

Goodnight, Irene – I Peter 5:14

I. Introduction:

- A. When I was a kid, we didn't have a television, but radios had been around for a few years, and we had one of those.
1. My mother let it play throughout the day to give her some company while my dad was at work.
 2. There were days when she would be happy, and she'd sing along with the songs she knew.
 3. As a result, I heard, and subconsciously learned, dozens and dozens of the popular songs of the 1950s.
 4. One of those melodies was called *"Goodnight, Irene."*
 - a. It was written in the 1880's and was first recorded by Leadbelly Leadbetter in 1933.
 - b. But the version I knew was performed by a group called the Weavers.
 - c. With a little research, I learned that a more modern rendition was made by Eric Clapton.
 - d. Maybe some of you are familiar with that version, but I don't know that I have ever heard it.
 5. The lyrics have evolved over the years, but the version I first learned went like this:
 - a. *"Last Saturday night I got married; Me and my wife settled down.*
 - b. *Now me and my wife are parted; Gonna take a little stroll downtown.*
 - c. *Irene goodnight, Irene; Irene goodnight; Goodnight Irene, Goodnight Irene; I'll see you in my dreams."*
- B. You may be thinking that is an awful way to introduce a gospel sermon, and perhaps you're right.
1. And you may also wonder how that has anything to do with the last message in our study of **I Peter**.
 2. The connection is in those two words: *"Irene"* and *"goodnight."*
 3. *"Goodnight"* may be the last thing we say to people before we go our separate ways.
 4. Peter was bringing his first epistle to a close, and in a sense he was saying, *"Goodnight everyone."*
 5. And the word which he used was *"peace."*
 6. In English he said, *"Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen."*
 7. In the Greek language, the word he used was *"eirene" (i-ray'-nay).*
 8. *"Eirene"* has developed over the years into the girl's name *"Irene."*
 9. Peter was saying something equivalent to *"Goodnight, Irene."*

II. The entire phrase which Peter gives us is sometimes called a **"BENEDICTION."**

- A. Benedictions are expressions of blessing to someone, usually at the end of religious service.
1. They have been around for millennia, and they are common in many religions.
 2. Catholicism and some Protestant churches use them quite frequently. And probably we should as well.
- B. In **Numbers 6**, Moses was directed by the Lord to tell his brother, the priest,
1. *"Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The LORD bless thee, and keep thee;*
 - a. *The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:*
 - b. *The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."*
 2. Essentially, that benediction was simply, *"May God bless you"* or *"It is my prayer that Jehovah bless you."*
 3. In my research I read several articles written by Jews, where the name of God was not spelled out, because they consider it too holy for human use.
 4. But still it was obvious that these words invoked the blessing of God, and Moses used the name *"Jehovah."*
- C. Whose blessing would you prefer: mine in my limited capacities, or the blessing of the infinite God, Jehovah?
1. You probably love the smile of your favorite person, but the smile of the Lord is far more important.
 2. God's smile means eternal life. It means eternal blessing.
 3. I can't keep you well; I can't keep you safe; I can't keep the wolf from your door, or protect you from death, but our God can.
 4. With the smiling face of the Lord toward us we can live in peace in this troubled world.
 5. With the smile of Jehovah we shall enjoy eternal peace.
 6. Those words at the end of **Numbers 6** contain a wonderful group of blessings.

- D. Similarly, many of the New Testament epistles, including all of Paul's, end in some sort of benediction.
1. They are worth more than a casual reading; they deserve to be studied in depth.
 2. We are doing that with Peter's benediction, but we can't study all of them right now.
 3. So I'll just read some of Paul's benedictions for you:
 - a. *"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."*
 - b. *"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen."*
 - c. *"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."*
 - d. *"Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen."*
 - e. *"Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen."*
 - f. *"The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen."*
- E. **Nearly all of these**, including the one's I didn't read, refer to **God's continued grace**.
1. We who were born sinners, need God's unmerited favor each and every day.
 2. **"Grace"** is perhaps a word which best summarizes the greatest gifts of God.
 3. We need grace not only for salvation but also for passing through each hour of the day.
 - a. Only in the Lord, and His will, do we live and move and have our being.
 - b. By Christ all things consist and continue, and if we want to thrive we need His grace.
 - c. If the Lord should withdraw His grace we'd all be dead in an instant.
 4. Paul recognized that need, and even Aaron's blessing made mention of God's graciousness.
 5. And underlaying that grace is God's love – something else which Paul mentions in his benedictions.
 6. Of course, each of these are directed toward God's people, not the unsaved, the unbeliever.
- F. Something else in nearly every one of Paul's benedictions is **how Christ** is **named** or **described**.
1. The blessings for which the apostle prayed were linked to **"the Lord Jesus Christ."**
 2. It isn't simply **"Jesus"** who blesses the Christian; it is Jesus who is the Christ, and who is the Lord.
 3. It is probably futile to seek a blessing from the one who is not personally our Lord and our God.
 4. Was Paul's Jewish mind going back to Aaron's benediction: **"The LORD (Jehovah) bless thee, and keep thee; The LORD (Jehovah) be gracious unto thee: The LORD (Jehovah) give thee peace"?**
 5. Jesus Christ is Lord because He is the Jehovah mentioned throughout the Old Testament.

