

“PEACE BE WITH YOU”

Rev. Emil R. Cronlund

*Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace be with you....”
Then Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you....” And after eight days...
again...Jesus came...and said, “Peace to you!” (John 20:19, 21, 26).*

During the course of his regeneration, a person passes through two states in general, the state of combat and the state of peace. The evils which a person loves and the falsities which he believes are stirred up within him by evil spirits, who arouse them to combat against good and truth. When the person then, by power given to him from the Lord, defends himself against the assaults of the evil, his spirit is in a state of anxiety and combat—he passes through the pains of spiritual temptations. When good and truth endeavor to assert and defend themselves, then the temptation begins and the pain is felt.

We experience physical pain when disease invades the body, and there is an effort on the part of nature to drive it out and to restore the person to a state of health. The effort of nature to heal is what is felt as pain. If there were no such effort there would be no pain, for there would be nothing to hinder the progress of the disease, and the person would immediately succumb and die.

It is the same on the spiritual plane. If a person does not, from a love of good and truth, resist evils and falsities, he cannot feel the pains of spiritual temptation. The effort of good and truth to defend themselves is what is felt as spiritual anxiety and pain. He who cares nothing for spiritual things, with whom there is no endeavor to live a new life, makes no resistance when evil spirits lead him astray. He follows them willingly and becomes spiritually dead. The stronger a person's love to the Lord is, the more interior is the temptation and the more severe is the pain that is felt. A person may be infested on all sides, so as even to doubt the very fundamentals of the church: he may doubt whether there is a God, whether there is a life after death. The anxiety and the torment that the conscience feels at such a time can hardly be described in words. But if there were not in the person some love to the Lord, this anxiety and torment would never be experienced. Evil spirits tempt those only with whom there is something of the Lord, with whom there is something of conscience. A person who is confirmed in evil cannot be tempted, for evil cannot tempt itself.

Those who undergo spiritual temptations trust to the Lord alone for their deliverance. They are indeed in doubt and despair concerning the end, for otherwise it is not temptation, but with them this doubt is soon changed into confidence and despair is swallowed up in victory. So the Psalmist wrote, “They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed. The poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles” (Psalm 34⁵⁻⁶). The reason they are saved is that “the Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit” (Psalm 34:18).

Once, when the Lord and His disciples were out on the Sea of Galilee, a storm arose. The disciples, thinking that they would die, went to the Lord, saying, “‘Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?’ Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Peace, be still.’”

And the wind ceased and there was a great calm” (Mark 4:38-39). As the Lord by His word of peace calmed the tempestuous sea, so by His same almighty Word He also subdues the raging of the hells within a person when he goes unto Him. And here we come to the second state into which regenerating people enter: after temptation follows peace. The state of peace after temptation may be compared to the calm that follows a storm, also to the spring after winter, and to the morning or dawn of day. It may also be compared to the sabbath, of which the Lord said: “In it you shall do no work” (Exodus 20:10).

A person’s regeneration is an image of the Lord’s glorification, so it follows that the Lord, in His Human, passed through states similar to those that a person experiences. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He said to His disciples: “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death” (Matthew 26:38). It is also said that He was in agony and that “His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44). This is called the Lord’s state of humiliation or exinanition. But later, having conquered the hells, on the day of His resurrection, “Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, ‘Peace be with you’” (John 20:19).

This benediction was pronounced upon the disciples by our Savior when He had fully glorified His Human, which makes it evident that all peace proceeds from the Divine Humanity of our Lord. Its origin is the Divine marriage of good and truth in Him. Having overcome the hells, He entered into Divine peace. Angels and regenerating people are admitted into the sphere of this peace, for the Lord said: “My peace I give to you” (John 15:22). This peace, which proceeds from the Lord, is heaven itself; it is the Divine of the Lord which makes heaven and all the happiness there. Because of this peace, heaven is eternal spring, eternal morning without clouds, a never-ending sabbath. It can exist only with innocence, which is a desire not to hurt anything of the Lord or of the neighbor, thus a willingness to be led by the Lord and not by self. This is innocence, and so far as a person is in innocence, so far he is in peace, for so far he lives in charity with his neighbor and is protected against the hells, which is spiritual security.

Heavenly peace is such that it transcends every idea of earthly happiness, for it is the Divine of the Lord inmost affecting the souls of people with joy. Natural language is inadequate to express it. Only an image of it can be given, for it does not reveal itself to the external sight, but must be felt and perceived by the internal person. In the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church, Emanuel Swedenborg wrote that

By the Divine mercy of the Lord it has been given me to experience something of this peace; but I sacredly attest that no language ever can express it; for it is the complex of all felicities, with the highest degree of life, without the life which is wont to arise from concupiscences, the pleasures of the body, care and anxiety about future things. It is to be in the bosom of God Messiah (Adversaria iv, 6925).

