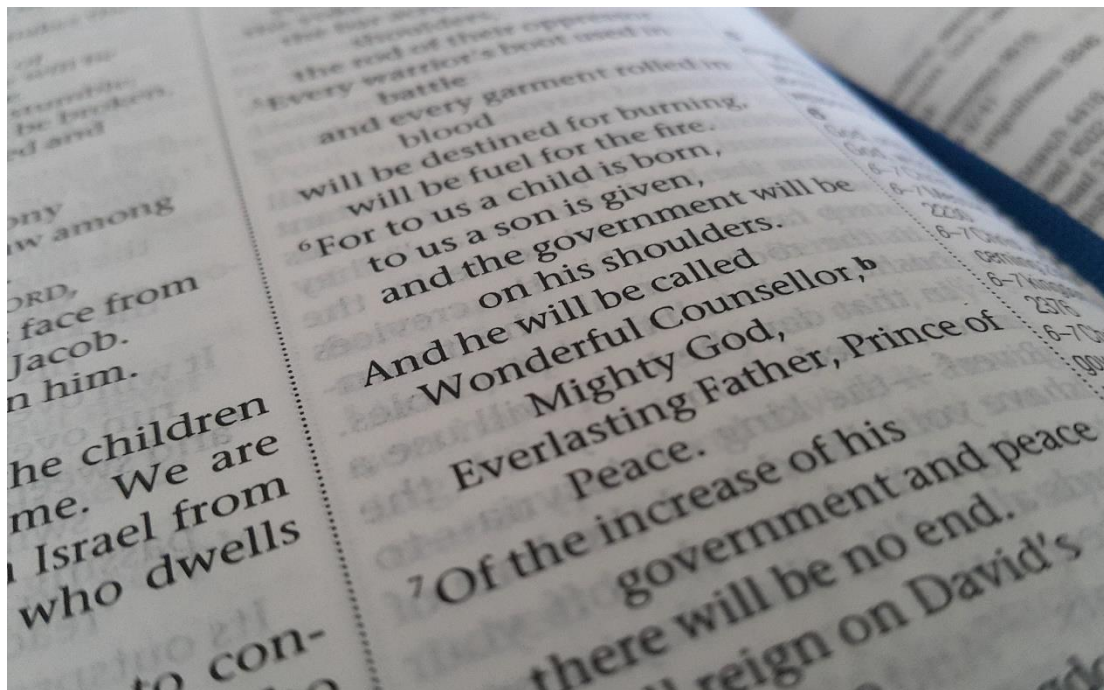


# THE WONDER OF



## HIS NAME

*A meditation on the words  
of Isaiah 9:6*

*by David Legge*



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# *The Wonder Of His Name - Chapter 1*

## **"A Child Born And A Son Given"**

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**G**ood evening to you all! It's good to be back with you in the Iron Hall again - the prodigal comes home once more! It's a real delight to renew fellowship with you, and I've been looking forward to these four weeks, in the will of the Lord, as we share together in this wonderful verse of Scripture that we're going to look at tonight, Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6. There is a great deal in this little verse, and that's all we're going to look at for the next four studies. I don't know exactly how it will all split up, but we'll work it out as we go along and trust the Lord for that - but there is so much within this little verse, as we take the title for the whole series 'The Wonder of His Name'. Tonight, if you wish to have a title, it would be: 'A Child Born And A Son Given'.

So let's just read this verse together, Isaiah 9 verse 6: *"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace".* Amen.

Perhaps we could come in prayer just for a moment. I know that our brother has already prayed, but there's something I want us to do - perhaps we could do it just now. Turn to Malachi chapter 3. Keep your finger or a marker in Isaiah 9, but turn over to Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, chapter 3. I received a very encouraging text - I'll not embarrass the man who sent it to me this morning - from someone who's here tonight. He was just encouraging me for the meetings for the next four weeks, and he quoted this little verse that, frankly, I had forgotten all about, but that I want us to claim tonight and indeed the next three Monday nights as we come to study. I really don't want you going out - you'll probably not go out with more knowledge in your head anyway, listening to me! - but I don't want you to just go out having received something cerebral upstairs in your head, I want you to go out having learnt a bit more, experientially, about our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. This is a wonderful verse that you ought to claim tonight, verse 16 in Malachi 3: 'Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on His name'.

Will you come with me and pray, and ask the Lord that He might bless you and speak to your heart, but that He might write your name in His book. We don't know what the book is, we don't need to know what it is, but it says here that there is a book and that God takes note of those who meditate on His name and talk about Him. Let's claim that together in prayer, and ask the Lord that He might speak to all our hearts this evening. Let us pray: Father, we thank You for sending Your Son, the Lord Jesus

Christ, into this world because You so loved us. Lord, we let those words roll off our tongues, we are so familiar with them - many of us here have known them since childhood - yet, Father, we want to move beyond mere intellectual knowledge, we want to move beyond sentiment. Lord, we want to move beyond Christmas festivity, we want to move right into Your heart, Father, in what it meant for You to send Your only begotten Son to be our Saviour. So, Father, we pray for the Holy Spirit to come and to minister Christ - not only to our minds, but to our hearts, to our souls, to our spirits, that we might be richer in the knowledge of Him. O God, we ask that He would manifest His presence in this place tonight by the power of His Holy Spirit through the preaching of the word. Oh Lord, those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name. O God, we don't deserve it, but in Christ's name be pleased to bless us tonight, for His glory alone, Amen.

So, back to Isaiah 9, please, and verse 6. Now, names mean a great deal to us today in our world. All you have to observe is a young couple deliberating over the name of a newborn, and the thought, and hopefully the prayer as well, that goes into such a decision - because our names are important. But though we value our names, it's nothing in comparison to what name meant in Hebrew culture, particularly in the Old Testament but also in the New; because, enshrined within any name, was meaning. When you gave a child a name, it meant something - and it even could mean something regarding revelation. We might say it could mean something 'prophetically'. It could actually be a blessing upon a child's life or, for that matter, a curse. We see that within Scripture. So names have inherent meaning in the word of God.

Take the very first man, Adam. God created him from the dust of the ground, He breathed into him and he became a living soul - and God called him 'Adam'. 'Adam', of course, in Hebrew means 'earth', speaking of how he came about, and reminding us all that in the beginning God created. If you go to the patriarch Abram, and we see that God changed his name 'Abram', which means 'exalted' or 'high father', to 'Abraham' - and that little addition meant 'father of many'. Of course, it is laughable when you consider that he was, along with Sarah, childless - and yet this was prophetic, this was an act of faith, God giving him this name to show that this is what he would become. You and I, as Gentiles, are children of Abraham by faith; and the Jews, of course, are natural children of Abraham by their lineage. When Abraham and Sarah were told by God that in old age they would have a son, they did laugh - not just about his name, but the promise. Of course, the son that would be born was called 'Isaac', which means 'laughter' - meaning in his name.

Now, the converse is also true: names can have negative connotations. There are several examples we could give, but one that stands out to me is - you remember during the wicked days of Eli the high priest, the Ark of the Covenant was stolen by the Philistines. Hophni and Phinehas, Eli's two sons, were killed in the battle - judgement against them, because they had made themselves wicked in the eyes of God. You remember when Eli heard the news of the death of his sons, and the

stealing of the Ark, he fell and he died. The story goes that Eli's daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was with child. Not long after that she gave birth, and we read in 1 Samuel 4 that: 'She named the child Ichabod, saying, 'The glory has departed from Israel!' because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband'. 'Ichabod', the glory has departed - such meaning and revelation concerning a nation, who were estranged from their covenant God.

Now, when it comes to divine names this principle of meaning and revelation, well, it applies all the more because the names of God have great instruction for us and, indeed, I would say that there is a dual revelation in most of the names of God. First of all, there is a revelation concerning the character of God Himself. When we find a name of God, He is telling us something about His personality and His nature - but that's not where it ends. There is also a revelation, not only about God Himself, but about His provision for us and His relation toward us in the covenant that we have with Him. So there is something to learn for us in God's name. There's a little line, I think it's in a chorus, that goes: 'Every name that He bears is a blessing He shares'. I want you to remember that as we go through this series.

Now let's start going way back to the book of Exodus to show this revelation that is often in God's name. Turn with me to Exodus chapter 6 verse 2: 'And God spoke to Moses and said to him: 'I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name LORD" - capital L-O-R-D, which signifies 'Jehovah' in the original Hebrew language - "by My name LORD", or 'Yahweh', 'Jehovah', "I was not known to them". Now, that's significant. In chapter 3, if you turn back to the burning bush incident in verse 14, perhaps verse 13 to get the idea of where verse 14 comes in: 'Moses said to God, 'Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?'. And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM'. And He said, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you''. Now, that name 'I AM WHO I AM' is a statement about the character and nature of God. God was saying to Moses: 'I am incomprehensible, and I am self-sufficient'. You see that statement, 'I AM WHO I AM', it's like a full circle without a break: God is God - and that's something hard for us to appreciate. Incomprehensible, because He is self-sufficient - but when we turn to chapter 6 and verse 3, there is obviously something being revealed here that is significant. There is something new, there is something precious, there is a fresh revelation of God's person-hood that has been given to Moses that hadn't been given to any of the other patriarchs. So the question is: what is it?

Well, it's obviously a revelation about Himself - that He is self-sufficient, 'I AM' - but, when you think about it, even in our English language, 'I AM' is an unfinished sentence, isn't it? 'I AM' has no object. 'I AM' what? Simply 'I AM'. So the revelation that comes to us about God's character is: He is self-sufficient, He is incomprehensible - but when it comes to us, there is a dual revelation, there is something that it is saying to us. It's saying this: 'I AM whatever my people need' - that's what God was revealing to Moses! Moses, who was being commissioned to go to the nation of Egypt who had God's people in bondage and slavery, and he, as this coward soul, was going

to go and deliver them - and he needed to know that God was able for the task. He didn't think he was able, he knew that, 40 years in the desert had knocked all self-sufficiency out of Moses. Of course, when he was a younger man, he was going to deliver Israel by his own arm of flesh, and he slew the Egyptian that had smote a Hebrew - he was going to do it himself! But through 40 years in the desert God knocked all self-sufficiency out of him, and then he starts making excuses - and then God reveals to him: 'I AM whatever you need, Moses'.

So the dual revelation here, particularly for us, is the Lord's provision. He, in Himself, is self-sufficient - that's hard for us to appreciate, isn't it? But what He is saying is: 'The moment human need arises, your need arises, I become just what you need' - now that's something we can appreciate! Some over-pious souls will say: 'It's selfish to always see your need in God, to always be looking for what He will do for you. You should just appreciate God for who He is'. Well, I suppose it is selfish if all that we're interested in is getting our needs met without any appreciation of God's person, but you've got to understand: God has chosen to reveal Himself to us in our need. How dare any of us contradict the means by which He chooses to reveal Himself. You see, God knows the way we are, for God made us; and He knows how we have become through our fallenness. He knows that we need dependency, we need provision, we need help! He is well aware that the context in which we can truly appreciate God is the context of our human need.

'I AM' is effectively a blank cheque, isn't it? 'I AM' what? Well, you fill in the cheque, what do you need? God says: 'I AM whatever you need'. It is faith that fills in that blank cheque. When the need arises in our lives, God is saying: 'I AM, I AM able for your need, whatever it is'. So the principle here is: where there is need, there is God. Sometimes in the Old Testament this blank cheque is filled in for us. Some examples are the nine compound names of Jehovah. For instance, in Genesis 22 you have 'Jehovah-Jireh', which means 'God will provide'. You remember Abraham went up to the Mount with Isaac to sacrifice him, and he thought he was going to have to kill his only son, and God stopped him, and God provided a ram in the thicket. The Bible says that he called that place 'Jehovah-Jireh', 'God provides', He provided the lamb. The second is 'Jehovah-Nissi', 'The Lord my banner'. You find it in Exodus chapter 17, and as the children of Israel were coming out of Egypt, their first battle and subsequent victory was against the fierce Amalekites. God having given them the victory, Moses built an altar, and he called it 'Jehovah-Nissi', 'The Lord my banner', God defends us in our battles.

A third compound name is 'Jehovah-Shalom', 'The Lord my peace'. We have to go into the book of Judges for this, and the character of Gideon - who, if you know anything about him, was filled with fear, one of the most cowardly characters in the Bible, and yet God came to him and said: 'You mighty man of valour', because God had something He wanted him to do. Gideon was so afraid that he pulled down the idol in his father's backyard in the dead of night, and yet God came to this man, and God gave this man His peace in the midst of crippling fear and anxiety to do His purpose. We read in Judges that Gideon built an altar unto the Lord after defeating the Midianites, and he called it 'Jehovah-Shalom', 'The Lord my peace'.

The fourth is 'Jehovah-Sabaoth', 'The Lord of hosts', and we find this in Isaiah chapter 6, where Isaiah, in the year that King Uzziah died, saw the Lord high and lifted up, His train filling the Temple. The Seraphim and the Cherubim cried: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD God of hosts', 'The Lord God of angels', the Captain of heaven's armies - this is 'Jehovah-Sabaoth'. The fifth is found in Exodus 31 verse 13, 'Jehovah-Mekaddishkem', which simply means 'The Lord your Sanctifier'. There God was instructing the people, through Moses, that the sign of God's covenant with them was the Sabbath rest. He told them: 'If you keep My sign, My sabbath, I will be the LORD who will sanctify you, I will set you apart as a special people'.

The sixth is 'Jehovah-Rohi' - you all know this, whether you realise it or not. In Psalm 23 verse 1: 'The Lord is my Shepherd' - 'Jehovah-Rohi'. The seventh is 'Jehovah-Tsidkenu', we sometimes sing about it in Murray M'Cheyne's great hymn, 'The Lord our Righteousness', we find that in Jeremiah 23. Then there is another in Ezekiel, 'Jehovah-Shammah', which means 'The Lord, He is there', He is present. It speaks of Jerusalem in a day that is yet to be in the future, when the Lord's presence, His Shekinah glory, will again dwell there. It did leave in Ezekiel's day, but it will return again in the future. The ninth is 'Jehovah-Rapha', which is 'The Lord our Healer'. We find in Exodus 15 that, as the children of Israel were travelling through the wilderness, God warned them that if they were obedient to His laws and commands none of the diseases that came upon the Egyptians would come upon them, for the Lord would be their Healer, 'Jehovah-Rapha'.

But do you know what is the supreme compound name of Jehovah in the whole of Scripture? We've got to go to the New Testament, and it is the name 'Je-sus', Jesus. It simply means 'Jesus saves', and it is in effect a contraction of 'Jehovah' and 'sus', simply meaning 'I AM your salvation', and of course it's the same as the Old Testament 'Joshua', 'Yeshua'. The point is this, putting all of this together: if we have laid down a principle as 'God reveals Himself in His name, wherever there is need, there is God', one of these days God, in the whole history of mankind, is going to have to meet the greatest need, He's going to have to deal with our sin. Not only 'Where there is need, there is God', but 'Where there is sin, there is Jesus'. Now this is profound, because need is not always blameworthy - do you understand what I mean when I say that? I mean, if you see a hungry child and it asks, like Oliver, 'Please Sir, can I have more?', you don't blame that child - but sin is blameworthy. Yet the magnificent grace of our God is this: He sees us in our fallen state, and it's our own fault, and He comes to us in His marvellous mercy and provides what we need.

