**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**ISAIAH-057. A RIVER OF PEACE AND WAVES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"Oh that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea."*

*Isaiah 48:18*

**I. The Wonderful Thought of God here.**

This is an exclamation of disappointment; of thwarted love. The good which He purposed has been missed by man's fault, and He regards the faulty Israel with sorrow and pity as a would-be benefactor balked of a kind intention might do. O Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered thee. If thou hadst known ... the things that belong unto thy peace!

**II. Man's opposition to God's loving purpose for us.**

To have hearkened to His commandments would have enabled Him to let His kindness have its way.

It is not only our act contrary to God's Law, but the source of that act in our antagonistic will, which fatally bars out the possibility of God's intended good from us. It is not hearkening which is the root of not doing.

That possibility of lifting up our puny wills against the all-sovereign, Infinite Will is the mystery of mysteries.

The fact that the mysterious possibility becomes an actuality in us is still more mysterious. If we could solve those two mysteries, we should be far on the way to solve all the mysteries of man's relation to God, and God's to man.

A will absolutely submitted to Him is His great ideal of human nature. And that ideal we all can thwart, and alas, alas! we all do. It is the deepest mystery; it is the blackest sin; it is the intensest folly.

Sin is negative as well as positive. Not to hearken is as bad as to act in dead opposition to.

**III. The lost good.**

The great purpose of the divine Commandment is to show us, for our own sakes, the path that leads to all blessedness.

Peace and Righteousness, or, in more modern words, all well-being and all goodness, are the sure results of taking God's expressed Will as the guide of life.

These two are inseparable. Indeed they are one and the same fact of human experience, looked at from two points of view.

The force of the metaphor in both clauses is substantially the same. It suggests in both--Abundance--Continuity--Uninterrupted Succession. But regarded separately each has its own fair promise. As a river-- flowing softly, not stagnant--that suggests the calm and gentle flow of a placid and untroubled stream refreshing and fertilising. As waves of the sea, these suggest greater force than river. The image speaks of a righteousness massive and having power and a resistless swing in it. It is the more striking because the waves of the sea are the ordinary emblem of rebellious power. But here they stand as emblem of the strength of a submissive, not of a rebellious, will. In that obedience human nature rises to a higher type of strength than it ever attains while in opposition to the Source of all strength.

Contrast--Whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

**IV. The lost good regained.**

God has yet a method to accomplish His loving desire. Even those who have not hearkened may receive through Christ the good which they have sinned away. In Him is peace; in Him is Righteousness, which comes from faith. Hear, and your soul shall live.