Peace exists by virtue of the Divine unity. It is the offspring of the union between the Divine and the Human. And in order that there may be peace, there must be unity. The root meaning of the Greek word for peace is “connecting into one.” With those who are united together by the common bond of love to the Lord and love of His truth, there is peace. Truth by itself does not produce unity, but *recognition* of the truth and *love* of it, unite people into one. The truth that wisdom has no power apart from love is evident from this, that although in the Word of the Lord

and in the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church, truths are presented in the most forcible manner possible and in the most beautiful terms, still a person who has no love of truth will not believe. The Heavenly Doctrine teaches us that love is a longing and a striving after conjunction, for love longs and strives to conjoin itself with wisdom or truth, and it is not satisfied until its longing is ultimated. But when love has been matched with its heavenly companion—wisdom—they are united into one, and the result of their union is heavenly peace.

For a person to be in a state of peace, his internal and external must be one. He must be complete—single-minded—with only one end or purpose steadfastly before him. He must will to *actually be* what he wills to *appear* to be. In Proverbs it is written: “Let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or to the left; remove your feet from evil” (4:25-27). When the external person becomes the willing and obedient servant of the internal person, then he enjoys tranquility and peace.

A person is in peace when he is conjoined with the Lord, when he is conjoined with the angels of heaven, and when, through the bonds of mutual love, he is conjoined with his fellow-men. Peace is established when those things that produce discord are removed. Evils of all kinds are what disunite and separate people from each other, from the angelic heaven, and from the Lord. When we do evil to others, we remove ourselves from them. As love is spiritual conjunction so hatred is spiritual disjunction. Evil, therefore, is what produces all discord and dissension in the world. It separates people and causes them to stand alone, whereas the Lord’s will is that they should dwell together in unity. “Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity,” are the words of the Lord (Psalm 133:1). It is also written that “it is not good for man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18), for the person who separates himself from others through evils of life also removes the means of salvation, which are the performance of uses to others. It is not good for a person to be alone; we need each other. We do not live for ourselves alone, but also for the sake of others. When evils are removed, then we are united with others and live in peace.

When the Lord, the Prince of Peace, came into the world people were living in hatred and all kinds of evils. They were spiritually dissociated from each other, separated from heaven and from God; thus, there was nothing of peace. But the Lord came to establish peace, and He did this by preaching charity. He said, “This is My commandment, that you love one another...” (John 15:12). By establishing His new church on the basis of mutual love, the Lord united people with each other, He consociated people with the angelic heaven, and He conjoined people with their Creator, thus establishing spiritual peace. The advent of the Lord into the world was accompanied by the proclamation of peace; the angels who announced His birth to the shepherds said: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14). The Lord came to guide our feet in the way of peace, and therefore, when He sent forth His disciples, He charged them, saying: “Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house!’” (Luke 10:5). These disciples were the messengers of peace, who would continue His work by communicating to others that peace which they had received from their Lord and Master.

On the day of His resurrection “Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ Now when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord” (John 20:19-20). Then Jesus said again, “Peace be

to you.” And this time He breathed on them, saying: “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22). And eight days later, “Jesus came again and said, ‘Peace to you’” (John 20:26). And having said this, He convinced Thomas that He was indeed the Lord Jesus who had been crucified and was risen from the dead. “And Thomas answered and said unto Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” (John 20:28). From this it is evident that spiritual peace is the goal of redemption and the blessing of the redeemed.

Spiritual peace is the blessing of the redeemed, because, by coming into the world, the Lord exalted His omnipotence, so that He holds hell in order and under His obedience to eternity. In the Heavenly Doctrine we are taught that this

heavenly peace, which is in respect to the hells that evils and falses may not thence arise and invade, may be compared in many respects with natural peace, as with peace after war, when every one lives in security from enemies, safe in his own city, in his own home or in his own fields and gardens. It is as the prophet said, speaking naturally concerning heavenly peace: “They shall sit every man under his own vine and under his own fig tree, and none shall make them afraid.” It may be compared also to recreation of mind and to rest after severe labor. It may also be compared with serenity after tempests, black clouds and thunders, and likewise with spring after a terrible winter has passed, and then with a gladness that comes from the new growths in the fields and from the blossoming in the gardens, meadows and forests. It may be compared also with the state of minds with those who after storms and dangers on the sea, reach the port, and set their feet on the wished for land (True Christian Religion 304).

No one can come into a state of peace until he shuns the things that are hostile to peace and opposite to it. So it was said that the regenerating person undergoes two states, the state of combat and the state of peace. The state of combat must come first, for the blessings of the redeemed cannot be received until after their redemption. A person must conquer his enemies before he can expect peace, and therefore the Lord also said: “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword” (Matthew 10:34). A sword signifies the Divine truth by means of which a person fights against the hells. By bringing a sword, therefore, is meant that He revealed His Divine truth more fully; He gave truths in greater abundance so that people might more skillfully defend themselves against the hells. By bringing a sword upon earth, the Lord diminished the power of the hells. If He had not sent a sword, He could not have sent peace.

To all those who live in love to Him and in charity toward the neighbor, the Lord has promised spiritual peace, for He says: “My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places” (Isaiah 32:18). The Lord grant that we may live so that we can become partakers of this heavenly peace.

Amen.

Lessons: Psalm 29; John 20:19-31; *Heaven and Hell* 286-287