

Let Not Your Heart be Troubled

“Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”
—*John 14:27*

THESE COMFORTING

words were spoken by our dear Lord Jesus to his disciples only a few hours before his death as a ransom price for the sin-sick human family. His tender words reflect the very high level of love, devotion, and compassion that he had for his faithful followers. They also indicate the wonderful peace of God which he possessed.

THE CONFUSED DISCIPLES

Jesus knew that his disciples were confused and unable to comprehend the tragic events that were taking place. The climax of his earthly ministry was unfolding, and in a few hours he would face a terrible death, as well as having been betrayed by one of his own followers.

His followers had just witnessed the institution of the memorial of his death wherein he substituted his own life as the lamb of sacrifice. They were invited to share with him in partaking of the sacred emblems that were symbolic of his sacrificed

life—the bread which he broke representing his flesh, and the cup which showed his life blood given on their behalf, and also for the sins of the world.

THE PRINCE OF PEACE

Although he would soon finish his earthly ministry as a ransom for the sins of mankind, he would not fulfill the prophetic titles of his future office as king for another two thousand years. Jesus knew that his faithful followers would experience many severe trials during that long period of time. One of the titles of his future office, “The Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6), points to one of the fundamental aspects of his loving character. Throughout his ministry he exemplified the fact that he was a man of peace, and as a peacemaker he assured his people of his continuing interest in their spiritual welfare.

During those few remaining hours of his life, Jesus turned to his disciples and promised them, “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. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.”—John 14:27-31

THE END DREW NEAR

The peace that Jesus had was centered in the omnipotent power, wisdom, justice, and love possessed by his Heavenly Father. Likewise, if we desire to have the peace of God and of Christ it must also be centered in God by faith. The peace of Christ is a blessed legacy, especially when the storm clouds of trouble descend upon the lives of his faithful people.

Even as Jesus was speaking these words, his betrayer Judas had left to carry out his murderous errand. This was to be followed by the agony he would suffer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Later, his disciples would become dismayed and fearful as they began to realize the fate of their beloved Lord. Under darkness of night, their suspense would deepen into more fearful forebodings as he stood alone before his merciless accusers and persecutors in the hall of Pilate and the court of Herod. In fulfillment of the Father's purpose came the tragic end and the horrors of the crucifixion, and they were powerless to help him.

Under the unfolding circumstances there was no peace of which Jesus had earlier spoken. Becoming overcome with fear and dread our Lord's disciples all forsook him. Even Peter, who was anxious to defend him, was so filled with fear that three times he denied his Lord, and with cursing declared that he never knew him. (Matt. 26:69-75) When Jesus had completed the task for which he had been born as a perfect man, he cried, "It is finished." (John 19:30) Then the heavens were darkened, the earth quaked, the rocks were rent, and the Temple veil was torn in two.

DEATH REQUIRED

Years later while commenting on the divine purpose, the Apostle Paul explained that peace could not yet be realized until Jesus' sacrificial death. In his letter to the Hebrew brethren, he wrote, "Where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives. Therefore even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood."—Heb. 9:16-18, *New American Standard Bible*

As fear fell upon the people of Israel, and the clamor and excitement of that awful day died away, they smote upon their breasts and returned to their homes with fear. "Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God."—Matt. 27:54

HOPE REALIZED

To the disciples of the Lord, the peace their Master possessed had also been theirs. Although they were in despair, three days later hope was revived by the news of the Lord's resurrection. It was confirmed to them by his appearance in their midst. Again, forty days later, they were strengthened by his ascension after his parting counsel, promised return, and instructions to tarry in Jerusalem until they received at Pentecost the promise of the Father—the Holy Spirit of adoption.

The peace of Christ and the Lord's rich legacy began to be more fully realized. The tarrying days of prayer and expectancy were days of abiding peace

which flowed as a river. On the Day of Pentecost the promised Comforter was received, and the disciples' peace and joy knew no bounds.

