

# Man's Fundamental Need Is Peace with God

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Ephesians 2:17 "And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near." Now, if you look at v. 18. "For through Him, we both have access in one Spirit to the Father." I have been looking very forward to getting to verse 18. And I thought, oh, there's not much in v. 17. I'm just going to make some brief comments on that and move directly on to v. 18, which I've been anticipating. I mean, how much can we say about this, right? "He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near." Now, the "far off," they're the Gentiles. We've been looking at this. Those who are "near," the Jews. The "He" - "He came and preached peace..." We know who that is all the way back from v. 13. "We've been brought near by the blood of Christ." Christ, right there, answers to all these pronouns. The "He's," the "Him's," that we keep getting through all of these verses goes back to that noun right there: Christ. He Himself (v. 14) is our peace. He made us both one. He has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances. He might create in Himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace. He might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross thereby killing the hostility. And He - Christ - came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. And again in v. 18, for through Him - Christ - we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. By the way, v. 18, one of the classic texts that just resounds with Trinity.

So Christ came. He preached to the Gentiles who were far off and preached peace to the Jews. So yes, there is it. Great. Ok. Let's move on. But you know, I got looking at that text. There were three different things that kind of pulled at me here. And then I recognized that I couldn't just run past this. One of the things was this: I knew looking forward that Ephesians 2:17 is actually not original with Paul. In fact, right in that area where John was in the first hour, this comes from Isaiah 57. And so, I was just thinking, does Isaiah have anything to contribute to this, since that's where that text comes from. But you know the further I got looking into it, the more I started asking the question does Paul have anything to contribute to Isaiah? Which I think they both contribute to each other.

The second thing that kind of bothered me is, "He came and preached peace to you." Well, who is Paul speaking to originally? The Ephesians. When did Christ preach to the Ephesians? But then there's something else in this verse. It tells us man's fundamental need is peace with God. Do we really know that? So, those three aspects of this verse, I want us to explore before we move on to v. 18, Lord willing, whenever I preach next. Maybe four weeks from today. So the first thing is these words come from Isaiah 57. So, let's go back there. Let's see what Isaiah has to say. Isaiah 57 And you'll notice v. 19. Now, my ESV starts with "creating the fruit of the lips," which kind of ties it back with v. 18. But some translations basically start anew. They put a semicolon at the end of this instead of a period, and they connect it with v. 19. God creates the fruit of the lips. In fact, that's just an odd saying anyway. Creating the fruit of the lips. What does that have to do with? V. 18, "I have seen his ways, but I will heal him. I will lead

him and restore comfort to him and his mourners, creating the fruit of the lips." Perhaps, it's those mourners there. It's creating praise. But you go on from that. "Peace, peace, to the far and to the near."

Now, I recognize Paul's not exactly quoting this, but obviously, this is where this comes from. Peace to the far and to the near. And Paul gives it to us in that exact order. The far - those who were far off, and the near. Christ came and preached peace. ..."says the Lord, 'and I will heal him.'" In fact, let's capture maybe even some broader context here. Go back to v. 16. "'For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry. For the spirit would grow faint before Me and the breath of life that I made, because of the iniquity of his unjust gain I was angry. I struck him. I hid My face and was angry. But he went on backsliding in the way of his own heart. I've seen his ways, but I will heal him. I will lead him and restore comfort to him and his mourners, creating the fruit of the lips. Peace, peace, to the far and to the near,' says the Lord, 'and I will heal him. But the wicked are like the tossing sea, for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt. There is no peace,' says my God, 'for the wicked.'"

As I read this over and over, you know what? One thing struck me. In v. 19, it's that word "him," at the end. It's not the pronoun that we expect. Now, look at it. "'Peace, peace to the far and to the near,' says the Lord. 'And I will heal him.'" Those who are far plus those who are near is plural. The far, the near. And yet, the pronoun is singular. But you see what happens here. Here's what happens. The Lord takes all those who are far, all those who are near, and He lumps them together into one particular person: This "him." Who is that?

