

PEACE IN ADVERSITY

By

Curtis Dickinson

While world leaders are traversing the globe to sit at peace conferences, back home their people are busily engaged in building the instruments of war. “When they are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them...” (1 Thess. 5:3). A peace made under the United Nations, which from the beginning has ruled out God” is the very opposite of the peace promised through Christ.

The word “peace” occurs nearly 400 times in the Bible, yet it is woefully lacking in the world and many will never experience it. Then what did the angels mean when they said “And on earth peace among men in whom He is well pleased” (Luke 2:11)? These words are repeated innumerable times throughout this month, but with little conviction.

The expression is usually misquoted as “Peace on earth, good will toward men.” But a more accurate translation is “And on earth peace among men in whom He (God) is well pleased.” That qualification narrows the promise considerably. There is no promise of peace to one who lives in defiance of God and His order. Instead there will be stress, frustration, guilt, confusion, depression, sorrow, hopelessness, and finally death at Judgment.

Peace, as promised by God is an individual matter. If you are looking forward to a time of world peace in this present age, you are in for a disappointment. Conflicts will continue to increase. Nations will war. Violence will escalate, and Christians will always be opposed by the majority. Jesus said, “In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Jesus is our sample of peace in adversity. He lived under an oppressive system when political and religious officials were viciously corrupt. He had neither political clout nor financial resources, and was surrounded by enemies who hated him and sought to destroy him and defeat his purpose. Yet, He displayed great peace. He led no demonstrations, and refused to join the rebels to overthrow those in power. Instead He calmed the crowds, taught them the truth of God, and sent them home to reflect on His words.

He was at peace with God, being completely free of sin. He could say, “I do always the things that are pleasing to [the Father]” (John 8:29), and the Father could say, “This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17). His obedience was not out of fear of punishment, as with many, but because of a desire to do The Father’s will. “I seek not my own will,” He said, “but the will of Him that sent me (John5:30).

We also can be free of sin and have peace with God through Christ, who died to meet the penalty for our sin, “having made peace through the blood of His cross” (Col. 1:20). That peace comes only after the guilt is gone. This is not done by setting it aside through

psychology, or by learning how to “cope” with sin and guilt. It is erased only by applying the death of Jesus, as summed up by Peter to the great crowd at Pentecost: “Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins” (Acts 2:38). Religious leaders may forever debate the place and value of baptism, but the fact is that true peace comes to those who humbly submit to those simple instructions of the apostle. Therefore, “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:10).

Jesus was at peace with His own purpose and actions. His aim was to please His Father. “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me...” (John 4:34). He made no attempt to please the public, knowing that “that which is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15). Much stress and disappointment is due to measuring our success by the standards set by the world rather than by our Creator. Millions are filled with frustration and anxiety” because they have set their goals on things of the world and have not been able to attain them. Jesus said “A man’s life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses” (Luke 12:15). Wealth must never define the Christian ambition. Rather, our goal should be to fulfill God’s purpose to have us in His image. There is nothing, outside of our own wills, that can defeat that purpose. Neither sickness, poverty, enemies, tragedy, nor anything else outside of ourselves can separate us from God or keep Him from transforming us into the new creatures He wants us to be. “Great peace have those who love Your (God’s) law, and nothing causes them to stumble.” (Psalm 119:185)

Jesus was at peace with his position. “I am in the midst of you as he that serves” (Luke 22:27). Jesus, The only perfect man, the very Son of God, “humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8).

Humility and peace go together. Life is filled with difficulties, suffering, and uncertainty. Some may think that if they only had more money, more prestige and more power, they could ban these things from their lives and have peace. The opposite is true. Jesus said, “My peace I give you, not as the world gives give I unto you” (John 14:27). The world would give peace through force, by taking away everyone’s arms, taking away our freedom and putting everyone under strict control of the government. That’s the peace of slavery, not the peace of God. It is when we recognize that we are not smart enough nor powerful enough to create peace that we humble ourselves and trust God to supply it. When we walk humbly in the position where God has placed us, seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness, we have a peace that the world cannot give or even know.

Jesus was at peace with others. He truly treated others as He desired to be treated returned good for evil and love for hate. The Jews who repeatedly counseled together to put Him to death were filled with hatred” but Jesus saw them as lost, condemned and without hope, and felt only sorrow for them (Matt. 23’ .37-39).

Pride is the obstacle that stands in the way of peace. It blocks the process of forgiveness, feeds the demon of envy, and creates grudges which fill the heart with resentment. Before

peace can reign in our hearts, pride must die. Like Paul, we must die to self that we might live in faith (Gal.2.20). Jesus was at peace regarding the future. Even knowing that there was a cross that would cut his life short, and that the entire nation was soon to be judged and destroyed, he spoke of the future as in the hands of The Father. He knows our needs: trust Him, "Be not anxious." Someone suggested that Jesus never worried, never hurried, and never doubted the outcome. He was able to say, in total honesty, "Not my will, but thine be done."

Many people, people who love God and seek to do His will, still worry over what the future might hold for themselves, their families and the nation. The psychologists might say, "Worry will not change it, so don't waste time worrying." Or, "Get your mind on other things; take your mind off these worries." Others say, "Most of the things we worry about never happen, so why worry about them?" But none of those answers give peace. Peace concerning the future comes when we trust the future to Yahweh, believing that whatever happens He will lead us in the paths of righteousness to the ultimate victory.

The Apostle Paul tells us what to do to have, peace about the future: "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 6.6-7). Note that Paul doesn't say that this will banish all the dangers or problems of the future. The things we feared may still happen. What is promised is that we shall be at peace whether it happens or not.

Peace is not conditioned upon circumstances, on whether or not everything goes smoothly. It won't! Remember, Jesus promised tribulation. Peace is given by God in spite of circumstances. It is peace "which passes all understanding." That's the great victory of faith, that God will give peace and guard our hearts and thoughts in Christ because we belong to Him and trust Him.

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts." (Col. 3: 15)

.....
Copyright © Curtis Dickinson. Formatted and Posted by Ken Fortier Ministries.
Permission is hereby granted by Mrs. Regina Dickinson to reproduce and distribute
Curtis' articles to as many as possible. This statement is to remain attached to this article
for permission to be valid. Vol. XXXVII, Number 12.
.....