

FULFILLED CHRISTIAN LIVING IN A PAGAN WORLD
"Part XII: STEADY Inner Peace Though Facing An Evil Environment"
(1 Peter 5:12)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) There are many challenges to a steady peace in our world, even for the believer:

(a) One day last March while traveling home from working at the church, I made a left onto Tarringford Street (south) at the Apple House convenience store. As I was in the turn, I saw a hand come out of a small red vehicle parked at the corner by the store, and an object hurtled through the air and bounced on my van's roof! The incident made me lose my concentration enough that I had to jerk my wheel to stay on the road! I came to a stop down the road and tried to turn back to intercept the rock throwers, but they saw me turn, so they wheeled out of the lot and headed quickly off down East Main.

I later asked the police what I could do about it and they said that my report was useful only if damage had actually occurred! In other words, either the windshield had to break, or I had to get into an actual accident to proceed further! That's unjust to say the least!

(b) Norm and Fran West, missionaries who spoke here a while ago and who went to Turkey, wrote in their recent prayer letter of an amazing incident. One of their co-workers, Keith, was on a national TV program in Turkey which ran an expose of "Ugly Missionaries". The host referred to Keith by that phrase repeatedly, and asked him, "What is the terrible thing that you missionaries are guilty of doing?" Keith pointed out that he was teaching that Jesus was not just a prophet, but the Savior, the only way to God. By implication, Mohammed was not a true prophet! Keith was since then arrested and held for questioning but released as Turkish law does not **now** implicate him as breaking the law! It's tough in Turkey, and it's very unfair for law-abiding missionaries who want to obey God!

(2) I have talked with several Christians this past month who, on a variety of issues have experienced great injustices at work, school, home or from other believers! The challenges to finding and keeping a steady, stable peace continue to mount up in our daily lives due to the **evil** that we face all the time, and from seemingly all directions!

Well, how can we KEEP a mind of peace with this challenge so persistently threatening that peace within?!

(We turn to the "Need" section of the message . . .)

Need: "I am having a problem gaining STEADY peace within! On the one hand, godly Christians may minister to settle me, and I find solace from reading God's Word. But evils at work, home, school or even church often interrupt that peace with turmoil! Any ideas?!"

- I. Peter's readers faced handling "the difficulty . . . of . . . fiery . . . sufferings", so he told them to take a stand in God's grace as variously taught throughout the epistle to STAY victorious IN life's trials, 1 Peter 5:12c (Alford, The Grk. Test., v. IV, p. 386).
- II. If we plug this SUMMARY command into the many lessons given throughout 1 Peter, we discover entire agendas for STEADY spiritual PEACE in major areas of life's troubles (as follows):
 - A. Dwelling Above Depression Over Evil Trials - **Whenever** we strain through differing with the world's values, believers AVOID depression by using God's "**joy**" agenda, 1:1-9!
 1. The believer must trust God's promise of **eternal** bliss to offset being depressed over **current** secular trials, 1 Peter 1:3-4.
 2. Since he must trust God to **handle** this tension, the very **struggle to trust itself** also matures his faith, causing him great and unspeakable **joy** in knowing he is being disciplined, 1:8-9!
 3. **Thus, always believing these facts will itself steadily keep us full of joy and douse depression in the bud, 1 Peter 5:12!**
 - B. Dwelling Above Wrath Over Unjust Persecution - **Whenever** we face unjust persecution, believers AVOID taking revenge by recalling God's "**vocational**" agenda where persecution is a high calling:
 1. Peter revealed that unjust persecution is the highest calling for humans in human history, 1 Peter 1:10-12.
 2. Accordingly, trusting this fact to be so thrills the believer and **sustains a marvelous attitude under unjust persecution, 13!**
 - C. Dwelling Above Concern About Evil Governments - **Whenever** believers are bothered about rulers, they AVOID sin by using God's "**heavenly citizenship**" agenda where **all** rulers are "drafted" by God to advance truth, 1 P. 2:11-17 with Ac. 17:26-27. Thus, they (1) submit to government where they **can also** obey God (2:16-18) **OR** (2) disobey rulers when God orders it (Acts 5:29) as **God's best means of spreading the truth, whichever the case may be!**
 - D. Dwelling Above Unjust "Must" Relationships - **Whenever** believers face trials of relating to "must" ungodly relations (like slavery and marriage to carnal or unsaved people), they AVOID sin by using God's "**associate**" agenda to handle personal costs from doing good to partners (4:19) and copy Christ's example, 1 P. 2:21.
 - E. Dwelling Above Witnessing Trials - **Whenever** they must defend their faith, believers AVOID defeat with God's "**witnessing**" agenda:
 1. They trust God's protection from unnerving failure before the ungodly by being considerate of the lost, 1 Pet. 3:8-12.

