

# The Sure Road to Peace

by Alan Redpath

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*Obedience to God's commandments is the key to experiencing peace and righteousness in one's life.*

**Duration:** 39:00

**Scripture:** Isaiah 48:9-20, Revelation 18:4

**Topics:** "Peace"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the simplicity of the road to revival, which is obedience to God's commandments. He highlights the importance of not only hearing God's word but also putting it into practice. The preacher emphasizes that while God freely forgives by His grace, He expects a high level of performance from those who have been forgiven. The sermon emphasizes the need for submission, humility, and obedience in order to experience the outpouring of God's blessings. The preacher also calls for separation from sinful behaviors and urges listeners to heed God's voice and turn away from disobedience.

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## Transcript

Let us look to God in prayer, shall we? We thank Thee, dear Lord, that there is a place, a place of calm and of rest, near to the heart of God. Lord, may each of us learn what it is to abide, that we may bring forth fruit, and that our lives may be lived for Thy praise and glory. Now speak to us through Thy Word today, may it bring its comfort, its challenge, just that word to suit our individual need.

Search us out, don't let us escape what Thou hast for us. Make us listen as if we're the only person in this place, or listening by radio, who matters to Thee. Hide Thy servant behind the cross, and let us see Jesus only.

The cry of the heart of everyone in this place is, Sir, we would see Jesus. Fulfill that prayer and answer it for Thy name's sake. Amen.

Our text for this morning's message, you will find in the 48th chapter of the Prophecy of Isaiah, the portion which was read to us earlier by Pastor Durie, Isaiah chapter 48, and I want to read to you the 18th verse. Verse 18. Oh, that Thou hast hearkened to my commandments.

Then had Thy peace been as a river, and Thy righteousness as the waves of the sea. There's something about the very tone and content of that verse that claims my immediate attention. For here is a lament

from the heart of God.

There's a suggestion here that things might not have been what they are, that they didn't have been what they have been, if only I had hearkened unto His command. There's a suggestion too that this word is not spoken to us by some ruthless dictator seeking to wreak vengeance upon a disobedient people, but spoken to us by a Father in heaven who has a remedy to meet our need, if only we're prepared to fulfill the condition. Of course, I'm fully aware that this word is spoken primarily to a very insignificant nation, the Jew, Judah, just an insignificant people, and yet a people for whom God had a very significant purpose, because you will recall that through them was to be born one who was to be our Savior.

But I am deeply convinced that with equal meaning and with equal authority, these words are spoken today to this country, to the church in this country, to this church in which we assemble, and to your life and to mine. Beloved, there has never been a time when God's people have not been face to face with a great principle of evil, concentrated perhaps in the life of a city, its social life, its moral life. Whatever it may be, there's always been that same principle, that same spirit, even though perhaps it has taken many different forms through history.

Always there's been the conflict between the upsurge of human pride and the vain glory of man and the glory of God. Always that conflict between the pride of intellect and, on the other hand, integrity of character. Always the conflict between the planning of some great utopia without God, who alone can give anything permanence.

And this principle is as strong in Chicago today as when those massive walls of Babylon, a far bigger place than Chicago incidentally, when those massive walls enclosed their millions and dominated the whole world. And as I once again take this passage of scripture and apply it to your life and to mine and to this city, to this nation, the whole question is, what's our relationship to these things? As we live in the midst of it all and in the surrounding of it all and inevitably mingle amongst it, what's our attitude? What are we doing? How are we living? I believe we are warranted in applying to present circumstances everything that we read here of what plagued and captivated the people of God and his exposure of their need and his great call, his great summons to a deliverance. I wouldn't presume to suppose that I am here to speak to a nation, but I do presume to speak to a soul.

And in speaking to a soul and to many souls, incidentally, I speak to a nation which is simply composed of millions of such. And if each one of us, each one of us were to act upon and respond to this great lament from the heart of God before it is too late, what a dynamic part you and I could have in the liberty and freedom and release and the authority of his church. Let me therefore share with you that which God has spoken to my heart from this portion of his word with the earnest prayer that he will yet cause all of us not just to listen, but to hearken and to do.

