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John Gill's

A BODY OF PRACTICAL DIVINITY

Book 1—Chapter 11

**OF PEACE AND TRANQUILITY OF
MIND**

Next to Love and Joy, in order, stands Peace; now to be treated of; "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace" (Gal. 5:22). "Charity," or "love," and "peace," are sometimes mentioned together (2 Tim. 2:22), and where the one is there is the other; especially if joy is in company with love, peace must be an attendant. Concerning which may be considered,

1. What peace is meant, and is designed to be treated of. Not an external peace; such as is sometimes enjoyed by whole bodies of men; as in nations, when free from wars and rumors of wars; and in churches, when at rest from persecution, and clear of animosities and contentions among themselves: and in good men, when at peace with their neighbours; which they are to follow after, and cultivate as much as in them lies; and when God sometimes makes their enemies to be at peace with them: and in individuals, when every man sits under his vine and fig tree, none making him afraid; and enjoying much prosperity and happiness. But it is an internal, spiritual peace of soul, which is to be inquired into; which is an ease of mind from distress through sin and a sense of wrath.

1a. First, sin, upon conviction, is made exceeding sinful, and is very distressing; this is usually through the law; "By the law is the knowledge of sin;" not only of external acts of sin in life, but of the inward lusts of it in the heart; "I had not known lust," says the apostle; that is, that it was sin, "except the law had said, Thou shall not covet;" and when such knowledge is had of sin, it appears "exceeding sinful," very odious, and gives great uneasiness (Rom. 3:20; 7:7,13), when the guilt of sin lies heavy upon the conscience, it is a burden too heavy for a guilty sinner to bear; as it was to David (Ps. 38:3,4), and especially where there is not a glimpse of pardoning

grace and mercy; as in Cain. There is a conscience in every man; and when it does its office, it causes great anxiety, grief, and trouble, more or less; when the mind is opened by conviction, under a work of the law, wrath is let into the conscience; "The law worketh wrath;" along with the knowledge of sin by the law, wrath from heaven is revealed in it against all unrighteousness and ungodliness; and it leaves a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation against it; which wrath sometimes lies so hard and heavy as to cause terror, and even distraction; as in Heman (Ps. 88:7,15,16). So that sin convicted of, makes dreadful work in the heart of an awakened sinner; such are pricked and pained at their very hearts; and in their compunction cry out, "What shall we do to be saved?" they are wounded with a sense of sin, and the arrows of divine wrath stick fast in them; the hand of God presses them sore; their wounds are grievous and intolerable; for "a wounded spirit, who can bear?" This inward distress is sometimes expressed by outward gestures and words; as by smiting upon the breast, not daring to look up to heaven; as in the publican, crying out, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" and by smiting upon the thigh; as in Ephraim, saying, he was ashamed and confounded, because he bore the reproach of his youth (Luke 18:13; Jer. 31:19), such usually express themselves as the three thousand did, convinced under Peter's sermon, inquiring the way of salvation; "What shall we do?" or more explicitly, with the jailor "What shall we do to be saved?" lamenting their lost and undone state, in the words of Isaiah, "Woe is me, I am undone!" Now,

1b. Secondly, spiritual peace is a deliverance and freedom from this distress; which in general is wrought by the Spirit of God, being the comforter of convinced sinners; for that is his particular and peculiar work; he first convinces men of sin, righteousness, and judgment; and then he comforts them, by taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to them: he does by them as God did with the people of Israel of old, allured them, and brought them into the wilderness, and then spake comfortably unto them; he causes them to see their sicknesses and their wounds, as he did Ephraim and Judah, and the inability of themselves and others to cure them, and then he heals and binds them up. And all this he does more particularly,

