

PURSUIT OF PEACE

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

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THE MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

CHAPTER FOUR -

YOU'RE INCLUDED IN A WILL

"JUST SHOW ME ONE PERSON who lives a life of peace in times like these and I'll believe that it can be done," was the challenge a man gave me a few days ago. I could write about a number of present-day Christians who know GOD's peace constantly, but I have a far better plan. Even the best of us are most imperfect and poor patterns for others. I want to point you to the one perfect example of always living in GOD's peace. That One is the Lord JESUS CHRIST, the God-man. As a man He possessed a human body with all the nerves and reactions to stress, emotionally, mentally and physically, as we do. He was tempted in every way to sin just as we, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). At the same time, He was GOD and as such knows the answers to all suffering and to every problem and knows how to live peacefully through any circumstances. What better example could be chosen to show how we too may know His peace?

We are so prone to blame the conditions that surround our lives and the pressures of modern living for our lack of peace. We might be tempted to think that it was easy to live a peaceful life in CHRIST's day but well-nigh impossible in these days. A closer look will show that CHRIST was subjected to all the pressures of modern life.

CHRIST lived under conditions that we would naturally think would produce strain and pressures in us. Mark describes His actions in words such as these: "**straightway, forthwith, immediately.**" He was pressed on every side by throngs of people and found little time for privacy. We have no record of leisure times or vacations but His life was without strain and stress. He never hurried but always moved in an air of perfect calm and peace. Interruptions were frequent in His life but He always used them as opportunities for His work and never let them upset His plans. He knew that His entire life's work must be accomplished in only three years but there was no frenzied push to work harder or longer.

CHRIST knew none of the security that psychiatrists claim is so necessary for a peaceful life. In His own words, He testified that He had no home nor food nor source of income. He never desired wealth or earthly possessions. His way of life showed His constant trust in GOD to supply His every need. His goal in life was only to "**do the will of my Father which is in heaven**" (see also John 6:38-40).

CHRIST's life was certainly lived intensely but always without tension. Almost every miracle He performed showed His love and compassion for the suffering. He wept when He saw the sorrow

caused by Lazarus' death (John 11:33-35). His heart was burdened with the judgments He knew would come for the sins of His race.

He "sweat... as it were great drops of blood" in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane and died the cruelest type of death on the Cross (Luke 22:44; 23:33, 34). Yet His life and death showed a calmness and serenity never seen in a man before or since.

CHRIST lived in the face of danger to His life from the time of His birth until He died. Most of His adult life was spent with the scribes and Pharisees planning and plotting His death. All dangers were met with a quiet calmness. Even when the soldiers came to capture Him just before the crucifixion, their actions indicated their awe and amazement that one could stand so quietly and answer so calmly in the face of such danger. His entire trial and death showed the inner peace and calm that characterized His whole life.

In spite of a life that would crush most of us under its burden, CHRIST found time for prayer and intimate fellowship with His heavenly Father. CHRIST was GOD and man. Yet He never performed a miracle, preached a sermon or carried on even the minor details of His life without constantly depending on His Father.

It is a mark of our age to strive for independence; the man who has become independent is usually the one who is admired as a success, and others strive to imitate him. Dependence is considered a sign of weakness, but in CHRIST it was a sign of greatness. Usually this independent attitude is carried over into a man's relationship to GOD. Independence was the sin that caused Satan to be cast out of Heaven. The sin of Adam and Eve put all mankind under condemnation. It was the same sin with which Satan tempted CHRIST, only in vain.

No problem or trial can arise in our lives that CHRIST did not experience. "**For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin**" (Hebrews 4:15). Since CHRIST's peace was sufficient for the tremendous pressures of His life, certainly that same peace is sufficient for any circumstances that may enter your life.

This peace, however, has to be taken! We may have CHRIST as our Saviour and be convinced that CHRIST has promised His peace to those who are His own, but somehow we still do not know this wonderful peace as our own. Why? CHRIST left us peace in His last will and testament. It is there for our taking, but we must by faith take this peace for our own. It is a definite act of appropriating it that makes the peace ours.

A popular radio program broadcasts the names, last known addresses, and descriptions of those who have been left money or property in legacies but who have never claimed them. It is an attempt to reach those who have lost contact with relatives and friends and do not know what valuable things have been left to them. From time to time someone is found and there is great jubilation when relatives and friends are united and the money or property given to those to whom it was willed. Many times those who received large sums of money had been living in poverty and great need when all the time there was money waiting for them to claim. How tragic to have people hunger for the bodily needs of life when they own a large sum of money that is only waiting to be claimed!