So that what is spoken from this pulpit has some relevance to what goes on in our lives. That what is spoken from this place in the name of the Lord is not just a torrent of words which merely tickles our ears and interests our intellect, but rather the authoritative message of God the Holy Ghost for this church at this time in every department of its life. What value is a ministry unless it has that authority? God help us.

As I listen then to this lament, and I have tried to be silent during the days of this week, and that's one of the most difficult things in life, as you've probably discovered. As I've tried to be silent to listen to this lament from the heart of God and expose my own life to its message, I have seen some things here, I believe, as the Lord has shown them to me, that I want to share with you. In the first place, I think I see

here what I have called, as I faced God about it, the sadness of a missed responsibility.

Oh, that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments. It has often been said, a trite saying but a true one, that man's chief aim is to glorify God and not himself. I glorify God only when I obey him.

Not simply when I patronize him, not simply when I give some adherence to the church, but when I obey him. I am deeply impressed with the simplicity of the road to revival. Just 24 hours obedience in my life and your life and you'd be right in it.

In such a flood tide of Holy Ghost blessing that there would not be room to contain it in this church. Hence this complaint from the Lord. Oh, that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments.

Of course, there was nothing new in that. It had been planned from the very beginning of God's dealings with this people that, uh, obedience was the key which would unlock the door that would let out all the blessing that anybody could take. And disobedience was a sure way to lose it.

I would like just to read a passage of scripture for authority for that statement. You remember these tremendous words in Deuteronomy chapter 30, verse 15. See, I have set before thee this day life and good, death and evil, in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply, and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

But if thine heart turn away so that thou wilt not hear, but shall be drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, I denounce unto you this day that ye shall surely perish and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore choose life that both thou and thy seed may live.

And in case there is some dispensationalist listening to me this morning, and someone who perhaps would say this is law and not grace, lest I imagine that this is but for the Jew and not for my own heart and my own life today in January in Chicago, let me remind you that the Lord Jesus said, Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in him, he that heareth my sayings and doeth them. He it is that I shall liken to a man who built his house upon a rock, and when the storms came and the floods descended and the winds blew upon that house, it fell not because it was founded upon a rock, and that rock was the rock of Obedience. God forgives freely by his grace, but he expects a high performance from the life that has been forgiven.

His free forgiveness and his free mercy are offered to us on the terms of simple faith and total commitment to the sovereignty of Jesus, but immediately there is the demand for totality of performance in the power that he gives. If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments. Yes, the one word which opens the door to the outpouring of the blessing of our Heavenly Father is submission, and the one word which shuts it is pride.

That's why at the very heart of the Christian revelation there is the cross of Jesus Christ, and that is the place upon which I would ask you to gaze in your soul today upon him who humbled himself and was obedient unto death, wherefore God hath highly exalted him and given him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. Something of the fruit of this obedience is revealed to us in our text. O, that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! Then, then would thy

peace have been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.

Peace as a river. Not a little stream that scarcely fills its little bed. Not just a little babbling, noisy brook at the beginning of its flow, so to speak, but a river, a river far down its course like the mighty Amazon, deep and placid.

A river able to bear great tonnage upon its surface, carrying in it the refuse of cities and towns and villages without contamination. A river not swept by storms, nor drained by drought, a great, deep, mighty, placid, flowing river, never anxious as to whether or not it can continue to flow, giving nourishment to all manner of plants and trees and shrubs that dig their roots into it. A river.

O, that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! Then thy peace would have been as a river, constant fullness, contact with the sinfulness, sinfulness, and foulest, and most degraded, yes, contact without contamination. An easy, certain, steady, deep, placid flow, giving nourishment not to a few, but nourishment to hundreds of lives who seek to draw from what you have, and from what I have, of the reality of Jesus Christ, a river. And thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.