So we have 'Je-sus', 'Jehovah-Saves', and therefore it is no coincidence that when we come into John's Gospel we have the seven 'I ams' of Christ. 'I am the bread of life to feed the hungry soul', 'I am the light of the world to dispel all darkness', 'I am the Good Shepherd to lead My sheep out of one fold into My fold', 'I am the door to lead them out and to lead them in, and to find pasture', 'I am the resurrection and the life, so that where there is death I can bring life here and now', 'I am the way to direct you, not only in life but in eternity, to the Father', 'I am the true vine, so that before you even enter heaven you can have a relationship with Me if you abide in Me, and My

word abide in you'. Seven times 'I am', and then we go to the end of the New Testament - and what do we find there? What's the last book in the Bible? We call it 'Revelation', but it's actually 'The Revelation of Jesus Christ' - and there, right away in chapter 1, we hear Him say: 'I am He that liveth, that liveth and was dead', I am He! 'And behold, I am alive forevermore, and have the keys of Hades and of Death'. There is a little chorus, and I don't think it's sung anywhere as far as I know - it's bound to be sung somewhere, but I have never heard it sung. It was sung years ago, and it goes like this:

'Jesus Christ is made to me  
All I need, all I need'.

Does anybody know it?

'He alone is all my need;  
He is all I need.

Wisdom righteousness and power,  
Holiness this very hour,  
My redemption full and sure,  
He is all I need'.

700 years before Jesus was born Isaiah the prophet prophesied in chapter 9 and verse 6 the uniqueness of Messiah in relation to our need. So there is a dual revelation: something about God is being revealed, but something of our need that can be found in God alone and in His Christ. So we read, and this is what we're looking at tonight: 'A Child is born, and a Son is given'. Now many point out that this is a literary repetition. I don't want to blind you with science - I couldn't do it anyway - but there is in Hebrew writing what is called 'Hebrew parallelisms', and you often find it in the Psalms, where a thing is repeated. If you read the Psalms you'll find this, an idea is repeated but in different language. Sometimes you can read too much into the second part, the repetition, because it often only means what the first was saying. It's a mechanism in Hebrew poetry - but here, though there might be literary repetition when Isaiah says 'a child is born, a son is given', we believe in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; which means that the Holy Spirit is moving this man in his exact wording, to say 'a child is born, a son is given' - and there's a difference here.

What the Holy Spirit is pointing out is: the dual nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, that He would be both God and man. As a child, He would be born; but as the Divine Son, He would be given. You see the difference. I want you to understand, primarily, not the theology of this, but how this great gift, unspeakable, indescribable gift of the Father, how it meets our need - that's what I want you to grasp! A child is born and a Son is given - but let's think about a few hypothetical questions. First of all: could Messiah not have been an angel? Why did a child have to be born and a Son given? Could some great archangel, or cherubim, or seraphim not come - or a new creation of God, angelically speaking, a celestial being come and deliver us? Or, for that matter, could God not just come without clothing Himself in humanity? Well, the



answer is 'No' on both scores - because, in order to meet our need, the Saviour had to be a man to make atonement for us, to bleed and to die for us, to make a sacrifice on the behalf of humankind. Also, and sometimes we often miss this point, He had to be a man in order to be our Great High Priest.

Let me show you this from the book of Hebrews, chapter 2 beginning to read at verse 14, do turn with me to it. Hebrews 2:14: 'Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For indeed He does not give aid to angels', He's not coming to be the Saviour of celestial beings, 'but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted'.

He must be born, in order to be flesh and blood, to die. Only flesh and blood can die, and He had to bleed and die. He had to be flesh and blood to be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, to be our Great High Priest. You see, the ministry of salvation is not over, He's still engaging in it at the right hand of the Father on high for us. He must be born. Then another hypothetical question arises: could He not have come as a fully grown man? Why did He have to be born? I mean, Adam was created with apparent age, we don't know what that age was - but, just like the tree in the Garden of Eden, if you had cut it, I believe you would have seen rings; so Adam was given age, he was a fully grown man. Could the Lord Jesus not have come as such? Well, I suppose He could have, but that would not have met our need. For Jesus to fully identify with humanity, He must pass through the human experience.

The Lord Jesus Christ had to pass through conception, granted it was the conception of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, but it was conception nonetheless, though supernatural. The Creator had to become a foetus. Then the Lord Jesus Christ had to go through what we call 'gestation', the Creator of time, the Originator of time had to wait nine months to be born. He had to then endure birth - now, as a man, I'm not going to even attempt to explain what that is like - but the Creator of the universe, who created the reproductive system, He had to pass through a human birth canal; and be born not into a clean, clinical maternity ward, but into a stable. He then had to pass through babyhood - and the Infinite, the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, the Infinite, well, He becomes an infant of several inches long.

Someone said: 'What a contrast with the Greek gods. They descended to earth fully grown with supernatural powers, but the King of kings and the Lord of lords, the God of gods, He comes as a babe'. What condescension! Is it any wonder Paul said to Timothy: 'Great is the mystery of godliness'? It brings an all-new understanding to that statement in Philippians chapter 2, listen: 'He made Himself of no reputation, but took upon Himself the form of a servant'. There's nothing more helpless or more dependent than a child, yet He became a child - because that's what we needed. Can I tell you something: it's more than just condescension, it's more than just His

humility - that's not the only reason why He became a child - it is as much about appreciation as condescension. What do I mean? I mean simply: He had to understand the human process, He had to know what it was like to pass through childhood. Luke testifies for us: 'The child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him'.

Now don't ask me to try and explain it, or enter into the minutiae of it - I cannot do that! But all I know is: in this great mystery of incarnation, He was a child, and He grew, and He learned. I can't explain how, but I can explain why. Here's the first reason: why did He do it? Why was the Child born? Very simply: for children. I think this is beautiful: to be able to say to little boys and girls, 'The Lord of Glory was a child'. For me to come to my daughter, Lydia, and say: 'Lydia, Jesus knows what it's like to be nine years old', 'Noah, Jesus knows what it's like to be five years old' - and I probably need to put in there 'apart from sin' with him! But isn't that precious? Isn't it? Not only did our Lord - and we often take solace from this - He took the children on His knee and He blessed them, but He was a child!

Not only did He become a child for children, but He became a child for adults who were children. I know that's a long way back for some of you, you maybe can't remember it. Many of us have very happy memories as children, but most in this world - believe it or not - don't. They have scarred childhoods, but isn't it wonderful that to such children we can say: 'You have a Saviour who was a child, who passed through childhood'. So many children in our world are being bullied and abused, maybe you were a bullied child, or abused? I'm encountering in these days a lot of people who have been abused, mentally, emotionally, sexually, physically. Do you know that the Lord Jesus Christ, they said of Him that He was illegitimate? Did you know that they said His mother was loose? Many are growing up today with absent parents, a father or a mother who has deserted them. Effectively the Lord Jesus, through death most likely, the death of His guardian, Joseph, grew up in a one parent family. The Lord Jesus knows what it was like to grow up in such a home. Maybe you have grown up, and you look back on your childhood and you resent the responsibility that you felt was above your years that was foisted upon you. Maybe, for one reason or another, you feel that you've lost your childhood? The Lord Jesus was an elder brother in a home, most likely, with several siblings, with all the stresses in a small home with lots of sinful children around - and He was the breadwinner in the carpenter's shop.

Now, of course, the Lord Jesus was never a parent - but don't you think for one moment that He does not understand the pressures of bringing up children. The Child had to be born for children, for adults, for all of us - not just to be a man, but to be a child. We'll sing it in a couple of weeks:

'For He is our childhood's pattern;  
Day by day, like us, He grew;  
He was little, weak, and helpless,  
Tears and smiles, like us He knew;  
And He feeleth for our sadness,

And He shareth in our gladness'.

Another question relates to not only the Child being born, but the Son given. Hypothetically we might ask: could He not have been a perfect man like Adam, why did He have to be God? But it says here 'a Son is given' - the Child born, that's His humanity; but the Son given is His deity. Now please note, this is important: He wasn't born to become 'Son', He was born to become a Child, a human - but He was given because He already was 'Son'; that's what we call the 'the eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ'. He didn't become the Son of God when He entered into humanity, He was given as the Son of God. There was a time when He wasn't man, but there was never a time when He wasn't the Son. But why did the Son have to be given? Well, we needed a perfect, an infinite being, to offer a perfect and infinitely satisfying atonement on our behalf for our sins - that's why He had to be both God and man. He had to be man to die for men, but He had to be God to make an eternal sacrifice for sins forever that would be perfect to satisfy God the Father.

That's why in chapter 7 He's called Immanuel, verse 14, 'God with us'. This Child born - we just get used to all these things, don't we, at Christmas? 'He came down to earth from heaven' - this Child born was the second Person of the triune Godhead, given by the Father for your need. Think of it! Think of it like this: the Godhead had taken humanity into itself - never before! Not only has the God had taken upon itself humanity, but it will forever own humanity, because Jesus will eternally remain a man. Believer, there is a man on the throne of God in heaven now! If Jesus were not fully man, He could not stand in the place of sinful men, He could not be a substitute for the punishment man deserves - but if He were not fully God His sacrifice would be insufficient. If He were not fully God and fully man, you and I would be lost in our sins - but He is! For a Child was born, and a Son was given.

But there's something else we want to cover tonight, and it's this statement: 'And the government will be upon His shoulder'. Now I have no doubt in my mind that this is referring prophetically to a day that is yet to be, when Christ will reign in His kingdom upon the earth for 1000 years - you can read about it in the book of Revelation - and He will reign over all the earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. There is, of course, further reference to that in verse 7 of chapter 9: 'Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this'. When the Lord Jesus came to earth, though He was the promised Son of David, and He was the King of the Jews and still is the King of the Jews, He did not take up the throne of His father, David, as King. He will do in a day that is yet to be, and we read many wonderful descriptions - some of them in Isaiah's prophecy - about that great day.

But do you know something? Before taking the government of the world upon His shoulder, He would have to take a cross, He would have to die upon it bearing in His body the sins of the world. Before He could wear a diadem of glory, He would have to wear a crown of thorns, He would have to give His life as the sacrifice for this world. This kingly Lion of Judah first had to come as the lowly Lamb of God, for until the debt

of sin had been paid, God's righteous government could not be established.

Now, I would love to take time tonight in thinking what Earth will be like when Jesus reigns. All you have to do is sort of look around you, and read the paper, and watch the news, and think of the exact opposite to infinity of what that is now presently as a reality. But do you know something? I don't think that we have to wait until the future to know the government of Jesus Christ personally. I believe there is a spiritual application to this truth, because we as believers are meant to give the government of our lives over to the Lord now. We're meant to pray: 'His kingdom come, His will be done in our lives on earth, as it is in heaven'. You don't have to wait to the millennium! You know, when you give Jesus the government of your life, everything that is expressed in His names becomes real to you - every name that He bears becomes a blessing that He shares, but you've got to have His government in your life.

Warren Weirsbe describes it like this, and we'll be going through it these weeks, he says: 'When it describes the Lord Jesus as 'Wonderful' here, that deals with the dullness of life. He is Wonderful, no dullness where Jesus is! When it says He is the 'Counsellor', that deals with the decisions of life. You have the Lord, you have His guidance, His eye is upon you. You hear a voice behind you saying: 'This is the way, walk in it. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me'. He is the 'Mighty God', that takes care of the demands of life. He's not just a man, but He's God, and He is able for whatever demands, upon us. 'Everlasting Father', or 'Father of Eternity', that deals with the dimensions of our Saviour. There's nothing going on at this present time in the universe that He is ignorant of' - and that means there's nothing going on in your life, my friend, that He does not know. 'Prince of Peace', that speaks for itself, and takes care of the disturbances of our lives, that are so many, and of this world. When your mind, your body, your will and your heart have given over to the government of Jesus, and He reigns in your life, the government is upon His shoulder. It's beautiful, what a great Saviour we have! What a Great High Priest!

Note please, not only does He know what you're going through because He was flesh and blood, sin apart, because He was man, but because He is God He is able to do something about it! Hallelujah! He doesn't even need to take the weight of the world upon His shoulders, plural, He only needs to use one shoulder, singular! Do you see it? One of the most favourite passages of Scripture I'm sure to many is Matthew chapter 11, you might want to turn to it. Matthew chapter 11, and I want to get very personal with you now with these truths. I highlight my Bible, I have a little colour code, and I highlight all promises in orange. I highlight particularly evangelistic verses, gospel verses, in yellow. You don't have to do it that way, by the way, but that's the way I do it! I have these verses, verses 28, 29, and 30 in orange - they are promises, and they are in brackets in yellow, so that means simply to me that there is a gospel application - but this is primarily a promise to me and every child of God. If you're honest, most of these three verses are preached in the context of evangelism and the gospel, but they are to us: 'Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy

and My burden is light'.

The Lord Jesus is saying to a great crowd. Most of them, I have to say, were being weighed down by religious burdens. The Pharisees were laying extra burdens upon them and, as Jesus said, 'You lay heavy burdens on men, but you will not relieve them with one of your fingers'. They just burdened people, they didn't liberate them - the Lord Jesus came to liberate burdens, to take them away. He said: 'Come to Me with your burden, and I will give you rest'. He also said: 'Take My yoke upon you, and learn of me'. Now the Lord Jesus didn't just know what He was talking about because He's God, but He knew what He was talking about when He spoke about a yoke - because He had made them with His own hands as a carpenter. Many a time he would make easy yolks, do you know what an easy yoke is? A yoke that fits well on the oxen, a yoke that will not rub against them, cause blisters, and chafe, a yoke that is well fitting. This is what the farmer would do: he would yoke an old beast, old ox, with a younger ox, so that the younger could learn from the older. In effect what would happen is: the older ox would take the majority of the weight. What the Lord Jesus was saying was: 'Take My yoke, My yoke will not chafe, My yoke will not be painful. I will take the burden and the load on My shoulder, but you must take My yoke and learn of me'.

Do you know what we do? Many of us as believers, we answer this verse in salvation, and we say: 'Lord, I'm coming to You with my burdens, here they are, and I'll take Your yoke' - but we struggle against the yoke. We wrestle against the yoke, and we cause for ourselves discomfort and pain. Sometimes we don't take Christ's yoke, do you know what often we do? We come and answer the request of the Lord, and we give Him all the burdens that we have had before we were converted, and then somebody comes along and he gives us a whole load more burdens and we take those on. The only burdens we ought to take are the burdens that Christ gives us - that's His yoke, and He takes the weight when we give the government to Him.

The Internet is a wonderful thing, I googled a question: 'How many types of government are there in the world?'. You know there are at least 50 types of manmade governments in our society and in human history, but there's only one that works: the government that is upon His shoulders. One day, I believe soon, this world is going to see it - but do you see it? Is the governing of your life given over to Him? Is there someone here tonight that needs to give the government of their life over to Him? Is it any wonder He is called 'Wonderful'? We'll spend time looking at that next week, but the glory of who He is, the glory of what He has done for us - it ought to fill us with wonder! You see, you cannot really look at Jesus, and really know Him, and not wonder. Listen: you can't spend time, as we read from Malachi 3:16, meditating upon Him and His names, and be bored! Do you see if we're bored - sometimes we're bored in church, I've been bored in church! Sometimes I'm bored when I read my Bible, and sometimes I'm bored when I'm praying - but I'm not seeing Jesus when I'm bored, for you will never see Jesus, truly see Jesus, and not wonder! Your mind, your heart, your soul, and your spirit will be filled with amazement: 'Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called' - say it with me - 'Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting

Father, Prince of Peace'. Amen.

Father, we thank You for the Lord Jesus Christ, Your unspeakable, indescribable gift. Lord, how can we ever attempt to extol Him, or to praise Him as we ought? A thousand tongues would not be able to sing His great praise. Yet, Lord, from these weak, beggarly bodies and souls, we would seek to honour Him, we would seek to express to You - the only way we can - that we love Him, and we appreciate Him, that He was a Child born, but He was Your Son given. Lord, may we freely tonight, all of us, relinquish the government of our lives to Him, that we might know the peace and the rest of His sufficient saving and keeping, as our Saviour and High Priest. O, we bless Your name for the Lord Jesus Christ, we offer up His praise in His name, Amen.