It is more tragic for Christians to be agitated and longing for peace, when peace has already been willed to them. There is excuse for those who have lost touch with relatives not to know that they have been willed some money. There is no excuse for the Christian to go on year after year without peace when the way of peace is so clearly taught in GOD's Word.

We have a copy of CHRIST's will for all Christians in John 14:27. "**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.**" If we lack peace it is because we have never truly believed the promise He has made nor have we ever appropriated it by faith. Just say in your heart, "Lord JESUS, You said that You have left me Your peace. I believe what You say and take it now for my own. Thank You for making peace possible for me." That is the simplest way of receiving this wonderful gift.

It is well to spend much time meditating on the fourteenth chapter of John. In it we have the complete summary of how CHRIST has made peace possible for us. Perhaps the questions the disciples asked in this chapter are the very ones you have been asking in your mind, too. The answers that CHRIST gave may help you see what is keeping you from living a peaceful life. Listen to their conversation and see if it won't help you.

The first question was asked by Peter and is recorded in John 13:36. "**Lord, whither goest thou?**" CHRIST had just told His disciples that He was going away. His face was set toward Jerusalem and His death on the Cross. This filled the disciples' hearts with terror, and took away all their hopes of having a part in CHRIST's earthly kingdom. They were confused and felt that the three years they had given to following CHRIST were in vain. CHRIST could see and know the pain in their hearts; before He answered the spoken question of Peter's, He answered the need of their hearts. "**Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me**" (John 14:1).

"**I go to prepare a place for you**" in verse two is the answer CHRIST gave to Peter's question.

First of all, He was going to the Father's house or the place that we commonly call Heaven. He was going there to prepare homes for us to have when we come to live with Him. CHRIST has not gone away to plan or to supervise a housing project. He said that for us He was going to prepare the place Himself. These houses will not be row houses or projects in which all houses are alike. These are custom-made homes, built to suit those who will live in them. He knows just what we need and He will provide that.

Several years ago we moved from Philadelphia to Dallas. It was necessary for my husband to precede us by several months. He spent all of his spare time looking for a home for us in Dallas while I spent my time packing and selling our home in Philadelphia. After a few months he found a house that he thought would suit our needs perfectly and was in our price range, so he bought it. Some of the church ladies were horrified that he would buy a house without his wife seeing it. They thought that he was making a terrible mistake. His answer was simple. "I have lived with my wife for seventeen years and I know what she likes and dislikes and the kind of home she had in mind." Even though my husband is human and fallible, the house suited me perfectly.

Now, CHRIST is infinite and knows so much better than fallible man just what we want in our heavenly homes. He has promised not only to provide it but to prepare it for us Himself. Many of us may have to live in apartments, in small, inadequate homes, or even live with others here on earth. We may never have the lovely dream home that is the desire of our hearts here on earth, but in Heaven we will have a perfect home for all eternity. We cannot see the architect's plans now, but knowing our Architect, we can be assured that it will be perfectly suited to our taste.

People worry more about death and the future life than any other thing. So much peace is lost because the matter of where they are to be after death has not been settled. For the Christian there should be no worry or terror at the thought of life after death because we have CHRIST's sure promise that He has gone ahead and is making preparations for us. We cling so tenaciously to this life that we never let the hope and prospect of Heaven take hold of our hearts.

Perhaps Heaven has not been fully described to us, because in our finite minds we could never understand a true description. Another reason might be because once we knew the joys of Heaven we would be so anxious to leave this earth we might be tempted to take our lives. The most important thing to know about Heaven is that where CHRIST is there we will be also. Being in the visible presence of CHRIST would make any place Heaven.

We also have the blessed assurance that He will come again, and receive us unto Himself, that where He is there we may be also. There is no danger of missing the way to Heaven when CHRIST will be our personal guide. We will also be surrounded with the others who have taken CHRIST as their Saviour, both the previously dead and alive, to go to be with the Lord (I Thessalonians 4:14-18).

The second question was asked by Thomas. "**Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?**" (John 14:5). The answer came immediately in verse six. "**I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**"

There is no plainer truth taught in Scripture than the way of going to glory to be with the Lord. If this were the only verse given in the Word to teach the way of salvation, it would have been enough for all to be saved. CHRIST said, "**I am the way.**" He is the only way to Heaven and to peace with GOD. He is much more than a teacher, prophet, guide, or way-shower. He is the door, the way, the road by which we may enter into life. The door of access to GOD was closed at the time that sin entered the Garden of Eden. Direct access to GOD was made possible again through the death of the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

CHRIST said, "**I am... the truth.**" Through CHRIST we have all true knowledge of GOD. Without Him, the human mind can never understand and know our great GOD. CHRIST is the basis of all true religion. Those religions that deny CHRIST's person as the Son of GOD, that deny His death and resurrection, have no truth in them. All spiritual truth is embodied in the Lord JESUS CHRIST. Only through CHRIST's revelation of Himself and of GOD can we come to know him in all truth. Even the most learned and educated people who have rejected CHRIST have missed the most important of all truth.

