

JOY AND PEACE IN BELIEVING

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A SERMON
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“Joy and peace in believing.”
Romans 15:13

I WOULD address myself this morning to a special class, and if there should be no spiritual instruction for others, I trust that they will follow what is said with their prayers, that the word may be useful to those for whom it is mainly intended.

There are a large number of persons who profess to have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, but who assert that they have no joy and peace in believing. They do not make this profession by union with the Christian church or in any open manner, but when they are pushed upon the matter of personal salvation, they will sometimes tell us, “I do believe in Christ, but still I am so unhappy, I am so miserable, that I cannot believe that I am saved.” The statement being tantamount to this, that the Word of God declares that whosoever believeth in Jesus is not condemned, but they assert that they have believed in Jesus, and nevertheless they are haunted with fears of condemnation which lead them to believe that they cannot have been delivered from the wrath to come.

Now, I shall suppose that the persons whom I am trying to address this morning are sincerely anxious to be saved, and that they are not raising this difficulty by way of cavil, because if they are cavilers, I shall not attempt to deal with them this morning.

Such persons need a discourse to themselves. I am speaking to tender hearts, or to those who desire to have tender hearts, to those who have their faces towards Jerusalem though as yet they travel in the dark. If you are really desirous to obtain joy and peace through believing, we trust God may bless you to the obtaining of it this morning.

We suppose also that the persons whom we are addressing are not laboring under any bodily sickness such as might bring on hypochondriacal feelings, and those despondencies which are rather the symptoms of physical disease than marks of spiritual feeling.

I believe there are some persons who are beyond the reach of the divine, and who must be dealt with, if treated at all successfully, by the ordinary physician. Their case has gone beyond the limits of argument. The mind has got into a disordered condition and the body also, and therefore both body and mind must be set right by some other means before it is likely that spiritual reasons will prevail upon them. But granted that you are sane people in some measure of health, and that you are sincere persons, we think that with God’s blessing we may be the means of comfort to you this morning.

And we will begin by making two observations. We grant to you that *joy and peace are exceedingly desirable things*. We hope you will never be satisfied until you get them, and enjoy very much of them, until you are in fact, as the text puts it, filled with joy and peace. For your own sakes this is very desirable, for your present condition is a very mournful and unhappy one. It is still more desirable for the sake of your acquaintances and kinsfolk, for they set down your present despondency to your religion, and so you tend unwittingly to dishonor the cross of Christ.

I know you would be willing to suffer anything sooner than that the Gospel should be evil spoken of, but it is evil spoken of through you, and necessarily so, because you cannot expect carnal persons to have a discernment between your religious feelings which are right and those which are wrong. They set your present despondency down to religious feelings of some sort, and with one sweeping verdict they are apt to condemn religion altogether. And you do not wish this, surely for their own good, for you

desire them to find peace. With all your anxiety for yourself, you are not selfish. You wish others to enjoy peace in Christ.

You would consent, I believe, to the loss of your right eye, if your husband and children, if your wife and friends might be reconciled to God by the blood of the cross. At present, however you are standing in the way, and instead of assisting by proving that “her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace,” you are doing an injury to those dear immortal souls by the misrepresentation which you give them. I grant again that this is done unwittingly, but alas! you are as surely injuring them as if you designed to do them evil.

But a second remark I must also venture upon, namely, that you must take care, while valuing joy and peace, that you do *not overestimate them*. For remember that joy and peace are, though eminently desirable, not infallible evidences of safety. There are many persons who have great joy and much peace who are not saved, for their joy springs from a mistake, and their peace is the false peace which does not rest upon the rock of divine truth but upon the sand of their own imaginations.

It is certainly a good sign that spring is come, that you find the weather to be so warm, but there are very mild days in winter. I must not infer because the heat of the sun is at such and such a degree, that therefore it is necessarily spring. And on the other hand, we have had very cold days this week—cold days which, if we had to judge by such evidences, might have betokened to us that we were rather in November than in May.

And so, joy and peace are like fine sunny days. They come to those who have no faith that are in the winter of their unbelief, and they may not visit you who have believed. Or if they come, they may not abide, for there may be cold weather in May, and there may be some sorrow and some distress of mind even to a truly believing soul. Understand that you must not look upon the possession of joy and peace as being the absolutely necessary consequence of your being saved.

