in the local church. And that is placed in the highest esteem by God our father. Disturbing the peace of the local church is repeatedly spoken of in most condemnatory terms in the local church.

Then there are two more ways. And these two are the way in which this word "peace" is used in Romans 5:1: first, as a harmonious relationship between God and man. This is illustrated by Acts 10:36: "The word which he sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ. He is Lord of all."

You also have this in Ephesians 2:17, as a harmonious relationship established between God and man.

An eighth, and final way, is the sense of rest and contentment in general. Mark 5:34: "He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.'" Here you have a woman who had a long standing physical problem. Nobody could heal her. A lot of money was spent going to a lot of doctors, and she received no help. And here Jesus comes along, and He heals her. Now, something dramatic had to change for this lady. All of us know what it is not to be well. And all of us know that we're not when we're not feeling good, we're not exactly in the status of peace and rah-rah. When we're not feeling well, we are incapacitated, and we are dragged down. And we long for that peace which is this sense of rest and of contentment, because we are in good physical operating condition. This word is used in that way in Luke 2:29, Romans 3:17, and Romans 8:6.

This is one peace (the peace of physical capacity) that I would suggest we ought to hold in highest esteem. Just think of the people you know now, in the circle of your association, that now are at a place in life where they are so incapacitated that their life is always in a state of turmoil and disruption. They do not have peace. These are people, sometimes because of the senility of their minds, they cannot even relate to spiritual things. If a person is an unbeliever, and he gets to that stage, he has real problems. When a person is incapacitated mentally so that he does not have stability there, he cannot make a decision for salvation. He can't even understand the gospel.

Then there are people who have no physical capacity. They finally get to the time when it's all gone. Today, a person asked me, "Do you remember Mr. So-and-so?" I said, "Oh, yeah." He used to come to Berean many, many years ago. He was a very virile, active man. He said, "Well I just saw him. Have you seen him recently?" I said, "No, I haven't seen him for years, and he looked OK the last time I saw him. He said, "You wouldn't believe it now. His hand shakes. One side of his body, you can see, won't work. He stumbles along. He has to walk on a cane. And finally, he has to sit down in a wheelchair to be wheeled around to this place and that place. He gets up and walks a little bit." This man was very active in the work of the Lord. And now he is very inactive in the work of the Lord, because he no longer has physical peace. In the process of the deterioration of age, or illness (sickness), that's gone. So, when you have peace physically, esteem it. When you have the capacity to think, and when you have the capacity to have the physical ability to get into your car and drive down to the local church here, and come in for a service of feeding upon the Word of God, esteem it. And when you have the capacity that the blood sugar in your body, and in your brain, and all the electrical connections are clicking off properly, so that you can think, and you can consider, and you can make decisions, and you can sit in church and receive the Word of God with great benefits, hold it in great esteem. And do not throw it aside lightly, because I caution you that everybody is in the potential of this man. And when I see these people in that condition, my heart goes out to them, and there's nothing we can do – the peace of physical rest and contentment.

Now, in Romans 5:1, this word, "the peace" is used in these last two ways: harmonious relationship between God and man; and, a general sense of contentment – lack of fear. The gospel is viewed as the means by which we come to peace with God. Ephesians 6:15: "And having shod your feet with the preparedness of the gospel of peace." This is part of the Christian soldier's armor. This does not refer to getting born again here. This is what you already have, as a Christian soldier, to put on for the spiritual warfare. This is telling you that you have put on your feet the preparation of the gospel of peace. You have peace with God. And if you do not have confidence toward God and your destiny, you're not going to be wanting to charge into battle where you might be killed. You are not going to be eager to charge into Satan's realm, and to confront him in God service. But you have shod your feet with the gospel of peace (put on your feet as shoes). Anybody who has ever been in the military knows what great pains they take to look at your feet, and to examine your feet, and to get the sizes, and to put a pair of shoes on you that are going to carry you through with all the walking that you'll have to do.