## *The Wonder Of His Name - Chapter 2*

# **"Wonderful Counsellor"**

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by David Legge

**W**ell, thank you Colin, good evening all. It's good to be back again, and it was a delight to renew fellowship with all of you last week, and good to come back each Monday night. I'm looking forward to this evening, and the next two weeks after this night, as we look at 'The Wonder Of His Name'. So we're turning again tonight to Isaiah chapter 9, and our text for this series, verse 6: *"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace"*.

Let's come before the Lord in a word of prayer - and I want you to come, as I've invited you last week, and will do in subsequent weeks, to come to the Lord now and ask Him to speak to you. I believe that is a prayer that God usually answers, and we want to claim again this promise in Malachi 3 and verse 16. So let us pray: Father, we thank You for Your holy word. We thank You for the Holy Spirit who inspired these pages before us tonight. Lord, as we come to You, we come in the mighty name of the Lord Jesus, that name that is above every name. Lord, we ask that through the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit, that we would have something imparted to us in our consciousness of the wonder of His name. Lord, we want to know Jesus more, we want to experience more of an intimacy with Him, we want to grow deeper in our relationship with Him through the revelation that is in these various names. Lord, we saw last week that there is not only something revealed of Your character in these names, but there is something revealed of Your provision for us in Yourself. So, Lord, meet our need tonight, whatever our needs may be, to the glory of the majesty of our Lord Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

If you were with us last Monday night, we looked at 'A Child Born And A Son Given'. Tonight we're looking at the first two designations, some would say it's only one, in this verse: 'Wonderful, Counsellor' - so that's our title tonight, if you want one, 'Wonderful Counsellor'. These designations are not names, per se, in a literal sense, rather they are descriptions of the character and nature of the prophesied Messiah here in Isaiah 9, of course: our Lord Jesus Christ. Men are usually satisfied with only having a name, but the difference in our Lord Jesus Christ is that He always lives up to His name. Tonight we're going to look at the first two designations: 'Wonderful, Counsellor' - some believe it's actually one designation, and I favour this view: that He is 'the Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace'. But we are going to look tonight at these as two designations of our Saviour: 'Wonderful and Counsellor' - because both of them are applicable, aren't they? He is Wonderful, and He is the Wonderful Counsellor.

So let's look at the first: 'Wonderful'. I think I ended last Monday evening by saying that you can never really look at the Lord Jesus Christ, you can never study Him, you can never behold Him or see Him with the eye of faith without considering Him as Wonderful. Or, conversely, you can never look at Him, really see Him, and be bored! The glory of who He is and what He has done for us should fill us with wonder. He will fill your heart and your mind with amazement. Yet I think it is true, as we look around us in our society, that there is a lack of wonder. Even in the Christian church, among believers, there is a loss of wonder in their lives. We need to ask the question: why are we so bored, if our Saviour is the Wonderful?

It was Bertrand Russell, the godless philosopher, who claimed that at least half of the sins of mankind were caused by fear of boredom - I think there's a measure of truth in that. With all the scientific discoveries that we have made by now, the technological feats, all the stimulating experiences and amusements that we can have, most of mankind is in a perpetual state of boredom. We hanker after the latest new toy, gadget, and sensual thrill, but once we have indulged them we toss it away into the corner of our playrooms, and then begin a new pursuit toward meaning and satisfaction. Lives that ought to be unbearably exciting in this 21st-century, are often intolerably boring. Why is that? Well, I believe it is because mankind, still, is blind to the wonder that is in Jesus Christ. Sadly many Christians are no different. I want to ask you tonight: do you see the wonder in Him? Or are you bored? Let's be honest here tonight, because I meet an awful lot of bored Christians! Are you bored with Jesus Christ? Are you bored with your Christianity? Are you bored with church?

I want you to turn with me quickly to - put a marker in there in Isaiah 9 - to Numbers chapter 11. In Numbers chapter 11 we have the account of the children of Israel who have been delivered from Egyptian bondage, and they are now travelling through the wilderness toward the Promised Land, and they have got bored with God's provision. There is great typological teaching here in this chapter, because God has been providing food for His pilgrim people by the gift of manna - which was a strange angelic food that was sent down from God from heaven, bread from heaven. Of course, it represents, in the New Testament, our Lord Jesus Christ - in John chapter 6 He says: 'I am that bread that came down from heaven'. But I want you to see the reaction of God's people here in the wilderness to this special bread, verse 5, they said: 'We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except' - and I want you to hear the disdain, there is an intonation of despising here, look at it: 'there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!'.

They were fed up with the bread of God that came down from heaven! Now it would be a very strong statement to say that Christians are fed up with God's bread that came down from heaven. Perhaps that is too strong, but I don't believe it is too strong to say this: many believers are bored, because they do not see the wonder of Him. In the first epistle of John, John writes about communion with God - just like his gospel in John 17 verse 3, 'This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent'. In 1 John he still talks about this fellowship that we can have with God as our Father through the Lord Jesus, and the



consequential fellowship that we have with one another as brothers and sisters. He talks about how we can enjoy this fellowship and communion with God, but it always intrigues me how he ends this epistle in chapter 5 and verse 21, I'll quote it to you. Here's how he ends it: 'Little children, keep yourselves from idols'. Why does he end it like that? Simply because an idol is a substitute for God, an idol is something that comes between us and our communion with God. We are to have this wonderful fellowship and communion with Him, but, if you like, an idol is something artificial that takes God's place.

I think you'll agree with me that we live in an artificial world in general. Warren Weirsbe says: 'Most people are living on substitutes and don't know it. Stupid, vulgar comedy has replaced true wit and humour. Cheap amusement has replaced wholesome recreation. Propaganda has replaced truth'. He goes on to say: 'When you exist on artificial stimulants, you gradually lose the ability to recognise and enjoy the real. When you live on the false, you can't appreciate the real thing'. I believe in my heart of hearts that few Christians are really seeing Christ's wonder - and because of that, many of us are accepting substitutes, artificial replacements, idols. That explains why there is a lust for more than Christ in the Christian church today - and there's no doubt about it: many are hankering after wonderful experiences, and there are experiences in the Christian life. Some are hankering after wonderful knowledge, and they think that they will satisfy their soul by feeding their brain. Many are seeking wonderful abilities and gifts, or wonderful success in ministry - and it's not that those things in and of themselves are inherently wrong, but many are seeking the wonder of these things at the expense of Christ! It is these things without Jesus, without intimacy with Him, without fellowship, without communion with God!

Sometimes one of the artificial substitutes is busyness. Warren Weirsbe goes on to say: 'We boast about the quantity of our activity, without admitting the lack of quality in our experience'. Could that describe us? We're so busy doing things for God and in God's name, but where is the depth and the quality of the experience? I heard Zac Poonen, quite a famous Indian preacher, recently quote the second president of India who revered Christ but wasn't a Christian himself. This is what he said: 'You Christians make such extraordinary claims, but live such ordinary lives'. In a sense, it is idolatry when we substitute the real for the artificial - and that is what we are doing if we don't see the wonder of our Lord Jesus.

Here's another lesson here concerning idolatry: we become like the God we worship. Did you know that? That's why - well, we'll not refer to any particular religions tonight, but you can pick out the ones that you like, and understand their conception of God and how it has thwarted their humanity. The engendered kindness that is in most people, just from being a man or a woman, it has been robbed from them because of their conception of a cruel, dictatorial, hateful God. But you know, as Christians, we need to be aware that we become like the God we worship - so if we worship something artificial, we ourselves become artificial too. The very senses that ought to wonder in worship at the Lord Jesus Christ, and God the Father as He is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ, those senses become jaded and then eventually paralysed until they are dead.

Now I really want you to understand the process of idolatry and how it can affect us. I think the Psalmist explains this well, if you turn with me to Psalm 115, he speaks about idols made with men's hands, idols of silver and gold. Look at what he says in verse 5 of Psalm 115: 'They have mouths, but they do not speak; eyes they have, but they do not see; they have ears, but they do not hear; noses they have, but they do not smell' - now, look at this statement in verse 8 - 'Those who make them are like them; so is everyone who trusts in them'. Do you see it? If you worship something artificial, even as a Christian, if you come to take wonder from something other and over Jesus Christ, and Christ alone in all His glory and the wonders of His name, the senses that you once found wonder in will become jaded, paralysed, and then dead. You will become like the idol you worship.

This is the effect of not seeing Christ: essentially you become a dead Christian. If you worship your brain, you'll become a boffin, cerebral Christian, purely on the mind level. If you worship experience, you'll become an experiential, overly emotional Christian, bypassing the brain or even all truth. But, you see, if you seek Christ as He truly is - and that can only come through a personal walk with the Lord Himself, an intimacy, a communion, a fellowship; well, you'll see His wonder, and you'll begin to appreciate Him. Here's the greatest miracle of all in Christianity: you will become like Him.

Now, let's delve a little bit deeper: what is this wonder that we're talking about? Well, there is a depth to it that goes beyond mere sensational amusement. We're not likening this to the pleasures of life that give us a buzz, a momentary distraction from the hardships of life - but this is a wonder that brings a depth of meaning with it. This wonder enriches us. This wonder changes us. It is to be overwhelmed with an appreciation of Jesus Christ, like Peter was, when we fall on our faces and say: 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man!'. Do you have an appreciation of the Lord Jesus, like Peter had?

What do we need to appreciate? Well, quickly: we need to appreciate the wonder of His birth. We will be thinking of it a lot in the weeks that lie ahead of us. There are so many wonders, aren't there? The wonder of His conception: of the Holy Spirit in the virgin's womb. The wonder of the circumstances: an unmarried mother, though she was betrothed; no room for them in the inn; and being born in a stable. The wonder of the wise men, the Magi, coming and worshipping Him. The wonder of the shepherds, you remember the shepherds spread the news - and we see the wonder of the reaction of the people to the birth of the Lord Jesus. In Luke chapter 2 we read: 'All those who heard it marvelled at those things which were told them by the shepherds'. There was wonder at the birth of the King of Israel!

Then there is the wonder of His life. Where do we even begin? Where do we end? Well, one place we could begin is the first miracle that He performed, that sign in Cana of Galilee at the marriage feast when He turned the water into wine. Effectively what He did was, He turned the ordinary into the extraordinary. What wonder in all of His miracles! He touched blind eyes and made them see, deaf ears and made them

hear, dumb tongues and made them talk. He touched atrophied arms, and the gathering, the congregation in Israel in the synagogue, saw that withered hand grow before their eyes. He walked on water. He fed 5000, and more, women and children besides, with five loaves and two fish. He even raised the dead! Everything Jesus touched, He made wonderful.

Not only were His works wonderful, but His words. We could talk about the Sermon on the Mount - never surpassed. Other philosophies and religions have pinched many of the principles, but none of them have been able to better them. They wondered at His words. We read in Luke chapter 4 and verse 22: 'All bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, 'Is this not Joseph's son?'. They couldn't get over the authority wherewith He spoke! You see, what the rabbis would do was, they would appeal to ancient authorities of respected rabbis in Judaism - but the Lord Jesus didn't quote other rabbis, He spoke with divine authority! His words were infused with power, and in fact, He said Himself, with life! These were not just points of discussion! He said in John chapter 6: 'It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life'.

That, of course, was the case, wasn't it? When, on the night and which He was betrayed, He took bread, and He brake it, and He said: 'This is My body'. He took wine, and He poured it out, and He said: 'This is My blood that I will shed for you, the blood of the New Covenant. Take and drink it'. He took ordinary bread and ordinary wine, and He endows them with sacred significance that never before was known by mankind. He goes to a cross - and I don't want to be, in any shape or form, sounding crude; but do you know what the cross was? It was the equivalent to a hangman's noose or an electric chair. Yet He turned that contemporary mode of execution into the greatest symbol of God's love that humankind has ever known. Everything He touched, He made it wonderful.

Of course, that brings us to His cross: the wonder of His life led to the wonder of the cross, because He was born to die. We saw that last week, a child had to be born not only to experience what it is to live as a human being in this world, apart from sin of course, but He had to bleed and die - as children are partakers of flesh and blood, He likewise partook of the same, so that He may die and defeat him who had the power over death, even the devil. He was born to die, and He was willing to die, and He did die. I came across a song recently by Vicky Beeching, it's called 'The Wonder Of The Cross' - it goes like this:

'O precious sight, my Saviour stands  
Dying for me with outstretched hands.  
O precious sight, I love to gaze  
Remembering salvation's day.

Though my eyes linger on this scene,  
May passing time and years not steal  
The power with which it impacts me,

The freshness of its mystery'.

The chorus goes like this:

'May I never lose the wonder,  
The wonder of the cross.  
May I see it like the first time,  
Standing as a sinner lost,  
Undone by mercy and left speechless,  
Watching wide-eyed at the cost:  
May I never lose the wonder,  
The wonder of the cross'.

Now let's be honest: we do lose the wonder of the cross, don't we? Whether it's when we sit around the Table and remember Him, or whether it's in the Gospel, or whether it's in the songs we sing, or the reading of the word of God in our daily experience - we come across the cross, we've heard about it so much, we've meditated on it so much before, and it loses the wonder!

Then, of course, there's the wonder of His resurrection - where do we even begin? The greatest miracle of all time and eternity: that Christ comes forth, the Author of a new creation, never to die again - offering eternal life to those who believe in Him. Not just a spiritual resurrection, but a bodily, physical resurrection - and then He goes, 40 days later, to His Ascension, and a Human Being enters heaven and is enthroned on the Throne of God in heaven! He becomes our Great High Priest, and intercedes for us. Do you see the wonder of it?

You see the dullness, if there is dullness in our lives, is not caused by the circumstances outside us, but by the spiritual condition inside us: when we no longer see the wonder of Jesus, as believers when we substitute the wonder of Him with idols, whatever those idols might be. I have to say to you that those idols can be spiritual habits, those idols can be doctrines that are devoid of the presence and communion and fellowship of Christ. Is there someone here tonight, and you want to know more of Jesus Christ? We all should, shouldn't we? It would be very naive for us to take for granted that we all do. Are there any here who want to see more of the wonder of Jesus, who want that experience of Ephesians chapter 1, that the eyes of our understanding should be opened and - as Paul said in Ephesians - that we should be filled with all the fullness of God? Do you want it? Well, ask God for it! Ask God for the Holy Spirit to show you the wonder of Jesus, because that's the Holy Spirit's job - not to focus on Himself, but to shine the spotlight on the One whom God is fully delighted with, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said it in John chapter 15: when the Helper, the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, the Encourager, the Strengtheners comes, 'whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me'.

Ask God the Father for the Holy Spirit to show you the wonder of Him. Now, do that, will you? Don't run out now to the Faith Mission Bookshop, and buy a book about Him,

and think that by reading that book you're going to see the wonder of Him. I'm not saying it's wrong to read books about Christ, I'm reading books about Christ at the minute - but don't substitute books, or mental knowledge, for an experiential intimacy and a spiritual revelation in your soul of the wonder of Jesus Christ that is displayed in His marvellous names. Don't feed your mind, though it's not wrong to feed your mind, that's not what we're talking about. We're speaking of the wonder that only the Holy Spirit can give: a deep appreciation of Jesus Christ in His glory - do you have it? He is Wonderful! Do you see Him as Wonderful? Or are you bored?

But He's not just Wonderful, He is Wonderful Counsellor. I think that's probably the designation here: 'Wonderful Counsellor'. Now there are many ways that we could talk about how He is a Counsellor. For instance, He sits on the High Council of the Godhead: the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit have been in counsel for all eternity. They are counselling together for our good, they have counselled together concerning our salvation; and it was their counsel that issued forth the plan of God to save us. You know that, don't you? How they cooperated together, how the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world; and how the Son said: 'Though I go to do Your will, O God', 'As it is written in the volume of the book, 'I go to do Your will''. He willingly came and, for the first time ever - we saw it last week - the Godhead took into itself humanity, flesh, and Jesus came in the flesh, bled and died on the cross, bore in His body our sins on the tree, was buried, on the third day rose again, ascended onto heaven, and sent the Holy Spirit who now appropriates that great plan of salvation. The Godhead, in counsel, devised all of this: that the Father should send, that the Son should come, and that the Spirit should implement all of it - bringing conviction of sin upon sinners: 'He shall convince of sin, righteousness and judgement', and He shall testify to the minds and hearts of unbelieving men the wonder of Jesus Christ as Saviour! Is it any wonder He's called 'Wonderful Counsellor'?

