

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

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Contents

PEACE

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**Zechariah 6: 12,13; Colossians 1: 19,20; Ephesians 2: 13-17;
John 14: 25-27;
Colossians 3: 15,16 (to richly).**

J.A.B. I am sure the brethren will see what I have in mind. I trust that the Spirit will use it and that, as the brethren help, it will be developed, because I have only a few simple thoughts about this very basic but important matter of peace. Mr Raven calls it one of the moral elements of Christianity. I wondered if we could get help together to see what the peace that we have read of involves. It is not what the world thinks of as peace; about the best the world can get to is an absence of trouble, and they call that peace. It seems to me, as thinking of these scriptures, that the peace which we are introduced to and which we can enjoy as believers is a very real thing. It is based on the death of Christ, a moral reality to be known and enjoyed by us all.

We might start with the place where that peace has always been, in the complacency that exists between God and our Lord Jesus. This verse in Zechariah caught my attention: "he shall be a priest upon his throne" - speaking of the Lord Jesus no doubt - "and the counsel of peace shall be between them both". I thought that was a lovely reference to what there has always been in that relationship and always will be. But then, as believers in the Lord Jesus, we are privileged to know something of that ourselves because of the way in which Christ has come out to us. So He has made peace "by the blood of his cross". It necessitated His death. And, "he is our peace"; it is found only in Him, in Jesus Himself. Then, He gives us His peace: "I give *my* peace to you". I wondered if we could see what is involved in these wonderful things. We read in another scripture of "the peace of God, which surpasses every understanding", Phil 4: 7. It is a basic thing, but I feel for myself that I need to deepen in my appreciation of how it has been brought about, and the depths that are involved in what the Lord Jesus said: "I give

my peace to you. That peace then, as in Colossians, is to preside in our hearts, to which we have been called.

What I have in my heart really is, I suppose largely individual, but Colossians brings in the thought of being called in one body to this, which is collective. I think that as believers in the Lord Jesus, enjoying what we do collectively, this deep peace which is His peace is to be known by us each one, more and more.

These are simple thoughts, but I wondered if we could get help together. They are not beyond the scope of anyone here, for every young person here who has trusted in Christ knows something about peace. I feel the need for myself of being deepened in the appreciation of the cost of this peace, and the depth and importance of it.

E.C.B. Apart from its being implicit, perhaps in Colossians 1 - "having made peace by the blood of his cross" - the thoughts in the other scriptures range a good deal beyond the idea of peace with God which is presented in the gospel.

J.A.B. I had that in mind. I suppose if you ask any believer in Jesus, Have you peace? they would say, Yes, my sins are gone, my conscience is clear before God and I have peace. I trust that everyone here today has that peace, "the peace of God, which surpasses every understanding". But what is spoken of here in Zechariah is "the counsel of peace". It seems to me a very attractive thought, and it always existed and always will exist in the complacency that there is in the relationships among divine Persons.

E.C.B. I am sure that that is true. I suppose the idea of the counsel of peace being between them both in Zechariah 6 is between the King and the priest, which takes our minds back to Melchisedec. While I am entirely with you in the thought of trusting that everyone here knows peace with God in relation to their sins, yet I think - if I may borrow from a hymn (No.178) - there is a deeper yet a calmer joy; and that is the area of peace which knows that that ground is settled. That is reconciliation in Colossians, allowing us to enter into another world which may not be too far from eternal life.

J.A.B. That is exactly what I have been feeling after, that deeper yet a calmer joy. It is the sharing, perhaps only a glimpse at any time, of that peace that exists where Jesus is.

D.J.H. Has it not been said that it is a peace which has never been disturbed, "the peace of God, which surpasses every understanding"? Paul says in Philippians that we have access to that as making our prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings known. It is a great thing that it has never been disturbed.

J.A.B. That must be right. There is a lot of pressure on the spirits of the saints. There is bereavement, there is failure, and yet we can reach and enjoy this. That is what I have in my heart, the need to reach into this more and be in the enjoyment of it, because as we do, our response to God will be deeper and fuller.

D.J.H. It is important that we should arrive at it in view of experiencing the blessings that you referred to in your prayer. The first exhortation in Ephesians 4 is to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace" (v 3).

J.A.B. That is a good reference - "the uniting bond of peace". But do you think we have to get a view of it as it is in heaven and see how the influence of that is to extend into our hearts and into our localities?

D.J.H. It is always right to start at the top.

J.A.B. That is why I read Zechariah 6 first. I wondered if we could see there "the counsel of peace". It is a most interesting expression.

J.W. Does this peace flow out from the Lord having His rightful place? I was thinking of the references to the throne. He has his rightful place in heaven, and He will have His rightful place on earth.

J.A.B. Our hearts were drawn to that in the first hymn. In that soon-coming day He will reign as the Prince of Peace, and there will be peace from shore to shore. We look for that. We see all around us what is the absolute antithesis of that, but we are to know it. That is my exercise, that we might start at the top and then be encouraged

that we can know it practically and experimentally in our hearts and in our links with one another.

D.A.B. Is it in your mind that this counsel, although primarily between the Persons of the Godhead, may also be imparted to us? The Prince of Peace is a mighty counsellor.

J.A.B. That is good. In Isaiah 9 "his name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end" (vv 6,7). That is the day to come, but we are to know something of it now. This peace is flowing out from that source.

D.A.B. You referred to people thinking of peace as the absence of trouble, but the peace we receive from Jesus is a blessing in the presence of trouble, is it not? If we were more seeking to be guided by His wisdom, we would have this condition of peace whatever trouble we encountered, as He did.