I think, and this, of course, is only my personal preference, of all of God's creation, there's nothing I love so much as the ocean. I don't mean the shore at low tide when it's all dirty and slimy. I don't mean that.

Ah, no. But I mean right out in the midst where there's no land in sight. And where all around there are great, big, forty-foot waves, and they're crashing onto that ship, and I listen to the roar of them, and the power of them, and I smell the freshness of them, and the loveliness of them, and I see them dancing here and there, and I know that underneath them all, there's miles and miles of ocean, and the whole thing's so pure, and so grand, and so powerful.

Oh, that thou hadst hearken to my commandments, then would thy righteousness be as the waves of the sea, as pure, as fresh, as lovely, as fragrant, as powerful as a great ocean billow. Ah, but beloved, it hasn't been that way. No.

Peace, righteousness, a haunting memory for some listening to me this morning, and it's all because there was a failure at a point of obedience. Would you please notice from our text that it wasn't a question of failure in the practice of religion. To see it in its context, I go back to the first verse, and I listen to God launching upon this complaint against his people, and saying this, Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel.

Yes, they do all that, but not in truth, nor in righteousness. There had been a very fair show of worship, but it was all an outward thing, and certainly not a matter of the heart, because, as I read the fourth verse, God says, I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass. Beloved, let's get this.

Oh, may the Spirit of God just drive it into your mind, and heart, and into the depths, so that there can be no escaping it. Basic to this sadness of a missed responsibility was failure to submit to the will and to the purpose of God. Can I not trace lack of peace and righteousness to a lack and a lack of liberty and purity and power and freshness to exactly the same thing? At some point, and on some issue, and it is not my business to inquire where the Holy Spirit is doing that as I talk with you this morning in his name, at some point there has been obstinacy.

At some place there has been the unbending will and the stubborn mind which wouldn't yield and insisted on holding on to the reins of life in that situation. You remember? And isn't it amazing what the flesh can do in putting on a remarkable show of piety alongside an unbroken will and an unrepentant heart, isn't it? Isn't it amazing how far we can go, and all the time within a casing that's like steel. There is an argument with heaven, and ever since that took place, do you recall? Was it before your conversion or after it? I wonder.

God spoke to you about your associations, perhaps, and your friendships, and your habits, your practices, and your thoughts. Did he? Ah, but there was a stubborn obstinacy at that point, and ever since that happened, you said goodbye to peace and to righteousness. And you forget it in singing away, it is well with my soul.

The sadness of a missed responsibility. As I thought about this, my heart, my heart felt sad. But then I look again at this chapter, and God speaks to me again.

And he speaks to me about what I called the surety, the surety of a merciful redemption. Look at verse 9. For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. Verse 11.

For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it, for how should my name be polluted, and I will not give my glory to another. I don't, I don't profess to understand this. I merely make it a statement because I believe it, and I do believe lots of things that I don't understand.

Quite clearly, the language of this text is that of one who does not force his will arbitrarily upon his creatures, but rather of one who conditions his treatment of us by our response. Oh, but how long and how hard is the way of rejection. Level my life up to the life I have, the light I have, by his strength.

Keep his commandments by his power, and thy peace shall be as a river. But if I refuse, something happens, and something happens that need never have happened. Listen.

Verse 10. I have refined thee, but not with silver. I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.

I want to talk with you a moment how I wish that I was sitting down in your home today, or in your hospital where you are, or sitting with you, dear ones, here in church, just two or three of us, rather than having to speak to a crowd. I want to talk to you about the furnace. Let me be clear about this, that not all suffering is caused by disobedience.

The furnace through which I pass in life does not always indicate my unfaithfulness to God. Everybody has got some trial or other. Everybody.

There's a skeleton in every cupboard. It's a different one, but there's one there. There's a very big difference between the punishment of the ungodly and the furnace through which God puts his people.

Very big difference. Maybe there's a corner around which you're going in life, and I've never been there. And maybe there's a tunnel through which I'm passing, and you've never been either.

