

TEXT:- "Be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace,
without spot, and blameless." (II Peter iii.14)

If we are taught of the Lord, the great matter of concern with us will be, to be found right in His sight. The question will not be what man thinks of me, but what I am in the sight of God; and, however much any of the people of God may lose sight of this, the day of death will bring them to this point. Nothing but the assurance of their acceptance with God will satisfy them in that hour; and, as nothing short of this will satisfy them in this solemn hour, it is a sweet mercy if nothing short of it will satisfy them day by day. It is a mercy to be found right, waiting, watching, looking when He comes: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when He will return from the wedding; that when He cometh and knocketh, they may open unto Him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching" (Luke xii. 35-37). There are two things in the text to which I specially call your attention.

- I. The apostle's desire for his brethren.
- II. The diligence used by the brethren on their pilgrimage to the desired haven.

I. The apostle desired for his brethren that they might be "found of Him in peace." Now this is how we would be found when He comes. We would not be found contending earnestly for the mere letter of truth, as Mr. Hart says,

"With warmth, and zeal, and strife" (783)

That would not give us peace in a dying hour, nor in the day of judgment. Those words by Berridge come now to my mind:

"Some wise men of opinions boast,
And sleep on doctrines sound;
But, Lord, let not my soul be lost
On such enchanted ground." (169)

Have you ever known people on that exchanged ground? I knew such a man many years ago when I started in the divine life. He started with me, and this was the snare he fell into:

he was one who slept on doctrines sound, for he never doubted his election of God. That is an awful delusion. I knew another who used to worship in this place many years ago. When talking to me about consistent living, he told me he should like to see me well rolled in sin - it would do me good. Oh, what an awful thing for God to come and find a man in such a condition! (Rom.iii.8). How shall we be found when the Lord comes? That is the question. He may come tonight - How will He find you? Are you resting on mere notions or on the approbation of man; or are you resting alone on the pure mercy and love of God in Jesus Christ? That is my daily concern - how I shall be found when the Lord comes to summon me away. May I be found in His fear; or, as our text says, "Be found of Him in peace"!

How are we to be found of Him in peace? The answer from the word of God is that "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"; "He is our peace" (Rom.v.1; Eph.ii.14). There is no peace apart from or out of Him. Those that are out of Him cannot have peace; nor can I understand that they can have peace who reject His truth or any part of His work, simply retaining His name. Are there not many in that condition, professors of the day, who thus hold the name of Christ and deny the very truths that make His name precious? (Isaiah iv.1). What will a mere name do for them? It is not just pronouncing the name of Jesus with the lips and expressing the truth in word. If I deny His truth, I deny Him. He and His truth are one. He made peace for His people by giving Himself a sacrifice for their sins, by standing in their place and stead, and the Father laid on Him the iniquity of them all (Isaiah liii.6). Thus by the blood of Christ they are reconciled to God (Col.i.20); they are reconciled to God in and through the propitiation of His dear Son (Rom.iii.25), and thus a soul is brought into peace. "If we seek peace "by works of righteousness which we have done" (Titus iii.5), we may have a false peace, but a true peace is thereby an impossibility.

"No peace but in the Son of God,
No joy but through His pardoning blood." (771)

He made the peace. Hence it is called peace-speaking blood, "the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Heb.xii.24). This is what we want when we are first disturbed about our condition.

"What shall I do, or whither flee,
To escape the vengeance due to me?" (238)

And the Holy Spirit directs to Jesus. He never tells a man to flee to his own works or to build his hopes on a pile of books. Christ is our peace. Peace is obtained through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. Our frames and feelings will not secure peace for us. I had no happy feeling until I had the assurance of my interest in Christ. The apostle had the desire that his brethren should be found in this way, and that is the longing desire of the ministers not only for the people, but for themselves also.

"Nothing else can satisfy.
Give me Christ, or else I die." (737)

This is more than a transient gleam. Hence the apostle exhorted them to give diligence that they might be "found of Him in peace."