J.A.B. We can only have it as we are in communion with Him. I do not know that I could say very much more about this scripture, but it says of this One who is the Branch that "he shall build the temple of Jehovah ... he shall bear the glory ... he shall be a priest upon his throne". Melchisedec has been referred to, the King of Salem. Hebrews translates that for us as King of Peace. That is our Lord Jesus, the King of Peace.

J.M. "The counsel of peace shall be between them both", that is between the King that sits in rule on the throne and the priest on the throne. Does that involve the reconciliation of everything in Him for God's pleasure? That is the basis of peace, is it not?

J.A.B. Yes, and that is what has been done.

J.M. I suppose it is viewed here as shining out in the millennial day. That peace will be there where every right of God has been secured unquestionably in that blessed Man, so that the result is peace.

J.A.B. That is so. The millennial day will be a full witness to this. I wondered if there was something which we could reach now of this counsel of peace, and the result of it in the way in which Jesus as

gone. He has done these things, He has done It will be fully borne witness to in the day to come, but It is to be reached now in the hearts and souls of believers.

S.D.K.R. Would that be seen in Solomon? When on his throne in connection with the two mothers he brought in peace in his wisdom.

J.A.B. That is very good. That is what Solomon's name means; it brings in peace even in connection with his name. "Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end". Solomon gives us that. So he was able to apply that to the very practical test that you refer to.

E.C.B. The other reference in regard to Solomon bears a good deal on what you have in mind; that is that "there is neither adversary nor evil event", 1 Kings 5: 4. Unbelievable though it may be, there were people on earth outside every thought of evil or trouble.

J.A.B. It is very testing to think of that. I read - as you do when you are thinking of occasions like this, and you try to collect your scattered thoughts - I think it was Mr Stoney who said that the person who is in the enjoyment of peace puts God between him and the trouble. In that way we can be maintained in the enjoyment of what we are thinking about. Is that right?

E.C.B. Yes, that is certainly right. I am sure that we all long for some blessed entrance into these things. We tend to get into this realm but look back over our shoulder to the trouble. Is this not the bearing of Paul's preaching in the Acts: "he has set a day in which he is going to judge the habitable earth in righteousness by the man whom he has appointed", chap 17: 31? That is a world of peace, is it not?

J.A.B. It must be so.

R.T. The Lord says in the gospel, "And if a son of peace be there" (Luke 10: 6), that the ministry would be effective. Does the thought of a son of peace come close to this idea of the counsel of peace?

J.A.B. I would be glad if you would say a little more about that.

R.T. You spoke about it being a relationship, and I think that is fundamental to it. A son of peace is someone who is in the good of that relationship and provides conditions where the truth and the ministry can be effective.

J.A.B. That is very attractive. It is clearly right to say that this is available to us. We do touch it; my exercise is that we might enjoy it more in our times together, and in our own hearts and lives. That is where we need it first. There is much to stir us up and concern us, there is the pressure of bereavement and circumstances, even economic circumstances. The brethren have much upon their spirits at the moment. I just wondered if we could grasp this and see that God has this area of peace in which He wants us to be. It is not that the trouble is taken away, but we can go into God's presence and bear our concerns and our troubles before Him and come out untroubled. Do you think that?

R.T. Yes. It is certainly a test to be formed in some measure in the divine nature.

D.E.R. It is establishing that the peace has been effected; it has not to be made, it has been made. Whether we are in the gain of it is another matter, but from the divine side peace has been made.

J.A.B. That takes us on to Colossians 1. I am glad that you say that, as it reminds us of what it cost Jesus. Is that what you had in mind?

D.E.R. Yes. Because of His work, the whole moral question which broke in upon the divine thought has been resolved.

J.A.B. "Having made peace by the blood of his cross" refers to the price that He paid so that what we are speaking of could be realised.

M.A.J.T. I could not help thinking of that little booklet 'Safety, Certainty and Enjoyment'. Safety - we never know peace until we are really safe on the rock the Lord Jesus; Certainty - He did not say you might have peace, He said "I give *my* peace to you" Then you have mentioned enjoyment several times. We can only know real enjoyment when we have peace in our hearts.

J.A.B. I do not think that we get too far away from the gospel in this reading. One of the blessings of Christianity is that no matter how deeply we appreciate these great truths of God – and as has been said earlier, there is much in what we might speak of that takes us beyond the peace of freedom from sin - we do not leave the gospel behind. We have always to be maintained in it. Our consciences are clear our links with God are clear. That is how we come into this peace. What you say is helpful.

S.D.K.R. It refers hereto reconciliation: is that not something that God has done for Himself?

J.A.B. Yes. I would be glad if you would say a little more about that because God has brought about reconciliation for His pleasure. There is a peace which we can enjoy, but He has reconciled all things to Himself and that is for His own pleasure.

S.D.K.R. God does not want any distance between us. It has been said that where there was distance there is now complacency. This scripture seems to be what God has done for Himself by the blood of the cross.

J.A.B. Very good, and He has done it righteously. When men try to reach peace - take the terrible situation in Bosnia just now, and how men with genuine intentions are trying to bring about peace there - they cannot. But the peace we are speaking about is based on righteousness. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other (see Ps 85: 10). We cannot know peace unless we are in that place of righteousness where Jesus has done everything for God.

H.A.H. God has dealt with the root in the human heart that militates against peace. No one in Bosnia can do that, however well-intentioned they may be.

J.A.B. Peace is not something that comes naturally to us, or the enjoyment of it. There is something in us as a result of sin that always wants to stir things up a little. I find that in my own heart.