The counsel of the Godhead in the past over our salvation, He also counsels for our good. We're very familiar with that verse: 'All things work together for good to them that love God' - and we do believe, though with the naked eye we often can't see sense in what's going on in our lives, we have to believe that God is sovereign and that God is in control. Though tonight, whatever you're going through, your life might seem as you look back with hindsight like a zigzag path, and you haven't understood where God has been bringing you from and where you're going to - but as God looks down tonight upon your history, God sees it as a dead straight line. He knows what He's doing. He's counselling for your good, for His glory.

But that's not what I want to really get at tonight when we think of the Lord as 'Wonderful Counsellor'. I want us to consider His counsel to us. Now a counsellor is a profession that we're all very familiar with in our modern age, because so many people are seeking guidance in their life, or help with just the burdens and the loads that they shoulder. Where people turn to when they need help tells us a great deal about them. One will turn to the bar, or a bottle, and drown their problem - inebriate themselves or turn to drugs to try and bury hurtful memories. Others will run to a medium, or a clairvoyant, or a fortune-teller, to try and make sense of what's going

on in their life. Some will just look at the daily newspaper horoscope and see if there is another power that can direct them, or tell them what's going to turn out of this life that seems to be pointless that they're living. Others go the medical route to therapy, they have a psychiatrist, a shrink. Others get good advice - maybe you have a good, trusted friend, a confidant. Some go to the doctor, Christians often go to the pastor - but the point of this title here, 'Wonderful Counsellor', is, listen: Jesus is the One who is fit to guide our lives, and He is the One who should be our first port of call, the Wonderful Counsellor.

Is He? When your back is against the wall, when you have a problem, when there is a dilemma, when there is a crisis - what's the first thing, often, we do after the panic? Maybe we lift the phone, call a member of the family - but we ought to really come to the Lord, and seek the Lord, because the counsel that He offers is second to none. Now counsel is offered to us on every hand these days. The world will always offer its counsel, and that's epitomised in popular culture and advertising that clamours for our attention, and seeks to condition us with the philosophy of the age. It's very easy to take on the worldview, and the advice that the television, daytime TV, and the modern-day gurus like Oprah, and whoever else there is, what they're saying about how to cope, how to get through life. If there is the world, there is the flesh, our own flesh or the flesh of others, that counsels us toward selfishness, comfort, ease, the indulgence of every appetite and passion without any restraint. Our flesh will always tell us: 'You ought to do this', 'You ought to do that', and the flesh in others will advise us readily - but the word of God says in Jeremiah 17: 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?'. You can't trust it!

Not only is the heart unstable, but the mind is limited. No matter how brilliant you are intellectually, God's word is clear in Isaiah 55: 'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways', says the LORD'. Do you know what that means? We don't have what it takes to live our lives. We can't go it alone. No matter what counsel we receive from the world, from our flesh, from the intellects of others, it's not enough! Jeremiah knew this, in Jeremiah 10 he says: 'O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps'. If the world gives its advice, and the flesh in us and in others, you can be absolutely sure that Satan and his demons give their advice as well. You can always rely on him to be there when we least need him, and of course he has been the ruin of humanity, and he is still being listened to! Do you know what I find as I move around churches and meet Christians? In a general sense Christians will believe the devil's lies, before they will believe God's word! You say: 'That's shocking!' - well, it's true! That's the reason why so many believers are wrecked with anxiety, and fear, and debilitating, paralysing care - because they're listening to the lies that the devil is telling them, rather than the truth of what God's word says. The truth of God sets us free, that's what Jesus said.

Satan deceived Eve in the Garden, that she would be as God, and she believed him. It brought sin upon humanity, and death into the world, and consequential suffering and pain, and the mess that we all find ourselves in - and Satan's objective, still, is to blind unbelievers. If you're not a Christian here tonight, you've got to understand this:

Satan has an objective, an agenda for you. He wants to blind the minds of those who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine into you, and you should believe. In short, he doesn't want you to see the wonder of Christ, and he will do everything in his power to prevent you.

He also seeks to deceive Christians. I haven't got time to look at, but we could look at 2 Corinthians 11 where Paul says: 'I fear for you, Corinthians, that, just as Eve was beguiled by the serpent in the Garden, you should be deceived from the simplicity of devotion that is in Christ'. Sometimes I wonder do half the believers actually know the devil exists! Yet he is a very real foe who seeks to destroy us, and he will give us all sorts of counsel if we will heed it, if we will obey it - but we have the Wonderful Counsellor! You don't need the world, you don't need to listen to the flesh, and you certainly shouldn't be heeding the devil!

Do you understand that this is a privilege of the New Covenant, the Lord Jesus as the Wonderful Counsellor? In Hebrews chapter 8 and verse 11, listen, the author to the Hebrews, he quotes Jeremiah 31 where there is enshrined the New Covenant blessing that was made to the Jews, but that we become partakers of by grace as the sons and daughters of Abraham by faith. This is one of the promises in the New Covenant: 'None of them shall teach his neighbour, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD', for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them'. Do you know what that means? There is a personal intimacy and fellowship of communion with the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Covenant - as believers, that's what we have: Him as a Wonderful personal Counsellor.

So, how does it work? How does He counsel us? Well, of course, He counsels us through the word of God. Primarily that is the supreme way that God speaks to us. We read in Psalm 119, listen: 'Your testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors' - God's word! He goes on to say: 'You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; For they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts' - through the word of God we have the Wonderful Counsellor of the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, we get counsel when we come to hear the preaching of the word of God. How many times in your life - maybe that's how you were converted - God spoke very definitely to you, and arrested your spirit through the preaching of the Gospel in the power and demonstration of the Holy Ghost. Of course, in our daily life, as we read our Bibles day by day - as is a good habit to be in - often there is a personal application of Scripture to us. The way we often describe it is that the word of God seems to jump out from the page and hit us, and speak to us right in the midst of some circumstance that we're going through. God's word can have an application in so many ways, even when we're not reading the word of God; because we have read it and put the input, the Holy Spirit can bring the output. Whenever we need a verse or a word from God, He can remind us of things that we've learned and we have read in the past.

Through the word of God we have God's counsel, and we can so often avoid so many common pitfalls by heeding the word - but the word of God is not the only way that

God speaks to us and counsels us. He can counsel us through our circumstances, through providence, through how He leads us. There is supernatural guidance from God, and the Bible does speak of things like visions and dreams, and God actually speaking in audible voices. It's a very rare thing - what is more common today than God speaking with an audible voice is the Holy Spirit speaking within. I believe one of the reasons why it's more common for God's people is because we, now, are the Temple of the Holy Spirit, and God resides and dwells within us - so we ought to expect to hear an inner voice from God. Is that not what the Lord Jesus promised in the New Covenant? John chapter 10 in verse 27: 'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me'.

It has been called 'the still, small voice', attributed to 1 Kings 19 where Elijah, fleeing from Jezebel, is depressed - and God comes to him and reveals Himself to him, but He doesn't reveal Himself in the earthquake, or the wind, or in the fire, but in a still, small voice. Wiseman translates that: 'The voice of a gentle whisper'. Do you receive the counsel of the Lord Jesus Christ through the witness of the Spirit? That's how He becomes, along with Scripture and these other things that I've mentioned, this is one of the main ways in the New Covenant that we can know this counsel of Jesus Christ: through the witness of the Spirit with our spirit. Some people have called it a sort of internal intuition, a knowing of the will of God, an impulse that comes to us that something is right or something is wrong, a nudge, or an impression that comes to us - a check on our spirits that tells us: 'Beware, that's going to harm you!', or 'That's the wrong road to take'. It might come in a word, it might come in a thought, it might come in a feeling - but listen: Jesus can help you with your problems, Jesus can help you with your decisions. The Wonderful Counsellor is there for you! If, as we said last week, you put the government of your life upon His shoulder, He will make this real to you, and He will guide you!

Believer, do you know what the witness of the Holy Spirit is internally? In the Old Testament we have, I think, a wonderful illustration of this, where God sometimes spoke through the High Priest using two stones that were called 'Urim and Thummim'. I believe it corresponds to the New Testament witness of the Spirit. These two stones were contained in a pouch which was placed behind the breastplate of the High Priest, which was close to his heart. When there was a need for divine guidance or a decision on behalf of the people, the Priest, this is what he would do: he would look behind his breastplate, and he would peek into the pouch behind the breastplate to see if the Urim glowed. If the glow was present, he knew that the Lord was speaking and saying 'Yes'. You might say that the glow was 'an inner burning'. If there was no glow, then he knew that God was speaking not to take action.

Now don't misunderstand this Urim and Thummim, or the witness of the Spirit - it is not an automatic mechanism that you can switch on and switch off at will. Saul found this out to his detriment, for in 1 Samuel 28 you remember the Philistines were coming against the King, and he didn't know what to do. He enquired of the Lord, and the Lord did not answer him 'either by dreams, or by Urim, or by the prophets'. Then, do you know what his next port of call was? He said to his servants: 'Find me a woman who is a medium', and he went down to the witch of Endor. The reason why



that inner burning witness did not work for Saul was: he was not walking in covenant with God. Do you know what 'covenant' means? It just means 'agreement' - Amos chapter 3 verse 3: 'Can two walk together except they be agreed?'. If you're wanting guidance and wisdom from God, you can't switch it on and off, you've got to be seeing and appreciating the wonder of Christ.

Warren Weirsbe said: 'God doesn't give His counsel to the curious or the careless, He reveals His will to the concerned and the consecrated'. What Christian doesn't want to know God's will? There are things in Scripture that you cannot find guidance for, in the sense that it's not going to turn up one day and say: 'Marry Rodney', or 'Bertha', or 'Move three blocks down the road'. We want to know these things, don't we? But here's the crux of the matter: God reveals His will for the purpose of obedience. One of the greatest lessons I've ever learned in my Christian life is that obedience is the instrument of revelation. If you want to know the will of God in your life, what to be and where to go, you need to be obedient in what God is already showing you. Here's the crux of the matter: guidance is based on a relationship with the Guide, the Wonderful Counsellor. By the way, that sums up the whole of what the Christian life is: it is relationship with God! Some of us treat God like a Satnav, we really do. We want God to say 'Left here, and right here, and go round the roundabout and up the road, 300 yards on your right will be the decision you need to make, or the place you need be, or the career that you need to follow'. Like Saul, we try and switch it on and switch it off - but we're not pursuing a relationship with Jesus Christ! That's why many don't have guidance, because they want all the answers to their questions but they're not prepared to pursue the Guide - and you can't have a relationship with a GPS, sure you can't?

God is more interested in who you are in relationship with Him, than what you become or where you become it. Guidance is based on relationship, seeing and appreciating the wonder of Christ. Do you know what it involves? Daily repentance, daily surrender, daily dependence, daily faith - it's manifest in a humble, prayerful dependence upon God. That's why James exhorts us in James 1:5 'If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him'.

We have the Wonderful Counsellor, do you know that? Sometimes I hear people say: 'Who would you go to for godly counsel these days?', or 'I have a serious spiritual problem, but I don't know who to turn to'. Now, don't misunderstand me, it's good to have godly counsellors and we should always seek out help if we really are in need, and we also need not neglect this fact: that often the Lord ministers to us in His counsel, His wonder, His grace and love, through the body of Christ when we are His arms, and we are His feet - but that's getting increasingly scarce today.

If you're needing help, you already have - if you're a Christian - One who is competent to counsel you. He's qualified because He's the all-knowing God in human flesh. You have One compassionate to counsel you. You know, you can have a doctor who might know your condition and treatment that has to come, but he has no bedside manner - and there are plenty like that, aren't there? He doesn't love you.

But not only does Jesus know and understand because He was flesh and blood, but Jesus loves you. You have a competent, compassionate - wait for this one - confidential Counsellor. He'll not put it on the front of the Belfast Telegraph, what you tell to Him. Competent, compassionate, confidential and continuous - 24 hours, seven days a week, you have the Wonderful Counsellor in your heart. That's why John said in 1 John 2 and verse 20: 'You have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things'. He is Wonderful, isn't He? Wonderful counsellor - next week, God willing, we'll look at 'Mighty God', and perhaps 'Everlasting Father'; then eventually in the last week, 'Prince Of Peace'.

Lord Jesus, You are Wonderful, and we worship at Your nail-pierced feet. O God, we are unworthy of Your love, but we thank You that You have lavished it upon us in grace. Let us not be lost to the wonder of Your majesty, and Your greatness. Lord Jesus, open the eyes of our heart to see Your wonder, for Your glorious name's sake we pray. And for those who need Your counsel tonight, Lord Jesus, may they receive wonderful counsel from the Mighty God. Amen.

## *The Wonder Of His Name - Chapter 3*

# **"Mighty God, Everlasting Father"**

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**T**hank you Paul, good evening all. It's good to be back with you in the Iron Hall tonight - and, as Paul has announced, we're turning in our Bibles to Isaiah chapter 9, and we'll read this verse together, verse 6. I dare say that if you didn't know it off by heart before the series started, you will know it by now - but that's a good thing, isn't it? Isaiah 9 verse 6. As Paul has said, I have entitled this series 'The Wonder Of His Name', and what we have just been doing is breaking up this little verse into the various names that are prophesied concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Already we have looked at 'A Child Born And A Son Given', and the government would be upon His shoulders - two weeks ago we studied that. Last week, if you were here, we looked at the designations of our Lord as 'Wonderful and Counsellor', and really I think those two things are meant to be put together: He is the Wonderful Counsellor. Tonight we're looking at the Lord as the 'Mighty God and Everlasting Father'. God willing, next week we will look at Him as the 'Prince Of Peace'.

So let's read it together, verse 6 of Isaiah 9: *"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace".*

Let us pray together, I've invited you each week to pray with me, and to invite the Lord to come and minister to you. I want you to do that for me, I want you to ask the Lord to speak to your heart tonight. I hope that you've come anticipating, expecting to hear from God - but it's important that we come in that attitude of humility and dependence upon God, and ask Him to speak to our hearts. So let us all pray together: Father, we thank You for Your holy word. We thank You for how this book reveals to us Your heart. Lord, we know that the plotline and the point of this whole Scripture is to set forth Your Son, the Lord Jesus, for our need as Saviour. Lord, we want to meditate upon Him. There are so many things we could talk about tonight going on in our world, things that are happening in our land, in our own individual lives, in our families - but, Lord, we want to just for a moment press the 'Pause' button on those things that so often take up our concentration and the focus of our emotions, and we want, Lord, tonight, to just be still and to behold Jesus. Lord, we believe that is Your desire, for You rent the heavens and said: 'This is my Beloved Son, in Whom is all My delight, hear Him'. Lord, we would behold the Lamb of God tonight. We ask for the Holy Spirit to come and reveal to us this truth, that He is the Mighty God; to reveal to us this truth, that He is the Everlasting Father - and, Lord, that we'll not walk out of this place tonight with heads that are bigger, filled with a wee bit more knowledge, but with hearts that are bursting with a greater capacity and appreciation of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. We thank You for what You have

been doing these weeks, for people whose eyes have been opened to the wonder of the Lord Jesus. We pray it would please You even tonight to open our eyes further, and open our hearts wider to receive more of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, Amen.