A man may be in the lifeboat, but that lifeboat may be so tossed about that he may still feel himself exceedingly ill, and think himself to be still in peril. It is not his sense of safety that makes him safe. He is safe because in the lifeboat, whether he is sensible of it or not.

Understand then that joy and peace are not infallible or indispensable evidences of safety, and that they certainly are not unchanging evidences. The brightest Christians lose their joy, and some of those that stand well in the things of God, and concerning whom you would entertain no doubt, entertain a great many suspicions however about themselves.

Joy and peace are the element of a Christian, but he is sometimes out of his element. Joy and peace are his usual states, but there are times when, with fights within and wars without, his joy departs, and his peace is broken. The leaves on the tree prove that the tree is alive, but the absence of leaves will not prove that the tree is dead. True joy and peace may be very satisfactory evidences, but the absence of joy and peace, during certain seasons, can often be accounted for on some other hypothesis than that of there being no faith within.

And once more, I pray you, dear friends, not to seek joy and peace as the first and main thing. Let your prayer be, “Lord, give me comfort, but give me safety first. Forbid that I should take comfort except from Thy right hand.” Use Toplady’s vow, which he puts into verse—

***“I will not be comforted
Till Jesus comforts me.”***

Believe that it were better for you to go all your life in darkness, and to end in everlasting life and the light, than to enjoy much of what you thought to be heavenly joy here, and then to go into outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Be anxious to be happy, but be more anxious to be holy. Be desirous after peace, but be more desirous still to get a good hope through Christ from which that peace may flow.

I like the fruit of the tree, but if I transplant the tree, and put it into my garden, I should like that better. I like the gold from the mine, but if I may become the possessor of the mine itself, I should much prefer it. I like joy and peace, but I like better still that sacred faith which looks to Christ and brings me joy and peace as a consequence.

Well now, having thus paved the way by these remarks, we come more distinctly to the text. The text speaks of joy and peace in believing.

I. And the first observation shall be this. THE TEXT MAY BE USED TO CORRECT TWO ERRORS very, very common and very dangerous.

The first of the two errors is this. The text corrects the error of supposing that there is a way of joy and peace through self. This is the broad road that leads to death, but it is full of travelers. In different forms and ways the most of men are trying to obtain joy and peace through something done by themselves, instead of resting upon the finished work of the Savior. Some look for joy and peace absolutely through good works.

Now, I can suppose that if you and I had never sinned, joy and peace would have been the consequences of perfect holiness. Adam in the garden must have had joy as the result of serving so good a Master, and he must have felt peace when at nightfall he could say, "O God! I have kept thy command, and I have not touched the forbidden fruit." Still the fear would haunt him, "perhaps I *may* do so," and that dark suspicion would go far to damp his joy and disturb his peace.

But think you that this can bring you solid peace? Now, since you and I have broken God's law, any rational joy and peace are impossible under the covenant of works, for whatever may be the perfection of our future life, it can make no atonement for the past. You have broken the alabaster vase. You may preserve the fragments if you will, but you cannot make it whole again. You have spoiled the perfection of your obedience, and having ruined it, God cannot receive it at your hands. You may try if you please, but my word for it (for I have tried it too), it is as unlikely for you ever to get peace by attempting to obey God's law as it is to gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles.

Many who are conscious of this run to another form. They say, "Then I will do my best, and having done my best I shall at any rate be able to say, 'Well, I can do no more.'" A man who is drowning may say that, but it is no solace to him as the billows close over him.

In yonder burning house the woman in the upper story who has thought over all the plans of escaping finds it no sort of comfort to say, "I have done all I can and can therefore do no more." What if you should do all you can, and I am afraid none of you will ever do it. Yet if you should, there is no peace or joy to be found in that.

Some try the plan of scrupulous observance of all religious ceremonies. Now, however much these rites and services may differ externally, yet trusting in them is the same in all cases. You, all of you, feel vexed with the Romanist that he can rely upon confession, upon penance imposed by his priest, or upon the hearing of masses.

You are indignant with the Puseyite that in a professedly Protestant church he should put confidence in his baptism and confirmation, and so on. But are you equally indignant with yourself that you should rely upon your own prayers or upon your own tears? Is there any more virtue before God in your prayers than in the prayers of priests? There certainly is no less, but is there any more? Is there any more virtue in your tears than there may be in those of a so-called saint?

