

PEACE — THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

The concept of “freedom” that the gospel proclaims is a selective freedom; this truth is exhibited clearly in Paul’s letter to Philemon concerning a newly converted but runaway slave, Onesimus. Truly, Onesimus was set at liberty through his knowledge and obedience to the truth but yet he remained a slave in the service of Philemon from whom he had fled. Onesimus, after his conversion, is advised to return to Philemon and to his former servitude by the apostle Paul who, no doubt, was responsible for his conversion in prison.

Yes, Paul, the gospel liberator, is himself in captivity, a free man shackled and in chains. “Free indeed,” therefore, as witnessed, does not set at liberty the individual in every realm but rather is a selective freedom. The failure to understand this spiritual principle of freedom causes some to err in their interpretation by making “freedom” a blanket concept when it is not.

That which is true concerning “freedom” is likewise true concerning several other concepts in the spiritual life, of which, “peace” is one such concept. Since the world, for the most part, has long since ceased to make merchandise of humans in slave trade the concept of freedom is not as contrasting as in earlier days, especially in the Roman and Greek world of biblical days—“peace,” however, is a concept that still presents, to the modern mind, many ongoing contrasts. To properly understand how Jesus, the Prince of Peace, could say, *“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword”* (Matt. 10:34) one must understand the ins and outs of “peace” from a biblical standpoint.

Many times, the “chapter and verse” technique is insufficient to obtain a true biblical precept. The Bible is a book of principles and as such must be approached by *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (2 Tim. 2:15). 1 Cor. 2:13-14 states, *“Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know [them], because they are spiritually discerned.”* One translation of 1 Cor. 2:13 says, *“which [things] also we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, _but_ in [words] taught by the Holy Spirit, interpreting spiritual [things] by spiritual [words] [or, combining spiritual [ideas] with spiritual [words]].”* To state it simply, we could say, “To obtain a spiritual precept it is necessary to go beyond ‘chapter and verse’ to ‘chapters and verses.’” Seeing the full spectrum of the Word in order to discern a principle is a biblical necessity.

Again, failure to see “peace” as a selective precept leads into the error of a peace that is comprehensive in coverage. It is for this very failure that Matt. 10:34 is so bewildering to many when Jesus (the Prince of Peace) stated, *“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I*

came not to send peace, but a sword.” Mistaking the true principle of peace has led many into covenants and pacts that are as anti-biblical as Jehoshaphat’s pact was with Ahab. True spiritual peace is an inner characteristic of the Holy Ghost indwelt child of God that influences the mind, heart, will and emotions.

External conflicts, contentions and wars, like a flooded river, continues to flow in our day with a strong current but the inward peace of God refuses to be swept away by such torrents. The world’s peace is achieved through finding the lowest common denominator —through the limitation of personal freedom—through compromise—through the incarceration of those whose behaviors violate social norms—through the politics of common interest, the balance of military power—and, when necessary, the threat of “mutual assured destruction.” This, of course, is not the peace promised by Jesus when He said, *“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.”* He clearly denotes a difference in “His” peace and the “World’s” peace.

Neville Chamberlain on 30 September, 1938 after the Munich Conference had ended the day before, read the following statement in front of 10 Downing St.: "We, the German Fuehrer and Chancellor, and the British Prime Minister, have had a further meeting today and are agreed in recognizing that the question of Anglo-German relations is of the first importance for our two countries and for Europe. We regard the agreement signed last night and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement as symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again. We are resolved that the method of consultation shall be the method adopted to deal with any other questions that may concern our two countries, and we are determined to continue our efforts to remove possible sources of difference, and thus to contribute to assure the peace of Europe."

Chamberlain after reading the statement then said: "My good friends, for the second time in our history, a British Prime Minister has returned from Germany bringing peace with honour. I believe it is peace for our time... Go home and get a nice quiet sleep."

Soon afterward, contrary to “peace for our time,” many men were not to “go home” but were to leave home never to return home and the sound of exploding V2 rockets and the screeching of the German Stuka dive bombers with their exploding payloads were to prevent an entire nation from “a nice quite sleep” for many months to come.

Chamberlain’s hand rather than holding a pen of compromise should have brandished a swift and keen edged sword to an evil despot that was hungrily swallowing Europe piece by piece. The message to this demonic inspired dictator should have been—not to send peace, but a sword! Chamberlain, however, was more concerned with “let’s just all get along,” rather than being concerned with “letting justice reign.”

Among Pentecostal ranks today a mentality of an all-inclusive peace has become the norm rather than the exception. Due to viewing peace as comprehensive, creating a Utopia on earth, many individuals now view any contention as being unchristian and not acceptable. Also, this mistaken mindset has produced a generation of Pentecostals that refuse to make a valiant stand for truth and label anyone so doing as bitter, legalistic and unloving (and several other such like categories). Mistaking internal peace for external peace is the banana peel that causes many to slip. It would truly surprise many present-day Pentecostal pacifists that Paul instructed his son in gospel, Timothy; *“This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare”*(1 Tim. 1:18).

