

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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RESTLESS! PEACELESS!

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## A Sermon

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“But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”—Isaiah lvii. 20, 21.

AMONG the greatest privileges of the believer in Christ are those choice blessings, rest and peace. Believing in Christ Jesus unto eternal life, he knows that his sin is pardoned, that he is a child of God, that omnipotence will preserve him even to the end, and that he will, by-and-by, be with Christ where he is, not only to behold, but also to share his glory for ever and ever. Consequently, his heart is at rest, for he leaves all that concerns him, whether in the present or the future, in the hands of his Heavenly Father, casting all his care upon him who careth for him; and, therefore, he has peace, perfect peace, in his soul. This peace and rest, which the believer enjoys even here and now, will deepen and increase until, in eternity, they will reach their perfection, and the child of God will, for ever and for evermore, in the blessed state above, be without even the slightest disturbance of heart, and will rest in the presence of God with his glorified spirit as full of joy as it can possibly be. The apostle Paul truly writes, “We which have believed do enter into rest;” but he also adds, just as truly, “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.”

These choice privileges of rest and peace belong, however, exclusively to believers; “the wicked” have no portion in them. They are, according to the testimony of Holy Writ, like the restless sea, which is never quite quiet, even in its greatest calm; and is never to be trusted for a resting-place; but, ever and anon, is lashed into fury, seething like the contents of a huge cauldron, and hurling up from its depths the mire and dirt which have lain there unseen;—such is the condition of the unregenerate heart of unrenewed man.

There are two things, in our text, of which I am going to try to speak. The first is, *a fact observed*: “the wicked are like the

troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." The second is, *a sentence pronounced*; and it is pronounced by God himself: "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

I. First, then, here is A FACT OBSERVED,—that the wicked are like the troubled sea. Who are these wicked people, who are like the restless waves of the turbulent ocean? I take the term to describe two classes of sinners.

First, by the expression, "the wicked", as used in the Scriptures, we must often understand *overt transgressors*,—persons who are living in the indulgence of open and known sin. Then, secondly, there is another class of sinners,—not open transgressors, like the others I have mentioned; still, *they have heard the gospel, and they have rejected it*; and, consequently, since we cannot put them down in any other category, and since their sin has a special aggravation about it because of the light and privileges which they have enjoyed, and yet despised, or neglected, they also must be put down with "the wicked", for they, too, "are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest." Let us begin with those, whose sins, as Paul says, "are open beforehand, going before to judgment." Why are they unrestful and unpeaceful?

First, because they are themselves swayed by restless passions. There are some sins, which will not let a man be quiet so long as he indulges in them. Take the sin of lust, for instance; who can ever satisfy its cravings? Let a man once indulge his evil passions, and can those passions ever be satisfied? Nay, they keep on getting more and more hungry, as a man would become the more thirsty through drinking brine. Does lust ever, of its own accord, cease its cravings? Nay; it is as insatiate as the grave itself, and it will suck a man's very life away unless the grace of God shall mercifully and miraculously interpose. If thou, young man, dost give thyself up to what is erroneously called the pursuit of pleasure, it is quite certain that thou wilt not find rest for thy soul in that direction! Thou hast taken a dose of poison that will make thy blood hot and feverish, and that will cause true rest to flee from thy pillow. This is a subject upon which I cannot say more, in this public assembly, except to add, with the preacher of old, "Know thou, O young man, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment!" Let the solemn admonition of good Dr. Doddridge come home to thy heart, and say thou with him,—

"How will my heart endure  
The terrors of that day;  
When earth and heaven before his face,  
Astonish'd shrink away?"

Then listen to his earnest exhortation, and not only listen to it, but at once obey it—

"Ye sinners, seek his grace,  
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;  
Fly to the shelter of his cross,  
And find salvation there."

Take, next, the sin of anger. There are some persons, who very soon get angry, but they do not as quickly cool down; or, if they do, they nurse their hatred, and watch for any opportunity of paying back their adversary in the base coin of revenge. Let me say to such a man,—You cannot enjoy real rest and peace unless you fully and freely forgive all who have wronged you. You may try to lay a salve upon your conscience, and to preach peace to your heart; but if resentment still lingers in your bosom, and especially the resentment which seeks an opportunity to display itself in an act of ill-will, you cannot rest. There are some animals that seem born to fight; and if they cannot tear others in pieces, they seem as if they must tear themselves; or, like a serpent, which, in its rage, will poison itself. Such is anger; such is malice; and thou, O man, must get rid of these evil things if thou desirest to know what real rest means!