III. In Peter's benediction he refers to one specific blessing: **PEACE** – **"eirene"** (i-ray'-nay). Why?

- A. Doesn't the context tell us?
1. I remind you that this letter is filled with references to the difficulties of the Christian life.
 2. Peter writes: **"Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations."**
 3. Your lives are filled with trials directly linked to your faith in Christ Jesus.
 4. **"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you."**
 5. **"If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye."**
 6. **"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."**
 7. In America we may not yet be suffering to the same degree and extent as those early brethren were.
 - a. But there are Christians, today in other places, who are suffering.
 - b. And there is nothing to stop Satanic persecution from beginning against us tomorrow.
 8. We all have need for peace.
- B. Remember that in **chapter 2** Peter told his readers, **"for even hereunto were ye called."**
1. It is a part of our ministry before the lost world, to absorb their abuse the way that Christ did.
 2. For **"Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."**
 3. But we are not like the Lord Jesus; we are not gods, and we don't innately possess the Lord's strength.

4. We need – we must have the peace of God to cope, to endure and remain faithful to our Saviour as the world spirals downward.
- C. One of the private conversations the Lord Jesus had with His disciples is recorded in **John 14**.
1. In **verse 22**: *“Judas (not Judas Iscariot) saith unto him... Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?”*
 - a. What Judas needed to learn was that it would be his job to manifest the Lord Jesus to the world.
 - b. He and the other disciples were to become evangelists and witnesses of the Lord and His grace.
 - c. He and the other disciples were the forerunners of those saints in Asia Minor and also of the saints in Post Falls, Idaho.
 2. *“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*
 - a. *He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.*
 - b. *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*
 - c. *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”*
 3. In this polarized world, the grace of peace is one of the things God’s servants need to help them in their ministries.
 4. Paul encouraged the persecuted saints in **Philippi** saying, *“the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”*
- D. During the night of Jesus’ birth, there appeared a number of God’s heavenly host, *“praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth **PEACE**, good will toward men.”*
1. But the Lord Jesus has told us that there is a sense in which he carried with him just the opposite.
 2. **Matthew 10:34** – *“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword.”* How is that Lord?
 3. It is because in Christ there is a line of demarcation, dividing the peoples of the world.
 4. There will be those who deny Him, and those who accept Him.
 - a. *“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.*
 - b. *But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.”*
 5. That division of humanity creates an animosity which flairs up from time to time in hatred and persecution against God’s people.
 6. And in the midst of a world where there is no peace, the servants of God need divine peace.
 7. That is to what Peter refers: *“Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus.”*
- E. From where, or from whom, does this blessing descend?

IV. Who is the **BENEFACTOR** of this blessing?

- A. There is no simple statement in this or the other scriptures and benedictions, but there is plenty of evidence to answer the question.
 1. Implied in Peter’s benediction is the Lord.
 2. But elsewhere, as Paul was bringing his epistle to the **Romans** to a close he said, *“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”*
 3. And a few verses later he wrote: *“Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.”*
 4. We need a constant flow of grace and peace from the God of all peace.
 5. Modern evangelicals may try to leave a different impression in their desire to win souls to Christ, but the Christian life is not easy. We need the continual blessings of the Saviour.