While education is an admirable goal in life. it is pathetic to see the highly educated apart from

CHRIST. They have what can be gained through human attainment but are sadly lacking in a well-rounded knowledge. Since the members of the Godhead made this universe and completely control and govern it, no human man can fathom the depths of any line of knowledge unless that one knows the Lord JESUS CHRIST as Saviour and has the truth. Even the best-developed human theories can never be complete until the Lord is taken into account, for He is the Creator, the Sustainer, and ever present One in our world. Man's wisest theories are foolishness to GOD. No man can ever say with complete honesty. "I have found truth," until that one has found the Lord JESUS CHRIST as Saviour.

CHRIST said, "**I am... the life.**" The members of the Godhead are the only Ones who have life in themselves. All of us have a created life that is from without and is sustained from without. In CHRIST's own words, we read. "**For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself**" (John 5:26). Since CHRIST has life within Himself. He is able to impart that life to those who come to Him as Saviour.

Life and CHRIST are synonymous. "**He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life**" (I John 5:12). When CHRIST is within, His life becomes ours. We have eternal and everlasting life because we have within us the One who has already triumphed over death, hence it is a resurrection life with all its power for our earthly span of years and the blessed assurance of a future bodily resurrection when CHRIST returns for His own.

The weakest person or the vilest sinner who turns to CHRIST as Saviour is given the same divine, eternal life as his present possession that will continue forever with the Lord throughout all eternity. CHRIST is the root and sustainer of all spiritual life and without Him there is no eternal life. The only prospect for the one outside of CHRIST is everlasting separation from GOD.

CHRIST goes on to emphasize the fact that He is not only the way to have eternal life, but He is the only way. Many may think that CHRIST is one way to life, but also believe that there are other ways, or that something must be added to CHRIST's atonement to make it completely acceptable to GOD. CHRIST removed all doubt about this question when He said, "**No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**"

In a few simple words that even the unlearned can understand, CHRIST asserts that He is the only basis and foundation through which anyone can come to know GOD and to belong to Him personally. Those who tell us that they know GOD and belong to Him, but deny the work of CHRIST on the Cross are merely fooling themselves (I John 2:23).

On the authority of GOD's Word, this cannot be possible. There is no bypassing CHRIST on the way to knowing GOD. There is a clearly stated teaching here that those who reach Heaven will only get there by coming through the Lord JESUS CHRIST. Coming to the Father through Him not only is speaking of coming to GOD when the body departs this earth but also speaks of coming to GOD in this life for peace, comfort, strength and all spiritual blessings.

Nothing can be added to GOD's plan of salvation and nothing can be deleted. GOD is the author of salvation for sinners, and those who come to Him must come in His way - which is through the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

How foolish for man to think that he can add his good works, church membership, charitable gifts, or any human contribution to the finished work of Christ! It is an insult to GOD to suggest that we need to work for a part of our salvation and shows a lack of the knowledge of GOD's Word. When one works for salvation, there is always the possibility that the good works will not be enough to outweigh the sins, and the soul lives in constant dread that what is offered to GOD may not be sufficient.

There can be no peace with this constant fear hanging over one's head. However, GOD settles the matter by telling us that anything we try to offer to Him for our salvation is like dirty, stinking rags in His sight (Isaiah 64:6).

A friend was once active in a church where she was taught that each time she sinned she must be saved again. She believed that she had to work along with CHRIST to complete her salvation. Her heart was full of constant dread that she might suddenly die before she could be saved again, for fear that her good works were not enough to get her into Heaven.

One day she saw and believed the truth taught in this verse and rested in the fact that this was GOD's Word and promise. From that day until now she has never feared or dreaded her future. She has complete peace and joy in knowing that her salvation was completed for her by CHRIST and nothing needs to be added or subtracted from His work. Her life has been radiant, her joy boundless, and her testimony for the Lord so precious that countless women and children have been won to CHRIST since she found full assurance in her blessed Lord.

A Christian should always have perfect peace in his standing and position in CHRIST both in this life and in the life to come. Others may strain and strive and work for salvation while we relax in peace in the finished work of CHRIST on the Cross.