H.A.H. I would have to say that too. It is the assertion of the human will which has brought in all the disorder.

J.A.B. But the Lord Jesus has done it all, "reconciled in the body of his flesh", and He has made peace "by the blood of his cross". That is something which everyone in this room, I trust, can relate to. What He has done involved "the blood of his cross".

P.M. To know peace in the soul we need to be justified, do we not? Could you say something as to "peace by the blood of his cross"?

J.A.B. It brings in the cost, the sacrifice, but it also brings in the infinite satisfaction of God in what Jesus has done there on the cross.

P.M. That seems a very touching reference: if God has made peace, He has made it at such a cost "the blood of his cross".

D.H. Isaiah says "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever", chap 32: 17.

J.A.B. Yes. The fruit of what we are speaking about is the fruit of the Spirit, is it not? That may be the New Testament bearing of the scripture you have quoted. Peace is among the fruit of the Spirit.

S.D.K.R. As to "the blood of his cross", does the blood, indicating His death, involve the removal of man from our side? That is where the difficulty as to peace is concerned. It requires the complete removal of what I am, the Lord taking the place of the first order of man.

J.A.B. I am sure that is right. The complacency, the relationship that God wanted to have with Adam was spoilt by sin; not just by what he did, but by the principle of sin in man after the first order. It is only as we not only understand the doctrine of it but realise practically and experimentally in ourselves that that man has gone forever that we can know anything of what we are speaking about now. I mean the deeper peace, the peace of Christ.

E.C.B. Does "the blood of his cross" actually refer to atonement?

J.A.B. I am sure it must do.

E.C.B. The context of this is reconciliation. While we quite understand that the first order of man has been removed in Christ's burial, the blood is for atonement. It is the blood that makes atonement for the soul. Atonement carries with it the thought of covering, and everything that hindered peace, even from God's side, has been covered by the blood in atonement. "When I see the blood" (Exod 12: 13) fore-shadows the blood on the mercy-seat. If that is understood, reconciliation is easily entered into.

J.A.B. What I am naturally cannot be reconciled. I have discovered that. What is it that is reconciled?

E.C.B. It is you, it is a question of "I". We get it in Romans 7. It is "I" that is reconciled. As has been said, the first man cannot be reconciled and the new man does not have to be. What then is reconciled is me. It is persons, everybody here. I just wonder whether we sufficiently understand that reconciliation is the platform on which God has established everything for Himself. I think it would enrich the service of God.

J.A.B. I am sure it would. He has done it, and He has done it in Christ, but at such a cost. Our feelings must be involved in this, our affections. Do you think that?

E.C.B. Yes, I do. The reference in Colossians is not so much to God; it is what He, Christ Himself, has done by the blood of His cross. It came from Him as dead; it was His blood that was poured out.

J.A.B. I think what you say about atonement is very affecting and important.

J.M. I was thinking, in relation to what has been said, that "the blood of his cross" relates to the totality of all that had come in. That is removed completely in order that there should be reconciliation and peace, but it suggests the totality of all that had come in against God.

J.A.B. So the apostle says "whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens"; everything is covered.

D.A.B. Does the blood go further than the total removal which has been referred to, but also lay the basis of what is new? The blood is not only on the altar but it is before God. I thought we need to see that simply to be occupied rightly with the total removal of what is old might leave a certain emptiness. God has brought in what is new. We are saved in the power of His life.

J.A.B. I wondered if we might see what the Lord Jesus has done. He has made peace, and He is our peace. Let us move on to Ephesians 2 and see what that means. "For he is our peace". This peace is in Him, that blessed One whom we all know. As we understand that, there will be no vacuum.

D.A.B. In a sense you might think that God could make peace by annulling the enemies, and we were enemies through wicked works, but He has reconciled us to Himself. The enmity has been slain but we have been preserved for His pleasure.

J.A.B. I think what you say relates to our scripture in Ephesians. What I had mainly in mind was the beginning of verse 14: "For he is our peace, who has made both one... that he might form the two in himself into one new man". We know that that refers to Jew and Gentile. There is what has been broken down, so that things are in reconciliation again, and then peace comes in again, "the glad tidings of peace to you who were afar off, and the glad tidings of peace to those who were nigh".

R.T. Does the enjoyment of peace involve being in a new position? It is not only that liabilities are met but we are found in a new position and circumstance.

J.A.B. Very good.

L.A.B. I wondered whether the secret of this is knowing something of what it is to go into the sanctuary. It is there that we find these things, the blessed Man who is the Branch, One who is going to establish everything. We find the Man who has effected peace by the blood of His cross. It is a question of our hearts entering more into what Christ is to God, rather than what He is as related to ourselves, do you think?

J.A.B. That is essentially what I had in mind in starting with Zechariah, what Christ is to God. There is the infinite pleasure that the Father takes in the Son, and ever will take, the complacency that exists there. Nothing could possibly come in to disturb that. It is wonderful to be in touch with that area, and we get into it when we come into the sanctuary on our knees.

L.A.B. Yes, and you do not think about yourself then, do you?

J.A.B. Not at all.

L.A.B. Your mind and heart are engaged with the Man who is the centre of everything for God, the Man who has effected everything for God. That is the only place where peace is known in its reality, that is, as I get into the presence of God, free from myself and occupied with the blessedness of that Man and all that He has done.

J.A.B. Do you think Isaiah speaks of that when he says "Thou wilt keep in perfect peace the mind stayed on thee, for he confideth in thee", Isa 26: 3? Is that an Old Testament reference to what you have in mind?

