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THE REVIEW

The Perfect Peace of God—Part 2

By Pastor Mark Strangman, Moderator IBFNA

Let me begin with an apology. I had promised in my article from last November that I would conclude the article on the peace of God in the February 2022 issue of the *Review*. I failed to follow through on that promise. I explained in the February article why I was pausing our topic at hand, since sometimes life requires us to respond to the current situation, and the vaccine mandate fiasco proposed by our President warranted such attention. So, with my apology completed (and I hope accepted), let us continue considering the peace of God and the state of the world's lack of peace.

A young lady recently shared a personal incident with me, which is indicative of the lack of peace in the world today. I am sure you are aware of the persistent lack of world peace. Perhaps you have heard the statistics that tell us that since the beginning of recorded history, the world has been at peace less than eight percent of the time. In 3,530 years of recorded history, only 286 years saw world peace. Moreover, more than 8000 peace treaties were made and broken. During this period there have been 14,351 wars, large and small, in which 3.64 billion people have been killed. Since 650 B.C., there have been 1,656 arms races, only 16 of which have not ended in war. The remainder ended in the economic collapse of the countries involved. There has never been nor will there ever be a state of lasting peace in the world. Even the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ will end in a tragic (yet quick) war. Only when sin is eradicated, and the new heavens and new earth are established, will the world be in a state of lasting peace. But in Scripture, the real focus when it comes to obtaining peace is not the world's stage, but rather the personal state of each individual soul.

The young lady shared with me her recent trip to a certain coffee shop where she had placed a mobile order for a drink. There was some sort of mix-up with her order and as the associate tried to sort it out with her, she noticed that another associate had what appeared to be the drink that she had ordered. She mentioned to the person helping her that "it looks like she might have my drink." Immediately, another worker (presumably the one in charge) came rushing over to her and exclaimed rather forcefully "excuse me, they prefer it if you would not use that pronoun when speaking about them." The young lady told me that she was offended, embarrassed, and frustrated by the whole situation.

We live in a world where there is such inner turmoil that it is impossible for people to find any sort of inner peace. People are constantly searching for answers but continually coming up short. Whether that story angers us or saddens us, the lack of personal



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peace in the world is something which we cannot ignore, nor should we. People are searching for peace in science, psychology, entertainment, the media, politics and the government, and countless other false hopes. What we must realize biblically is that the quest for peace in the inner being must first begin with absolute truth. The individual who is confused about what gender they should be is really in need of absolute truth about who they are. The person seeking peace in a political system must first understand the truth about the nature of society. Even the one who is seeking peace in a religious system will fall far short if the church by which they are seeking peace is not grounded in biblical truth.

Rom. 1:18-22 outlines this desperate need of mankind and previews the calamity caused by a sinful approach to truth and reality. Verse 18 states, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." Paul is saying that the sinful downward spiral of the world and its system is caused by each person's not having a proper understanding of reality. They "hold the truth in unrighteousness." The Greek word translated *hold* in this verse is *katecho* which is to *hold down* or *restrain*. Their unrighteous condition has kept them from understanding the truth about their situation. They literally live in a false view of reality.

You have most likely experienced an encounter with someone who fails to see plainly a sinful condition or an unbiblical position in the world or in their own personal lives. Perhaps it frustrated you because they could not perceive a truth that was crystal clear to you. I am not speaking of matters of taste or preference but of absolute, straightforward truth. Those who are separated from the Lord by their lost condition are simply unable to see the true reality of the world and themselves. That is why the only true answer to the lack of peace in the world today is not found through education or social programs. It is not finding yourself or exercising blind tolerance regardless of facts. It is coming to the absolute truth that we all are sinners who need a Savior.

The quest for peace can succeed only by coming to the true source of peace. It will never be acquired

by natural, ungodly methods. Rom. 3:10-12 reveals the sinful condition of every individual. Verses 10-12 (Psalm 14:1-3) share the true state of humanity - "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." The principle concludes with verses 17-18: "the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." They simply cannot arrive at peace because they are taking the wrong way. They are attempting to calculate a solution of peace without considering God in the equation. They must come to the Prince of Peace, the only one who holds the way to a relationship with God the Father. In response to His disciple's inquiry about the true way, Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

There you have it - the only means by which anyone in this world can find true peace is by salvation through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. So many are looking for peace but ignoring the only true way to find it. That is why we must be the ambassadors of the Lord. We must bring the gospel of salvation to them so that they finally can find peace. There is no other way.