“Sin, like a venomous disease,  
 Infects our vital blood;  
 The only balm is sovereign grace,  
 And the physician God.

“Madness by nature reigns within,  
 The passions burn and rage;  
 Till God’s own Son, with skill divine,  
 The inward fire assuage.”

Such, too, is envy,—a very common sin which is not spoken of as often as it should be. This is the sin of the poor man, who cannot bear to see another man better off than he himself is. This is the sin of the sick man, who is envious of the healthy. Ay, but envy may be found, not only among the poor, but also among princes; not only among the sick, but also among the strong. And when a man once becomes so envious that another man’s joy is his sorrow, and another man’s gain is his loss, and he cannot be content with his own lot because another man has more honour, or more money, or more friends than he has, he has a poisoned arrow rankling within him, which will breed a thousand woes, and make rest of heart impossible to him. Envy even grows by feeding upon itself; therefore, I charge thee, whatever thou doest, get rid of it, if thou desirest to find real rest.

Pride is another enemy of peace and rest. If you see a proud man, you may feel sure that he is not a restful man. It is in the Valley of Humiliation that the flowers of peace will be discovered. As for the pompous people, who are so high in their own esteem that they look down on all others,—pity them, my brethren; do not get angry with them. It is a sad disease from which they are suffering; their brain is turned, so deal gently with them, think as kindly of them as you can, and pray to God to heal them. Mind also, that you do not catch their complaint, for it is very contagious, and there are many who are proud of their humility, and who condemn the pride of others when, all the while, they are really still prouder themselves.

Then there is avarice: and when a man is once possessed by the desire to amass gain, there is no peace or rest for him. Suppose he acquires what he reckons to be wealth; it ceases to be wealth as

soon as he has gained it. He thought that, if ever he should secure a certain sum which he had set his heart on, he would retire from business; but, having saved that amount, he now regards it as quite insufficient; and ten times as much is the mark at which he now aims. If he should ever succeed in hoarding that amount, he will find that he is further off the goal of his desire than he was when he started. Some there are, I do verily believe, who, if they could claim the whole world as their own, would want the sun and moon and stars as well, for nothing could ever satisfy them. Once get into the grip of avarice, and rest is impossible.

And it is much the same also with ambition,—not the desire to use one's capacities to the full, especially for God's glory, and the good of our fellow-creatures; but that craving for so-called "glory" which makes a man court the homage of his fellow-men, and which will not let him be content unless he is set up on a high pedestal for fools to stare at. Ah, sir, if thou art ambitious, in that sense, thou and peace have parted company, and are not likely to meet again. But if thou wilt do the right, and leave thy reputation in the hands of God, and especially if thou wilt leave those lofty pathways, which, after all, lead only to the grave, then mayest thou find peace; but thou canst not find it so long as any of these evils, that I have mentioned, are reigning within thy heart.

The first reason, then, why the wicked man's heart is like the troubled sea is, because there are evil passions within it which will not let it rest.

The next reason is, because the wicked man is agitated by the memory of his old sins. Suppose him to have been, for some years, engaged in an evil course,—in dishonesty or unchastity; he cannot, even if he tries, forget his sins. They have burnt themselves into his very soul; and, what is even worse than the memory of sin, I suppose that you know how every sin breeds other sins, so that, every time you sin, you have a still greater tendency to commit more sin. This is a fact that is strangely true both as to the body and as to the soul; we wear tracks for ourselves where there were none before. If we have, at first, to force our way through the brushwood of conscience, and to cut down, as it were, the old timber of our early instruction and the gracious examples set before us in our childhood; by-and-by we make a trail for ourselves, and then a beaten track, so that it becomes ever easier and yet easier to sin; nay, more than that, there seems to be a pressure put by habit upon a wicked man so that, what he once did from choice, he comes at last to do because he must. Sin in the soul is like leaven in the dough; it heaves, and ferments; and though it was, perhaps, put into you twenty years ago, or more, it will go on fermenting and working until the whole of your manhood shall be soured by it.