Now, here's the thing, if you're an Old Testament Jew, or even a New Testament Jew, if you're a Jew, undoubtedly you read this and the "him" is Israel. Undoubtedly. The far, the near, and we can sum it all up in this one "him," this one particular person. And undoubtedly when Jews read this, it represents Israel. The far and the near in their thinking would have described Jews and their proximity to the land of Canaan or to Jerusalem or to the temple. And this would have seemed all the more applicable when you think about the Jews. You remember, those in the Northern kingdom got hauled away by Assyria. Later, those in the Southern kingdom got hauled away by Babylon. And under Cyrus, and after that, different waves - you remember Ezra and Nehemiah - different waves of Jews came back into Canaan, and yet some stayed in Babylon. They were scattered among the nations. And undoubtedly, a Jew looking at this would have thought, the far, the near, the "him" is representative of Israel and the far are Jews that are far away and the near, well, they're the Jews that have come back. They're near. They're in the land of Canaan. And the wicked of v. 20 is in the estimation of Jews, the raging sea and all the vast humanity.

Who would that be? That would be the nations. That would be the Gentiles. They're the wicked. They're the ones on the outside. They're the ones who know not God. And you know what's interesting? See, it's not so much, I think, that Isaiah has a lot to contribute to Paul, as much as Paul has a lot to contribute back here, right? Because, we find this singular usage to describe the people of God right there in Ephesians 2. You say what? One new man in place of the two. The far, the near, comprise one new man. It's singular. Now that's interesting. Because it kind of moves everything around for us. What the far off are, are the Gentiles. What the near are, are the Jews. And the wicked? The wicked are Jews and Gentiles who reject Jesus Christ.

Christian, what this does is it allows us to read Isaiah with the right eyes. You see, this isn't inapplicable to us. This "him" is us. And Christian, you can read this and personalize this. Look at v. 18-19. Just read this. "I have seen his ways." The "his," the "him," is this one particular person who makes up the far and the near. That's the one new man. That's us. Think about this. "I have seen his ways." He's not talking about good ways. He's talking about our bad ways. Because you see, it's in contrast. "But" - that indicates contrast. "But, I will heal him..." Even though I have seen the things that were done by him. That's us. The far and the near. Even though He's seen what we've done, "I will heal him. I will lead him. Restore comfort to him and his mourners. Creating the fruit of the lips. Peace, peace, to the far and to the near," says the Lord. 'And I will heal him.'"

Now, let's go back to the creating the fruit of the lips. Again, you know what, Paul helps us here. This is the fruit of whose lips? Now, you may jump in and say, I think it's the fruit of the lips of the mourners there at the end of the previous verse. But you know, if you listen to Paul, Paul says Christ came and spoke this. This is the proclamation of the Savior. He came and preached peace. It seems the fruit here is the fruit of the Savior's lips. He comes to a soul and says, "Peace. Be still. Peace." Are you ever so far? Have your sins taken you far, far away out to the uttermost extremities? What you get is this fruit. There's fruit for you to eat. Fruit from the Savior's lips. Peace, peace... not like that original fruit that we were forbidden to eat. This is fruit that you're bidden to eat. Eat to the full. Peace. Peace.

And these wicked, look at v. 20-21. "'But the wicked are like the tossing sea. For it cannot be quiet and its waters toss up mire and dirt. There is no peace,' says my Lord, 'for the wicked.'" Here's the contrast. "But, the wicked..." You can see this hurricane comes and the waters - what a picture! It's the waters of the wicked humanity out there. Just all foaming and troubled and the restless sea whose waters, they cast up mire and dirt. This is all of humanity. Just mire and dirt. All the world John was talking about. This world, he came at it from a certain angle, all the suffering, all the wickedness, all that's going on, all the rottenness. Brethren, this is just a picture of unrest. It's a picture of dirt and mire coming up. When they talk about the waters that gush in.