L.A.B. Yes; and the Psalmist said: "Until I went into the sanctuaries of God; then understood I their end", Ps 73: 17. David goes in and sits before Jehovah. These are men who practically knew what it was to enjoy this peace to which you are referring.

J.A.B. That is fine.

E.C.B. This reference in Ephesians 2 is stating again what has so often been said among us that there is only one Man before God.

J.A.B. How does that relate to peace?

E.C.B. Because of the very fact that He is there in the undisturbed conditions in which He is, and He is the only man now that God sees, He sees everyone else there in Him. It brings out also that there is not a Jewish Christ and a Gentile Christ, there is one Man before God and we are in Him.

J.A.B. Very good. I could not add to that. It is a blessed thing to come to.

E.C.B. Therefore the glad tidings of peace is the preaching of what Christ is now before God.

D.J.H. Is that why we get the reference in Colossians 1, "translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love" (v 13)? It is what He is and that is where we enjoy the peace. We get into it, as has been said, as in the sanctuary. Reference has been made to that new position; He has done it, He has translated us, it is all what God has done.

J.A.B. These are things which are immensely attractive. I feel for myself the need to appreciate them more deeply, so that the service of God, and what each one of us can contribute to the praise and worship that rises from our hearts, is deepened. The line of the hymn has been referred to - Yet deeper if a calmer joy. The man who wrote that knew what we are speaking about. My desire is that we might all know a little more about it by seeing what God has done, the Man that is before God, and the complacency that exists there. It is a wonderfully restful thing. How easily some of us get stirred up. We like to be active and doing things, and yet this is something which we cannot contribute to. It has all been done and we can just rest in it. It is beautiful.

M.M. Should we experience this freshly each Lord's Day morning as the Lord comes amongst us? I was thinking of John 20; it is significant that on each occasion that He comes in, He says "peace be to you".

J.A.B. I thought of that scripture too. The doors were shut through fear of the Jews. The disciples had known alarm and despondency, their Messiah had been laid in the grave, and the first word that He says to them is peace. What more would you say about that? I am sure what you say about the Supper is very important.

M.M. I do not think I have noticed it quite so definitely before as to "he is our peace". As He comes in amongst us would we have a fresh realisation of that?

J.A.B. I am sure that is right. I have been speaking quite a lot of what we enter into in the enjoyment of and the appreciation of

individually, but as we come together on Lord's Day morning the service of God can only proceed from this area where this peace is known and where He is our peace.

P.M. I was just going to refer to that. It comes in later in this chapter, flowing out of "coming, he has preached the glad tidings of peace", and then immediately, "For through him we have both access by one Spirit to the Father". That is not peace with a view to what I might enjoy, but in view of what is for God.

J.A.B. Just as we are speaking of these things together, it appeals to me how much the service of God proceeds from this area where the peace of Christ is known.

J.W. Is the bearing of this that there is peace horizontally?

J.A.B. I am sure that is right. What do you have in mind about that?

J.W. It is wonderful that where there was the greatest distance between persons there is peace. Jew and Gentile are headed up in one Man, but it works out horizontally.

J.A.B. I have that in mind too. We have been speaking of the delight that God takes in Jesus and in all that He has accomplished, and the peace that exists there and how we are to touch that. But unless it has a practical bearing upon us, unless we know something of it, then we are merely talking about it. I believe the brethren do know this peace, especially the older ones who have learnt, perhaps more than those of us who are younger have, of all that God has in Jesus. But it must work out experimentally, otherwise it is only a doctrine.

J.W. This chapter starts with our place in heaven, but things are established here for us now so that God's pleasure can be seen in persons.

J.A.B. Very good.

E.F.W. I was wondering about the word in Colossians, "that *he* might have the first place in all things". Now, at the Supper He does, unquestionably, have that place. It is the Lord's supper, we have no

one else in mind. But flowing out of that He has the first place in all things. Does that bring in our appreciation of peace?

J.A.B. I am sure that is right. I am glad of what you say about the Lord Jesus having first place in all things, because when that is so, the consequence must be that everything fits into place. Peace is known, reconciliation enjoyed, all of these things, as a moral consequence of Him having the first place.

D.E.B. Practically every one of Paul's epistles begins with the words "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ", which indicates two things to me. One is that he saw the need of it; there must have been a bit of a lack. The other is that Paul himself seemed to be able to be the channel by which it was conveyed. I suppose it is a good thing to be able to convey grace and peace to the saints.

J.A.B. That is quite a test, but I am sure that what you say is right. The need of it must have been there, but Paul had known peace himself. We can see too, in the lives of men like Mr Darby, the tremendous activity that they undertook in their service, and yet Mr Darby was in the daily enjoyment of what we are speaking about. Do you think he knew something about what you are speaking of, a channel of peace? It flows from communion, does it not?

D.E.B. Does he not speak in hymn 85 of the "calming grace"?

J.A.B. That is very good.

D.E.R. Do we not need each other, very much, for the working out of this peace? Ephesians 2 goes on to "in whom ye also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (v 22). Where there are conditions together in which God can dwell, His peace is known.

J.A.B. "The building fitted together" (v 21) - it will not fit if there is not peace known experimentally.

D.E.R. I was linking it with what has been said before as to peace both vertically and horizontally.

J.A.B. The dimensions of this building are covered in each respect by what we are speaking of.

D.J.H. Is that seen in verse 16: "might reconcile both in one body to God"? That is the horizontal and the vertical. Our relations together are in view of God's pleasure - "both in one body to God".