But what if our lives are not demonstrating that perfect peace? What if the ones who are searching for the peace of God cannot see it in us? Isa. 26:3 promises, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." But what if we are failing to trust in the Lord as we should? What if His perfect peace does not flow through us?

Rom. 8:6 warns, "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." The word translated *carnally* refers to basic human fleshly nature. It is the nature of the unregenerate, the one who does not have a relationship with God. Yet the context of this passage indicates that Paul refers here not to the state of the unsaved world, but to the wayward believer. This is the brother or sister whose mind is not stayed on the Lord and trusting in Him. But to be spiritually minded is to live a life of peace. Peter reminds us in 2 Pet. 3:14, "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." As we anticipate the Lord's return and the coming of the end times, we must be diligent to be found in His

peace, living a life that is pleasing to the Father and an example of His peace to the unbeliever.

Paul gives us the key to accomplishing this in Phil. 4:8. After his guarantee of the peace that passes understanding in verse 7, he enumerates thought patterns that will establish God's peace in us. He tells us to think on the things of the Lord. The word translated *think* is *logizomai*, to take inventory or an account of. It means to account for precious truths. By taking this inventory, we establish the correct thought process. We are to think primarily on the things of the Lord. They are to occupy our mind and continually affect everything else which we think on. We cannot help but think on sinful worldly things that we encounter every day. But even as burdensome as they can be, they are never to take root and cause us to sin. The righteous truths of God's Word should dominate our thought processes and keep the things of the world in God's proper perspective.

I am sure that you are very familiar with this list: things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of a good report; things of virtue and of praise

– these godly principles should occupy most of our thought life. Take, for instance, the one who is troubled by anxiety or worry – think on these things rather than your own concerns and see how God replaces anxiety with faith. Or take the one whose thought life might lean towards immoral fantasies – think on these things and your relationship with the Lord will stay pure and wholesome. Or consider the one who is overcome with depression – think on these things and God will establish your heart and set you upon the rock of Jesus Christ. The possibilities are endless, and the result will always be the same – “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.” As you think on the things of the Lord, you will find yourself acting out those attributes and qualities which the Lord desires you to have. You will be at peace, having the God of peace lead and guide your every step.

May the peace that passes understanding keep your heart and mind through the Lord Jesus Christ, and may the Lord richly bless the IBFNA.

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Hope Baptist Church, 6427 Charity Way, Hanover, PA 17331; Host Pastor: Al Harris

Conference Schedule:

*Please note that the Sight & Sound trip is on Wednesday, not Tuesday as announced in the conference brochure.

Tuesday:

9:00 AM Devotions - Vic Perry (v. 58)
9:45 AM - Prayer Time
10:15 AM - Break
10:30 AM - Allen Harris (vv. 1-11)
11:30 AM - Lunch
1:30 PM - Kevin Hobi (vv. 12-19)
Free Time (Gettysburg, etc.)
7:00 PM - Ken Lynch (vv. 20-28)

Wednesday:

9:00 AM Devotions - Vic Perry (v. 58)
9:45 AM - Prayer Time
10:15 AM - Break
10:30 AM - Marty Von (Part 1)
11:45 AM - Business Session
12:30 PM - Lunch / Free Time
(Sight & Sound Trip—“David”)*
7:30 PM - Marty Von (Part 2)

Thursday:

9:00 AM Devotions - Vic Perry (v. 58)
9:45 AM - Prayer Time
10:15 AM - Break
10:30 AM - Marty Von (Part 3) w/ Q&A
12:00 PM - Lunch
1:30 PM - Jeff Kistler (vv. 29-34)
2:45 PM - Paul Connor (vv. 35-50)
4:00 PM - Mark Strangman (vv. 51-57)

Good News About the Good News

By Evangelist Ken Lynch

“These are the times that try men’s souls” was a statement by colonialist Tom Paine more than two-hundred years ago reflective of the time when the colonists were experiencing great difficulties. These were the days experiencing the independence of the colonies from Great Britain and the establishment of a brand-new country. Indeed, they were difficult days. While Paine’s was a political statement, it also has a spiritual application to our day, the first two decades of the 21st century.