I'm sure most of you have heard of Martin Luther, the reformer. In one of the great biographies about him, Jean Henri Merle d'Aubigne writes that Luther was seeking to know God more. He records that, and I'm quoting him now, the biographer: 'He would have wished to penetrate into the secret counsels of God, to have wished to unveil His mysteries, to see the invisible, and to comprehend the incomprehensible'. Jean Staupitz was Luther's confessor, he was the man who encouraged Luther to study Paul's Epistle to the Romans and to the Galatians, which of course birthed, as it were, the whole Reformation in Europe. But it was Staupitz who told Luther not to presume to fathom the hidden God, but to confine himself to what God had manifested to us in Jesus Christ. He said to Luther: 'In Him', in Christ, 'God has said 'You will find what I am and what I require. Nowhere else - neither in heaven, nor in the earth - will you discover it''. How true that is. Roy Hession, who relates that story in his little book 'We Would See Jesus', comments thus: 'How good of God to simplify our quest like this. We need not be philosophers or theologians, nor scholars. We need not, nay, we should not pry any farther. All we need to know of the Father has been revealed in the Lord Jesus with such simplicity that a child can understand - perhaps with such simplicity that, unless we become as little children, we will not understand; for so often it is our intellect that gets in the way'. This is what he goes on to say, now listen, this is so important: 'To see Jesus is to apprehend Him as the supply of our present needs, and believingly lay hold on Him as such. The Lord Jesus is always seen through the eye of need. He is presented to us in the scriptures not for our academic contemplation and delight, but for our desperate need as sinners and weaklings'.

That's what we've seen these weeks, isn't it? On week one we saw that there is great revelation in the names of God right throughout Scripture. You remember we looked at the name 'I AM', the name 'Jehovah', the compound names of Jehovah, nine of them - and then, of course, the tenth one in the New Testament, 'Jesus', 'Je-sus', a contraction of 'Jehovah saves', that's what it means. We saw that there is a principle in a revelation of God's names: one, that He reveals something about Himself, His character and nature; but two, that in revealing Himself, He reveals something that He provides for us. Every name that He bears is a blessing that He shares - and if His name often revealed told us the story that where there is need there is God, when Jesus came God was declaring that where there was sin there was Jesus. How He is infinitely able to meet our needs is revealed in these names. A child must be born, He must take upon Himself human flesh, not only to bleed and to die as the sin-bearer, but to take our place in humanity and understand what it is to be one of mankind, apart from sin of course. Therefore to be our Great High Priest, touched with the feelings of our infirmities, because He was tested like we are because He was a man. But a man was not good enough to die for our sins, a child must be born and a Son must be given. We saw that He had to be God of God to make a sufficient and satisfactory atonement for our sins that would be eternal.

Last week we looked at how He is Wonderful, and that is a designation of God Himself, and we can't even touch on the wonder of our Lord Jesus! But He's also the Wonderful Counsellor, and we saw how He counselled in the Godhead in the past to bring our salvation to bear - how He counsels with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to bring our lives to fruition in the purpose and goal that He desires of us in His will; and how He counsels us every day, not just through the word of God and our conscience and circumstances, but by the still small voice: 'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me'.

Tonight we're going to see how He meets our need in these two designations: 'The Mighty God, and The Everlasting Father'. Seven hundred years before Jesus is born Isaiah prophesies that He would be described as 'The Mighty God' - that means 'the God of all creation', 'the God of glory', 'the God who reigns on the throne, sovereign in heaven', 'the One who alone is worthy of our worship and adoration'. This is what this name means, 'Mighty God', that He is deity! Now, of course, a couple of chapters back, chapter 7 and verse 14, this also witnesses to the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ: 'Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel', of course which means 'God With Us'. Of course, in the nativity story, Matthew chapter 1 and verse 23, we see this brought to fulfilment: the Lord Jesus called 'Immanuel'.

But there could not be a more explicit declaration of deity in our Lord Jesus Christ than this name 'Mighty God'. Yet there are so many groups, so many sects, schisms, who do not believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is God Almighty. The Jehovah's Witnesses, for instance, make the distinction between 'Mighty God' and 'Almighty God'. They say that 'Mighty God' isn't quite there the way 'Almighty God' is - but biblically there is no such distinction. In fact, both titles, 'Mighty God' and 'Almighty God', are used of both Jesus and of Jehovah, Yahweh. In fact, in Revelation chapter 1 verse 8 in the New Testament, 'Almighty' is used of our Lord Jesus. We read: 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End', says the Lord, 'who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty'. Indeed, Isaiah himself, if you turn to the next chapter, chapter 10 and verse 21, uses this term 'Mighty God' of Jehovah - it's being used of the Divine. Verse 21 of chapter 10: 'The remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, To the Mighty God', there it is! So this is a divine title, it is a statement of absolute deity: Jesus Christ is God! The Mighty God!

Now of course Jesus claimed to be God Himself. Turn with me for a moment to John chapter 10, John 10 verses 30 and 31 - you might want to take notes if you have a pen and paper, or get the recording afterwards, because I'll be going through quite a few texts of Scripture here, and if you're going to try to remember them - well, you might be better noting them down. Jesus says: 'I and My Father are one'. That does not mean 'one person', it does mean 'one in purpose', and it does allude to their oneness and unity in the Godhead. But look at verse 31, the Jews perfectly understood what the Saviour was alluding to: 'Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him'. They saw Him in this statement as attributing divinity to Himself. Near the end of His ministry, if you turn to chapter 12 of John verse 44, Jesus says, crying out: 'He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. And he who sees

Me sees Him who sent Me' - there it is! It's tantamount to the Lord Jesus saying: 'Look! Look at Me, and you're looking at God!'.

Of course, to Philip's request, chapter 14, turn to it, Philip in verse 8 asks the Lord Jesus - and you can almost sense, maybe I'm wrong here, but you can sense a tone of frustration here with Philip - he's saying: 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us'. 'Lord, just show us God, and we will be satisfied!'. Jesus said to him: 'Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?'. That does not mean Jesus was the Father, what it means is: Jesus came to reveal the Father in His divine person. Jesus, it is clear, claimed to be God Himself. Anyone who denies that is not being honest or reputable with the Holy Scriptures.

Not only did Jesus Himself claim to be God, but those who knew the Lord Jesus claimed Him to be God - they attested to the fact that He was divine. You only have to go right back to the very beginning of John's Gospel, chapter 1 verse 1: 'In the beginning was the Word', a designation of Jesus Christ, 'and the Word was with God', so He's a distinct person, but 'the Word was God', He is divine in being and essence and substance. It's very clear. When we go to the end of John's Gospel, chapter 20, another attestation to His deity comes from Doubting Thomas, as we have come to know him. You know that the Lord Jesus says to Thomas: 'Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing'. And Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!'.

John attests to it, so does Thomas, and he was a doubter. Of course, the great apostle Paul, who was Saul of Tarsus, after his dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus - he called Him 'Lord' there - but right throughout his whole writings in the New Testament he continually attests to the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let me quote you a couple without looking it up, Romans chapter 9 and verse 5, Paul says: 'According to the flesh, Christ came', there is His humanity, 'who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen', there is His deity. In the flesh He is Christ who came, Messiah, but He is God over all, eternally blessed forever. Again in Titus 2 Paul witnesses to the Lord's deity, he says: 'Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ' - Titus 2:13. The apostle John is no exception. In 1 John chapter 5 verse 20, we read there: 'And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life'.

The Lord Jesus Himself claimed to be God. Those who knew Him, and were with Him, and experienced His divine, mighty power as 'Mighty God', attest to the fact that He is God of very God. Then God Himself calls Jesus God. If you turn to Hebrews 1 - and, incidentally, if you're ever on the doorstep, and in the frame of mind to talk to the Jehovah's Witnesses, or the Mormons, or anyone else who is denying the deity of our Lord Jesus, a good way of remembering texts that are helpful is: first chapters. John chapter 1, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word

was God'; Revelation chapter 1 we've already quoted, where Jesus calls Himself 'the Almighty'; and here is Hebrews chapter 1, where there are many indications of the Lord Jesus as divine. Here we see in verse 8 of chapter 1, God Himself calls the Lord Jesus, His Son, God: 'But to the Son He', that is, God, 'says: 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever''. Now listen: the Jehovah's Witnesses will tell you that it's the New World Translation of the Bible that you need. Some will blind you with linguistics and tell you that you need to be a Greek expert to delve into these deep matters - I'll tell you: you don't! The Bible very clearly, both Old and New Testament, declares that Jesus is God.

He also receives worship as God, look at verse 6 of Hebrews 1 - the Father requests worship of Him: 'But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: 'Let all the angels of God worship Him''. Now you know your Commandments, I'm sure, that you're to worship none but the living and the true God. So how could the Father be asking people to worship His Son if He is not divine? John Calvin says: 'And indeed, if Christ had not been God, it would have been unlawful to glory in Him - for it is written, 'Cursed be he that trusteth in man'' - but, you see, He's not mere man, He's the God-Man.

We can add to the fact that Jesus claimed to be God, and those who knew Him attested Him to be God, God Himself calls Him God, and He receives worship as God - we can add to those that He claimed to do things that only God could do. There's a couple of examples of this that I will allude to, we don't need to read them for the sake of time tonight. In Luke chapter 7 we have a woman who anoints the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, she called 'a sinner woman', which is a sort of a nod and a wink to the lifestyle that she led - but the Lord Jesus has mercy and grace upon this woman, because of the devotion that was in her heart. He recognised what the Pharisees around could not see - they thought Jesus was blind to it: 'If He knew who this woman was, He wouldn't let her touch Him'. But, you see, Jesus not only knew who she was, He knew what was in her heart. Jesus said to her: 'Your sins are forgiven', and you can almost hear in the space in the verse the inhale, the gasp. The Pharisees and the Scribes, those who sat at the table with Him, began to say to themselves: 'Who is this who even forgives sins?'. Now these guys were not wrong, they were right. They knew that the only one who could forgive sins was God - but what they had fallen at, and what was their offence, was that He Himself was taking upon Him the authority to wipe this woman's sins away. He was claiming to do what God alone can do.

He did the same in Mark chapter 1, you remember the paralysed man whose four friends had broke the roof through, and let him down into the midst of that crowded little house to meet Jesus? You remember the Lord Jesus forgave him of his sins, and the Pharisees and the Scribes they cried, again this gasp: 'Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?'. Men might not understand what Jesus was claiming to do, but the Jews of His day understood completely: that He was claiming to be divine.

Now the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ is foundational and fundamental to the

Christian faith, it is not an optional extra. It is not enough to believe in God and to think of Jesus as 'only a good man'. Further, those who actually deny the deity of our Lord Jesus effectively accuse us of idolatry, because that means we are worshipping a mere man who is not God - and that is the most serious sin against God, to worship another! The truth of the matter is that those who believe that Jesus is not God are guilty of the unpardonable sin - do you know what the unpardonable sin is? We'll not go into the depths of this tonight, but essentially the unpardonable sin was to reject the Holy Spirit's witness of God's Son. That's what the Scribes and the Pharisees did! We read in John 3:36: 'He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him'. You see, this is a spiritual matter of life and death: what you think about Jesus.

C.H. Spurgeon, the great preacher, said: 'If Christ were not the Son of God, His death, so far from being a satisfaction for sin' - listen to this - 'was a death most richly and righteously deserved'! He goes on to say: 'The Sanhedrin before which Jesus was tried was the recognised legislator of the country. He was brought before that Sanhedrin charged with blasphemy, and it was upon that charge that they condemned Him to die - because He made Himself the Son of God. If He wasn't the Son of God, He died justly under that sentence' - but He was, for even before He was born, Isaiah says: 'He will be called the Mighty God'.

Now I've been labouring this point, that in every name of God there is both a revelation of His character and there is a revelation to you of His provision. So what is the provision of God in this wonderful name 'Mighty God'? Warren Weirsbe says: 'The history of mankind has been the story of the discovery of power and the application of power. First it was manpower, then horsepower, then steam power and electric power, and now atomic power. Each step on the power path has enriched mankind both materially and financially, but it's doubtful that we are richer spiritually'. This is what he goes on to say: 'We are able to harness today the powers of the universe, but we can't control ourselves or keep selfish people from destroying the world and its people. The basic power needed today is spiritual power, and the source of that power is Jesus Christ'. As Almighty God, Jesus takes for us the demands of life. He is able, for He is Almighty.

Can I ask you tonight, very personally: what are the burdens that you have come into this meeting under? There were a couple of people carrying big Christmas parcels on the way in tonight, and I said jovially to one of them: 'You're under many burdens there!' - but sometimes we come in with heavier burdens, but they're invisible. You're not displaying them, other people are not seeing them, but you feel the weight of them upon your shoulders. You smile, and you say 'How are you doing?', and the other person says 'I'm doing fine!', and they say to you, 'And how are you doing?', and you say 'Well, I'm doing fine!' - and you've told a couple of lies before you've even enter the sanctuary. You know what I'm talking about tonight: the demands of life can weigh so heavy upon us, and there is power in our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, for the demands of life.

Let me show you His power here to demonstrate it for you. Take His power as the



Creator of the universe, turn with me to Colossians chapter 1, Paul's letter to the Colossians. Again, this is another chapter 1 that sets forth the deity of our Lord Jesus - so, what's that now? John 1, Revelation 1, Hebrews 1, Colossians 1 - verse 15, we're thinking about His power as the Creator of the universe: 'He', Jesus, 'is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist' - that makes me want to shout, 'Hallelujah!'. That's your Saviour! That is my Lord! The amazing thing about the incarnation that we celebrate at Christmas time is that the Creator became, in effect, a creature - of course, He existed in His divinity before His birth into Bethlehem, but at Bethlehem He took upon Himself creature-hood!

I believe the greatest act of power that our Lord Jesus displayed was not the creation of the world - now think about that! The great astrophysicists, Hawkins and his like, are still trying to plumb the depths of it all, and yet we read in a word Jesus set the stars in place, He set the planets in orbit. Physicists are starting really to believe that there is no end to the universe, and yet they cannot believe in an eternal God. But, my friends, the greatest demonstration of divine power in our Lord Jesus was Calvary, His death, when He took upon Himself the sins of the world, and made an eternal, everlasting, never ceasing, never to be replaced, sacrifice for sins forever. I heard recently someone say, a messianic Jew, that when He cried out 'It is finished!', and He died, and He give up the ghost, that the veil of the Temple was rent in twain - in fact, I think it was brother Arthur told me this a couple of weeks ago - it was rent from the top to the bottom. We know the significance of that, that we can now enter in by the blood of Jesus, in behind the veil and speak face-to-face with our God - but Arthur was telling me that this Jewess said: 'When there is mourning, often the garment is ripped, and it was as if God the Father was ripping the garment of the veil in mourning for His Son'. But three days later, the greatest miracle in the history of humankind: up from the grave He arose into the power of an endless life, and He lives never to die again. He gives unto those who believe in Him life eternal, resurrection life - you don't have to wait until you die or until Jesus comes to get it, you get it now.

Now listen: the power of Jesus in His resurrection is seen not only in the fact that God the Father raised Him from the dead, Ephesians chapter 1, but here in Colossians chapter 1 we see His power. In John chapter 10 we read: 'No one', Jesus said, 'takes My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father'. So not only did the Father raise Him from the dead, but He raised Himself from the dead - now that's power!

His mighty power, believer - wait for this now - His mighty power, the power that created the cosmos, the power that bore the sins of the world in His own body on the tree, the power that raised Himself from the grave; that power is available to you! Now, you're looking at me as if I've said something wrong! Do you believe that? Look at Colossians, Paul prayed in verse 9 that we would know this power, now read these words very carefully with me: 'For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do

not cease to pray for you, and to ask God that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy'.