J.A.B. It is good to be reminded that this is what has been done. From one point of view, all we have to do is let ourselves go in the enjoyment of it. Then we will know this fitting together in each direction, and the way in which the Lord has done it. He is our peace. In John 14 He gives it to us: "I give *my* peace to you".

D.J.H. Would that be seen in Matthew 11? When His works were rejected He could say "I praise thee, Father" (v 25). And Luke tells us that "Jesus rejoiced in spirit", chap 10: 21. Was that not His peace in the presence of the trouble?

J.A.B. It was always there, never disturbed. We have been speaking of pressure. There was never any pressure like the pressure the Lord was under, yet that peace which He enjoyed was never disturbed. If we hold that in our affections we will know something of what we are speaking about today.

D.A.B. Mr Parker spoke of this verse as the Lord's legacy. It is a great blessing that He should have opened His will before He died and this is what is in it. He has chosen to leave us what we need most.

J.A.B. "I give *my* peace to you".

D.A.B. As He left the world, that peace, in the sense in which He had enjoyed it, would be no longer needed by Him, but it would by them.

S.H. What would be included in the glad tidings of peace which the Lord preached?

J.A.B. He preached them. He was the Prince of Peace; He was really preaching Himself. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that announceth glad tidings, that publisheth peace", Isa 52: 7. "The glad tidings of peace" is a very beautiful reference.

E.C.B. What you are bringing out raises questions as to how much we understand some other aspects of things which we often speak

about. The characteristic preaching of Jesus in the gospels was the kingdom. It seems that the glad tidings which He preached, under the description of the kingdom - "I must needs announce the glad tidings of the kingdom" (Luke 4: 43) - should give us a better sense of what the kingdom of God is. It is not something which is against people, but it is, as Mr Raven said, for man's benefit and we are drawn into it.

J.A.B. The note to 'prosperity' in Psalm 122 speaks of 'restful security'. Is that what the kingdom of God is?

E.C.B. Yes; and I think in John 14 it is the Father's house. He says here, "I give *my* peace to you: not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it fear". That goes back to the beginning of the chapter where there is reference to "my Father's house". It just shows how all these things are bound together, with a view to giving us the sense that every aspect of what is before God rests in the enjoyment of these things you are speaking about.

J.A.B. I am very glad of what you say about that. I wondered too about how the Lord's referring to His peace comes in here immediately after He says that the Holy Spirit "will bring to your remembrance all the things which I have said to you". I wondered whether the enjoyment of the peace that He gives us is really linked to listening to His word. When Mary sat at the feet of Jesus she was listening to His word and she had peace; Martha was distracted with much serving, but Mary just sat there, she was peaceful. I wondered if there was a link there with the word of Jesus.

E.C.B. I am sure that is right. I wondered whether we do not need to have more of a sense that if the Lord speaks to us it would normally be to set us forward in the enjoyment of His own things, rather than being corrective. Do we not tend to think of the Lord's voice being corrective?

J.A.B. That may be, but I would certainly agree with you that what He would normally say to us would be about His things. The Spirit's main activity is to enhance the glories of Christ and the glory of the

relationship that exists between the Father and the Son. That is the Spirit's primary objective.

P.M. Do these chapters flow on to give some indication of the Lord's relationship with the Father and with the Spirit, and then to our relationship with the Father and with the Spirit? I wondered whether what you are suggesting as to peace, His peace, involves relationships which He Himself knew peculiarly, but which are open to us now in measure.

J.A.B. That is excellent. Would you say that it is the enjoyment of the complacency of relationship?

P.M. I have been pondering that while you have been speaking. In John 8 Jesus went to the mount of Olives. There was turmoil all around, but He retired into the complacency of that relationship. In the storm on the boat He was asleep on the cushion; He was really enjoying that relationship. Has it not been said that the cushion is still here, so that we can enjoy that relationship?

J.A.B. That must be the case; it is a lovely thought. It is easy to be distracted by the storm around, but it would help us just to retire into the enjoyment of what is always undisturbed and must ever be undisturbed. As the brethren have been speaking of these things, the need to appreciate what has never been and never will be disturbed is impressing itself on me. It is open to us.

D.B.B. It can only be truly enjoyed in nearness. I was thinking of what has been said about this complacency, that it is only enjoyed as in nearness. In Ephesians it says "ye who once were afar off are become nigh", chap 2: 13.

J.A.B. Mary knew something about that as she sat at the feet of Jesus listening to His word, did she not? She was near to Him; there was a certain complacency there. Much else was happening, much else that was necessary, the service was needed, but Mary had chosen the good part. I would like to know more of that good part for myself.

R.T. Among His words in resurrection was "my Father and your Father ... my God and your God", John 20: 17. Do you think that that is "I leave *my* peace with you "?

J.A.B. That is fine. Do you mean that is the complacency of relationship?

R.T. This peace is an enjoyed and known relationship, an active relationship. The stronger that relationship, the less disturbance there will be.

J.A.B. I feel the need to understand that for myself better. What we are speaking about as peace is not the absence of other things. It is something which is tangible, which exists between the Father and the Son and which divine Persons have in mind should exist between Them and us as believers in Jesus. It is a moral reality that we are speaking of.

R.T. And the effect of that being enjoyed is that there is peace between you and me.

J.A.B. Exactly; it must be so.

J.S.G. What is exercising me is the side of our relations with God. This seems in several of your scriptures to be connected with drawing near to God, and the Lord's desire that we should know the Father. In at least some of these scriptures the gospel side of peace is presented as the ground for our drawing near to God. The other aspect is the enjoyment of what is undisturbed on the divine side being known in our relations with God.

