

PURSUIT OF PEACE

"Seek Peace and Pursue it" - Psalm 34:14

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THE MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

CHAPTER TWO -

WHY WE DO NOT HAVE PEACE

SEVEN TONS OF SEDATIVES will be taken by people in the United States tonight. In the year of this writing our government is spending one million dollars for tranquilizers for members of the armed forces. The best sellers in our country today are chewing gum, soft drinks, cigarettes, liquor, tranquilizers and aspirin. All of these things are advertised to relax tension and to calm nerves. This gives a picture of the agitation and unrest in people's hearts today.

So many of us are frantically looking everywhere to find peace of mind. We have become a nation of people who can't stand to live with ourselves. If we have some quiet time, we feel restless and turn on the television or radio; we look at a magazine or telephone a friend. Our thoughts and problems stare us in the face unless we can keep our minds on something else. The movie and television companies have found it necessary to have more tremendous, spectacular and shocking entertainment in order to attract an already bored and pleasure-mad nation.

Turn to the entertainment pages of your newspaper and see the lurid, sexy ads that a Christian should be horrified to see, much less to attend any of these amusements. There is a rat race from one diversion to another in order to forget our miseries for a little while.

Doctors have become alarmed at the extensive use of drugs to still the ache of an empty heart. Much has been written to warn us that there is a limit to what the sedatives can do and of the dangers of their wrong use. In her book, *The Drug Addict as a Patient*, Dr. Marie Nyswander pleads with people not to use these drugs without prescription and not to give anyone else medicine that has been prescribed for them. Conservatively speaking, there are already 12,000,000 (1962) people in this country addicted to the use of tranquilizers and sedatives.

Where will it all end? Drugs and diversions can only be a temporary stop-gap, they can never bring inner peace. They are used to keep us from seeing ourselves as we really are and finding out just why we are in this condition. Why not face facts and see why you aren't able to live a peaceful life?

Since peace is the result of trusting GOD to keep His promises there is only one sure way to find the formula for peace, go to GOD. We have GOD's written Word. Let's start in the proper place to find out how GOD gives His peace.

GOD's peace is not possible for unbelievers. **"But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked"** (Isaiah 57:20; 21).

"These things I [CHRIST] have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

These words were given to the disciples when their hearts were very unpeaceful. The Leader whom they had followed and loved for three years was now talking of going to a Cross to die. They had not fully understood GOD's plan for the redemption of the world. They had been trained in the promises of an earthly kingdom for the Jewish people. All their hopes seemed blasted and their hearts were heavy. CHRIST saw their hearts and showed them that in Him they have their peace - not in the world.

In the world there will always be tribulation but in CHRIST there will always be peace. He did not promise that our circumstances were going to be peaceful. He made no promise that our bodies wouldn't wear out or that we would not have pain, sorrow or heartaches of many kinds. Instead He just said that in the midst of all kinds of difficulties "in me" ye shall have peace. We must look to CHRIST for our peace. Looking to the world and worldly things usually brings more heartaches and troubles. Often many of us turn to everything else before we learn this lesson.

"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).

Here again CHRIST shows us where we can find peace. This is not the peace of a trembling Christian or even of the strongest saint you know; this is CHRIST's very own peace.

These promises are made to those who are **"in Christ Jesus."** In other words, this peace is only for Christians! But are you a Christian? You say you think you are, you hope you are. You must be because you are a church member and you have been baptized. You try your best to keep the ten commandments and all of CHRIST's teachings and laws. Better make sure right now whether you truly are a Christian or not!

When we want the definition of a word, we turn to the dictionary. That is what it was written for. When we want to know how a person becomes a Christian, the only place to turn is to GOD's written Word. **"But as many as received him [CHRIST], to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his [CHRIST's] name; which were born, not of blood, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"** (John 1:12, 13).

I am a native Virginian because I was born in Virginia. Now I am living in Texas. No matter how I keep the laws and customs of this state, I can never be a native Texan. To be a Christian one must be in CHRIST. Try as you will, keeping laws and the teachings of CHRIST to the best of your ability will never make you a Christian. You may act like a Christian, go to the same church, and give the same amount of money as a Christian but you are not a Christian until you are born in CHRIST.

Many years ago, I was born into the Harrison family. It was quite an event though I can't remember it. My parents were Christians but even though I was born to them, it did not make me one. I was born a Harrison. That gave me the nature and characteristics of my earthly father.