Warren Weirsbe says of verse 11: 'If God fills us with all might, then that makes us almighty!'. The almighty power of God is available to us through Jesus Christ. Now, we all know we're not almighty in and of ourselves, but what he is getting at is that, by the power of the Holy Spirit - who has been given to us because of the shed blood of Jesus, the power of His resurrection, His High Priestly ministry and glorification - the Spirit has come, Christ is in you, the hope of glory, and we can know the almighty power of God. The question is: do we? Believer, are you tapped into that power? I think if we were tapped into that power there would be big changes, big changes in our personal lives, big changes in our homes, our domestic situations, big changes in the workplace, big changes in our churches, big changes in our communities, in our land! We're talking here not in theory, we're talking about being in touch with the very divine power that raised Christ from the dead! What do we know of that?

This power is not given to us for display. I think that's why some Christians might want it in certain circles. They want to be seen themselves as powerful, and kind of offering the power of God to other people - but that is not the context of why Paul talks about us being filled with this Almighty power. If you look at it, he's talking about this power being used to develop our Christian character and our Christian conduct to the glory of God. This power is not given to us to say, 'Look at me!', it's to say 'Look to God!'.

Look at verses 10 and 11, verse 10 makes this clear - why is this prayer made that we might know the power of God? 'That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God' - this is the life of holiness. Verse 11, the beginning, that you might be: 'strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power' - why? - 'for all patience and longsuffering with joy'. This spiritual power is given to us to produce character. The purpose that God's power is given to us is that we might be godly.

A lot of people, as I've said, are interested in power - but there are very few people these days interested in holiness, but that's what the power is for. Often we have to suffer, there can be pain and there can be a cost involved in experiencing this power in our lives. You remember Paul had a thorn in the flesh - we don't know what it is, and we're wasting our time speculating about it - but it was something that he came three times to God and asked Him to remove, and God said no! I hear some people say: 'God never says no to your prayers' - God said 'No' to Paul's prayer to take that thorn away. He said: 'My grace is sufficient for you', listen, 'for my strength is made perfect in your weakness'. We'll all run for a shot of the power of God, won't we? Oh, God's power! But when it's wrapped in suffering and pain and cost, that's a different thing. Paul could say: 'I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong'.

I don't know what you're going through tonight, but I'll tell you this: in your brokenness you can know the Almighty power of God just for your need.

We've got to move on. He's not only 'Mighty God', but He's 'Everlasting Father'. Now the idea in the Hebrew language here - which the Old Testament, of course, was written in - is that Jesus is the Source and the Author of all eternity. Now we've already seen that He is the Creator of the universe, but often people take this designation of Christ and say: 'Well, this means that He's God the Father' - it does not mean anything of the sort. Jesus is not the same Person as the Father in the triune Godhead. In the Hebrew that's not what is meant here. The concept in Hebrew is that 'Father' means 'originator of', or 'author of', or 'the beginning of'. What it's saying here is that He is the Father of eternity, that He is the Author and Originator of the ages. You remember the Lord Jesus in the Gospels called Satan 'the father of lies', it's the same sense, that he is the originator and the author of lies. Well, in the same sense, when it says Jesus is the 'Father of Eternity', that means He is the Originator of the eternal ages. Jesus is the Author of all things eternal.

Now, there are many applications of this truth. We've already thought about Him as Creator, we could think of Him tonight as the Author and Finisher of our faith, our eternal salvation and redemption. He also now lives to give eternal purpose to our lives, and quality to our lives. John 10 and verse 10 says: 'The thief', alluding, I believe, to the devil and angels of light representing him, 'The thief comes to steal, to kill, and to destroy. I have come that you may have life, and that you may have it more abundantly' - that you might have it to the full. The literal sense is 'that you might have life overflowing'. Now, I only need to look at some Christian's faces to know that they don't have life overflowing. I'm not saying that life has to be a bed of roses, that's not the same thing - but even when life is filled with trial and tribulation, that deep down there is this inexpressible joy and security, this anchor in Christ Jesus, this fountain overflowing unto eternal life. You see, 'eternal life' is not just the quantity of life, that you're going to live forever and ever. Eternal life, particularly in John's Gospel and John's epistles, speaks of the quality of life - it's God's life.

As I said, there are many applications of this, but I want to leave you with one. Primarily I want you to see the Lord Jesus as the Father of eternity, the Originator of eternal things, in the realm of how He is sovereign over time. You see, time is encapsulated in eternity, it's not the same thing, but in God we live and move and have our being. This takes care of the dimensions of life: He is in control of time. Let me show you this, first of all He is in control of His own time. Of course this is in submission to the Father, we find this in the Gospels, and I'll not turn you to it because we haven't got time! But in chapter 2 and verse 4 Jesus said to Mary that His time had not yet come. In chapter 7 verse 4 He repeats that statement to others, His time, His hour, had not yet come. In chapter 7, twice He says: 'My hour has not yet come'. In chapter 8 He says it again, and then in chapter 17 - as He's now getting ready to go to the cross - in that great what is called 'High Priestly prayer', in verse 1 He says that His hour 'now had come'. He was in control, in submission to the Father, of His own time. In fact, in Hebrews 1 that we've already read, in verse 2 the literal translation of one of the phrases there is that Christ, not only did He create the

worlds, but He framed the ages - He framed the times!

Now, do you know what this means? Even the ages of history are under His control. Can I tell you tonight: your life is no different! I love that little statement in Psalm 31 verse 15: 'My times are in Your hands'. Do you believe that? Matthew Henry said of that little verse, 'My times are in Your hands', listen: 'Our times (all events that concern us, and the timing of them) are at God's disposal. They are not in our own hands, for the way of man is not in himself; nor are they in our friend's hands, thank God for that; nor are they in our enemy's hands, but in God's. They could not be in better hands'. Spurgeon said: 'We are not waifs and strays upon the ocean of fate, but are steered by infinite wisdom towards our desired haven'. Listen to this: 'Providence is a soft pillow for anxious heads'.

Now don't misunderstand me tonight, I'm not talking about blind fatalism - 'Que sera, sera, whatever will be, will be' - I don't believe in that. This doesn't mean that everything that is ever done is in God's will, or that there are never any detours in our lives, but what it does mean is this: God rules, and God overrules! We all make mistakes, we all take wrong paths, sometimes thinking God led us down them; but if we truly put our lives - remember how Isaiah put it, 'If the government of our lives is upon His shoulder' - He will be the Father of eternal things to us, and He will overrule even our own mistakes.

Maybe you're here tonight, and you have put the government of your life upon His shoulder, but He hasn't come through for you. He's delaying. Well, I want to tell you tonight that God's delays are not His denials. There is a wonderful story in John chapter 11, the Lord Jesus Christ had no place to call His own home when He began His ministry - but there was one place, if there was any, that He considered home, and that was a little house in Bethany. Some of His closest friends were Mary and Martha, and their brother Lazarus. While Jesus was on ministry the sisters sent the message to Him that the one whom He loved was sick near to death. They feared that Jesus would delay in getting to heal him and raise him to full health, but the very confusing story is that apparently they were right to fear Christ's delay, because He deliberately delayed! John 11 tells us He waited two days until Lazarus was dead, and He did not arrive at that little home in Bethany until Lazarus was already four days in the grave, which meant that decomposition had set in. For the Jewish belief, the spirit had long gone, departed from the body, and it was impossible for recovery - this was the end of no return.

It's very hard to understand why Jesus' delay should be deliberate, isn't it? Of course, we have the inside track: Jesus said this would be for the glory of God, but none of them could have known what the Lord Jesus had in store for Lazarus. Don't think for one moment that Jesus was not touched, or was not moved by the condition of His friend. We read that He came to that grave, and He stood with the sisters, and Jesus wept! So, just because Jesus is delaying in your situation, does not mean that He doesn't care! As far as they were concerned, the situation was beyond hope - but, you see, Jesus is the Father of eternal things, and He brings another dimension to every situation. He is the Eternal - and I love this verse in John 11 and verse 9, just listen:

'The disciples said to Him, 'Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?'. Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours in the day?'. That can mean a lot of things, but do you ever notice in the Gospels that our Lord Jesus Christ was never in a hurry? 'Are there not twelve hours in the day? Men, I am the Author of eternal things'.

Maybe you feel the clock is ticking on your situation? Well, listen, if you would put the government of your life on His shoulder, the Lord Jesus, the Wonderful Lord Jesus brings another dimension. Here He brought another dimension to life and death itself, and He does with our problems - that's why we cannot get our eyes fixed on the things that are of time and sense. Listen to what Paul says: 'Our light affliction, which is but for a moment', that's a phrase of time, 'is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen', the things of time, 'but at the things which are not seen', eternal things. 'For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal'.

Oh it's wonderful, He is Wonderful, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father! Now, I know perhaps you can't make sense of your world at this moment - but I want to tell you tonight: if you have put the government of your life on His shoulder, He is in control.

There's a lovely story I want to end with, I told it years ago here, but it's worth repeating. It's about a wise old Chinese man, who lived on the troubled Mongolian border. One day his favourite horse, a beautiful white mare, jumped the fence and was seized on the other side by the enemy forces. His friends came to console him, and they said: 'Oh, we're so sorry about your horse', they said, 'that's bad news!'. The wee Chinese man said: 'How do you know it's bad news?', he said, 'It might be good news!'. A week later the Chinaman looked out of his window to see his mare returning at breakneck speed, and alongside her was a beautiful stallion. He opened his gates and put both horses into his enclosure. His friends then came to admire his new addition, and they said: 'What a beautiful horse, that's good news!'. He said: 'How you know it's good news? It might be bad news!'. The next day the man's only son decided to try riding the stallion - you've guessed it, it threw him off and landed him painfully, breaking his leg. The friends made another visit, and all of them were sympathetically saying: 'We're so sorry about this, it's such bad news'. You know what the wee Chinaman said: 'How do you know it's bad news? It might be good news!'. Within a month a terrible war broke out between China and Mongolia, and the Chinese recruiters came through the area pressing all young men into the Army. Every single one of them perished, except for the Chinaman's son, who couldn't go off to war because of his broken leg. 'You see', exclaimed the Chinaman, 'the things you considered good were actually bad, and the things that seemed to be bad news were actually for our good'.

I don't claim to understand the good or the bad, but what I do know is: Jesus is Wonderful, He is the Mighty God, and the Author of eternal things. As Hudson Taylor, that great pioneer missionary to China, once put it: 'Ill that God blesses is our good, and unblessed good is ill; and all is right that seems most wrong if it be His sweet

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will'. Amen. Do come back next week, and we're going to spend the whole night on the name of our Lord as 'Prince Of Peace'.

Father, that word 'great' can only be used of You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We thank You for the greatness of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who has opened our eyes through the Scriptures to see the wonder of Your Beloved Son, whom we can call 'mine', the Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. We worship Him. Amen.

## *The Wonder Of His Name - Chapter 4*

# **"Prince Of Peace"**

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**W**ell, good evening to you all. It's good to be back with you again in the Iron Hall - thank you, Paul, for the welcome - it has been a real privilege to be back with you these now four weeks, and I do trust that you've enjoyed the ministry of God's Word, and the presence of God in our midst. I certainly have enjoyed renewing fellowship with you these nights. We're turning again to Isaiah 9 then, and verse 6. We've looked at the various names - we've entitled this series 'The Wonder Of His Name' - 700 years before our Lord Jesus was born at Bethlehem, the prophet Isaiah was given, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, this prophecy. We've been looking at the names involved in it, let's just read it together - Isaiah 9 verse 6: *"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace".*

Tonight we're going to look at the title 'Prince of Peace'. I want us to pray together just now, and I want to say to you before we pray that I have been seeking to apply these names each week in a very personal way - but perhaps tonight is going to be the most personal night, as far as the application of this name, the 'Prince of Peace', is concerned. I believe that some of you are going to receive enlightenment concerning not only this title, but your lives. I want you to come now before the Lord in prayer, and ask Him to speak to you. We've done this each night, and I believe the Lord has been answering prayer. We praise God for what He has been doing in some people's lives, but tonight is a new night, and a new exciting opportunity for God the Holy Spirit to do something in our midst in each of our experiences. So let's come - will you come and pray for that for yourself, not forgetting those around you, that God might speak and meet with us all?

Father, we want to thank You for Your holy word. We want to thank You for this sure word of prophecy that we have. We thank You that it is self-authenticating, even in this prophecy concerning our Lord and how, 700 years after it was made, He came: veiled in flesh, the Godhead seen - the little Babe of Bethlehem who would grow to be the Messiah, in ministry anointed of the Holy Ghost, to heal the brokenhearted, to bring liberty to the captives, Lord, to open the prison doors and set people free, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, the year of Jubilee. Lord, we want to walk in that experience that the Lord Jesus Christ gives to us, that is revealed, particularly tonight, in this name 'Prince of Peace'. Lord, we're coming to You now in the name of the Lord Jesus, and we're asking to experience this peace that comes from Jesus alone. Lord, we can't work this up through a sermon, or a service, this is something that must be imparted by grace, received through faith, through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit. So, Lord, we ask for the Holy Spirit to come and to minister to all our

hearts. Lord, I ask that You will help people tonight, that this name, Prince of Peace, will become something very special to all of us in the gathering tonight. I need Your help, Lord, I pray afresh that You will take me, body, mind, soul, and spirit; and that, Lord, we might know that unction from on high. For Christ's sake, and for His glory we pray, Amen.

Now, I think from the first week's study in this little verse I have been impressing upon you that in each name of God that we find in the scriptures, and in each name of the Lord Jesus, there is a dual revelation. Now you're not in school tonight, so I'll not test you on whether you can remember what that is - but it's quite easy, and I hope that you will be able to retain it for future times when you're reading the word of God and you come up with a name of God in the scriptures. There is both: one, a revelation of God Himself in His character and in His nature, something about who God is; but, two, there is always something communicated to us in that divine name that is for our provision. I've been quoting this little line: 'Every name that He bears is a blessing that He shares'. So you have to do a bit of digging, and find out: well, what is the blessing that God is sharing with me in this name with which He has revealed Himself?

Now, tonight we're just spending the whole night on this one designation of the Lord Jesus: 'The Prince of Peace'. It's self-explanatory in and of itself. We look at the Lord Jesus in the Gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John - and we see very quickly that He was a man of peace. If you watch Him and witness Him, you will see Him in a perpetual disposition of peace. You know, sometimes we read these stories, even in our daily readings, and you know we're so familiar with them - I would ask you to do something when you're reading the scriptures, particularly the Gospels, particularly the record of the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus: try and picture yourself there, and try and look on at what is actually happening, and take particular note of the demeanour and disposition of our Lord.

Forty days He is in the desert, tempted by the devil himself, but He doesn't lose His peace - isn't that remarkable? Fasting alone in the desert, but we see very clearly - as we would put it: He doesn't lose His cool, He doesn't lose His equilibrium. He doesn't get into a state! Now, how are we when we are tempted and tried and tested? Let's be honest now, we're so different, aren't we? See Him in a boat on the Lake of Galilee, He could fall asleep in the midst of the storm - perfectly at peace. How are you in the storms of life? How do I cope? When He had knowledge of Lazarus' death, a very dear friend as we saw at the close of last week's message, He found out that the one whom He loved was dying - when He received that news, what does He say? He says to the disciples: 'Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I might wake him up'. Perfect peace. How are we in the presence of death? That's how our Lord behaved.

When He faced the demoniac of Gadara, who was possessed with a legion of demons - we know that a legion may be anything between 3000 to 6000 soldiers in a Roman garrison, and this man may well have been possessed with as many demons. It was Christ's peace that overcame the devil's torture of that pitiful soul, so that that man came to be, listen: sitting, and clothed, in his right mind, and they - the bystanders -



were afraid. Why were the bystanders afraid? How do we react when we face the terror of the enemy? Are we not afraid? But they saw not the terror of the enemy, they saw the peace of Christ overcoming the devil's torture in this man's life - and they were afraid. It's remarkable, isn't it? Though mankind has sought this most elusive condition, peace, peace of mind, peace of heart, peace on earth, when they see the peace of Christ they don't understand it! It frightens them! In fact, if we were to read the story, we would see that the people actually sought the Lord Jesus to leave their district, because they couldn't understand such unworldly peace. That's exactly what this peace of Christ is, it is a supernatural thing!