Beside all this, the ungodly man is like the sea for restlessness, because, like the sea, he is governed by a greater power than his own. The sea feels the force of the moon, and is agitated and stirred by the mysterious agency of the winds; and the wicked man is under the dominion of the prince of the power of the air. If, for a while, he would be at rest, Satan will not permit him to be in peace. He

puts opportunities of sinning before him, and then excites the desire to indulge in the evil thing. Satan is no myth; they, who think that he is, cannot, surely, have opened their eyes, or else they would have discovered, in their very unbelief in his existence, that he had given them that unbelief. Those, who have stood foot to foot with Apollyon, and fought with him, and overcome him in the hour of temptation, will never doubt that there is a great fallen spirit who strives to lead men into sin. Satan and his myriads of myrmidons still lie in wait for the ungodly, or openly drive them into fierce lusts and evil passions so that they sin again and again.

Nor is this all, for wicked men—those who go into open sin,—are kept, by the action of others, from becoming quiet. If it were not for the restraints of society, what horrible places would those be where the utterly dissolute and abandoned assemble! Even as it is, every now and then, we read, in the newspapers, records of the doings of so-called “gentlemen” that reveal to us something of what goes on when Bacchus rules or riots. Then there are the brutalized beings at the other end of the social ladder, the “fiends” who use their boots so heavily upon their wives. Put a few dozen of them together, and let them have their own sweet will. Do not restrain them at all, and see what they will do. God only knows what wondrous patience he has with such men when they get together, and egg each other on in sin. I have often marvelled that he does not speedily put an end to their blasphemy and indecency and cruelty. Yet are they spared, notwithstanding their sin; but they cannot rest, for one will not let the others be quiet; and if, at any time, a good resolution should be formed by one of the company, another laughs that resolution down, and keeps the whole society “like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.”

I do not wonder that a wicked man cannot rest, because such a man is out of gear with the entire universe of God. Lift up your eyes to yonder starry orbs, and remember there is not one of them disobedient to the law of its Maker. The comet, which was thought to be eccentric, obeys in all respects its great Creator's will. Everything that you can see, from the tiny atom of dust that is borne along by the wind, up to the huge Atlantic billow in which the leviathan feels at home, is under the power of the divine law. From the archangel before the throne of God, down to the midge that dances in the summer sunbeam, everything is obedient to the Lord of all, except the wicked man, and he says, “I will not obey him.” Well, as he is out of gear with all the rest of the universe, is it any wonder that he is restless as the waves of the sea, and that there is no peace for him? If you were to set yourselves to disobey the physical laws of the universe, for instance, paying no regard to the law of gravitation, but leaping from a church spire, or falling down a precipice, you know what would come of such madness. If you ever set yourself up in opposition to law, you may depend upon it that law will get the mastery over you; and the man, who lives in disobedience to God's moral law, will find that it will be the same with him, and he will have no rest for ever and ever. As God's

servant, I must say to you, very plainly, and very earnestly,—You cannot possibly find rest and peace in the course you are now pursuing. May God enable you to escape from your sins, and to trust in Jesus Christ, his Son, that you may have both joy and peace in believing!

Now I have to speak, very briefly, to those who could not be put down among the outwardly and notoriously wicked. I thank God that you could not; but, still, you have heard the gospel, perhaps for many years, and you understand it, yet you have never received it. There is reconciliation with God to be had, yet you remain his enemy. Now, I will not say, for a moment, that the moral man, who is not a Christian, is to be put in the same category as the immoral. In many respects, he does not do so much harm in the world as the other man does; but let me tell you this, my friend, if you sin against light and knowledge, there may be an intensity of guilt in your sin which may not be found in the man who is, apparently, worse than you are. He may never have had such teaching and advantages, nor such a tender conscience as you have had; and hence his sin, bad as it is, like that of Sodom and Gomorrah, may be such that it shall be more tolerable for him at the day of judgment than for you, who have not sinned one tithe as much, according to the judgment of others, but who have sinned against the gospel,—sinned against the dying Saviour's blood,—sinned against the Holy Ghost. God grant that you may never run this terrible risk!

