

## **THERE IS NO PEACE FOR THE WICKED!**

**Today's Text: Isaiah Chaps 46-48**

**Extracts:**

1. **For you have trusted in your wickedness; you have said, “No one sees me.” Your wisdom and your knowledge have warped you; and you have said in your heart, “I am, and there is no one else besides me.” Therefore evil shall come upon you; you shall not know from where it arises. Trouble shall fall upon you; you will not be able to put it off [Is. 47: 10, 11]**
2. **“There is no peace,” says the Lord, “for the wicked” [Is. 48: 22]**

*General Augusto Pinochet was the head of the military government that ruled in Chile, South America, from 1973 to 1990<sup>1</sup>. His regime was reputed for committing extensive human rights violations, such as execution or disappearance or torture of political enemies, and suppression of press freedom. Many Chileans escaped abroad as political refugees. Even after handing over to a democratically elected government in 1990, he took a seat in the Senate with the hope of keeping immunity from prosecution for life. However, in 1998, he travelled to the UK for medical treatment. There, he was arrested on a warrant from a Spanish judge (under international law for crimes against humanity) and kept under house arrest. Since that time, Pinochet has known no peace. Even now, back in Chile, at age 90, he is standing trial on various criminal charges. There is no peace for the wicked!*

*In the eyes of God, a wicked person is anybody who has departed from the path of righteousness and enjoys doing so [Dan. 9: 5; Is. 47: 8, 10]. It does not matter that the person is a minister of God or a political or business leader, a parent or a beggar. Whoever puts anything else above God is wicked in His eyes. You may be able to run but you cannot hide! Sooner than later, your sin will find you out [Num. 32: 23], because you cannot have the peace of God. Ask Pinochet! Ask any backslidden believer. Ask yourself! Life on earth is already tough. Why should you make it harder? In today's lesson, we shall examine how peace can elude the wicked and find out how to deal with the situation.*

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<sup>1</sup> Story based on “Augusto Pinochet,” from *Wikipedia*, the free press encyclopedia.

## 1. True peace can only come from the God of peace!

Peace may mean different things to different people. For example, when a victorious army signs a peace treaty with a defeated enemy, that assumes there is now peace in enemy territory. The fact is that the enemy is “peaceful” because s(he) has been conquered! The day that the enemy can acquire the means to reassert his/her power, the peace treaty will be shattered. That kind of peace cannot last because it is viewed from the outward. True peace comes from within.

One definition of peace that is appropriate for this lesson is given in the Webster’s *Third New Dictionary* as follows: “a mental or spiritual *condition* marked by freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions: calmness of mind and heart: *serenity of spirit*.” That kind of peace looks hard because we do know that we are daily haunted by disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions. We are working harder, resting less, and paying more bills. Families are in distress and the divorce rate is rising. Criminals and terrorists are taking over our streets and freedom while the security forces appear fighting a losing battle. We fear for our future as inflation eats away at the worth of our investments and pension benefits. Unusual climatic changes are bringing about unanticipated natural disasters, such as earthquakes, storms, drought and fires in various parts of the world. Some radically minded countries are developing nuclear weapons and they are not hiding their intentions to use them against their enemies in the near future. With such a string of “bad news,” what is the “condition” of your heart or mind? If you do not feel an inner peace or security or serenity, then, you cannot claim to have peace!

However, the definition of God’s peace can be found in the following verse [**Phil. 4: 6**]:

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

That definition *recognizes* that worry is inevitable and that it tells heavily on our hearts and minds. However, the only way to deal with it is to rely on a higher source. In other words, *it is only the person or thing that we depend upon that can guarantee us peace*. Some trust in chariots and some in horses [**Ps. 20: 7**], that is, worldly things, such as power, position, material wealth, etc. Some people rely on themselves [**Is. 47: 8**]. If you depend on the world, you will have the peace of the world, which is hardly peace at all! However, if you depend on God, you will have the peace of God. That is why Jesus told His disciples before His Passion, “In Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” [**Jn 16: 33**]. Examine the significance of those two verbs, “may” and “will.” The first is conditional, that is, the peace of God is

at your disposal *if you want it*. The second is inevitable, that is, *whether you like it or not, the world cannot guarantee you any peace!* Therefore, true and genuine peace can only come from the God of peace on the condition that you allow your heart and mind to be guided and guarded by God's peace through Christ Jesus, the Prince of peace. If you are ready to do what is true, noble, just, pure, lovely and of good report, then, the God of peace will be with you [**Phil. 4: 8, 9**].

