One of the devil's tricks is to take something good and overdo it until it becomes sinful. For example, work is good. But when work consumes us and we no longer have time for family or God, then work has become the devil's tool. Or another example, family is good. But when people start to lie, steal, or even kill for family, then family has become like the Mafia. The devil tempts us to abuse even God's best blessings.

And what about that blessing of peace? Christianity promises peace. When Jesus was born, the angels proclaimed, *Peace on earth, good will to men.* Peace is a good. But watch out! In the name of peace, Satan and the world tempt us to give up the truth. In the name of peace, they tempt us to compromise so that in the end we lose the peace that Jesus brings. You see, Jesus brings a different kind of peace - a peace that came through division and that causes division. Let's take to heart Jesus' words here as we focus on the theme: **JESUS BRINGS A DIFFERENT KIND OF PEACE.**

Jesus says: *I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed!*

These do not sound like the words of a peacemaker, but Jesus was a different kind of peacemaker. He did not use fuzzy words to muddle what he meant. People use fuzzy words so that everyone can read their own meaning into them. Then they can seem to have peace, even though they still do do not agree.

During his earthly ministry Jesus clearly spoke God's Word even when it stirred people up. For example, he called the Pharisees to account because they claimed that they did enough to be good in God's sight. Jesus called them *white-washed tombs.* They appeared good and clean on the outside, but inside they were dead and rotten like a corpse. The Pharisees and other Jewish leaders did not like Jesus' words. The labeled Jesus a troublemaker, not a peacemaker.

With his words, *I have come to bring fire on the earth,* Jesus was looking ahead to a greater fire that would come. He was looking ahead to that fire that his baptism of suffering and death would bring. He uses fire and baptism figuratively. He had already been baptized with water by John the Baptist. But he looks ahead to the suffering that would be poured out on him and calls that a *baptism.*

What a price he paid to win your peace! One of our hymns puts it this way: *Stricken, smitten, and afflicted, see him dying on the tree!* 'Tis the Christ, by man rejected; yes, my soul, 'tis he, 'tis he. So Jesus says here: *How distressed I am until it is completed!*

But his greatest distress was not his disciples deserting him, or the nails in his hands, or the ridicule of the soldiers and crowd. His deepest distress echoes in his words: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* To bring you peace, Jesus endured the division that goes beyond all imagination: forsaken by the Father.

On that cross Jesus became our sin and carried our guilt. Our sin divided us from God. As that hymn also says: *If you think of sin but lightly nor suppose the evil*
great, here you see its nature rightly, here its guilt may estimate.

Yet as great as our sin is, Jesus is greater. As deep and wide as our division from God was, Jesus bridges it. As bloody as our warfare was against God, Jesus’ blood brings you peace. From that cross Jesus called out: **It is finished**. His baptism of suffering in your place was now completed.

What a deep and dreadful baptism Jesus knew was ahead of him! But willingly, in grace and mercy toward you, in obedient love to his Father, he went through it and completed it to bring you peace. Through division, through separation from the Father’s love, through his god-forsakenness, Jesus brought you peace - a different kind of peace.

He brought you peace with God, the peace of sins forgiven, the greatest peace, the eternal peace. He is the **Prince of Peace**. How true the angels’ words that declared peace on earth to us sinners because of God’s good will that sent our Savior from sin! How great the words of promise from our risen Savior’s lips: **Peace be with you. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven!**

Jesus brings a different kind of peace. He achieved your peace through his distress on the bloody, god-forsaken cross. And this peace that came through division causes division. It divides us from the world.

Jesus says: **Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division.** After saying this, Jesus then describes how this division would split even the family. **From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.**

When Jesus changes a person’s heart so that they turn away from sin and follow him, those who still belong to the world hate them. To follow Jesus is to confess him as our only Savior, the only way to heaven. And confessing that Jesus is the only way to heaven proclaims that all who do not follow him are going to hell. People do not like to hear that. They want you to compromise. They want you to say that Jesus is one of the ways to heaven. Then they can have their own peace of mind even if they do not follow Jesus.

But such a compromise betrays Jesus. If you could get to heaven some other way, why would he have come and suffered so on the cross? Or compromising and saying that Jesus is only part of the answer robs him of the glory. He went to the cross to be your total Savior, not a partial Savior. He suffered total god-forsakenness to fully ransom you and completely rescue you. Give him the full glory as your one and only Savior.

Not long after his death and resurrection we see the fiery division the Gospel of Jesus causes. The Apostles were arrested by the Jewish council in Jerusalem. Persecution against Christians broke out. Later as Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire, the government put many Christians to death for refusing to honor the state religion. Or consider how when Martin Luther in the 1500’s preached Jesus alone as our Savior, apart from works or obedience to the Pope, he was excommunicated and declared an outlaw. Jesus spoke to truth about division.

And his words are true still today. **Do you think I came to bring peace on**
earth? No, I tell you, but division. Do not fall under the world's spell that preaches compromise of the truth for the sake of peace. Remember that Jesus brings a different kind of peace. He brings you peace with God through the forgiveness of sins purchased by his holy, precious blood. That peace divides us from those who do not believe. To compromise is to forsake Jesus and join them.

So watch out when the world preaches peace and makes us feel guilty for standing up for the truth. Rather keep standing boldly. But make sure you are standing up for God's truth.

You see, when it comes to our own opinion, our own rights, our own wants and preferences, then Christian love not only compromises, but Christian love gives up what is ours. It surrenders all for the sake of the Gospel. That is what Jesus teaches when he tell us to turn the other cheek, to walk the extra mile, to pray for our enemies. Then follow the way of peace.

But when it comes to God's truth revealed in Scripture, do not give an inch, do not compromise a letter, do not tolerate any error. That is especially trying when other churches or Christians or even our own family that do compromise the truth criticize us for causing divisions. It is easy for us to start to feel guilty. We want peace and unity. Where can we turn for comfort?

First, remember Jesus’ words here. He made it clear that his truth brings division. When standing up for the truth of Gospel seems to destroy peace, do not let that trouble you. Jesus said that would happen.

Second, reinforce yourself in God's truth as you study his Word. So that when stand up for the Gospel, it is his Gospel your standing up for and not yours.

Finally and most importantly, remember the different kind of peace that Jesus brings. As you hold on to him as your only Savior, you have peace with God. That is far greater than any lose of earthly peace we might suffer. You have peace with God through the forgiveness of sins.

So bring your guilt to him if the world makes you feel guilty. Even when we do the right thing and stand up for the truth, we know that our thoughts and words are stained by sin. Maybe we were not clear enough, may we were too harsh or rude, maybe sinful pride that we know the truth and they do not lingers in our hearts. Each day bring your sin and guilt to Jesus. He paid for all those sins. That is the peace he brings to you. The peace of forgiveness. Peace with God through his blood.

With this peace in your heart, you can live at peace no matter what kind of fire or division rages around you. Jesus is your one and only Savior. In him is peace. He brings you a different kind of peace. Rest securely in his peace. Amen.

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