I tell you that if you trust in these things, your holiest emotions and your best desires are nothing but an antichrist, foul and unclean, which God will abhor; for the way of salvation is not by your holiness nor by your ceremonies, nor by anything upon which you can put your hand. "If thou liftest up thy hammer upon it," said God of His altar, "thou hast polluted it."

And so have you, if you have put your little finger to the work. Unless it be all of Christ and not of yourself you have polluted it, and God will see to it that no joy or peace shall ever come to you by that road. Do not therefore try it. Do not try to get joy and peace by penitential feelings, by humbling yourself, by consecrating your life, or by any attempts of this kind. These things are good, pre-eminently

good in themselves if they are used lawfully. But to rest in them will be your ruin, and as to your present peace and joy, it can never be obtained by work or by anything from yourself.

But the text also corrects another error which is so common, namely, turning the text upside down. There is such a thing as joy and peace in believing, and some simpletons therefore infer that there is such a thing as believing in joy and peace. I believe there *is* such a thing but that it is of the devil, and that the sooner we are clear of it the better.

My dear friend, to get joy and peace through believing is one thing, it is God's plan of salvation, but to get your believing as the result of your joy and peace is quite another thing and it is of yourself, and is a snare of Satan. Beware of it!

You will get peace just as the florist gets his flower from the bulb, but you will never get the bulb from the flower. Take the tulip and try it. That fine flower will come up if you put in that ugly bulb into the ground and give it time. You will get the glory of the flower ere long. But take the flower and put it into the best prepared earth, and see if you will ever get the bulb.

Now joy and peace are the soul's flower, and if you get faith into the ground joy and peace will come of it. But if you get joy and peace first and say, "Now I believe," no you do not, it is not believing, it is the very opposite to it. You must not therefore reverse the laws and rules of right procedure.

Let me just argue this point with you. To trust Christ because you just feel happy is in the first place irrational. Now suppose a man should have said during the last panic, "I feel sure that the Bank my money is in is safe." Why? "Because I feel so easy about my money." Now anybody would say to him, "That is no reason." Suppose he said, "I feel sure that my money is safe," and you had said, "What is the reason?" "Why because I believe the Bank is safe." "Oh," say you, "that is right enough, that is good reasoning."

But here you put the effect in the place of the cause and try to make that a cause, but you cannot do it. If a man should say, "I have got a large estate in India." How do you know? "Why, because I feel so happy in thinking about it." "Why, you fool," say you, "that is no proof whatever, not the slightest." But if he says to you, "I feel very happy," and you ask him why and he replies, "Because I have got an estate in India." "Oh," say you, "that may be right enough."

A man may be thankful for that which he rightly possesses, but to make joy and peace the evidence of facts from without is supremely ridiculous. And for a man to say, "I know I am saved, because I am happy," is most irrational, while to be happy because you are saved is right enough. Oh, I pray you, take care that you do not act irrationally before God.

Or take another view of this thought. Suppose me to be in fear this morning about the health of some dear friend. "Well," I say, "I should like to have my friend healthy, but I want to feel myself safe about that friend. I do not know anything about the state of my friend just now and I am uneasy. Now I can tell you if I could get to feel easy, then I should be convinced that my friend was well." "Why," you would justly reply, "there is no connection between the two things."

The proper mode of procedure is to try and find out whether your friend is well, then you will feel easy." Now you say, "I should believe I was saved if I felt happy." Why, is there any reason in that? On the contrary, first of all believe that you are saved, and then happiness shall come of it, and you cannot believe that you are saved while you persist in doing what God does not tell you to do, namely, to look to your own joy and peace, instead of looking to the finished work of Jesus Christ.

While this is illogical and inconsistent it is also very irreverent. You say to God, "O God, You tell me to trust Christ and I shall be saved. Well, I cannot trust Christ but I can trust my own feeling. And if I felt very happy I could believe that He would save me."

Oh let the words I have spoken be forgiven, if they sound like blasphemy, but I think they have the essence of blasphemy in them. What, are my poor changeable frames of feeling to be set up in preference to the Word of Christ? He tells me if I trust Him I shall be saved, and I reply to Him, "I cannot trust Thy word, Jesus, but I could rely upon it if I felt so-and-so. That is to say, I could trust

myself but I cannot trust Thee.” Weep, dear friends, that you should have been guilty of such irreverence, but do not persist in it.