J.A.B. I appreciate what you say, especially about drawing near to God. As we have been speaking, the significance of that nearness seems to be emerging, the nearness of relationship.

J.S.G. It is a great privilege that God desires that we should draw near to Him. We use the name of the Lord Jesus, each of us, every time we are on our knees, when we speak to God, and that gives Him pleasure. But I wondered if it was in our relations with God and our knowledge of God that this settled peace is really to be known.

J.A.B. I think it is only there.

J.S.G. As to our liberty to draw near, according to Ephesians 2 the same glad tidings have been preached to all of us, have they not?

J.A.B. Yes. God has this in mind for everyone, not just for the most spiritual, not just for the older brethren who have been in the pathway for a long time. God has nearness and the enjoyment of these things in view for every believer.

L.A.B. Is it interesting that He says "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it fear"? You might have said, You have told us you have left peace with us, are we going to be troubled and fear? Does not the Lord say "Now is my soul troubled", John 12: 27? He Himself knew what it was for His soul to be troubled, but immediately He directs His affections to the Father. Is not the secret of this peace some consciousness in our souls of our links with divine Persons? The Spirit is introduced as the Comforter here. It is not that I am not disturbed by things, but I know something of the restfulness and peacefulness of my own links with divine Persons.

J.A.B. I am glad of what you say, especially about the Spirit. We have been speaking largely of what Jesus has done and the relations which are there between Him and the Father. Could you say more about the part the Spirit has in what we are speaking of?

L.A.B. Only what we have been taught, that He is our best friend on earth. It is a wonderful thing to think that at any moment I have a resource in the Spirit to turn to. I am challenged by how much we know the reality of these things, the reality of my links with divine Persons.

J.A.B. I have been impressed, as we have been speaking, about the important part that the Spirit has as "another Comforter". The objective of the Comforter would be to bring in comfort and peace.

J.B-t. His name is Comforter.

J.A.B. What a wonderful system we are part of, where the Lord Jesus is our Comforter, and the Holy Spirit another Comforter, whom Jesus sent.

D.J.H. Is it notable that in chapter 16 it says as to the Holy Spirit, "whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak" (v 13)? That is, He brings to us something of what is proceeding in the relations between the Father and the Son. He brings that to us and that would strengthen us in this peace.

J.A.B. It goes without saying that none of what we are speaking about could be known without the service of the Holy Spirit. It would be right to call Him the Spirit of Peace. He is the Holy Spirit, He is the Spirit of God, but He is the Spirit of Peace.

R.W.F. Nearness to the Father is in sonship. Enjoyment of peace is one of the traits of sonship: "Blessed the peace-makers, for they shall be called sons of God", Matt 5: 9.

J.A.B. That is a very interesting link between sonship and peace and extends what we were saying about relationships and the enjoyment of them.

E.C.B. Does not what has been said about relationships open out the verse in Isaiah 32 which has been referred to? Mr Raven taught that righteousness was perfection in every relationship. The working out of that is peace.

J.A.B. That is very interesting. There is a moral sequence there.

E.C.B. It is of interest in that scripture, as applied in that way, that when every relationship is known in perfection this peace is enjoyed and then everything else can be left behind. It says "my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation", Isa 32: 18.

J.A.B. That is very good. This is not peace at any price. This is peace based firmly on righteousness in every respect.

E.C.B. It is necessarily based on righteousness. I think sometimes we need help to understand remarks of Mr Raven's; for instance he said that grace and righteousness are the same thing, and peace and righteousness are the same thing. I think we could get help on those things. We divide things up too much.

J.A.B. We are too analytical.

D.A.B. What has been drawn attention to about righteousness reminds me of a scripture in the epistles where Paul says, "as far as depends on you, living in peace with all men", Rom 12: 18. Now we might say - We will have peace when the other brother gets some. But there is no reason for their unreadiness to destroy my enjoyment of this. So far as it lies with me, I should be at peace with all men.

J.A.B. I think that would bring us to Colossians 3: "Let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts". There is no qualification there; it is Paul's exhortation. It is to you and it is to me, and if we are both in the good of it, then we will be at peace between ourselves. That is how it works.

D.E.B. One of the Lord's first words in public ministry in Matthew was "Blessed the peace makers", chap 5: 9.

J.A.B. That was one of the things that He brought out in Himself.

D.A.B. I might give offence without meaning to, but there is no good reason to take offence if the peace of Christ presides in my heart.

J.A.B. I think that if the peace of Christ presided in my heart I would overlook a lot more than I do sometimes. There is an interesting suggestion here in the reference "to which also ye have been called in one body". That would bring in what we were speaking about earlier as to the fitting together; it brings in what is collective. It is to preside in our hearts. That would begin with what is individual, but then "to which also ye have been called in one body", that is, called together to the peace of Christ.

P.M. Do you think that, if we were really enjoying our standing, these matters that flow from our state would easily be adjusted and we would fit together without any difficulty?

J.A.B. Very good. This is our standing, this is what we have been called to, the peace of Christ. I wondered again about whether the word of Christ was linked to that; that is why I had the next phrase read. We will not have the peace of Christ if we ignore His word.

D.J.H. Is that why it is "preside in your hearts"? It does not say it dwells in your hearts, but it presides.

J.A.B. What does that word convey to you?

D.J.H. I wondered if it was just what you were saying. It is "Let the word of the Christ dwell in you richly", that is, it is controlling us. It is not just simply that it is there but it is controlling us, we are governed by it and that would affect all our relationships and reactions.