Before I go on any further, I want to say to you tonight that it does not call for our scrutiny, or our intellectual analysis, what this peace calls for is our worship and wonder, and childlike faith to receive it. You see the Lord Jesus now in the Garden of Gethsemane, the shadow of the cross upon Him. The soldiers come to arrest the Lord Jesus, and what does Peter do? He pulls out a sword and declares war on the mob, and the servant of the High Priest's ear. Jesus immediately warns Peter, we read in Matthew 26, Jesus said: 'Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword' - and the Lord calmly surrenders to the soldiers. He then is led away and undergoes the travesty of justice that was His trial. He is shunted from court to court, facing the lies, the trumped up charges of wicked men, and yet we read in Isaiah's prophecy: 'He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth'. We even read that Pontius Pilate - and we know from secular history that he was a hard-headed tyrannous rascal, and yet he wondered, 'marvelled' the Bible says, at the peace of the Lord Jesus as He answered not a word.

Even as He hung on the cross, unlike most criminals who were executed in His day, He did not curse His accusers - but rather He prayed. This is literally what it means: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing' - peace that is incomprehensible! Peace that is unspeakable! Indescribable! What peace! Do you know what the Hebrew word for 'peace' is? Well, you all know that of course, it's 'Shalom'. But it doesn't simply mean the absence of distress and unrest, but there is a very positive connotation in 'Shalom', it is the presence of wholeness, soundness, complete harmony and rest in the human spirit. It primarily does not refer to external conditions. You see, we talk about 'happiness', and happiness really is based on 'happenings', our circumstances. But this peace that we're talking about, supernatural, goes deep down into the human spirit so that it does not rest and depend upon externalities, but it is an internal disposition that Christ had when He hung on the cross and yet was at complete peace.

Now, let's be honest tonight: we often want God to change our circumstances, don't we? That's not always wrong, and God is a God who does change circumstances - but do you know something? What God is more interested in than changing your circumstances and mine is changing you and me. He wants to change our characters. You often hear the little saying: 'Prayer changes things', and it does - but the biggest thing that prayer will ever change is you. Now, I want to say to you tonight, as we

look at the Lord Jesus as 'The Prince of Peace', now listen: that same peace is available to you! Do you believe that? The Bible talks about this supernatural peace as a gift of grace. It's a free gift, just like salvation, it cannot be earned or bought. You don't have to jump through hoops to get it, it's something that is absolutely gratuitous on God's part. It is because of the cross. We, as evangelicals, we wonder and revel in the cross - but I believe that much of the time we relegate the work of the cross to things of the past, you know, the bad things that we've done years ago. They have been blotted out by the blood of Jesus, but we don't realise that the blood of Jesus Christ is far more powerful than that: the blood of Jesus Christ is actually delivering us today from the consequences of sin, seeking to sanctify us, seeking to give us the full blessing of God's salvation. I hope it's not a half salvation that you've got! The blood of Jesus Christ has bought you this supernatural peace!

Now, we know that through the blood we have peace with God, don't we? Colossians chapter 1 verse 20 says that Jesus has made peace through the blood of His cross. The big word in the Authorised Version for this is 'propitiation' - it simply means that a wrath-averting sacrifice to satisfy the justice of God has been made in the person of this, as Isaiah 9 says, child that was born, who would be human flesh, who could stand as a substitute for sinners; but He would also be the Son given, He would be the divine Son, the One able to satisfy the demands of God because He Himself is eternal. Through the shedding of His blood He has made peace with God for humanity. Paul the apostle says in the book of Corinthians: 'We now', because of the cross, and the peace that has been made through the blood, 'We have a ministry of reconciliation', we preach this peace - or at least we're meant to! We're meant to be ambassadors for God, Paul literally says, standing in Christ's stead, in Christ's place, imploring men: 'Be reconciled to God!'. We can do that because of the cross, that is the good news - listen to what Paul says: 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself', that is mighty! Do you know what that means? The whole wide world is reconciled to God tonight through the shed blood of Jesus - that's right! The problem is: men and women aren't reconciled to God. You see, God, whose back was once toward us because of our sin and because there was no substitute and satisfaction for our sin, through Christ has reconciled Himself to us so that He has turned to face the world and offer the free gift of forgiveness of sins - but the problem is: most people's backs are still toward God. Repentance, you know, is turning around and being reconciled to God.

Through the cross, we read also in Colossians 1:20, 'and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven' - listen: the Bible looks really far ahead into the future, and sees that Christ will reign for 1000 years on the earth, and there will be peace! Then it looks further to a day when there will be a new heaven and a new earth, and wait till I tell you: all that is already in the bank because of the shed blood of Jesus! It's already finished! It's as good as done in the mind of God, He's just bringing humanity into line and sync with His plan. He's being long-suffering for us, so that we might come to repentance and enjoy what He has done through the blood of His Son. Can I ask you tonight: are you in agreement with God? Are you reconciled to God? Are you at peace with God? Wonderful verse in Romans 5 and verse 1, this is the 'how' of it: 'Therefore, being justified', that means

just as if you'd never sinned, clean slate given to you as a sinner, 'Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ'. You see, grace is the hand of God that reaches out and offers us reconciliation; faith is our hand that receives it from the Father. Have you received it?

Maybe you have lost the sense of peace with God through sin, and this is often what happens. Maybe someone, they thought they had received it at one time in their past, but sin, or selfishness, has come in and interrupted that fellowship between them and God. But listen, it's all the same, I never cease to wonder at the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He still offers such reconciliation to rebellious sinners, even Christian sinners! Turn with me for a moment to John 13, John's gospel chapter 13 - these are very familiar verses of Scripture that we know well, but sometimes what is obscured (in the whole of the Bible I have to say) are the divisions of chapter and verse. Divisions of chapter and verse, while they are sometimes advantageous, are certainly not inspired of the Holy Spirit. They were put in by men, and most of the time they did a good job - in fact, I think Martin Luther was one of the main men who divided our Bible the way we have it, maybe not the chapters, but certainly the books and the order in which we have them.

But here is one unfortunate division between chapter 13 of John and chapter 14. Now, in verse 38 of chapter 13 Jesus says to Simon Peter, who was always putting his foot in his mouth you remember - Peter had said, 'I'll follow You to death!' - Jesus has to say to Peter: 'Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times' - but look at this, read it again and forget about chapter 14 and those big numbers there, forget about those big numbers. Look: 'Jesus answered him, 'Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times. Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me''. Are you seeing something you've never seen before? The division is not there. Yes, the disciples were troubled because the Lord had told them, 'I'm going away, and where I'm going you cannot follow Me'. They're troubled because He had also been telling them, as He instituted the Lord's Supper, that there was one eating with them at the table who would betray the Lord - that troubled them, no doubt. Then He's also speaking about Peter now, who was a real bold man, he was the courageous guy, the fighter, that he was going to deny the Lord - this was hard for them to take in. The Lord does speak collectively to them, the plural 'you' is there, 'Let not your heart be troubled', but He was speaking to Peter. This just boggles my mind, that before Peter denied the Lord, the Lord's grace was so great that He could say to him: 'Peter, be at peace about it'. In fact, in verse 27 He again says to the group: 'Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid'. He is telling them: 'You will have a supernatural peace'. Now, of course Peter's peace was interrupted by his betrayal of Christ, but the Lord had assured him: 'Peter, Satan has desired to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you; and when you're restored what a blessing you will be, Peter'.

Is God's grace and reconciliation not marvellous? That Christ could actually promise

His peace to Peter before he had sinned! Now don't think tonight that I'm giving you some licence to go out and sin, because Peter had no idea of premeditation regarding this sin - as far as he was concerned it wasn't going to happen! But the peace of Christ was there for him even before it. It was interrupted by it, but it was there for him after it. Isn't His grace great? Sin robs us of peace, but it is offered again when we repent and believe: 'Believe in God, believe also in Me'.

There is the peace with God, we know a lot about that in evangelical circles, but something different is the peace of God. Now, here's a mistake that many make: they confound the peace with God with the peace of God, and they are not the same thing. All you have to do is see a lot of Christians to realise that: they don't have the peace of God. We've got a real problem in evangelicalism: we think that the conversion experience is the end experience, when in fact it is only the threshold experience, it is only the entrance into this new life of discipleship and commitment, and the process of sanctification and being made into the image of Christ - it's only the beginning! We've got to move on! So many have peace with God, but the peace of God eludes them! Do you have it tonight?

Look with me at Galatians 5, Paul, remember, is talking to Christians here. So, if to be a Christian gives the peace of God to you, well, he was wasting his time - but, of course, many of them didn't have it. In verse 22 of chapter 5 of Galatians we read a list of the fruit of the Spirit, Paul says: 'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace', there it is, peace, 'longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law'. Now look at verse 22 again, note it does not say the fruit of the Spirit plural, 'the fruits of the Spirit', it doesn't say that - it says 'the fruit of the Spirit', singular. This is one fruit. Now I know there are several fruit here, nine, but it's actually one fruit - these are different aspects of the one fruit. Therefore this fruit can be summed up actually in one word, what is that word? 'Character', that's what this is a description of here, isn't it? The fruit of the Spirit is really character, whose character is it? Well, do you know anyone who is completely loving, completely rejoicing, completely at peace, long-suffering, kind, good, faithful, gentle, controlling self? Yes, you do: Jesus! This is His character here that we're reading about.

We're thinking specifically of peace, and what Paul is saying is that the fruit of the Spirit for the Christian is actually the impartation of the character of Jesus into the spirit of the believer, and so this peace can be in-wrought in the life of the Christian by the power of the Holy Spirit. Now, fruit, you will know, cannot be manufactured. There is no such a thing as a fruit factory, unless you want the plastic stuff in the fruit bowl in the middle of the table that doesn't rot - but try taking a bite out of it! You can't manufacture fruit, it is born of life, it's produced. Now, the Lord Jesus in John 15 taught on this very subject, and He said that if we are to produce much fruit for the Lord Jesus and for the glory of the Father, we need to abide in Him. That's what Jesus said: 'Abide in Me, and if I abide in you, you will produce much fruit'. He used the illustration of a vine, and we are the branches, and we are to bear fruit to the glory of God - but the only way that we can bear that fruit is if we abide in the vine, the life source that is Jesus Himself.

In other words, we don't cultivate the fruit - and so many Christians, I have to say, are running around exhausting themselves trying to do something for the Saviour that is in the power of the flesh, and they are manufacturing something that is not born of the Spirit. God does the cultivating of the fruit. If you read the parable in John 15, the Father is the vinedresser, He is the husbandman, He is the farmer. He's the one who does the cultivating, all we have to concentrate on is abiding in the vine and allowing the life of Jesus to abide in us and flow through us. We simply do the drawing upon the life source, abiding in the vine. So, to put it another way: fruit comes in the Christian life through being in relationship with Jesus - that's what abiding in the vine is. I think we said a couple of weeks ago that that's the one word that could sum up the whole Christian experience: relationship. Jesus said in John 17 verse 3: 'This is eternal life', not a ticket to heaven, though we get to heaven, but this is eternal life 'to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent'. It's to know God, to relate to God - and if you're wanting to know the peace of God that is imparted by the Holy Spirit, you do it through the relationship that we're meant to have with Jesus Christ: abiding in Him, the vine, and He abiding in us. If we abide in Him, the peace of Christ, that supernatural peace that you see manifested in His character, will be imparted to us by His Spirit.

We can't create peace, what we do is: we cultivate our relationship with Jesus, work on abiding in Him and He abiding in us, and we will receive His peace. Now you say: 'Well then, is there nothing for me to do?'. Well, of course there is! There are things involved in abiding in the vine. We can't go into all of those tonight, but one thing I do want to do is I want you to turn to Philippians chapter 4, because there - and some of you may have heard me mention this before - we have a medicine bottle for the anxious, those who feel an absence of God's peace in their life. Believers who have peace with God, so many of them do not know the peace of God. If you're wanting now to know how you abide in the vine, and draw off the life source of Jesus this supernatural fruit of the Spirit that is peace, we have directives here - if you like, this is a medicine bottle for the anxious, and on the bottle is a label with directions, instructions for you to take this medicine to receive this supernatural peace.

Now I believe, before we look at this, that we've got to face facts. The absence of peace within the life of many believers, and the presence of distress, is at epidemic proportions in the church of Jesus Christ. Sure, in society at large it's a well-established fact that stress contributes to people becoming actually physically sick - and that's right. Mental, emotional, and often spiritual problems, are at the root of physical illness. Now I'm not getting this from theology, this is accepted. Some statistics would lead us to believe that a minimum estimate of illnesses that are psychosomatic could be anywhere upward of 50%. Now 'psychosomatic' doesn't mean it's all in your head, that's a misconception of that word, but what it does mean is that the physical manifestations of sickness and even disease that you're experiencing are coming from a mental cause, or an emotional cause that can manifest itself in a physical way. There are some statistics that I've read where even up to 75%, some doctors believe, of physical illnesses and symptoms can come from mental and emotional causes. But, that aside, one thing is absolutely sure: anxiety and fear are

devastating to the spiritual condition because they rob us of the peace of God. They rob us of all the blessings God intends us to enjoy, but one of those that we're looking at tonight is peace - and fear and anxiety will rob you of the peace of God.

Now, understand what I'm saying here tonight: one thing that Satan can never do is, if you're genuinely born-again - and make sure you are! - he cannot rob you of your salvation, thank God for that! But what he seeks to do as the adversary, the accuser of the brethren, is: he seeks to divest us of the benefits of our salvation, so that we walk through life and we might as well not be saved because the joy of the Lord, and the peace of God, and the assurance of our salvation is being robbed from us! Two of Satan's most successful weapons in his arsenal against Christians are fear and anxiety.

Now, here are the instructions given in Philippians chapter 4 of how we can abide in the vine and draw from Jesus this supernatural peace. The first instruction is in verse 6: 'Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God'. Be anxious for nothing! Now here's the first instruction: worry about nothing, that's literally what it means! Worry about nothing. The reason for that is, now wait for this: worry is sin - did you know that? At least that's what the Bible says, if you're going to believe the word of God; because worry, in essence, is essentially unbelief. You are not believing God, but you are believing a lie - and you know who the father of lies is, the devil. Now listen to me: all irrational fears, all unreasonable anxieties, are based on a lie. Now, you need to assess that yourself, and maybe apply it to your own fears and worries - but you'll find out right away that that is the case. Most of the time the things that we worry about never ever happen, if not all the time. They never happen, or certainly things don't turn out the way we envisage them to. Many of the fears that we have are blown out of all proportion. We could give examples of that, but we don't have time tonight - but what is true is that if you have an irrational, unreasonable fear or anxiety, it's built on a lie. Maybe just where you're sitting tonight, you need to raise a prayer to God if this is a problem for you - fear and anxiety - and you need to say: 'Lord, reveal to me by the Holy Spirit what is the lie that I have believed'.

Now here's what happens: when you believe a lie there is a corresponding truth of God that you have chosen not to believe, OK? So when you believe the lie of the devil, rather than the corresponding truth of God, effectively what you're doing is: you are walking in agreement with the devil rather than walking in agreement with God. Amos 3:3, isn't it: 'Can two walk together except they be agreed?'. Another word for 'agreement' is the word 'covenant', it's essentially the same word. It's as if you're signing - you know, Satan hands you a document which says 'You are going to die with cancer in five years' - and you worry about dying of cancer, and effectively you believe what the devil is saying, and you sign the dotted line. You sign on the dotted line on that document, and you enter into agreement with Satan that that is worth worrying about because it's true, or at least could become true - when God tells you not to look into the future, because He is in control of the future, and more than that: if you're in covenant with Him, and walking with Him, He'll take care of your future and you don't need to worry about it. Do you understand? This is what I'm getting at:

that by believing lies we give grounds to the devil to torment us and torture us.

