Peace with God

INTRODUCTION – In a 1789 letter to his friend (French scientist Jean-Baptiste Le Roy) Benjamin Franklin famously wrote: "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." Yet, quite a number of human beings pay no or almost no taxes. So, what we are left with is the sobering truth that the ONE THING CERTAIN in life is death. That leads to 3 related questions each of us needs to ask: Am I ready to die? Am I ready to face God after death? Where and how will I spend eternity – (1) enjoying undeserved peace with God or (2) enduring deserved punishment from God?

A. The priority of peace with God – Most people don't have peace with God. Some do long to be right with God; but many more seem bent on one or more of the following 6 things rather than peace: prestige, pleasure, power, property, possessions, and purse (wealth). One guy quipped that all he asked for was just a chance to PROVE that money CAN'T make him happy! Recall, by contrast, what Augustine said in the 5th century about God: "You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Thee" (***Confessions***, 1.1.1).

B. The necessity of peace with God – Most folks don't see the need to make their peace with God. They think they can get along quite well without God now and even after death; they think that they don't need God to save them from sin.

C. The authority for peace with God – Most people don't believe the Bible. They're trusting in preachers, pastors, priests, prelates – not God. The Bible declares the short and sole way to peace – namely, by being "justified by faith" in God (Rom 5:1).

D. The simplicity of peace with God – The Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas "What must I DO to be saved?" (Ac 16:30). Equally important, though, is "What must I KNOW do be saved?" There are two major areas of truth that people need to know in order to be saved – 1) the perversion of peace with God and 2) the provision of peace with God.

I. The perversion of this peace – Satan was at peace with God till he sinned. He has been God's enemy ever sin. Adam and Eve were at peace with God from Creation week until they sinned. Then sin separated them from God, and God drove them from the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:24). Human nature has not gotten any better since then; in fact at one point humans were so bad that God destroyed all humanity in the Flood except for 8 people.

Will Rogers' epitaph quotes him as saying "I never met a man I didn't like." That, though, is quite different from God's evaluation of the human race; as God sees the human race, all humans are born wicked, and they never get better without His supernatural work in their lives.

A. The presence of sin (human wickedness)

1. Inherited depravity (sinners by conception) – According to Scripture, when Adam sinned, all humans sinned. He was our federal representative, acting on behalf of the human race as far as God was concerned.

a. Near the beginning of the race (Rom 5:12,19) – not at Creation (Gen 1:31) – but in Eden

1) Discontent – Satan sowed seeds of discontent, prompting Eve to want to be like God in knowing good and evil. 2) Disbelief – Satan also led her to doubt or discount God's warning about death.

b. At the beginning of our life – No one is born innocent.

1) David's admission – He admitted he had been shaped in iniquity and conceived in sin (Ps 51:5) – not an illegitimate birth but an iniquitous birth, with a sin nature (iniquity) passed on from Adam.

2) Pharisees' accusation – The Pharisees said to the man born blind, whom Jesus healed by giving him sight: "Thou wast altogether born in sins" (Jn 9:34). Actually, they were right – but they were born in sins, too!

3) Paul's assertion – We're all born sinners (Rom 3:23 = "for all sinned [past tense – i.e., in Adam] and are coming short [present tense] of the glory of God.") We're not all born losers, but we are all born sinners.

2. Individual activity (sinners by decision) – "All sinned," and we all continue to fall short or come short in God's eyes (Rom 3:23; 5:12). We sin in different manners and in different magnitudes.

a. Various displays – in deeds, words, and thoughts

b. Various degrees – "white lies" vs. mass murders (Rev 20:12f)

B. The products of sin (human wretchedness)

1. God's wrath (Jn 3:36; Rom 1:18; 2:5; 5:9; Eph 5:6) – The unsaved are judicially under God's wrath now.

a. Alienation (estrangement) – Our sin has brought about alienation and remoteness between us and God. b. Antagonism (enmity) – Our sin has brought about hostility. We're **at odds w/ God**. (Rom 8:7; Eph 2:15,16) "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." (Rom 5:10; cf 11:28; Col 1:21)

2. Man's death (Gen 2:17; 3:3; Rom 5:12; 6:23) – Aging leading to death starts at birth.

a. Physical death – The separation of soul and body ends one's physical, earthly life.

b. Spiritual death – Separation from God starts at birth – and, for the unsaved, ends in the lake of fire.

1) Presently (Isa 59:2; Eph 2:1,5) – Spiritual death starts with the start of life on earth.