1b1. By leading them to the blood of Christ, by which their wounds are healed; "With his stripes we are healed;" that is, with the blood flowing from them (Isa. 53:6), the blood of Christ is the balm in Gilead, the panacea that cures every wound, and he is the physician there; he is the "Sun of righteousness" that arises on distressed souls in beams of light, and joy, and love, and with "healing in his wings;" which healing is no other than pardon of sin, and the application of it (Ps. 103:3), the consequence of which must be, joy, peace, and tranquillity of soul; "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee!" (Matthew 9:2), for what can make a soul more cheerful, and give it more peace and pleasure, than a view of pardon by the blood of Jesus, and this given by Jesus himself? through an application of pardon, guilt is removed from the conscience, the burden is taken off. The blood of Christ applied, cleanses from all sin, takes away the guilt of every sin, and leaves none behind; the heart sprinkled by it from an evil conscience, is purged from dead works, which lay as an heavy encumbrance upon it; "Blessed therefore is he whose

transgression is forgiven;" or is lifted up, as the word signifies; which is lifted up from the sinner, and taken off from his conscience, as a burden on it, and he is eased of it. It is in this way that peace is spoken to a guilty sinner; hence the blood of Jesus is said to "speak better things than that of Abel;" the blood of Abel called aloud for vengeance on the shedder of it; but the blood of Christ speaks pardon and peace to condemned criminals. Peace is made for enemies and rebels by the blood of Christ; and this blood, by the Spirit of God, applied to such consciences who have been awakened by him, produces peace and quietness there; let a soul be as it were in a storm and tempest, if pardon by the blood of Christ is pronounced, all is hush and quiet in a moment.

1b2. By leading to the righteousness of Christ; a man's own righteousness will not yield him any solid peace; for there is no justification nor salvation by it; and it must at best be very variable, unstable, and inconstant; since man's righteousness is very imperfect, he sins in all, and in the best he does; and it is at most but while he is doing, or thinks he is doing, something good, that he has any peace; but when there is any interruption in doing, or he ceases from it, his peace is broken. But the righteousness of Christ, which is perfect, pure, and spotless, by which a man is justified from all his sins, lays a solid foundation for peace. "Every religion, says Beza, which opposes anything to the wrath of God, than the alone innocence, righteousness, and satisfaction of Jesus Christ, apprehended by faith, robs God both of his perfect justice and mercy; and therefore is false, and formed to deceive men." This being revealed and applied to a sinner, and faith wrought in him to receive it, as his justifying righteousness before God; and the sentence of justification by it pronounced in his conscience by the Spirit of God, produce peace in it; hence righteousness and peace are mentioned together, the one as the fruit of the other (Rom. 5:1; 14:17; Isa. 32:17).

1b3. By leading into the truths of the gospel; which is the Spirit's work, and in doing which he acts the part of a comforter; "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come," before spoken of as a comforter, "he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13), it is not by the law that peace is had, that was delivered in a storm, in the midst of blackness, darkness, and tempest; and they that heard it, were terrified with it, and entreated it might not be spoken to them any more; and surely they that desire to be under it, do not hear it, so as to understand the voice of it; for it pronounces the whole world guilty before God; it curses in case of a breach of any of its commands; it is the killing letter, the ministration of condemnation and death. But it is by the gospel, and the truths of it, which the Spirit of God enlightens the minds of men into, and makes application of, that peace is enjoyed; that is called, "The gospel of peace," not only because it proclaims peace made by the blood of Christ, is the word preaching peace by Jesus Christ, and the ministers of it, the publishers of that peace; but because it speaks peace to the conscience of a sinner, when Christ comes by his Spirit, and preaches peace unto them, and makes the word effectual to such a purpose the various truths of the gospel have a tendency to speak comfort to them, and to free them from that spirit of bondage, the law has brought them into, and holds them in, for that genders to bondage, encourages and increases it; but they

that "know the truth," the truth of the gospel, spiritually and experimentally, especially that great truth, free and full salvation by Christ for sinners, "the truth shall make them free," set them at liberty, and fill them with joy and peace (John 8:32).

1b4. By leading them into the covenant of grace, its blessings and promises; which, as it is a covenant of life, so of peace; and is a covenant of peace which cannot be removed; and is so called, not only in relation to the article in it, concerning peace to be made by Christ, the Mediator of it; but because it lays a lasting foundation for peace and comfort; its blessings are the sure mercies of David, spiritual, solid, and substantial ones, and which last for ever, which are founded in the free sovereign grace and will of God, and come to men through Christ being made a curse for them. The promises of it are exceeding great and precious; great in themselves, their origin, matter, and use; and precious to them that believe, and see their interest in them; these, fitly and seasonably spoken, are like apples of gold in pictures of silver; and being opened and applied by the Holy Spirit of promise, afford strong consolation to the heirs of promise; what peace did a view of covenant interest in its blessings and promises yield to David, amidst his sinful infirmities, and the troubles of his family! (2 Sam. 23:5).

