

4: The Good Doer

“Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.”

[Psalm 34:14]

Whenever anyone becomes a true follower of Jesus and acquires that glorious, privileged name of “Christian”, a step has been taken with eternal consequences. The dominion of darkness has been departed from, and an entrance has been made into the Kingdom of Truth and Light, ruled over by King Jesus.

Believing is a question of leaving the old life and entering one that is new. Believing begins with grieving for the wrong that you have done — a process known as repentance; and, through faith in Christ, receiving the gift of eternal life. **Romans 6:23** puts it like this: **“For the wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

Clear Instructions

For those who have been born again of the Spirit, having been saved through faith in Christ, **Psalm 34:14** has a particular resonance: **“Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.”**

“To depart” not only means to leave sin behind, but to do so for ever. But there is a battle to be fought against being enticed back to the old life. Someone once warned: “Keep out of sight and scent old sins.” That is excellent advice; but negatives alone are not enough. In order to move forward, positive steps are needed. In short, set your sights elsewhere. This is the essence of **Psalm 34:14**: **“...do good; seek peace, and pursue it.”**

These three commands deserve closer examination.

1: DO GOOD

This is a call to active service for the Lord. It is a reminder of **James 1:22**: **“...be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own souls.”** Hearing is not enough. Knowing is not enough. Understanding is not enough. It’s the active and ongoing doing of God’s word that ultimately counts. That is where true virtue is to be found. This command takes it as read that Scripture will be constantly consulted and studied, as one would do with a reliable map when in difficult terrain.

This is because the present age is in a deteriorating state of darkness and confusion as to what is right and wrong. Add to that, the ongoing pressure to conform to the prevailing culture, and Christians have a formidable task to comply with the commands of God.

Before going any further,

Pause a moment for meditation

1: There is a somewhat contemptuous expression around, called “Do gooders”. To what extent, if at all, should any notice be taken of it? This raises the wider point of unduly worrying about abusive remarks, rather than focussing upon serving the Lord. It has been said that insults are very much what you make of them. Surely, then, to be called a “Do gooder” should be treated as a compliment!

2: Consider carefully **Matthew 5:16**, **Psalm 40:3** & **Acts 10:38**: -

(i) **Matthew 5:16** says: **“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”** Therefore the full focus should be on God’s glory. Remember the old hymn: “Jesus bids us shine”.

(ii) **Psalm 40:3** says: **“And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.”** The new song is the knowledge of God’s will. Notice the word “see”. Obedience to God needs to be obvious and visible.

(iii) **Acts 10:38**: When Peter was addressing an assembled company at Caesarea, having come there at the request of Cormelius, a centurion, he told **“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed**

of the devil; for God was with him.”

Many Oppressed

There are many just now who are oppressed of the devil, and are positively afraid to do good in the sight of God, because there is a very contrary spirit around. It is impacting upon every walk of life. Many are oppressed! But don't get depressed! There is a power that man can wield, called prayer, for the power of the Holy Spirit to confront the world with truth.

What steps, then, should be taken? An essential starting point is Christ's words to God the Father: **“not my will, but thine, be done.”**²

*“Behold, the servant of the Lord!
I wait Thy guiding eye to feel,
To hear and keep Thy ev'ry word,
To prove and do Thy perfect will;
Joyful from my own works to cease,
Glad to fulfil all righteousness”*³

2: SEEK PEACE

CHRIST JESUS is the saved sinner's peace [**Ephesians 2:14**]; for He alone has broken down the middle wall of partition between us. In the context of that verse, Paul was speaking of the previous division between the Jews and the Gentiles. On being saved, both are made into one body of believers by the cross [**Ephesians 2:16**]. That peace is conferred upon all believers, who through faith in Christ have peace with God. But in the context of this verse, the peace that is to be sought is that enabling gift of peace in order to serve the Lord.

Bequeathed

Peace was bequeathed by Christ, who said in **John 14:27**: **“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”** What is its primary purpose? The answer is given in **John 16:33**: **“These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”** Therefore Christ's peace extinguishes fear and equips His people for service. Without it, the fear of man will fuel reluctance to do good at every step of the way. It is notable **Galatians 5:22** includes “peace” as one of the fruits of the Spirit.

Thus Christ's peace is a gift; and yet it is to be sought. There can be no peace where there is division amongst the brethren. That is perfectly plain from many passages of Scripture, and none more startlingly than **Galatians 5:15**: **“But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.”**

Sought by Prayer

So how is “peace” sought? The answer must surely be by putting our trust wholly and completely in the Lord, and by asking for it earnestly. It is to be sought with a spirit of longing to be of more effective use in the cause of the Kingdom of God. It is to be sought earnestly, passionately, frequently, in conjunction with a spirit of repentance for those times when we undoubtedly fall short of what is rightly expected of us. An old, forgotten and largely lost children's hymn says this: -

*Teach me to love, /Teach me to pray,
Saviour above,/Teach me the way*

*Show me how I,/ In my small way,
Can if I try / Do good each day.*⁴

3: PURSUE PEACE

Peace is to be pursued. A pursuit is an activity, participated in, or striven for. If you stop striving, you will lose sight of it. There is such a thing as perfect peace; yet it is rarely experienced. **Isaiah 26: 3 & 4** says this about it: **“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed [or “sustained by”] on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.”**

Peace is a state of mind that rules the heart. Paul wrote: **“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.”** [**Colossians 3:15**] Furthermore, peace is essentially part of the wider spiritual state of each believer, seen where each treats the other with forbearance, forgiveness and, above all, charity — that crowning grace of all Christian virtues.

The Pursuit of peace – a cause for thought

1: Is “peace”, as outlined above, high on every Christian’s agenda? When was it last raised and discussed in a church meeting?

2: What are the practical implications for the Gospel by peace “ruling in our hearts”?

3: What noticeable outcome will be seen by the pursuit of peace?

Part of the answer is contained in the following anecdote: -

The Precious Effect of Peace

Hugh Bourne, co-founder of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, wrote of the blessed effect at one of their conferences where peace presided: -

“The tenth annual meeting, or conference, of the Primitive Methodist Connexion was held at Scotter, in the county of Lincoln, It commenced on Thursday, May 14th, 1829... This was to be the best conference ever held in the Primitive Methodist Connexion. The union, harmony, and zeal were of a high order. The unction that attended the doing of business, and the meetings for worship, was great — the people were baptised from heaven day after day, and mourners were comforted, many precious souls were set at liberty, were justified by faith, and obtained peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ...”⁵

It is really wonderful to hear of such things. It is even better to do them!

FOOTNOTES:

1: See: James 1:27

2: Luke 22:42.

3: Charles Wesley, 1707-88.

4: Dorothy Pleydell-Bouverie, 1878-1949.

5: *Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Hugh Bourne*, Volume II, pp.179-80

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