Nineteen years later another birth took place in my life. I can remember that one quite vividly. That was the night that I took GOD's Word from John 3:16. "**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him [CHRIST] should not perish, but have everlasting life.**" I trusted that promise and placed my name in the "**whosoever**" of this verse. I believed that CHRIST died for me. I took Him by faith as my Saviour and became a Christian. Christian means "one who belongs to CHRIST." This was my second or spiritual birthday. This was the moment that I was placed into GOD's family because I was now "**in Christ Jesus.**"

You can know and believe all the facts about CHRIST and about the way to be saved and still not be a Christian. Those verses in John 1:12, 13 also show that the believing has to be of such a nature that it results in that of receiving CHRIST as Saviour.

When I was in high school, my family took me to Niagara Falls. After we had enjoyed the sights from both the American and Canadian side, my grandfather suggested a ride in the cable car over the falls. I was afraid to go.

"What's the matter, don't you believe that it will hold you up?"

"Of course I do, but I just don't want to go." Then he said something that I'll probably remember all my life.

"You don't really believe in something unless you are willing to trust yourself completely to it."

You don't really believe in the Lord JESUS CHRIST unless you are willing to stake everything on receiving Him as your Saviour. Either He is the Son of GOD as He said, or He is a liar, and no better than you or I. He is either able to save you by His death on the Cross alone, or He is just an imposter, and cannot be trusted at all. Which is He to you? You must choose whether you will become a Christian in GOD's way or that you will remain separated from GOD and His promises.

You can be born into GOD's family right this minute by just asking CHRIST to save you. He died on the Cross carrying your sins. The full price that GOD demands for sin has been paid. You have nothing to do to add to what CHRIST has already done. "**For by grace [unmerited favor] 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, 9).

Right now, quietly in your heart, ask CHRIST to save you. If you did that now, you have just been born the second time, "**not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.**" This act puts you into GOD's family and gives you all the rights and privileges of GOD's children. This gives you CHRIST's peace.

I would love to promise that from now on your life will be peaceful, calm and happy. But I can't. If that were true there would be no need to write further. I could close right here if that was what GOD promises for all Christians.

Many Christians are as fearful, unhappy and nervous as the people who are not believers in CHRIST. We are living more and more in the tempo of the age. It has been said that this is an age of insanity. It is beginning to show itself in our hurry, worry, and busy. Unfortunately this characterizes the lives of many Christians, too. This should not be true, but we must face the fact that it is. It is so easy to let ourselves be swept along with the times. We must plant our feet firmly and refuse to be sucked into the frenzied activity that only leads to unrest and agitation. As long as we live in the manner of the world, there is little chance that we can know real serenity, even though it is ours for the taking.

It is sadly true that many born-again Christians have not found the way to appropriate the wonderful peace that CHRIST gives us. It is the purpose of this book to help those who are still searching for peace. To the best of my ability, I want to give you GOD's way of having peace, not my own. I want to show you some of the ways that GOD has led me to find my every need met in CHRIST JESUS. Why are there so many Christians who do not have peace although it has been promised to them?

Many Christians honestly do not know where to look for peace. We have been told that peace can be found through reading the Bible and prayer. That is true. As long as the happenings in our lives are pleasant we live without much thought of GOD; When tragedy strikes we turn to the Bible for help. Often we don't know where to look for verses that will meet our need. Even when we do, our minds are so occupied with the circumstances that distress us that we don't really give the Bible a chance to speak to us. When we turn to prayer, it is asking for peace as though we expected GOD to lay this package in our laps.

There is little thought of the conditions which GOD has laid down in His Word. Usually we ask that the unpleasant circumstances be removed, thinking that this is the only way of relief. We give little or no thought to the fact that this is GOD's will for us and that He has promised that "**All things work together for good.**" We are asking for something to be removed which GOD in His love and wisdom has sent for our own good. Then, because these occasional readings of the Word (when the mind is preoccupied with worries) and prayer (that often is not according to GOD's will) do not give the desired peace, we conclude that the answer to our needs cannot be found in the Lord. In reality we are expecting GOD to perform miracles whenever we choose to turn to Him in hard circumstances.

When GOD does not work in the way we think He should, we turn to other methods. For the Christian out of fellowship with the Lord, popular psychology in any form can only bring temporary relief. Have you become so confused and discouraged that you believe that peace is not possible and have given up trying to find it?

Many Christians do not find peace because they want it on their own terms. We do not want to change our way of life but we want peace added. We are first in our lives and GOD second. We want to live in the world's ways part of the time and have GOD's help when we feel that we can't manage. We do not sense a need of GOD unless some trial or sorrow comes. Then we expect

GOD to give calmness.