Once again, is it not very egotistical? Here is a person who has God to deal with, and has the divine promise—“He that believeth on him is not condemned.” And instead of confiding in this, he says, “No, I shall believe nothing which I do not feel. When I *feel* I am saved, I shall believe it. When I have joy in consequence of being saved, then I will trust Christ to save me.” That is, “I will trust Him for nothing, but I will set up my own feelings and my own knowings over and above the promises, and the positive declarations of a dying Savior.”

May the Lord forgive you, my dear friends, who are in this state of heart, for being so guilty in this thing, for I think if nothing else should make you feel your sinnership, you ought to feel it on this account, that you find it hard to trust Christ. If you were what you should be, remember that to trust Christ would be the natural outgoings of your nature. But because your nature is what it ought not to be, it becomes so hard for you to trust the truthful One, while you think it so easy to trust in what is fickle as the wind, and false as the deceitful sea.

Well, I have just exposed these two matters, and want your patient attention while I seek to bring out the truth of the text. We have done with the errors that are not in it. Now for the truth that is in it.

II. The great truth of the text is THAT BELIEVING IN CHRIST IS THE TRUE GROUND FOR JOY AND PEACE.

What is believing in Christ? In one word it is trusting Christ. He is sent of God to save sinners, and those sinners who trust in Him to save them are saved. Faith then, the faith which is the ground of our joy and peace, is a simple trust in Christ.

Now I feel sure, from what we understand of mental science as well as from the teaching of God’s Word and one’s own experience, that if a man unfeignedly trusts Christ, he must, in the main, have joy and peace. I think you will see this.

There is a sinner who feels himself guilty before God, but he hears enough of the Gospel to understand that God has devised a plan of salvation. The very believing of that must give some sort of peace. The sinner would say, “I thought I could not be saved, but now the very whisper of that word, ‘Savior,’ gives me some hope. The black thought that it is impossible for me to be saved is gone. There is evidently a possibility, for there is a desire on God’s part, or else He would not have provided a plan by which men might be saved.”

When however, the sinner comes to look at the Gospel more carefully, he perceives in the suitability of the plan another cause for joy. “Why,” says he, “I see it is thus—God will save me not on account of anything I do or am, but out of pure grace. I see that He has provided a salvation not for the good but for the bad, not for those who have something to recommend themselves to Him but for those who have nothing to recommend, but everything to disqualify them for His favor. And I see,” says the sinner, “as I look at the Gospel, that the way to get a hold of this is not by feeling any good feeling—if so, it were impossible—not by doing any good works, else it were also beyond my power. But I perceive that the method of salvation is that of believing in the Savior. Now, if my heart be but right, if I really am desirous of salvation, what is it that I am expected to believe?”

Already he feels a certain sense of joy at the thought of such a plan. By works he felt he could not be saved, but he begins to hope that it may be by that plan of faith which requires neither good feelings nor good works. And so he opens all his ear and all his heart too, and says, “Master, what is it I am to believe? Only tell me what it is. I am so sick of sin, and so sad at heart, that if I am to have joy and peace in believing tell it me. And if it be reasonable, if there is anything in it which a man can believe, I am prepared to accept it at once.”

Very well then, and therefore so far we shall be agreed that the mere understanding that there is a Savior, and the information that that Savior is to be received by believing in Him has a tendency to give some joy and peace.

But now to the point. When the sinner asks, “What is it I am to believe in order to have peace? In whom am I to trust?” he is told that he is to look for his salvation, present and to come, wholly from the hands of Christ, and then he will be saved. “Oh,” says he, “but what sort of a Christ is this I am to confide in? Is He worthy of my trust? That is all I want to know.” And the reply we give to the sinner is this—We have trusted Christ for these reasons—

1. We have trusted Him because of the wonderful union of His natures. He is God, and we know that whatever God undertakes, He is able to accomplish. But He is man, and feeling that He is like ourselves, a man, we realize that He has the requisite tenderness to deal with such poor sinners as we are, compassed about with infirmities.