The third question was asked by CHRIST Himself in verse nine. "**Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?**" This was asked when Philip made the request that CHRIST show the disciples the heavenly Father. The question was a gentle rebuke to Philip for not understanding that, knowing the Son, they also knew the Father, because one great purpose of His coming to earth was to give a revelation of the Father. "**He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father,**" All of the members of the Godhead are one GOD but are three persons who possess the same attributes and characteristics. In seeing CHRIST, the beholder also sees GOD the Father. In understanding and knowing CHRIST, one also knows the Father because they are the same in essence.

The same question that CHRIST asked Philip is asked of us today. "**Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?**" Place your own name there. The answer has a great bearing on the amount of peace a Christian can have.

Do you know the Lord better today than you did when you were first saved? Do you know Him better now than a year ago? A month ago? Than yesterday? It is blessedly possible and it is GOD's plan that we grow each day in a knowledge of Him and in fellowship with Him. In fact, we are told to "**grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ**" (II Peter 3:18).

A personal, intimate fellowship with the Lord is not only possible for the Christian but is what the Lord desires for us. This is the normal Christian life in GOD's sight. This knowledge and fellowship with GOD is the source of constant peace and rest in our lives. It is the basis of producing the trust and assurance we need to know GOD's perfect peace.

Knowing someone is a relative thing. We might say that we know the President because we have seen him on television or have heard him speak in person, but in reality we have no personal knowledge of him. My husband says that he knows me. Certainly he should after living with me for more than twenty-two years.

He knows many of my likes and dislikes; he knows my moods, my good and bad points. Even couples who have lived together for fifty years still do not know each other as completely as they know themselves. Godly people are never satisfied with their knowledge of the Lord. The closer we live to Him and the more time spent in meditation on His Word and in true prayer, the more we will know Him.

This knowledge and fellowship with the Lord in this life is the basis of constant and wonderful peace and calm in the believer's life. No Christian should ever be without peace when the very One who made peace is with us as a companion who loves us and who can be as intimate and personal as our best friends and relatives. Yet many times He is more intimate and closer than any human person can be. Certainly this truth should keep the Christian in perfect peace.

Judas, not Iscariot, asked the fourth and last question.

"Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" In answering this question, CHRIST promised that there would be five different ways that He would manifest Himself to Christians that cannot be experienced by non-Christians.

First, as Christians we have the special love of not only the Father, but also the Son and a manifestation of His presence with us (verse 21).

We are also promised that the Father and Son will make their abode with us, and that we will be indwelt by them (verse 23).

Third, we are told that our prayers that are offered to the Father in the name of CHRIST will be answered. Only Christians can have the peace of knowing that GOD hears and answers their prayers.

Fourth, Christians have the blessed promise of the indwelling presence of the HOLY SPIRIT. This is given in verses 16, 17 and 26. Since the Lord JESUS CHRIST took the form of a man here on earth, He limited Himself to the limitations of human abilities. After He went into Heaven, He sent the HOLY SPIRIT, who would live in the hearts of all believers. His power can be more far-reaching than CHRIST's in a human body. The HOLY SPIRIT is the One who teaches us and guides us and gives victory over sin in our lives. It is a part of His fruit to produce peace in our lives.

Fifth, and most important of all, CHRIST promised to manifest His peace in the Christian in a way that the unbeliever can never know (verse 27). We do not have some peace, or a Christian's peace, but we have the very peace of CHRIST. In the midst of the most trying circumstances the Christian can always have CHRIST's peace. We know the presence of CHRIST and the HOLY SPIRIT within us which enables us to take trials and suffering with perfect quiet and confidence.

CHRIST is the only perfect example for us to follow. Even though He lived through the same stresses and pressures that we know in modern days, He lived in perfect peace.

- He knew no security in His home, family, wealth, or friends.
- He lived in constant danger to his life. He knew when and how He would die.
- He had to pack a full life and ministry into three years.
- He had no privacy, leisure time or vacations.
- He was never overcome with nervous tension though He lived intensely.

His family misunderstood Him, one of His disciples betrayed Him, and His closest friends deserted Him during His trial. But He had peace.

CHRIST has willed us that same peace. It is there for just the taking. His work here on earth assures us of perfect peace about death and the life to follow. It gives us the way of salvation and access to Heaven and to GOD. It shows us the possibility of a close personal walk with GOD and the way in which GOD has made it possible for us to experience a moment-by-moment peace with CHRIST.

~ end of chapter 4 ~