These are indeed difficult days for the modern Bible-believing, Bible-preaching local church. In my more than fifty years of ministry and forty-four on the evangelistic trail, many changes have taken place in fundamental circles. Some churches have grown, but many have not. Many churches have closed their doors for a variety of reasons. Many churches, including fundamental churches, no longer have old-fashioned evangelistic meetings. Meetings that used to extend for two weeks (or more) have been reduced to four days, with a few extending to six days. Even churches that still have meetings are finding the attendance something less than encouraging. It is more and more difficult to get church members to faithfully attend such meetings, much less the unsaved.

It seems that the doors of opportunity for biblical presentation have been slowly closing for more than half a century now. Whereas once the Bible was read in every high school homeroom, it is now a forbidden book. When, at one time, each morning the public schools of America opened with the salute to the American flag and a time of silent prayer, those moments are indeed quiet—no flag salute and no time to recognize God, even silently.

Yet, in spite of it all, these ought not to be depressing days, but days of excitement as we see the end times preparing for the coming of Christ. This is not just any gospel (for there are many out there). Rather, it is the gospel of Christ that is still the “dynamite” of God “unto salvation to everyone that believeth” (Rom. 1:16). Dynamite may not be like an atomic bomb, but it is still a mighty power-

ful explosive. Just as dynamite can be used to destroy, it can also be used to build.

There is a power in the gospel that must not be underestimated. The very word *gospel* means *good news*. And the good news about the good news is that God is still in the business of saving souls. While we may not see hundreds coming to Christ as in the days of the great evangelistic meetings of Bob Jones, Sr, Sam Jones, Gipsy Smith, and Billy Sunday, God is still saving souls, one here and one or two there. In Asia there are thousands coming to Christ in countries like Korea.

God has provided many unique ways to evangelize here in America. Since the invention of radio decades ago, there have been hundreds of Christian radio stations and programs reaching around the world. With the invention of the television set, there came the new ministry of “televangelism.” However, it must be noted that much of so-called “Christian TV” is really Christian in name only. There are a host of false prophets on TV, much more so than on radio. Then came the Internet, Facebook, and other social media.

Recently, I had the opportunity to play music and speak to an entire elementary school, one class at a time (as they rotated to the classroom where I was). I was able to present the ministry of the evangelist and what he does, even sharing the gospel, since that is what the evangelist does. Some of the children even joined with me in quoting John 3:16. By the way, I received no negative comments or objections.

Most readers of this article are aware that my primary evangelistic ministry is working with small, often struggling, churches. As a result, I do not see as much fruit as other men do in larger ministries. But there is fruit. God still saves folks in the little churches just like the big churches. Recently, an 80-year-old man, a 20-year-old young man, and a 10-year-old boy trusted Christ.

I like to fish, and it is always fun to catch fish. But sometimes I get “skunked.” Sometimes there

just are not any fish in the pond. Then there are those times when the fish are really biting, and I can go home with a bucket full. The same is true in evangelism. Jesus told His disciples, "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men." But, if there are no fish to catch, then no fish will be caught. God is the one who stocks the pond of a congregation making the catch possible. Isa. 55:11 reminds the soul-winner that it is His Word that God promises to honor. When spiritual fish are caught, we rejoice and get excited, and that is as it should be. But one must remember that it was God who gave the increase.

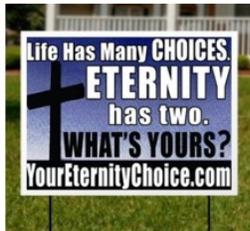
A few years ago, I came in contact with a new ministry that had just started called YourEternityChoice.com. It started with full-sized highway billboard signs (particularly in the central Kansas area along I-70 and elsewhere). It then grew with the addition of business-card-size witnessing cards. More recently, a very nice yard sign was developed. All of these unique tools carry the same message: "Life has many choices. Eternity has two. What's yours?" followed with the web site where the gospel and Christian living is clearly presented. (See the attached ad.) These yard signs are especially unique in that they offer a way to have a silent witness in one's yard. It is hoped that someone will enquire as to why only two questions, what are they, etc.