1b5. By leading them into the love of God; for this is the Spirit's work; by whom not only the love of God is shed abroad into the hearts of his people, which occasions peace and joy, and even glorying in the midst of tribulations; but they are directed and guided by him into it; "The Lord," that is, the Lord the Spirit, as he stands distinguished from the other persons in the text, "direct your hearts into the love of God," κατευθυνα, direct, as in and by a straight line, immediately into it, not in a round about way, in a long train and course of duties, and from thence to fetch the evidence of interest in the love of God; which, at best, makes it very precarious, and leaves great disquietude and uneasiness: but when the Spirit leads directly into a view of interest in it, and bears witness to it, and grants a delightful sensation of it, the effect of this is solid, permanent peace; "There is no fear in love;" the love of God the Spirit leads into; "But perfect love casteth out fear," slavish, distressing, tormenting fear; where that has a place, the other removes, and instead of it, or the effect of it, is tranquillity and peace of mind (1 John 4:18).

Now this peace is enjoyed through faith in Christ; the God of hope "fills with all joy and peace in believing;" in believing in the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ; they that trust in him are kept "in perfect peace;" as their faith is, so is their peace; if their faith is steadfast, their peace is permanent: and it is much enjoyed also in the use of gospel ordinances; gospel churches, under the power and influence of a gospel Spirit, are "peaceable habitations, and quiet resting places;" gospel ordinances are ways of pleasantness, and "paths of peace," these are the "still waters" or "waters of quietness," or rest, beside which the saints are led; and the "green pastures," where they are made to lie down and take their ease and rest. I go on to inquire,

2. Who are the subjects of this peace; or who are possessed of it.

2a. Not sinful men, or unregenerate sinners; "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa. 57:21), whatever outward peace and prosperity they may enjoy, they have no inward spiritual peace; though "they are not in trouble," as other men, in outward trouble, as to body or estate; nor in soul trouble, or in a concern about their immortal souls, and the welfare of them; yet this ease is no other than stupidity, and a carnal dangerous security and indolence; and is owing to the ignorance of themselves, and of their state; "The way of peace they know not," the way to true peace with God, and peace of conscience; for while they cry, "Peace and safety, sudden destruction cometh upon them" (Rom. 3:17; 1 Thess. 5:3).

2b. Nor self-righteous persons, who trust in themselves that they are righteous, and fetch their peace from thence; but their trust is a spider's web, and such webs shall not become garments; nor shall they cover themselves with their works; and so shall not have peace and comfort; and of them it is said, "the way of peace they know not" (Isa. 59:6,8), and to such self-righteous persons Jehovah says, "I will declare thy righteousness," what a vain, useless thing it is in the business of justification before God, and with respect to peace to a man's self, "and thy works, for they shall not profit thee," in the affair of salvation, and to give peace and comfort (Isa. 57:12,13).

2c. Only justified and pardoned sinners have true, solid peace in themselves; those who are justified by Christ's righteousness have peace with God through him, and whose sins are pardoned through his blood, they are blessed, and blessed with peace; for with such righteous and happy ones it will be well at death, and to all eternity; when they die they enter into peace, and rest in their beds; the end of the perfect and upright man is peace; he enjoys much now, and shall be perfectly possessed of it hereafter.

2d. Believers in Christ, and who trust in the Lord, enjoy true peace of soul (Isa. 26:3), such whose hearts are fixed, trusting in the Lord, are "not afraid of evil tidings;" these do not disturb their peace, let them come from what quarter they will; from the suggestions of their own hearts, from the temptations of Satan, or from the world and wicked men in it; the falsehood of which they are soon able to detect; and their faith and trust in God fortifies them against them.

