Rockwood Church of Christ
The Proclaimer
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Behold, I Thought; Now I Know

Despite being a leper, Naaman the Syrian army commander retained his pride. Didn't his status merit a dramatic healing ceremony from Elijah? *"Behold, I thought, 'He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy'"* (**2 Kings 5:11**). Instead, Elijah had sent a servant to instruct Naaman to dip seven times in the Jordan River. How undignified! But when he set aside his prideful anger and obeyed, the cleansed leper's *"Behold, I thought"* became *"Now I know"* (v. 15).

This wasn't the first time someone's think-so turned out to be wrong. When Abraham and Sarah journeyed to the Philistine city of Gerar, Abraham told King Abimelech that Sarah was his sister (just as he had done in Egypt many years earlier). Abimelech promptly took Sarah into his harem, but the Lord just as promptly ordered him to return her to her husband. The indignant king demanded an answer from Abraham: "*Why have you done this thing*?" Abraham's excuse was, "*I thought surely the fear of God is not in this place, and they will kill me on account of my wife*" (**Genesis 20:1- 11).** Yes, he thought – but was dreadfully wrong.

Looking back at the time he had been a Jesus-hating abuser of Christians, Paul said, "*Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth*" (**Acts 26:9**). Like Abraham and Naaman, Paul had to come to grips with how utterly wrong he had been.

What a difference between "*Behold, I thought*" and "*Now I know*"! The line of demarcation: Learning and obeying God's will.

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I Have Made Peace with God

There is nothing more important in life than having peace with God. There can be no assurance of salvation or hope of heaven without having peace with God. Therefore, we should all desire to have peace with our Maker.

But how can we have such peace? The basic answer to the question is that peace comes by receiving the forgiveness of sins. Sin brings disturbance and causes discord between man and God (**Isaiah 59:1-2**). As long as one remains in sin, there can be no fellowship or peace with God.

Occasionally, a person who has shown little or no interest in spiritual things might make the statement: "*I have made my peace with God.*" The Bible teaches that the Lord will be the final judge on the Day of Judgment. Only the Lord qualifies to judge and to determine the ultimate destiny of souls. However, it is not being judgmental or self-righteous to affirm that one has no peace with God until one has obeyed the Gospel and been forgiven. Simply claiming to have "*made peace with God*" does not make it so, unless the one who makes that statement has submitted to the Gospel of Christ.

Consider what Paul wrote about peace with God: "*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (**Romans 5:1**). Peace comes when one is "*justified by faith.*" But when does that occur? When does faith justify? In the next chapter of Romans (chapter 6), the answer is given: "*But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness*" (**Romans 6:17- 18**). Notice that the Christians in Rome to whom Paul wrote were "*made free from sin*" when they "*obeyed*" the Gospel. Earlier in Romans chapter 6, Paul states that the Romans had been baptized into Christ, and had been raised to walk in newness of life (**Romans 6:3- 4**). This is when and how one can know that he or she truly has made peace with God. When one's faith leads one to repent, confess Christ, and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins, then one has a scriptural reason for claiming to have peace with God. Nevertheless, apart from obedience to the Gospel, claiming to have peace with God is to make an unscriptural statement. May we all search the scriptures and our lives to be sure we have made peace with God.

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