We are prepared to rely upon Him because of His Godhead, which renders Him omnipotent. We are equally glad to trust Him because of His manhood, which makes Him kind and considerate for our infirmities. It seems to us that if we believe Jesus Christ to be God and man, it is not difficult to place ourselves in the hands of incarnate Deity.

2. But next, we trust Him because of the evident truthfulness of His character. We have read the four evangelists through, and we find Him scorning every subterfuge. His character seems to us to be resplendent with truth. We think that no exaggeration was used when it was said, “And we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Our Lord seems to us to be the most tender of men, and the most truthful of men too. We cannot believe that He would lie.

Moreover, when we consider Him to be God we understand that God cannot lie, and we feel inclined to think that every promise He has given will be kept, and that if He undertakes to save, heaven and earth may pass away, but He will do what He has promised.

Now we think this is a good reason for our confidence if there were no others. Could we suspect the Savior we should find it difficult to trust Him, but as we cannot imagine a cause for suspecting Him, we (and oh that you may be brought to the same pass!) feel shut up to believing Him, and when He says, “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” we trust Him, and we get rest, and we believe that if you trust Him you will get rest too.

Millions of spirits before the throne all bear witness to the trustworthiness of Christ. He did not fail one of them—Mary Magdalene or the thief on the cross, or Saul of Tarsus, or even blaspheming Peter—they have all found Him able to save to the uttermost them who come unto God by Him. And we therefore believe Him because of His nature, and of the trustfulness of His character.

3. But the main reason, perhaps, why we believe Him is this. He tells us, and God tells us, that He was sent of God on purpose to save. God hath set forth Christ. Christ did not undertake this work on His own account apart from heavenly authorization. He is called “Mess-iah,” that is, the Sent of God.

Now it seems to us that if God sent Christ on purpose to save, and Christ comes into the world and says, “Trust, and I will save you,” He has God to back Him, and the everlasting honor of the Eternal Trinity is pledged to every soul that comes to rest on Christ to be saved. I venture to say that unless you can make God a liar, you must believe in Christ, and if you are not prepared to trust Christ, remember you do what John says, and I hope you shudder at the thought of doing it—“He that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.”

4. Another reason why we trust Christ is this. We conceive that the merit of His sufferings must be great enough to save us. Beloved hearer, if you cannot trust Christ, will you come with me a few minutes? Can you see the Son of God agonizing in the garden? On the ground your Maker lies. Can you see Him taken before Herod and Pilate, and there mocked and scourged and spit upon? Can your eyes endure to see that spectacle of grief when the ploughers made deep furrows on His blessed back?

Can you believe that He is very God of very God, and yet is suffering thus? Can you see JEHOVAH grind Him to powder between the upper and the nether millstone of His wrath? Can you hear Him say, “It is finished”? Can you mark the fearful shriek of “Eloi! Eloi! lama sabacthani?” Can you believe that this is the Son of God? standing for sinners, and suffering all this weight of wrath and punishment for us, and yet think that He is not worthy of being trusted to do that for which He died?

Oh, sinner! let me tell you, when I heard it said to me, “Look unto Christ and be saved,” I did look, and when I saw God suffering for me, the perfect Son of man bleeding for me—the immaculate and innocent One afflicted for me, and JEHOVAH Himself suffering for me in the person of His own dear Son, I could not help believing. And it does seem to me this morning that if you really believe that all this has occurred, and that Christ bids you trust Him, you will not say any more, “I cannot trust Him.” I hope you will say instead, “I cannot help trusting Him.” The thing commends itself so to me—if Christ died to save He is able to save.

5. We have still another reason. After our Lord had died and was buried He was put into the tomb, but He could not be held there. On the third day He rose again from the dead, and now He ever lives to make intercession for us. He is gone up on high with this resolve upon His heart, that He will plead for sinners, and that every sinner that seeketh God through Him shall find peace by Him. This day I hope your faith believes it. This day the Savior once slain stands a living high priest before the Father’s throne, and this is His plea, “Father, forgive them. Father, forgive them.”

Now it is written that He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for us. Now we feel as if a living Savior being what He is, having done what He has done, must be able to save, and we therefore trust Him.

