

Psalm 119:165

Great Peace For Sinners In Christ

The Hebrew word David uses here for peace is *shalom*, and it means much more than our English term peace. It is a very broad, rich, and wonderful word. It is so expressive. For example Our English word *peace* is a very negative, superficial word. We think of peace today, and we think simply of the absence of strife, or cessation from war, or a state where there is no fighting.

We hear a lot of talk today from the media of *global peace* and *international peace*. But all that is in view is that these nations should put down their bombs and bullets, stop killing each other, and call a truce. That is defined as a state of peace. Webster's Dictionary defines *peace* as "a state of tranquility or quiet; freedom from civil disturbance."

The Hebrew word *shalom*, however, is positive and not merely negative. It denotes not simply the absence of strife but the presence of something. It means the presence of God's rich and fullest blessing. In fact, when a Jew greeted someone in the street, as they do today, with the term *Shalom*, "Shalom Etah," "Peace be to you," they weren't saying, "I hope you don't get into a fight today. Or I hope you don't have an anxiety attack in the street." NO. They were saying, "I hope that God's blessing will rest on you in all its fullness. The word *shalom* incorporates the ideas of wholeness, completeness, health, and a life that lacks nothing because God is their sufficiency.

In Psalm 119:165, David strikes a chord with his readers with these words, "*Great peace have they, who love thy law; and nothing shall offend them.*" In order for us to truly experience and enjoy great peace in our lives we must know first and foremost peace with God.

You may be thinking to yourself today, why do we need peace with God? Why is this our fundamental need? The Bible gives us the answer. Sin has spoiled the original friendship with God and humanity. Sin has created a great barrier between us and God.

The Bible reveals the awful truth, “that all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God.” Sin separates us from God. It shuts us out from God’s blessing and presence.

We read in Romans 8:7 “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”

How clearly we see this in the beginning of the human race, with our first parents, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden. Originally there was perfect unity and harmony and friendship with God and with His creation. That is until our first parents took and ate the forbidden fruit. They willfully disobeyed the will of their God, and sin entered into the human heart.

The friendship between God and man immediately was destroyed. God drove out the man Adam from the Garden, and barred the way to the Tree of Life. Now because of that, all of us born into this world are in a state of sin and rebellion against God.

The Bible takes it further than that. There is real hostility between God and the sinner. There is enmity between them. When we turn to the Scriptures the hostility between God and man is mutual. Man is hostile against God and God is hostile against man.

We read in James 4:4 “Know ye not that the friendship of the world is **enmity** with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the **enemy** of God.”

Romans 5:10 “For if, when we were **enemies**, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”

Ephesians 2:3 “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the **children of wrath**, even as others.”

The bottom line is sin must be judged, and for this reason the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Therefore, we need peace with God because there is real hostility between God and sinners. The peace that sinners need with God is found in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The title of my message is, **Great Peace For Sinners In Christ**, and there are four observations I would like to make today.

1. Great peace is a *possession* to be enjoyed in Christ.

Psalm 119:165, “**Great peace have they**, who love thy law; and nothing shall offend them.

David begins by emphasizing the peace we enjoy in Christ as being *great peace*. It is great peace because it was purchased at a great price, by the shedding of Jesus Christ’s precious blood on the Cross.

The N.T. reveals the wonderful truth that the Lord Jesus Christ has accomplished a reconciliation between God and sinners. Christ is our Peace. Reconciliation could not be brought about by anything we could do. We created the barrier of sin but we can do nothing to break it down.

And this is where the meaning of reconciliation differs from the human realm today. It's not like all the disputing parties sit around the table and negotiate some kind of settlement.

It's not God and the sinner sitting down to agree on terms. No. God can't compromise His character. He can't budge. He is the offended party. Sin must be dealt with on God's terms. Sin can't be ignored. God can't wink at sin and turn away and pretend it never happened. It has happened and the results are with us today. Sin must be removed.

The good news of the gospel is that Jesus Christ, as the Redeemer of Sinners, has done it. We could never do it.

We read in 2 Corinthians 5:19 "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

Reconciliation is the work of God and God alone. How does God accomplish this? The Bible reveals that He has done it through the death of His Son, Jesus Christ, on the cross.

Christ died on the cross to accomplish our peace with God and our reconciliation. The cross was God's way of putting away sin. Jesus wasn't dying on the cross for His own sins. He was dying as a substitute for His people.

We read in Colossians 1:20 "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."

A good illustration of reconciliation is found in Matthew 5:23-24, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

This means to settle the difficulty; to make proper acknowledgment, or satisfaction, for the injury. If you have wronged your neighbor then make restitution to him. If you owe him a debt which ought to be paid, pay it. If you have injured his character, confess it, and seek pardon.

If your conduct has been such as to lead him to suspect that you have injured him, make an explanation. Do all in your power, and all you ought to do, to have the matter settled.

In the gospel, Jesus Christ reconciled sinners to God by making an atonement for sin. Christ laid down his life to pay off the sin debt which we incurred against God. In addition to paying off our sins, he debited to our account a perfect righteousness which is acceptable before God.

Paul adds in Romans 5:1 “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:”

Albert Barnes writes, “The state of sinners after conversion is described as a state of peace. They are reconciled to God. They acquiesce in all his claims, and they have a joy which the world knows not in the word, the promises, the law, and the perfections of God, in the plan of salvation, and in the hopes of eternal life.”

We see first that great peace is a possession to be enjoyed in Christ.

Do you possess great peace today?

2. Great peace is a *result* of loving God's law with all our hearts.

Psalm 119:165, "Great peace have they, **who love thy law**; and nothing shall offend them.

Walking with God according to gospel rules has peace entailed upon it, and that peace is such a treasure, as thereby, a Christian may have his rejoicing from himself. His own heart sings him a merry tune, which the threats and reproaches of the world cannot silence.