There is a large billboard along I-70 Rossville, KS. One man passed that billboard every morning on his way to work and was offended by it. One day he approached one of the men in the church that had sponsored that billboard, wanting to know why the church was so pushy in their religion. The fact is, that individual, knowing where that sign was as he drove to work, did not have to look at it. But he did every morning. His eyes were automatically drawn to it. He was under conviction and did

not know it. Our prayer is that one day he will respond and come to Christ.

What this article is all about is simply that the good news about the good news is that it is still the good news, the good news that God still uses in bringing souls to Himself. It is our responsibility to do our part in sharing that good news with whatever means are available. The materials offered at YourEternityChoice.com are just another way of getting that message out to a lost and dying world. "How shall they they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher" (Rom. 10:14). The word for *preacher* does not mean a pastor or evangelist or some ordained minister. It simply means someone to tell the good news as a town crier. You know, the old "Hear ye! Hear ye!" May God help each to do his or her part in carrying this good news to our own neighborhoods. As the motto of YEC says, we all need to "Keep the Gospel of Christ Before Your Community."

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The Possibility of Revival

By Pastor Kevin Hobi

Before the IBFNA was a Fellowship, it was a call for revival. Our founders called themselves "Regular Baptists for Revival." In the last edition of the *Review*, we considered the Bible's answer to the

question, "What is revival?" The schoolhouse of Scripture taught us that revival is a work of the Holy Spirit by which He causes dead and dying souls to live again spiritually, expressing the Father's love

for sinners and His joy in their eternal salvation, blowing powerfully like wind and descending refreshingly like rain, multiplying the Word of God, disciples of Christ, and local churches, and marking these multiplied disciples and churches with the exaltation of Jesus Christ, lastingly changed lives, hunger for their Bibles, a commitment to truth over falsehood, and a selfless love for God and the brethren. This is God's mighty work of revival.

So is revival possible in our day? What makes Christian revivals possible is an important question for local churches as well as students of history. That a despised and persecuted sect triumphed over the Roman Empire is traceable to the revivals of the third-century persecuted church. The agnostic historian, E. R. Dodds, wrote a book titled, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, in an effort to explain this history in human terms.

As the title of his book suggests, Dodds begins by saying that beginning with the reign of the emperor Marcus Aurelius, the glory days of the Roman Empire, called the *Pax Romana*, were declining. Aurelius was a philosopher-emperor who came to power in A.D. 160, and he wrote of the senselessness of the human condition in his pagan society.

Dodds gives some examples: "As the earth is a pinpoint in infinite space, so the life of man is a pinpoint in infinite time, a knife-edge between two eternities . . . His activities are 'smoke and nothingness'; his prizes are 'a bird flying past, vanished before we can grasp it'. The clash of armies is 'the quarrel of puppies over a bone'; the pomp of Marcus's own Samaritan triumph is the self-satisfaction of a spider which has caught a fly. For Marcus this is not empty rhetoric: it is a view of the human condition, and it is meant in deadly earnest" (p. 8). This pessimism and loss of faith in meaning and purpose is where paganism leads, and it is where many find themselves in our day.

A century into this malaise, the Christian church comes under severe persecution beginning with the Emperor Decius in A. D. 249 and intensifying under Diocletian and Galerius. During this time, the church gained rapidly in numbers, and the historian Dodds tries to explain how that was possible. He mentions the weakness of paganism and the courage of Christians in the face of persecution as important factors.

And then he notes that certain characteristics of the Christianity of that time were important to its victory: (1) "In the first place, its very exclusiveness, its refusal to concede any value to alternative forms of worship, which nowadays is often felt to be a weakness, was in the circumstances of the time a source of strength." (2) "Secondly, Christianity was open to all. In principle, it made no social distinctions." (3) "Thirdly, in a period when earthly life was increasingly devalued and guilt-feelings were widely prevalent, Christianity held out to the disinherited the conditional promise of a better inheritance in another world." (4) "But lastly, the benefits of becoming a Christian were not confined to the next world. A Christian congregation was from the first a community in a much fuller sense than any corresponding group" (pp. 132-136).

I am struck, as I read that explanation of what made possible Christianity's advance in third-century Rome, that this list of causes is the same list that ought to characterize us in our day and age. What Dodds fails to understand, of course, is that Christianity becomes all those things through a supernatural work of God, not a natural work of man. It happens through revival among believers.