J.A.B. It is dominant. Can I say that the peace of Christ is dominant in me? I find that very testing, because so often it is not so, but Paul says here that that is to be the case -"Let the peace of Christ preside". "Preside" is a very lovely word, a kind of restful, untroubled word:

D.J.H. It is not simply peace, but the peace of Christ, "*my peace*".

R.W.F. Does it suggest that that peace is to be all pervasive in the heart? Solomon's reign has been quoted, when there was neither adversary nor evil event, but that is to be so in my heart, is it not?

J.A.B. That is good, and expands on the thought contained in this word "preside". It is to dominate and pervade every aspect of what I am and what I do.

S.D.K.R. I was thinking that behind all this is the necessity to get free from ourselves.

J.A.B. That certainly does lie behind all that we are speaking about, because if we let ourselves intrude it will completely spoil any enjoyment we have of this. But as we let the peace of Christ, His peace, preside in our hearts, then what we are naturally will be right out of sight.

LONDON

19 February 1994

Key to initials

(London unless otherwise stated)

D.A.Burr; D.B.Bodman, Birmingham; D.E.Burr, Redbridge; E.C.Burr;
J.A.Brown, Grangemouth; J.A.Burnett; L.A.Barlow, Bexley;
R.W.Flowerdew, Sunbury; J.S.Gray; D.Hawgood, Bexley;
D.J.Hutson; H.A.Hutson; S.Hewison, Dorking; J.Mitchell, Bexley;
M.Matthews, Birmingham; P.Martin, Colchester; D.E.Remmington,
St.Albans; M.A.J.Terry; R.Taylor, Barnet; E.F.Woodford, Dorking;
J.Wright, Redbridge

PEACE

Brian Deck

Psalm 119: 165; John 14: 27; Colossians 3: 15

It would seem appropriate, dear brethren, to speak a brief word about peace. It is very evident that it was prominent in our Lord's mind when He arose from the dead: "Peace be to you " (John 20: 19), so prominent that He repeats it: "Peace be to you" (v 21). It would not be the character of peace the world is seeking for. The world is seeking for peace, too, and will not find it until the King of Peace comes. The great anxiety of men employs their greatest ability to seek a formula for peace, and they will not find it. Even when finally someone says, "Peace and safety" (1 Thess 5: 3) it will be a terrible hour for this world: "sudden destruction". We are living in such times. God could close up the history at any time. What should prevail in a Christian is peace, a settled peace, not invaded or spoiled by anything of this world. We have things in this world ; we have tribulation. We have to find our way through; yes, we have to maintain righteousness. The Christian is to have an inward sense of peace that is superior to the circumstances we may find ourselves in as left in this world. We will come to that: the Lord says, "I give my peace to you".

I have read from this Psalm. We would not read it all, of course. Someone set themselves to learn *verbatim* Psalm 119. It would be quite an undertaking. I think one verse is enough. Each verse brings out a moral quality. The Psalm really is the mind of God, the whole alphabet - it is the word the *logos*. It is the revealed mind of God, see perfectly in the moral glories of the Lord Jesus. I hope we have all read that book more than once. Keep it handy: 'The Moral Glories of the Lord Jesus'. It is food for the Christian's soul to pre serve us from all the temptations and the waywardness and the sinfulness of this wicked world. Let us keep apart from it! Do not steer a course as near as possible to it! We flee from it. "But youthful lusts flee", 2 Tim 2: 22. It is a strong word. The deeper my

love for the Lord, the more evident will be my distance from the world and the things of the world. The cross stands betwixt me and the world.

So this Psalm says, "Great peace have they that love thy law". Now there is an adjective "great", not an ordinary kind of peace. It is great peace. And where do we get it from? That is why I read from John 14. That is where we get it from. It is a wonderful thing, dear brethren, to experience conscious peace. We touch it in these occasions to ether. How wonderful that the fellowship of saints has been preserved in days so outwardly broken and in public ruin of the church that we can walk together in relation to the truth of the assembly. Let us value it! Dear younger brethren, value your place in the testimony! "Be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord", 2 Tim 2: 8. Value it! Do not jeopardise it! Keep in the full current of what the Lord is doing and saying amongst the brethren! It is a place of safety. It is a place of protection, and it is a place of enjoyment. It is a place of peace, and "great peace have they that love thy law". What is the law? The words of Jesus. That is the law; not the ten commandments. That was the law under Moses, and if it proved anything it was that no-one could keep it, save the Lord. He made it honourable. The words of Jesus become the law for His lovers. If you love Me, He says, you will keep My word, keep My commandments. Practically the proof of your love for the Lord is that you keep His word. Plenty of people would profess to love the Lord. I remember a dear brother once startling us by saying he would walk with anyone who loved the Lord. We wondered what he was going to say next. What he meant was right. If you love the Lord, the proof is you do keep His word and you do keep His commandments, otherwise your words mean - I should not say nothing - next to nothing. Let us be real and true. The testimony of our Lord requires reality and definiteness and committal and zeal. There is very little time left. Let us make use of what is left! Let us be found vitally in the testimony of our Lord! We have not been given "a spirit of cowardice, but of power, and of love, and of wise discretion", 2 Tim 1: 7. We need "wise discretion". To face the things outwardly in the