Now then, if you wind it all up, and say to me, “Why do you personally believe you are saved?” I will tell you. I believe I am saved, I *know* I am, and the ground of my assertion is not because I feel I am, nor yet because I can preach to you about it, nor because I sometimes or generally feel joy and peace, but I believe I am saved because I do—God knows I do—trust myself wholly and entirely in the hand of Him whose business it is to save sinners.

I find my name in the Bible. Why do you look at me? Have you never heard of the Negro child that sat reading the Bible, and someone said to her, “Why do you read that Book so much?” She said, “I have always loved to read it since I found my name in it.” “Found your name in it!” “Yes,” said she, “here it is,” and she pointed to the text, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” “That is my name, sir, that is my name, for if you are not sinners I am.”

I know myself to be laden with iniquity, to be defiled with all sorts of sin in my holiest times. I have not one good work that I dare think of, much more trust to, but being what I am, unworthy, undeserving, and hell-deserving, I trust Christ to save me, and if He does not save me, He is not as good as His word. But I have no suspicion about that.

*“I know that safe with Him remains
Protected by His power,
What I’ve committed to His hands,
Till the decisive hour.”*

And now I get joy and peace. But if I wait for joy and peace, and afterwards trust, I go the wrong way to work, and put the cart before the horse. I have begun to expect a harvest before I sow the wheat, to expect the flower before I cultivate the stem, and I shall be mistaken and go down to the pit with a curse, because I would not obey the command, “Believe and live.” We will now close with the last point.

III. Remember that THE PRINCIPLE OF THE TEXT IS OF CONSTANT APPLICATION, JOY AND PEACE ALWAYS COME THROUGH BELIEVING.

I have told you we do not always have joy and peace, but still, in the main, joy and peace are the result of believing, and they are results, not sometimes, but in every case. For instance, as soon as a person is saved, one of the earliest evidences of spiritual life is a great battle within. Some have the notion that as soon as they are saved they shall never have to fight. Why, it is then that you begin the campaign. The moment you get into Canaan, what are you to do? Canaan is yours now. You have

passed out of the wilderness. It is all yours, what have you got to do? Why you must ever seek to drive those Canaanites out, and you will fight continually till you get to heaven. You did not expect this. Well, but you shall have joy and peace while the fighting is going on. Is it possible to be fighting with inbred sins, and yet to have joy and peace? My dear friends, it is not only possible, but it is the only chance we have of victory.

I know that some of you—and I deeply sympathize with you—are fighting with your bad temper and with many other imperfections, but you have not believed in Christ, and you have not any joy and peace, and you cannot conquer that evil spirit. Of course you cannot, because while you are distressed in mind, that helps to irritate you. But if you simply believe Jesus, and get joy and peace, oh, then you can use the sword against that bad temper of yours. You will say to these little fretfulnesses, “Be off with you. I have something more to think of. I have something sweeter to cheer me than anything you can bring to annoy me.”

Why, you will say to yourself, “I trust Christ to save me, and I know He will do it, for He is no liar, and oh, now it is that I feel peace, and now, Lord, help me to overcome that temper of mine. Enable me to be holy and like to Thee, since Thou hast done so much for me, now lend me strength.”

But you cannot do this, nor hope to conquer except by the blood of the Lamb. Go and wash in the fountain He has opened, and you shall be more than a conqueror through Him that has loved you.

Furthermore, remember that even after you are secure in Christ, and accepted before God, and clothed in Jesus’ righteousness, you may sometimes get despondent. Christian men are but men, and they may have a bad liver or an attack of bile, or some trial, and then they get depressed even if they have ever so much grace. I would defy the apostle Paul himself to help it.

But what then? Why then you can get joy and peace through believing. I am the subject of depressions of spirit so fearful that I hope none of you ever get to such extremes of wretchedness as I go to, but I always get back again by this—I know I trust Christ. I have no reliance but in Him, and if He falls, I shall fall with Him, but if He does not, I shall not. Because He lives, I shall live also, and I spring to my legs again and fight with my depressions of spirit and get the victory through it. And so may you do, and so you *must*, for there is no other way of escaping from it.

In your most depressed seasons you are to get joy and peace through believing. “Ah!” says one, “but suppose you have fallen into some great sin—what then?” Why then the more reason that you should cast yourself upon Him. Do you think Jesus Christ is only for little sinners? Is He a doctor who only heals finger-aches?