John went to the Philippines, and the team went over there after that typhoon hit. And you know, you listen to them. Those waters that come in, it's not clean. It's all full of blackness and dirt. You heard about the team over there in Houston. And all the waters, they're full of sewage. This is the picture. It's all foaming. This is a picture of man that is not at peace with God. Man is restless like the sea. And brethren, I'm not talking to people who don't know that. Because some of you are still restless. And all of us that are converted in this place, we've come from that. We came where that was true. No peace. No rest. We tried to drown it out.

Joshua would tell us that when he was lost, he just constantly needed music in his ears. But that was like so many of us. We just needed noise. Always noise. We needed something to drown it out. Why? Because the silence - there's an emptiness. There's a gnawing sense. The problem is, brethren, man has a memory of how he was originally created, and you can't get away from it. Because Scripture tells us we've got eternity written in our hearts. And Scripture tells us we've got a conscience. And Scripture tells us we've got a memory of God. Oh, we may seek to suppress it, but there is this sense of God. And even the atheist, he knows in his heart as he tries to suppress it. And no matter how we try to suppress everything, we have to stare

straight in the face of the fact that death is coming. And there's just unrest inside. And even though we know it's true. You can talk to somebody, and they may weep and they may recognize that there's truth in what you're saying, but they love their sin and they're just torn in their unrest, and they're going to go drink of it. And yet, there they'd partied all night long and then they have to wake up in the morning in unrest and hollow and gnawing.

Or even the religious person - the churches are filled today - when is it enough? When is it enough? We need to do more! We need to do more! It's like the rich, young ruler. What good thing must I do? Even though, in his estimation, he'd kept all the law. Something was gnawing in the religionist. Something is always gnawing. We've got to go do. We've got to do. Always panting after some new thing. Something always - we're reaching. Brethren, isn't it like that? Our life was always like that. Always unsatisfied. Just casting up dirt and filth and unsatisfied and empty.

And it's like there's something, we know, something somewhere is going to satisfy us. But we couldn't get it... Until Christ came and He spoke "Peace, peace." Always trying to escape the restlessness. All of life and all our ways just cast up dirt. Dirt. Always unsettled. You can see the waves just in turmoil.

The thing that I ask is, ok, wait, how were the people in v. 20-21 different than the people in v. 16-18. The "him." Because God says I will not always be angry. In other words, I was angry with them. Why? For their sin. For their wickedness. V. 17 Because of the iniquity, I was angry. I struck him. I hid My face. You see all the anger? How's that different? It's like it describes these people in these earlier verses, but when you get to the last two, it's like it goes to somebody else. Yeah, but wait, what's the difference here? I think it probably is that word there at the end of v. 18. "I will lead him and restore comfort to him." But the "him" here is described as having his mourners. Didn't Jesus say, "Blessed are those who mourn"? I think that's the real issue. If you're happy in your sin, you're happy with the dirt, you're happy with the filth and the mire always being tossed up in your life. If you're happy and content to live without God and to live without Christ, then you're in this category. But you know what? If the happiness and enjoyment is gone, guilt, shame, remorse, the dirt, the mire, they're choking you. You see yourself as some unclean thing and you're mourning for healing. That's what you're wanting. Then hear the fruit of the Savior's lips. He speaks, "peace." Not just peace. Peace, peace. It's emphatic. I will give you rest. Peace, peace. Rest, rest. And, the thing is, Christ says back in Ephesians 2, He Himself is our peace. He's made peace by the blood of His cross.