With that history as background, we will consider the possibility of revival in our day with the help of the Lord's instruction to his disciples after his conversation with the rich young ruler (Luke 18:15-27). They ask the Lord a closely related question in verse 26 of our chapter, "Who then can be saved?" Our question, "Is revival possible?" is really the same question.

What Prompts the Question

Jesus had mentioned the eye of a needle. There is an interpretation of this needle that arose in the fifteenth century that claimed that this needle was a small portal in the wall of a city for the use of pedestrians. If a camel kneeled down, he might scooch through one of those successfully. But sewing needles were common devices in NT homes, and the physician Luke actually refers to a surgical needle in this passage, using a different word for *needle* than the other Gospels. What prompts the question is very simply the large size of camels, and the small size of a needle's eye. Since the one is too small for the other, "Who then can be saved?"

So, Jesus's point is that when we are talking about someone being saved, we are talking about something that is impossibly difficult. And in this context, He is focused on one of the things that makes saving a sinner impossibly difficult.

Riches make saving a sinner impossibly difficult (v. 24-25). I believe the rich young ruler of this passage would have sold everything he had and given it to the poor to be able to live the life I am living. I also believe that I would not want to have to live the life the rich young ruler had to live.

Think of the technologies, conveniences, comforts, luxuries, and pleasures we experience that the rich young ruler could have never imagined possible. We go to the bread aisle at a grocery store, and the number of choices before us is astounding. And we have not even made it to the store bakery yet, and then to think that grocery stores are everywhere, and that is just bread. If riches caused an impossible difficulty when it comes to the salvation of this rich young ruler, it does at least that in my life and yours and of everyone we know.

I would like to mention one other things in this category not mentioned by Jesus in our passage. Paul later indicates that show business makes saving a sinner impossibly difficult (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

My youngest son bought me a book for Christmas titled, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. It was written by Neil Postman, a New York University English professor, whom I do not believe was a Christian.

The book describes the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates, the first of which took place on August 21, 1858 in Ottawa, IL. Douglas spoke first for one hour; Lincoln gave a rebuttal for an hour and a half; and then Douglas finished with a half hour.

The funny thing about this 3-hour debate format was that it was a condensed version of what was typical in public discourse. On October 16, 1854, the two men had met in opposition in Peoria, IL. Douglas gave a three-hour address with the agreement that Lincoln would get the same amount of time to reply. They would still not be done after Lincoln, awaiting another reply from Douglas. In the middle of this session, Lincoln suggested that

they all take a break for supper, which they did, and remarkably they all returned for the finish.

Citizens in Ottawa and Peoria in the 19th century lived in a culture that had the ability to listen to a lot of content, and they could listen well. Today, our political debates are staged visual extravaganzas with each participant hoping to utter the one-liner that will entertain the audience the most. Paul talked about these days, as did Ezekiel. God told Ezekiel to preach to dry bones, which had no ears, and He told Paul to be instant in season and out of season, because seasons like this would come.

Postman goes on to explain that before the invention of the telegraph, information could travel no faster than a human being could, about the speed of a locomotive, or about 35 miles an hour. Today, information travels instantaneously at 5G speeds. Postman says the reason people could listen to the Lincoln/Douglas debates was that they had lived in an age of exposition. More and more, we are living in what he calls an age of showbusiness. Because information travels as fast as it does, we have many more topics to digest, and our brains have been wired to not spend too much time with any of them because we cannot do much about them anyway. Few of the problems and causes the tweeter finds on Twitter can he solve or advance.

And so in our age, showbusiness is part of what makes saving a sinner impossibly difficult. Other forces, like rock-n-roll music, might be mentioned.

What Answers the Question

The answer to the question, "Who then can be saved?" and to the question, "Is revival possible?" is the same. Jesus's answer is twofold - with man this is impossible; with God all things are possible. We must remember both answers in our preaching and praying, in season and out of season.

As you study the history of revival, you find not that men figured out some new way of doing things, or that they instituted a better program, or that they finally found a leader who would lead them to the promised land. What you find is that God decided to do something extraordinary. Only God can make a camel go through the eye of a needle. Only God's Spirit can give a rich young ruler childlike faith (Luke 18:15-17).

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