THE CHURCH'S LEGACY

The legacy of peace was given not only to the Early Church, but is the blessed promise to the entire church throughout this present Gospel Age. In his prayer during those last hours of his life, Jesus declared, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."—John 17:20,21

The promised peace of which Jesus spoke was not to be the peace that the world may offer. That may be enjoyed for a short time, but may soon vanish when health fails and death steals away the treasures of the heart. Paul pointed to this when he said, "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."—Phil. 4:7

Christ enjoyed this peace of God when he endured loss, persecution, and contempt even amidst the agonies of the cross. "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:25,26) His ministry was a difficult way, and so it must be with all his faithful followers until the purposes of God are accomplished in us. We are assured that

through all of life's storms this peace shall abide in us also. "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) This is the peace which no trial can destroy and no enemy can wrest from us.

FAITH'S FOUNDATION

The foundation and security of this abiding peace is able to survive even the most difficult storms of life. When we consider the Lord and his apostles, we are impressed with the fact that their faith in the love, power, and wisdom of God was firm and unmovable. They believed that what God had promised them, he was able also to perform and that his righteous and benevolent plan could know no failure.

When speaking of the Heavenly Father, Isaiah declared, "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." (Isa. 46:9,10) To emphasize this, we read again from the words of the prophet, "The LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?"—chap. 14:27

Those who have responded to the heavenly calling during this present Gospel Age have rested on the wonderful promises of God, and in him has their faith been firmly anchored. While they were being tossed about by the tempests of life, their anchor still held fast to the throne of God. Jesus had been with the Father from the beginning, and had realized his

love and goodness. He had seen his power and had marked his righteousness and fatherly providence over all his works. The knowledge which he had of the Heavenly Father gave him a firm foundation for faith in all God's purposes concerning the future. The Master could walk by faith which enabled him to overcome all obstacles, and to secure the victory even over death.

As it is written, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."—Isa. 53:11,12

THE VICTORY

John has written for our instruction, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born [begotten] of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born [begotten] of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."—I John 5:1-4

It is only through steady, unwavering faith that the peace of Christ will abide with his faithful and consecrated people. While Jesus was with his disciples and they witnessed in him the manifestation

of the Heavenly Father, their faith remained strong and they had peace in him. As he said, “While I was with them in the world, I kept them.” (John 17:12) However, it was not until after he had left them that their faith was truly anchored in God. After Pentecost they experienced the same peace that Christ had enjoyed. This blessed peace came from a knowledge that God had acknowledged them as sons and heirs, and joint-heirs with Christ, and if they would continue faithfully to follow in the steps of the Redeemer they could be victorious.

UNWAVERING FAITH

This is the basis of our peace. No matter how fiercely the storms of life may assail us, we must never let go our anchor and allow ourselves to drift. The Apostle Paul wrote, “The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”—II Tim. 2:19

The psalmist assures us, “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.”—Ps. 91:1-4

“Being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.” (Rom. 4:21) Notwithstanding our human imperfections and frailties which are covered through the imputed

righteousness of Christ, we should have no fear that our loving Heavenly Father is fully capable of assisting his people to faithfulness. We are to have full assurance of faith, “For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.” (John 16:27) God knows our weaknesses, “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.”—Ps. 103:13,14

THE ANCHOR OF FAITH

We are thus encouraged to maintain a firm grip upon the anchor of our faith. In his letter to the Hebrew brethren, the Apostle Paul provided an important definition of faith, when he wrote, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Heb. 11:1) He emphasized its true value, when he explained, “Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”—vs.6

THE PEACE OF GOD

If we desire to have the peace of God reign in our hearts, we must never let go our anchor, nor suffer Satan’s deadliest strife to beat our courage down. The language of our hearts must always be as was Job’s. He wrote, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.” (Job 13:15) The Prophet Isaiah wrote, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”—Isa. 26:3

Thus armed with faith, the peace of God that was given to us by our Master ever abides. “Let the

peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.” (Col. 3:15) As we walk in newness of life and in faith, let our hearts be cheered and our minds be stayed with the assurance that all of the divine purposes shall be accomplished in us. Jesus assured us of his Heavenly Father’s ultimate purpose. “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”—Luke 12:32

In loving tenderness he said, “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 trou-bled, neither let it be afraid.”—John 14:27