So that's the first thing. Isaiah 57. So let's go back to Ephesians 2. Here's the next thing. Here's another question. The first one was how does Isaiah help us. The second one was this: When did Christ preach peace to those far off and to those near? Look at the text. "He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near." Now, three things bothered me about this. One is the apparent sequence. You say, what do you mean? I mean basically this, v. 16 right before it is Jesus Christ reconciling us by going to the cross. And then you get this conjunction: "and... He came and preached peace to you who were far off..." Well, there seems to be an order. There seems to be a sequence. Cross first. Then He came preaching. But, I would just ask this, did Jesus die on the cross then rise and go forth preaching to the Gentiles? After the cross, Jesus was resurrected three days later. After 40 days, He ascended up to the right hand of His Father. Someone says, well, this isn't to be taken

chronologically. This preaching to them obviously had to do with that segment of His life where He had His preaching ministry. Perhaps. But then there's something else. Christ specifically, during His preaching ministry, He specifically pointed out that He was not sent to preach to the Gentiles. Remember what He said to the Syrophenician woman when she was looking for the crumbs that fell from the table? He said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." And in Matthew 10, when Jesus sent the Twelve out, He says, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles. Enter no town of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Y

ou see, the problem is if we say, it's not to be taken chronologically, it's during His preaching ministry, I would say, yeah, but during His preaching ministry He made it a point to say I'm not sent to the Gentiles. Somebody says, yeah, but in John 4 didn't He go to the Samaritans? I mean, even though He said that, weren't there some exceptions? Didn't He actually bless the Syrophenician woman? Weren't there some exceptions? Well, perhaps. But there's one more thing here. Notice the wording of Ephesians 2:17 very carefully. "He came and preached peace... to you." Paul isn't saying that Jesus came and preached to the Samaritans. He specifically says that Jesus came and preached peace to you Ephesians who were far off. And the pronoun is there. Paul's being very specific. He came and preached to you, Ephesians. Well, I mean, Jesus had never been to Ephesus. It certainly cannot be said that Jesus personally during His earthly ministry came to Ephesus and preached peace to these folks. But here's the thing. Peace was preached to these people. We know it was. Otherwise they wouldn't be Christians. Paul wouldn't be writing to them in the fashion he's writing to them.

Here's the thing. Where do we find the Gospel first going to Ephesus? Does anybody know where? Acts. Maybe actually the first time is Acts 18. But here's the thing about the book of Acts. In fact, turn to the book of Acts. Listen to how this book starts. Acts 1:1-2 Brethren, I want you to capture this. See Acts 18, 19 - the Gospel goes to Ephesus for the first time. People are converted. A church is being built up. But notice the account of Acts as it starts. "In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with..." Now notice these words. "...all that Jesus began to do and teach." Now just let that sink in. The first book - that's Luke's Gospel. Luke wrote two books. He wrote the Gospel of Luke (part 1); the book of Acts (part 2). Theophilus - what I wrote in the first volume, in my first treatise, that's what Jesus "began to do and teach." All that Jesus began - do you know what that means? He's not finished! The Lord Jesus is going on with His work. Listen, Theophilus, I have a whole other volume to write to you. I told you in that first treatise about what Jesus began to do. You've heard that. You've read that. But now, I'm going to go on. Now, I'm going to tell you that there's more. I want to tell you what the risen Christ continues to do. He's seated at the right hand of God in eternal glory.

Brethren, hear His words! Go into all the nations. Why? On what basis? He said all authority, all power has been given unto Me, committed to Me in Heaven and on earth. Therefore, go. Why? Because I'm going to be with you until the end of the age. What does that mean? It means He's still working. He's working through His church. He continues to work. He goes on working. And on and on working. Because Christ is not done working. Therefore, we go. The whole idea here is that when we proclaim the Gospel, He proclaims it. When we send a missionary, if you look at Acts 13, that church at Antioch sent out Paul and Barnabas. But it also says the Spirit sent them out. You see, it's in coordination. He's working through us. When a

church is planted, He does the work. Brethren, if a church gets planted, if people get converted and are added to a church over in Nepal, we can look at that and say the Lord builds the house. Because we labor in vain if He does not do that. This is Him working. The book of Acts is Christ working. It is the risen Christ working. You remember, you remember they went to the Beautiful Gate, and the man is jumping and leaping, shouting for joy, and they said, we didn't do that. That's the whole idea here. Did somebody preach to the Ephesians? You better believe somebody preached to the Ephesians. It can be said that Christ preached to the Ephesians, because He's the One that matters. It's His voice. It's them hearing His voice. He does the work. He has the authority to do the work.