There's a common bond of sympathy that draws us together, therefore, because this happens to all. If you're not chastened, God says, you're not sons but bastards. But what I want to say is that if we are unfaithful, then you may expect a furnace the like of which an ungodly man doesn't know one thing about.

If I speak to one young Christian girl or man today who's let go of their chastity, God is going to put you through a hell on earth till you repent. A furnace the like of which you've never known a thing about. A furnace that you'll make you think you're going mad.

Start staring mad because you've let go the most cherished thing in life, your own sanctity and your own chastity. There's a furnace of severity and trial and heat and intensity through which a Christian goes when he disobeys God, that an ungodly man doesn't know a thing about. Oh, how many of God's people today are going through a furnace which need never have been, if only they'd been willing and obedient.

I want to talk theory to you, beloved. I just talk from my heart and from my own experience. I recall a time in my life, just can't recall the actual length, but I recall the time and the incident and the reason for it so clearly when, for I think it was almost a year, it seemed as if there was a blackout in my soul.

I began to talk to other people about the wonderful thing of going through darkness and what God has for us in the darkness. True. Began to speak about the maturity of a Christian whom God can trust to go through the dark and therefore does not need to be dependent upon feelings and upon emotion.

Perfectly true. I made a scapegoat of some of the greatest truths in to excuse my sheer downright disobedience and sin. Has that ever happened to you? Oh, amidst all the cruelty and luxury and wickedness of Babylon, those Jews spent 70 years in slavery that need never have been.

But listen, they were God's chosen people. And even though in captivity, his promises never let them go, they couldn't forget that they belonged to him and his covenant was made with them and they just could not slip out of his grasp. And yet, yet, they kicked against his will.

But you know, the furnace did its work. They were put into it because of their idolatry. And they came out of it never to worship an idol again.

The most precious thing following Babylonian captivity was their scripture, which they guarded and kept at all costs. Never again did they fall before idol worship. The furnace did its work.

May I say it's our friendly to you? Oh, Spirit of God, just drive this home now. Listen, the greatest tragedy is not pain, it's not suffering, not the mystery of this, but the sterility of it, the fruitlessness of it. That in spite of the fact that God puts me through the furnace, I harden my neck and I resist.

And I fail to respond to the fire of affliction. No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous. Nevertheless, afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Is anybody listening to my voice this morning in a spiritual Babylon? Oh, what could have happened if only, if only you hadn't taken that step out of the will of God. How long have you been there? Took God a year to deal with me. How long has it taken to deal with you? What peaceful hours I once enjoyed, how sweet their memory still, but they have left an aching void the world can never fill.

Has disobedience involved you in the coil of suffering and the difficulty and the tragedy of it, from which there seems no escape, no escape? Has God been pummeling, may I use that word reverently, pummeling Sunday by Sunday, day by day at your heart? But it's been like a case of steel. Beloved, one day you're going to give in, if you're a Christian. Oh, yes.

Of course, you can harden your heart to any affliction and any suffering, and just go on doing it till it lends you in a lost eternity. And dear friend, it won't be God's fault. But if you're a Christian, he's going to have his way with you yet.

But it's costing an awful lot, an awful lot to heaven, and an awful lot to you, and an awful lot to somebody else. But I want to tell you that that furnace need not continue. For my name's sake.

Oh, blessed truth, not for my merit, not for anything in myself, because the fire and the furnace of God's affliction have done their work when they have brought me just to be as dust and ashes they've burnt till they've left me like that. That's all. Does it seem hard when I tell you that that's exactly what God wants to do with his people, just to make them like that? He will not give his glory to another, says this chapter.

And when I come to recognize that it cannot be for my merit, but for his name's sake. Let downright submission take the place of stubbornness. Let utter obedience take the place of rebellion.

Let humility take the place of pride. And therefore, I have one last word to say. I shall probably lose my radio audience in saying it, but I must say it to you.