We must also notice that our peace may be marred and broken by our wrong doings. I am perfectly sure of this, that we can mar our own happiness; we can break our own peace. But what a mercy that we cannot break our everlasting peace! God does not delight in taking peace away from His people. If we lose our peace, we have not far to go to find the cause. I think this takes in peace with the brethren. The child of God would not desire peace with God and variance with his brethren. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (I John iv.20,21). But this I speak to every child of God: O that we all might have peace with God! Then we shall have peace with our brethren: "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph.iv.3). As you would not like to be without the peace of God in your heart when the Lord shall come to call you hence, neither would you like to be found at variance with your brethren. If the day of the Lord should come - and it will come suddenly, "as a thief in the night" (I Thess.v.2) - oh, how ashamed we should be if the Lord should find us at strife and in bitterness (I John.ii.28). So, when He was about to leave His disciples, He said: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (Jn.xiii.35).

"The work of righteousness shall be peace" (Isa.xxxii.17). And the greatest and highest sense in which the soul can be found without spot is as it is found in that peace procured

by the righteousness of Christ. That covers all the sin and all the unrighteousness of every true believer. This is the one and only way in which we can ever stand before God at the last great day "without spot and blameless." Paul says: "And by Him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts xiii.39). However much you may try, you will never succeed in washing the leper clean.

"Not the labour of my hands
Can fulfil thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

"Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to thy cross I cling." (143)

The soul will be found without spot at the last great day only as he stands in the righteousness of Christ. After being taught by the Spirit and brought to feel the abominations of his heart, he will in God's time be led into that beautiful passage: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom.v. 1,2). Thus, see the wish of the apostle for his friends, that they might have peace with God without spot; and I believe that, with the apostles Peter and Paul, the one great point was how they should stand before God at the last day. Exhortations to this effect abound in the word of God. We are not to slight them. Now you whom the Lord has set apart and called will long for His spotless robe in which to stand in the sight of God. I love holiness and hate sin, and I cannot tell you how I have wept lest I should sink to hell in my darkness. The apostle was desirous that God's people might be found in the enjoyment of peace and blameless. We do not believe that any child of God is to be found blameless in himself before God - not for one moment. "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Eccles.vii.20). Yet every one that fears God will want to walk rightly not only in the sight of God, but before men also.

II. The apostle exhorts them to be diligent, and this is the one great aim - to be found of God in peace. He did not say we can sit down, we have nothing to do, God will do

it all; but we have a good deal to do in the means of salvation as God works in us "both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil.ii.13). I do not want to hold anything that is not in strict accordance with God's word; but it is here clearly declared that the apostle was desirous that the children of God should be found of Him in peace; and so he exhorts them to be diligent. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (II Pet.i.10). Was not their election sure? Certainly it was, yet we are to give diligence to make it sure. It is remarkable that diligence should be coupled with election. But God gives His people the diligence so that they shall know it. I do not want to be wiser than God's word. The graces in the soul are called into exercise. Faith is called into exercise, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, as it is said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi.31). So also prayer is brought into exercise. Thus, you see, God gives diligence. Oh, how diligent the soul is in seeking the Lord during the early stages! Wherever he may be, whether in the kitchen or in the street - man or woman - there will be a seeking to be found of Him in peace. Ah, death and eternity are solemn things! The man knows not what an hour may bring forth, and he says: "If death should come and take my breath, how stand matters between God and my soul? Have I true peace with God?" He wants to know, and he desires to have an assurance that he is at peace with God - whether he is so accepted before God that he shall appear at the last day without spot and blameless. "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat" (Prov.xiii.4). And we also read: "How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psa.cxix. 103). It is a mercy when any child of God feels that he cannot rest satisfied. I love to encourage the people of God, and the exhortation is to them: "Be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace." Jesus said to His disciples - mark! not to the multitude - "Watch ye therefore ... lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch" (Mk.xiii.35-37).