## 2. Why the wicked cannot be at peace

According to the word of God through Isaiah, the peace of God will elude the wicked for the following reasons, among others:

### a) *They are hardened transgressors*

God said of the wicked, "Surely *from long ago* your ear was not opened, for I knew that you would deal very treacherously, and were called a transgressor from the womb" [**Is. 48: 8**]. That is a good definition of hardened criminals or sinners! They enjoy sin and see it as an achievement or a business. The prostitute who stands around 5-star hotels to attract clients is not thinking about sexual immorality but business. The medical doctor who runs an abortion clinic is not thinking about murder but business. The serial killer who is stalking people to kill is not thinking of murder but to satisfy a depraved pleasure. A good example is the BTK killer, Dennis Rader, who was recently sentenced to 10 consecutive life terms for killing 10 women between 1974 and 1991.<sup>2</sup>

Dennis was a former church congregation president and Boy Scout leader. In his criminal activities, he called himself the BTK for "bind, torture and kill." For 30 years, he harassed Wichita, Kansas, USA, and kept detailed accounts of his escapades that showed that he enjoyed his work! Yet, the police could not catch him. However, in 2004, he resurfaced when he wrote to a local newspaper and included photographs of a 1986 strangling victim and a photocopy of her missing driver's license. Those leads helped police to get him. His trial took two days because he owned up to the killings. Does that suggest that he had enjoyed peace all these years? I doubt it!

### b) *They serve gods that cannot carry them and trust in wickedness!*

The powerlessness of the gods of the wicked is vividly portrayed in the following words, "Their idols were on the beasts and on the cattle (and their) carriages were heavily loaded, a burden to the weary beast" [**Is. 46: 1**]. In other words, a false god is carried by its worshippers who determine its laws and fight for their upkeep. The true God, on the other hand,

<sup>2</sup> Roxana Hegeman, "BTK serial killer sentenced to 10 consecutive life terms," [www.crimelibrary.com/news/ap/08052/2001\\_btk\\_10\\_life\\_terms.html](http://www.crimelibrary.com/news/ap/08052/2001_btk_10_life_terms.html)

upholds us from birth, “from the womb: even to your old age, I am He, and even to grey hairs I will carry you” [vv. 3,4]. So, since the strength of their gods depends on the strength of the carriers (youth, beauty, money, position, fame, legal protection, etc), such gods cannot be trusted to carry the wicked for long. That is how the wicked find themselves in captivity [v. 2]. How can somebody in bondage have peace?

When their gods fail them, the wicked then turn inwards and begin to trust their wickedness, saying in their hearts, “I am, and there is no one else beside me” [Is. 47: 10]. This is manifested in pride, unwillingness to admit or recognize good qualities in others or a tendency to hide one’s incompetence. That is why when trouble comes upon such people, they “shall not know how to put it off” [v. 11]. That is hardly a peaceful state!

c) *The wicked rely on a multitude of advisers*

In social psychology, there is something called the *risky shift phenomenon*. It states that people tend to take more risky decisions when they are in a group than when they are alone. This is because, when a group decision fails to work, the whole group will take the blame whereas an individual will bear all the responsibility alone. In like manner, wicked people are always around “astrologers, the stargazers and the monthly prognosticators” [Is. 47: 13]. They hide under the multitude of advisers to practise their wickedness. The politician who steals state money to launder in private foreign vaults is aided and abetted by the experts, the civil servants who know the rules and regulations. Nevertheless, neither the wicked nor their advisers can escape “from what shall come upon” (them). The fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame” [v. 14]. Since a sophisticated forecast is not a prophecy, the wicked will keep searching but can never find. They are wanderers [v. 15] and people who wander are hardly at peace!

d) *The wicked are hypocrites!*

Surprisingly, wicked people are not as far-fetched as we may think. They may be up there on the pulpit, in the boardroom, the family, the bank, the school, etc. They are called by the name of the people of God “who swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, *but not in truth or in righteousness*” [Is. 48: 1, 2]. It is such people that Jesus Christ was referring to when He said, “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practise lawlessness’” [Matt. 7: 22-23]. Who can have a peaceful spirit if spoken to in that tone?