Here, the gospel is a means to having peace with God. You have good footwear. You have good walking shoes. It is the gospel that gives you peace with God. Now you can walk out into the world now. You can meet whatever the devil throws against you: whatever he throws against you physically; whatever he throws against you emotionally; whatever he throws against you financially; and, whatever he throws against you socially. You can meet him without fear, because you have peace with God, and because you have that peace through Jesus Christ. And if you don't get it through Jesus Christ, you will not have peace, when suddenly you found that you had come to some kind of a crisis in life. Your life is at stake. And suddenly, you know that there's a potential that you are about to meet your God. It is the shoes of the peace of God that comes from the gospel that only Christ can provide us.

God is viewed, then, as the source of this peace. This is pointed out to us in Romans 15:33: "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."

In Philippians 4:9: "The things you have learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, practice these things. And the God of peace shall be with you." Now, what is that saying? That is saying, "Stay in temporal fellowship." Paul says, "What I taught you of doctrinal principles, you've learned; you've received them; you've heard them; and, you've seen me practicing what I preach. If you do that, and you practice it, you maintain integrity, and the God of peace is going to be there with you when you need him.

So, God has established peace for us objectively. And when we accept Christ the Savior, then that peace becomes our personal, subjective position. And when we know the Word of God, the basis upon which you operate, and are in temporal fellowship, then we have peace in our daily lives.

Romans 5:1 adds this: that we have with God. And this word "with" tells us something. It's "pros." It's a preposition process. This word means face-to-face – in the very presence of God. That's what I'm talking about – facing a crisis of death, or whatever it might be, that suddenly comes upon you out of the blue. And suddenly, you are aware that you are going to be "pros" (with) God. You're going to be right there, facing Him, face-to-face. And here, what do we have? Paul says, "When God does the justifying, which you received by faith in Christ, then you will have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." You have peace that will carry you when you're face-to-face with God. "God" here is "*the* God," here in the Greek, meaning God the Father. The justified sinner has a harmonious relationship when he's in God's presence. Why? Because God's wrath has been removed from him. The believer is no longer the enemy of God. He is the object of God's favor because he's reconciled to God. He's been adjusted to God's standard.

The result is an inward sense of rest and contentment for the believer. So, this inward tranquility is the inevitable fruit of the genuine justification which reconciliation has brought about with God. This tranquility of the soul is the main thing that every human being seeks. Every person wants a tranquility of soul when it comes to their facing God. They don't want any questions about that. They're looking for contentment. And they're looking for satisfaction that all will be well in His presence. And that's what this is all about.

What people really seek, however, on their own, they never find. It is only the gifts of God through Christ. Lack of genuine tranquility toward facing God is a sign that you do not have justification. Therefore, you do not have reconciliation. Are you going to heaven? Some would say, "I hope so." Or some would say, "This person is sick. Let's have a Mass in their behalf." Or: "This person has died. Let's say a Mass, because every Mass where they mention your name, such that this Mass is for you, you have another notch up toward God, and another step up toward making reconciliation between you and God." And you may say, "Please pray for me. Please get another notch for me. After I'm dead, say as many masses as you can." What you are telling us is that you do not have the peace of God that passes understanding. You don't have the peace that the blood of Christ on the cross can give you. Therefore, because you have a lack of peace, what can you fall back on? What you are: your works; and, your goodness, instead of the goodness of Christ. That seems so simple to us. But don't blow it off.

It just happens to be that, for some reason, God took everybody in this room and said, "I'm going to make this very clear to you, and I'm going to see to it that you believe it. And you will have peace with Me. You will not be afraid to meet me someday." But for most people, who go through the religious rackets of this world, they do not know what has happened. And if you think that you're going to find out that you possess eternal life only after you're dead, then, all likelihood, you are not reconciled to God, and you do not have justification. And most of the people in the world think that their destiny is going to be made clear to them at what they call "The Great Judgment Day."

I still recoil with horror as I think about a person that I no longer have to instruct me, and to open insights to me: Phil Donahue. He's off the air now. But I remember the time when he was having a discussion with religious people about going to heaven. You can imagine what a discussion that was. And these people are saying what they're doing, and where they're going. And this one lady got up and said, "It all depends on Jesus Christ. If you accept Him as Savior, you're going to heaven. If you don't, you're not." She was followed by a lady who stood up and said, "I'm a Jewess. And I don't accept Jesus Christ. I'm going to be in heaven." I said, "No, you're not." And she said, "Yes, I am." She was quite confident. And this was going back and forth.