What is the lie that you've believed? F.B. Meyer said that the English word 'anxiety' has the root word for 'anger' in it, anxiety, anger - and the literal meaning of that word 'anger' is: the physical act of choking. That's what anxiety and fear does to the peace of God and all the fruit of the Spirit: it chokes them out of existence, it will choke your peace to death. In fact, the Lord said, you know in the parable of the seed, the sower, and the soils: 'The care', or the worry, 'of this world chokes the word of God', and we become unfruitful! There it is! Worry chokes out the fruit of the peace of God. Whereas Paul says here: 'Be anxious for nothing'. It's the same expression that Jesus used three times at least in the Sermon on the Mount: 'Take no thought, take no thought, take no thought' - it's the same word in the Greek language, 'Be anxious for nothing'. It really means, listen to this now: do not under any circumstances worry about anything! Right, now, how do you measure up to that one? Come on now! Do not under any circumstances worry about anything! 'Oh', you say, 'well, that's impossible, you can't do that!'.

It's not just saying don't worry about your health, it's actually also saying: don't worry about your spiritual life. Now don't misunderstand me, I believe there needs to be a striving in the Christian experience, I believe there needs to be an insatiable satisfaction, so you're satisfied with Christ but you want more, you want to go deeper, you want to go on with God - but you're not meant to worry about it! You're certainly not meant to worry about your past sins, repent over them, and grieve over them if you must, but repent and confess and get up and take the forgiveness of God and accept it! You see answers to prayer, whilst you may travail and break your heart over things that you haven't seen come to fruition yet, particularly the salvation of loved ones, though you might break your heart you're not allowed to worry about it! There's a difference, you see, because the worry will rob you of the peace. Scripture consistently forbids it: worry about nothing.

There's the first instruction. You might say: 'Well, I'm finished now, you know, you've left me there. Worry about nothing? That's impossible for me! You might say it, but I'll never do it. How you do that?'. Well, listen, you're right, you can't just zap worries and they disappear. The second instruction here is: 'Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication' - you can't just make invisible your cares and concerns and fears, but what you ought to do, the Scripture says, is turn your cares into prayers. This is God's method for getting rid of your anxieties. Now, you might say: 'Well, does God not already know what's bothering me? Why do I need to pray about it?'. Well, of course He knows, the Bible says He knows what you're going to ask before you even speak it - but the point is this: prayer is an act of faith, whereby you're showing to God that you are giving these cares and anxieties over to Him. It's a very powerful thing. The Psalmist says in Psalm 55: 'Cast your burdens upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you'. The literal word for 'cast' is 'rollover' your burdens unto the Lord, lay them on the Lord, or literally 'throw your burdens unto the Lord', and He will sustain you. It's the same idea that we find in 1 Peter 5 verse 7: 'Cast all your care on Him, for He cares for you'. Do you know how J.B. Phillips translates that, listen: 'You can throw the whole weight of your anxieties upon Him, for you are His

personal concern'. Isn't that beautiful? You can cast all the weight of your anxieties on Him, for you are His personal concern. Is that what you do? You see, that's what we're meant to do. Martin Luther said you can't stop the birds flying over your head, but you can stop them nesting in your hair. We can't stop the stresses and strains of life coming along our way, but what we can do is not allow them to nest upon us. We turn our cares into prayers, we decide: 'I'm not going to worry about this, but I'm going to pray about everything, and I'm going to roll these burdens unto the Lord'.

There was once a man who couldn't get to sleep one night, and at 3 AM in the morning he was pacing up and down in the bedroom. His wife, she was so annoyed at him keeping her awake, and she says: 'What on earth is the matter with you?'. He says: 'I owe Sam next door £1000, and I have to pay him back tomorrow, and I don't have a penny of it. What am I going to do?'. Do you know what she did? She jumped out of bed, and she threw open the window, and she guldered next door: 'Sam! Sam!'. Sam got up and stuck his head groggily out the window, 'What is it?'. She says: 'You know that thousand pounds that my husband owes you that he's to pay you tomorrow?'. 'Yes?'. 'Well, he hasn't got it!', and she shut the window, and she turned to her husband and she says: 'Now, you let him worry about it and go to sleep!'. Now, we laugh at that, but that really, in essence, is what we're meant to do with God. The One who neither slumbers nor sleeps, what's the point in you staying up all night worrying, when He's up all night taking care of you? If you cast it on Him, it's His problem - and I say that reverently and respectfully, but that's what this means! Pray about everything!

Here's the third thing: be thankful for anything - that's a tricky one too, I know, but we have to cultivate thankfulness, particularly in prayer. Verse 6 says: 'Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving' - this is praise-ful prayer. One great example of this within the scriptures is Daniel, and he found peace through praise. When the King announced that none of his subjects was to pray to anyone except him as a new deity, what did Daniel do? Good old Daniel: he went to his room as he always did, he opened the window three times a day, he got on his knees and he prayed as he always had done before. But we read in Daniel 6 specifically, listen: 'He prayed and gave thanks before his God'. So he was in this predicament, and he didn't just turn his cares into prayers, but his prayer was praiseful. He give thanks unto his God, and do you know what the results were? Perfect peace in the midst of his difficulty! What do we read in the story? Well, Daniel was able to spend a night with the lions in perfect peace, and do you know who stayed up all night and couldn't sleep? The King!

Faith does not flourish in the atmosphere of pessimism and gloom. You know there is something pervading a lot of our churches in these days, a real heavy depressive spirit that is not of God - it's not of God. You know, sometimes we can see all that's wrong in our world, and there's a lot wrong; and we can see a lot that's wrong in the church, and there's an awful lot wrong; and we can see an awful lot that's wrong in our lives, and most of the time it's the boy beside us, his life, that we see an awful lot wrong in; and we can constantly have a diet of negativity - when what Scripture requires of us is rather to be thanksgiving and praising! Because that will actually



effect - you remember I preached a couple of months ago here on the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness - someone has said: 'In a life full of care, if it is filled with prayer, and if that prayer is filled with praise, it will result in peace'.

Do you practice thanksgiving? Now it doesn't come naturally, and this is a common myth that we have: that you have to feel good to praise God - that's rubbish! If I waited until I felt good to praise God, God would never get praise! The order is: you must praise to feel good - that's right. Even today, I praised my way into feeling good. Do you do that much? This is the instructions on the medicine bottle: worry about nothing; pray about everything; be thankful for anything - here's the next one, verse 8: think about good things. 'Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy; meditate on these things'.

Now listen: if you haven't already found out as a Christian, the battle that is on is a battle for your mind. That is the battleground where the enemy fights. You've got to work out the process of the human form, that is, listen: thoughts affect our feelings, and feelings affect our actions. So if we think that when we walk through the front door we're going to get run over by a bus, we will feel fear about seeing or meeting a bus, or crossing a road, and that will probably filter through to our actions where we won't step over the door. You see what happens? We can apply that in so many different scenarios, but the key to everything is the thoughts - and if you are continually having negative thoughts, you'll be having negative emotions and negative actions, or at least your actions and behaviour will be determined by what you think about and what you feel.

Now here's the danger: we think, 'Well, now I have to weed out these bad thoughts and emotions', and when you try to do that more come in their place. That's what happens, they actually multiply, because it doesn't say in the Bible: 'Wrestle these thoughts', because when you wrestle them you aggravate them. What it does say is: 'Cultivate good thoughts'. You will only push the bad out by pouring in the good - that's why Paul says here: 'Think on these things'. It means 'feed on these things', and that's how you renew your mind - and that is something that has been purchased by the blood of Jesus, a renewed mind. There's an awful lot of Christians running around, and they've got renewed spirits but old heads on their shoulders. What you have to do is replace the negative with the truth, and that will lead to actions. I don't have time to look at these eight things that we're told to pour into our minds, look at the verse, verse 8, another paraphrase puts it like this: 'Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honourable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise'. But you've got to determine to do that, the will has to be engaged.

Can I ask you tonight: what do you pour into your mind? Think of our television habits, what we read in the newspapers and magazines, music perhaps that we listen to - even, dare I say it, the news. I mean, the news would depress you, wouldn't it? Everybody is going bankrupt, the banks aren't going to give you a fiver out of the

machine any longer, we're all doomed! What are we feeding our minds on? Listen to what someone said: 'Fear is the darkroom where many negatives are developed'.

Here's the fifth thing, not just think about good things, but verse 9 says 'Do the right things': 'The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you'. You see, if you're going to think right, you've got to do right. It's like the horse and cart in that order, the horse is the thought life, the cart is the actions. You've got to do what's right, if you know what that right thing is. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he. There's a wonderful verse in Isaiah that teaches us that righteousness, behaving correctly, and peace go together - you can jot it down, Isaiah 32 and verse 17. Listen to it: 'The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever'.

You've got to do what's right, you see God's first concern is not peace but righteousness. In Jeremiah's day there were prophets who were crying 'Peace, peace', when there was no peace. You see, true peace cannot be based on unrighteousness. Listen, you'll never have the peace of God if you're playing fast and loose with sin, or compromising, or the self life is on the throne and not crucified with Christ. Isaiah says in chapter 57: 'There is no peace', says my God, 'for the wicked'. Righteousness and peace go together.

So you're to worry about nothing, pray about everything, be thankful for anything, think about good things, and do right things - and the wonderful result in verse 7 is this: 'The peace of God', beyond comprehension, beyond understanding, 'will guard your hearts and minds', the word there is 'garrison', it will mount a guard, it will stand sentry. Now picture this: if you do these things, abiding in the truth of Christ, the peace of God will patrol your mind and your heart and prevent, shut out, unhappy, unholy thoughts, and will create a wonderful haven and environment of safety out of which will flow righteousness and blessing. That's what God will do if you do what He tells you - isn't He the Prince of Peace? Peace with God, peace of God - do you know something? I haven't finished! And I'm not coming back next week! So give me 5 or 10 minutes, will you?

There is peace with God, peace of God, but if you have the peace of God, do you know what will outflow from that? Peace with man. You see, when our relationship with God is right, the Bible teaches that our relationship with men will be right. The two come together. If you go to the very beginning of the Book, Genesis chapter 3, God's relationship with man is severed in the Garden through his sin - and what happens in Genesis chapter 4? Man's relationship with his brother is broken, Cain slays Abel. The two are together, and if you're right with God - and wait till I tell you, if you've got the peace of God in your heart, you will be at peace with men. Now, I know what some of you are thinking, what Jesus said in Luke chapter 12: 'Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division' - but that was in relation to man's reaction to the Lord Jesus, how He came unto His own and they did not receive Him. But we know clearly from the annunciation of the angelic host at the first Christmas that He came to bring peace on earth and goodwill toward men, but they would not have this Man to reign over them. Now sure, of course, we will still feel the wrath of the enemies of Jesus today, but it is equally

certain that, as believers, we are commanded, for instance in Hebrews chapter 12 verse 14: 'Pursue peace with all people, and holiness without which no one will see the Lord'.

Now it says there, and I believe when the Bible says 'all', it means 'all - 'Pursue peace with all men'. I believe that's unbelievers and believers, as far as is within you, follow peace. Warren Weirsbe says: 'The world doesn't need a definition of the word 'reconcile', what it needs is a demonstration of reconciliation in the lives of God's people'. You see, this is what we are to be known as: people of peace. Weymouth's translation of the beatitude is wonderful, I think it really gets to the root of the meaning, you know when the Lord said 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God', what it really means is how Weymouth translates it, listen: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for it is they who will be recognised as the sons of God' - that's what it means! They will be called the sons of God, because they will be recognised as such!

In John 17 the Lord prayed that they, His followers, 'may be one in Us', Father and Son, 'that the world may believe that You sent Me'. I've heard all sorts of arguments about the church invisible, and He's praying about the church invisible, that they would be one, and they are already one. Well, how are people in the world going to see the church invisible that they might believe in Him? There's a wonderful verse, and we'll not take time to turn it up, but jot it down, 1 John 4 and verse 12. John says: 'No one has ever seen God at any time', but listen to what he says, 'If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us'. Now, to paraphrase, what that means is: 'Nobody can see God, because God is Spirit, and Jesus has gone to heaven - but they will see a manifestation of Divinity when believers dwell together in love and unity and peace. They will see God in us'.

Well, how much of God are they seeing? One respected Bible teacher said: 'If there's anything that would keep me away from Christ, if I was lost, it would be the attitude of Christians toward one another'. I say 'Amen' to that. We need peace among Christians. Are we endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? Are we known as people of peace? People of gentleness? People of love? Or are we known as angry people, aggressive people, an intolerant people? Now don't get me wrong: you should be angry, the Bible says 'Be angry and sin not'; and you should be intolerant of a lot of things that are going on in our world, morally and spiritually; and you should be frustrated and aggressive in a sense with your holy zeal - but listen, the Bible is very clear that we are not to be known for those things supremely, those things are not meant to define us in the eyes of people, but love and peace are.

The disciples really struggled with this one, didn't they? There was a guy casting out devils, and he wasn't one of them, he wasn't in their denomination, he didn't belong to their assembly! They said: 'Lord, should we forbid him? Should we forbid him?'. They had this partisan mentality. Do you remember on another occasion where the Lord Jesus came to a village, and the village refused to welcome Him and be hospitable to Him - and what did the disciples want to do? They wanted to call down fire from heaven! Are we sons of thunder, or sons of peace? Now, please, I'm not talking about compromising the truth. We cannot compromise the truth, but we are to

speak the truth in love. Warren Weirsbe says: 'Instead of being peacemakers, so often we are troublemakers'. Jesus said: 'By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you love one another'. As I was meditating upon this in the last week, I thought to myself: if the Holy Son of God, as the Christmas Carol says, was pleased as with sinful man to dwell, how can I not dwell with my brother?

But the final peace - this is a short one - there is a peace with God, peace of God, peace with man, and peace on earth. Peace on earth, and goodwill to all men upon whom God's favour rests - that's what was announced at that nativity. Today there is peace in heaven, praise God, for the saints through the blood of Jesus. There is peace in the hearts of those who have received a little deposit of heaven in the Holy Spirit. But there will never be peace on earth until the Prince of Peace returns to rule and reign. In verse 7, of course, of Isaiah 9, we read a little bit about that: 'Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forevermore' - and that has never happened. The Bible teaches there will be a thousand year reign of Jesus on the earth, and we can read in Isaiah himself, chapter 11:35, and many other places, of the wonderful idyllic conditions that will take place through even the animal kingdom during that time.

But what I want you to come back to tonight is to see this Prince of Peace. Imagine after the turmoil and anguish of Him leaving the disciples to go to the cross, and they knew what happened to Him, bleeding and dying, Jesus comes in His resurrected form to them, and He reveals Himself to them, to these troubled spirits - and what does He pronounce to them? Can anybody tell me? What does He pronounce to them? 'Peace be with you', and then what did He do? Can you remember? He showed them His hands, and He showed them His side - that's where the peace comes, through the precious blood, through what He suffered for us that we might have this supernatural peace. Do you know what He did next? What did He do next? He breathed on them the Holy Spirit, because He's the only One who can bring that peace. Is He not Wonderful?

Warren Weirsbe has a marvellous write up on this whole verse, but sums it all up - I gave it to you the first week - the whole verse like this: 'He's Wonderful, that takes care of the dullness of life. He is Counsellor, that takes care of the decisions of life. He is Mighty God, that takes care of the demands of life. He is Everlasting Father, that takes care of the dimensions of life. He is Prince of Peace, that takes care of the disturbances of life'. Listen: if the government of your life is on His shoulder, you will experience the wonder of His name.

Father, we just now ask that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and His peace may go with us all, now and forevermore. Amen.



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