Beloved, it is no faith to trust Christ when I have no sin, but it is true faith when I am foul, and black, and filthy. When during the day I have tripped up and fallen, and done serious damage to my joy and peace, to go back again to that dear fountain and say, “Lord, I never loved washing so much before as I do tonight, for today I have made a fool of myself. I have said and done what I ought not to have done, and I am ashamed and full of confusion, but I believe Christ can save me, even me, and I will rest in Him still.”

That is the true way of Christian life, and the only way of getting joy and peace. Go to Christ even when sin prevails. “Yes, but,” I hear one say, “I am so afraid of presumption.” Well, I am not sorry that you are, but when you are most afraid of presumption, the true way to get joy and peace and to be kept from presumption is by believing. They say that “like cures like.” Certainly belief cures presuming, trusting Christ cures trusting self.

Dear friend, when you are afraid of presuming, believe. When you say, “Perhaps, after all, I may be cast away,” then go to the cross and say, “But if I am I will be cast away trusting in Christ.” “Pshaw,” says the devil, “you fool, do you think that such a sinner as you can ever be perfectly saved?” Say to the devil, “Whether I am a fool or not I do not know, but if I am not saved, I will be damned trusting Christ. If I am cast away, I will be cast away hanging to the cross.” Stick to this, dear friends, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” You cannot help having joy and peace then.

*“And when thine eye of faith is dim,
Still hold on Jesus, sink or swim;
Still at His footstool bow the knee,
And Israel’s God thy strength, thy peace shall be.”*

Only do let your confidence be not in your peace, not in your joy, but in Christ.

Now, I will finish with this declaration—that if you can get into such a state that all the sins that were ever committed should swear that they will block your pathway to peace, and if all the suggestions of hell that ever came up from the infernal pit should surround you at one time, and if, in his own proper person, the very prince of hell should stand across the way and swear to spill your soul’s blood, and if, in addition to this, the light of God’s countenance should be hidden from you, and no promise should seem to come comfortably with power to your soul, and if, over and above this, every Christian minister should be silent, or have no word for you but condemnation, and every Christian brother should turn his back on you, and tell you that you were a hypocrite, a deceiver, a foul and lost villain, and if conscience should come in at the back of these and say, “Every word of this is true, you are all this,” yet, yet in that fearful extremity, if you can believe, you are saved.

If you can then come, even in the most abject, filthy, leprous, horrible condition, so that the blackness of hell were whiteness compared to you, and the hardness of adamant were softness compared to your horrible and obdurate heart, yet if you can come and believe Christ is able to save to the uttermost, and you can fling yourself as a helpless, lost one, at the foot of His dear cross, and resolve to live or to die there, you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of His hand, for He will save, and he will rest in His love. And if you believe in Him, you can no more perish than He can perish, and unless He can be untrue and reverse His promise, and cast His blood upon the ground to be spilt in vain, it is not possible that a soul trusting in Jesus should be lost.

May God bless this testimony to you! I have brought you to the water, but I cannot make you drink. I can bring Christ to you in the preaching, but I cannot bring you to Christ. However, I can pray this, that the Lord Jesus may now bless the word, and seal it home, both to heart and conscience, for His name’s sake.

One word before we part to those who know neither joy nor peace through faith in Jesus, and have no wish to share these blessings with us because they are satisfied with the delusions of the god of this world. Weigh for one moment your so-called joy with ours, and put your peace as you conceive of peace into the scale against ours. Judge you now. Is your joy as pure? Has it no alloy? Are your cups without dregs and your delights without bitterness? Is it as lasting as ours? Will it never be cut off?

Does your sun never go down? Do your riches never take to themselves wings and fly away? Does no moth corrupt, no thief break through and steal? Is it as powerful to fill the heart at all times? Does it never pall? Are you never weary of your delights? Can you live upon them forever, and wish no higher good than to have them continued through eternity?

Do your pleasures ennoble and exalt? Are you led by them ever higher and higher? Do they elevate you as a man, and develop every higher power and faculty of your being? Do they give you a power and a strength in the path of duty, and never lead astray to folly? Or are they prone to spread snares for your feet, and to beguile you into evil ways?

Ponder these questions, and if I mistake not, you will learn to despise your present state, and seek that joy and peace which come through believing in Jesus. May it be so! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 14

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.