Finally, Donahue gives us those gems of wisdom that have carried us through the hard places in life. He said, "Here's the way I like to look at it. Here's the way I like to think of it. We're all going to be gathered there some day, after it's all over down here. And we're all going to be standing up there in this great, cathedral, judgment room. And we're all going to be kind of just silent, and looking at one another, and maybe chatting a little bit. And suddenly the door up front opens, and God walks out." He says, "And this is I like to think of it. He's going to look us all over, and we're all wondering who's going to go in that door into heaven, and who isn't. And for a moment, He's going to stand and look us over, and then he's going to say, "Ah, come on – all of you."

That chilled me, because millions of people who don't know better, think that that's how they would have peace with God – that God someday is going to say: "You meant to do better. You didn't know better. I'm going to forgive you. I'm going to forget it. Come on in, whether you accepted Christ as Savior or not. After all, you are a Muslim. After all, you were a Hindu. After all, you were a Buddhist. After all you were a Confucius; you were a Taoist; or, you were any number of things." But that is not the way it's going to work. And anybody who has peace by that kind of a nonsense has a false peace.

The agent of this peace is very clear (Romans 5:1). We have this complete comfort and relaxation, and we're at ease in our soul, through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the Lord Jesus Christ, the God-Man, who paid for our sins. He is the object of our faith that produces personal justification. And when we are justified, we are reconciled to God. He is the mediator of our peace. He is a reason we can have peace with God. Therefore, He deserves our love, our devotion, and our service, and our great kindness. The sinner does not make his peace with God. Jesus Christ makes us at peace with God.

So, when somebody is about to be executed, don't tell him to make his peace with God. He can't. And he'll start thinking of all kinds of ways of what he can do to make his peace with God. He can't. And you're diverting him from the fact that he should be accepting the peace that Jesus gives. The sinner cannot remove God's wrath, which is against him, nor can he quiet the fear that gnaws on the inside of him of the punishment he may anticipate. Only Christ can remove that gnawing fear and bring peace to the soul. When Christ is accepted, God is satisfied, and peace comes. There can be no peace in the soul until the person has satisfied God's wrath against him. His sins have been paid in full. That's what Christ did. Therefore, we can accept the joy as justification.

The world is filled with its religious ideas, and the world gangs up, with all kinds of wrong ideas, about how one can have peace with God. And what that does is intimidate us. We've been seeing some very prominent people who have died and have been put to rest. It's very difficult to talk about those people. It's very difficult to evaluate what those people really believe; what they really stood for; what their lives were all about; and, what their anticipation with their hopes were all about, because it seems like only somebody that is a real redneck idiot would challenge the assurance that these people are destined for sainthood. The only people that are going to be saints are those who have peace in their souls that Jesus Christ has given them because of their trust in Him. Nobody else is going to have peace in his soul. All the others will go through their whole lives with that gnawing concern within them of their relationship to God, and everything that Satan can do to give false ideas: of religion; of salvation; and, of how to be saved. And that's what amazes me – that's even among Christians, there are so many absolute false ways of presenting the gospel, and the critical thing of knowing what to do with the information that Christ has died for them. There is only one thing I can do with it, and that is to believe it. And when I believe it, God says, "Now I can give you My standard of absolute righteousness. I impute this to you." And instantly, you are reconciled with Him, and you find that suddenly your hands are no longer gripping all of your false hopes. But in your hands or the hands of God. And you have been made forever a child of God. You have been taken into His royal family. And with that, there is peace forever.

Our Heavenly Father. We do thank You that You have instructed us on how we may come to peace with You. This is a concern for everybody who has half a brain. And yet, the Word of God tells us that people, in their indifference, and in their blindness spiritually, while having a gnawing fear, do not concern themselves, thinking that somehow they'll make it. We know that salvation is for a very limited number of people, and through a very specific way, Christ, our Gate and our Pathway into heaven. We pray, therefore, that we would be well aware of the fact that we are the people who need to tell the message. Without us, the fear that is in the heart of people, of facing You, will not be removed. But we do thank You that the Word of God has made it clear to us – we have been justified by faith in Christ. We now have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. May we be His honorable witnesses in the week which is before us. We pray in His name. Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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