2e. Spiritually minded persons have a large share of inward peace of soul; "To be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6), they who mind carnal and earthly things, though they seek peace to themselves in this way, do not find it; for "a man's life" the peace, comfort, and happiness of it, "consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth;" for though he promises himself much peace, and that lasting, in the goods he has accumulated and laid up; yet these may be soon taken away from him, or he from them.

2f. They that love the law of God, his doctrines, ordinances, ways, and worship, usually enjoy much peace of soul; this the Psalmist attests by his own knowledge and experience; "Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them" (Ps. 119:165), or thy doctrine, especially the doctrine of peace, pardon, and salvation by Christ; such who have drank into this doctrine experimentally, find peace in their souls; nor are they easily offended with what they meet with in themselves or from others: they are sons of peace, who receive the gospel of peace; and they enjoy much who walk in wisdom's paths, which are "paths of peace;" and such who worship God according to the rule of his word, peace is upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

2g. They are the people and children of God who are the subjects of this peace; "The Lord will bless his people with peace" (Ps. 29:11), his covenant people, the people given to Christ, and saved by him, and who are effectually called by his Spirit and grace, and who are the children of God, the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty; "Great shall be the peace of thy children" (Isa. 54:13), the children of the church, the children of Christ, and the children of God; all to whom the Spirit of adoption is given, crying, "Abba, Father."

Now the seat of this grace in these subjects, is the heart and mind; for it is an internal frame of mind, it rules in the heart, and keeps and guards the heart and mind (Col. 3:15; Phil. 4:7), it lies in the breast of a saint; and what protects, preserves, and keeps it there is, "the breastplate of faith and love," of faith in Christ and love to him.

3. The author and causes of this peace.

3a. The efficient cause is God; hence called "the peace of God," because it comes from him; and he "the God of peace," because he is the author of it, even God, Father, Son, and Spirit. Sometimes the Father is meant; "The God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus;" that is, the Father of Christ, who raised him from the dead, to whom his resurrection is often ascribed (Heb. 13:20), and peace is often wished from him as in most of the Epistles; and also from Christ the Son of God, who is not only the peace maker, but the peace giver, in whom and from whom the saints have peace, when in the world tribulation; "My, peace I give unto you," &c. (John 16:33; 14:27), and peace is expressly called a fruit or grace of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), and is prayed for from all the three persons together (Rev. 1:4,5).

3b. The moving cause of it is the grace and goodwill of God; grace is always wished for along with it, and is usually set before it, as being the spring of it; and the angels in their song sung, "Peace on earth, and goodwill towards men," signify that the peace men had on earth was owing to the goodwill of God towards them (Luke 2:14).

3c. The instruments of it are the word, and the ministers of it; the gospel is the word not only preaching peace by Christ, but the means of administering peace to distressed minds; and the ministers of it, by publishing peace, are the instruments by whom the Lord speaks peace to wounded conscience.

4. The nature and properties of it.

4a. It is a gift of God, and which none can give but himself, and an excellent one it is, worth praying for and worth having; "Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means" (2 Thess. 3:16), it is a free gift, unmerited, and springs from grace, and is what the world cannot give (John 14:27).

4b. It is a blessing; the Jews, when they wished happiness to any, it was usually in this form, "Peace be to you," that including all prosperity in it; and when the Lord blesses his people it is with peace (Ps. 29:11). And,

4c. This is called "great" peace (Ps. 119:165), it is great in quality, and sometimes great in quantity, abundance of it, peace like a flowing river.

4d. It is said to be "perfect" (Isa. 26:3), though sometimes saints "for peace" have "great bitterness," as Hezekiah had, yet the ground and foundation of their peace is perfect, solid, and substantial; as the love of God, which is unchangeable, the covenant of peace which can never be removed, the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ, which have always the same virtue and efficacy.

4e. It is a peace which "passeth all understanding" (Phil. 4:7), of a natural and unregenerate man, who is a stranger to it, has no experience of it, intermeddles not with it, and can form no judgment about it.

4f. It is what cannot be taken away; "When he (God) giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" (Job 34:29), not at that time at least; and though it may be interrupted, it cannot be destroyed; not by the world's tribulations, nor by Satan's temptations, nor by a man's own corruptions.