2. They replace fear of the ungodly with a GREATER fear of the Lord when put into witnessing encounters, 1 Pet. 3:13-15.
 3. They trust God's promised, sovereign provision to have an answer **IF** they do the apologetics homework God **assigns before** their encounters, 1 Peter 3:15; Mtt. 10:18-20; John 14:26!
 4. They trust God's promised witnessing effectiveness for using dignity in **how** they speak with opponents, 1 Peter 3:15b-16!
- F. **Dwelling Above Fatigue From Troublemakers** - **Whenever** believers tend to wear down from relating to the ungodly, they AVOID collapse by using God's "**energizer**" **agenda** of leaning on His Spirit for the vigor to face others **up to 120 years** (Noah), 3:18-4:1; Gn. 6:3.
- G. **Dwelling Above Evil Social Decay** - **Whenever** believers worry over society's decay from Satan's influence on it (4:4-6), they productively COUNTER by using God's "**social**" **agenda**: they pray, use their spiritual gifts in God's ways to edify the **Church**, and **through** it **society**, and trust God for **their own** social needs as well, 4:7-19
- H. **Dwelling Above Church Administrative Crises** - **Whenever** trials of church administration arise, believers AVOID defeat by using God's "**servant**" **agenda** to defeat Satan who fuels the trials with pride :
1. **Leaders** thus humbly shepherd and protect the flock, letting God tackle satanic rebellion that they can't **biblically** address; they gain motivation to do so by valuing God's eternal approval to keep them **not** using man's effort to counter rebellion, 1-4, 8!
 2. **Subordinates** likewise humbly submit to the leadership, 5:5, 8.
 3. **Both** leaders **and** subordinates look to God instead of self to repair, confirm, strengthen and rebuild if the **other** respective party errs in its role and harms anyone in any way, 1 Peter 5:7-11!

Lesson Application: ***STEADY spiritual peace comes through noting that unrest arises from handling evil by human effort, but that God has competent agendas in grace for responding to wickedness no matter what form it takes! (1) We must believe on Christ for salvation (Jn. 3:16) and (2) apply 1 Peter's input wherever needed as agendas for steady peace over ALL evils we face!***

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

Henry F. Lyte was a pastor in the 1800s who bore great physical weaknesses all of his life.

He suffered with asthma from childhood, but studied to earn a Doctorate from Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland. After graduation, he took a succession of small parishes finally to settle in the pastorate on the English seacoast in Devonshire in 1824.

The fishermen there were sturdy and rough, and this physically weak pastor had a tough time ministering with his contrasting frailties before these hardy people. Yet, they loved his care and kindness, and put up with him for the love and kindnesses he had to offer.

Finally, Henry Lyte contracted tuberculosis and resigned the pastorate to leave for a warmer climate in Italy. For his last Sunday sermon, he almost had to crawl to reach the pulpit, and once there admonished his parishioners to prepare to meet their Maker as was he. Leaving that pulpit to die in Italy, he went into his study and penned a hymn about God's strength and man's weakness. He handed it to a relative, and left for Italy where he died not long afterwards.

Belgian survivors of World War I heard nurse Edith Cavel sing Henry Lyte's hymn as she stood before a German firing squad to die for sheltering British, French and Belgian soldiers. The doomed on board the Titanic sang it as the ship slipped beneath the frigid north Atlantic waters. The words to Henry Lyte's song read:

"Abide with me: fast falls the eventide;

The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide:

When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,

Help of the helpless, O abide with me!"

God permitted Henry Lyte to be born into a frail body in preparation for his greatest achievement in life -- the hymn "Abide With Me" penned through dying in grace after 54 years of suffering!

God has agendas for facing trials and evil with lasting peace, and they all start by our abandoning human effort for the provisions of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit! **Perfect, steady peace is the work of God, not man!** It comes by **faith** in God!