For I find in this passage of scripture something else that comes as a great clarion call to my soul today. A summons to a mighty recovery. Verse 20.

Go ye forth of Babylon, flee from the Chaldeans with a voice of singing. Declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth. Say ye, the Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob.

The clarion call from the throne of all power and all authority, speaking to the depths of my soul, here in church, here in Chicago, right now, get out. Get out from your bondage and out from under this rebellion, get out. It was a summons to an exodus.

It was a call to separation. It finds its echo in the call of the Lord to the church in the book of Revelation. Come forth out of her, my people, that ye be not partaker of her sins and that ye receive not of her plagues.

Now listen. Oh, I don't know that I shall ever again be able just to speak on this subject as God has burdened my soul to speak to you this morning. And I love so much the people who listen in the Lord and I tremble for anyone who may resist his voice and his word.

Listen. This is not God saying to you, give up all you know. Movies and shows and a few surface habits that, of course, if you're a Christian and you go on with the Lord, you don't want them.

That's all. It isn't God saying that. It is God with the sword of the Word and the authority like of which there's nothing in all the universe saying to you, stop it and get out from your sin of disobedience.

And stop fooling with the thing that's merely on the surface, but oh, that the sword might go down until there's soul surgery down in the depths of your personality and forever that friendship is broken. I can say this when I'm off the radio and I say it is the biggest burden of my ministry here in this dear church in Chicago that there are people who belong to this place who are living in sin. Woman with woman, man with man.

And you know it. Nothing on earth will stop you. Of course not.

No preacher ever can. Got yourself encased in steel. And I have wept and prayed and agonized and said, oh God, what's the matter with me? It's the matter with my ministry that has no effect.

It doesn't touch it. It leaves this kind of quagmire, this awful muddy mess of filth going on inside one of the greatest fundamental churches in America. And it's there.

If anybody wants to challenge me about it, I'll prove it. Not I, but the Lord says to you today, go ye forth. And the Spirit of God with the authority of the Word says, come out.

Let God burn out that spirit of worldly love. Come out from fellowship with darkness and evil. And you know what this means, don't you? And that's what makes us afraid.

It would be a dangerous thing ever to press an argument to a conclusion by saying that before you can help anybody else, you've got to be through the same thing yourself. And I'm not here to parade the unsaved days of the man who's preaching you today. But I tell you, when I heard this alarm bell in my own soul, and I knew that God called from me for a holy life above everything else, and nothing mattered but that, but an integrity and a transparency that would be right, not by my merit, but by His namesake.

I knew that His call must win and He must triumph, but I tell you, it was as if I was just being pulled and pulled away, right away from the quagmire and the sand. And very often, very often, even against the desire of my own sinful heart, pulled and dragged out of it by a power that was greater than I. And I was so afraid because I said, oh God, if you take me that way, I'm going to starve. I cannot live without this, and I cannot live without that, and I cannot go on without this.

How can I live without these things? They've become part of my life, part of my character. It seems such a desert between Babylon and Jerusalem. But God has said to me again this morning, and through these days, and through these years, the language of verse 21, they thirsted not when He led them through the desert.

He caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them. He claved the rock also, and the waters gushed out. He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

Has the furnace done its work in your life? Oh beloved, God would speak to you now and say to you, my child, the time of your discipline is fulfilled. The time of the furnace is over. I want to take the heat off, the pressure off.

I want you to be released. I want you to go free. But there comes a clarion call to you that will send you out of this church, and you'll go from this place, and you won't look at that which has pulled you, and you'll look straight in the face of that person with whom you've been associated, and you will say, I'm through! That's what God demands.

Oh, that thou hast hearkened to my commandments, then would thy peace have been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea. To him, my Jesus, I love thee, I know thou art mine. For thee, all the follies of sin, I resign.

Oh God, for Jesus' sake, grant that thy Spirit may have penetrated and shattered the resistance of any heart to thy will, and send us from this church today free in the power of an indwelling Saviour. God grant it, for thy name's sake. Amen.

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