The catalogue of faith listed one of its attributes as having *“Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens”*(Heb. 11:34). While warmongering is an activity that is despicable and generated by the works of the flesh it must be understood, however, that an all-inclusive peace is not only unrealistic but also unbiblical. True Christians must do all to stand and then *“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace”*(Eph. 6:14). The gospel of peace requires a soldier’s outfitting.

Contrary to what some may have us believe, *peace at any cost* is not a biblical precept. Today it is extremely unpopular to unsheathe the sword against any ungodliness, evil or degenerate enemy of the Cross. Mark well the brazen gay-steps of homosexuality as it marches nearly unopposed and unchallenged throughout the land. Pulpits with political correctness mumble incoherently behind the hand covering their mouths and apparently even over the eyes as some fail to perceive the blossoming garden of gay flowers among their musicians and choir members.

Paul, never shirking from a righteous battle, said; *“Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust”*(1 Tim. 1:9-11). A Chamberlain the Apostle Paul was not.

Paul was not an advocate of “let’s just all get along” but was one who charged Timothy; *“I charge [thee] therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they*

will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away [their] ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished [my] course, I have kept the faith:" (2 Tim. 4:1-7).

Someone was quoted as saying; "If the Nazis have really been guilty of the unspeakable crimes imputed to them, then—let us make no mistake—pacifism is faced with a situation with which it cannot cope. The conventional pacifist conception of a reasonable or generous peace is irrelevant to this reality." A spiritual pacifist is an oxymoron. The true saint of God soon learns that, like a magnet, the Truth attracts certain hostilities and dealing with contention and conflict is certainly a part of the spiritual life of a soldier of Jesus Christ.

Those which are unwilling to face the prospect that the gospel will often be confrontational are deluding themselves and those unwilling to stand firm without compromise are doomed to take a seat among those that would rather switch than fight. Peace in this type of situation is not a Bible peace but rather a misguided interpretation of peace that allows the enemy to conquer and dominate. An inner peace enables a Christian to wage the war of faith in external conflicts—and still remain a Christian.

Woodrow Wilson was quoted as saying; "There is a price which is too great to pay for peace, and that price can be put in one word. One cannot pay the price of self-respect." While in agreement with Wilson I would, for purposes here, say, "There is a price which is too great to pay for peace, and that price can be put in one word. One cannot pay the price of God's Truth." There are those today that have drank deeply and fully from the pseudo charismatic love fountain until they are too inebriated to make a firm-footed stand for gospel truth, they wish to offer disclaimers to "*One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism,*" until that it ends up being "One's semantics." Some afraid to be confrontational have parleyed with the enemy instead of boldly proclaiming the Truth. Acts 2:38 in certain areas, has become butcher blocked with sharp-edged logic until it is severed into compatible servings.

The message of godly separation from the world as a sanctified people has been dynamited, undermined, mailbox bombed and sniped from terrorists wishing to deMORALize the troops. The glorious revelation of the Mighty God in Christ has been deluded with the fluids of plurality until it reeks with trinitarianism. Building bridges over (thereby bypassing and omitting) the waters of Jesus Name baptism to reach the Trinitarian is not progress but pollution. Peace is not an option. Truth shall never set at the surrender table on any vessel. "His truth is forever settled in heaven." There is a price which is too great to pay for peace—*"Buy the truth and sell it not."*

A Turkish proverb quips; “If a man would live in peace he should be blind, deaf, and dumb.” While it is well understood that the inner peace of God reigns in the heart, mind, will, and emotions of a true saint it is also understood that externally there is an adversary that gives no quarter but does take prisoners—the war is real and there is no discharge from its warfare. Those that mistakenly believe that error can coexist with Truth are sadly mistaken. “How can two walk together except they be agreed?” That Turkish proverb has some truth because if a man lives in peace (with the world) he is blind to the Truth, deaf to the Truth and cannot speak the Truth!

Jesus Christ teaches that His peace is beyond understanding, that it is a miraculous peace from the Prince of Peace. This inward “peace be still” is the Master’s doing and we are recipients of a divine peace that sees our vessel through all the storms of life’s turbulent seas. Jesus also tells us that though we have this inner peace we can expect outward hostilities in John 15:18-19; *“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before [it hated] you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”*

“9-11” has become much more than a calendar date notation, it was birthed into history as a time when an enemy that hated all that the United States of American stands for aggressively made known their hatred in a horrendous fashion. Were the Twin Towers bristling with anti-aircraft weapons or a factory that processed poison nerve gas or a base for mercenaries trained to kill for pay? No, the Towers were simply a symbol of American economy and way of life thus they became targets of those that hated that life style. Likewise, the church of Jesus Christ, without provocation, becomes the target of hell and its minions. Like Paul, every true Christian must say as he unwaveringly said, *“knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.”*

“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all [things] he might have the preeminence. For it pleased [the Father] that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, [I say], whether [they be] things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in [your] mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and [be] not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, [and] which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;” Col. 1:18-23

Remember WE were once enemies of the Cross—but now Jesus Christ has made PEACE through the blood of His Cross! I am so thankful I changed sides! What about you?

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