Let me say to you, who are living without Christ, that, however excellent and amiable you may be, I know that you are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest. I know some special times when you cannot rest,—when you hear of others being converted,—your brothers or sisters coming forward to confess Christ,—your friends or relatives rejoicing in Jesus as their Saviour. "Ah," you say to yourself, "they are restful and peaceful, but I am not." I know how you feel, on communion nights, sometimes, when you have to go away, or to look on at others gathered around the table of the Lord. You do not feel easy, then, do you? And you feel very uneasy, too, when any of your companions die,—those who are very much of your own sort. You attend their funeral, and the thought strikes you, "Shall I die as they have done, without Christ, and without hope? Shall I pass away from under the sound of the gospel without having given any evidence of conversion?" You do not feel easy then, I know; and, sometimes, you feel very much like the troubled sea when conscience begins to call you to account. John Bunyan, in his "Holy War," gives a graphic description of what happened to Mr. Conscience when Mansoul was being besieged by Immanuel, and that is very much what has happened to some of you. They said that he was out of his wits, but he was never more truly in his wits than when he was crying out for Mansoul to yield to the great King Shaddai; and I feel sure that some of you have felt, upon the door of your conscience, the blows of the great battering-ram that Bunyan describes, and you have been ready to open it; yet, still, you are not at rest, for you have not come to

Christ, who alone can give you rest. It is still true, as Dr. Watts wrote, long ago,—

“In vain the trembling conscience seeks  
Some solid ground to rest upon ;  
With long despair the spirit breaks,  
Till we apply to Christ alone.”

If you hear the gospel faithfully preached, you cannot be at rest. Some of you try to be satisfied with a false peace; but, by God's grace, we will plague you to Christ yet; we will love you to Christ; we will incessantly worry you till, at last, you yield yourself up to Jesus. Some of you are getting on in business; God has been very gracious in preserving you in life, restoring you from sickness, or keeping you in health; you have a better situation now than you ever had before, yet you are not restful. You feel grateful to God for all his goodness to you, yet you say, “There is something more needed.” Yes, and that something is the one thing needful. I am thankful that God is prospering you, but I hope you will never be able to rest until you have that one thing needful,—the grace of God. Some of you are very thoughtful, and when you get alone for half an hour, it is very awkward for you, for there are certain problems that you cannot solve, and they sorely perplex you. Worst of all are your forecasts of the future. Sometimes, you look ahead, and you picture yourself upon a sick bed, and you say, “Can I die triumphantly as I am?” You know you cannot. And then, sometimes, you picture yourself rising from the dead, when the angel's trumpet blast is sounding, and the quick and the dead are standing before the judgment-seat of Christ. You cannot bear to think of that great white throne, and the separation of the righteous from the wicked, for you know where you must go, unless a great change is wrought in you. Though not outwardly wicked, you do not belong to the sheep; then you must go with the goats; and when you think of this, and the future stands, for the moment, present before your mind's eye, your spirit is “like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” I would that you had rest. God grant it to you this very hour! But let Augustus Toplady's prayer be your prayer also,—

“Oh, may I never rest  
Till I find rest in thee,  
Till of my pardon here possessed,  
I feel thy love to me !

“Turn not thy face away,  
Thy look can make me clean ;  
Me in thy wedding robes array,  
And cover all my sin.

“Tell me, my God, for whom  
Thy precious blood was shed ;  
For sinners ? Lord, as such I come,  
For such the Saviour bled.”

II Now, secondly, and only for a minute or two, in our text there is A SENTENCE PRONOUNCED : “No peace”—you notice that the words,

"*there is*," are in italics, because they are not in the original; so the text runs, "No peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

It is God himself who says it. There may be a truce, for God is slow to anger; but there is "no peace." God is at war with you if you are among "the wicked." You may be under the delusion that there is peace, but God's voice of truth shatters that delusion to pieces. There can be no peace where there is unpardoned sin. Until you have humbled yourself before God, and sought and found mercy, God is at war with you, and you are at war with him. There can be no peace where there is no purity. God has no peace with sin, and never can have. Like a devouring fire, his holiness burns against sin; and thou must be made pure, thy nature must be changed, the love of sin must be killed in thee, and thou must as vehemently love that which is good and right; or, else, still God's voice thunders from heaven's burning throne, "No peace! No peace! No peace!"