Brethren, we need to once and forever get past this idea that it's the politicians that run this world. Don't worry about who the president is! We know Who sits on the throne, brethren. And He is working. And we're watching Him work. And we, of all churches in this world, we can say, yes, we have seen His hand; such things have happened as we could have never done in our own strength; we could have never done with our own wisdom. We would have never figured out (incomplete thought) Brethren, we look at this thing and we say Praise the Lord! Praise Him for His excellent glory! Praise Him that He does work through His people! That's the basis upon which we are to go forward. Why? Because, Theophilus, He began to work, but He wasn't done. And He's working through His church now. And He's given His Spirit. And there is great power!

And remember the promise: The works that I do, you will do. And greater works than these, you will do. How? Because of Him! Not in our own strength. Not in our own wisdom. Not in our own might. Brethren, consider your calling. He purposely picks a bunch of backwards people so that He might get all the glory. He puts all of this in broken vessels. Just clay pots. Why? That He may get all the glory. Paul hits on that in 2 Corinthians. Does he not? Oh brethren, Christ has all the authority in Heaven and on earth. Not Donald Trump. Not the leaders of the nations. Don't worry about that! His Kingdom is moving forward. And He is working. The people that were in the political positions back in the early church, what were they doing? Pilate, Herod, Caesar.

Just look - it's no different today. And yet, here this band of people, 120 - a little group of people. They're going to come down and they're going to preach that this dead Jewish carpenter came to life. It turned the world upside down. That's what we read about in Scripture. He promises to be with us and help us and work through us. Brethren, He said, you go wait in Jerusalem, and you will receive power from on high. And the Spirit of God is going to come upon you. And you're going to be My witnesses. He empowers the message. Why do we pray before I come up here and preach? I'm asking the Lord for help. Why? Because it's Him! It's Him, brethren. We've been watching people get converted. It's not because they hear my voice or any man's voice. It's because they hear God's voice in that. That is the reality, brethren.

You remember how it is there at the end of Mark. "Then the Lord Jesus, after He had spoken to them, was taking up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God, and they went out and preached everywhere while the Lord worked with them." That's it. Or how about this? We're ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. See, it's on behalf of Christ. And God speaks through us. That's the reality. Our message is to be regarded as a message from Christ Himself. Brethren,

do you recognize when you preach out on these streets, or you take those tracts over to Houston, or you're teaching your children - mothers - when you speak this Gospel and the truth from these words, Christ is speaking. Christ. It is that authority, brethren. It is the message of God. When we speak, it is Christ Who speaks. What we say to this world is declared by His name, by His authority. That's what happens. The Gospel of peace that we hold forth is to be received with the respect that's due from a message that comes directly from God. Do you recognize that, brethren? Do you recognize that? Do you know that in Scripture, when Jesus upbraided or denounced those cities that did not believe in Him after all the mighty works that He did, do you know He said to them it is going to be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment than for you. But do you know when He sent the Twelve out, He said if the people don't listen to you, it's going to be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom than for them. Do you recognize what He's saying? He is saying that the very same message they went with and people turning it down, it came with the same authority; it came with the same power; it came with the same urgency to be accepted. And if it's not, though it be spoken from the lips of His people, it is His message. It comes on His authority. And we can say it is Him Who is preaching. It is a message directly from God. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God. This fills this message that we speak with infinite importance. It makes it a fearful thing to reject it.

And brethren, you know as well as I do what Scripture says. If our mouths go silent in proclaiming this message, we have to ask, how are they going to believe in a Christ they have never heard of? And how are they going to hear, brethren, unless somebody is going forth - and don't get hung up on the word "preach." It doesn't mean somebody standing in a pulpit. This is a word that means proclaim. That's the reality. So that's the second thing.