C.H. Spurgeon writes, "It dwells not with those who perfectly keep the law, for where should such men be found? but with those who love it, whose hearts and hands are made to square with its precepts and demands.

These men are ever striving, with all their hearts, to walk in obedience to the law, and though they are often persecuted they have peace, yea, great peace; for they have learned the secret of the reconciling blood, they have felt the power of the comforting Spirit, and they stand before the Father as men accepted.”

The Lord has given them to feel his peace, which passed all understanding. They have many troubles, and are likely to be persecuted by the proud, but their usual condition is that of deep calm -- a peace too great for this little world to break.

Robert Murray M'Cheyne observes regarding love for God's law, "All of you who are really brought to Christ are changed into his image, so that you love God's holy law. "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart": Psalm 19. The world says: What a slave you are! you cannot have a little amusement on the Sabbath -- you cannot take a Sabbath walk, or join a Sabbath tea party; you cannot go to a dance or a theatre; you cannot enjoy the pleasures of sensual indulgence -- you are a slave. I answer: Christ had none of these pleasures. He did not want them: nor do we. He knew what was truly wise, and good, and

happy, and he chose God's holy law. He was the freest of all beings, and yet he knew no sin. Only make me free as Christ is free -- this is all I ask. "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them."

We read in Galatians 6:14-16, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. **And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them,** and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."

The word rendered "rule," (our English word canon,) means properly a reed, rod, or staff employed to keep anything stiff, erect, asunder, any standard or rule. Its usual meaning in the New Testament refers to life and doctrine. Here it means the limit, boundary line, or sphere of action assigned to any one.

A Bible commentator writes, “Paul means to say that God had appropriated a certain line or boundary as the proper limit of his sphere of action. The meaning is, that Paul was especially careful not to boast of anything beyond his proper bounds. The Rule of God is revealed in the Scripture and is for our good and for God’s glory.

Psalm 119:165, “Great peace have they, **who love thy law.**”

Do you love God’s Word? Do you read it and meditate upon it?

Great peace is a *result* of loving God’s law.

3. Great peace is a state that can not be broken because it is anchored in Christ.

Psalm 119:165, “Great peace have they, who love thy law; **and nothing shall offend them** or *they shall have no stumbling block.*

John Bunyan, the Puritan and author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, writes, "They that have this character of God's children, will not stumble at God's dispensations, let them be never so cross to their desires, because they have a God to fly unto in all their troubles, and a sure covenant to rest upon. Therefore the reproaches cast upon them, and on the way of God, do not scandalize them; for they have found God in that very way which others speak evil of; they are not so offended by anything that attends the way of God, as to dislike or forsake that way. Nevertheless we must take heed that we be not offended."

We considered Psalm 55:22 at the prayer meeting this week, "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, **and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.**"

He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. The believer may move like the boughs of a tree in the tempest, but he shall never be moved like a tree torn up by the roots. He stands firm who stands in Christ.

Many would destroy the saints, but God has not suffered it, and never will. Like pillars, the godly stand immoveable, to the glory of the Great Architect, Jesus Christ.

The life of a Christian is often compared to a ship in the midst of a great storm at sea, "And I see the good ship riding, all in a perilous road. The low reef booming on her lee. The swell of ocean poured sea after sea, from stem to stern; the mainmast by the board. The bulwarks down. The rudder gone. The boats stove by the chains. But courage still, brave mariners, the ANCHOR yet remains: And he will flinch -- no, never an inch - - until ye pitch sky high; Then Christ moves his head, as if he said, "Fear nought, for here am I!"

Christ is our anchor. He will never leave us nor forsake us in our times of darkest trials. We enjoy the peace that passes all understanding.

Great peace is a state that can not be broken because it is anchored in Jesus Christ.

Do you have this great peace?

4. Great peace is a delusion for many in the world today.

Much of the instruction given to lost sinners, and professors of Christianity today, is only calculated to give, and encourage a false peace. When sinners are convicted, and anxious, instead of spreading out before them the objects of faith, and love, to engage their attention and win their affections, they are pointed to some form of sin, and required to give that up, and to resolve never to commit it again; and then to another, and another, leading them, perhaps by various, and selfish considerations, to yield some point, or points, upon which there is a conflict in the mind; and thus inducing, a false peace, while there is not a particle of the right knowledge or of the love of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Indeed, sinners must be convicted and repent of their sins. But they must do more than repent. They must believe in Jesus Christ. They must be convinced that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.

Sinners often mistaken a calm mind for true peace or a sincere, and misguided faith in a false religion as grounds for peace and security. Sinners often misinterpret external wealth and prosperity as the basis for their peace and happiness. They look at favorable and positive circumstances as proof that they have peace with God and men. And therefore, sinners rest in their delusions, and false peace.

Sinners must perceive their great danger before a holy God. They must see themselves as sinners, who are defiled and deserving of eternal punishment from God. Sinners must see that their sins offend a thrice righteous God. They must see their need for Christ to save them from destruction and reconcile them to God. Only as sinners see their sins and look to Jesus Christ to save them can they be assured of this great peace in Psalm 119.

Everywhere in the western world, we see people arguing that God loves us all and that we need not fear. This is certainly something that none of our ancient ancestors thought, seeing that all pagan religions seek to appease their gods and not the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So many are living with a sense of false security.

Are you living under the delusion of false peace?

In closing, Psalm 119:165 reveals great peace for sinners. Great peace is a *possession* to be enjoyed in Jesus Christ, it is a *result* of loving God's law with all our hearts, it is a state that can not be broken because it is anchored in Christ, and it is a delusion of many in the world today. Do you possess great peace in Jesus Christ today? May the Lord be gracious to us and write His Word on our hearts. Let us pray!