

John 14:27

Introduction

Matthew Henry writes, “When Christ left the world He made His will. His soul He bequeathed to His Father, His body to Joseph, His clothes to soldiers, His mother to the care of John. But what should He leave to His poor disciples who had left all for Him? Silver and gold He had not but He left them what was far better – His peace.”

What He gave His disciples, He still bestows. His special gift to all His people. He seldom gives them money or worldly ease, or temporal prosperity. But He is always able to give all His people this far greater blessing. How relevant this is in the age in which we live. More people than ever are nervously irritable and lack repose. General insecurity of present times registers itself not only politically and economically, but also emotionally and mentally. Amid the fever and fact of modern life, do we ever see a face which reflects deep and settled peace within?

Now into this situation Christ says, **My peace I give you** (John 14:27). Would we like peace? Not peace of lethargic ease or safe and sheltered life. But one which stands sentinel at the gateway of the soul and confronts all manner of difficult things with steady eyes, peace that holds the heart serene through crowded days and overwork and criticism of men. Would you like that? Not a matter of temperament. Even the most highly-strung can know something of this. It is a matter of accepting a gift.

The peace of Jesus Christ

Jesus offers to give us the peace that His own heart knew. We feel it on every page of the Gospels - Christ's serenity. Study the narratives. Think of what He had to put up with. Continual intrusions on His privacy, no respite from dawn to dusk, steady drain on Him, inconsiderate people interrupting Him, awful burden of sharing the sins and sorrows of others, misunderstandings, cutting criticisms, pettiness of His own disciples, disappointments, crushing load of life. Yet through it all He had a serene untroubled heart.

Contrast this with the disciples. Exasperated with the Samaritan village, wanting to call down fire on it because it would not receive them. In the boat in peril on the lake – lost all self-control and self-respect, **Teacher, don't you care if we drown?** (Mark 4:38). Jesus' words, **Peace, be still!** was for the panic-stricken hearts as much as for the wind and the waves.

When the end came, the enemy struck, and strained nerves snapped as the disciples forsook Him and fled. But Jesus? **Father, into your hands I commit my spirit** (Luke 23:46) – He died serenely. “My peace” – the peace He knew from Bethlehem to Calvary. This is the peace He offers.

But, you say, that was Jesus, He was different, we are just common day people. Yet here He teaches that this peace is not a far off dream but within reach of everyone who will claim the gift. Whatever life may do, there is far more in Christ to hold us

steady and serene than there is to shake and unnerve the soul. Hear His words again, **My peace I give to you**, to you who know what it is to be rushed, fretted, agitated and worried.

I do not give you as the world gives (John 14:27). Nowhere else will you find peace, the world cannot give it. The world can give you fame, wealth, physical rest, pleasure, happiness of a kind, but all on the surface. Like a skim of turf covering a volcano, a very thin plating over the depth of restlessness. The world's gift is the best at first, and the worst at the end. Christ's gift of peace gets deeper and fuller as the years go by and the storms of life assail. He wants to give you something far more valuable, and he offers it willingly, generously, and for all time. He is more willing to give than we are to receive.

Effects of this peace

The peace of which Jesus speaks is not one which means changing our circumstances or avoiding and escaping trouble. The peace He brings changes us even though circumstances do not change. This is something which is very profound and real. Paul says it "passes all understanding", it amazes and surprises. Yet there is no question about it. When you have got it, you know you have got it. C.f. the calmness of the martyrs and the persecuted, e.g. Peter in Acts 12, Paul and Silas in Acts 16. Peace which cannot be quenched. Peace which lives on even when there is a halter round the neck and a sword in the side.

Brings other blessings in its train – joy ("peace and joy" are often found together in Scripture), love and holiness (it constrains us to please Him and walk in His commandments). Independent of circumstances, we have His peace. No experience of life can take it away from us. Even sorrow and danger and suffering cannot make it less. This peace helps us bear affliction. It is amazing what men can put up with and overcome when Christ's peace is imparted to them.

Peace of conquest, and not of avoiding trouble or escaping difficulty. It makes men giants. They become the mightiest of the mighty. Never more evident than when sorrow and bereavement strike in the ugliest or most savage form, or when the Christian man has to look death fully in the face. Calm in all circumstances, even the worst.

It drives out over anxiety, helps us to think clearly and act sensibly, even in the worst situations. Since this peace is grounded not in circumstances but in the Lord, we should be free from all dismay. Our hearts are not to be troubled or dismayed. **Be strong and courageous** (Joshua 1:9).

"There is no more precious possession than Christ's peace. Never a congregation meets for worship but some need more than anything to learn the secret of true serenity." (James Stewart). All have prayed out of the depths of personal experience.

*"Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of thy peace."*

What burdens men and women carry – unemployment, hard to make ends meet, worries about the children, lonely souls who feel the world does not need or want them. Explore the causes of your own restless moods. Why do you grow irritable? Why do nerves get on edge and you say things you regret? Why do you try to cross bridges before you get to them? Why is life a burden? Why do you find it hard to relax? Why do you find other people so exasperating at times? The trouble is with you – you lack the peace of Christ – His last and greatest gift.

Means and maintenance of peace

Peace is not in us or in our circumstances, but in Him. Therefore everything depends on being rightly related to Him and being so continually. It begins with salvation. No man has peace while his conscience is at war. He has peace with God when he is justified by faith. Peace through the blood of the cross. Conscience has to remain clear. If there are unforgiven and unforsaken sins, the conscience of the believer is soon disturbed. Keep short accounts with God. Submit to His lordship unreservedly.

If we want peace, and we want our own way, the two things just don't go together. A civil war within the breast. Pulled this way and that with passion, self-will and indulgence. Inclinations one way, duty another way. Torn in pieces like a man drawn asunder by wild horses. Only one way for that strife and conflict to be brought to a close – hand life, with its decisions and possibilities and options, to Christ, and let Him do with it as He will. Submission to His direction and guidance. "Not my will but thine" is the shortest route to peace.

There must be a continued relationship with Him. To be maintained by **fixing our eyes on Jesus** (Hebrew 12:2). Enjoy continued fellowship with God. This is how the Lord Himself maintained contact with His Father. The secret of His life was the way He slipped away from the crowds to meet in solitude with God. He was utterly dependent on God. He laid all His work before God, and sought His help and power.

With us, His peace is inseparable from His presence. We have it when we have Him. When we have Him and are in vital touch with Him, we have His peace. The moment we are out of touch, we lose the peace. Peace is a by-product of having Him and being in touch with Him. Jealously guard against the temptation to lose that contact, through self-sufficiency, self-will, having own way, acting out of His will. **Walk humbly with your God** (Micah 6:8).

George Muller sought God's help in matters, however minute, connected with daily duty. **In everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God** (Philippians 4:6). One thing that gives security and makes it possible to have a calm heart is the possession of Christ by faith. Without Him, we are wasting our breath to say, "don't be frightened", and "be at ease".

"The world without Christ is nought. Christ without the world is enough." (Alexander Maclaren). Make sure we are in Christ and have firm grasp of Him. **I have set the Lord always before me. Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken** (Psalm 16:8).

To the unsaved – you have never begun to have peace. Seek the peacemaker and be saved.