

CHAPTER 7

THE LIFE OF PEACE

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"Peace, perfect peace". What nice words are these, they overflow like music. Mentioning these words fills the hearts with emotions. Sometimes we succeed to quieten these emotions, like a mother who quietens her crying child for a little while. These emotions, however, rise up again and are more eager to be calmed down.

We find peace in nature. There is peace in the clear blue sky, and in the quiet lake with the mountain shielding it from the gales and winds. We also find peace in the vast fields in spring time, with their green visage and in other faces of nature.

Thank God that there is peace for the human being. Jacob the father of the Fathers was lying sick in bed near death in the land of Egypt. His face radiated the heavenly light to which he was going. **He prophesied about "Shiloh" the Prince of Peace** (Genesis 49:10), **and His coming to the world to establish accord among the people.**

Many generations passed before "Shiloh" came. **Finally a man appeared among the people whose life was full of afflictions and sorrows: "A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"** (Isaiah 53:3). **Yet He had a serene face which displayed the perfect peace that filled His heart. The Fathers prophesied that He was the Giver of peace to the people. His heart was full of peace and hence He was able to say: "My peace" (John 14:27). He had the power to give peace to others when He said: "My peace I give to you" (John 14:27).**

A) CHRISTIANITY AND PEACE

Is Christianity a call to tribulations and sorrows as many imagine?: "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). **Is the road of Christianity a road of tears?:** "Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy" (Psalm 126:5). **Is there anything else in Christianity? What calls us to this difficult road and encourages us to walk in it?**

Christianity is not a call to a life of tribulations and sorrows. On the contrary it is a message for freedom and joy: "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). This kingdom of God is not

only the one expected in the life to come, but also the one in which we live here and now and we are enjoying its tributes: "For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21).

Christianity is the message of joy: "Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, **you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory**" (1 Peter 1:7, 8). The Epistle to the Philippians which the Apostle Paul wrote in his first imprisonment in Rome expresses the most joy among all Paul's Epistles. In it he says: "**Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!**" (Philippians 4:4).

Even the tears which a believer shed - he who lives for God and in God - are not tears of sorrow, but of joy, because through these tears he sees God and his heart is filled with joy. St. Isaac says: "Blessed are the righteous because through their tears they always see the face of God".

Joy accompanies the inner peace of God which fills the heart of man: "The kingdom of God is but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:7). **What is this inner peace which is enjoyed by each soul who loves God?**

It is not easy to talk about the peace of God. The Apostle Paul who was caught up to the third heaven and heard inexpressible words (2 Corinthians 12:2-4) could not adequately describe it. All he said is that it "surpasses all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). If it surpasses all understanding, how can we talk about something which is beyond our comprehension?

What is peace then?

All we can say is that peace is a state which accompanies the dwelling of God in the heart, a state of joy in the heart. Wherever peace and joy are, God Himself is: "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21), "Glory to God in the highest, **and on earth peace**" (Luke 2:14). **When did peace come to earth except when the Lord Jesus the Son of Man was born and brought goodwill toward men!** (Luke 2:14). In conclusion, peace is the heart's comfort and inner quietness, the result of the dwelling of God in our weak temple.

B) PEACE AND CHRISTIAN FAITH

Peace is the first fruit of faith: "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). It is the first fruit of faith because it is based on the Blood of the Redeemer and Savior: **"Having made peace through the blood of His cross"** (Colossians 1:20). **Peace is considered one of God's greatest gifts to the human being in the Person of Christ.** We regain the peace which we lost through our disobedience by our faith in the Incarnation of the Son the Word.

The mark which Christ chose when He greeted His Disciples to express His message was: **"Peace to you", and He commanded them to use it**, when He sent them before Himself in training missions: "But whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house" (Luke 10:5).

In fact the words "Peace to you" are not as much greeting words as they are the grace and power which Christ "the Prince of Peace" gives to all who believe in His name. This is the title which Isaiah, in the past, prophesied about Him saying: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**" (Isaiah 9:6).

We mentioned that the words "Peace to you" are not as much greeting words as they are grace and power which Christ gives to those who believe in Him. The Lord Jesus said to His Disciples: **"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you"** (John 14:27). **Then, peace is a spiritual gift and an inheritance to the sons.** Expressing peace was the greeting of the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary: "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you" (Luke 1:28).

Again the expression "Peace to you" is not just words, but it is power moulded into human words. The expression of peace which the Lord used after His mighty Resurrection was to fill their hearts with peace, joy and comfort.