"But I will go to church, and receive the sacrament," says one. You will get no peace that way, except a false peace that is worse than none. "But I will attend the means of grace with the Dissenters," says another. You will get no peace that way, if that is all that you do. If your sin be unforgiven by God, and if your nature be unchanged by the Holy Spirit, all the religiousness in the world will bring you no peace. "But I will weep an ocean of tears, and I will offer prayers continually." No peace will come to you, that way, so long as you remain wicked, for God says, "No peace! No peace!" And "wicked" you must remain till Jesus washes you white in the fountain filled with his precious blood, and until the Spirit of God renews your nature.

"Not all the outward forms on earth,  
Nor rites that God has given,  
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,  
Can raise a soul to heaven.

"The sovereign will of God alone  
Creates us heirs of grace;  
Born in the image of his Son,  
A new peculiar race.

"The Spirit, like some heavenly wind,  
Blows on the sons of flesh;  
Creates a new,—a heavenly mind,—  
And forms the man afresh."

"Oh!" says another, "but I will promise to be better, and to do better; I will amend my ways." So you may, and so you should; but still saith my God unto the wicked, "No peace!" What say you to all this? Behold your God in arms against you! Omnipotence comes forth to war against you, the creature of an hour! Will you submit? Be wise, I pray you; cast down your weapons, cry for mercy; accept the reconciliation which Christ has wrought. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has suffered, "the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." If thou wilt but trust him, what he did shall be accounted as thine; that is to say, the punishment

that he suffered shall be reckoned as if thou hadst suffered it; and the righteousness he wrought shall be counted as if thou hadst wrought it; and God shall accept thee in his Son's place, and for his Son's sake. More than that, the Spirit of God will overshadow thee, and give thee a new heart, and a right spirit, and take away the heart of stone out of thy flesh, and give thee a heart of flesh. Art thou willing now to yield, and end this unequal war, and be at peace with God? Then the Lord, who gave his Son once, gives thee his Son over again into thine heart, and he says, "Peace! Peace! Go in peace; thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee." He who with his heart forsakes his sin, and unfeignedly believes in Jesus, shall have the peace of God, which passeth all understanding; but he who will keep his sin, and so remain among the wicked, or who will keep his self-righteousness, and so refuse the salvation of Christ, has nothing to go home with but this, "No peace! No peace!" And, oh, to die with that terrible knell ringing in one's ears! To look up to God, and to hear him say, "No peace!" To have the prayers of your friends for you, but to feel no peace! To lift your own eye to heaven, but to find prayer freeze upon your soul as you hear again this sentence from God the Judge, "No peace!" And then follows the eternity, in which there is no peace! God grant this may not be the sad portion of any one of us, but may the Lord give to each of us peace, perfect peace, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

### Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

#### PSALM XXIII., AND ISAIAH LV.

We will first read that choicest of all the Psalms,—the twenty-third. It is like a precious pearl shining with a mild lustre. This Psalm is, among the other Psalms, what the lark is among the other birds; it soars and sings till it is lost in the heights to which it ascends.

Psalm xxiii. Verse 1. *The LORD is my Shepherd;*—

What a precious title the psalmist used in speaking of his God! It is right to call the Lord a Shepherd. "The Shepherd of Israel" is a very blessed and true title for him; but "my Shepherd" is best of all. I wish, beloved, that each of you could truthfully say, with David, "'The Lord is my Shepherd.' He owns me; and as I am his property, he will preserve me, protect me, provide for me, guide me, and be everything to my weakness, and folly, and necessity, that a shepherd is to a sheep." "The Lord is my Shepherd;"—

1. *I shall not want.*

"Not only do I not want at the present moment, but I never shall want. I may sometimes foolishly fancy that I shall come to want; but I never shall as long as God provides for me. How could such a Shepherd as he is, almighty and all-sufficient, ever suffer one of his sheep to lack any good thing? No; 'I shall not want.' All the world beside may want, but I shall not while Jehovah is my Provider. Famine may be sore in the land; there may be neither dew nor rain, and even the brook Cherith may at last be dried up; but since 'Jehovah is my Shepherd, I shall not want.'"

As a guarantee of his care of us in the future, we turn to our experience in the past and the present. What is our experience of our great Shepherd even now?