In summary, we see that the wicked is looking for peace in the wrong place, in the world. That is why God has said emphatically, “there is no peace for the wicked” [Is. 48: 22]. There has to be a better way.

### 3. God is the better way!

God reminds the wicked [Is. 48: 18-19]:

*Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea. Your descendants also would have been like the sand, and the offspring of your body like the grains of sand; his name would not have been cut off nor destroyed from before Me.*

A river flows wherever it wishes, in freedom and majesty. The waves dance for joy as they leap up and down. What vivid figures of speech God has used to describe the peace of mind of the righteous! Do you realize that the river is constantly searching for easy routes to flow through to the sea? That is why it meanders! The waves are the product of strong winds driving the seawaters? Yet, neither the river nor the sea is anxious for anything! They both remain calm and peaceful, even with the turbulence.

The Psalmist gives us a good contrast between the profile of the wicked and that of the righteous. For example, the righteous, that is, the person who fears the Lord and delights greatly in His commandments [Ps. 112: 1] will, among other things:

- ❑ have descendants who will be mighty on earth and blessed [v. 2];
- ❑ have wealth and riches in his house [v. 3];
- ❑ be gracious, full of compassion, lend to the needy, and guide his affairs with discretion [vv. 4, 5];
- ❑ not be afraid and his heart will be established [v. 8].

Consequently, his righteousness endures forever [v. 3], and “he will not be afraid of evil tidings; *his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord*” [v. 7].

The wicked, on the other hand, will see the peace enjoyed by the righteous “and be grieved. He will gnash his teeth and melt away; the desire of the wicked shall perish” [v. 10]. What a pity!

### 4. Conclusion

Fear is part of our daily living. Anxiety will always knock at the doors of our minds and hearts. There is nothing wrong with that. It is what we do with it that matters. You can choose to worry yourself to death and strive to use your worldly connections to deal with your situation. You may be tempted to sell your soul by joining secret or demonic cults, clubs or gangs so as to take off the pressures. You

may be tempted to be like everybody else by cutting corners and taking short but illegal or immoral routes. I have bad news for you! God Himself has told us in today's lesson, "there is no peace for the wicked" [Is. 48: 22].

Here is a better way for you to obtain the peace of God:

❑ *Don't dwell in wickedness!*

The Psalmist says, "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness" [Ps. 84: 10]. Do you realize that God is angry with the wicked everyday [Ps. 7: 11]? Confess your wickedness [1 Kgs 8: 47] and give it up [Ps. 7: 9]. Don't worry about your past because God is not counting on your personal efforts and good deeds. Thanks to the blood of Jesus which has been shed for you, God will do what is right and forgive you *all* your past sins [1 Jn 1: 9].

❑ *Stay on the new course!*

That you have given your life to Christ does not mean that your former associates and comrades-in-wickedness will give you up without a fight. Therefore, your flesh will war against your spirit. Happily, the battle is not yours but God's. God has promised you that from now on even up to your old age, He "will carry and will deliver you" [Is. 46: 4]. The only condition is that you must stay the course for God "will keep in perfect peace whose mind is stayed" on Him because you trust in Him [Is. 26: 3].

❑ *Bask in the peace of God!*

Like Peter in chains in prison fast asleep in the peace of God [Acts 12: 6], you can now boldly face the odds of daily living. You will no longer be afraid of the "terror by night nor of the arrow that flies by day nor of the pestilence that walks in the darkness nor of the destruction that lays waste at noon." And whenever you are in trouble and call upon Him, God will answer you and will deliver you. He will honour you with long life and satisfy you with His salvation [Ps. 91: 5,6,15,16]. Then, you can afford to bask in the sunshine of God's peace.

There is no peace for the wicked!