Peace is a holy gift which God gives to His children. In the past the Psalmist said: **"The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace"** (Psalm 29:11) and **"I will hear what God the Lord will speak, for He will speak peace to His people and to His saints; but let them not turn back to folly"** (Psalm 85:8). In the New Testament our teacher the Apostle Paul says: "And as many as walk according to this rule, **peace and mercy be upon them**" (Galatians 6:16).

C) THE CHRISTIAN AND PEACE

We mentioned that peace is the first fruit of faith in Christ, and it is a spiritual gift and a holy inheritance which the Lord Jesus left to us: "Peace I leave with you". **In fact the life of peace is the true evidence that we have a holy fellowship with Him.**

If peace is among the fruits of true faith, the loss of peace is a fruit of sin which when it ripens leads man to despair and hopelessness and sometimes even to suicide.

What does the Holy Bible say about wicked people and peace? The Holy Revelation says by the Prophet Isaiah: "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest. **There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked**" (Isaiah 57:20, 21). After he sinned, the Prophet David said: "**There is no health (peace) in my bones because of my sin**" (Psalm 38:3).

The words which Cain said to God after he killed his brother Abel expresses this point very clearly: "My punishment is greater than I can bear! Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me" (Genesis 4:13, 14). Evil desires and devious passions destroy the peace of the heart, like fire to wood and moth to wool.

There is no comfort and peace for man in the desires of the world, only anxiety and troubles. This is compatible with the ever changing nature of the world. But the true peace of God stays with us because it is from God "with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (James 27:1). He who seeks peace from the world is like a bird who flies over the waves of the sea, there is no place for its feet to stand until it is tired from flying and gliding.

Peace which a Christian enjoys is like a referee in a football match! When the referee blow his whistle, the play stops because an error has occurred and the error has then to be corrected. Likewise when we lose our inner peace, it is like the whistle of the referee which God installed inside us, to warn us that an error has occurred! What should we do then? We should stop and correct the error which we committed and raise our heart to God in repentance. But if we do not recognise the error, we should humble ourselves in front of God asking Him to show us the reason for this warning which echoed inside us. It is true that there is no peace for the wicked. After we correct our error, peace will return to us.

Did you experience that in your life? I am sure that you did. There is no peace for the wicked. Some people whom we know who walk in the road of sin and live in impurity, seem in front of others to be joyous and laughing. **It is all deceitful. If they tell you about the misery and bitterness that is inside their hearts you will realize that their laughter and clowning are but a curtain which hides the bitterness of their souls!** In many cases, such people use ways and

means which bring them joy and happiness. That is an escape and these means are like temporary pain killers which can not remove the anxiety and trouble that is inside them.

Peace comes with inner purity: The person who does not submit his body to the dominion of the Spirit has in him "the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh and these are contrary to one another" (Galatians 5:17). It is not possible for such a person to enjoy peace because he suffers from inner division. However if he reaches a degree of purity in which bodily desires cease and its graceless movements stop and the control of the body is returned to the Spirit, peace will return to him. This person becomes again one identity instead of being two quarrelling ones.

D) EXPERIENCE OF PEACE IN THE LIVES OF GOD'S MEN

The depth of inner peace was felt in the lives of the saints and the righteous people of God. The Lord God dwelt in their hearts and His word lived richly in them.

The Psalms of the great Prophet David reveal the depth of peace in him. He says: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell. Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this I will be confident" (Psalm 27:1-3). **In another Psalm he says:** "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling. There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved" (Psalm 46:1-5).

The experience of peace for David was not only at times of rest, but also at times of danger and trouble, as is perceived from his Psalms. If you ask David why will he not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling, he answers: "Because there is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved" (Psalm 46:1-5). The city of God is none other than the heart of the believer in which the Most High dwells. The streams of the rivers are none other than the sign of the Holy Spirit and His work in man. Did not the Lord Jesus say: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He

who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive" (John 7:37-39).

The peace of Christ is like a river with clear water. It continues to flow and its path quietly becomes deeper and goes forth until it pours in the endless sea: "Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! **Then your peace would have been like a river**, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea" (Isaiah 48:18). **As the river deepens its path by the factor of time, likewise the peace of God increases in its depth and in its flow as time goes on.** "All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children" (Isaiah 54:13). Mountains may disappear and hills are uprooted, but the peace of God remains forever.