If business and pleasure interfere with our fellowship with the Lord or public worship at church, the business and pleasure usually come first. We wonder why our Christian faith does not bring the serenity which is promised in the Bible and so beautifully described by the minister. We believe that GOD can be let in or out of our lives at will and we can still have the promises of GOD as given in His Word. Our philosophy is, "I want peace if I can have it on my own terms." Those who come to GOD with this attitude can never be satisfied.

Another reason that many Christians do not have peace is because they are not willing to pay the price. It is easier to drift along in easy ways and just hope for peace. It is not precious enough for us to be willing to meet the conditions necessary for it. We all hear people say, "I'd give anything to play the piano like Van Cliburn!"

What they really mean is that they would give anything except the hours of practice necessary, the finger exercises, the pleasures missed, and the strain of travel and being constantly with people. In the same way, we have heard those who say, "I'd give anything to have peace." We want it, yes, but not enough to pay the price of having it. We may be willing to buy peace with money, fame or position but not willing to do just what GOD requires to attain it. Like everything of value, peace has its price.

Many Christians are looking for peace in the wrong place. A great number of people are looking in the world's way instead of looking to the Lord. CHRIST said that only in Him can we have peace; there will be tribulation in the world (John 16:33). The world's idea of peace and the Biblical idea of peace are entirely opposed to each other.

Worldly people believe that serenity comes from outward circumstances, such as fame and success, wealth and health, pleasure and diversion. The Bible teaches that it comes from CHRIST and is inward regardless of problems. If our peace depends on outward circumstances, it is certain that it will come and go according to the happenings in our lives. That is not peace. That kind of feeling can never be trusted to hold us through suffering, trials and disappointments.

Many feel that if they had a better home or more money they would have peace. It is foolish to think that if we don't have to stretch the budget until it springs back at us, we would have peace. Some friends testify that the happiest and most peaceful years of their lives were the times when they had the least money and worldly possessions.

Some feel that if they could have a regular vacation, they would have peace. Many mothers think that getting more rest and getting away from their children for a while would give peace. An increasing number of people who are nervous and cannot find peace at home are being sent on vacations by their doctors. They believe that if they can get the patients away from their problems for a while, they can find inner rest.

A friend of mine could not find the answer to her difficulties though she was helped by a minister and a doctor.

The doctor suggested a trip to Europe. She was more miserable in Europe than at home and soon returned. As long as there is no peace in the heart, there is no more peace in Europe than in the

United States. As long as there is no peace in the heart, it can't be found however far you may travel. Peace has nothing to do with geography. It can be in the smallest house or in the largest palace. There is peace on the mission field in the darkest jungle, or in a New York business office where CHRIST is truly the center of the life. No circumstances can give peace and none can take it away.

Many Christians are looking to the wrong book for the answer to peace. The market is full of books written on peace, how to overcome worry, how to live without fear, and related subjects. The fact that some of these books are best sellers shows the desperate search people are waging to find the answer to the needs of their hearts.

Some of these books are written merely for those who are looking for mental exercises and mechanical ways of relaxing and relieving nervous tensions. Others are written by so-called Christian ministers who give very much the same advice, but also include Scriptures to help in the exercises. They fail to show that GOD's promises are for those who belong to Him. These authors are often even more false than those who make no pretense of being Christian. They treat the problems of the non-Christian and the Christian alike, and that is contrary to GOD's Word. They fool people into believing that because they are ministers and are using Scripture the readers are being given GOD's method of giving peace, no matter what the personal relationship is to the Lord.

We cannot state too often that GOD's peace is for GOD's children only. We only become members of GOD's family when we receive the Lord JESUS CHRIST as our Saviour.

Later when the reader gets little or no relief, he thinks that the Word of GOD is at fault and that GOD is not big enough to keep His promises. Most of the advice in these books is in terms of what a person must do for himself, and great stress is laid on works. GOD indicates that we cannot jolly ourselves into real peace, we cannot manufacture it, and that our works have nothing to do with our receiving it.

Recently there have been many excellent books written along this line by godly people who know the Word. Thousands have testified that these books have helped to start them living peacefully. However, be sure that what you study is biblically grounded. Never trust even the best man to give you GOD's ways and plans. The Bible is the only Book that can be completely trusted. Use other books as helps but never in preference to the Bible, GOD's true Word.

Peace is not possible for those who do not accept CHRIST as their Saviour and become members of GOD's family.

GOD's peace is not promised to unbelievers. Christians sometimes do not have this wonderful peace because they are looking for it in the wrong ways. Peace is not found in worldly ways, in our plans and methods, in popular books of psychology or psychiatry. It is God-given and must be received from Him in response to the conditions laid down in His Word, the Bible.

At the end of this book, I have listed a few books that have been very helpful to me, along with a very brief summary of how each book might be useful.

~ end of chapter 2 ~