- B. Jesus said to us through His disciples, *“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”*
1. *“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”*
 2. *“Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”*
- C. It is a waste of time to search for peace in this world through psychology and psychotherapy.
1. True and lasting peace is not to be found in the mind, in changing perspectives or religions, or in drugs.
 2. I know that it is cliché, but in order to enjoy peace in a world where there is no peace, we need more of the Lord and a closer walk with Him. He is peace; He is the source of inner peace.
 3. The more time we spend in God’s Word and the more time we invest in prayer the more of God’s peace we will enjoy.
 4. David said in **Psalm 119:165** – *“Great peace have they which love thy law; and nothing shall offend them.”*
 5. *“The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace”* – **Psalm. 29:11.**
 6. Isaiah said, *“Thou (Lord) will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee.”* – **Isaiah 26:3.**
 7. The God of peace... the Christ who came to earth at Bethlehem two thousand years ago... in Him is the source of true peace in this world.
 8. Peace in this world is available.
- D. But sadly, I can’t finish this message without pointing to one other thing contained in this scripture.

V. Who are **BENEFICIARIES** of this benediction?

- A. Peter is not sharing these words or this prayer with anyone who is outside the Lord Jesus Christ.
1. *“Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.”*
 2. If you are not a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus, Peter is not praying that **you** might have peace.
 3. This is only for those who are children of God; those who are *“in Christ Jesus.”*
 4. And we aren’t talking about religion or church membership.
 5. I am talking about the new life there is in Christ’s salvation.
- B. I am not going to put any words in Peter’s mouth, but I will say it myself:
1. If you are yet in your unforgiven and unrepented sins, you don’t need peace.
 2. You still need the prerequisites for peace, which are entirely different.
 3. You need to feel the turmoil and confusion that comes with an understanding that you are separated from the God of peace.
 4. You need the misery which comes with the conviction of the Holy Spirit.
 5. Christians should be praying that the Lord make your life miserable in order to give you a glimpse of what your eternity is going to be.
 6. No matter how horrible your life in this world might currently be...
 - a. No matter how depressed, conflicted and in pain your spirit might be...
 - b. It is nothing compared to what you will experience throughout eternity, if you don’t come to Christ in repentance and faith.
 7. Yes, you do need God’s peace, but before that you need the misery of God’s conviction for your sin.
- C. **Romans 5:1** describes the source of peace with God – which is the basis of Peter’s benediction.
1. *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*
 2. **Ephesians 2:14** says that Christ is not just the source or cause of peace, but is actually the peace itself.
 3. *“But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace...”*
 4. Peace with God can only come through the sacrifice which Christ made on the cross.
 5. When that peace becomes ours, then we can talk about peace in the midst of a peaceless world.

D. What is it to be *"in Christ?"*

1. It is to be enveloped in God's saving grace, and in the washing away of the judgment our sins deserve.
2. It is to be wrapped in the righteousness of Christ, forever forsaking our own useless self-righteousness.
3. It is to be surrounded by the blessed promises of God in regard to eternity.
4. It is to be dwelling by faith in the mansion the Saviour has gone to prepare for us.

E. Let me take you back to that word *"eirene" (i-ray'-nay)* one more time.

1. It is translated *"peace"* eighty-nine times, but also three times in other ways.
2. Once it is rendered *"quietness"* which makes complete sense, and another time it is translated *"rest."*
3. But on one occasion it paints a different but interesting picture.
4. The Deacon Stephen was describing the occasion when Moses was trying to break up a fight between two men. This was well-known to the Jews to whom Stephen was preaching.
5. *"And (Moses) would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren, why do ye wrong one to another?"*
6. Stephen used the word *"eirene" (i-ray'-nay)* to express reconciliation between the quarreling parties – *"to set them at one again."*
7. The word *"peace"* speaks of a restoration of broken relationships.

F. This is what you and I need as sinners when standing before the holy God.

1. The fellowship which our first father had with God was broken by sin, and that relationship has been broken ever since.
2. We need the peace which can only be created through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.
3. Christ's blood is available to cover all our transgressions against God and to restore the relationship which has been broken.
4. In the second verse of his letter – as Peter was beginning his epistle – he spoke of *"grace"* and *"peace"* after referring to the *"sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."*
5. There is only one way for Peter's benediction to apply to you, it is through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

G. As I have said, you and I need the peace of which Peter was writing.

1. You need that peace.
2. It will only be granted to those who will humbly acknowledge that need – their sinful condition – and who will put their trust for that peace in the bloody hands of the Christ on the cross.
3. Will you repent and trust Christ today?