The music of Divine Peace is louder than the turmoil of a storm. It is an experience presented to us at the Sea of Galilee. The peace of the Lord Jesus, which from its riches He gives to His own, can calm down the strongest windstorm and most violent tempest. As the Lord arose He rebuked the wind and said to the sea "Peace, be still!" and the wind ceased and there was a great calm (Mark 4:35-39). **"Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble"** (Psalm 119:165).

E) JOY COMES WITH PEACE

Great joy always accompanies peace, which the Apostle Peter describes as: "Inexpressible and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). It is inexpressible because it is inside the innermost part of the soul. It is not revealed easily and does not show on the outside. It is a deep joy established in the heart: "And your joy no one will take from you" (John 16:22). It is also inexpressible because no one can describe it. To a great extent, it may be pictured as our teacher Paul recounted: "surpasses all understanding" (Philippians 4:7).

When the angels were singing the Eternal Song: "And on earth peace" (Luke 2:14), another angel was "bringing good tidings of great joy" to the shepherds (Luke 2:10). The birth of Christ brings both joy and peace which is to us from Him and through Him.

We nearly feel the same joy and peace in the house of Zachariah the Priest. When the Virgin Mary visited her relative Elizabeth and gave her peace, immediately Elizabeth said: **"For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy" (Luke 1:44).**

One may say: "How can peace and joy accompany the believer, when previously our Lord prophesied that we can only follow Him with trials and that He commanded us to carry the Cross the sign of pain?"

There is no contradiction in that. The trials and difficulties which the Lord spoke about, are outside difficulties which do not seep to the soul of the believer who is a temple to the Lord. But peace with exceeding joy is a picture of the inner state of man. The Apostle Paul said: "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2 Corinthians 6:10). Notice the word "as" before the word sorrowful and in fact we are always rejoicing! The world has its means in measuring joy, yet for the believer his joy is an inner one.

From this point the Christian resembles the green Bush from which God appeared to the Prophet Moses (Exodus 3:2-4). The Bush was burning with fire, but it was not consumed. Its beauty was not gone and its greenery did not disappear. Likewise for the believer, the difficulties which surround him are like the fire from the outside which is not able to let him lose his inner peace and joy!

Do you know that he who goes to the Mount of Olive (Mount of Resurrection) has first to go through the Garden of Gethsemane, and with difficulty goes higher to the summit of Golgotha, then goes down to the Garden of the Tomb? In doing that we can keep our peace like Our Lord who

at the time of His severe suffering was keeping His perfect peace and His calmness, to the extent that He made a miracle at the time His enemies came to arrest Him. He healed the right ear of the servant of the high priest which Peter had hastily cut with his sword (Luke 22:50, 51; John 18:10, 11).

The saints lived the life of peace and inner joy. Hence they disregarded everything. They lived on earth with their bodies as if they had no bodies. All their care was for the inside, not for the outside, and thus they lived the life of peace and joy. Their literal and speaking abilities did not help them to express their feelings.

John Saba (the Spiritual Elder) tried to describe the state of peace, joy, pleasure and glory of the saints which reflected on them as a result of their life with Christ, but he could not. Finally he did his best and said:

"I wished to write down but I could not. I tried different ways but still I could not. That which fills everyone, I tried to describe on paper as food for my people, but I could not. There is nothing like it in the outside world, and no body knows about it in the inner world. There is nothing like it in our world and no body can match what is in the spiritual world. I do not know how to douse my inflamed heart which burns and boils. You cannot express it by words, no one sees the signs, it can not be pictured, and no one hears the movement of the conscience. I am totally defeated. I do not talk about it like a person who is not good enough for it. I am very sad as I do not know how to picture or describe it. And if it cannot be described, ask for it dear brothers. Ask for it to be part of you. The blessing of its grace is greater than all other blessings. It does not resemble anything else in its pleasure. That is the explanation. It is said, you my father are in me and I in you, and also so that they become one in us. Blessed is he who enjoys its blessings. Blessed is he whose soul with his flesh and bones enjoy this pleasure which can not be explained"

And now dear brother, you knew that the Lord of Glory gave you the gift of peace which is inexpressible. Do you feel this peace inside you and do you enjoy this holy gift? Know well that the only thing which takes away peace from your heart is sin. If you still suffer from anxiety and difficulties, sit down with yourself and search it well. Be open with yourself, and if you have failed to know the reason for the loss of peace, lift up your heart to God in prayer so that He will show you your weaknesses and unveil to you your iniquities and sins. God's love will work in you and He will give "peace which passes all understanding" according to His Holy and true call.