The third thing here is this: Here's what jumps out at me. If Christ came and preached peace, that's a fundamental need. He came and preached peace to the far off and to the near. Why? Because peace is the thing most necessary. It's the need of all men. Not just of some. You're far off? You're near? You need peace. He came. That's the message. He came. Do you know where He came from? He came from the halls of glory. He came from dwelling in the presence of His Father. He came from Heaven. He came down. Scripture says here in Ephesians later on, He came to the lower parts of the earth. He came.

Why? Do you know what? He did a lot of things, but He came with a message of peace. That's why He came. That's why He's here. He came from outside this world. He came with a message for our dark, depraved world. Brethren, He knew He was coming into a place where people do things and make sex slaves and do the things that John was talking about. He came into a world because He knew it was just like that. He knew that people killed each other. He knew there were wars. He knew there was slaughter. He knew there was ugliness. Man and his ugliness. At his ugliest. They spit on Him. I mean, You sent God. You sent the God-man with the radiance of the glory of God upon Him, and men spit on Him and they plucked His beard out. And they buffeted Him in the head. And they despised Him. And they hated Him. That's man at his best. So what will man do to each other? He says if they'll do this to the master, what are they going to do to us? If man will do that to Him, what will they do to each other? All we have to do is look around. They make sex slaves of each other. They kill. It's all this wickedness, just foaming and mire and filth. All this vast humanity. All the vast humanity.

I looked at numerous videos. Especially like in the Virgin Islands and some of those places that took direct hits. You know how often the people profaned the name of God? Almost every single time. And Christ came down into this world. All this foaming mire and dirt and wickedness and discontent and man not satisfied, and always groping and hating God and back to God and running the other way. And Christ came into the midst of all of it. Isn't it amazing? He went to where the waves foamed and broke the worst - right out into the midst of sinners and prostitutes and tax collectors. Peace. It's like Paul wants to sum it all up. Hm... if I'm just going to describe what Christ came to speak in one word: Peace.

You say, there's a lot of things: the cross, the righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel. Yes, all those things are true. But you want to sum it up into one word? There it is. We provoked Him. Think: He came! He came! He knew. He looked. His Father says are You willing to go? I'm willing. Do You know what it will cost? I'm willing. I go. I'll take the message of peace. You know You're going to have to earn that peace for them. And the suffering is going to be untold. I'm going to put a cup to Your lips and You will drink every drop. I go. He came. He came. The Scripture talks about the chastisement for our peace. He took the severe punishment.

Brethren, I know everybody in this room has an inner sense of God. We all do. For some of you, you don't like that. You're disturbed by it. But I ask everyone here, are you at peace? Because Jesus says, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." Be honest. Don't play here. You don't want to get to your deathbed and find there's no rest. There's no peace. Is there rest? Is there peace between you and God? Or do you feel it? Your life is not at rest. The dirt. The filth. The sin. The lust. The draw. Just the powerlessness. And yet, there's this tearing. I know what they preach here is true. But I want my sin. And there's just this unrest and there's this turmoil. And the devil will be right there. You don't have to deal with it today. Just tomorrow is ok. Tomorrow. Put it off... put it off...

The thing is, people out in this world, they don't know it. They don't know this reality. They don't know about Christ. The world out there generally thinks, yes, there's turmoil, but it's my circumstances. It's my wife. I've got to get a different wife. It's my boss. Why'd I ever take this job? Why'd I end up with children like this? Why'd I have to be born in Key West? Now my house is gone. It's all my circumstances. They've caused me trouble. I could be watching football. Now I have to flee from my home. It's all my circumstances. My life stinks! Oh, I just need a vacation. I need to get away. Everybody is convinced... I need a little bit more money. I need just a little bit better life. Something else.

