

An Abiding Peace

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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. JOHN 14:27

Whenever there is turmoil or trouble, violence or war, our world talks much about peace, about some lasting peace, which abides. In the troubles of life we speak of personal peace, of inner harmony, and how to obtain it. Likewise when we are confronted with family violence and marital strife, and our world seeks solutions to the problems of peace in the home, that there might be unity, peace, harmony between husband and wife, between parents and children. The search for peace enters every area of life and human existence. Thus, harmony with our environment or ecological peace has become a preoccupation in our day. Our society produces a variety of organizations, efforts, groups, and action committees each with their own vision of peace and harmony and solutions to the problems in the world.

But the results always fall short. They never really succeed. Peace among nations abides for a moment and is gone, new enemies arise, new violence and strife. Inner peace of mind, tranquility and hope are driven out by new problems and troubles. Human cures for the problems of our world always seem to bring with them new problems, unforeseen side effects. The whole history of mankind is one of a constant failure to obtain or realize any abiding peace even in one small area of human life. Not even with sickness and disease is there any abiding success, for there appear new strains of diseases which are resistant to the drugs that once cured them. Conquer one disease and a new and more horrible epidemic appears. Not even wealth or power can bring peace or security, for men fall from power, the economy experiences a recession, inflation takes hold and what we have set aside for protection slips away or becomes valueless.

The reality is that as far as man is concerned there is no peace. The peace which this world gives never abides. Year after year the same problems confront us. Each generation is heir to the problems of the generations preceding it, both new and old. Nor do any of the self-help religions, you-can-do-it problem-solving seminars, you-can-succeed movements bring any real peace. Nor for that matter do any of these movements, warmed-over and clothed in "Christian" religious garb afford any real peace because they are still man's peace rooted in man's work.

The reason for this utter failure is given clear expression in the Christian Bible, the Word of God. The reason lies in man's sin and guilt before the living God of heaven and earth. "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked." Isaiah 48:22. The judgment of God is that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," Romans 3:23. Man is separated from God, he is out of harmony with him. In fact he has become God's enemy. The Bible declares that the fault for this lies wholly with man who seeks his own way and invents evil, that therefore, "God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions," Ecclesiastes 7:29. So deep is this reality that we are born "dead in trespasses and sins," Ephesians 2:1, Psalm 51:5.

The result, contrary to much modern philosophy which also passes itself off as Christian, is that man is not good, but evil by nature, and God does not love him as he is, but he is the object of God's holy anger with sin. Therein lies the reason there is no peace. God stands against us, and we are exposed to His divine righteous judgment. The whole creation lies under the curse of His anger, "for the wages of sin is death," Romans 6:23. That curse of God extends to the whole life of the world, to death in all its forms and causes. It embraces our life in the world, in the home, and with our neighbor. "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked," Proverbs 3:33. "God is angry with the wicked every day," Psalm 7:11. Therefore there is no peace.

It is against the stark reality of our sin and guilt that the same Word of God sets for the wonder of God's divine love and grace. It sets forth the wonder that God, out of mere grace, has chosen unto Himself a people in Jesus Christ, a people whom He wills to adopt as His children, to reconcile to Himself and set before Him as His own. To them He wills to give the blessing of an everlasting peace in a new heavens and earth, Ephesians 1:3-6. It is God Who makes that peace, in love sending His own, only begotten Son into the world to assume our flesh and blood, that He might

suffer and die, bearing the wrath of God against the sins of His people and the curse of God due to us, Matthew 1:21, 20:28. This Jesus Christ, as the shepherd of the sheep given Him of God, came that He might lay down His life in the place of all His own, and thereby obtain an abiding peace with God, John 10:9-18.

Of this work Jesus Himself speaks in the last night before His death saying unto His disciples, and in them to His people, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you?" John 14:27. That peace is not like the world's peace which never abides. It is peace with God. It is peace with God. It is a peace which He establishes in His cross, by His suffering and death under the wrath of God for the sins of His people. It is the ransom price by which our sin and guilt are covered that we might have peace with God and His justice be satisfied. It is a peace which Jesus leaves with His people even as He departs this world. For dying on the cross, He would also rise again from the dead, and having obtained that peace and life for us would go unto God in heaven. That peace He now gives unto all His own by the work of His Spirit from heaven that it might also abide in our hearts. Therefore Jesus speaks of a peace which He both leaves with us and gives unto us. That peace by His death and resurrection, stands beyond death and sorrow and all the troubles and tumults of this world. In it is eternal life, the promise of an abiding comfort now, in this life, at peace with God, and the assurance of an eternal peace in life with God in eternal heavenly glory.

That peace which is God's peace in Jesus Christ is the glad tidings of the gospel. It is God's great work of grace, which God has established with His people in Jesus Christ that He should be our God and Father. Man did not earn it. Man cannot make such a peace. This peace alone abides. It is God's gift in Jesus Christ, imparted by His Spirit, the Comforter. By the power of that peace with God we are born anew, called out of the world that perishes into a new and abiding relationship with God - - to know Him in His love through faith in Jesus Christ. In the light of that peace of God, the world's peace and its labor for a peace of its own without God is nothing but the false and proud attempt of sinful man to obtain his own peace and salvation by his own works. Against it the Word of God declares, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast," Ephesians 2:8.

God's Word therefore commands all men to repent of their sin, to turn from the false peace of this world which cries, "Peace, Peace," when there is no peace, and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. To such who by His grace repent and believe, He promises forgiveness of sins and life eternal, even His everlasting peace. "Peace I leave unto 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." John 14:27.