2) Eternally – There's no sin in heaven – so, after God's judgment [Heb 9:27; Rev 20:13-15], the unsaved are ETERNALLY separated from God by means of "the second death." (Rev 2:11; 20:6; 21:8)

C. The power of sin (human helplessness – Rom 9:16) – Humans are born spiritually **dead** (Eph 2:1,5; Col 2:13), **blind** (Jn 12:40; Ac 26:18; Rom 11:7; 2Co 3:14; 4:4), **without knowledge or understanding** (Rom 3:11; 2 Tim 3:7), **not seeking God** (Rom 3:11), and **unable to please God** (Rom 8:8; Heb 11:6). **There are 3 things humans CANNOT do regarding salvation: 1) save ourselves, 2) keep ourselves saved, and 3) become unsaved once God saves us.**

II. The provision of this peace

A. The Mediator – The only way to have peace with God is "through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jn 14:6; Ac 4:12).

1. He personifies peace – Jesus embodies peace as "prince of peace" (Isa 9:6) and "son of peace" (Lk 10:6) – and He "is our peace" (Eph 2:14).

2. He provided peace – Jesus made peace with God (Eph 2:15 "in His flesh"; Col 1:20 "by blood") for those who would trust in Him. Isaiah 53:5 puts it forcefully: "punishment needed for our peace was upon Him."

3. He preached peace (Eph 2:17) – When was this? During His earthly life? There's no record of this idea of peace between Gentiles and Jews being "preached" then. It would seem that Paul is referring to the evangelization by the Apostles up to the time Paul wrote this. Paul used the Greek verb ***euangelizō*** – which means to preach or to preach the gospel, to bring good or glad tidings. **Jesus evangelized through the evangelists**. God revealed the new unity to Paul. Steel-magnate industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie (the richest man in his day) fully funded and built Carnegie Hall in New York City and supported founding the Peace Palace in the Hague – but then died a broken man in 1919, still trying to buy peace. How sad it is that someone can praise and promote peace – but not procure it!

B. The message – The phrase "the gospel of peace" occurs in only 2 passages, each dealing with a special concept.

1. The idea of a messenger – "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom 10:15; cf Isa 52:7) – This refers to a preacher of the gospel.

2. The idea of the military – "your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Eph 6:15) This is the only place where the word "preparation" occurs in the NT; in the Septuagint Old Testament it refers to "a stand or base." Roman soldiers' ***caligae*** (sandal-boots) were studded with hobnails, enabling them to be ready to stand or to move. **Our spiritual war is defensive**, not offensive (preaching). **The gospel of peace grounds us** in fighting evil and error.

III. The possession of this peace

("We HAVE peace with God"– Rom 5:1) Those who put their trust in Jesus for salvation don't have to wait till heaven to be at peace. So,

A. How do we get it? – "What must I do to be saved?" (Ac 16:30)

1. Acceptance ("by faith") – **There are 5 essential 5-letter words that are part of God's salvation**.

a. grace – This is God giving us what we don't deserve (deliverance from sin – Ac 15:11; Eph 2:8).

b. mercy – This is God not giving us what we do deserve (damnation for sin – Titus 3:5).

c. Jesus – Belief in Jesus' deity and His resurrection (Rom 10:9f) are necessary for salvation.

d. blood – Humans need to realize and rely on Jesus' blood shed at Calvary as the once-for-all full payment for all their sin (Rom 3:5; 5:9; Col 1:14,20; Heb 9:14; 13:20; 1Pt 1:2,19; 1Jn 1:7; Rev 1:5; 5:9).

e. faith – We are saved simply by trusting fully in God's grace and mercy and in the person and atoning work of Jesus for salvation from all our sins (Ac 16:31; Rom 10:9; Eph 2:8; cf Lk 8:12). We "call upon the name of the Lord" for salvation (Rom 10:13; Ac 2:21; 4:12).

2. Assurance – Assurance that we possess salvation does not come by raising one's hand, going forward and kneeling at a mourner's bench, praying, or signing a "decision card."

a. The who – It's GOD who does the work of salvation, not man.

b. The when – God knows (and planned) the exact moment when He would save each believer. Many believers can't recall the exact date or even the year when they first trusted in Jesus. That's not a problem! The Bible never says we're saved by remembering the circumstances of our trusting in Jesus.

c. The what – What is essential is that a person is truly, totally, and solely trusting Jesus NOW.