Brethren, Jesus has come and there's no one more qualified to come and preach peace. He's the very One that made peace between God and man, and He took all that hostility. He took the severe punishment. And for all those sins. I mean the bad ones. The ones you don't want anybody to know. The ones you're so ashamed of. But the ones that look good too. The ones that we can wear on the outside and they're very much accepted by the world. All our idolatry and all the covetousness. All the hypocrisy and the religion. All of it. He became sin. I'd just say this, the far off, the near... some of you, perhaps, you're way out there. You're right there at the gaping mouth of hell itself, and you're just teetering over the edge. You'd be so ashamed if people knew what you have done. In fact, to describe what you've done is more animal than it is human. It's more demonic.

If that's you, you have to hear Him: "Peace to you who are far off." How far? Far off. You're way out there. You say, after the things I've done? Yeah, where does that put you? A long way away. But He preaches to you far off. Peace. Be at peace. Did you not see Me come? I went among the most foul sinners when I walked this earth. And I declared peace to them. And He says the tax collectors and the prostitutes, they're flowing into the Kingdom. Why? Because you can be out there teetering on the very brink. Any of you live lives like that where you're just hellbound? Hell-bent. Teetering over that edge and just playing with your soul. Riding down the highway 140 miles an hour. Or getting drunk... and always living on the edge. Just daring God to kill you. And He calls you back from that edge. He says, "Peace."

But then the near: you know we have children here, maybe you've been under conviction numerous times. You remember the man there in Mark 12? That question: what is the greatest commandment? Jesus said loving God, loving your neighbor. And that scribe said, "that's right, Lord." He said, "you're not far from the Kingdom." And we get people like that. You haven't been out at the edge. You've sat under the Word. You've been exposed to it. And you even have some liking to it. You may be reading your Bible. You may have come under conviction at different times. You're one of the ones that's near, but you've never closed with Christ. You've sought to be religious, but you're like the rich, young ruler. Ever so close. Ever so moral. But something is just not at rest. You can be close. But if you miss Christ, no matter how close you are, you've missed the bus. But even you... it's like yeah, but hypocrisy and self-righteousness and religiosity. But He says, "Come. I call you just as well." You're religious? You're like Nicodemus - not like Zacchaeus? Come. Far off. Near. Come. Peace. Remember what He said to that storm? Peace. Be still. And it was calm.

And many of us in this room, we know that. Our lives just foaming and filth and dirt and muck and mire and waves and restlessness... Oh, those Sunday mornings, hungover and this gnawing. No rest. The best thing to do is to get as sober as I can so I can go drink more and just not have to think about it. Just put on a movie. Just get to noon so there can be football on so I can just forget this gnawing. I've got to get with my friends. Let's get high. Do something. Something. For some, it's I've to get to church. I've got to get to church. I just talked with a sister a week and a half ago that we actually baptized. She was just saying she felt like she needed to get to church. She needed to do the religious thing. She had to keep going; had to keep going. To me, it was get to the football game. Get to where I could drink again and not throw up. And she's like I've got to get to church.

Brethren, whether it's far off and all the time the Lord came into this world, He knew He was coming to people just like this. And He says, "Peace." I know who you are. You are hell-worthy. You are ugly and you are defiled. And you deserve judgment. But, I am the very radiance of the glory of God. I declare the Father. And I've come to this world that you might know that He bids sinners to come. Peace. Peace. I've gone to that cross. I've taken your chastisement on My head for your peace. Come. Take it. Father, I pray that that message of peace would reach the ears and that You would heal "him," just as it says there in Isaiah 57. Lord, heal him. Heal this true Israel. Those wandering sheep. Those who comprise this one new man. Lord, bring him in. Give him ears to hear. Far off or near. May they have ears to hear, Peace. Peace. Peace by the blood of the Lamb. Peace because He took all that hostility upon

Himself at that cross. Have mercy, Father. Please have mercy. We ask it in Christ's name, Amen.