world we need to be wise in the way we regard them and handle the situation. So, "Great peace have they that love thy law", and then it adds, "and nothing doth stumble them". Beloved brethren, we have stumbled enough. "But to him that is able to keep you", Jude says, "without stumbling, and to set you with exultation blameless before his glory" (v 24). Let us keep near the One who can keep us from stumbling! Let our path, our eyes, look right on! Let us be fully committed to the testimony of our Lord! There is no time to risk being stumbled. We look on; we look upward; we do not look back. That poor woman that looked back became a pillar of salt (see Gen 19: 26). What does that mean? Terrible witness to the folly of looking back! Let us look on, look for Him to come: "He that comes will come, and will not delay", Heb 10: 37. There is no need to try and work out the dates like some are doing. That is virtually a waste of time because it will happen in any case. The very hour is fixed, and the Father has fixed it. Let us trust Him and trust the Lord. Someone said it is one of the most difficult things He has to teach us, to trust Him. Why? Let us cleave to Him, dear brethren, and cleave to the truth, cleave to one another and trust one another! How wonderful to be in a circle of affection where we can trust one another! How simple Christianity is if we will let it be simple. The more simple, the easier it works, so let us keep in the area of things where the voice of the Spirit is heard. The overcomers have heard what the Spirit is saying. Clearly we are together on the basis of being overcomers. Let us maintain that! Have your own palm tree and dwell under it and you will find someone can join you and enjoy it together, and that brings about the practice of conscious fellowship. How wonderful this is! How the Psalm is full of the moral glories of the Lord Jesus; what He is doing is to impart a sense of peace, and He says it is not an ordinary peace: "Great peace have they that love thy law".

Now, that brings me to John 14 because He says, "I give *my* peace to you: not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled". He says "*my* peace": "I give my peace to you". Now that is special; that is the peace He enjoyed that was never

disturbed, save on the cross, we could say, in those three hours when He was forsaken by God for you and for me because of our sins. How we love Him for that! For three hours it was interrupted, the perfection of a peace with His God when He, 'in solitary might' as the hymn says (No.40), met the whole question of sin and sins, resolving it in divine righteousness in the very place of sin. Why? That we should know peace. So the peace He enjoyed He would impart: "I leave peace with you". He has made peace through the blood of the cross. God is perfectly, absolutely satisfied with the work of Christ. This is the gospel. What could be greater than the glad tidings? But then He says, "I give *my* peace to you: not as the world gives" - you will not get it there. What you will get there is tribulation, not peace. He says, "I give *my* peace to you", and then He says, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it fear". He had already said that in the beginning of the chapter and He says it again. How wonderful, beloved brethren, if we could just complete our meetings today with a sense of peace on our spirits, restfulness, confidence, love among ourselves. Let it be deeper! Let it be expanding itself! The apostle in writing to the Thessalonians had no need to write about that: they did love one another, but he said, let it be more and more. It can always be more and more. The great bond is love for the truth - yes - and love among ourselves. Love is the life of heaven and it is the life of the assembly and it will hold us together in the enjoyment of eternal life. I sometimes think we may hear a little more about eternal life and we will learn it in the company of those who have peace, the Spirit of God springing up into eternal life. In fact, I wonder if the enjoyment of eternal life does not lead us directly into our understanding and experience of the assembly. It may be it works both ways, if you understand me. I do not think we will understand the assembly until we experience it and the enjoyment of mutual conditions of love among ourselves.

Well, I want to be brief. The Lord says, "I give *my* peace to you" - *My* peace. He has that wonderful gift of peace, and He wants us to have it. We do not know what is ahead. We are not foreboding. We would not do that. We would not know what may be

ahead. It seems that things will not get easier. The sufferings of this present time are running on, entering into the final completing touches as to the assembly as the Lamb's wife. She understands what the Lamb went through, His suffering. She enters feelingly into it; her formation is bound up with it. What a wonderful thing to share in the sufferings of Christ for His sake! How He feels the public breakdown of the church! Would He not have us enter feelingly, responsively into His own affections for the assembly, to be finally part of that vessel, the consort of the Lamb, the heavenly Man? Let us value every moment and turn it to account!

So the final scripture I read was let peace preside: "And let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts". This is a solid position. Like the president, it is a fixed position: "And let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts, to which also ye have been called in one body, and be thankful". This is what would obtain in a local meeting: peace. Let it be promoted. The son of peace is there. You would look for a son of peace. He is a safe man. He is a trustworthy man. You can trust him anywhere. He is safe in battle; he is safe out of battle. His company is very fine company. He is a son of peace. He is a son. Let us lift one another to the dignity that belongs to us as the called ones of Jesus Christ, called into sonship, sons by adoption, given the Spirit of God's Son. Let us clothe the brethren with dignity, and let peace preside. It is in control. Nothing is out of control if peace is the president, and it is a question of our hearts. I think a safe way for the mind is through the affections: "the eyes of your heart" (Eph 1: 18) - that is extraordinary, the heart having eyes! The head has eyes. Spiritually, I think that is the safe course. So peace is in control: "And let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts, to which also ye have been called in one body, and be thankful".

I just want to leave that for the dear brethren. Maybe we have not caught up too much today. It does not matter. If we get one feature of a moral glory of Christ, that is enough. Cling to that! Embrace it! If that is the One I am attached to, that is the One I love and I will keep His word and I get great peace in keeping His word,

and then you find it comes directly and personally from it: "*my peace*", and He says now I have a settled place in the local meeting where you enjoy these things. Well, may the Lord help us, dear brethren. We love another. There is a great deal of love among the brethren. Let us enjoy it! Let it expand itself! It will keep the enemy, I was going to say, at bay. No! It will disperse the power of what would intrude and spoil the peace of Jerusalem. Let us: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee! , Ps 122: 6. For His Name's sake.

GRIMSBY

9 April 1988