B. What do we have? – Jesus at Calvary bought entire and eternal salvation for all believers in Him. This includes:

1. Perfect peace – **Jesus' death** ended every believer's war with God (Rom 5:1 – the only Bible verse containing the phrase "peace with God"). Humans do NOT "make peace with God! GOD did it for believers (**Rom 5:9-10**).

a. Legal transaction – justification (v. 9) – All believers' sins are legally blotted out, "off the record." b. Personal transaction = reconciliation (vv. 10-11; 2 Cor 5:18ff; Eph 2:16; Col 1:19ff) – GOD has done it – He has declared that the saved are reconciled to God, not God to man.

c. Imperceptible transaction – Our salvation or regeneration is not a process that is seen, noticed, discerned, or realized. 1) It's NOT an **experience** (something we see, hear, or feel/touch). – NO!

2) It is an **event** (something we live through). – YES!!

2. Permanent peace – irreversible and irrevokable. We have ETERNAL security – we're forever saved and safe in God's family care. We're saved (and kept saved) by **GOD'S** works. God (at Calvary) made permanent peace with believers; Jesus paid it all, our whole sin debt. There's no more enmity between us and God; we have peace with God. God's work and His peace last infinitely longer than human peace pacts or peace treaties. One very sad fact of history is that the USA has broken more than 500 treaties with native Americans. Thankfully, God is totally different – totally trustworthy!

a. God ends what He starts (**Rom 8:29-39**; Php 1:6; 2Ti 2:19; Rev 2:9). He is perfecting believers for eternity. b. God keeps what He claims – He keeps those who are His from total/final apostasy or unbelief (Jn 6:37; 10:27-30; 1Co 1:7-9; Php 1:6; 1Th 5:23-24; 2Ti 4:18; Heb 10:14; Ju 24-25). **We can't undo our (God's) salvation!**

CONCLUSIONS –

A. Trust the Lord – Real peace comes in one way – by trusting in the living Word (Jesus Christ) and in the written Word (the Bible). A warning road sign says "Drive carefully. There's no hospital within 50 miles." Life's uncertain – and death often comes without warning. If you're reading this and are not saved, how do you hope to find peace? Have you given up? It's not too late – while you're still alive. Every breath you take is a gift from God; don't wait till you've taken your last one.

God uses a great variety of Scriptures, saints, and scenarios to save sinners. **Does the date January 6th ring a bell?** Long before the publicized incident at the U.S. Capitol (Jan. 6, 2001), the Lord used a verse – a verse that's not part of the gospel of God's grace that we proclaim today – to bring Charles Spurgeon (the "prince of preachers") to trust in Jesus alone for salvation and find peace with God. The verse says this: **"Look unto me, & be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else"** (Isa 45:22). Spurgeon looked to God (not to himself) for salvation on January 6, 1850.

B. Tell the world – All of us who have already believed the gospel and are trusting in Jesus for salvation and enjoying peace with God should want to share that peace through the gospel with anyone and everyone who will listen. We should want others to have the same peace with God that we experience by His mercy and grace. The hymn "O Zion, Haste" encourages us to do just that: "Publish glad tidings, tidings of peace, tidings of Jesus, redemption and release."

1. Jubilation – We should all **WANT to share** what God has done for us – the peace and joy He gives believers. a. Remember, the **New Testament Epistles** are addressed specifically to those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ – churches, groups (Hebrews), and individuals (e.g., Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Gaius [3Jn], & "the elect lady" [2Jn]). **NONE mention anything about our being responsible to make the world safe or peaceful.**

b. What they do encourage is "speaking the truth in love" (Eph 4:15) and "sounding out" "the Word of the Lord" (1Th 1:8).

2. Preparation – You have heard of the slogan "Plan your work – and work your plan." We should all be planning to speak to others about their eternal need of salvation – even if there's only 3-5 minutes in which to do it (as when someone is dying at a traffic accident).

3. Impartation – Some have **the gift of evangelism** (Eph 4:11) – most of us don't. Those with that gift should want and seek to use it. The rest of us should want the joy of sharing personally what God has done for us – and then seeing what He does for others as well!

4. Variation (in content & length of the conversation) – Some of the unsaved know more; they are further along in knowing and understanding God's truth (especially the plan of salvation). Some need more proof – of God, sin, creation, Jesus' resurrection, life after death, hell, etc. Some just need the Holy Spirit's last tug/nudge to get them to believe. God doesn't tell believers in advance if and when we will be part of the Holy Spirit's last nudge before someone believers.